

THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE

The Irish School of Ecumenics

THEOLOGY OF DIALOGUE:  
TRINITARIAN APPROACH

by

George Zavershinsky

This dissertation has been submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Ecumenical Studies)

University of Dublin

September 2008

## DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of PhD (Ecumenical Studies), has not been submitted at any other University, and that is entirely my own work. I agree that the Library may lend or copy the dissertation upon request.

Signed .....

George Zavershinsky

Date .....

## SUMMARY

The work introduces dialogue as a mode of human being that had initially been presented by Buber and his followers from a very human perspective. People always exist personally, in a dialogical realm which was viewed by Buber through the prism of the word pair “*I and Thou*” and later rediscovered ethically by Levinas as “*I for Thou*”. The above human approach to dialogue is complemented with a sort of theological dimension, which, though not absent from the work of Buber and Levinas, had, strictly speaking, never been viewed from the perspective of Christian Trinitarian theology. This is the context in which the term “theology of dialogue” has been developed in the current work.

The *first chapter* of this work is dedicated to the concept of *relation*, as it lies naturally implicit within the whole of creation. Once started with the different kinds of relationship identified by Aristotle we went on to consider the Trinitarian trace which runs through creation, ordering it in accord with God’s plan.

The *second chapter* presents dialogue from the perspective of the philosophical thought of Buber and Levinas. The key terms “*I and Thou*,” “*eternal Thou*,” “*in-born Thou*,” and *true or confirmed dialogue* were introduced in accordance with their original meanings provided by Buber.

In chapters *three* and *four*, a special attention is paid to the writers of the Church. There is an effort to learn dialogue while pursuing the dialogical development of Trinitarian thought throughout the epoch when the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople was formed. A major result gained within the context of the fight against heretical propositions, was that the true human-divine dialogue could be seen to reflect the relations of the Trinity itself insofar as they could be realized within the creation.

In *chapter four* we turn to practical issues while speaking of dialogue in the liturgical context and in the context of interreligious human relations. *True dialogue* was

considered to be based on love and to be central to the Liturgy as a point of intersection of inter-human and human-divine relations.

Trinitarian theology is a subject that has been highly developed and re-examined thoroughly in the thesis on the basis of an already well-established permanent foundation. Both the Holy Scripture and the writings of the Fathers were presented as the solid starting point for any further thought on the Trinity in its particular dialogical dimension. The aim was to present the Trinity as an ultimate and eternal source of the relations in the world such as they ought to be. Such relations were considered to be *true dialogue*, i.e. dialogue that has been truly established and confirmed by the “eternal *Thou*” of God. The patristic confession helps us develop our Trinitarian approach to understanding dialogue, notably when Gregory of Nazianzus says that “singularity is moved to duality and rests at trinity”. We see that, in his view, duality is not a balanced state and, since singularity is to be ‘moved into duality’, trinity appears as the very perfection at which the former two, singularity and duality, have to arrive. Similarly, when monologue is turned into dialogue, the latter becomes perfect or true if it is confirmed by the third party involved. Paraphrasing, one could say that “monologue is moved to dialogue and rests at *true dialogue*”.

In its pure state, Orthodox Trinitarian theology would be of great help in attaining the above aim. While endeavouring properly to interpret the mystery of the Trinity to their contemporaries and to subsequent generations, it is believed that the Fathers of the Church were contemplating revelation rather than pursuing their own human thought. This way of thinking might in itself be seen as a sort of *true dialogue* as understood above. Following the dialogical thought of the Fathers and of Scripture, this approach enabled us to avoid external and rational considerations but instead to examine the subject in agreement both with the initial thought of Buber and with those who have written on the Trinity. Thus one would be able to *speak of dialogue in a dialogical way*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express deep appreciation to my advisor, Professor John D'Arcy May. Not only have his courses given me a vision for the ecumenical nature of theology but he has also helped me see how the discipline of ecumenics can and should serve the Church. I am grateful for his wisdom, encouragement and careful eye for detail throughout the process of developing this dissertation. I also want to thank Dr. Andrew Pierce and Dr. Geraldine Smyth for their support and attention to the research. I am very grateful to Anastasia Heath and Peter Brooke whose revision of the text has helped me a great deal to improve the presentation of the thesis.

I want to thank the friends, both inside and outside of the ISE, and my congregation who gave the encouragement I needed to tackle this work. And I would like to say the final thanks to my family, my wife and daughter, who allowed me to finish this work exactly in time.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| DECLARATION.....   | 2   |
| SUMMARY.....   | 3   |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....  | 5   |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS.....   | 6   |
| <br>   |     |
| 1. TRINITY – SOURCE FOR DIALOGUE.....                          | 8   |
| 1.1. Relations and the Trinitarian ‘trace’.....                | 10  |
| 1.1.1. Relations.....  | 10  |
| 1.1.2. The Trinitarian ‘trace’ and the divine energies.....    | 17  |
| 1.1.2.1. Western view.....                                     | 17  |
| 1.1.2.2. Orthodox view.....                                    | 22  |
| 1.2. Relations within the impersonal universe.....             | 28  |
| 1.3. Human relations with the universe.....                    | 36  |
| 1.4. Interpersonal relations.....                              | 41  |
| <br>   |     |
| 2. DIALOGUE AS A MODE OF BEING OF A PERSON.....                | 48  |
| 2.1. Practicing life of dialogue (Martin Buber).....           | 48  |
| 2.2. Buber and Christianity.....                               | 65  |
| 2.3. Rediscovering Buberian dialogue in Christianity.....      | 81  |
| 2.4. Buber and Levinas on ethics of dialogue.....              | 94  |
| 2.5. The principle of person as a basis for true dialogue..... | 106 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 3. TRINITY – WAY TO DIALOGUE.....                                | 125 |
| 3.1. Learning dialogue from the Scriptures.....                  | 127 |
| 3.1.1. Dialogue in the Old Testament.....                        | 127 |
| 3.1.2. Wisdom of God.....  | 137 |
| 3.1.3. Father-Son dialogue in the New Testament.....             | 151 |
| 3.1.3.1. Sonship in the Bible.....                               | 153 |
| 3.1.3.2. Jesus’ eternal Sonship.....                             | 157 |
| 3.1.3.3. Confirmative actions of the Spirit.....                 | 168 |
| 3.2. Learning dialogue from the Nicene-Constantinople faith..... | 181 |
| 3.2.1. The way to Nicaea.....                                    | 184 |
| 3.2.2. From Nicaea to Constantinople.....                        | 206 |
| <br>   |     |
| 4. LITURGY – DIALOGUE OF LOVE.....                               | 238 |
| 4.1. Towards Liturgy as true dialogue.....                       | 239 |
| 4.2. St. Maximus the Confessor on love.....                      | 247 |
| 4.2.1. St. Maximus and Chalcedonian Christology.....             | 248 |
| 4.2.2. True dialogue of love.....                                | 252 |
| 4.3. Inter-religious dialogue.....                               | 256 |
| <br>   |     |
| 5. CONCLUSION.....   | 270 |
| <br>   |     |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY.....  | 278 |

## 1. TRINITY – SOURCE FOR DIALOGUE

The word “God” defines not an objective concept but a personal relation. By encouraging a relationship rather than understanding a concept we know God. The relation constitutes the very existence. It does not suggest separation and distance but reconciliation and dialogue. It is by being wholly transformed into relation that our life is transformed into life.

We participate in existence consciously and rationally, because the erotic drive of our nature is transformed into a personal relation when there arises in the space of the Other the first signifier of desire: the maternal presence. The subject is born with love’s first leap of joy.<sup>1</sup>

The word ‘relation’ is used inevitably when speaking in theological terms of a Trinitarian approach. In the beginning of the world there is a Trinity-like relation established between God and His creation. The only way to relate to God personally is to be a person like Him. Then there is a man created in His image and likeness. “He who created human beings in order to make them share in his own fullness so disposed their nature that it contains the principle of all that is good, and each of these dispositions draws them to desire the corresponding divine attribute.”<sup>2</sup> God could not have deprived man of the best and most precious of his attributes – those that refer to His personal inner relations.

Since there is a similarity in the way the things of the world are observed by God and by man the relationship between them provides an appropriate means by which we can come to know God through His creation. Although the immediacy of that relationship has been interrupted by the effects of the original sin, there is

---

<sup>1</sup> Yannaras, Christos. *Variations on the Song of Songs*. Trans. by Norman Russell. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory of Nyssa. *Catechetical Orations*, 5 (PG 45,24). As cited in Clément, Olivier. *The Roots of Christian Mysticism. Texts from the Patristic Era with Commentary*. Trans. by Theodore Berkeley. London: New City, 2002, p. 81.

still a possibility of renewing it and therefore a potential for reconciliation. The relations of the inner life of God - the Trinity - are not changed in the process of creation, either before or after. Actually this is the thing God wants man to participate in and share with Him. The Trinitarian relations are in themselves of a personal character, since the Father relates to the Son in the witness of the Holy Spirit. The personhood of the Father is a source of the relation whereas the personhood of the Son is a subject of it. The personhood of the Holy Spirit is a function of the relation between the Father and the Son. There is no time and place when and where the relation is interrupted. It is beyond time and space. But a time and a place in which participation in the divine relations becomes possible came into existence with the creation. The creation itself took place in order that an image of the Trinitarian relations should be revealed. In the abundance of His goodness God has made the world by His Word and vivifies it by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the life of the world is affected in some way by the personal relations in the Trinity and one may reasonably seek for a certain vestige of those relations within the different relational patterns peculiar to both personal and impersonal natures in the world.

Objections have been raised to the very idea of such a *vestigium trinitatis* (vestige of the Trinity or Trinitarian 'trace') within the universe. Karl Barth, for example, would reject any possibility of divine disclosure beyond the Word of God addressing us in Jesus Christ. For Barth a *vestigium* would be a creature illegitimately being used as a cosmological or anthropological basis for revelation:

The concern here was with an essential trinitarian disposition supposedly immanent in some created realities <...>. It was with a genuine *analogia entis*, with traces of the trinitarian Creator God in being as such, in its pure createdness.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Volume I, Part 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Trans. G. W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, p. 334.

If, however, we do not share such an outright rejection of the very possibility either of an *analogia entis* or of some knowledge of God beyond the Christian revelation, then the question still has to be posed of what the uncreated *vestigia* might signify.<sup>4</sup> We will later come to compare an idea of *vestigia trinitatis* with the patristic idea that the uncreated energies of God act within the created universe and relate to it according to God's providence. Those relations that interest us will be introduced in the following section before we go on to discuss the patristic doctrine of the uncreated energies and how they are to be distinguished from the essence of God.

## 1.1. Relations and the Trinitarian 'trace'.

### 1.1.1. Relations.

Relation is one of the ten Aristotelian categories and one of the four categories of being of Stoic philosophy. To denote relation Aristotle generally uses the term *pros ti* and the Stoics – *schesis*. Aristotle reserves the term *pros ti* for denoting relative terms – that is, things which stand in certain relationships. Instead, referring to relations themselves the Stoics speak particularly of man's relations to other men, to God, and to objects. Plutarch attributes to Zeno the view that "virtue is one, and only differs in its relations (*scheseis*) to things according to its actions."<sup>5</sup>

In the patristic era the category of relation occupied a central place in the fight against iconoclasm during the eighth and ninth centuries. It had become vitally important at the time to clarify the exact relationship between the icon and its prototype, and between the 'beholder-and-venerator' of an icon and the icon itself. The notion of relation also plays an important role in patristic discussions of man's relation to God, to our fellow men, to material things and secular values.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ipgrave, Michael. *Trinity and Inter Faith Dialogue. Plenitude and Plurality*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2003, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Pearson, A. C. *The Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes*. London, 1891, pp. 173-174. As cited in Cavarnos, Constantine. *The Hellenic-Christian Philosophical Tradition*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1989, p. 77.

The preferred term in patristic works is the Stoic *schesis*, not Aristotle's *pros ti*. The Fathers who authored special chapters on the category of relation, such as John Damascene and Photios the Great, tend to use Aristotle's expression *pros ti* for denoting a relative term, such as "master" and "slave," and *schesis* in referring to relations themselves, such as "master of" and "slave of."<sup>6</sup>

When using the term *schesis* the Greek Fathers paid more attention to the psychical relations and their binding character. Their most significant contributions can be found in their application of the notion of *schesis* to the moral and spiritual life. Besides a mere awareness of the existence of things or persons there is also an emotional or volitional human attitude towards such objects as money, material possessions, human glory, as well as persons. A binding relation begins as an interest in a thing. When this interest, called *prospatheia* ("feeling towards"), becomes strong, the relation to the thing is called *empatheia* (from *en* – in, and *pathos* – passion), and the particular emotion involved is called a "passion." It has become a strong emotional identification with a person or thing. Then the relation (*schesis*) appears to be a sort of bondage or enslavement. The Greek Fathers teach the need of freeing oneself from such enslaving relations.<sup>7</sup>

In the field of the Trinitarian relations, there is an absolute freedom from any subjection. While speaking about "the Son of the Father" or "the Spirit of the Father" the term *schesis* might be in use, but never in a sense of bondage. The term *pros ti* is more appropriate since it is less associated with the idea of subordination. It may have contributed to the formation of the word *prosopon* (person) and when it is used to denote the relations between the Persons of the Holy Trinity it excludes any notion of subordination.

The relation (*pros ti* or *ad aliquid*) in the thought of Aristotle-Aquinas is twofold: *real* and *of reason*. Real relation is the order in things themselves. Thus, for exam-

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

ple, an effect is related to the cause on which it depends, a part to the whole, potency to act, and an act to its object. A relation of reason is an order that results from mental contemplation as, for example, the order of the predicate to the subject, and of species to genus. Real relation can be ‘transcendental,’ or it can be ‘essential,’ or ‘predicamental,’ as, for example, the relation of essence to existence and matter to form, or the relation of faculties, habits, and acts to the specific object.

Real relations are divided into *transcendental* and *predicamental*. A transcendental relation is of an order that is included in the essence of a thing as, for example, the soul’s relation to the body, that of matter to form, essence to being, an accident to its subject, a science to its object, etc. All these things have these relations by their very essence, and the transcendental relation lies *perdue* even when the term disappears. Thus a separated soul continues to be individuated by its relation to the body, which is to rise again. It is called transcendental because it transcends the particular predicament of relation and is found also in other categories, for example, in substance and quality – indeed there is scarcely anything that is not ordered to something else by its nature.

Predicamental relation, which is also called relation according to being (*secundum esse*), is defined by Aristotle as a real accident whose whole being is ordered to something else. This relation is not included in the essence of the thing, but it comes to the essence as an accident. It is pure order, only existing in reference to a term, as, for example, paternity, filiation, the equality of two quantities, likeness.

The real existence of these relations is certain, for, antecedent to any consideration of the mind and independent of anyone’s thoughts on the matter, two white things are really alike and this man is really the father of another. On the contrary, the relation of the predicate to the subject in a sentence is a relation of

reason, which does not exist until after the consideration of the mind, and as the result of the mind's activity.

The predicamental relation requires a real basis in the subject and a real terminus really distinct from this basis in the subject. This relation does not lie *perdue* after the terminus disappears, and this is how it differs from the transcendental relation. The basis of the predicamental relation is the reason for the reference or ordering. Thus, in the relation of paternity, the man who begets a son is the subject, the son is the terminus, to whom the father refers; the basis of the relation is generation since the reason why the father is referred to the son is the fact that he begot him.

Trinitarian relations in Aristotelian terms would seem to be of the predicamental character as, in the relations Father-Son, Father-Spirit, there is a real basis in the subject and a real terminus really distinct from this basis in the subject. However if one does not follow the doctrine of the *Filioque* – that is, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father – then the relation Son-Spirit does not seem to be of the same character as the two others. There is no real terminus in the relation Son-Spirit when the *Filioque* is rejected. All that can be said about this relation is that it has its origin within the relations of both Persons with the Father. This symmetrical principle of the monarchy of the Father imposes from the start an understanding of the triadic relations which is beyond what can be established by a rational logic. There is no genuinely Trinitarian relation if the third party is excluded. Therefore, any relational movement that starts from the Father must return to Him eternally in agreement with the Son and with the Spirit. The Father is both subject and terminus of the relations of the Trinity whereas the begetting or the procession is simply the basis in the subject of the relations Father-Son and Father-Spirit, respectively. However, such triadic-like relations, in which a third party cannot under any circumstances whatsoever be excluded, do not fit the Aristotelian

scheme. The Trinitarian relation requires completion. It starts from within the Father as a source, it involves the Son as begotten from the Father, and comes back in the Spirit as processing from the Father. There is in the Trinitarian relations a complete relational plenitude.

The *Filioque* gives a different interpretation to the triadic relations. It agrees with the Aristotelian definition of the predicamental relation. A third party is not an essential part of such a definition. So difficulties might arise about the role of the Father in the Son-Spirit relation or the Spirit in the Father-Son relation or the Son in the Father-Spirit one. The relation Father-Son, for example, is complete in itself without involving the Spirit Who is processing from the Son and from the Father likewise. The Father-Spirit and Son-Spirit relations look the same in their basis and in their terminus. This may introduce a certain vagueness into the Father-Son relation as both its subject and terminus appear as subjects in the other relations which complete the Trinity. It also introduces *an excess* into the “closed system” of these relations.

Within the Holy Trinity the Trinitarian relations must be self sufficient. God has made the world freely, under no kind of constraint, according to His goodness, and He wills that the world should know Him through Trinity-like relations. He relates to the world through His energies, or uncreated light, of which we will talk below. “All that we say positively (*kataphatikos*) of God manifests not His nature but the things about His nature”.<sup>8</sup> St John Damascene takes up this thought of Gregory Nazianzen and renders it more precise, using expressive images of ‘movement’ (*kinesis*) or of the ‘rush of God’ (*exalma Theu*) in de-

---

<sup>8</sup> Gregory Nazianzen. *In Theophaniam*, Oratio XXXVIII, 7, P.G. XXXVI, 317. As cited in Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Trans. from the French, first published in English in 1957. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002, p. 73.

scribing the divine energies.<sup>9</sup> The Fathers apply to the energies the name of ‘rays of divinity’, penetrating the created universe.<sup>10</sup>

The word ‘energy’ is derived from Aristotle’s term *energeia* which is usually rendered in English translations of Aristotle as ‘actuality’ or ‘activity.’<sup>11</sup> In Aristotle’s philosophy *energeia* is identical with form or determinate structure. *Energeia* is the opposite of *dynamis* or ‘potentiality,’ which is identified by Aristotle with ultimate matter, matter devoid of definite structure. Aristotle conceives God as pure form without any matter or potentiality, in other words, as *energeia*, pure actuality. He makes no distinction between God’s essence and His energy. However, there is a clear distinction between these two in the Greek Patristic writings. This distinction was particularly emphasized in the fourteenth century by St. Gregory Palamas and his followers, in opposition to the view of a Latinizing faction led by the monk Barlaam. For Barlaam, who followed the western philosophers and theologians, a real distinction between the essence of God and His energy or energies was inconceivable. In this they were faithful to Aristotle, regarding him as the infallible philosopher. Palamas and the other hesychasts, on the basis of their own experience, and in agreement with the Fathers such as Denis the Areopagite, Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, asserted that although the essence of God is beyond the powers of the human mind to grasp, contemplate, or participate in, God’s uncreated, eternal energies can be contemplated and participated in as ineffable, suprasensible light – God’s glory, experienced as Divine grace. Instead, Barlaam and his followers held that these energies are created, subjective phenomena (*phantasm*) produced in the human mind.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> John Damascene. *De fide orthodoxa*, I, 14, P.G., XCIV, 860 B. As cited in *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> E.g., in *Metaphysics*, XII. 1072a5-33, 1072b 15-31.

<sup>12</sup> Cavarnos, Constantine. *The Hellenic-Christian Philosophical Tradition*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1989, p. 47.

If the uncreated status of the divine energies acting within the world is not acknowledged, then the above mentioned element of *excess* within the divine relations becomes the only means by which the world can relate to God. So when we study the Orthodox distinction between the divine essence and energies, we find that its denial inevitably produces an orientation towards the *Filioque*. Referring to Aquinas' theology of analogy, which is based on the *Filioque*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes,

The likeness, the analogy of man to God, is not *analogia entis* but *analogia relationis*. This means that even the relation between man and God is not a part of man; it is not a capacity, a possibility, or a structure of his being but a given, set relationship.<sup>13</sup>

Such a relationship is supposed to be understood as analogous to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son within the inner relations of the Trinity. If there is no procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father, then there is no *excess*, going beyond the self-sufficiency of the inner divine relations and, therefore, no basis for an analogy of relation. In that case the relations of God the Trinity remain inaccessible for man even as analogy.

Palamas noted that the essence of God, being one and altogether indivisible, is never spoken of in the plural, whereas the uncreated energy of God is referred to by Orthodox theologians both as one and as many, as being "divisible indivisibly," like the rays of the sun. It is through the uncreated energies that we know that God exists, though not what He is. God's essence is above reason, incomprehensible. "This discussion helps us see that Aristotle's failure to distinguish between the essence of God and His energies resulted in the negation of God as a Creator and Providence, and the relegation of Him to a sphere altogether beyond human experience. In the West, it has resulted in Deism, Agnosticism,

---

<sup>13</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Creation and Fall*. London, 1959, p. 37.

and Atheism.”<sup>14</sup>

### 1.1.2. The Trinitarian ‘trace’ and the divine energies.

#### 1.1.2.1. Western view.

Introducing Augustine’s statement that “when therefore we regard the Creator, who is understood by the things that are made we must need to understand the Trinity of whom there appear traces in the creature”<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas points out:

“Every effect in some degree represents its cause, but diversely. For some effects represent only the causality of the cause, but not its form; as smoke represents fire. Such a representation is called a *trace*: for a trace shows that someone has passed by [from cause to effect] but not who it is. Other effects represent the cause as regards the similitude of its form, as fire generated represents fire generating; and a statue of Mercury represents Mercury; and this is called the representation of image.”<sup>16</sup>

He argues that in rational creatures, possessing intellect and will, the Trinitarian trace is found by way of image. In its own being every creature has a form in order to distinguish it from other species and determine its relations to them. Its being represents the cause and principle, thus showing the Person of the Father, Who is the “principle from no principle.” In having a form and a species, it represents the Word, and having a relation of order, it represents the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as He is love. Therefore Augustine says that according “as it is one individual,” and according “as it is formed by a species,” and according as it

---

<sup>14</sup> Cavamos. *The Hellenic-Christian Philosophical Tradition*, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, Saint. *On the Trinity* (VI, 10). Trans. by the Rev. Arthur West Haddan, B.D. Online Edition by K. Knight, 2004. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers>

<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, Thomas. *The Summa Theologica, Vol. 2, Ia. q. 45, 7*. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Second and revised edition. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1921. See also online edition by Kevin Knight, 2003: <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>.

“has a certain relation of order” the trace of the Trinity is to be found in every creature<sup>17</sup> and that “the whole united Trinity is revealed to us in its works.”<sup>18</sup>

How the Trinity is observed to be present in creation differs according to the perspective of any particular observer. For Augustine, it is principally the human mind that offers an image, albeit an imperfect one, of the triune God.<sup>19</sup> Bonaventure, John Calvin,<sup>20</sup> and Johannes Kepler,<sup>21</sup> however, consider that it is in the entire cosmos that the image of God is to be seen.<sup>22</sup> Bonaventure says: “The First Principle created this perceptible world as a means of self-revelation so that, like a mirror (*speculum*) or a footprint (*vestigium*), it might lead the human being to love and praise God the artisan.”<sup>23</sup> Calvin writes that “in the whole architecture of His world God has given us clear evidence of His eternal wisdom, goodness and power ... He shows himself to us in some measure in his work. The world is therefore rightly called the mirror of his divinity.”<sup>24</sup> Kepler “saw in the visible universe the symbolic image of the Trinity.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Augustine. *On the Trinity* (VI, 10).

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, Saint. *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans* (XI, 24). Trans. by H. Bettenson. London: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 457.

<sup>19</sup> Augustine. *On the Trinity* (X, 12).

<sup>20</sup> See Zachman, Randall C. “The Universe as the Living Image of God: Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation Reconsidered,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No.4, 1997, pp. 299-312.

<sup>21</sup> See Kepler, Johannes. *The Harmony of the World*. Trans. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, J. V. Field. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997. The theme of the Trinity observable in the universe is also very strong in Kepler’s *Epitome of Copernican Astronomy*; see *The Fontana History of Astronomy and Cosmology*. London: Fontana, 1994, p. 323.

<sup>22</sup> Panikkar’s scheme develops this notion further to suggest that not only humanity, but also reality itself has a Trinitarian structure – matter/energy, consciousness and transcendence/freedom. See Panikkar, Raimon. *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*. New York: Maryknoll, 1993, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup> Bonaventure, Saint. *The Breviloquium*, II.11.2. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1963.

<sup>24</sup> Calvin, John. *Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter*. Trans. W. Johnston. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1963, p. 160.

