

VI. TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

THESIS: (a) rapporto tra Trinità economica e Trinità immanente. Transito dall'una all'altra in teologia; (b) mistero pasquale come evento trinitario (Moltmann, von Balthasar); (c) analisi della nozione di persona in teologia trinitaria; (d) vestigium trinitatis: analogie psicologiche (S. Agostino), analogia della comunità delle persone (Bracken, Moltmann, etc.)

I. The relation of the economic trinity and the immanent trinity

A. Statement of the thesis:

Rahner's argument is that the Christian doctrine of the trinity seems to be an isolated aspect of the Mystery of salvation rather than the whole of that mystery. And so, Rahner laid down the thesis, the Trinity of the economy of salvation is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa. The affirmation of God's trinity is made in order to preserve and make intelligible the experience we have of God in our salvation history.

1. There is a comparable statement in **Barth**: The reality of God in His revelation is not to be bracketed with an "only" as though somewhere behind His revelation there stood another reality of God; but, the reality of God which meets us in revelation is His reality in all the depths of eternity."

2. In some respects, Rahner's thesis is anticipated by **Schleiermacher**: "We have no formula for the Being of God in Himself as distinct from the being of God in the world." Schleiermacher's conclusions, however, is that one really cannot get beyond our consciousness of God to the immanent God of the Trinity.

B. Understanding of the Immanent Trinity from the Event of revelation.

1. Shift in understanding revelation as propositional to God's self-communication:

a. Vatican I:

Our knowledge of the Immanent Trinity comes from what God has revealed about himself for the sake of our salvation (cf. DS 3015 -- "there are proposed to our belief mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God."). Revelation, in this sense, is seen as **propositional** truths -- the relation, therefore between revelation and immanent Trinity is seen in terms of the propositions that God has revealed about himself. The problem remains as to the relationship between faith and reason.

b. Vatican II:

Revelation is not seen principally in terms of propositions but in terms of the **event** by which God discloses himself in Jesus Christ. There is a different way in which we see the relationship between revelation (now seen as event) and the immanent Trinity. Theologically, this shift in understanding is already worked out in Barth and Rahner.

2. Trinitarian Theology of Karl Barth:

a. Historical background: Reaction to liberal theology

In the circles of nineteenth century Protestant liberalism, particularly Schleiermacher, the doctrine of the Trinity is unintelligible. Since faith and the feeling of dependence are the most critical aspects of religion, the doctrine of the Trinity should be no more than an appendix. For Barth, our understanding of the dynamics of faith is unintelligible unless we grasp the doctrine of the Trinity.

b. Event of Revelation and the Doctrine of the Trinity:

God, in his own being is essentially hidden, absolutely transcendent. God has bridged this gap by disclosing himself in revelation. Revelation is the **event** of God's self-revelation. We don't start theology by speaking about "faith feeling", but rather by speaking about the God who reveals himself and thereby makes faith possible. THE revelation of God is Jesus Christ. He is the unique and utterly new event that breaks into history; the fullness before which was hidden, after which nothing more can be said.

c. Triune God's revelation to man and the relationship of the economic Trinity and immanent Trinity.

1. By sin man cannot know God. He is hidden. Yet God can reveal Himself and gives us the possibility to know Him. The Hidden God leads to the revealed God = Christ.

2. God has revealed himself as LORD. In this revelation there is a three-fold distinction between God the **Revealer**, God the **Revelation**, and the **Revealedness** or impartation of revelation. As Revealer, God has freely chosen to enter into dialogue with us. That which is revealed is identical to the one who reveals. Jesus Christ IS God's self-revelation. God's self-communication is a communication of SELF. Finally, we say that communication is for the sake of communion -- it is to draw us into his own divine life. The work of the Spirit is to allow the event of revelation to be God's ever-present contemporary offer of self.

a. In all of this, God is irreducibly SUBJECT (Sovereign Lord) -- he is never an OBJECT that confronts us, someone to be manipulated.

b. The Revealer communicates himself not through any instrument that is other than himself.

c. Finally, I do **not** confront Jesus Christ as a **past** historical event but as a contemporaneous present reality. Christ actually dwells in me through the power of the Spirit.

3. **Summary:** In the economy of salvation:

a. Father: He is Revealed Being

b. Son: Objective aspect/content of revelation = Jesus

c. Spirit: Subjective aspect/ revelation in me

There must be a correspondence between the immanent God and the God revealed in history (economic Trinity). Why? Because of revelation, i.e. God reveals Himself precisely as Trinitarian.

As Barth sees it, **revelation requires the believer to make distinctions in God.** Without such distinctions, we cannot give an adequate account of our experience of God on the basis of his word. The triune God is the necessary condition of the possibility for God's revealing himself.