<sup>25</sup> “Kepler,” *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. C.C. Gillispie. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973, p. 307. Kepler likewise asserted that Man was created in the image of God, *ibid.*

Indeed, for Kepler, God's purpose in creation "was to create the most beautiful and perfect world that would reflect the divine image."<sup>26</sup>

That Augustine, Bonaventure, Calvin, and Kepler see God's image in varying phenomena points to the cosmos and humanity as different images of the same God. Indeed, it is fitting that the image of the infinite God is conveyed in many different modes. It remains for humanity to "on the one hand <...> distinguish between the world that we see and the God whose image it is, and, on the other hand, there must be a similarity or analogy between the image and the God representing himself therein."<sup>27</sup>

It may be possible to discern images of the Trinity which are not literally three-fold. We know of God's triunity because of divine revelation, not because of observation. Augustine, Bonaventure, and Kepler perceived the image of God as itself tripartite. Yet as Australian scholar Denis Edwards has noted, it is because of God's Trinitarian nature that communion is the fundamental ontological category. "Once the nature of God is understood as relational, then this suggests that the fundamental nature of all reality is relational."<sup>28</sup> God's image thus need not be recognised in creation only when a suitable triad is located, but God's image is visible wherever there exists a reality grounded in communion, that is, in Edward's words, "Being-in-relation".<sup>29</sup>

Central features of the Western Trinitarian doctrine are the unity among divine persons and their equality. It was firmly claimed by The Fourth Lateran Council, that the unity of the Godhead was not just a collective unity 'in the way that many human beings are said to make one people, and many believers one church'. Rather it is the same 'thing', 'that is divine substance, essence or nature'

---

<sup>26</sup> Kepler. *The Harmony of the World*, xv.

<sup>27</sup> Zachman, p. 304.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards, Denis. *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999, pp. 26-27.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

which ‘truly is the Father, and is the Son, and is the Spirit’, ‘That thing is not begetting, nor begotten, nor proceeding, but is the Father who begets, and the Son who is begotten, and the Holy spirit who proceeds, so that there may be distinction of persons but unity of nature.’<sup>30</sup> The interpretation of the *omoousios* (of the same substance) as a relation ‘which links the persons closely while allowing them to be discernible with respect to a certain range of properties’ gives an opportunity to get the right (i.e., a non-Sabellian) teaching that there are three distinct persons, not just three modes of operation of one person.

With regard to the equality one has to accept that “the Three are radically equal to one another; none is in a position of superiority over the others <...> all imply one another, so that none of them can be understood in a position of primacy over the others.”<sup>31</sup> Such equality is necessary if communion and not substance is the nature of the Trinity. If one Person were superior, that Person would be the ‘locus of divinity’. Equality among Persons ensures that the divine life is defined by mutual giving, not by the substance of divinity.

In the Western Christian tradition the doctrine of the Trinity is often articulated in two forms: *social* Trinitarianism which might stress the separateness of the persons and *relative* Trinitarianism stressing in a way the unity of the Godhead. The relative one is supported by the early Karl Barth in his “Church Dogmatics” giving the Trinity as simply three ‘modes of existence’ of one God<sup>32</sup> and Karl Rahner to whom the Trinity is ‘the three-fold quality of God in himself, his triune ‘personality’<sup>33</sup>. Jürgen Moltmann opposes their views in his social

---

<sup>30</sup> Denzinger, H. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. Freiburg, 1963, 803f.

<sup>31</sup> Cunningham, David. *These Three are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 111-112.

<sup>32</sup> Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Volume I, Part 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Trans. G. W. Bromiley. Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1975, ch. 2, pt. 1, ‘The Triune God’.

<sup>33</sup> See, among other places, the short essay in his *Theological Investigations*, iv, ‘Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise “De Trinitate”’, trans. K. Smith. Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1966, p. 101f.

Trinitarianism<sup>34</sup>, although not giving an adequate account of what binds the persons of the Trinity together. Sympathizing rather with Moltmann than with Barth or Rahner Richard Swinburne, the author of a tetralogy on the philosophy of the Christian doctrine, offered a *moderate* form of social Trinitarianism, “one which stresses both the logical inseparability of the divine persons in the Trinity, and the absence of anything by which the persons of the Trinity are individuated except their relational properties.”<sup>35</sup>

Humanity can never fully comprehend the mystery of the economic Trinity, nor the dynamic of the immanent Trinity. As Boff writes,

Even revealed, the truth of the Trinity remains a mystery ever open to new efforts of human understanding, but finally an absolute mystery handed to us in freedom and love for our divinisation. This mystery is of the essence of the Trinity, and so will remain a mystery for all eternity.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, God’s plan for the evolution of the universe remains beyond the grasp of humanity. We may never understand what role a particular species may play in the evolution of the cosmos. To emphasise the importance of a single component of creation over any other part is unwarranted.

Human existence relies firmly and absolutely upon the non-human creation, animate and inanimate. Indeed as each person of the Trinity can be understood as pointing outward to the other two members of the divine communion, each member of creation points to everything else in the cosmos. Just as it is with the persons of the Trinity, so too each part of the creation has a specific mission to fulfil. Thus both anthropocentrism and even an un-Trinitarian christocentrism are called into question when reality is viewed from a Trinitarian per-

---

<sup>34</sup> Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*. Trans. M. Kohl. SCM Press, 1981.

<sup>35</sup> Swinburne, Richard. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 189.

<sup>36</sup> Boff, L. *Trinity and Society*. London: Burns and Oates, 1988, p. 99.

spective. It is with humanity on earth as it is too with Christ in the Trinity: each is unique within the relations by which they are constituted, but not superior to them. Creation is, in the words Cunningham uses to describe God, “Relation without remainder”.<sup>37</sup>

#### 1.1.2.2. Orthodox view.

The main distinguishing characteristic of Orthodox theological methodology is its use of antinomy – oppositions of contrary but equally true propositions. There is for example the completely unreconcilable antinomy concerning the knowable and the unknowable in God. Accordingly, two theological ways - the positive and the negative - exist antinomically and there is no need to unify them or try to reconcile them for any purpose whatsoever. It was established by Dionisius the Areopagite that there are two ways by which God can be known: *positively*, attributing to Him the perfections which one finds in the created world: being, goodness, love, wisdom, beauty; and *negatively*, through ignorance, denying to Him as subject everything that pertains to the realm of being, and considering Him to be above any being, above everything which can be named. Reinterpreting the Thomist theory of analogy, Battista Mondin concluded that, in his teaching, names applied both to God and to other beings, if they are names of absolute perfections, are predicated according to the analogy of one thing with another. Since Aquinas’ constant aim was to preserve the absolute-ness of God he denies that any analogy between two things and a third, or many things and one, can be used. For such an analogy to be possible, the two or more things must be preceded by something else to which each of them bears some relation. Since nothing precedes God, but He precedes the creature, the above kind of analogical predication is not applicable to Him. On the contrary, according to the analogy between one thing and another, the same abso-

---

<sup>37</sup> Cunningham. *These Three are One*, p. 165.

lute perfection is predicated both of God and His creatures, not in the same way but following *priority and posteriority*.<sup>38</sup> “Analogy of one to another is fit for theological discourse since, on one hand, it safeguards God’s absoluteness and uniqueness and, on the other hand, does not destroy the ontological consistence of finite beings.”<sup>39</sup> This has provided a basis for the continued development of scholasticism in Western theology.

Those Western theologians who broadly received the Areopagitic tradition made different estimates as to what this antinomy of the two theological ways was worth. As we have seen, for Thomas Aquinas it seems to have no existence; the positive and negative ways are to be unified into a single way – that of the positive theology of analogy. The negative way simply means that all affirmations touching the nature of God must be understood in a more sublime sense (*modo sublimiore*). However, the great mystical dialectician Nicholas of Cusa preserves the whole value of that antinomy; these two ways remain irreducible for the human spirit, but their opposition is resolved in God.<sup>40</sup>

Confirming that the antinomy between the positive and negative theologies has a real foundation in God, Gregory Palamas whose approach might be called *theology of antinomy* in place of Aquinas’ *theology of analogy*, gives us a more precise understanding of Dionisius’s dominant idea. Like, for instance, the antinomy of unity and trinity, which postulates a distinction between nature and persons in God, and all other theological antinomies – the antinomy of the two ways discloses to the human spirit ‘a mysterious distinction within God’s very being’. This is the distinction between divine immovable essence and God’s move-

---

<sup>38</sup> Mondin, Battista. *The principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963, pp. 34-35.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., as cited in Torrance, Alan J. *Persons in Communion. An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, p. 138.

<sup>40</sup> Lossky, Vladimir. *In the Image and Likeness of God*. Trans. from the French, ed. by John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001, p. 53.

ments, operations or energies.<sup>41</sup> Following Basil the Great, John Damascene and Gregory Palamas, Vladimir Lossky puts special emphasis on the fact that God goes beyond His essence, remaining the same God in His energies.

The energies are not the effects foreign to the divine essence; they are not acts exterior to God, depending on His will, like the creation of the world or acts of providence. They are the natural processions of God Himself, a mode of existence which is proper to Him and according to which God exists not only in His essence, but also outside His essence.<sup>42</sup>

God is not bounded even by His essence and the divine energies do not exist only as a function of God's relation to what is external to Him. If the world were not created, God would be both within His essence and outside it, overflowing the essence in His energies. He is never diminished in His natural processions outside the essence. Palamas sometimes calls the essence 'superior divinity' in opposition to the energies as 'inferior divinity', although by no means indicating in the energies any diminishing of God. Despite the particular terminological resemblance to the Platonists, Lossky points out a basic difference: "essence can be said to be superior to energies in the same sense that the Father, the source of all divinity, is said to be superior to the Son and to the Holy Spirit". He also emphasizes that the distinction does not imply any separation or division of God into knowable and unknowable because "God reveals Himself, totally gives Himself in His energies, and remains totally unknowable and incommunicable in His essence."<sup>43</sup> According to Dionisius the Areopagite, there are two modes of existence in which God remains identical: sameness and difference (*to tauton ke to eteron*).<sup>44</sup> God is never limited by His essence and can-

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>44</sup> Dionisius the Areopagite. *De divinis nominibus*, 9, 1; P.G. 3, col. 909B.

not be reduced to it. In order to emphasize that fact Palamas even prefers the word ‘superessence’ (*hyperousiōtis*), borrowed from Dionisius.

When speaking of God, there is always, in the Orthodox view, the Holy Trinity. The energies can be designated by the word “divinities” only because they are proper to the Three consubstantial Persons as their life, power, wisdom, sanctity, which are common to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Flowing eternally from God’s nature and being communicated to us by the Holy Spirit, each energy reveals to us the Trinity as a whole. Some efforts have been made, erroneously and without reference to Orthodox teaching, “to improve” palamism and make it more suitable for the purposes of ecumenical dialogue. Such is, for example, a proposal by Michael Ipgrave to “develop a theory of Trinitarian appropriation whereby particular energies were understood as expressive of particular hypostases”<sup>45</sup>. While rightly considering that a Palamite study of *enhypostasia* would be “a more fruitful basis for a theology of appropriation than the rather arid assignation of various *attributa* set out in Latin scholasticism”<sup>46</sup>, his suggestion that wisdom, for example, would be associated with the Logos and life with the Spirit reveals a lack of understanding that, since it is always the one God, the energies reveal the Trinity as a whole. They are never to be associated with any particular hypostasis but act outside *apophatic* immovable essence as its *kataphatic* (positive way of knowing God) completion.

It often escapes our attention that there is no single right way to embody our real experience of God in words or expressions. But a balanced approach is possible because the possibility of divine revelation is always open. God Himself wants us to know about Him. He steps forward towards man through the active energies that characterise the Three Persons in their *perichoral* relationship. The divine essence with its energies is *enhypostasized* in the three divine Persons; hence, a hypos-

---

<sup>45</sup> Ipgrave. *Trinity and Inter Faith Dialogue*, p. 298.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

tatic principle or mode of the relational being of God the Trinity is to be considered as the most important means of approaching the knowledge of God. *Enhypostasized* energy should not be understood as belonging to a particular hypostasis and separate from the other ones but as revealing the unity of the Three.

Evoking natural examples such as the sun with its rays when trying to show that energies of God are the same God in His movements theologians use the term 'light'. "God is called light not according to His essence, but according to His energy."<sup>47</sup> Introducing the concept of the divine light Lossky writes:

This light (*phos*) or illumination (*ellampsis*) which surpasses intelligence and the senses is not of the intellectual order, as illumination of the intellect, taken in an allegorical and abstract sense, often is; neither is it of the sensible order; however this light simultaneously fills reason and the senses, manifesting itself to the total man, and not to just one of his faculties <...> The *Hagioritic Tome* distinguishes: (1) sensible light, (2) the light of the intelligence, (3) the uncreated light which surpasses both the others equally.<sup>48</sup>

Related to the concept of the divine light, the doctrine of grace for Orthodox theology is founded on the distinction of nature and energies in God. Both St Gregory Palamas and St. Mark of Ephesus said that illumination or divine grace is not of the essence, but of the energy of God. Being something more than a mere function, grace is more than a relation of God to man. "Far from being an action or an effect produced by God in the soul, grace is God Himself, communicating Himself and entering into ineffable union with man."<sup>49</sup> On Mount Tabor during the Transfiguration of the Lord the light which the apostles saw belongs to God by its nature as eternal, infinite and existing outside of time and space. It has been revealed in the theophanies of the Old Testament as the glory

---

<sup>47</sup> Gregory Palamas. *Against Akeidyinos*, P.G. 150, col. 823.

<sup>48</sup> Lossky. *In the Image and Likeness*, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

of God. Each theophany actually proves to be a point of intersection of the divine and human, created and uncreated, temporal and timeless, spatial and spaceless. When taking place in time and space in the presence of a created human being, it reveals the timeless and spaceless uncreated glory of God. What we have to notice here is that there is a sort of impersonal matter such as water, fire, cloud, rock, vestment (of Christ) involved in each of the theophanies that ever took place.

Palamas insists on the possibility of seeing God with corporeal eyes. This caused his opponents a great deal of distress and seemed to everyone to be absurd. However we must be careful not to evaluate too easily as “absurd” everything which appears strange to our rationalistic minds - the major part of the Christian dogmas for example. Lossky argues that it is not so for God the Trinity Who lives in inaccessible Light and Who penetrates by His energies the created world which is the world of pure spirits as well as that of physical beings. God is as equally distant from and close to the senses as He is distant from and close to the intelligence.

We forget that this opposition between the body and the soul, this struggle of the flesh against the spirit and of the spirit against the flesh of which St. Paul speaks, is a result of sin; that the body and the spirit are in reality only two aspects of the human being; that our last end is not only an intellectual contemplation of God but the resurrection of the total man, soul and body, the beatitude of human beings who are going to see God face to face in the fulness of their created nature.<sup>50</sup>

We might similarly understand the opposition between the created impersonal nature and human persons as being a result of original sin. Analyzing the relations within the impersonal universe as they are understood in the perspective of the latest research in physics, we can begin to approach an idea of the relativ-

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

ity of the created world which is much more profound than the merely materialistic one. Relativity, or relatedness, can also be understood as a result of uncreated energies penetrating the world. Although the energies reveal the Trinity as a whole, they are, necessarily, characterized by their deeply relational nature. When he observes the universe man enters into personal contact with its impersonal reality, thus affecting it and making it possible for it to be considered as a creation of God. The uncreated Light of God pours out upon the universe as a whole, human beings included, and the same Light forms it into a unity due to the collaboration with the rediscovered image and likeness of God in humanity.

### **1.2. Relations within the impersonal universe.**

Men and women live in the material world within time and space which have been created for them. Space and time originate together with created matter which, as physics today is giving a picture of it, is a totality of dynamically uncertain active relations. “Nature permits us to calculate only probabilities <...> the way we have to describe Nature is generally incomprehensible to us,”<sup>51</sup> concludes Richard Feynman (Nobel Prize winner for physics 1965).

The scientific discoveries made in the XIX and XX centuries have enabled philosophers to develop a new grammar of metaphysics. Metaphysics is no longer to be considered as something outside and above physics anymore, but rather as a part of it. The unorthodox methodology and apophatic language of post-Newtonian science reads like the beginning of a metaphysical extension of physics. A human being cannot be a neutral observer of nature, and the primary claim of science to objective knowledge has been shown in practice to be unattainable. It is impossible to observe and describe physical phenomena without affecting them.

---

<sup>51</sup> Feynman, Richard. *QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 77.

Quantum theory tells us that nothing can be measured or observed without disturbing it, so that the role of the observer is crucial in understanding and physical process. So crucial in fact that some people have been led to believe that it is the observer's mind that is the only reality – that everything else, including the whole physical universe, is an illusion.<sup>52</sup>

The Creator affects His creation simply by observing it, and this is one of the means by which our relation with Him becomes possible. It can be argued that within the relational character of created matter there stands revealed a trace of the Trinitarian relations as they are within the Creator Himself. We may be able to observe the same trace (*vestigium trinitatis*) in the metaphysics of human relations which will be discussed later on. And this may even suggest the idea of comparing relations within matter with interpersonal human relations.

When we speak of relations in quantum mechanics, we refer to a mode of correlation-referentiality-coordination which has the character of the unpredictable, of the probable, of the possible, and which could be compared only with the dynamic freedom of interpersonal human relations. Quantum mechanics has come to assert “within the very nature of things” a probabilistic character which <...> constitutes the given mode of physical reality.<sup>53</sup>

As a result of the divine trace mentioned above matter has a probabilistic character which admits of no possibility of a purely objective approach. When seeking the *vestigia trinitatis* in the inner state of matter one can only speak in terms of probability since, together with the known relations there are also relations which cannot be described and of which no-one can be fully aware. No objective theory dealing with real matter and physical processes, can take such relations into account. Consequently, a real observation will always turn out very differently from

---

<sup>52</sup> Rae, Alastair. *Quantum Physics: Illusion or Reality?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Yannaras, Christos. *Postmodern Metaphysics*. Trans. by Norman Russell. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004, p. 93.

its theoretical forecast. Once we have understood these modern views on the relational character of matter, in particular, we can easily conclude that any effort to consider the created world without referring to the Creator will be fruitless. Even though, on a purely practical plane, the well-known theories and approaches still seem to work.

To observe means in some way to relate to, and therefore to form a relational pattern with, matter. This might vary for the different observers but the relationship between them ensures that their common orientation towards matter is, somehow, managed. If the observers could structure their investigation of matter in such a way as to understand how the Creator relates to it, then the *vestigia trinitatis* within it would be revealed through its relational character. And inversely, while seeking for the relations within matter, one might come to know what the Creator's plan for it is.

The observation shapes its object; the object is constituted only as something observed in accordance with the form of the experimental intervention of the observer. It is not an object in relation to the subject, but is the relationship itself – a kind of free response of the thing observed to the observation.<sup>54</sup>

The relational character of the observation can be understood, for example, in terms of a curious 'wave-particle' duality in the quantum theory. It is reminiscent of the soul-body duality. According to this idea, a microscopic entity such as an electron or a photon sometimes exhibits behavior like a particle and sometimes like a wave depending on the sort of experiment chosen. "A particle is a totally different animal from a wave; it is a small lump of concentrated stuff, whereas a wave is an amorphous disturbance that can spread out and dissipate. How can anything be both? It all has to do with complementarity again"<sup>55</sup>. In a wider sense,

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>55</sup> Davies, Paul. *God and the New Physics*. London: J.M. Dent, 1983, pp. 108-109.

this physical-metaphysical duality or “complementarity” is characteristic of relations even as they operate on a higher plane. How can the Bible be both a revelation and a collection of words or the human heart be a vehicle of love and a blood pump?

Wave-particle duality presents a kind of ‘software-hardware dichotomy’. The particle aspect is the hardware face of atoms – “little balls rattling about”. The wave aspect corresponds to the software, or mind, or information, for the quantum wave is different than any other sort of wave. “It is not a wave of any substance or physical stuff, but a wave of knowledge or information. It is a wave that tells us what can be known about the atom, not a wave of the atom itself. The quantum wave is also a wave of probability. It tells you where you can expect the particle to be, and what chance it may have of such-and-such a property, such as rotation or energy. The wave thus encapsulates the inherent uncertainty and unpredictability of the quantum factor.”<sup>56</sup>

Generally speaking, the principle of wave-particle duality is also reflected in the relation between the object and its idea, or logos and, thinking more profoundly, between the Creative Logos and the created matter. The wave of knowledge or information contains within itself everything that needs to be known in order to describe the specific characteristics of the particle. It is in the wave that the relation is established between the material particle and the rest of created matter; and, inversely, it is in the wave-particle duality that the relational principle of the creation, its *vestigium trinitatis*, is observed.

We speak of “matter” as if it exists within space and time. The revolutionary theory of relativity has dramatically changed this approach. There is no space and time independent of matter. Space and time are combinations and products of the presence of matter; they are a consequence of the materiality of what exists. Therefore, any question relating to the fact of existence in itself, that is to ontolo-

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

gy or metaphysics, must be stripped of any association with the ideas of space and time. The question of what exists with regard simply to the fact that it exists (before the inclusion of materiality in the consideration of its mode of existence) excludes any connotation of space and time. In the context of space and time it is only as a fact in relation to the space-time coordinates of a particular instance of materiality that existence can be studied. This is confirmed by the idea of the origin of the universe in an initial ‘Big Bang,’ the explosion of the universe’s matter-energy in its initial super-dense state. Beyond this explosion there is no space, just as there is none beyond the bounds of the universe. Any inquiry into the “before” and the “where” of the beginning of the universe is excluded. The exclusion is imposed by the assertions of physics and itself “imposes a purely metaphysical concept: the concept of an obligatory exit from the succession of before and after, and also from every dimensional location. Such a concept may also entail the exit from the presupposition of the existent, or it may not. Contemporary physics seems to say that it does not”<sup>57</sup>.

If in the existent there is no space and time, what is there? An answer might be suggested by what we have said about the divine trace. There is a *relation* which organizes the existent and prepares it to become matter within its space and time. The relation itself is above matter, space and time. It bears the *vestigium trinitatis* “before” the matter exists in time and space, although there is no “before” but some kind of expectations of matter to be formed. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen 1:1-2)<sup>58</sup>. The book of Genesis tells us the story of the expectation of the matter to be created in a form. There is no form, no space and time, consequently, no laws forming the matter; there is only a relation between

---

<sup>57</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, pp. 102-105.

<sup>58</sup> All quotations from the Bible will be taken from the King James Version.

the created heaven and earth. The formless matter, or 'earth,' is related to the heaven which is the created spiritual reality. The movement of the Spirit signifies this expectation which is going to be ended by a revelation of the *vestigia trinitatis* in the relations within the creation.

As an existent the expectation contains within itself the relational laws which will be manifested in the matter. So long as no alternative is possible, the divine trace presupposes that what will be given will be a *harmony* rather than any mutually exclusive alternatives. "And God said, let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen 1:3-4). The light has brought harmony into the creation as it reveals the *vestigium trinitatis*. The lack of it is called the darkness which does not reflect any *vestigium trinitatis* at all. The more light is poured unto the earth the more clearly is the Trinitarian trace and, consequently, the relation of the created matter to the Creator, is revealed. Heaven is full of light without any darkness and the relation with God is evident to the creation. The division between the darkness and the light signifies that there is still an unenlightened state of matter with no relation yet established with God. The expectation is that this matter will be enlightened by man who will recognize the *vestigia trinitatis* within it. All the creation should be under the light of the collaboration of God and man in their Trinitarian-like relations. The absence of a clear view of the *vestigia trinitatis* within the created world shows that the collaboration is still very incomplete.

We can see from the above account what the relationship can be between contemporary physics and a metaphysics that has been reconsidered in terms of its fundamental discoveries. Physics gives us the calculations that have defined the Big Bang as the initial event responsible for setting up the universe as it can be observed today. These calculations constitute an extension of the physical boundaries beyond this conclusion: "a metaphysical extension of physics".

Both the specifications (fortuitous or intentional) of the Big Bang as a founding event of the universe, and the non-local and non-temporal coordinates of the beginning of space and time are determined and therefore "existential" facts, principles of existential uniqueness, without entailing materiality in the definition of their existence.<sup>59</sup>

“The laws of science do not distinguish between the past and the future.”<sup>60</sup> An electron can move “backward in time” and constitute a positron, that is, it can be equally existent both then and when it moves “forwards” in time. And a photon can pass simultaneously through both slits of a polarizer, abolishing the “where” but remaining demonstrably existent. The relation within an electron-positron pair constitutes their existence, with no spatial and temporal limits. This suggests that it might be possible to compare their relation with the divine trace or with the expectation within the formative matter or, better to say, matter considered in the abstract, in the absence of a space-time form.

The backwards-moving electron when viewed with time moving forwards appears the same as an ordinary electron, except it's attracted to normal electrons – we say it has a ‘positive charge.’ <...>. For this reason it's called a ‘positron.’ The positron is a sister particle to the electron, and is an example of an ‘anti-particle.’ This phenomenon is general. Every particle in Nature has an amplitude to move backwards in time, and therefore has an anti-particle. When a particle and its anti-particle collide, they annihilate each other and form other particles. (For positrons and electrons annihilating, it is usually a photon or two.) And what about the photons? Photons look exactly the same in all respects when they travel backwards in time <...> so they are their own anti-particles.<sup>61</sup>

Richard Feynman sees the pairing of particles as a general phenomenon since it determines something which is specific for the inner state of matter as a whole.

---

<sup>59</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 106.

<sup>60</sup> Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time*. London: Bantam Books, 1988, p. 160.

<sup>61</sup> Feynman, *QED*, p. 98.

For the physicists the movements “backwards in time” have become a necessary part of their explanation of material events. For those interested in metaphysics a similarly decisive role must be played by relation. It constitutes the existent of the electron-positron pair and sets up the process by which the proton is born. This third particle, born as a result of the annihilation of the particle and anti-particle, enables us to imagine what the relation between the two is like. The triadic pattern of this relation is general for the created matter. The “process” of annihilation does not “take place” in time and space and so the relation is already creative “before” the creation assumes a form. Being imparted by the Creative Logos, this characteristic of the relation is already present in the matter that is expecting to be formed. There is already a Trinity-like relationship between the Logos and the formless “earth” though the perfection and the plenitude of such relations is signified by the created “heaven”. Once it is formed, matter becomes an image which reflects the beauty of the Creator through His relation to the creation. Beauty is a creative and, therefore, a relational matter allowing a personal to be revealed through an impersonal which reflects the personal. This can never be grasped in a scientific way but might be interpreted by using the example of how we approach a work of art.

The scientific study of an art object cannot impose upon us that form of the relationship with it which allows us to recognize the principle of a personal otherness, the uniqueness of a creative person. Scientific study can possibly convey the personal otherness of the creative principle which is expressed in the work of art, can possibly refer to it. But it can never make it into a cognitive fact. The knowledge of personal otherness is only an experience of relation.<sup>62</sup>

The revelation of the Trinitarian trace within created matter gives us a sense of God’s personal otherness and of His creative providence, though in their perfec-

---

<sup>62</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, pp. 112-113.

tion and plenitude they can only be known through those relations that are found in “heaven”. Both “heaven and earth are full of Thy glory”. The created earth and heaven reveal the beauty and glory of the Trinitarian relations in ways that are complementary to each other: heaven – as a creative relational principle; and earth – as realized creative relations. In the example given above, the event of non-spatial and timeless particle/anti-particle annihilation breaks through the limitations of classical physics, extending as far as a metaphysical reality of creative relations. The triadic relational principle becomes a revelation of the possibility of discerning the personal character of God the Trinity as it is known through its impersonal realization. One can enter into relation as long as there is an other to whom one may relate. Their personal otherness gives birth to their relations and, conversely, their relations reveal and complement their otherness. The sense of personal otherness is given to man through and within his relationship with God. Having been created by God with and within the impersonal world, man is able to enter into communication with God through his relations in the created world by means of which the initial personal otherness of God the Trinity can be known. God can also relate to man through created impersonal matter which bears the *vestigia trinitatis*. One may say that the personal and relational mode of the human being implies his creation in the image and likeness of God. However, the plenitude of those relations is only to be seen in the created heaven where their likeness to the relations of the Trinity is perfect and complete.

### **1.3. Human relations with the universe.**

Since his creation man is invited to relate to the universe, which is the environment of the created human being. As we have argued, there is within the universe a Trinitarian trace affected by the Creator through His “observing” the creation. Therefore, from the very beginning the universe tends naturally towards the formation of conditions for its self-cognition, that is to say, towards the formation

of the conditions of sensible life. Within the perspective of this inherent and verifiable tendency of the universe, life can be properly understood as an integral and/or relational phenomenon, whose existence is due to the mutual interaction of all the natural laws and all the elements of physical and metaphysical reality. “The universe has to be such as to admit life. It is not only that man is adapted to the universe. The universe is adapted to man.”<sup>63</sup> An uncompromising version of this ‘anthropic principle’ can be found in the following statement: “Scientific observation does not simply affirm the reality of the cosmos; it constitutes it as an existential fact.”<sup>64</sup> This “anthropic principle” appears as a result of those same relations which form the basis for the personal recognition of the divine trace within the impersonal universe.

Relation, in this perspective, is not simply the “extrinsic” mental relationship between objects. It is not a phenomenological sequentiality, order and functional combination, assembled from observation, convergence, encounter, exchange or parallel operations. Nor is it simply a syntactic structure, an effective combination or a complementary reciprocity. Relation is fundamentally referentiality as the exclusive mode of formation of the existential fact – from the quantum composition of the behavior of matter, as the active formation of the human subject by means of reason “in the field of the Other” – with the “horizon” or recipient of the reference as a given.<sup>65</sup>

The word person is the linguistic term used by Christos Yannaras to signify, in particular, the subject not as “an existential given in itself, but as an active fact of reference and relation, and at the same time as a “horizon” manifesting the referentiality of existential things”. The Greek word for “person,” *prosopon*, is a compound word formed from the prefix *pros* (towards) and the noun *ops* (face) (*opos* in

---

<sup>63</sup> Barrow, John D. and Tipler, Frank J. *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. vii.

<sup>64</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 118.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

the genitive). Person (*prosopon*) signifies a referential act: one has his face towards someone or something else. He is always being opposite. The word “individual” (*atomon*), by contrast, evokes a static existential unit, “wholly homogeneous in itself,” with no referentiality at all. Relationship as a unique, dissimilar and unrepeatable existential fact stimulates the active referentiality of every person. As Yannaras argued, this is the only real existence within the created world which underlies relation and is not exhausted in its referentiality, although it is by means of the relation that it is defined: “The ineffable (not strictly definable) *hypostasis* (or real existence) of the human person is the only existential reality in the world which is not exhausted in the referentiality of relation, in quantum referentiality, although it is recognized and defined only by means of the relation.”<sup>66</sup>

The hypostatic principle of a personal being is derived from the very existence of Triune God as the Creator Who delivered His image and likeness to man in order that he should know God in a personal way. According to John Damascene, the term *hypostasis* has two meanings. Sometimes it simply means existence. Certain of the holy fathers have talked of ‘natures, or hypostases.’ From this definition it follows that *hypostasis* is the same thing as *ousia* which is frequently employed by Aristotle. His definition of *ousia* is as follows: “That is principally, primarily and properly called *ousia* which is stated of no subject and which is in no subject – for example, this man, or this horse. We call ‘second ousias’ those species wherein the ‘first ousias’ exist with their corresponding description: thus, ‘this man’ is specifically man and generically animal. Man and animal, then, are called ‘second ousias’.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, as Lossky argued, ‘first ousias’ are individual subsistences, the individual subsisting; ‘second ousias’ – essences, in the philosophical Realist sense of the word.

Sometimes *hypostasis* implies that which exists by itself and in its own consistency.

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle. *Categories*, V. As cited in Lossky. *The Mystical Theology*, p. 50.

In that case *hypostasis* denotes “the individual, differing numerically from every other – Peter, Paul, this particular horse”. The two terms, according to Lossky, would thus appear to be more or less synonymous<sup>68</sup>. *Ousia* means an individual substance, while being capable at the same time of denoting the essence common to many individuals. On the other hand, *hypostasis* means existence in general, but is capable also of application to individual substances when it denotes the same thing as person (*prosopon*). *Ousia* can never imply the same meaning as *prosopon*, however it might be synonymous with *hypostasis* when being applied to concrete substance.<sup>69</sup>

By the very fact of the creation a reality in the world is set up as an *invitation-to-relationship*. An invitation could be issued only in a personal way as it belongs to the freedom of the person to agree to being defined as the second term of a relationship – to acknowledge, or to deny and reject, the invitation-to-relationship. Addressing the person (*prosopon*) to turn his face towards the reality of created impersonal matter implies the coming together in a unified fact of a dialogue between physics and metaphysics. As argued above, it is through an extension of the borders of physics that the state of entering such a dialogue can be defined. As it is an aspect of *logos* – i.e. an aspect of reasoning – that enables us to apprehend principles and forms, there are two things prompting dialogue – “the rational recipient of the world’s reason (*logos*) and the causal principle of invitatory reason (*logos*)”<sup>70</sup>. The prefix *dia* (inter) forming the word “dialogue” (*dia-logos*) implies an interaction between the two above reasons: “world’s” and “invitatory”. Since they are both terms of the dialogue’s relationship, the dialogue becomes an existential fact – the given existence of the world as regards humanity.

Taken up by St Ignatius of Antioch, the concept of *logos* in the first three Chris-

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 138.

tian centuries became an instrument for reconciling the cosmology of Greek philosophical thought with the biblical concept of creation. Although this line of argument originated with the Greek apologists (Justin, in particular), it was to become particularly characteristic of the Alexandrian theologians: Clement and, most of all, Origen. Justin and later Clement employed the idea of *logos* in a christological manner as the bond between God and the created world or between truth and the mind contemplating the truth. As the *logos* of God, Christ is the link between truth and the mind. In Clement a fundamental role is played by the idea that the truth exists 'partially' outside Christ. By contrast, Origen connected the idea of God and that of creation so closely that the link between the *logos* of God and the *logoi* of creation comes to be organic and unbreakable. He argued that it is essential to have an object on which God exercises His power; otherwise He would not be eternally omnipotent.<sup>71</sup> Despite the unorthodox character of much of his thought, Origen was approaching an important idea of the closeness of the *logos* of God to that of man in that both are addressing the universe. The dialogic relation with created matter (the reason, or logic, of the world) reveals the trace of God the Trinity and, inversely, it is the invitatory reason of that trace that brings such man-universe dialogue into being.

Reality does not exist only as an invitation-to-relationship. Since the invitation refers to the relationship, the reality cannot refer to its invitatory character alone, denying any real content to the relationship. So the invitatory character of the world's *logos* implies something more than simply a relationship with the world itself. Although the dialogue has become an existential fact, it includes no hypostatic term since the *hypostasis* is above relational matters and defines something which is only characteristic of God and of existential being. This hypostatic term is the causal principle without which there can be no relation as an existential fact

---

<sup>71</sup> Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997, pp. 74-75.

and, hence, no dialogue.

The quantum constitution of the world constitutes an existential fact which refers only to human consciousness-cognition. It does not form an objective something, a hypostatic term of a relation. The quantum wave acquires value and constitutes an existential signification only in its encounter with human consciousness. “Outside” this encounter it is not signed as an existential fact. That is why we also say that the quantum wave is a rational principle (logos) that calls into relationship, but not a term that brings the relationship into being. A hypostatic term (with the relation given as an existential fact) is the causal principle of the invitatory rational principle (logos) of the world, not as a logical consequence but as a “value” (existential verification) of the first term of the existential relationship.<sup>72</sup>

When the human rational principle encounters the rational principle of the world, the world is constituted inevitably as an existential fact; but if the world’s invitation-to-relationship is rejected or denied, its existence appears to be meaningless and without purpose. Although it is a prerogative of our human freedom either to follow or to deny the invitation of the world, the denial must result in the same consequences for the human being itself – it becomes useless when the rest of the world appears as meaningless. By the will of the Trinitarian God, the human vocation must be realized within the created universe, which is “adapted to man”. And the very *invitation-to-relationship* proves to be a sort of *vestigium trinitatis*, prompting man to adapt himself to the universe in a dialogue between his own *logos* and the invitatory reason/*logos* of the divine trace.

#### 1.4. Interpersonal relations.

Human beings are of a common nature. According to the ‘divine plan’ of the creation there is one single undivided nature in many human persons. The distinction of human nature and human persons is inherent to the creation and, in

---

<sup>72</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 138.

Lossky's words, "no less difficult to grasp than the analogous distinction of the one nature and three persons in God."<sup>73</sup> According to Leontius of Byzantium, a sixth-century theologian, and later St Maximus the Confessor and St John Damascene, a whole nature is found or enhypostasized (*enhypostaton*) in an hypostasis, such "being the nature of a hypostasis which cannot otherwise exist."<sup>74</sup> Since divine nature is one and *enhypostasized* in the Persons of the Trinity then, as it is created in the image and likeness of God, human nature likewise is one and must be *enhypostasized* in many human persons. Division within human nature arose due to original sin. When human nature became divided, split up, broken into many individuals, human beings appeared to be of a double character: as having an individual nature, they are parts of a whole, elements which make up the universe; but as persons, containing all in themselves, they are in no sense parts of anything else. This duality will only disappear when the consequences of original sin have ceased and there is no more division within human nature.

Lossky insisted that one could not know the human person or hypostasis in its genuine pure state, i.e. free from alloy. In our common practice the terms *person* and *individual* are, usually, interchangeable. However, the word *individual* expresses a certain mixture of the person with elements belonging to the common human nature, while *person*, on the other hand, means that which distinguishes it from nature. Therefore, individual and person rightly mean opposite things, although in our present condition, as it is, of changed or damaged nature, we may know person only through individuals, and as individuals. When trying to characterize a person, one is instead gathering together his or her individual characteristics or traits of character. Those traits are to be encountered elsewhere in other individuals, and, as belonging to nature, they are never absolutely personal.

---

<sup>73</sup> Lossky. *The Mystical Theology*, p. 121f.

<sup>74</sup> Leontius of Byzantium. *Contra Nestorium et Eutyrium*, P.G., t. 86, 1277 CD; St. Maximus (P.G., t. 91, 557-560); John Damascene. *De fide orthodoxa*, I, 9, 531. As referred in Lossky. *The Mystical Theology*, p. 123.

We admit that what is most dear to us in someone, what makes him himself, remains indefinable, for there is nothing in nature which properly pertains to the person, which is always unique and incomparable. The man who is governed by his nature and acts in the strength of his natural qualities, of his character, is the least personal. He sets himself up as an individual, proprietor of his own nature, which he pits against the natures of others and regards as his 'me', thereby confusing person and nature.<sup>75</sup>

There is something indefinable which is peculiar to one person and can be recognized by the other in a particular personal way rather than as a fact of our common nature. For example, a work of art may allow us accurately to give the name of the artist. By cultivating our relationship with the work of an artist we gradually become aware of and experience the personal otherness of the work, which gives us the opportunity to recognize and affirm this personal otherness in every encounter with the work of the artist, even if that particular work is previously unknown to us. "We see a painting we do not know, we hear a musical composition we have not heard before and affirm on the basis of our previous experience: this is Van Gogh, this is Mozart."<sup>76</sup>

Following the thought of Vladimir Lossky, "the nature is the content of the person, the person the existence of the nature." Asserting himself as an individual and shutting himself up in the limits of his particular nature, a person is far from realizing himself completely and becomes impoverished. It is only in renouncing its own possession and giving itself freely, in ceasing to exist for itself and starting to live in communion with others that the person finds complete expression in the one nature common to all. In giving up its own special good, it expands infinitely, and is enriched by everything which belongs to all. By getting that very likeness which is the perfection of the undivided nature common

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 121-122.

<sup>76</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 153.

to all humans, the person becomes the perfect image of the personal God – the Trinity. “The distinction between persons and nature reproduces the order of the divine life expressed by the doctrine of the Trinity, in mankind.”<sup>77</sup>

‘It is by engaging in a relationship rather than by understanding a concept that we can come to know God.’ That was the starting point of this chapter and it gives us the idea that as we come to know the Trinity our life will be wholly transformed into relationship. The significance of the human person therefore lies in the fact that two contradictory things are presented simultaneously: particularity and communion. As we argued above, there is a radical difference between being a person and being a self or an individual; similarly, in relation to human nature, there are two different approaches represented respectively by the person and by the individual. Questions may arise concerning relations between persons. As John Zizioulas argued, “a person cannot be imagined in himself but only within his relationships.”<sup>78</sup>

Relations between individuals are caused by impersonal human nature and cannot be freely established. Unlike relations between persons, conditioned relations of this kind cannot give rise to self-consciousness. In Aristotelian terms one might recognize those relations of individuals with their common nature as *transcendental* ones, whereas interpersonal relations prove to be of a *predicamental* character. Let us follow this thought thoroughly.

As we mentioned above, a transcendental relation is of an order included in the essence of a thing. The individual is characterized by manifestations of certain traits which belong to our common nature. Relations between individuals, therefore, can only be based on the natural order, which is transcendental to individuals – it is not a necessary characteristic of individuals that they should relate to each other. The individual is merely following his own characteristics,

---

<sup>77</sup> Lossky. *The Mystical Theology*, p. 124.

<sup>78</sup> Zizioulas. *Being as Communion*, p. 105.

manifestations of our common nature. It is the relation to the common nature that is important to him. Such relations as arise between individuals, if any, never touch or change them profoundly and they can be interrupted at any stage without affecting the transcendental relations with their common nature. It is not the same when the person encounters a person.

Predicamental relation is defined by Aristotle as a real accident whose whole being is to be ordered to something else; it is not included in the essence of the thing, but it comes to the essence as an accident. It is entirely ordered by or referred to a term, as, for example, paternity, filiation or likeness. There is to be a real basis in the subject and a real terminus, really distinct from this basis in the subject. Unlike the transcendental relation the predicamental relation ceases when the terminus disappears. The reason for the reference or ordering is the entire basis or reason for the predicamental relation. When speaking in terms of interpersonal relations, person must always be clearly distinguished from nature and person and individual must never be considered as synonyms. In that case we can define interpersonal relations as predicamental ones. It is the person that gives existence to the nature and signifies what is itself independent of nature. Nature, for its part, is the content of the person and, since it is undivided, it must also become the content of the reason, or the basis, for the interpersonal relations. As long as there is a reason in the relations they continue until they find a terminus which is distinct from the reason. The personal otherness of many persons with the same nature would be a reason for relationship among them. But there is no interpersonal relation if there is a subject and no terminus which is distinct from a basis in the subject. This means that the otherness of the personal terminus is a major defining characteristic of interpersonal relations. That is why the person would have no real existence without his relation with the other person experienced by him as a terminus.

The basis of the interpersonal relations is love. Let us develop this thesis. As Yannaras argued, only a personal ‘will-to-existence,’ unfettered by any natural-essential presupposition or intentionality, can be an absolutely ‘non-self-interested’ and sacrificial love. It is only as a volitional mode of existence that love, as an ontological (rather than an ethical) category, can express self-transcendence and self-offering and thereby lead to a communion with personal being. “Only love can refer to an existence which exists not through necessarily acquiescing to the fact of its existence, but through freely hypostasizing its being (by coming forth as distinct hypostases of its being) – producing hypostases by “generation” and “procession” with which it structures being as a communion of love.”<sup>79</sup>

Without being conditioned by nature, i.e. without their content, persons are not inclined to relate to each other. A volitional act of invitation is required to establish their relationship. An unalterable nature is revealed as the content of a person in its volitional movements, its enhypostasizing energies. “Invitatory energy”, as it is called by Yannaras, is a mode of the personal existence of enhypostasized human nature. It urges an act of love that can be accepted by the other person of the same nature. However, if a third does not arise in the ‘space’ of the other, “the radically primary referentiality of the subject will never constitute a relation – freedom from dependence on duality will never be established.”<sup>80</sup> It can only be resolved within “the initial hypostatic realization of being as a communion of love” which “can only be triadic.”<sup>81</sup> “Dependence on duality” is peculiar to relations of individuals rather than those of persons. So long as the relation is one of “dependence on duality”, there is no opportunity to distinguish traits of character or simple individual characteristics from natural hypostasizing energies. The in-

---

<sup>79</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 176.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176-177.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

dependent third breaks this dependence, witnessing to a hypostatic freedom from any commingling with the nature. In support of this triadic view of interpersonal relations Yannaras proposes an uncreated “*One and Trihypostatic Principle*” of creation which signifies an appearance of the *vestigia trinitatis* within human hypostatic relations just as it has been found in the relations within the impersonal universe and human relations with the universe. We will continue to develop this thought in the following chapters, looking at this dialogue from different angles.

## 2. DIALOGUE AS A MODE OF BEING OF A PERSON

### 2.1. Practicing life of dialogue (Martin Buber).

The problem has long been posed as to how true human relationships can be described in terms of dialogue rather than of debate or dispute. Many different obstacles, including “withholding, expectations, biases, deceptions, disruptions, conflicts, ambiguities, and vagueness”<sup>82</sup>, appear in the way of dialogue. Our human nature tends to be dominated by selfishness and yet we are always conscious of the fact that we are living with others. Otherness is inevitably a real fact of existence. Once we have related to another person, we may recognize his life as reflecting a being that is even more real than our own concept of what we are ourselves. Personality is neither simply an individual matter nor simply a social product; it is a function of relationship. We are all born as ‘individuals’, in the sense of being different from each other; but it is still only potentially rather than in actuality that we are born as persons. Our personalities are called into being by those who enter into relation with us. This does not mean either that a person is merely a cell in a social organism. To become a person means to become someone who responds to what happens from a centre of inwardness.

Persons will differ among themselves in the extent of their willingness to enter into relations with each other. This is due to the very fact that the person must keep itself apart from being mixed with the common nature. While firmly believing that I know who I am according to my own nature, I should nonetheless be aware that I cannot see my own value as it is known to others. This unknown value which is unique to my personhood has to be taken into account in dialogue, since one’s self is being penetrated by the other

---

<sup>82</sup> Kraemer, Kenneth. *Martin Buber’s I and Thou: practicing living dialogue*. Kenneth Paul Kramer with Mechthild Gawlick. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2003, p. 2.

who is also interested in comprehension from a centre of his own inwardness.

Human interest in the world – personal or impersonal – and in its Creator, has been considerably redirected towards dialogical or communal issues by the impact of a personalist approach in philosophy and theology. While science investigates human being not as a whole but in selective aspects and as part of the natural world, dialogical method turns us toward its wholeness and integrity. What is recognized as being a scientific method is, precisely, a highly perfected development of the subject-object (or *I-It*) way of knowing. But it is a process of abstraction away from the concrete actuality and largely ignores the differences there must inevitably be between the observers. It reduces the *I* as far as possible to an abstract knowing subject and the *It* as far as possible to a passive and abstract object of thought. However, as we have already said, even when we are dealing with the impersonal world, no observation can be made that is not affected by the observer. For these reasons alone, the scientific method is not qualified to find the wholeness either of human being or of nature. One might compare human beings with each other and a human with an animal, but all that can emerge from such a comparison and contrast will be an expanding and contracting scale of similarities and differences. This can be of aid in categorizing human beings and animals as differing objects in a world of objects but not in discovering the uniqueness of man as man or of nature as related to man.

Among the most significant writings of the best-known dialogical thinkers of the beginning of the last century – Buber, Rozenzweig and Ebner - pride of place must be given to Martin Buber's "I and Thou". In this brilliant book, now recognized as a classic, the author makes use of both poetry and philosophy to reveal the significance and the depth of our human inter-relations. There can be no existence other than in relation to other existences, so, once they enter into dialogue, all the participants become, insofar as

they are open to it, participants in a common existence. Buber stressed the importance of this dialogical common existence, arguing for the fundamental value of the *I-Thou* relationship and its distinction from the *I-It* relation. The *I-It* relations are objectifying and monological as opposed to those between *I* and *Thou*, which are communal and dialogical. So one can say that the pair of words *I-It* indicates degrees of separation from others, whereas the two-fold term *I-Thou* indicates a togetherness, a close bonding<sup>83</sup>.

*I-Thou* is the primary word of relation. It is characterized by mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and ineffability. Although it is only within this relation that personality and the personal really exist, the *Thou* of *I-Thou* is not limited to men but may include animals, trees, objects of nature, and God. *I-It* is the primary word of experiencing and using. It takes place within a man and not between him and the world. Hence it is entirely subjective and lacking in mutuality. Whether in knowing, feeling, or acting it is the typical subject-object relationship. It is always mediate and indirect and hence is comprehensible and orderable, significant only in connection and not itself. The *It* of *I-It* may equally well be a he, a she, an animal, a thing, a spirit, or even God, without a change in the primary word. Thus *I-Thou* and *I-It* cut across the lines of our ordinary distinctions to focus our attention not upon individual objects and their causal connections but upon the relations between things, the *dazwischen* ('there in-between').<sup>84</sup>

Buber was not the only – or even the first – researcher to discover the *I-Thou* relationship, but he gave it its classical form and drew the essential distinction between *I-Thou* and *I-It* relations. He also worked out the implications of this distinction in a systematic and thorough-going fashion. The German theologian Karl Heim has described this distinction between *I-Thou* and *I-It* as “one of the decisive discoveries of our time” – “the Copernican revolution” of modern thought. When this new conception has reached fuller clarity, it must lead, writes Heim, “to a second new beginning of European thought pointing beyond the Cartesian

---

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Friedman, Maurice S. *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960, p. 57.

contribution to modern philosophy.”<sup>85</sup>

In considering the role of dialogue, Buber mentions a phenomenon common among men - a certain kind of speech through which a human being enters into a common existence with other human beings, speech-with-meaning. This speech-with-meaning reaches out for a personal reciprocation, which may or may not occur. Dialogue, then, can be viewed as a form or mode of personal being recognized within being-with-the-other, that is, within the relationship, which exercises a continual influence on the personal inward being.