4. Further Questions: Can anything more be said about the immanent Trinity? How are we to understand the Trinity within the Godhead? Barth feels that we ought to leave the how of God's Trinity shrouded in mystery.

3. Trinitarian Theology of Karl Rahner: God as Giver, Gift, and Ground of Acceptance of Gift.

A. Comparison of Rahner and Barth:

1. Rahner and Barth share similar thoughts except that Barth has a fundamentally Christological starting point while Rahner has an anthropological starting point.

2. Rahner describes God as "Absolute Holy Mystery" -- In the old theology, there are many different mysteries in Christian Faith because mystery was anything that transcended our

experience, and was accepted due to divine authority. Rahner says there is only One mystery = God as absolute mystery revealed in three “other mysteries”: grace; incarnation; and Trinity.

B. Rahner’s anthropology:

1. Man as openness to mystery of God

a. Knowledge:

In every act of knowing, man recognizes a particular object in the act of judgment and at the same time recognizes himself. The infinite Horizon, God, is implied in every act of knowing. He is auto-conoscenza (conoscenza objective) with a dynamism that is from S to O. He is both categorical (objective, historical acts in world) & transcendental (subjective aspect) Man’s dynamism pushes him towards the Horizon. **The result is God is the Horizon of my Knowing.**

b. Freedom:

Man is auto-determinative (liberum arbitrium). In every act of categorical freedom, man is oriented to God who is the Horizon implied in every free act. In each act of freedom, man chooses a thing of this world and also creates his story freely; makes a choice re: self. Yet, no object can fully realize me.

Result is God is the Horizon/Guarantee of my Freedom.

God is “Absolute Holy Mystery”

Man is by nature open to Mystery and is determined, in every act of knowing and loving, in terms of mystery. Yet, in philosophy, God remains silent. The question becomes: Does God wish to become involved with us? The result is a theology of revelation.

C. Theology of Revelation and Grace

a. Nature of Grace:

God lives in me; come near to me up to the point of inhabitation; part of my subjectivity because God is the constitutive principle of my subjectivity. This is a universal offer. In this sense, Rahner understands grace as uncreated grace, i.e. that the Spirit of God inhabits within us.

b. Objection: Is Jesus Christ superfluous? NO

Answer: Man is both transcendent and categorical. Thus, God must touch him in both ways: in history, in order for man to be truly saved.

c. Distinction between natural and supernatural revelation:

1. Natural (transcendental) revelation:

God’s self-disclosure as ground of the drive of self-transcendence - the ground of human knowledge and freedom as oriented toward the infinite, anonymous, nameless Mystery -- in this sense there can be a natural knowledge of God, or at least a pre-thematic grasp of the Divine as Ground).

2. Supernatural (categorical) revelation:

The fullness of God’s self-disclosure in Christ, a disclosure made historical in the Incarnation and having its personal effect through elevation (sanctification)

d. Incarnation: Gift of Revelation and Grace.

1. Jesus as the “real symbol” of God in history:

(God is symbolized and Jesus is the symbol or sacrament). The Logos, when it expresses itself outside of itself, produces the humanity of Jesus. The humanity of Jesus is diverse but inseparable from the Logos.

A Real symbol is the reality's self-realization that takes part in its substantial constitution in the being of another. A thing, in order to express itself, creates a symbol, apart from itself, but that is also part of it. There is unity and distinction between distinction and inseparability when one speaks of a symbol. A perfect example of a real symbol is "I" and my "Body"

2. God's self-disclosure in the Incarnation: two extremes to be avoided: monophysitic and Nestorian.

a. The monophysitic view, God uses this humanity as an instrument. In a sense, the problem is one of "mixing" God and the world (humanity and divinity). In the order of creation, we get a type of pantheistic identification. In Christology we get a docetism, in ecclesiology we get a kind of idolatrous triumphalism, in priesthood we get an exaggerated alter Christus, etc.

b. The Nestorian view: In creation we conceive of two independent objects working upon each other (a limited view of God if he can be so affected by the world) -- God and world are both caught up in a greater whole -- call it PROCESS or whatever. In Christology, there is no understanding of the unity of the person of Christ. In sacraments, you get either consubstantiation, etc.

3. Mediating viewpoint: Mediated immediacy:

The unity itself is the ground of diversity. "In one and the same act, the Logos must create the humanity as a distinct, autonomous humanity but as a humanity in unity with the Logos as its humanity. That which makes the humanity ek-sistent as something diverse from God, and that which unites the nature with the Logos are strictly the same." IT IS PRECISELY IN HIS HUMANITY THAT THE DIVINITY IS REVEALED. This concept is later expressed as symbol, Jesus is the ekstasis of God, his unique and fullest self-expression in history.

e. The appropriation of gift of salvation through divinizing grace: the Holy Spirit working in the depths of subjectivity of every human person.