The objections to Buber’s method of knowing what man is stem for the most part from the belief that there is no other way of knowing than the subject-object, or *I-It*, and hence that any knowing into which the whole man enters must be a poor combination of ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’ in which subjective emotion corrupts the otherwise objective power of reason. It is, in fact, only the knowing of the *I-Thou* relation which makes possible the conception of the wholeness of man. Only *I-Thou* sees this wholeness as the whole person in unreserved relation with what is over against him rather than as a sum of parts, some of which are labelled objective and hence oriented around the thing known and some subjective and hence oriented around the knower.<sup>86</sup>

The idea is still widespread that while we can know the external world of the senses directly, we can know other selves only mediately and by analogy. This overlooks the fact that the *I* is only an *I*, the self only a self, through its meeting with the *Thou*. A feral child, for example, while he is being brought up by the wolves, is not human. He has a human body and, originally, a human brain but does not have that distance from the world and from other selves which is a necessary presupposition for entering into relation with a *Thou* and becoming an *I*. In normal conditions, on the other hand, a child will come to know others as per-

---

<sup>85</sup> Heim, *Ontologie und Theologie*, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, neue Folge XI (1930), p. 333, as cited in *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

sons through meeting them and through the innate potentiality (the ‘inborn’ or ‘a priori’ *Thou*) of becoming a person through such meeting. The child’s awareness of himself as *I* is preceded by the meeting of the *I* and the *Thou* which enables him to infer what the actions of others might mean.<sup>87</sup>

It is, then, on the basis of his relationship with others, that the child comes to a knowledge of the external world. Later, it is through his social relationships that he receives those categories that gradually enable him to see the world as “an ordered continuum of knowable and passive objects”. Buber has described this process as the movement of the child from the *I-Thou* to an *I-It* relation with people and things. Through constantly comparing his perceptions with those of others the child establishes what is for him ‘objective’ reality. Since it is often purely technical in nature, this dialogue with others belongs to the order of the *I-It* relation, but “the compelling conviction of reality which it produces is entirely dependent upon the prior (if forgotten) reality of the meeting with the *Thou*.”<sup>88</sup>

There are two different *I*s within the pairs *I-Thou* and *I-It*. However, the world itself is not twofold but is to be considered rather in two different and related modes.<sup>89</sup> It is difficult in practice to distinguish them and, in the case of those who are attempting to live in dialogue, the distinction may be expected to vanish altogether. The dialogical modus of being provides the person with a “two-dimensional” perspective in contrast to the *I-It* relation, which is a sort of mutual soliloquy. The one-sided *I* is to be transformed into the *I* reciprocally reflected in *Thou*. Nevertheless, the two modes are related to each other and co-exist in the same reality of being; however inseparable in practice they must be distinguished in principle if we wish to grasp the be-

---

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Although the Buber scholar Kramer used the term “twofold world”: one may find that Buber himself mentioned “twofold attitude” towards the world instead of “twofold world” – Kraemer. *Martin Buber’s I and Thou*, p. 42. And he was only trying to link or subordinate word pairs in their twofold relation to *I*.

ing in its wholeness and immediacy. At the beginning of his book, Buber considers “two primal life stands” as follows.

|                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>I-IT</i> RELATIONS             | <i>I-THOU</i> RELATIONSHIPS          |
| Never Spoken with the Whole Being | Spoken with the Whole Being          |
| Experiencing/Using/Knowing        | Event/Happening                      |
| In Space and Time                 | Spaceless/Timeless                   |
| One-sided: Singular               | Two-sided: Mutual                    |
| Controlling                       | Yielding                             |
| Subject-Object Duality            | Interhuman Betweenness <sup>90</sup> |

When taken separately, the parameters in the second column seem to be the opposite of those in the first. However, if we consider them in an existential rather than analytical way, a certain continuity between them can be recognized. All human beings are provided with rational, and experiential, as well as spiritual, modes of knowing. The word-pair *I-Thou* initially embraced the whole world but now it has abandoned its wholeness and in becoming partial has brought about the pair *I-It*. The wholeness of being can never be evoked within *I-It* relations, though a movement toward wholeness can be urged, but Buber argues that such a movement is rare and not strictly necessary since the originally experienced *I-Thou* relationship remains as an intrinsic characteristic of the human being itself.

Experience is followed by use, which is followed by knowledge, which can be confirmed by a coming event as it leads to a new experience. There is a cyclical relationship between the two modes of human being. In ascending towards the spaceless and timeless, one starts from being within space and time. But the state of being within space and time has itself arisen from within the spaceless and timeless. The consciousness that something is lacking may lead someone to attempt to enter into dialogue with another, who similarly feels that something is lacking. One’s acceptance of the *I-Thou* relationship means the mutual

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

*perichoral* intention of allowing one's *I* to know the being of the *Thou* and come back to replenish one's own knowledge. Having come up against the limitations of knowledge acquired by the "subject-object" rational method, one may be intuitively looking for existential knowledge, or experience from within the "interhuman" relationship. Thus, we may talk about *I-It* and *I-Thou* relations as two related modes, though our presumption is that *I-Thou* has priority.

To understand his "life of dialogue" it is important to see how Buber sees the interaction between the dialogic relations expressed by the two initial word pairs *I-Thou* and *I-It*. In the German original the *I-It* relation is the *Ich-Es Verhältnis*, the *I-Thou* relation the *Ich-Du Beziehung*. Though not carried over in the English translation this difference between *Verhältnis* and *Beziehung* is important in indicating the two stages of Buber's insight into man. First, that man is to be understood generally in terms of his relationships rather than taken in himself; second, that he is to be understood specifically in terms of that direct, mutual relation that makes him human.<sup>91</sup>

- The *I-Thou* relationship comes first, and the *I-It* relation emerges from it;
- The *I-It* is the "eternal chrysalis"; the *I-Thou* is the "eternal butterfly";
- The *I-Thou* continually becomes *I-It*; and only at times is the *It* capable of returning to the *Thou*;
- The *I-It* need not become the *I-Thou*; yet, to truly become a human person, one must meet the world as *Thou*; and
- The "inborn *Thou*" continues throughout life to seek genuine meeting<sup>92</sup>.

In a formidable act of intuition, Buber has seen that the *I-Thou* relation comes first, and yet the image of the butterfly suggests the idea of something that has reached its perfection. So what is it that has come first - the actual perfection, or just the idea of perfection? There is a kind of dialectic or antinomy, which seems to be applicable to any chicken-and-egg, or butterfly-and-chrysalis, question. Ra-

---

<sup>91</sup> Friedman. *The Life of Dialogue*, p. 61.

<sup>92</sup> Kraemer. *Martin Buber's I and Thou*, p. 29.

tionality can be troubled by antinomies, “mutually contradictory propositions each of which can apparently be proved”<sup>93</sup>. It happens, as Kant argued, because of “the fallacies that arise from applying the principles of space and time to matters that are not thus experienced”<sup>94</sup>. Each of the four Kantian antinomies consists of thesis and antithesis. One of the antinomies presented by him concerned space and time. The thesis says: “The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.” The antithesis says: “The world has no beginning in time, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space.”<sup>95</sup> Within the dialogic world these might be used to characterize the pairs *I-It* and *I-Thou* respectively. As the *I-It* relation takes place within space and time, this belongs to the world of the thesis; similarly, the world of the *I-Thou* relationship belongs to that of the antithesis. On the one hand, it turns out that the Buberian dialogic pairs *I-Thou* and *I-It* have an experiential rather than a rational meaning, and in that context we cannot call them antinomies. On the other hand, independently of experience, they constitute an intellectual reality and the antinomy emerges when we try to fit them into categories. So when we speak of Buberian antinomies, they should be considered in a dual, rather than in a Kantian, sense. As we shall see later, there is also a Christian interpretation which could be given to the antinomy of *I-It* and *I-Thou*.

The concept of *antinomy* began to play a significant role in Christian theology at the time of the Christological controversies. There were no appropriate terms in which to consider the interpenetration (“interchange of the properties” – *communicatio idiomatum*) of the two natures of Christ<sup>96</sup>. The Greek word *antinomy* appeared appropriate for the two natures that were incompatible but had been unit-

---

<sup>93</sup> Russell, Bertrand. *History of western philosophy*. London: Routledge, 2000, p. 681.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Livingstone E. A. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 133.

ed mystically in a common hypostasis within the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The purely personal meaning of this Christian *antinomy* probably corresponds better to a Buberian rather than a Kantian philosophy. Therefore, coming back to the interference of *I-Thou* and *I-It* proposed by Buber, it follows that the true human person meets “the world as *Thou*” and that the “inborn *Thou*” continues throughout life to seek genuine meeting. True dialogue may occur if *It* and *Thou* are united in a common hypostasis within the human person of *I*, and the *I* of *I-It* becomes once again the *I* of *I-Thou*, out of which the *I-It* originally emerged. Consequently, the *antinomy* of the *It* and the *Thou* within the relational pairs *I-It* and *I-Thou* becomes true in a Christian personal sense, in the same way as the different *antinomies* of divine-human, spirit-flesh, and soul-body do when referring in part to the person of man and wholly to the Person of Christ.

Individual perceptions of dialogical relations may be different and sometimes dialogue simply becomes monologue or it becomes centred only on matters of common interest. The personal approach would identify dialogue as existing between those who understand and recognize the richness of each other, each seeking from within the other something vital which is lacking in himself. Buber distinguished three realms of dialogue: genuine, technical and monological.

1. **Genuine Dialogue:** “Whether spoken or silent...each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship between himself and them.”
2. **Technical Dialogue:** That communication which is “prompted solely by the need of objective understanding.”
3. **Monologue Disguised as Dialogue:** That situation in which “two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their own resources.”<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Kraemer. *Martin Buber's I and Thou*, p. 33.

Genuine dialogue is characterized by the intention of the “inborn *Thou*” reaching out towards identification with the real *Thou*. This may be understood easily in the case of human love, for instance: a man is unconsciously seeking a woman whose image impresses him as his ideal (or a woman in the same way is seeking a man). Her *Thou* implicitly exists within the man and impels him to seek its embodiment, though in that particular case the force of his passion may eliminate the other personal dimensions of the dialogue, in which case the relations of human love will eventually be turned into monologue and/or objectified.

This personal dimension in dialogue is of even more importance in the case of those who are seeking God. When He is present in human personal life, God enters into dialogue with man and bears witness that this dialogue is true. The witnessing enables the truth that emerges from the dialogue to be *confirmed* by a third party. The role of the third party is to confirm that the dialogue is true and that all the participants have a sincere and open intention to communicate dialogically. Friedman, the interpreter of Buber, however, has also explained that true confirmation means one confirms one’s partner as this particular existing being even while opposing him.

I legitimize him over against me as the one with whom I have to do in real dialogue, and I may then trust him also to act towards me as a partner. To confirm him in this way I need the aid of ‘imagining the real.’ This is no intuitive perception but a bold swinging into the other which demands the intensest action of my being, even as does all genuine fantasy, only here the realm of my act ‘is not the all-possible’ but the particular, real person who steps up to meet me, the person whom I seek to make present as just so and not otherwise in all his wholeness, unity, and uniqueness.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Friedman. *The Life of Dialogue*, p. 86.

But even when I only do this as a partner, standing in a common situation with the other, if there is no confirmation of the third party my address to the other may remain unanswered and the dialogue may die in seed.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit witnesses to the relationship between the Father and the Son. This is the true dialogue of love, as the Father reveals His love toward the Son Whose answer to His Father is eternally the same. The love of the Father is revealed to men who are seeking God and believe in His Christ. The fruits of the true dialogue between the Father and the Son are revealed to others through the Holy Spirit as the Witness to the relationship between the Father and His Son. There is a manifest form of dialogue which is revealed to humankind, which responds and participates in it. Later we will pursue further the impact of the Trinitarian doctrine on the theology of dialogue and, inversely, of the dialogic perspective in Trinitarian theology.

Dialogue begins with meeting, which causes the participants to recognize what is occurring between them and to respond truthfully. “All Real Living is Meeting”. Genuine meeting, for Buber, is immediate, personal and reciprocal, which means that its wholeness refers to the wholeness of *I-Thou* instead of to the particularity of *I-It* relations. He emphasizes the importance of clarifying what is original and supreme in the genuine meeting, drawing a vivid contrast between such a meeting and what he calls the ‘mismeeting.

MISMEETING (*Vergegnung*)  
 Dismissing the Other  
 • Labeling  
 • Misrepresenting  
 ‘Misrecognizing’ the Other  
 • Culturally induced stereotypes  
 • Judging the other  
 ‘Miscommunicating’ with the Other  
 • Distorting  
 • Misunderstanding

MEETING (*Begegnung*)  
 Accepting the Other  
 • As a unique person  
 • As a co-equal person  
 Affirming the Other  
 • Addressing and responding  
 even through tensions  
 Confirming the Other  
 • Accepting and affirming,  
 even while withstanding

The above characteristics of both meeting and ‘mismeeting’ can be found in Kenneth Kramer’s study, “I and Thou”<sup>99</sup>. The first reaction of someone who is holding back from dialogue is likely to be a simple dismissal of the other. In an attempt to avoid encountering the unknown, unpredictable other, one tries to label him with some familiar epithet and continues to ignore his otherness. There may also be an attempt to misrepresent the other by depicting him or her as a being on a lower level and, hence, of lesser importance than oneself in the meeting. In that case the encounter becomes a one-sided “mismeeting” and dialogue fails to emerge. On the other hand, where personal uniqueness and equality are accepted by both sides, the meeting may produce real dialogical relations of *I-Thou*. The participants reciprocally welcome each other’s otherness as a principle of their relations and go forward towards a living dialogue.

Having grown up in a certain cultural, social, geographic and ethnic environment, one cannot overlook the fact that the other, coming from a different realm, is similarly conditioned. Stereotypes, imprinted by culture or by tradition, are, consciously or unconsciously, present within us. They impel us to sit in judgement on those from outside our culture or tradition. This may lead us to a distorted view that the other does not look, speak, behave etc. as he or she should. Thus, the opportunity for dialogue is missed because of the stereotypes, although they can be overcome through resolving some internal mutual tensions. Buber considers that people can truly address each other and respond even despite such tensions, which are only caused by problems of recognition and by cultural one-sidedness. The more one progresses in dialogue, the less one is affected by the stereotypes. However, even after the process of communication has begun, serious distortions and misunderstandings are still possible: they may occur at any time throughout the dialogue. It may be necessary at any point to confirm the recognition of the other as a living partner rather than an object. When the disruption occurs, one

---

<sup>99</sup> Kramer. *Martin Buber’s I and Thou*, p. 47.

must step back and consider oneself as again standing at the very beginning of dialogue and looking at the other as a unique and co-equal person, accepting his otherness.

When dealing with human existence, one must consider all the surrounding beings within its peculiar mode of relations. Who or what can appear as “the other” to a man living his relational life? First, there are various material objects, whether useful or otherwise, which can be recognized as related to man. Secondly, other persons, once they have been perceived from a certain view, become - to a greater or lesser extent – significant for man, and this encourages the desire or the need to enter into communication with them. And, lastly, there are beings from beyond the sensual world who are able to communicate with man since he is provided with spiritual receptivity. In Buberian thought there are three different non-hierarchical relational realms – those of nature, of men and of spiritual beings. A fourth realm, which Buber addresses later on, and separately from the “vaguely described”<sup>100</sup> spiritual beings, is the particular relation with the Absolute, or God. In his essay, “What Is Man?” (1938) Buber speaks of this realm:

[A man’s] threefold living relation is, first, his relation to the world and to things, second, his relation to men – both to individuals and to the many – third, his relation to the [endless transcending] mystery of being – which is dimly apparent through all of this but infinitely transcends it – what the philosopher calls the Absolute and the believer calls God, and which cannot in fact be eliminated from the situation even by a man who rejects both designations<sup>101</sup>.

Life with nature, or in relation to the world and to objects, may appear to concern only the relation *I-It*. However, if one speaks about the unique wholeness of the being of a thing, then its perception in terms of *Thou* becomes possible. It means that the person, “the sayer of *Thou*”, has bestowed on the object the ca-

---

<sup>100</sup> Macquarrie, John. *Existentialism. An introduction, guide and assessment*. London: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 108.

<sup>101</sup> Cit. *ibid*, p. 63.

capacity for unity and wholeness which the object now manifests<sup>102</sup>. One may say that this living wholeness is a property of the *I-Thou* relation as it functions in the life of our relations with nature<sup>103</sup>.

Relations between men are essentially described in terms of genuine meeting, as described above. The phenomenon of spoken language is a peculiarity of both sides in this relation, and differentiates it from Buber's other two relational realms. The matter of how far changes in human dialogue have genuinely originated in changes of language could be a profitable subject for serious research. Nobody can generate an *I-Thou* dialogue by himself. "Genuine dialogue occurs by virtue of relational *grace*, which arises from and generates the spirit of genuine meeting"<sup>104</sup>. What sort of *grace* is mentioned here? It is "not a theological term but spontaneous *presence of mutuality*"<sup>105</sup>. Buber said that "this ground and meaning of our existence constitutes a mutuality, arising again and again, such as can subsist only between persons"<sup>106</sup>. There is a certain difficulty in clarifying the Buberian term *grace* in its non-theological meaning. When appearing as a definition for some particular kind of grace, the *presence of mutuality* appears to be a nebulous concept, but by approaching the more theological meaning of grace, one can grasp the very central idea of *confirmed dialogue*. That is, that dialogue in its true being should be confirmed by grace - the very grace which had itself initially prompted the dialogue which has emerged from a genuine meeting. This grace is always present as a witness to dialogue in its continuous mutuality.

In Buber's perception, *grace* could presumably be related to the "inborn *Thou*". The otherness of the "inborn *Thou*" is revealed to man through, and by accepting

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>103</sup> See also Macquarrie. *Existentialism*, p. 108-110. One may also find here an interesting discussion of the closeness between Buber's and Heidegger's thought.

<sup>104</sup> Kraemer. *Martin Buber's I and Thou*, p. 56.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>106</sup> Buber, Martin. *I and Thou* / trans. by R. G. Smith. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937, p. 135.

and confirming, the other in a genuine meeting. This then generates the *I-Thou* dialogue. But Buber later turned to the fourth realm of the “eternal Thou”, replacing the vague “spiritual beings” which he had associated with artistic inspiration<sup>107</sup>. In the third and last part of *I and Thou* Buber wrote about the relationship between *I* and the “eternal *Thou*”, and about the dialogically oriented movement he calls “turning”. His theological and philosophical insight had led him to the confident assurance that God as “eternal *Thou*” can be glimpsed in every genuine *I-Thou* relationship.

If I myself should designate something as the “central portion of my life work”, then it could not be anything individual, but only the one basic insight that has led me not only to the study of the Bible, as to the study of Hasidism, but also to an independent philosophical presentation: that the I-Thou relation to God and the I-Thou relation to one’s fellow man are at bottom related to each other<sup>108</sup>.

There is a parallel to be drawn here with the patristic thought of the early Christian epoch concerning how God’s will becomes known to man: man becomes aware of it because God has moved towards him. Man needs only a very dim awareness in order to recognize the presence of the eternal *Thou*, seeking to enter into relation with him. That appearance (*pro-odos*) of God, His descent as a fleeting personal revelation within man’s consciousness, was even called in the writings of John Damascene a “jump of God” (*exalma theou*)<sup>109</sup>. Since the briefest re-

---

<sup>107</sup> One may find the same line in the life and thought of one of the most influential recent Orthodox ascetics – Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), the author of the book “Saint Silouan” and a number of other books, well-known in the West. He settled in England in the last century and founded the monastery in Essex. Being a talented artist in his youth, he was looking for knowledge of God in his creative inspiration. He thought that in it lay the grace of God. Later he turned to a search for the personal God – to Whom he might say *Thou* and Who answered him in the same manner. In other words, he personally turned to the relationship *I-“eternal Thou”*, which became of great importance for Buber, living and writing at almost the same time. In this chapter, we will further examine the thought of Fr. Sophrony.

<sup>108</sup> Buber, Martin. *Philosophical Interrogations*. Ed. Sidney and Beatrice Rome. New York: Hope, Rinehart & Winston, 1964.

<sup>109</sup> *Patrologia Graeca*, 94, 860C.

relation of God to humanity can radically change perceptions even up to death, God's *Thou* can be glimpsed within those human relationships that remain reciprocal, self-offering and genuine, in the Buberian sense. Thus, genuine human dialogue is no longer to be considered as exclusively human but is witnessed by the "eternal *Thou*". This means that the dialogue has become *confirmed* as mutually true by the third part of the "eternal *Thou*". At the same time the third party is recognized as genuine through the I-"eternal *Thou*" relationship in which all the parties to a genuine dialogue participate. In fact, the "eternal *Thou*" is the source of genuine dialogue.

Every particular *Thou* is a glimpse through to the eternal *Thou*; by means of every particular *Thou* the primary word addresses the eternal *Thou*. Through this mediation of the *Thou* of all beings fulfilment, and non-fulfilment, of relations comes to them: the inborn *Thou* is realized in each relation and consummated in none. It is consummated only in the direct relation with the *Thou* that by its nature cannot become *I*.<sup>110</sup>

The peculiar function of the mediator must be addressed. Although no one can "express" God as an idea, everyone can address God. One comes "before the face" of God and meets the "eternal *Thou*" through genuine dialogue with a "particular *Thou*". Our relationship with each other is never complete in itself and is fully consummated only in the presence of the "eternal *Thou*". Therefore, God is the source, giving birth to genuine relationship, while His presence is reflected by the authenticity of the relationship. According to Buber, the "eternal *Thou*" can never become a human *I*, and, therefore, remains immanent and unique for every human *Thou*. It is only the reflection of the "eternal *Thou*" within true dialogue which makes true every other *Thou*.

Now we consider that turning point which, according to Buber, is a characteristic of dialogue. The very term "turning" (*Umkehr*), which in different transla-

---

<sup>110</sup> Buber. *I and Thou*, p. 75.

tions of “I and Thou” appears as “reversal” or “return”, is the Hebrew word *teshuvah* as translated by Buber<sup>111</sup>. *Teshuvah* in Hebrew means complete turning to God. It may now be understood clearly why Buber used this particular term for the practice of true dialogue. Once the “angle” of the “eternal *Thou*” is included, every confirmed dialogue assumes the appearance of a triangle. This reveals the very personal meaning of the starting point of any dialogue, which in turn leads us to the mystery of personal faith. A lack of faith would never allow true dialogue to come into being. This makes sense of the irreversible completeness of becoming involved in dialogue.

Before engaging in the exploration of inter-religious dialogue that follows, it is crucial to insist that the basis for dialogue is a complete turning to God. It is impossible to betray oneself or to revert to selfishness when turned towards God, just as it is impossible to do so in a mutually true relationship among men. As Buber wrote,

In genuine dialogue the turning to the partner takes place in all truth, that is, it is a turning of the being. But where the dialogue is fulfilled in its being, between partners who have turned to one another in truth, who express themselves without reserve and are free of the desire for semblance, there is brought into being a memorable common fruitfulness which is to be found nowhere else<sup>112</sup>.

As this implies, the uniqueness and fruitfulness of genuine dialogical relations are serious arguments for introducing that approach into the praxis of relations between different religious traditions.

While concentrating on dialogue as a modus of human existence, mostly by following Buberian thought, we have considered the interference that exists between the two dialogical *I-It* and *I-Thou* relations. It has been presented as a type of rela-

---

<sup>111</sup> Kraemer. *Martin Buber's I and Thou*, p. 158.

<sup>112</sup> Buber, Martin. *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*. Ed. with Introductory Essay by Maurice Friedman, trans. M. Friedman and R. G. Smith. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965, p. 85-86.

tional antinomy between *I-It* and *I-Thou*, similar in meaning to certain well-known Christian antinomies. The “inborn *Thou*” of man seeks to be realized in the real relationship of *I-Thou*, which is prompted by genuine meeting. We have provided an example of the “inborn *Thou*”, that of man impelled to seek woman, and vice versa. We gave the further and more important example of man seeking God. The characteristics of “meeting”, with the attendant dangers of “mismeeting”, were discussed in order to come closer to understanding the type of meeting which generates true dialogue. We emphasised the dimensional changes involved in moving from the one-sided *I-It* to the two-sided *I-Thou* and, further, having entered into relationship with the “eternal *Thou*”, into the three-sided, *confirmed, I-Thou* relation (confirmed by the relational *grace* given through the *I-“eternal Thou”* relation). It is with this last, three-sided relationship that we are now chiefly concerned.

The following chapters will be devoted to theological issues. We will consider how this three-sided dialogue – the *I-Thou* dialogue, witnessed and confirmed by grace - may stand in relation to a Trinitarian theology.

## **2.2. Buber and Christianity.**

“Theology is talking about God; religion is experiencing God. It’s the difference between reading a menu and eating a meal.” This is a quotation from Martin Buber’s sayings given by Harold S. Kushner in his bestseller “When Bad Things Happen to Good People”. Buber’s insight into very basic things enables him to give clear expression to such intimate and subtle matters as the personal experience of God. His philosophical outlook encourages him to be less concerned with his own preferences and the confession of his own personal faith, and to aim at better results in a dialogical perspective. He looks for the real Jewishness in Christianity and for the real Christianness in Judaism, but in our view he fails, largely because of his insistence on separating or even contrasting, on the one

hand, Jesus and the synoptic authors and, on the other, Paul and John.<sup>113</sup> In this respect he is following the precedent set by some Protestant theologians, notably Weiss, Bultmann and Jeremias, expressing disagreement with them but nonetheless writing appreciatively of their theological method. It was an opinion popular at that time that those seeking for pure Christianity had to rediscover certain major points in the Bible which had apparently been reshaped by the Church in creating a Hellenized and Gnostic Christianity – a Christianity of “John and Paul” instead of the messianic one of the “real” Jesus. While the messianic Jesus was addressing the Jews, the gnostic Christianity had been devised for the gentiles. Among other disputable issues in the Hellenic-Jewish confrontation, Buber has even raised the possibility that Jesus might have been taken straight from the cross to Heaven in much the same manner as Enoch, or Elijah.