Further reflections on Rahner's understanding of grace.

(1) Grace is primarily uncreated grace, that is, the uncreated gift of God's own life working within the human subject (constituting the subject as subject) elevating the subject to participate in God's revelation of self.

(2) The analogy used to understand how God is constitutive element of human subjectivity is that of formal causality. However, Rahner qualifies this analogy (semi-formal causality) so formal cause, strictly speaking, is immanent within the being).

(3) The work of this self-communication: God gives himself in such a way so that we can accept the gift. Without the Holy Spirit within us, the gift itself would be reduced to finiteness, if the gift were to be accepted. "In order to be able to accept God without reducing him in this acceptance to our finiteness, this acceptance must be borne by God himself."

D. Summary:

Two modes of God's self-communication: Grace and Incarnation

Subjectivity in Grace: (transcendental)

HS: universal divine self-communication

Objectivity in Grace: (categorical)

Christ: Incarnation

anthropologytheology

transcendentality.....grace
 (subjectivity)
categorical.....Incarnation
 (history,world) (Jesus Christ)
Primordial Mystery..... revealed in ...Mystery of Grace
 (Father)
Hidden Transcendent.....Mystery of Incarnation
 (Economic Trinity)

Faith is of the God of Absolute Mystery who is revealed in Grace and the Incarnation.

Comments by Ladaria on Rahner: That the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity is much discussed. It must not be understood to mean that the Trinity is *perfected* in the plan of salvation, given that God is perfect. Neither must it be understood in the sense that would hold that the Economic Trinity reveals all of the mystery of God.

4. Trinitarian Theology of Walter Kasper

A. Justification of basic principle of identification between economic Trinity and Immanent Trinity: Man's experience of salvation

1. Man's salvation can be nothing less than God himself (it cannot be a created gift distinct from God or a created grace); God's action through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit is therefore truly God's saving action only if in that saving action we are dealing with God Himself as he really is. The economic trinity has no meaning if it isn't the immanent Trinity. In the Christ event, there can't be some unilluminated residue of a *Deus absconditus* lurking behind the *Deus revelatus*. The *Deus absconditus* is the *Deus Revelatus*.

2. There is at least one truth of faith defining this identity of the economic and the immanent Trinity -- The Incarnation -- the hypostatic union. The false scholastic opinion was that any one of the three divine persons could have become incarnate. Rather, if we look at the Logos as the one who becomes incarnate -- he doesn't simply dwell in the man Jesus but he became man; the logos is the subject in which the humanity of Jesus subsists. The humanity is not merely an external garment but a REAL symbol of the Logos. The eternal fully discloses itself in and through the temporal in the person of Jesus Christ. If it is true self-communication by God, then it is fitting that the one who is the expression of God, the Logos, enters into that dialogue with humanity through Christ. Here, in the Incarnation, the immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity form a unity.

3. The salvation brought to us by the Son of God consists in our becoming sons and daughters of the Father through the Holy Spirit. God's self-communication is given to us today through the power of the Spirit that allows what is revealed to be effectively "revelation". In this, the Spirit has a distinct mission ad extra; it is not simply the "Godhead" that works in the created world. Here, the Spirit is the eschatological gift in which God's self-communication can be brought to a fullness. Because there is a personal indwelling of the Spirit in us, we are united to the Son and through Him we go to the Father. Our experience of being saved, in short, is a trinitarian experience.

B. Three misinterpretations of the axiom:

1. To strip the economic Trinity of its proper historical reality and to understand it as simply a temporal manifestation (mirroring) of the eternal and changeless immanent Trinity. We have to acknowledge that something new happens to God in the Incarnation. By virtue of

his becoming flesh, God has a new mode of being in the world. In spite of the classical axiom of God's immutability, the Incarnation does imply that God really does "become".

2. The opposite misinterpretation is to dissolve the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity of salvation History, as if the Trinity first came into existence in and through history. In other words, from all eternity, there were not real distinctions within the oneness of God, just the possibility of threeness which becomes real in history (Schoonenberg).

3. Another misinterpretation is to push the immanent Trinity from consideration and only to speak of the Trinity in the history of salvation (tendency of Kung); this deprives the economic trinity of all significance. It has meaning and significance only if God is present in the history of salvation as the one who He is from all eternity.

C. Kasper's understanding and re-statement of the axiom:

The axiom states the identity of the immanent and the economic trinity, but this identity must **not** be understood along the lines of a **tautology** (A=A). "IS" means not strict identification but, the non-deducible, free and gracious historical presence of the immanent Trinity in and through the economic Trinity. Kasper rephrases Rahner's axiom to read, "In the economic self-communication, the infra-Trinitarian self-communication is present in the world in a new way, namely, under the veil of historical words, signs and actions, and ultimately in the figure of the man of Jesus of Nazareth.

1. What needs to be maintained in expressing the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity is the character of **graciousness and freedom** in the divine decision of self-communication, kenosis.

2. To say that the infra-Trinitarian self-communication is present in the economic trinity is in some way to preserve the **apophatic** character of the immanent Trinity. We cannot deduce the immanent Trinity from the economic. (In the early Church, the affirmation of the immanent Trinity was made on the basis of the baptismal confession; a confession which was attributed to a direct command from the risen Lord to baptize all nations in that Trinitarian formula.)

II. The paschal mystery as a trinitarian event

A. Theology of Moltmann:

1. Overview:

a. The Fundamental basis of Moltmann's Trinitarian theology is the **Cross** and not any formulae. The Trinity is the hermeneutical principle with which one can interpret the cross. In this sense, he echoes Kant who said that concepts without images are blind. For Christians, the image of faith is the cross which what is necessary to understand it is the Trinity.

b. Paschal Mystery has two aspects: Resurrection and Cross

"Resurrection of God crucified and the Cross of Risen Christ"

c. Cross takes us beyond atheism (protest in the face of suffering) and theism (God is unable to suffer). In Jesus, God partakes in human suffering.

2. The Death of Jesus:

a. **Scriptural Witness:** In Jesus, God partakes of our suffering

1. Mk. 15:34: Cross = abandonment of Jesus

2. 2 Cor. 5:21: Jesus became sin for us. Point: Sin = abandonment

3. Rm. 8:32: Father “gave” over his Son for us. Point: Jesus dies with sense of separation from Father.

4. Gal. 2:20: Paul speaks of two givings:

a. From Father: emphasized by Moltmann

b. From the Son

Moltmann suggests that Father gave way to Son, The Cross is the abandonment that is mutual. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of communion that “fills” in the mutual abandonment.

The result is a **dialectical** approach: Cross seems to be both total abandonment and unity in the Spirit.

b.Moltmann’s three levels of interpretation of the death of Jesus: religious, political, theological

1. Religious Level: Blasphemy

The death of Jesus is a confrontation with Judaism. Jesus doesn’t die a martyr’s death but the death of a blasphemer -- as one rejected by that leadership.

2. Political Level: Power

In the confrontation with Pilate, there is the confrontation not only between two powers but also between two concepts of power (“You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them.... But it shall not be so among you; whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”) For the Christian, there is no power but only the charism authority exercised as a service.

3. Theological Level: Separation from God

In the cross is seen the separation of God from God -- a mutual abandonment of the Father and Son -- an abandonment that is bridged by God himself (Spirit). Here, Moltmann destroys the traditional philosophical understanding of a God who cannot suffer -- impassability. The shift is from a God who is a-pathos to a God who is pathos. God does suffer. The cross speaks not of the death “of” God but **death “in” God**. Not only is a traditional philosophical monotheism abandoned, but also presumes a different understanding of the Incarnation. We ought not conceive of the Incarnation so much in terms of God taking on human nature as God taking on human history. The actions of Christ are the actions of the God of history.

3. The mutual abandonment (the double paradidomai)

a. Perspective of Jesus:

Jesus proclaims a God who is near; yet this God does not save Jesus from death. “Jesus died without a word or a wink from God to reassure him that, whatever the gawking crowd might think, he knew that Jesus was not only innocent but valid where it mattered.” This God-forsakenness on the cross, this hell, this is separation from God which is what sin is. Yet, at the same time, the affirmation is made that God and forsakenness are no longer contradictions (as in traditional theism and atheism alike. The forsaken and the rejected can experience communion with God. [God was in Auschwitz because Auschwitz was in the crucified God.]) The obedience of the Son has an eschatological significance -- this obedience will have its final consummation in the ultimate surrender of the Kingdom to the Father.

b. Perspective of the Father:

What does the death of Jesus mean for the Father? Even the question shatters our concept of an impassible God, one who would be unaffected by the suffering of the just one.

The emptiness creates a space, as it were, that is filled with the Spirit. The life-giving spirit of love emerges from the obediential death of the Son and the grief of the Father.

c. Perspective of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit fills the forsaken with love and brings the dead alive.