Despite such controversial sticking points it is, nonetheless, possible to follow in Buber’s thought the dialogical method as it has been outlined above. In doing so, we must resist any temptation to objectify – to reduce to the status of an object of study – historically and traditionally confirmed spiritual reality as it has been experienced in practice rather than in theory. The dialogical way of thinking is only realized when the other practice is accepted as a different but nonetheless real existent. This can only make sense when no effort is made in the name of our own convictions to refuse the significance and uniqueness of the other.

After the Second World War Buber was involved in a Jewish-Christian dialogue, though his own Judaism was not regarded as strictly orthodox. His dialogical approach towards apparently intractable problems was already well known, for example through his suggestion that the state of Israel should be defined as a joint Jewish-Arab foundation. It became even clearer in the early 1950s when he published, in Germany, England, and America, his *Two Types of Faith* (*Zwei Glau-*

---

<sup>113</sup> See also, e.g., Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Martin Buber & Christianity; a dialogue between Israel and the Church*. NY: Macmillan, 1961.

bensweisen), the book on Jesus and Paul which he had written during the ‘siege of Jerusalem’. It was subtitled “A Study of the Interpenetration of Judaism and Christianity,” but it is also a study of their fundamental divergence and, in particular, of the messianism of biblical Judaism as it appears independently of historical Christianity. The meaning of the subtitle, then, is that Judaism and Christianity can enter into a true dialogue despite the long history of their past controversies. Buber felt that messianism had been continued and reinforced by Jesus on a basis that was altogether different from the messianism of Paul and John. Their thinking was centred on belief in the risen Christ rather than around the biblical *emunah*, or trust in God the Father, which Buber believed was the exclusive concern of Jesus.

In reply to this one might recall that there are two major parts of Jesus’ life – his early time in Galilee (which was, perhaps, what Buber had chiefly in view) and his stays in Jerusalem, including the final journey to Jerusalem and the Passion. On the way to Jerusalem He certainly talked about His Resurrection, teaching His disciples to believe inseparably both in His relationship with the Father (*emunah*) and His historical mission of salvation. In this context Buber prefers what Jesus has to say about His sufferings, which seems to him to be more Semitic when they are taken from Luke (Luke 24:26) rather than from the other synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Mark (repeated three times in each of them).

Buber construed two religious types according to their approach to God: one called by the Hebrew term for trust, *emunah*, meaning mutual confidence between God and man (*I and Thou*); and the other called by the Greek term for faith, *pistis*, meaning belief in the factual truth of certain crucial events in salvation history (*I and It*) presented in statements about Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection.<sup>114</sup> Buber considered Judaism and Christianity as the classical examples of *emunah* and *pistis*,

---

<sup>114</sup> “Buber, Martin.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Encyclopaedia Britannica 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006.

respectively – though there is a good deal of *pistis* in historical Judaism and a good deal of *emunah* in historical Christianity. This argument, together with others like it, could, he believed, provide the common ground for a dialogically open, if not dogmatically defined, universe of discourse which would enable himself and his Christian interlocutors to talk with one another fruitfully. The interpenetration of the two dialogical word pairs, *I-Thou* and *I-It*, as well as recognition of the primacy of *I-Thou*, is important to those who are seeking to engage in dialogue on a common ground. There would be no common ground if either the above word pairs (*I-Thou* and *I-It*) or the above types of faith (*emunah* and *pistis*) were assumed to be in irreconcilable opposition to each other.

The intimacy of the *I-Thou* relationship is particularly characteristic of those Christians who have resisted the scholastic method which tends towards the objectification of thought. It is a method that has led many other Christian thinkers and theologians who have adopted the *I-Thou* philosophy to recast it in the form of a radical dualism between the *I-Thou* and the *I-It* relations which is entirely incompatible with Buber's own approach. On the other hand, the Jewish literalism and hypocrisy of the Scribes and the Pharisees which Jesus condemned could be referred to as *I-It* relations of the objectified type. Unlike the "real" Pharisees, Buber argues, Jesus in His "woes" and other words of condemnation, was referring to a particular sort of pseudo-pharisee.

While remaining firmly planted on the soil of Judaism, Buber has personally, and to an extent that possibly no Jew has ever done before, recognized and pointed to the tremendous religious significance of Jesus. He wrote:

From my youth onwards I have found in Jesus my great brother. That Christianity has regarded and does regard him as God and Saviour has always appeared to me a fact of the highest importance which, for his sake and my own, I must endeavour to understand. . . . My own fraternally open relationship to him has grown ever stronger and clearer, and today I see him more strongly and clearly than ever before. I am more than ever certain

that a great place belongs to him in Israel's history of faith and that this place cannot be described by any of the usual categories.<sup>115</sup>

Buber's study of Jesus and Paul was the culmination of forty years of concern with Jesus' significance for Jewish Messianism, and it was certainly an event of great significance in both advancing and explicating the relation between Judaism and Christianity. But in fact, the *emunah* which is here identified both with biblical Judaism and with the teachings of Jesus, is not in opposition to *pistis*, faith in the truth of a proposition, which Buber identifies with Greek thought and Paulinism. They should be understood not as opposites but as complementaries. It is because they stand in a different relation to Judaism and, therefore, have a different value for him, that Buber draws such a sharp line of demarcation between them. As a result, whether intentionally or not, he identifies these two historically presented types of faith in accordance with the two dialogical pairs *I-It* and *I-Thou*.

With regard to his own individual position, Buber preferred to keep things rather nebulous and avoid polemics, consistently putting everything into an eschatological perspective. He wrote that the faith of Judaism and that of Christianity will remain separate until the Kingdom comes. According to him, the Christian considers the Jew as "the incomprehensibly obdurate man who declines to see what has happened", and the Jew sees the Christian as "the incomprehensibly daring man who affirms redemption in an unredeemed world". Nevertheless, he believed that each could acknowledge the other's relation to truth if they would pay more attention to personal experience of God rather than to the ways in which God can be imagined. This was how he was able to preserve the dialogical disposition of both his mind and heart with regard to this mutually painful matter.

---

<sup>115</sup> Buber, Martin. *Two Types of Faith*. Trans. By Norman P. Goldhawk. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951; New York: Macmillan Co., 1952, p. 12f.

An Israel striving after the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of the person and a Christianity striving for the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of nations would have something as yet unsaid to say to each other and a help to give to one another hardly to be conceived at the present time.<sup>116</sup>

Proclaiming his own credo, Buber wrote in a letter to the Roman Catholic Karl Thieme: “Judaism and Christianity stand with each other in the mystery of our Father and Judge: so the Jew may speak of the Christian and the Christian of the Jew not otherwise than in fear and trembling before the mystery of God. On this foundation alone can genuine understanding exist between Jew and Christian.”<sup>117</sup> This letter, taken in conjunction with an earlier letter addressed to the same person, is important as indicating the spirit in which *Two Types of Faith* was to be written. Buber accurately follows his own dialogical insight and never ceases to affirm the importance of accepting the other without which no dialogue is possible: “I am convinced in ultimate seriousness that as the Jews are not destined to become Christians, so the Christians are not destined to become Jews.”<sup>118</sup> He was convinced, that God’s truth does not allow itself to be trapped in the human dialectic of such an either/or. Concerning his own preferences, Buber confessed that he heard both a “yes” and a “no” when he read the New Testament and wrote to Thieme that “I hear in Mark 10:18 another voice than in John 14:6, and I hold to the former speaker and not to the latter... That the mystery will be fully revealed in the end, I believe as you do: only I anticipate that *all* human articles of faith will be resolved in it.”<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 173f.

<sup>117</sup> As referred in Friedman, Maurice S. *Martin Buber's Life and Work*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988, p. 84.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 83-84.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

In the Foreword to *Two Types of Faith*, Buber insists he is not suggesting that Jews and Christians in general fall into the categories he ascribes to them “but only that the one faith (*emunah*) found its most typical representation among Jews and the other (*pistis*) among Christians.”<sup>120</sup> He concedes that a Hellenistic religiosity was already present in Judaism before it went on to contribute to the formation of Christianity, and he was also well aware of the interpenetration of the two types of faith in both religions. We cannot assume that he had any close acquaintance with Orthodox theology and tradition. He was, rather, heavily involved in relations with those theologians who were systematically following Western thought, mainly based either on Thomism or on the theology of the Reformation. Buber’s philosophy of dialogue could be greatly enriched through contact with Orthodox Patristic thinking on the strictly personal relation of both God-human and human-human types. There is a dialogical experience in the Orthodox tradition, where no scholastic distinction can be found between *pistis* and *emunah* but rather their complementary and undivided interpenetration. There are even serious parallels to be found between some Orthodox Christian points of view on *emunah* and those of Martin Buber. Especially, there is a good deal of common ground in the intimate matter of the human-divine-human personal relationship. In his book *The Life of Dialogue* Maurice Friedman has analyzed the influence of Buber’s dialogical insight on Christian theology. As a result of his analysis and the direct correspondences he has found, he drew up a list of those theologians and Christian philosophers who had somehow been touched by Buber (mainly by *I-Thou* philosophy) at that time:

Among the prominent Christian religious thinkers whom Buber has significantly influenced are John Baillie, Karl Barth, Nicholas Berdyaev, Emil Brunner, Father M. C. D’Arcy, Herbert H. Farmer, J. E. Fison, Friedrich Gogarten, Karl Heim, Reuel Howe, Hermann von Keyserling, Ernst Michel,

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, J. H. Oldham, Theodore Steinbüchel, and Paul Tillich. Mention should also be made of a number of Christian thinkers whose religious thought has significantly paralleled Buber's without either influencing or being influenced by him. Of these the most important are Ferdinand Ebner, John Macmurray, Gabriel Marcel, and Eugene Rosenstock-Huessy.<sup>121</sup>

Along with other theologians of the Reformation, Paul Tillich was greatly influenced by Buber and wrote about his significance for Protestant theology. Tillich saw it as lying in three main directions: his 'existential interpretation of prophetic religion, his rediscovery of mysticism as an element within prophetic religion, and his understanding of the relation between prophetic religion and culture, especially in the social and political realms.'

Buber's existential 'I-Thou' philosophy . . . should be a powerful help in reversing the victory of the 'It' over the 'Thou' and the 'I' in present civilization.... The 'I-Thou' philosophy ... challenging both orthodox and liberal theology, points a way beyond their alternatives.<sup>122</sup>

The exchange of correspondence between Buber and Thieme is evidence of his influence on Catholicism, though there were some crucial points which Thieme criticized and rejected. For instance, he saw Buber's views on the thought of Paul as a caricature, and disagreed with his proposal that the Pauline view should be separated from the real Jesus of Nazareth. This separation was one of the main themes of *Two Types of Faith* and many of Buber's arguments were based on it. These arguments could be seen as having been greatly affected by current Protestant thought and that may help to explain why they were so heavily criticized by Thieme. At the same time, as Friedman argued,

---

<sup>121</sup> Friedman. *The Life of Dialogue*, p. 268.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Tillich, 'Martin Buber and Christian Thought,' *Commentary*, Vol. V, No. 6 [June 1948], p. 397, as referred in *Ibid.*, p. 269. For a further evaluation of Buber's significance as an alternative to orthodox and liberal Protestantism see Tillich, 'Jewish Influences on Contemporary Christian Theology,' *Cross Currents*, Vol. II [1952], pp. 38-42.

Buber has gone as far as a Jew could go in honouring Jesus of Nazareth. His insistence that God needs man's help to complete creation brings him close to Catholicism but removes him from Protestant Christianity, while his enmity toward any fixed laws and rules brings him close to radical Protestantism while setting him apart from Catholicism.<sup>123</sup>

One can recognize here a sort of “betweenness” which poses a problem for modern Christian thinkers as it did for Buber's contemporaries – whether it makes sense to use it as a bridge of mutual understanding between Catholics and Protestants or whether it should be laid aside as indifferent to all camps because it can be exploited by none. In his answer to this question, Thieme made certain key points. In particular he says that it “does not depend so much on the influence of Buber's Hasidic teaching or his existentialist philosophy as on whether Christian theologians will allow themselves in earnest to be fructified by Buber's interpretation of the Bible.”<sup>124</sup>

It seems that Buber's *I-Thou* philosophy cannot be understood properly until the relational reality is thought *within* each of the partners in the relationship. In Buber's terminology, such a reality is said to be *between* them. Yannaras, in particular, mentions it as an *invitation-to-relationship*<sup>125</sup>. This “betweenness” itself enables us to talk here about the possible fruitfulness of a “third” or medial way of Christian thinking, a role that might possibly be played by Orthodoxy. When there are no rival camps or divisive opinions but simply a painstaking effort to maintain the intimate personal relationship with God as it was experienced by the Jewish prophets and by the Disciples of Christ, that relationship can be seen to be still possible in a very pure, undamaged form.

---

<sup>123</sup> Friedman. *The Life of Dialogue*, p. 269.

<sup>124</sup> Thieme, Karl. ‘Martin Buber als Interpret der Bibel,’ *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* (Köln), Vol. VI, No. 1 (1954), p. 8f, as referred in *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> See the paragraph *Human relations with the universe* of the current thesis.

Essentially focused on the contemplation of the Trinity, Orthodox theology offers a sort of medial type of faith based neither on 'Paulinism' nor on 'Messianism', considered separately from each other, but on a Trinitarianism which is experienced and revealed prayerfully rather than dogmatized. Over a long period of dogmatic controversies Orthodox thought was very much concentrated on the questions of how to maintain the belief in the Holy Trinity and how to avoid highlighting one dimension of faith to the prejudice of the others. Orthodoxy must develop into a very well-balanced belief which will allow us, turning to God, to recognize His personal and, therefore, relational inner character, as it is revealed through and within His Creation<sup>126</sup>. Dedication to God, as Buber understands it, means a deeply private and intimate relationship of men and women of faith with God. Characterising the two types of faith he has identified two different approaches: "trust God" and "trust in God". Taking the example of Abraham, Buber argued that his faith "in God" as the living Person relating to human being, stands in contrast to Paul's idea of Abraham's justification through the fact that he has "trusted God". An intimate and close relationship with God would lead human beings to recognize His relational nature and His will to be known. The idea of a "chosen people", highlighted by Buber, seems to preserve such an intimacy but at the expense of its relational counterpart. If one believes in God as being Good and Self-sufficient then one must assume that, above any relation to the human being, He must be in a relation within Himself. His personal and intimate relationship with a human must be of such a character that it is similar, though not at all identical, to the inner divine relationship. Consequently, no intimacy with God is possible without recognition of an intimate relationship within Himself. If such a relationship is unknown to a human being, then we are left uncertain about our sonship and God's fatherhood. In that case no one is able to say to God "Father" in a strict-

---

<sup>126</sup> See the chapter *The Trinity as a Source for Dialogue* of the current work.

ly personal way. How could we know such a relationship with God the Father if there was no Divine Son to reveal it to us? Buber resists any idea of a mediator but the *I-Thou* relationship with God remains unknown until one is capable of saying “Father” to God. The parental relationship must be a property intrinsic to God in Himself, otherwise it would not be possible to say such a word. There is no need to involve an external mediator in the God-human relationship but there is a mediation given by the Son, Who shares human and divine natures in His Person and lets us know of our own sonship with God. According to the Orthodox belief, His primary role lies in His divine filiation rather than His role as Mediator between God and man.

Buber considered the dialogical reality of *between* as an impersonal and, therefore, could not properly present the Gospel’s idea of “the door”. He regards “the door” as a sort of mediator that separates us from the Father Who, in the Buberian view, wills us to know Him directly. The door, in Buber’s view, means the abolition of the immediacy between God and man which had been the essence of both Covenants and of the kingship of God.

“I am the door” it now runs (John 10:9); it avails nothing, as Jesus thought, to knock where one stands (before the “narrow door”); it avails nothing, as the Pharisees thought, to step into the open door; entrance is only for those who believe in “the door.”<sup>127</sup>

What Buber is missing in his interpretation of John is the idea of the Good Shepherd, an idea which is inseparable from that of “the door.” The ones who enter the door are the ones who have believed and followed the Good Shepherd; the door itself is not an object of belief. On the one hand, it is an image of the narrowness of the way to God; on the other hand, it reveals His openness and His will that those who have accepted His fatherhood should enter “the

---

<sup>127</sup> Buber. *Two Types of Faith*, pp. 96f, 102-113, 160.

door” of His Son by following Him. The only essential barrier is the one which prevents from entering anyone who consciously denies his relation to God the Father. The Son and the Father are both of the same nature and the relationship is peculiar to the nature, therefore, They are always relating to each other in accordance with Their personal characteristics. The Holy Spirit is *between* them for, as we have seen above, there is no dialogical relation apart from a real “betweenness”. He holds the “betweenness” as His personal characteristic which might be known to human beings who recognize the divinity of the sonship of the Son.

One can look at what has been written on the Trinitarian relationship by the Holy Fathers of the undivided Church and find there nothing that is incompatible with, or does not resemble, what inspired the people of Israel and their prophets. We will come back to this matter when working out the theme of dialogue in the context of the Trinitarian study of the Fathers. It seems to be an essential thing which Buber missed when he set about examining the two types of faith: the Jewish *emunah* and the Greek *pistis*. His original education and environment gave him a certain vision of Christianity which needs to be complemented with the basic aspects of the personalist theological perspective. It can be clarified with the help of the Christian “principle of persona” or *hypostasis* as it has been preserved, perhaps in its least damaged form, in the Orthodox tradition.

Friedman has been highly critical of the opinions of some Christian authors who have wrongly emphasized the apparently dualistic character of *I-Thou* and *I-It* relations.

The widespread influence of *I and Thou* on Christian thought does not mean, unfortunately, an equally widespread understanding of Buber’s I-Thou philosophy. Many have not followed Oldham’s warning that *I and Thou* is a book which must be reread again and again and allowed slowly to remould one’s thought. Not only has Buber’s I-Thou philosophy been applied in the most

diverse ways, but it has also, at times, been seriously distorted in the application.<sup>128</sup>

As an example, he mentions the Russian religious philosopher Nicholay Berdyaev, accusing him of misunderstanding the ontological significance of the sphere of the 'between' and criticising his emphasis on subjectivity and inwardness. Berdyaev was also wrong in suggesting that for Buber the *I-Thou* relation is uniquely between man and God and not between man and man and within the larger human community.<sup>129</sup>

The Christian tendency from Augustine to the Reformation to see faith as a gift of God has had the effect, in Buber's opinion, of obscuring man's spontaneity:

This sublime conception, with all that goes with it, resulted in the retreating into obscurity of the Israelite mystery of man as an independent partner of God. The dogma of original sin was not, indeed, adapted to further that especial connection of the ethical with the religious that true theonomy seeks to realize through the faithful autonomy of man.<sup>130</sup>

But Buber perhaps misunderstands the ontological meaning of original sin which has closed man off from the immediacy of his relations with God. While Buber considers Torah as an instruction of God which enables a clear direct understanding by man, the Christian insight denies that any human being can possess such purity. Having broken an ultimate commandment, man by his own efforts is no longer capable of following God's instructions. Christians be-

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 271. Leader of the ecumenical movement in the Christian Church Joseph Houldsworth Oldham made a forceful appraisal of Buber's significance for Christianity, saying that he is "convinced that it is by opening its mind, and conforming its practice, to the truth which Buber has perceived and so powerfully set forth that the Church can recover a fresh understanding of its own faith, and regain a real connection with the actual life of our time." Oldham, Joseph Houldsworth. *Real Life Is Meeting*. London: The Sheldon Press; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947, pp. 13-16, as referred in Ibid., pp. 268-269.

<sup>129</sup> Berdyaev, Nicholas. *Solitude and Society*, trans. from the Russian by George Reavey. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938, p. 79ff, as referred in Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>130</sup> Buber, Martin. *Eclipse of God. Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy*. Trans. by M. Friedman. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952, p. 140f.

lieve that they need God's help to change their consciousness and their natural abilities before they can receive any instruction as to how to fulfill the commandments. That is why Paul said that man's disobedience and therefore his violation of the Law is the essential defining characteristic of his condition.

Buber says that Paul, in contrast to Jesus, "posits a dualism between faith and action" based on belief in the impossibility of fulfilling the Law. Buber considered that in this approach the Law was being treated as necessarily external and that this concept of Law was derived from the Greek conception of an *objectivum* which is foreign to the Jewish understanding of Torah as instruction. The external law as presented by Paul makes all men sinners before God, but the dilemma can be resolved by faith in Christ. Buber regards this faith as essentially the Greek *pistis*, "faith in the truth of a proposition – faith with a knowledge content"<sup>131</sup>.

Arguing that Paul's position was generally dualistic, Buber believes that trust in the immediacy between man and God was destroyed through "Paul's strong tendency to split off God's wrath and His mercy into two separate powers". He regards the world in Paul's teaching as given over to the power of judgment until mercy and redemption are brought by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Man is intrinsically vile and incapable, prior to the advent of Christ, of receiving pardon from God. Commenting on a passage in Paul's epistle to the Romans, Buber says: "For the sake of His plan of salvation God hardens all the generations of Israel, from that assembled on Sinai to that around Golgotha, with the exception of His chosen 'Election' (cf. Rom. 11:7)". Buber thought that for Paul God's will to harden is no longer a part of His direct relation with a particular person or generation, and that God has no regard for the people to whom He speaks but "uses them up for higher ends"<sup>132</sup>.

---

<sup>131</sup> Buber. *Two Types of Faith*, pp. 7f, 11f, 36-37, 79f.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 81ff, 85-90, 131-134, 137-142, 146-150.

In Buber's interpretation, when answering the problem of evil, Paul, in fact, creates two separate gods, one good and one bad. It is God who makes man unfree and deserving of wrath while in the work of deliverance "God almost disappears behind Christ". Consciously or unconsciously Buber has set up an opposition between God and Christ and this may be one of the reasons why he sees Paul's thought as dualistic. In his effort to consider Christ as a prophet, a real man of God along with the other remarkable men of Israel, he fails to recognize the uniqueness of His messianic mission. If Paul had considered Christ as one among the Jewish prophets he would indeed have fallen into dualism. The whole force of his teaching is based uniquely on his trust in Christ as the Son of God, with no possible division into *emunah* and *pistis*. Such a division would render his thought incomprehensible in its very central point – God the Father and His Christ are one as far as it is revealed to man by the Holy Spirit. Buber clearly cannot acknowledge the principle of a *persona*, or hypostatic principle, which is common to both the divine and the human being<sup>133</sup>. By developing their relational nature we might resolve the problem of the duality which Buber saw in Paul and which appeared to him, in the light of his own dialogical method, to be insoluble. God is a Person standing in an intra-divine communion as well as in His relation to the created world.

Having eliminated this intra-divine communion, Buber inevitably misinterpreted other ideas of Pauline thought. "The Highest Beings stand out from one another as dark omnipotence and shining goodness, not as later with Marcion in dogma and creed, but in the actual experience of the poor soul of man." In his comments on this Buberian view, Friedman sees the modern Christian Paulinism, rather in terms of the theology of the Reformation, as softening 'the demonocracy of the world' but, nevertheless, considering existence as divided

---

<sup>133</sup> See, for instance, Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *We Shall See Him as He Is*. Trans. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. Essex: Stavropegic monastery of St. John the Baptist, 2004. pp. 190ff. We will come back to discuss this matter later.

into 'an unrestricted rule of wrath' and 'a sphere of reconciliation.' Such a division would never arise within a theology which recognized that certain of the Apostle's words were addressed specifically to the Jews who believed that only the Law had redemptive power. Paul's attitude towards the Jews has to be distinguished from his response to the Gentiles, who did not know the Law. This is not an ontological, but a methodological distinction. One has also to be aware of the circumstances which were troubling Paul in his missionary efforts when, despite usually suffering persecution at the hands of Jews, he painfully loved them as his brothers and never missed an opportunity to stress his own Jewish roots. An insufficient awareness of the diversity within Christian thought has provoked Buber to affirm that "*de facto* the redeemed Christian soul stands over against an unredeemed world of men in lofty impotence." This obvious dualistic conception of God and his relation to the world, erroneously attributed to the whole of Christian thought, was utterly unacceptable to Buber: "In the immediacy we experience His anger and His tenderness in one," he writes. "No assertion can detach one from the other and make Him into a God of wrath Who requires a mediator." The immediate relationship, where it exists, does not require a mediator, though it cannot be expressed in an external way but can only be known as an inward experience. The relationship with God is such that human beings will tend to keep silence rather than talk about it. Thus it would be unknown in its plenitude unless a Man appeared Who could be believed to be capable of saying it plainly. Nobody could realize his own relation of sonship to the Heavenly Father if God the Father did not confirm His relationship with His Son and the Son did not reveal by words that He knows the Father as He is. This is not a matter of mediation but an ultimate experience expressed both with words and with deeds. Those who focus on Christ's role as mediator are missing something important in the immediacy of the relation with God which He proclaimed. And when we do speak of the mediation of Christ

we should avoid any comparison with any kind of mediation that could occur among human beings since Christ mediates between two ultimately different natures – the divine and the human. This mediation is an ontological one which is *hypostasized* according to the inner hypostatic principle of God.