4. Consequences for Moltmann's thought:

a. Good Points:

1. The Paschal Mystery is given a Trinitarian context,
2. The doctrine of the Trinity is no longer a matter of impractical speculation, but is a shorter version of the passion narrative; **If salvation is in God himself, then the drama of salvation where God-forsakenness is overcome in God demands a trinitarian understanding of God.** There is no suffering and death, no life and joy, which have not been integrated into God's history.

b. Critique:

1. There is too much emphasis upon the giving of the Father and not enough of the Son's giving of self. The point is that the Father does not throw the Son out but that the dynamic is within the Trinity.
2. Moltmann's process is not one of analogy but dialectic: God is known in terms of his opposite -- Godlessness, god-forsakenness. However, it seems that God is, in an almost Hegelian manner, entangled in the history of human kind, so that God's existence in and for himself (the immanent Trinity) can no longer be distinguished from the history of God's suffering in the world. **It seems that the dialectic with which Moltmann starts turns into an identity.**

B. Theology of Von Balthasar:

1. Overview: The drama of the paschal mystery is grounded in the **eternal** trinitarian drama of the divine life (i.e., the historical drama of the cross, which is the drama of God's involvement in the world presupposes an eternal drama in the inter-trinitarian life).

Like Moltmann, von Balthasar sees the cross as the separation of Father and Son, a dramatic caesura that has already been embraced in the eternity of the Trinitarian life. From eternity, the Father has given himself away to the Son, has risked his being on the Son, and from eternity the Son has been an obediential "yes" to the Father. The separation is bridged over by the Holy Spirit.

2. Dynamic View of Immanent Trinity: drama of love

The inner-Trinitarian drama is the reciprocal offer of love of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the fruit of the love between them. Thus, in the immanent Trinity there is the mystery of separation between Father and Son and union in the Holy Spirit

"Che Dio come Padre possa donarsi, che il Figlio riceva il suo essere non voltanto come prestato ma anche lo possieda possanti, all'essere del Padre affermala una separazione incompresibile e inseperabile do Dio se stesso, cosi che ogni altra seperazione ande la gia oscura e la piu ancora puo avvenire soltanto fra questa seperazione divine."

3. Meaning of Good Friday/ Holy Saturday:

Two aspects of death: active and passive

1. **Active** element: Death is seen as the final choice, the act by which I freely render the project of my life complete (Do I kick and scream? Do I surrender? The choice is mine). For

Jesus, this active aspect of his death involves the surrender of his life into the hands of his Father. This in turn becomes the data for our theological understanding of **Good Friday**.

2. **Passive** element: Death is the ultimate threat of annihilation, the threat of non-being. From a religious perspective, this aspect of death takes the expression of the utter absence of God, that is, hell. This becomes the data for our understanding **Holy Saturday**.

4. **Meaning of the descent into hell.**

For von Balthasar, the descent into hell is not the victorious liberation of souls but reflects the ultimate identification of Jesus in his journey -- that he identifies himself with the utter alienation from God that is represented by Hell.

a. Jesus defines Hell --the meaning of hell is determined from Christ's death on the cross -- in the OT, there was hope of light, and so no real hell. In the cross, all light has been cast away and there was only darkness. Jesus suffered that aloneness so that none of us are destined to suffer that isolation. And even here, God who will respect the human freedom of the human "no" overcomes the human no. The sinner no longer finds himself ultimately alone but in the company of the God-forsaken Son of God.)

b. Here, von Balthasar takes seriously the Pauline statement that Christ who knew no sin became sin. He identifies with our powerlessness as sinners. Jesus fully identifies with human weakness caused by sin **but by doing so freely he transforms sin into love**. Of course, at the moment of intense separation from the Father is also the moment of intense union, through the Spirit which binds Father and Son together.

III. Analysis of the notion of "person" in Trinitarian theology.

A. Early classical theology:

Metaphysical Idea of Person: Distinctness of three/Objectivity of each person

The two major issues faced in Trinitarian and Christological controversy -- **subordinationism** and **modalism**. How are we to understand the equality of the Son and Spirit with the Father while at the same time affirming that they are not merely "modes" of being God?

1. Nicea resolves subordinationism with **ousia**. However, some interpreted ousia in modalistic ways.

2. In order to preserve consubstantiality and yet remove modalism, the Cappadocians were the first to make the distinction between: **one ousia** ("substance") **and three hypostases** ("person" or better said: an objective presentation of divinity; a real objective distinction between persons). However, the foundation for the distinction of each hypostasis was not clearly spelled out in terms of "relation."

3. The notion of "**prosopon**" in the Greek had the connotation of role (disguise, mask); Justin used the word "prosopon" to speak of the dialogue roles carried on in the OT between the prophets and the divine Logos. Justin points out that the "role" is not just a mere literary device, but signified the real person of the Logos.

4. In the West, Tertullian inherits this prosopographic interpretation of the OT. The roles of the Son and Spirit are present in the OT. Tertullian had used the word "persona" to describe the distinctness of the Three -- "**una substantia, tres personae**."

5. Augustine, not wanting to translate the word hypostasis as "substantia" chooses the word "person" (without a definition of what person meant).. Augustine introduces the notion of "**relation**" as the element of distinctness among persons: "In Deo, nihil secundum accidens

dicitur, sed secundum substantiam aut secundum relationem.” Despite the philosophical language, the terms are not divorced from Scripture but help deepen our understanding of the Scriptures. Thus, “The Son, by himself, can do nothing.” Why? His personhood is pure relativity.

B. Medieval tradition:

1. Boethius: In the light of Christology, Boethius defines person as an **individual substance of a rational nature** (i.e., emphasis is on individual). While person is identified with individuality, the category of “person” so defined as a rational subsistent individual belongs more properly to substance.

2. Richard of St. Victor augments Boethius by adding the concept of “relation”. Person is an **“incommunicable existence of an intellectual nature”**. “Ex-sistere: sistere carries the connotation of Boethius ‘substantiality (it is a “this” and not a “that”). Ex indicates the relationship of origin by which the person is constituted .

3 . Aquinas, appeals to the tradition of Boethius (emphasis on substantiality) but accents relations. Aquinas defines the three persons in the Trinity as **subsistent relations**. Each person is subsistent in the Godhead, identical with the divine substance; however, one can only define each person in reference to its relation to the others.

a. Divine Persons: Identical in Divine Substance/Distinct due to real relationship

b. Four relations:

1. generated
2. being generated
3. active spiration
4. passive spiration

C. The problem posed by modern philosophy:

a. Cartesian “turn to the subject:

1. Person is characterized by self-consciousness -- **an autonomous center of conscious intellect disposing of and defining itself in freedom**. The shift in emphasis then is from the “objective” to the “subjective” order.

2. Related to this is the notion of man as **relational**. This will undergird the modern theological push to interpret the Trinity in communitarian terms.

Danger: If we bring this understanding of person unreflectively into our theological speculation, we will be led to a tritheism.

b. Summary of Modern Shift:

1. **Classical: Person is defined in Ontological way**
2. **Modern: Person = subjectivity. Person is a subjective center of knowledge and will; as auto-conoscenza.**

D. Preserving the classical model: Focus on unity and indivisible consciousness.

It is clearly the Christian tradition that there is one consciousness in God, flowing from the belief that God is the infinite plenitude of Being. Barth and Rahner try to preserve this with the following constructs.

1. Karl Barth: “Three modes of being in God”

Rather than speak of three “persons” in God, one might speak of “three modes of being” in God. Barth asserts that this formulation does not attempt to answer the question “how”, for

the whole inner life of God in his interpersonal relations is always numinous. His attempt is merely to remove the philosophical and linguistic confusion.

2. Karl Rahner: “Three distinct (*real*) manners of subsisting”.

Philosophical anthropology: human subjectivity is a process of self-transcendence; as a drive toward the Infinite, finite subjectivity is implicitly aware of God as boundless horizon in every act of knowing and willing. Whereas finite subjectivity is a self-consciousness conditioned by the world, God is an infinite self-consciousness, immediately present to Himself without mediation of other(s). This absolute subjectivity (the Divine “I”) exists in a three-fold way (“three distinct manners of subsisting -- cf. Trinity . p . 109 .)

3 . Evaluation of this approach:

a. Does replacing person with the term “mode of being” or “manner of subsisting” make trinitarian faith more easily graspable on the kerygmatic/pastoral level?

b. Certainly Barth and Rahner are not modalists (both insist on the identity of the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity. God is not pure monad within himself while being triadic towards us); however, must we say that the ultimate principle is unity? Dare we speak of multiplicity (and here, community) as the ultimate principle?

c. Is this nothing more than the triumph of modern idealism, substituting for the personal God of revelation the absolute subjectivity of Hegelian philosophy?

d. Moltmann’s critique: the concept of the absolute subject leads to a repressive form of monarchianism. The I-Thou of the God-man relationship degenerates into a kind of master-slave relation. God is sovereign Lord. The stage is set for the problems addressed by modern philosophy of religion, namely human freedom and divine freedom. But, if we see God within a communitarian analogy, then the interpersonal relations within God grounds all other interpersonal relations.

4. Von Balthasar: Trinity as Community:

a. VonBalthasar, like Muhlen, uses the analogy with the human experience of fruitfulness (i.e., marriage and children). “In this sense, the child can be seen as an image of the Holy Spirit, the We of the ever-greater fruitfulness of the love of the Father and the Son.” (O’Donnell, 31).

b. Trinity = community of love. Aquinas says first that the process within the Trinity is intellectual. Von Balthasar says that all three processions are of love.

c. J. Moltmann holds that there are three subjects in the Trinity. The unity is in the pericoresis. The danger is tri-theism.