Although it can be said truly that Buber's "contrast between Judaism and Christianity has been unfavourable toward the latter"<sup>134</sup>, there are many fruits of his labor that can be useful for Christian theology and practice. He argued that there was no way religions could relate to each other except by what he called true dialogue: "Religions are receptacles into which the spirit of man is fitted. Each of them has its origin in a separate revelation and its goal in the suspension of all separateness. Each represents the universality of its mystery in myth and rite and thus reserves it for those who live in it."<sup>135</sup> It is always a senseless undertaking to compare one religion with another, valuing the one which is seen from within and devaluing the one which is seen from without. "One can only compare the corresponding parts of the buildings according to structure, function, and connection with one another."<sup>136</sup> This issue will be considered in more detail below, but here we will work out a possible theological application of the above dialogical approach to Christian thought.

### **2.3. Rediscovering Buberian dialogue in Christianity.**

By exploring the realm of *confirmed dialogue* we have encountered a new approach applied to dialogue, treating it as an existential event. It has been considered as a relationship of each of the parties engaged in the dialogue with the "eternal *Thou*", confirming the accepted *otherness* of *Thou* within the dialogue. This means that, in addressing the other, the *I* should continuously ensure that the *Thou* is

---

<sup>134</sup> Friedman. *The Life of Dialogue*, p. 279.

<sup>135</sup> As referred in Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

actually present in the dialogue. In this way, the dialogue is prevented from becoming an actual or disguised soliloquy.

The dialogue is to be considered as an open one, ready to accept new participants. Being confirmed through the *I-“eternal Thou”* relationship, the newcomers would each enrich the others within their mutually shared and *confirmed otherness*. Both openness toward newcomers and “turning to God” are of essential significance when approaching the realms of Christian theology and tradition. Concerning the theological perspective of any religious relationship, one needs a grasp of the related doctrinal issues as well as experience of the tradition. Since we are approaching from a Christian theology of the Trinity, this basic knowledge and experience are taken for granted. It now becomes of great importance to look for a dialogical dimension within the Trinitarian view. We will follow the dialogic approach discussed above and try to rediscover how the internal and external Trinitarian relations work in the context of *confirmed dialogue*. That is to say that both those personal relations within the Holy Trinity which are comprehensible to man and the relations of God the Trinity to the created world will be approached dialogically in terms of the personalist perspective.

During the first four centuries the Church defended the mystery of the Holy Trinity against certain natural inclinations of the human mind. On the one hand, by thinking in monotheistic terms, the human intellect tends to exclude the hypostatic distinctions and reduces Trinitarian unity to an intellectually comprehensible conceptual unity. Firstly, it was presented as a concept of the Greek philosophers, with three modes of manifestation. This predisposition of the human intellect arose in what has been called the Sabellian heresy, or Modalism. On the other hand, the same tendency in reverse later led to Arianism, which erroneously held, with reference to the Three Persons of the Trinity, that there were three distinct beings.

In place of these merely intellectual claims, the Church has existentially expressed by the term *homoousios* (of one essence) “the consubstantiality of the Three, the mysterious identity of the monad and of the triad; identity of the one nature and distinction of the three hypostases.”<sup>137</sup> The Holy Trinity should be spoken of as a mystery, personal in dialogue and impersonal in essence. However, the dialogic dimension in the Trinity can be presented in terms of those particular personal characteristics which lie within man’s grasp. These are *unbegotten*, *begotten* and *proceeding* as referring respectively to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is all we may know concerning the internal relations of the Trinity, though even here “the mode of generation and the mode of procession are incomprehensible,”<sup>138</sup> as John Damascene has said.

The dialogic personal relations within the Trinity are very different from those among men. The Father is eternally begetting the Son and eternally the source from which the Holy Spirit proceeds. Between the Father and the Son there is mutual reciprocal love, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, Who is Love itself. Thus, one might speak about the “eternal *P*” and the “eternal *Thou*” within the eternally confirmed dialogue between the Father and the Son. Grace, considered in the Buberian sense as the *presence of mutuality*, may here be considered as the Glory of the Father witnessed by the Holy Spirit. The Son glorifies His Father, just as the Father glorifies His Son “with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (Jn 17:5). The Son and the Holy Spirit are equal with the Father, yet differ in their personal characteristics as discussed above – *filiation* on the one hand and *procession* on the other.

The Holy Spirit is the third participant in the *divine dialogue*. His “eternal *Thou*” witnesses to the eternal relationship *I-Thou* of the Father and the Son. As Yves Congar argued, “a *consortium amoris*, that is, a loving together of a third and an

---

<sup>137</sup> Lossky. *The Mystical Theology*, p. 48-49.

<sup>138</sup> As referred in *Ibid*, p. 55.

enabling together of that third to share in the happiness of the first two. The Holy Spirit is therefore postulated as the *condilectus* ('a common friend' or 'a third equally loved') of the Father and the Son."<sup>139</sup>

The Father, Who generates the otherness both of the Son and the Holy Spirit, is the eternal "cause" of the *divine dialogue*. "God the Father, moved outside time and in love, proceeded to a distinction in hypostases, remaining without division or diminution in the wholeness proper to Him, supremely unified and supremely simple."<sup>140</sup> He begets the Son, *turning* to dialogue with Him. From Him proceeds the Holy Spirit, *confirming* this dialogue. The otherness of the Son is in His *filiation*, whereas the otherness of the Holy Spirit lies in His *procession*. Being Himself the cause of the otherness of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Father has His own 'otherness', which is that of *paternity*. The *turning* within the divine dialogue is eternally mutual, and the dialogue itself is without beginning, ceaseless and fruitful.

The fruit of the divine dialogue is the creation and the salvation of the world.<sup>141</sup> The *I-It* relation within the temporal world has emerged from the eternal *I-Thou* relationship of the loving Father and the Son. The "eternal *Thou*" is still accessible for man within genuine human *I-Thou* dialogue which appears to be primordial as regards "createdness" of *I-It*. Christos Yannaras considered man to be created in one essence and in many hypostases.

---

<sup>139</sup> Congar, Yves. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. Trans. by David Smith. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003, p. 87.

<sup>140</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Scholion on the Divine Names*, Patrologia Graeca 4, 221A.

<sup>141</sup> In Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity, for example, one may recognize that silent conversation of the three heavenly visitors to Abraham. It is an image of confirmed dialogue between the Father and the Son, witnessed by the Holy Spirit. The altar table in the centre and the Eucharistic cup on it may signify the very initial and even pre-eternal divine "idea" of the creation and the salvation of the world. That "idea" is of dialogic significance as it is a fruit of the eternal Trinitarian dialogue. See, e.g., Sandler, Egon, S. J. *The Icon. Image of the Invisible. Elements of Theology, Aesthetics and Technique*. Trans. from the French by Fr. Steven Biggam. Oakwood Publications, 1988, p. 74.

Created “in the image” of God in Trinity, man himself is *one in essence* according to his nature, and *in many hypostases* according to his person. Each man is a unique, distinct and unrepeatable person; he is an existential distinctiveness. All men have a common nature or essence, but this has no existence except as personal distinctiveness, as freedom and transcendence of their own natural predeterminations and natural necessity. The person is the hypostasis of the human essence or nature. He sums up in his existence the universality of human nature, but at the same time surpasses it, because his *mode of existence* is freedom and distinctiveness.<sup>142</sup>

Thus was transferred to man that which was peculiar to the uncreated Godhead, the Trinity – oneness in multiplicity. Therefore, the human hypostatic relationship begins “in the image” of the eternal *I-Thou* communion. Unhappily, as a result of original sin, the *I-It* relations within the created world become closer and more useful than those of *I-Thou*, for man’s *I* has lost its intimacy with God’s “eternal *Thou*.” Since human nature has been changed irreversibly, the only constant which remains for man turns out to be the personal or hypostatic principle or mode of a human being. Let us examine that principle at its *relational* roots. A very similar dialogic approach to the above may be found to be applicable.

The terms *person*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon* appear to have the same meaning. Since the time of the Trinitarian synthesis they have, within both philosophical and theological definitions, signified human uniqueness, distinctiveness and relatedness. At that time the question was raised as to whether or not it was possible to apply the great achievements of Greek philosophical thought to the formulation of Christian dogma.<sup>143</sup> A certain theological bridge was needed to link the

---

<sup>142</sup> Yannaras, Christos. *The Freedom of Morality*, trans. from the Greek by E. Briere. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>143</sup> Concerning relations between philosophy and theology at that time see e.g. Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos. *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*. Trans. by Esther Williams. Levadia-Hellas: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1999, p. 41-59.

educated human mind, experienced in philosophy, with the truth of Revelation, so the idea naturally arose of rethinking the use of well-known terms.

The term *prosopon* was used for an actor's mask. While wearing his mask the actor becomes the player of a certain role, but nobody knows his real face. He relates to the other actor while wearing the mask appropriate to his role. They perform their parts in the presence of the third actor whose role is to listen to them.<sup>144</sup> This well-known term taken from the theatre was to become the ontological term which defines the very essence of a thing. In relating the word *prosopon* to the *hypostasis*, with its original meaning of *ousia* (*essence*), the Cappadocian fathers at the end of the fourth century applied that term to the concept of the realization (*hypostatization*) of the nature (*ousia*). Thus, the ontological severance between the unknowable nature of a thing and its concrete embodiment was eliminated, owing to great philosophical intuition combined with a strict belief in the Incarnation of the unknowable, invisible and incomprehensible Godhead. Man is enabled to partake of the nature of God through *hypostatization*, because both the divine and the human natures are present in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate.

In order to follow the thought of the Cappadocians and reveal its dialogical input, we shall consider different aspects of the term *prosopon*. *Etymologically*, there is no evidence for this concept in the ancient Greek texts; hence there is no certainty among leading Greek scholars concerning the original meaning of the word *prosopon*. While John Zizioulas, for instance, traces the etymology of the word on the basis of strict anatomical interpretation<sup>145</sup> – “the part defined by the eyes” (*to pros tis opsi meros*),<sup>146</sup> Christos Yannaras prefers what he claims is

---

<sup>144</sup> According to Lucian (Slander 6) there were three leading *prosopa* in Greek comedies: the slanderer, the one slandered, and the one hearing the slanderer. The relationship was presumed to be complete, simply with three participants.

<sup>145</sup> Zizioulas. *Being as Communion*, p. 31.

<sup>146</sup> Stephanus H. *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* VI, col. 2048.

“the most widely accepted” rather than “a particular etymological” analysis. He accepts the etymology which interprets *prosopon* as “what is opposite the eyes [of the other].”<sup>147</sup> The substantive *ops* (gen. *opos*), which means “look”, “eye”, “face” or “aspect”, with the prefix *pros* (towards) forms the etymology of *prosopon*. Man, as an existential component of relationship and communion, is a person, *prosopon*, which signifies, both etymologically and in practice that he has his face turned towards someone or something else. This means that he is in relation to or in connection with them. In its existence as a reference point and in relation to God, the created nature of man is “opposite” God, through and also within every personal hypostasis.<sup>148</sup>

*Philosophically*, the use of the term *prosopon* as a mask can be found in Plato (Comicus, *fragm.* 142), and in Aristotle (*ta tragika prosopa*, Problems XXXI, 7, 958a, 170). In ancient Greek philosophy and drama, there was a presupposed dramatic conflict between human freedom and the rational necessity of a unified and harmonious world. Man, being oppressed by this necessity, strove to become a person who was free from it. The mask was not unrelated to the person, but the relationship was a tragic one.<sup>149</sup> Only by wearing a mask could man be unique, unrepeatable and distinctive in his entity and also capable of relating to the other man, also wearing a mask. True dialogue was impossible since nobody could address another’s *Thou*. Something needed to be added to man’s being to enable it to become truly free and adequate to the *hypostasis* in relation to his *essence*. Hence, it would make sense, first, to separate *hypostasis* from *essence* terminologically and, secondly, to move away from the term *prosopon* in its former sense of an actor’s mask and concentrate upon the meaning of the term

---

<sup>147</sup> Chantraine, Pierre. *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Histoire des mots), vol. III. Paris, 1974, p. 942; Frisk, Hjalmar. *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg, 1960, p. 602; Schwyzer, Eduard. *Griechische Grammatik*, vol. II. Munich, 1950, p. 517.

<sup>148</sup> Yannaras. *The Freedom of Morality*, p. 20-21.

<sup>149</sup> Zizioulas. *Being as Communion*, p. 31-33.

*hypostasis* as a realized *essence*. There is no additional term to complicate matters, but a transfer of emphasis from the theatrical to the ontological meaning takes place. When following the Cappadocians' thought, we should consider the term *prosopon* as having become ontological and referring to the ontological relationship rather than the theatrical one. Thus, the sense in which the term is used here is clarified and gives us the opportunity of thinking of *prosopon* in terms of true dialogue. The three actors of the Greek drama have been transformed into three participants in a *confirmed dialogue*.

*Theologically*, the relational term *prosopon* was adopted by the Cappadocians in Trinitarian theology in order to explain the personal or hypostatic relationship occurring within the common divine nature. The particular hypostatic differences within the Trinity are of great significance once the self-transcendental relationship has been revealed to man. This relationship is the divine love peculiar to divinely hypostasized nature. Love is a movement of God (or, in the Cappadocians' terminology, His *energy*) addressing God's creation in Christ (see Jn 3:16). Through and within love the true Trinitarian dialogue may be known to man who can be involved with it as a participant. Invisible, incomprehensible, immeasurable, inconceivable but hypostatic and, hence, "relational", God, the Trinity, is no longer completely hidden. The hypostatic dialogue of love is confirmed by the Holy Spirit through Whom it is revealed to man.<sup>150</sup> Once touched by hypostatic love, human nature, existing within its *prosopon* as relational being, is united with the divine nature "in the image and likeness" of Christ. As we have seen, the Cappadocians had achieved a form of theologically philosophical synthesis, of great importance for explaining the content of Revelation. The synthesis is based on the interchange between ontological and relational categories. The theory was expressed by John Zizioulas as follows.

---

<sup>150</sup> See e.g. Mantzaridis, Georgios I. *The Deification of Man*. Trans. from the Greek by Liadain Sherrard. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, p. 33-39.

This meant that from now on a relational term [*prosopon* – G.Z.] entered into ontology and, conversely, that an ontological category such as *hypostasis* entered the relational categories of existence. *To be* and *to be in relation* becomes identical. For someone or something to *be*, two things are simultaneously needed: being itself (*hypostasis*) and *being in relation* (i.e. being a person). It is only in relationship that identity appears as having an ontological significance, and if any relationship did not imply such an ontologically meaningful identity, then it would be no relationship. Here is certainly an ontology derived from the being of God.<sup>151</sup>

He reminds us that the Cappadocians “arrived at this through their thesis that no nature exists ‘in nakedness’ but always has its ‘mode of existence’ (*tropos eparxeos*),”<sup>152</sup> rooted in true dialogue which is confirmed ontologically. Ontology as “derived from the being of God” is implied within His “eternal *Thou*” which is the necessary witness of a true dialogue. The united term *hypostasis-prosopon* designates human nature hypostasized within the dialogically oriented *prosopon-person* in his/her relationship with another *prosopon-person* of the same nature. The “Mode of existence” of this relationship is reciprocal love revealed to them through their turning to the “eternal *Thou*” of God the Trinity. The hypostasizing of nature is not an act of human nature itself. It is due to the creative will or energy of God, Whose principle of being is hypostatic. Neither divine nature-essence nor any other reason but the Father alone is the cause of being of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since it is co-eternal with God the Father, His love toward His Son is hypostatically reflected by the Holy Spirit. The creative energy of God is an abundance of this love poured forth from the dialogical fullness and completeness of the Trinitarian relations.

---

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, p. 87-88.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Having grown up amongst the different traditions of Hinduism and Christianity, the distinguished Catholic theologian Raimundo Panikkar<sup>153</sup> presented a similar approach towards the Father, understanding Him as the principle of Trinitarian being and relations. However, his argument is not derived from the hypostatic mode of existence as given in the teaching of the Cappadocians, but is, rather, a development of the Absolute character or oneness of God. He put this absoluteness beyond any other principle or possible name of the Absolute known in human language: God, the Father, the One, the Divinity. Ultimately, even the question of what the Absolute is makes no sense. There is nothing outside the Absolute that would enable it to be measured. No being would be possible without the Absolute, although the Absolute itself is not a being. “His transcendence is constitutive and he alone is authentically transcendent.”<sup>154</sup> Thus, one should say that “God’s re-flection is no longer the Father. The Father is the Absolute, the only God, *o theos*.”<sup>155</sup> We may remark that, following Panikkar’s thought, even “God in Himself” is no longer an appropriate expression since it implies a “reflection.” A “self” of God is already a derivation from the unknown God and, hence, is no longer “original and originating.”

The Father in Panikkar’s thought has no existence of his own. Once He has acquired His paternity through begetting the Son, He exists merely in His Son. The Son is the being of the Father. The Son is the beginning of the very fact of being. The Father as the Absolute goes beyond His absoluteness and begets the Son in His eternal being. This is seen by Panikkar as an eternal emptying (*kenosis*) of the Father, as “the Cross in the Trinity.”

---

<sup>153</sup> His book *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York – London, 1973) is “one of the best and least read meditations on the Trinity in our century” – Rowan Williams. *Trinity and Pluralism* published in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D’Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>154</sup> Panikkar, Raimundo. *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man. Icon–Person–Mystery*. New York – London, 1973, p. 44.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

In the Father the apophatism (the *kenosis* or emptying) of Being is real and total. This is what elsewhere I have called “the Cross in the Trinity” i.e. the integral immolation of God, of which the Cross of Christ and his immolation are only the images and revelations.<sup>156</sup>

So we are given an exciting idea of the “Cross of the Father” of which the Cross of Christ is only the image. Since He is the Son of His Father, He shares the Father’s absoluteness – otherwise He is not begotten but made. Consequently, the absoluteness becomes a dialogic or relational category and the possibility arises of marking from within being a distinction between nothingness and absoluteness. The otherness of nothing can only be inferred *in relation* to being. This is a peculiar dialogic principle concerning being as well as non-being since we say of it “God creates from nothing” – which is no absurdity because in saying “nothing” we have in mind its otherness towards the being which is about to arise out of it.

This absoluteness has to be shared and confirmed. There is no way that we can refer to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit separately, even with a view to defining them. Similarly with the Cross. It has to be shared just as love, obedience and mutual (not integral) immolation are shared within the Trinity. This is what the Church Fathers called the *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, the “dynamic inner circularity of the Trinity”<sup>157</sup> which is the true, that is, confirmed, *Trinitarian dialogue*. “Once the revelation of the living Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is received, it already becomes an abstraction to speak of ‘God’.”<sup>158</sup> God as a monolithic entity does not exist and we are impelled to speak in terms of the relationship: “There is no God except the Father who *is* his Son through his Spirit.”<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

Panikkar further develops the relational reasoning we have considered above: “A person is never in himself, but by the very fact that he is a person is always a constitutive relation—a *pros ti*.”<sup>160</sup> His insight concerning the relational character of the person gives us additional evidence in favour of dialogue. However, while speaking of the Persons within the Trinity, he nevertheless distinguishes the personhood of the Son from that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit:

Correctly speaking, then, it is only with the Son that man can have a personal relationship. The God of theism, thus, is the Son; the God with whom one can speak, establish a dialogue, enter into communication, is the divine Person who is in-relation-with, or rather, is the relationship with man and one of the poles of total existence.<sup>161</sup>

This denial of the personal relationships of man with the Father and the Holy Spirit may appear to a misinterpretation. In both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions there are certain prayers which do address them in a personal way. Besides, most obviously, the “Our Father...,” the Eucharistic canon is also to be considered in its entirety as addressed to the Person of the Father. Set as it is at the very beginning of all Orthodox prayers, public and private, the well-known “O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth ...” is addressed to the Holy Spirit. The view that the Spirit-Paraclete has been personally revealed in the writing of the Fourth Gospel can be found in numerous works by such distinguished authors as Barrett, Brown, Burge, Porsch, Windisch, Mowinckel, Miguéns and Ferraro.<sup>162</sup> Yet Panikkar denies any possibility of personal relations with the Spirit and of prayer to him: “One cannot pray *to* the Spirit as an isolated term of our prayer.” His formula is as follows: “One

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> See e.g. Windisch, Hans. *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel*. Trans. by James W. Cox. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968, p. 24.

can only pray *in* the Spirit, by addressing the Father through the Son.”<sup>163</sup> Following the last sentence, one could say that even prayers to the Father and to the Son “as isolated terms” are impossible since we must have the unity of the Trinity in mind in all the prayers. “Where the Spirit is, there Christ is also. For wheresoever one person of the Trinity is, there the whole Trinity is present.”<sup>164</sup> But this might go rather deeper than a mere terminological misinterpretation if we lose the Cappadocians’ insight concerning *hypostatization* as a Trinitarian principle worked out within the context of a strict belief in the Incarnation. Trinitarian theology is impossible without Christology and pneumatology, and the converse is likewise true.

Perhaps, Panikkar’s intention was to emphasize the mystery of the Trinity as it is manifested only in Christ, Who “*is* the Son, the Icon, the Image, the Word, the Glory, the very Being *of* the Father.”<sup>165</sup> However, such a Christocentric concept of the Trinity needs to be complemented substantially by the dialogic input of the *prosopon-hypostasis* view. He does point out the dialogic impact of the Holy Spirit as He leads man to realize that “he is not an I (*ego*) but a Thou (*te*); that he only exists insofar as the one I (*ego*, *aham*) says to him *thou*.”<sup>166</sup> This dialogic approach has been developed by him later on.

In recollecting the fact that the Father is “greater” than the Son and that “only in the Spirit is this interpersonal communion realized – and in dialogue on an equal footing between *me*, man and *him*, God”<sup>167</sup>, Panikkar has applied the term *communion* to the Holy Spirit so that His witness to the relationship between the Father and the Son can be revealed. The Spirit in communion is immanent both in the

---

<sup>163</sup> Panikkar. *The Trinity*, p. 63.

<sup>164</sup> PG 60, 519. As referred to in Clapsis, Emmanuel. *Orthodoxy in Conversation*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000, p. 59.

<sup>165</sup> Panikkar. *The Trinity*, p. 55.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p. 66.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

Father and in the Son. In some manner the Spirit proceeds from the Father to the Son in His begetting and returns to the Father, confirming His paternity. Just as the Father keeps nothing of His own (except His *paternity*) in His self-offering (*perichoresis*) to the Son, so the Son, in His reciprocal self-offering to the Father, does not keep to Himself anything given to Him by the Father. There is nothing (except His *filiation*) that He does not return to the Father. Thus, as Panikkar argued, “the Trinitarian cycle is completed and consummated, though in no way is it a ‘closed cycle.’ The Trinity is, indeed, the real mystery of Unity, for true unity is Trinitarian.”<sup>168</sup> One may add that true unity is a product of true dialogue confirmed by a third party who is above any ‘suspicion’ on the part of either side in the dialogue. Thus, true dialogue becomes the three-dimensional embodiment of the Trinitarian mystery of unity. The witness should be of the same *spirit* as those engaged in the dialogue, and the otherness of those in dialogue should be “in the image and likeness” of the otherness of *paternity* and *filiation*, that is, of reciprocity reflected in Trinitarian love. God the Trinity “communicates – and goes on communicating – himself.”<sup>169</sup>

#### **2.4. Buber and Levinas on ethics of dialogue.**

By turning to another great thinker of dialogue, Emmanuel Levinas, we can enrich and rediscover some of the particular key points of Buberian thought which can usefully be applied in the Christian context. Levinas has introduced the dialogical argument into the sphere of ethics. He has introduced a “eucharistic” dimension into the idea of dialogue by speaking of the asymmetry in mutual responsibility of the parties to the dialogue and emphasizing the “sacrificial” character of the *I*'s involvement in dialogue. His *I* in the dialogical *I-Thou* pair must accept the invitation of *Thou* and answer, with no possibility of declining it. The

---

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>169</sup> Barnes, Michael. *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 224.

response of the *I* is, therefore, considered by Levinas as a sort of “sacrifice” given for *Thou*’s sake. According to Levinas, there is no symmetry in dialogue at all and no equality between the *I* and the *Thou*. Disagreeing with Buber in certain crucial points such as the reversibility and mutuality of the relationship, Levinas has posited instead the idea of responsibility. Responsibility appears to be rather a personal thing and, therefore, of different value for each of the parties to the dialogue. But they would not be aware of it so long as they remain alone in their mutuality. For example, two people involved in a mutually interesting conversation may be absolutely deaf to the sound of a third person knocking on the door. Thus, in Levinas, the mutual enjoyment of the *I* and the *Thou* may be disrupted by the appeal made by an anonymous third. Again, there is an intriguing reference to a third party of dialogue through whom the dialogue will be confirmed. A third party, if there is one, introduces an ethical dimension into the dialogue by observing and, therefore, appraising it ethically. The moral result of the dialogue might be witnessed and revealed to others with the help of a third party. It will be of great interest in the context of our study to follow the key points of Levinas’ dialogical approach by “putting him in dialogue” with Buber, especially on the ethical dimension of dialogue.