Summary: The danger of Rahner/Barth..... modalism

The danger of vonBalthasar/Moltmann.....tritheism

E. A via media between monadic consciousness and tritheism:

Distinction between essential and personal acts within the Trinity. (Kasper/Bourassa)

1. God is one, monos, simple and indivisible. We cannot speak of three acts of consciousness in God.

2. Christian faith wants to show that this unity is not incompatible with plurality. Each person is the one entire God. If we speak of three “subjects”, they must in some way share the same divine conscious life.

3. **In the Trinity we are dealing with three subjects who are reciprocally conscious of each other by reason of one and the same consciousness which the three subjects**

“possess” each in his own proper way.” What is preserved here is Rahner’s notion that personhood is constituted by self-awareness.

[NB: when there is one shared divine consciousness or “self” shared in three distinct but related ways, there is a far less chance of one falling into tritheism.]

4. Bourassa’s distinction of **essential and personal consciousness**:

a. Each person is conscious of himself in the full plenitude of divinity (essential consciousness)

b. Each person is conscious of himself as distinct from the other persons (personal consciousness).

c. At the same time, each person’s consciousness of self is a total and reciprocal communication.

F. O’Donnell’s Observations: “The Trinity as Divine Community”

(based on Bourassa and Hill)

1. Two tenets of faith must be preserved:

a. God as the infinite plenitude of being

b. Divine Persons defined as subsistent relations

2. Starting point: analogous understanding of the human person

There is a difference between humans, who are many subjects who **share** one nature and God who is three persons who **are** one nature.

3. Result: Can speak of Trinity as a divine community in which each person is fully conscious of his identity and exists in total and reciprocal communion with the other persons.

4. Summary: “Thus in God there is only one self which is identical with the divine being. The “I am” of God is the infinite plenitude of being; the “I am” of God is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* as such. Here there is only one knowledge, one will and one consciousness in God. But God’s knowledge, love and consciousness of self must not be understood in a monadic fashion. Rather, as Hill expresses it, there are three who are conscious by way of one essential consciousness, constituting a divine reciprocity that is an interpersonal and intersubjective unity. Thus, in an analogous way, we may speak of three centers of consciousness of God, in the sense that the Father knows himself to be Father, to be the Begetter of the Word; the Son knows himself to be Son, to be the one uttered; the Spirit knows himself to be the Spirit, to be the bond of communion between the Father and the Son. Thus each of the divine persons is aware of being himself, distinct from the other persons and in relation to the other persons. At the same time, each person is conscious of being the one God. Relations, then, provides the key to the divine community.”

IV. Vestigium Trinitatis

A. Psychological model of the Trinity in the writings of Augustine:

1. Man is made in the image of God; the image of God is something which is not even effaced by original Sin. Augustine’s seeking vestiges of the Trinity in the soul is not merely to provide an illustration of three-in-one-ness: rather, in **self-contemplation** (through the illumination of grace), one can begin the ascent from self-knowledge to knowledge of the Creator.

2. Throughout the second half of *De Trinitate*, Augustine examines several such vestiges of the Trinity in *ratio superiore*; moves from “Lover, Beloved, Love itself” to Memory of self,

Knowledge of self, Love of self (*memoria sui, intelligentia sui, amor sui*; the highest exercise of these faculties and therefore the highest trinitarian vestige is memory, knowledge and love of God, i.e. *Confessions*). The self is the same (corresponding to the Divine substance); *memoria sui* is the prehensive grasp of self which comes to full articulation in self-understanding; it is the will that brings the intellect to bear upon the memory in the process of self-articulation. Of course, the analogy breaks down when one considers that in the human process, memory of self precedes knowledge of self; in God, the divine processions are not in time.

3. Critique: Some like Barth will accuse Augustine's analogy as being too rationalistic -- reducing the mystery to human analogy. However, in fairness to Augustine, the *vestigia* are only explored in the second half of *de Trinitate*; the first half concerns the revelation concerning the trinity. (Augustine: *Crede ut intellegas* -- believe that you may understand. One does theology only within the faith context!) Others say that the psychological image is too individualistic, making God into a supreme "Ego".

B. The Trinity as "Community of Persons":

1. Joseph Bracken (& Gelpi): vestigia trinitatis in the social order.

"The nature or essence of God is to be an interpersonal process, i.e. a community of three divine persons who are *constantly growing* in knowledge and love of one another and who are thus themselves in *process* even as they constitute the divine community as a specifically social process." A Person = personally ordered society and the Trinity is the Society of societies.

a.-Are we tritheists? ontology according to these rules:

(1) to be is to be in process.