Levinas refers to three influences that were particularly important in the formation of his own thought: his reading of the great Russian authors and, in particular, Dostoyevsky<sup>170</sup>; the Hebrew Bible, especially as read in the light of the Talmudic texts and Rabbinical commentary; and his own experiences as a Jew – emigration across Russia and then to France, the rise of Hitler and National Socialism, and the experience of the Holocaust. In particular, his writing was affected by what he called the type of ‘every hatred of the other person’, that is the

---

<sup>170</sup> One finds frequent references in Levinas to Dostoyevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*, especially to the words of Markel, younger brother of the elder Zossima: “Darling mother . . . there have to be masters and servants, but let me be the servant of my servants. Let me be the same as they are to me. And let me tell you this, too, Mother: every one of us is responsible for everyone else in every way, and I most of all.” (As cited in Purcell, Michael. *Levinas and Theology*. Cambridge: University Press, 2006, p. 4).

never-to-be-forgotten anti-Semitism. He wrote,

To the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same antisemitism.<sup>171</sup>

Being influenced in a specifically philosophical way by the thinking of Husserl, Heidegger, and Bergson, Emmanuel Levinas begins his phenomenological approach with the experience of the face (*le visage*) of the other, with whom *I* relate *face-to-face*. The main dynamic behind this relation is ethical. The otherness of the other is to be recognized by responding in a relation of discourse rather than of competition. So Levinas's face-to-face has obvious parallels to Buber's *I-Thou*. Both Buber and Levinas place the readiness for such an encounter or relationship with otherness at the beginning of experience. "Both consider the encounter as oriented toward the other prior to theoretical understanding and knowledge. And finally, both posit the relation with the 'Thou' as in some sense incorporating or deriving from the relation with the absolutely Other called God."<sup>172</sup>

Although he prefers Buber's rendering of the *I-Thou* relation to that of other philosophers - Gabriel Marcel, for instance - Levinas does not seem at first sight to present a consistent reading of Buber. In his postwar writings, up to and including *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas seemed to be primarily concerned with distinguishing his own ethical philosophy from Buber's. At that time, Levinas suspected that Buber's thought had no answer to the radical "separation" between the *I* and the other, and he explicitly opposed his own use of the phrase "*I-Thou*" (*moi-toi*) to "Buber's sense, where reciprocity remains the tie between two separated freedoms, and the ineluctable character of isolated subjectivity is underestimated."<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> As cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Levinas and Buber: dialogue and difference*, edited by Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice Friedman. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2004, p. 7.

<sup>173</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel. *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987, pp. 93-94.

This is in addition to the criticism in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, where Buber's "I-Thou" is charged with being self-sufficient and forgetful of the universe.<sup>174</sup> Levinas associates it with conjugal love – a relationship with the otherness of a woman in the intimacy of the home which does not suppose that a third party will be involved.

Later Levinas clearly decided that he could "use Buber both as a useful resource when seeking to avoid the neutral discourse of ontology and as a foil for his own views when it was necessary to distinguish his own thinking from Buber's."<sup>175</sup> However – though Levinas had already praised "Buber's fundamental contribution to the theory of knowledge" and attributed "great spiritual importance"<sup>176</sup> to the primacy of the *I-Thou* relation over the *I-It* – he is still posing several "objections" to Buber, again mainly directed at the "reciprocity of the I-Thou relation."<sup>177</sup> While, for Buber, the relationship between the *I* and the *Thou* is directly lived as reciprocity, Levinas' point of departure, by his own words, is Dostoyevsky and his idea that "we are all culpable for everything and for everyone before everyone, and I more than the others."<sup>178</sup>

"Meeting", as presented by Levinas, has a "nonformal ethical character" which, he argues, has been missed by Buber in his insistence on the fully reciprocal nature of the relationship. Instead of the "totally spiritual friendship" of the Buberian *I-Thou* relation, Levinas asked about another "true and concrete access to the otherness of the other", namely "clothing the naked and feeding the hungry". One realizes that Levinas is expressing an essentially ethical concern about the

---

<sup>174</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1969, pp. 77, 213.

<sup>175</sup> *Levinas and Buber*, p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel. *Proper Name*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 23.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>178</sup> *Levinas and Buber*, p. 33. See also Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. David Magarshack. London: Penguin, 1982, p. 338.

overly spiritual bias he attributes to Buber who, although concerned with ethics, was “unable to go beyond the philosophical tradition that has always subordinated ethics to ontology.”<sup>179</sup> A similar division between ethics and spirituality can be seen in the emphasis Levinas puts on the human dimension of dialogue thereby, perhaps unconsciously, missing the divine perspective called forth by Buber’s “turning to God”. Although he always rejected the ‘spiritualist’ label, Buber, as we have learned from his *Two Types of Faith*, did defend what he called a messianic spirituality against the spirituality of Reformation theology. As ethics is not his starting point he simply does not attribute any character to the relation in advance, avoiding any attempt to characterise its content, allowing the parties to stand within the dialogue bringing one another to their respective *Thou*.

The moral issue is worth pursuing if we are seeking a Christian dialogical approach that can be expressed in terms of Buber’s *I-Thou* relation - criticized by Levinas both for lacking an ethical concern and for the reciprocal privacy of the two. We turn to a commentary by Maurice Friedman who has thoroughly reviewed and clarified Buber’s position in the light of the critique made by Levinas. Friedman believed that a true dialogue will evoke the true moral norm which is to do, existentially, with the human being as a whole rather than with some objective moral norm imposed from above which can be accepted or not as the case may be. The young Martin Buber, in an incident that has become legendary, was faced with a choice between obedience to authority and loyalty to his fellow youngsters. On the one hand there was an objective moral norm, delivered for general use to be followed blindly in all circumstances, and on the other there was a concrete situation that required one to be involved with one’s whole being and to respond accordingly. In the event the young Buber refused to betray his classmates because he could not find an answer to the question: who would be really helped by his betrayal? But in so doing he was betraying the objective moral norm requiring

---

<sup>179</sup> *Levinas and Buber*, p. 7-8.

obedience to authority. Only later did he find an adequate means of understanding his dilemma. It comes from the conscience – not the routine “play on the surface” conscience, but “the unknown conscience in the ground of being, which needs to be discovered ever anew...” He wrote, “God tenders me the situation to which I have to answer; but I have not to expect that he should tender me anything of my answer.”<sup>180</sup> Friedman comments:

Most importantly of all, instead of finding security in the “once-and-for-all” of general moral norms, Buber began living with the insecurity and responding to the unique and irreducible situation to which no general categories could do justice. He rejected the norm that came from above, and that split one into an obedient part and one into a rebellious part, in favor of “the true norm” that commands us, that is, addresses us directly in the situation and leaves us to respond with our whole being. The address of the true norm is on the level where the human being is at, where one brings oneself in response to what faces one at that moment. This command cannot demand “obedience” because it does not dictate the form and way in which one should answer.<sup>181</sup>

This argument seems to be entirely in line both with a general Christian ethical approach and with the Orthodox understanding of freedom. When obliged to respond to a particular moral dilemma, a human being is expected to co-operate voluntarily with other human beings according to God’s will which is equally available to them all. There are no longer external restrictions given by the fixed moral law but only the true morality of the law written in their hearts. This is the true freedom of the “sons of God” which human beings are given in Christ. Instead of submission to the authorities there is loyalty to those we love. “The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal 3:24-25, NKJV). If there is a

---

<sup>180</sup> Buber, Martin. *Between Man and Man*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 69.

<sup>181</sup> *Levinas and Buber*, p. 122.

lack of faith and, therefore, no filial response in Christ then freedom from the general norm may indeed bring “the insecurity” and the possibility of misinterpreting our inner responsibility. This insecurity remains characteristic of all humans who are falling short of their sonship and, thus, committing sins. The Orthodox tradition believes that “there is no man who lives and yet does not sin”, therefore, all human beings are in a position of insecurity when they have to respond “to the unique and irreducible situation to which no general categories could do justice”. Actually, while they can be understood as general in the human sense those categories are quite impotent in relation to the justice that must belong exclusively to God. The Orthodox theology of a “divine-human” antinomy, as considered above (see section 1.1.2.2), opens up a dimension which is quite appropriate when considering a matter such as how to cope both with the humanly established norms or rules, and with a divinely oriented justice.

The main principle of *the theology of antinomy* (as we have called it above) is that antinomies are characteristic of life both divine and human, at its most basic level. Among the divine antinomies are “unity-trinity” and “essence-energy”. The “human-divine” antinomy refers to the Incarnate God, and among the human antinomies there are “nature-hypostasis” and “nature-energies”. One might speak of antinomy as a reflection of the dialogical or relational character of the creation which is also characteristic of the Creator Himself. A moral issue, therefore, whether it is of human or divine origin, must be considered in terms of antinomy. Thus the written law itself can evoke a dimension of inner personal responsibility more usually associated with the “insecure” situation which is irreducible to the written law. Buber gives another example of this “insecurity”: his response towards the biblical story of Samuel and Agag.

Buber discussed the passage from the Book of Samuel with a thoroughly observant religious Jew he once met on a train. This is the story in which Saul delivers over to Samuel, Agag, the prince of the Amalekites – the people against whom

Moses swore eternal enmity and whom Saul had just defeated in battle. Buber told his companion that it horrified him as a child to read how after Agag said to Samuel, “Surely the bitterness of death is past,” Samuel “hewed” him into pieces (1 Sam 15:32-33, KJV). Buber confessed that even now when they were speaking together he could not believe that this was a message of God. His partner’s brow contracted angrily and he demanded of Buber, “What do you believe then?” Buber answered, “I believe that Samuel misunderstood God.” The angry brow of his companion smoothed, the eyes became positively gentle and radiant, and he said, “I think so, too.”<sup>182</sup>

Buber spent a major part of his lifetime, literally up until his final coma, translating the Hebrew Bible into German and revising that translation many times, so his attitude toward the above passage must be taken into account very seriously despite its obvious dangers. One can recognize here Buber’s concern with the divine-human relationship as it has been considered in terms of the true dialogue *I-“eternal Thou”*. Buber believes that God does not abandon the created man to his needs and anxieties; He gives him the comfort of his words. But there is no objective criterion to distinguish between what is received and what is manufactured, so man blends together command of heaven and statute of earth, revelation and human orientation.

Nothing can make me believe in a God who punishes Saul because he has not murdered his enemy. And yet even today I still cannot read the passage that tells this otherwise than with fear and trembling. But not it alone. Always when I have to translate or to interpret a biblical text, I do so with fear and trembling, in an inescapable tension between the word of God and the words of man.<sup>183</sup>

While in the Jewish ethics presented by Buber there is still “tension between the

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>183</sup> *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, edited by Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice S. Friedman. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967, p. 33.

word of God and the words of man” and no objective criterion to distinguish command of heaven from the statute of earth, a consciousness oriented in a Christian way would offer a different approach towards the “verbal reconciliation”, proposing a different ethical criterion. Bearing in mind the deeply relational character of the created world as it has been discussed above we might suggest replacing the non-existent objective criterion of “the reconciliation between heaven and earth” with a personal ethical approach which, being of a dialogical character, would reflect that relativity. God relates both to the human being and to the whole universe. He has established an immediate relationship with His creation through Christ Who has spoken to humans a word of consolation and reconciliation. One would not expect within His Word to find such a tension as might exist apart from the Word. Both these Jewish thinkers, Buber and Levinas, were sincerely and painstakingly looking for just such an ethical criterion in a desperate attempt to approach the relational character of the human being while leaving the absolute character of God untouched.

Buber says, “God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed and not expressed.”<sup>184</sup> When we meet our fellow human beings or the world as *Thou* we meet with the “absolute Person” of God Who is the “eternal *Thou*” and can never become an *It*. He cannot be an object of human thought, not even the “Absolute” object from which all others derive. So we do not express or discover God, we only respond to Him. Buber believes that the “eternal *Thou*” is met by every person who addresses God by whatever name, and even by that person who does not believe in God yet addresses “the *Thou* of his life, as a *Thou* that cannot be limited by another.” “All God’s names are hallowed, for in them He is not merely spoken about, but also spoken to.”<sup>185</sup> Despite his awareness of God as being the inexpressible and unap-

---

<sup>184</sup> Buber. *I and Thou*, p. 80f.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75f.

proachable One, Buber gives man an opportunity of speaking about and to Him. He evokes a *Thou* who acts as a mediator, opening up a way of reconciliation. A human *Thou* is unlimited because it reflects the “eternal *Thou*” of God. Through discovering the *I-Thou* relation in the created world one may know about the Creator Whose vestige in the creation is, therefore, a personal reflection of His *Thou*. We spoke earlier about the divine vestige which reveals the relations of the Holy Trinity. The inner Trinitarian *I-Thou* relationship is a perfect and absolutely genuine one because the “eternal *Thou*” is reflected perfectly in the “eternal *P*” and both of them are peculiar to the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Anyone who believes in the Trinity has to accept the inner relational character of God. Buber attributes either “eternal *Thou*” or “eternal *P*” to God depending on the orientation of the addressing: “eternal *Thou*” when man addresses God and “eternal *P*” when God addresses man. If it is taken into account in relation to Buber’s thought, a Christian awareness of the inner *I-Thou* relation of God could be of great significance for resolving the problem of the “tension between the word of God and the words of man”. The Father relates to His eternal Son and to the whole universe through Him and His Word. The Word is revealed to humans and teaches them how to relate to the other as *Thou* rather than *It*. Once revealed in Christ to those who believe in Him the Father-Son divine relationship has become an evident *I-Thou* relation of true dialogue. No one but the Son addresses the eternal *Thou* of His Father and receives the *Thou* indwelling in His eternal *I*. For Levinas, God is not a moral *a priori*, but is always encountered *a posteriori* and always at the juncture of our dealings with other people. “The vision of God is a moral act. This optics is ethics.”<sup>186</sup> The answer to the question of God lies in the realm of practice which always, in contrast to the realm of theory, implies response and responsibility. Levinas considered ethics as always primary, even if it

---

<sup>186</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel. *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* / Trans. S. Hand. London: Athlone Press, 1990, p. 275.

is only after the event that this is understood. When dealing with others in a moral way he opposes – in a sense, like Buber - theory as “words of man” to practice as deeds, which evoke a “word of God”. One finds no reconciliation between theory and practice in the moral issues which dominate in his work, despite their inevitably subjective character. Never referring to Christian ethics in a positive way, he operates entirely within a Jewish religious perspective, meaning that the truths and the ideals which provide a regulative framework for our engagement with others are embodied in the concrete commandments of the Law. Sometimes it is expressed in the questions: ‘Is an action right because God commands it, or does God command it because it is right? Is an action wrong because God prohibits it, or does God prohibit it because it is wrong?’ Such questions would never arise if a historical - i.e. practical, and spiritual, or theological - example were given to enable us to see how the law works. The expression “Jesus is Christ” signifies that the commandments of the Law have been revealed in a perfect combination with the concrete deeds of a concrete Man. But without an example of this sort the division between faith and deeds remains. So the first question in Levinas’ moral thought is not ‘What must I believe?’ but, rather, ‘What must I do?’ He evokes the possibility of ‘loving the Torah more than God.’ But, ‘loving the Torah more than God’ is not to embark upon the way of theological fundamentalism, for ‘it is not the case that what the Bible says is true because it is in the Bible, but rather that it is in the Bible because it is true.’<sup>187</sup> Following ethics as his initial motivation, Levinas, commenting on Buber’s “Samuel and Agag” story, wrote that “Without doubt, Buber thought that his conscience instructed him on the will of God better than the books!”<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> Purcell, Michael. *Levinas and Theology*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>188</sup> *Levinas and Buber*, p. 128.

Despite the criticism<sup>189</sup> Levinas has unintentionally disclosed Buber's main concern – to live his life in accordance with his own conscience, which was honored by him as a voice of the “eternal *Thou*”. In his later works Levinas set aside his earlier worries about the formalism, reciprocity and spiritualism of Buber's *I-Thou* relation. He presents Buber in a way he himself finds more attractive, as a philosopher of coexistence and sociability rather than a philosopher of consciousness, though he is careful never to draw a parallel between Buber's thought and his own.

The antinomic approach is an inseparable element of Christian Orthodox thought, bringing a new dimension to personal ethics. The divine-human antinomy has come to a head in the Person of Christ. Once resolved it can provide a way of resolving those problems in which the “command of heaven” and “statute of earth” appear to be irreconcilable. They could be reconciled with the help of the Christian antinomy of the divine-human as it has appeared in the Person of God Incarnate. The antinomy maintains the unapproachable character of God and considers His “eternal *Thou*” as embodied in Christ, providing human beings with an appropriate way by which He can be addressed. Christ's *I* enters into a true dialogue with the human *Thou* and addresses God the Father within the dialogue of the “eternal *I-eternal Thou*”. The enhypostasized natures, divine and human, allow the energies peculiar to each of them to act in the Person of Christ so that through Him dialogical relations in both directions can take place.

God rests after the six days of creation and entrusts man to take care of the creation on the seventh day. This day has been consecrated by the Jews and called Sabbath, and respect for the Sabbath becomes a basic principle of the Law. The Law is considered as given by God and the moral principles characteristic of the Law are considered to be characteristic of God. A particular People is called by

---

<sup>189</sup> Levinas asserted that without extreme attention given to the Book of books, one cannot listen to one's conscience. Ibid.

God to follow His Law and fulfill its moral principles. If they did so the question could not arise as to which was higher: “words of the Law or word of God” (Buber) or “God or morality” (Levinas). But the expectation that this people could fulfill the Law proved to be vain and so the doubt persists. Being sent by God, His Begotten Son has shown the people how the Law should be fulfilled by doing moral things on the very day of Jewish Sabbath just as it was commanded by God on the seventh day of creation. The Sabbath and morality are shown to have arrived from the same source and they are to be reconciled in a personal ethics which is common both to the Person of God and the person of man. Those who did not follow the personal ethics of the commandments of God were rebuked by Christ for their concern with the written law of “the words of man” rather than listening to the conscience, which is a voice of God. There is no true dialogue taking place if we pay no attention to the “eternal *Thou*” addressing us personally through our conscience.

Since personhood requires communication with another person, it is essential for the theology of the person to speak about a dialogical input. We are now approaching the personalist theology developed during the last century within the theological circles of the Orthodox Church and reflected in a profound way in the theology of archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov). In the following section we will try to look at the dialogue through the prism of the hypostatic principle as it operates both in the divine and in the human being.

### **2.5. The principle of person as a basis for true dialogue.**

Thanks to an almost limitless stream of information, the world is becoming more compact and capable of investigation. This has both a positive and a negative impact on human beings. Under the influence of ever-changing data, it is easy to become confused and lose one’s own natural ability to analyze. Instead, we are drawn into relying on the type of analysis that is typical of the mass media. This

type of thinking makes it easier to make initial contacts but there is a risk of losing personal identity and particularity, since it appears more appropriate to be like everyone else. Otherness may become suspect and unwelcome. The apparent simplicity of relations can lead to an oversimplification of personal attitudes to the point where they can even cease altogether. If there is nothing peculiar to one's self identity it is difficult to see how any *true dialogue* could be expected to take place.

At the same time the monotony and boredom of our materialistic civilization urges many people to search for new forms of theology which can provide them with an absolute Reason that will transcend everything that is relative. A strong tendency towards globalization reinforces individualism as an alternative mode of life as the human being seeks the self-esteem to be gained by putting the self at the centre of his/her response to the modern world. Otherness is confused with individualism and *true dialogue* is replaced by a sort of disguised monologue. Disappointed in the things which are common to everyone, people thirst after those personal manifestations which are normally understood as being relative and, therefore, of no permanent significance. But at the same time, the Absolute or the Impersonal Reason, on the one hand, assumes the appearance in the West of a religious ideal and, on the other hand, in these circumstances the oriental religions exercise a great power of attraction over our human reasoning.

If all one has is a merely psychological understanding of the personality, one can easily be convinced of its narrowness and imperfection and conclude logically that the principle of personhood cannot be applied to the Absolute. Furthermore, one might suggest that the concepts of 'absolute' and 'personal' are mutually exclusive and, therefore, resolve to go further in the search for a "supra-personal principle", "transcending all that is relative."<sup>190</sup> Such a quest makes sense so long as the concept of the person or hypostasis is identified with the limited concept

---

<sup>190</sup> Sophrony. *We Shall See Him as He Is*, p. 213.

of the empirical individual. The principle of personhood, however, “escapes all definition and includes the potential for development, for embracing within itself the fullness of divine and human being.”<sup>191</sup>

*True dialogue* is based on the hypostatic principle of being, whether divine or human. When the *I* encounters the *Thou* in the hypostatic relationship there is always the eternal *Thou* confirming the dialogue to be true, which is to say, hypostatically realized. This proposition will be examined further through the theological understanding of the principle of hypostasis or persona given by archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), one of the most remarkable figures in modern Orthodox personalist theology<sup>192</sup>. He considers that the basic things which determined his way of life and his theology were his relationship with his fellow monk Silouan the Athonite, now recognized as a Saint, and his own experience of the personal God. In the dialogical context it is particularly important to emphasize the true dialogue which took place between Fr. Sophrony and St. Silouan when they had both experienced the same eternal *Thou* of the personal God. They lived

---

<sup>191</sup> Zacharias (Zacharou), archimandrite. *Christ, Our Way and Our Life. A presentation of the Theology of Archimandrite Sophrony*. Trans. from the Greek by Sister Magdalen. South Canaan, Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2003, p. 37.

<sup>192</sup> Archimandrite Sophrony was born in Russia on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, 1896. He trained as an artist at the Moscow School of Fine Art. After the October Revolution he settled in France, where he continued to work as an artist and exhibited in the Paris Salons. For a brief period he read Theology at the St Sergius' Institute but in the autumn of 1925 left to become a monk at the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos in Northern Greece. In 1930 he was ordained deacon by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich. About this time he met Staretz Silouan, who became his spiritual guide. After the Staretz's death in 1938, Fr. Sophrony spent seven years living as a hermit in the 'desert' of Athos, first at Karoulia, then in a cave near St. Paul's monastery. He became a priest in 1941 and soon after was elected spiritual confessor for several of the monastic communities on the Athonite peninsula. On returning to France in 1947 he edited and published the writings Silouan had entrusted to him, adding an introduction. Because of serious illness he was unable to return to the Holy Mountain.

In the spring of 1959, helped by friends, he moved to England with a small group of men and women. For many years he received people from all walks of life for spiritual direction. In his latter years he was particularly attentive to those afflicted with cancer.

He died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 1993 at Tolleshunt Knights in the community which he had founded and inspired till the end of his days.

Archimandrite Sophrony's life is marked by the tragic events of the last century but more profoundly by his meeting with Staretz Silouan, whom he lived to see canonized.

at the time of a real challenge to the very existence of humanity and both felt that nothing but personal prayer could prevent the world from chaos and its complete destruction. The challenge prompted many religious thinkers and philosophers of the last century to turn towards the rediscovery by means of a personalist approach of the value of the human being. The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber and the Orthodox theologian and ascetic archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) were among them. One can see both of them endeavouring from within their own traditions and beliefs to persuade their contemporaries that there is nothing more important than a personal human being standing in relation with other human beings of no less value. Both were concerned with learning the lessons of the recent humanitarian catastrophe of the Second World War. And both lived their lives in accordance with what they taught.

Fr. Sophrony was deeply affected by the vision of the hell of war that had just been experienced historically, both in Russia and throughout the world. He writes,

Personally, I was possessed by the vision of hell here, in history. Life in the desert, far from releasing me from this torment, increased my suffering over the events of our age, most of all the Second World War. The desert gave me freedom to devote myself to prayer for mankind, especially during the night. I was somehow obsessed by all the suffering in the world. My experience of the First World War and the ensuing Revolution in Russia contributed to this. I had lived for years in the stifling atmosphere of the fratricidal hatred – at first of conflict between nations and then of civil war. Since that time I would rather hear of maybe thousands of victims of earthquakes, floods, epidemics and so on – catastrophes which normally inspire widespread compassion, whereas wars drag practically everyone into moral participation in the slaughter. There is no worse sin than war.<sup>193</sup>

He sees a war as the deadliest sin which can ever be committed by humankind as almost no one can avoid being morally implicated one way or another in the

---

<sup>193</sup> Sophrony. *We Shall See Him as He Is*, p. 105.

slaughter. War is a sin against God the Creator as it breaks the very personal principle of the created human being. No attention can be paid to a person as the image of God when millions of people are forced to torment and murder each other. Eventually, however, once the hell of the war has ended, it becomes clear to many that God is and that He is a Person rather than an impersonal Absolute. God reveals Himself in this way to those awakening from the disaster and they are able once again to find themselves in the image of God and to relate to each other correspondingly. *True dialogue* is now becoming possible since there is a hypostatic mode of the human being to be recognized in the hypostatic mode of the Divine Being. There is no actual personal being beyond the hypostatic revelation of the personal God in the Word Which “was in the beginning.”