(2) to be is to be relational. Persons-in-community is the first category of being, not "substance"; in other words, the unity of community is a genuine ontological category, higher than the category of substance. Unity in community is not just a metaphor.

KEY: Unity of Trinity is affirmed in the perichoresis and not in the indivisible divine substance.

b. What are the members of the Trinity considered as individual persons apart from their reality as a community? It's a false question: you cannot consider the Father apart from the community; the persons together are the community and there is no community apart from the persons. As St. Thomas says, Person, has no reality proper to itself over and above the divine nature.

c. There are three consciousnesses in the Trinity and therefore three freedoms -- but a perfect harmony and correspondence among them.

2. Jurgen Moltmann (& Boff) : reverses Augustine's methodology:

Rather than proceeding from unity to plurality, he proceeds from plurality (our experience in salvation history) to unity. He sees God in terms of a divine community which frees us from egoism to create genuine human community of liberation. The goal is to realize fellowship (i.e. true freedom = fellowship in community and Lordship over all).

a. Like Bracken, to be a person is to be in relation -- the classic concept of perichoresis; the mutual indwelling of the three persons.

b. Persons do not first exist in themselves and then enter into community (leading us logically to tritheism). Rather, the persons are their relationships and without the relationships there are no persons.

Divine Person = perichoresis. Tritheism is denied because person is relational.

c. Danger: The Trinity is dissolved into history; the unity of one divine substance is weakened; the prophetic critique rests with the message of Jesus.

3. Evaluation:

A communitarian understanding of the Trinity gives theological impetus to the human drive to create that kind of community in the social order. As for Augustine, the discovery of the imago Dei within was not merely for the purpose of understanding the Trinity by analogy, but rather to allow the reality to perfect the image, enabling the soul to ascend to God. Finding the image against the prototype, perfecting human communities according to the prototype of the Trinitarian life.

A. The Intradivine Processions within Trinitarian Theology (M. Hunt)

“... When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me...”

John 15:26

I. Nature of Procession (Trinitarian)

A. ad intra

1. immanent life of the Trinity
2. two processions
 - a. procession of the Son from the Father
 - b. procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son
3. eternal
 - a. no categories of spatial or temporal succession
 - b. “an eternal active reality of immense power, inexhaustible fullness of life, and yet profound interiority and response.” (Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 279)

B. ad extra

1. movement ‘outside’ of the Trinity
2. Missions (subject of *Theme Six*)

II. Procession of the Son from the Father

A. Procession in terms of generation

1. to;n ejk tou` patro;” gennhqvnta pro; pavntwn tw`n aijwvwnwn [Council of Constantinople (381)]
2. generation - the Son as being before all ages, timeless and beginningless
3. therefore, not created

III. Procession of the Holy Spirit

A. Procession in terms of spiration

1. ec-stacy of love

B. Procession from

1. the Father and the Son (Western, eg. St. Augustine and St. Thomas)

- a. knowing and willing as the model
 - b. fullness of knowledge of self
 - c. *willingness* to give completely to each
 - d. power that moves and impels
 - e. “When we wish to express the intimacy of union between two persons, we say that they are of one spirit, or even that they are one spirit.” (Scheeben)
2. the Father (Eastern, eg. St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John of Damascus)
- a. spoken word as the model
 - b. spoken word is intelligible breath
 - c. Spirit proceeds from the Father
 - d. communicated through the Son
 - e. received by every creature

IV. Procession as Basis for Relation

A. Fatherhood

- 1. proper to the Father

B. Sonship

- 1. proper to the Son

C. Active Spiration

- 1. proper to the Father and the Son

D. Passive Spiration

- 1. proper to the Spirit

Relations form the basis for naming each person of the Trinity.

V. Bibliography

The Bibliography for this theme and the following theme are essentially the same, given the nature of the themes. Hence, the Bibliography is presented at the conclusion of *Theme Six*.

B. The Missions of the Divine Persons (M. Hunt)

I. Divine Mission (General)

A. Goal of the Divine Missions

- 1. presence of the Son in the world
- 2. presence of the Spirit in the world

B. Origin of the Divine Missions

- 1. ‘dependence’ upon the Father (not in a subordinationist sense)
- 2. “... temporal prolongations of the eternal processions, and as the introduction of their products into the creature.” (Scheeben, 147)

C. Nature of the Mission

- 1. dynamic and living within the human person

II. Mission of the Son

A. Sending of the Son by the Father

1. visible in the Incarnation
2. revealer of the Father
3. Savior
4. impress of light (divine image) by the Son

III. Mission of the Holy Spirit

A. Sending of the Spirit by the Father and Son

1. visible in the experience (Congar) or effects of charity in the human person
2. seal of love by the Holy Spirit

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