Practically, in the sphere of asceticism Fr. Sophrony warned about the egocentric character which has the impersonal practice of the stripping from the mind of everything that is relative and transitory. This can lead us to “perceive the divine origin in the very nature of man” and, thus, to self-divinisation.<sup>194</sup> A certain ‘absoluteness’ is attributed to the human *I*, which does not require that confirmation of the eternal *Thou* of God which occurs when the *I* relates to the other. A dialogical approach would have no meaning for an *I* that has proved to be self-sufficient, engaged in a predominantly monologized relationship with an impersonal, unrelated entity. Fr. Sophrony considers this ‘absoluteness’ as “nothing else but the reflection of the Divine Absoluteness in the creature created in His likeness; to feel drawn to return to the state of peace which man knew before his appearance in this world.” Having somehow become reflected, ‘absoluteness’ ceases to be absolute; it is the natural relative, not absolute, genius of the human spirit in his “sublimated impulses towards the Absolute.” All contemplation, stated Fr. Sophrony, arrived at by such means is to be considered as self-contemplation rather

---

<sup>194</sup> Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *On Prayer*. Trans. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. Essex: Stavropegic monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1996, p. 169.

than contemplation of God. “In these circumstances we open up for ourselves created beauty, not First-Being. And in all of it there is no salvation for man.”<sup>195</sup> He was eager to find a real image of the Infinite Being imprinted in us or, rather, transmitted to us. And his thirst was satisfied.

The source of real deliverance lies in unquestionable, wholehearted acceptance of the Revelation, “I am that I am ... I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” (Exod. 3:14; Rev. 1:11). God is Personal Absolute, Trinity One and Indivisible. Our whole Christian life is based on this Revelation. This God called us from non-being into life. Knowledge of this Living God and discernment of the manner of His creation releases us from the obscurity of our own ideas, coming “from beneath” (cf. John 8:23), about the Absolute; rescues us from our attraction – unconscious but for all that ruinous – to withdrawal from existence of any sort. We are created in order to be communicants in the Divine Being of Him Who really is.<sup>196</sup>

There must be a mode or a principle common to both divinity and humanity. This principle is originated by God the Creator in accordance with His triune being as the perfect communion of love and it must be the same for all the human beings. The return, the process by which the spirit of the human being enters into the domain of divine eternity, however, differs with each one of us. This signifies the multiplicity of created humankind, and its variety. The ascetic experience in the hermitage and the practice of the communal life in the monastery prompted Fr. Sophrony to discover *the principle of the person* as an imprint of real eternity within each created human being. This very principle impels them into a communion of love with the whole created world.

He writes that the soul comes to discover herself first and foremost when she comes face to face with God. “The persona is born from on High and so is not subject to the laws of nature but transcends earthly bounds and moves in other

---

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Sophrony. *On Prayer*, pp. 169-170.

spheres. It cannot be accounted for. It is singular and unique.”<sup>197</sup> Since Fr. Sophrony has found the prime meaning of hypostasis or “persona” in being, he has never passed on to other definitions: “As the principle, determinative to all other aspects of being, persona is not subject to any determination nor, hence, to any other definition.”<sup>198</sup> He has described the person rather as an active manifestation and gives a sort of “dynamic definition” to the human person as manifested in his/her “capacity for self-knowledge and self-determination”; in his/her “possession of creative energy”; in his/her “talent for cognition not only of the created world but also of the divine world.”<sup>199</sup>

The heart of Fr. Sophrony’s achievement lies in his statement that the human being, which is the image of the Absolute, is hypostatic since the Absolute Being is hypostatic. His confidence in God as Spirit and, likewise, in hypostasis as a spiritual mode of the human being has led him to the subsequent recognition that, just as the Divine Logos took on Himself human flesh and became visible and cognizable, the human spirit also is not incoherent or abstract, but given specific expression by the particular human body. And the human hypostasis is actually real since the Incarnate Christ has revealed hypostatically that God is not a delusion of human fantasy, created by an ignorant fear of unknown impersonal phenomena, but actual reality. Being capable of containing the fullness of divine and human life, the human being as a hypostasis is to become the uniting principle of the plurality of the universe. The Divine Spirit embraces all that exists and hypostatically gives the same capacity to the human being.<sup>200</sup>

This unifying capacity of a human cannot be realized automatically but only in

---

<sup>197</sup> Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *His Life is Mine*. Trans. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977, p. 43.

<sup>198</sup> Sakharov, Nicholas V. *I love, therefore I am. The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony*. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002, p. 71.

<sup>199</sup> Sophrony. *His Life is Mine*, p. 44.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

love, which is the most profound content of the personal being, “the noblest expression of his essence.” It is not through a process of opposition that the person is determined but through a process of love. In this faculty of love lies likeness to God. “*Per se* the person is excellence surpassing all other cosmic values. Rejoicing in the freedom that he has discovered, man contemplates the divine world.” The persona is beyond scientific or philosophical definition and, therefore, unknowable from outside, unless he himself reveals himself. “Since God is a Secret God, so man has secret depths. He is neither the author of existence nor the end. God, not man, is the Alpha and Omega. Man’s godlike quality lies in the mode of his being. Likeness in being is the likeness of which the Scriptures tell.”<sup>201</sup>

The Revelation of the Triune God is, in fact, a revelation of the hypostatic relationship which is peculiar to God *ad intra* and tends *ad extra* to become peculiar to humans. Hypostatically, in a personal way, the human being is always invited to participate in the Revelation of God. As argued above, two interacting (*dia*) things (*logoi*) prompt dialogue – “the rational recipient of the world’s reason (*logos*) and the causal principle of invitatory reason (*logos*)”<sup>202</sup>. The revelation of God the Word is dialogically - i.e. via a hypostatical invitation - present within both the personal and impersonal creation. It is the ‘manner of the creation’ so that the personal principle of being can be recognized as an ‘invitatory reason’ and accepted with the whole heart and with no doubt about the God Who is eternally saying ‘I AM’. This is a real invitation to dialogue for those who are able to say those same words in the *true dialogue* with God. Is this dialogue possible at all, and in what way? Fr. Sophrony put similar questions in a different way: “Where lies true Being, and where the mirage of our fallen imagination? Where indeed is living eternity, and where the illusory attraction of our spirit towards ideas which we can perceive through our own intelligence? Is the principle of the person-

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p. 138.

hypostasis limited *ipso facto* and therefore unworthy of, and inapplicable to, God, or is this very principle the image of the Living Absolute: I AM THAT I AM?<sup>203</sup> These questions are also of vital significance when we speak in terms of a confirmed or *true dialogue*. They might be reformulated as follows: Where lies the *true otherness* of the *Thou*, and where the mirage of the stereotype created within us? Where indeed is the eternal *invitatory logos*, and where the intellectual illusion of our mind? Is the *I* limited in itself and therefore unworthy of *true dialogue* with the eternal *Thou* of God, or is the hypostatic relationship applicable both to the Living Absolute and to the *I* of the human being?

Fr. Sophrony gives an answer to his own questions:

If we decide that the principle of the person is *per se* restricting, then our ascetic effort will be concentrated on transcending this principle in ourselves. And vice versa – if we apprehend it as the only possible image of Absolute Being, enraptured by the power flowing into us we shall pray: “Our Father, which art in heaven ...”<sup>204</sup>

Reformulated in dialogical terms it would sound something like as follows: if one decided that the *I* is restricted in itself then one must endeavor to transcend one’s own *I* and proceed beyond oneself. But if one apprehends one’s *I* as the only possible way to enter into dialogue with the eternal *Thou* of Absolute Being, enraptured by the power of the *invitatory logos*, one can address the *Thou* of God as one’s Heavenly Father.

Although, unlike Buber, he has developed no special terminology, Fr. Sophrony has dialogue in his mind. A dialogical approach is, necessarily, inseparable from the hypostatic principle. He concludes from the revelation of the Holy Trinity that the hypostasis, as love, requires other hypostases. It is just the same in the

---

<sup>203</sup> Sophrony. *On Prayer*, p. 171.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171-172.

case of the human.<sup>205</sup> After the creation of Adam, “the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). What exactly is the author of the book of Genesis speaking about? Adam was not alone as a person but in communion with the Person of God while he was listening to God’s commandments and following them. God sees Adam as lonely since He created him in His image and after His likeness and expects him to have personal relations in the image of those between the Persons of the Trinity. These are of a genuine dialogical character and human relations are expected to be the same.

God made Eve out of Adam’s rib. This shows the potential of created human nature to be enhypostasized in more than one person. God multiplied the same human flesh and thus reveals its distinguishing characteristic. The human nature is specified by the identical flesh and the pair of the persons of Adam and Eve, each made from the same flesh, is to be dialogically interrelated within one nature. Their dialogue was confirmed by the eternal *Thou* of God until the relation with God was broken. The commandment of giving birth to further hypostatic beings means bearing the fruits of the dialogical relation between Adam and Eve. It also confirms their relatedness to the created universe. First, God said “be fruitful, and multiply” and then “replenish the earth, and subdue it” (see Gen. 1:28). One could argue that solely through the fact of being multiplied and, therefore, related to each other humans recognize and follow the providence of God the Trinity concerning the creation as a whole.

Following an idea of St Basil the Great,<sup>206</sup> the human persons like the divine Persons are not subject to arithmetical counting. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). All the earthly elements which are included in the ground were used in forming the human being; however, not from the dust

---

<sup>205</sup> Sophrony. *His Life is Mine*, p. 45.

<sup>206</sup> Basil the Great. *Sur le Saint-Esprit*. 18.45, 404. Edited by B. Pruche. SC 17 bis. 1968.

of the ground but from “the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman” (Gen. 2:22). The rib used to be *a part of the same body* as the rest of the man and in that sense Adam and Eve have one body and, thus, one single nature. They are a couple which is to say simultaneously one and multiple. Although they are different persons, their sons also are of the same flesh and nature, etc. By this example one may suppose that something other than arithmetic is to be applied in order to grasp the meaning of the expressions ‘two in one’, ‘three in one’, or ‘multitude in one’ in relation to the human or divine beings. In that sense there is an analogy or rather *vestige* of the personal triune God to be found in the created personal world. In accordance with its relational or dialogical character the person is always in a relation and although on the one hand it is inseparable from the other persons it is on the other “one and only, unique and irreducible”. The person “is not subject to the natural elements: it transcends earthly bounds and moves in the sphere of other dimensions” and, thus, “cannot be accounted for arithmetically.”<sup>207</sup>

The arithmetical approach as such results from a dependence on objectification and particularization rather than on relatedness in the universe. When the world is addressed as *It*, it is usually for a purpose and a method has to be found to analyse it and estimate its usefulness. But the plenitude of the real world stays hidden from such a view which allows only a part of it to be known or estimated using the particular method. When, instead, the *I* relates to the world as *Thou* and not as *It*, the hypostatic principle is at work and no such arithmetical or any other method is needed. The realm of the world appears to be the world as a whole which does not need to be estimated but loved, just as it is loved by God. So long as they follow their hypostatical image and likeness according to the principle of the person, humans can see the created world in its relatedness as it were with God’s eyes. God the Trinity made human beings capable of knowing the creation as His

---

<sup>207</sup> Sophrony. *We Shall See Him as He Is*, p. 196; Sophrony. *His Life is Mine*, p. 43.

beloved, and enabled relations to be established between them just as He relates in Himself i.e. without arithmetical numbering but hypostatically.

The original sin interrupted the harmony of the human-divine relations and its consequences were fateful for the universe which has ceased to be a single whole and become particularized. The dialogical *I-Thou* relationship had been replaced by the objectified *I-It* relation. *True dialogue* is no longer characteristic of human nature which is now “fallen”. And the relations within the created world present difficulties since they are no longer confirmed by the eternal *Thou* of God. Without such confirmation our mutual relations have become a matter of suspicion. Adam was afraid, because he was naked; and hid himself (cf. Gen. 3:10). Before he discovered his nakedness and was afraid “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). They were concerned not because of their otherness itself but rather because their own *I-Thou* relationship needed to be confirmed by the eternal *Thou* of God. They used to be in *true dialogue* and did not look at each other as an object or as an *It*. After they took and ate the fruit “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:7). Something has happened between Adam and Eve which is actually a result of the split between them and God.

Having in mind the fallen state of human nature, Fr. Sophrony asks, “Can created being meet with the Creator?” and answers,

When the human *persona* stands before Him Who named Himself ‘I AM THAT I AM’ (Exod. 3:14), his spirit, his whole being not only glories but agonises over his own littleness, his ignorance, his wrong-doing. Suffering is his lot from the moment of his spiritual birth. Conscious that the process of transforming our whole earthly being is still far from complete, the spirit wearies.

Christian faith is the result of the presence within us of the Holy Spirit, and the soul knows Him. The Holy Spirit convinces the soul that she will not die; that death will not possess her. But the body, as the material instrument of

the soul, is subject to decay.

Only sin can stifle the Divine breath within us. God Who is Holy does not blend with the darkness of sin. When we seek to justify a sinful action we *ipso facto* sever our alliance with God. God does not constrain us but neither can He be coerced. He retires, leaving us bereft of His luminous presence. Of course, man cannot altogether avoid sinning; but he can avoid the consequences of sin – separation from God – through repentance. With repentance and the consequent increase of grace within us, the reality of the Divine World preponderates over the visible cosmos.<sup>208</sup>

For Fr Sophrony, then, meeting with God and knowing Him as a Person is only possible through the way of repentance which, in turn, is only possible within relations that are personal. And such a true personal relationship or, as we called it, *true dialogue* is itself unlikely without repentance. By its very character repentance is an act of the person towards another person with whom he is going to be reconciled. While in the Buberian dialogical insight no repentance is implied, Levinas's ethical approach comes closer to an understanding of the matter.<sup>209</sup> Since participation in dialogue entails a moral responsibility, it is appropriate in the case of ethical violation to speak about repentance. "Without the law sin was dead ... but when the commandment came, sin revived" (Rom 7:8-9, KJV). Sin emerges from the moral law when it is applied to human relations and breaks them. Repentance can be understood as an effort to come back to the fulfilment of the law and, therefore, to the restoration of the relationship. With his attention fixed more on the practicalities of dialogue Levinas did not succeed in clarifying so subtle a matter as repentance. It must, however, play a role in the dialogical relations for as long as they are in progress. The repentance revitalizes the dialogue and helps to confirm it as being true. The revival of the dialogue through repentance

---

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>209</sup> Focusing on what being other might mean John Zizioulas in his recently published book argues that with Levinas for whom "the Other is not constituted by the self (Husserl, etc.), nor by relationality (Buber), but rather is absolute alterity, which cannot be derived, engendered or constituted on the basis of anything other than itself" one comes "closer to the patristic understanding of otherness". Zizioulas, John. *Communion and Otherness. Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Edited by Paul McPartlan. NY: T&T Clark, 2006, p. 48.

is vitally important as there might be breaks and misunderstandings during which the parties lose their “betweenness” and, thus, do not attend to the confirmation of the dialogue. Repentance enables a process of forgiveness and reconciliation to take place. One could even go further, speaking of the love which arises from personal penitence and forgiveness. According to Fr. Sophrony, the hypostatic principle has to be formulated in terms of personal love; but in no way can one enter into a *true dialogue* of love if one’s conscience is still troubled by unrepented sin. We can say that love emerges from repentance and if there is love then sins are forgiven. The less is forgiven the less love there is and the more love the more is forgiven, just as Christ said to the Pharisee about the sinful woman: “Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47). This close correlation between love and forgiveness is necessary because the original sin has been committed and thorough repentance is required if humans wish to relate to each other as God relates to them in a *true dialogue* of love.

The Orthodox reflection on *true dialogue* might be expressed along these lines: true or confirmed dialogue occurs when through repentance one becomes capable of recognizing within himself/herself the eternal *Thou* which prompts the *I-Thou* relationship with the other person to become genuine. It is not as a condition but rather as a consequence of such prompting that the otherness of *Thou* enables the *I* to repent a sin. Sin is always a result of pride or selfishness which prevents us from recognizing and accepting the other as a person of the same or even better value. Once repented, the sin which compelled the human being to deny the worth of the other has ceased to act within the *I*. One is, however, unable to repent one’s own pride unless there is a grace of God which reveals it to one’s soul. In place of such a grace, Buber has put the eternal *Thou*, Levinas – ethics and morality. Both have, however, somehow or other, recognized the need for an external power which brings “a change of mind” to the *I* looking for the *Thou*. The

same external power makes the *Thou* capable of accepting the *I* and responding properly, establishing a new kind of relation which has never happened between the two persons before. This is the beginning of a dialogue which is going to become true and the repentance brings about what we called above *confirmation* of dialogue. With no repentance there is no *confirmation* and, therefore, no *true dialogue* can take place.

An emphasis on repentance is a particular characteristic of Orthodox belief and in the Christian East there are also many examples of a particular kind of confirmed dialogue which can emerge in the relationship between a spiritual father and his disciple. Such a dialogue is always very close and very intense. While the son reveals his love through his obedience to the father, the father reveals his love in the work of spiritual guidance and in the responsibility he assumes for the success of the relationship. And so long as they are confirmed by the grace of God, both are able in this way to follow God's commandments.

There are two texts which give the essential principle of spiritual fatherhood and sonship in a particularly notable manner: the letter of St. John Climacus, abbot of Sinai, entitled *To the Shepherd (Ad Pastorem)* and sometimes treated as the thirty-first step in his *Ladder of Divine Ascent*; and the first letter of St. Symeon the New Theologian, abbot of Saint Mamas in Constantinople, entitled *On Confession*. The two saints do not provide any systematic list of the characteristics of spiritual fatherhood and sonship but the role of the spiritual father as described by both authors can be discerned chiefly in five ways -doctor, counsellor, intercessor, mediator, and sponsor.<sup>210</sup> Each of these ways interrelates with the others and specifies a particular spiritual action of the father towards his disciple. These practices were developed in the early Christian period in the Middle East and rediscovered in

---

<sup>210</sup> Kallistos (Ware), bishop of Diokleia. *The Spiritual Father in Saint John Climacus and Saint Symeon the New Theologian*. The foreword in Hausherr, Irénée. *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*. Foreword by Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, trans. from the French by Anthony P. Gythiel. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1990, pp. xiii, xiv.

recent centuries particularly on Mount Athos and in some of the Russian monasteries.

When it is applied in the theology of dialogue, the principle of persona introduces into it the category of repentance. True dialogue, when it occurs, can become a way of reconciliation with God. Since both parties to the dialogue have repented their pride they are able to communicate with God and through Him with each other. The eternal *Thou* of God as third party to the dialogue confirms that it is genuine. Repentance, however, is a work of one's own will as well as of the grace of God. The collaboration between the two produces out of the complete repentance of sins by a human being a personal relation with God. There is no corporeal creature other than the human being capable of repentance so the entire creation is prevented from engaging in the way of reconciliation when men and women do not repent their sins. *True dialogue*, when it occurs, signifies the way of salvation and its consequences include the peaceful and joyful coexistence of both the personal and impersonal universe. As we have argued above, when there is a true, confirmed dialogue, the relations within the created universe become like the relations within the Trinity; and due to the providence of God there are within the universe *vestigia trinitatis* which show that such relations are possible.

Fr. Sophrony also reveals his dialogical insight in his book *Letters to Russia* when he speaks of knowing the other *as a result* of brotherly love. "If I will love my brother and my neighbor as my own life, and will not egoistically separate myself from him, then, clearly, I will come to know him more, and know him more deeply, in all his sufferings, thoughts, and quests."<sup>211</sup> There is a parallel here with Levinas's demand for that "true and concrete access to the otherness of the other" which is "clothing the naked and feeding the hungry,"<sup>212</sup> though there is no

---

<sup>211</sup> Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *Letters to Russia*. (In Russian) Edited by Nicholas Sakharov. Moscow, 1997, p. 23, as cited in Sakharov, Nicholas V. *I love, therefore I am*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>212</sup> *Levinas and Buber*, p. 7-8.

preliminary notion of brotherhood either in Levinas or in Buber, who was also concerned about having “in mind the other or others in their present and particular being” and turning “to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship.”<sup>213</sup> The otherness of the other is recognized as an intrinsic characteristic of their participation in the hypostatic love. An “inborn *Thou*” - the human capacity for love - inescapably urges the human being to share his or her life with the other or, in Fr. Sophrony’s words, to live another life as his/her own. The hypostatic principle implies love as its revelation and fulfilment. Love is at the very beginning; the recognition of otherness when one is addressing the other in a personal way is a matter of love. And from the perspective of the hypostatic principle, the *I-Thou* dialogical relation tends to become a relation of hypostatic love which might be offered as the very definition of a *true dialogue*.

*I* is a magnificent word. It signifies persona. Its principal ingredient is love, that opens out, first and foremost, to God. This *I* does not live in a convulsion of egoistic concentration on self. Created by the will of God the Creator from ‘nothing’, if wrapped up in self it will continue in its nothingness. The love towards God commanded of us by Christ, which entails hating oneself and renouncing all emotional and fleshly ties, draws the spirit of man into the expanses of Divine eternity [cf. Luke 14: 26-27 and 33; John 12:25; Matt. 16:25]. This kind of love is an attribute of Divinity.<sup>214</sup>

Through renouncing “fleshly ties” and “hating oneself” human beings are freed to discover the other not as a “wrapped up in self” *It*, which brings nothing for dialogue, but as *Thou*, whom the *I* may address in godlike love and with the confirmation of the eternal *Thou*. Fr. Sophrony said that “the creature person-hypostasis is a godlike centrum” and is regarded by the Creator “not as His Act but as a kind of fact even for Himself”. He is convinced that “the hypostasis recognises no outside authority” and, hence, neither earthly, nor heavenly power

---

<sup>213</sup> Kraemer. *Martin Buber's I and Thou*, p. 33.

<sup>214</sup> Sophrony. *We Shall See Him as He Is*, p. 199.

could compel the hypostasis to make a choice.<sup>215</sup> This does not mean, however, that the hypostatic being is characterized by anarchy. An *I* “wrapped up in self” will have no reason to make a choice so long as there is no *Thou* to be recognized. It is meaningless to speak of a choice when no alternative is present. The *Thou* appears to the *I* to be such an alternative. Meeting with the *Thou* excludes anarchy as such but the *I-It* relation still admits it. Within the *I-Thou* dialogical pair both the *I* and the *Thou* are seeking for a hypostatic love which becomes their voluntary choice in *true dialogue*.

Fr. Sophrony builds a bridge between the expression of the human *I* and that of the divine *I* in the biblical formula of Exodus 3:14. “The name of God is ‘I AM THAT I AM.’ For man, created after the image and likeness, this word *I* ... brings out the principle of *persona* within us.” There is no *I* apart from *Thou* just as there is no father apart from a son. The *I* should never be referred to without the *Thou*. It was a wonderful insight that allowed Buber to reveal this idea so forcefully that it embraced almost all the heights of both the philosophical and religious thought of the last century. And it was a great spiritual experience which prompted Fr. Sophrony to develop “the principle of *persona*” and reveal its central position in the Revelation of God. According to his intuition which indeed is confirmed within the Orthodox tradition, the *I* is the revelation of the principle of the person within the human being just as God’s *I*, which is for us the eternal *Thou*, is the Revelation of His divinity. The human personal being is unconsciously seeking a similarly personal being beyond the limits of a materialist society. Fr. Sophrony has linked this quest to the persistent calling of the Personal God Whose *I* is at the origin of the same principle of the person that is revealed in the human *I*. Christ promised: “I live, and you will live also” (Jn 14:19). From the eschatological view, in eternity our being, according to the promise of Christ, will retain its godlike personicity. Our personal spirit will abide as such and will not be

---

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

diluted and absorbed in the ocean of any supra-personal absolute.<sup>216</sup> The Absolute is comprehensible to us due to the content of His relational being which is hypostatic love; it can never be perceived in the realm of the impersonal where numerous human delusions hope to find it.

---

<sup>216</sup> Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *Birth into the Kingdom Which Cannot Be Moved*. (In Russian) Edited by Nicholas Sakharov. Essex, 1999, p. 22.

### 3. TRINITY – WAY TO DIALOGUE

The relational character of the created world, as it appears, prompted a question: what type of divine relations would correspond to those that take place in reality? On the one hand, we might seek for a kind of imprint or vestige of the relations that characterize the Creator Himself. On the other hand, if we were to follow a strictly monotheistic belief we could not provide any explanation as to how the One God remains in relation within Himself and, therefore, we would have no means of saying in what way He is really relating to the universe. In the latter case, the relations in the created world lose their connection with the Creator and become a sort of “thing in itself”. Then, only an *I-It* kind of relation in the sense discussed above would be possible.

Discovering the dialogical mode of a personal being brings out the *I* personally addressing the *Thou* – not from outside but rather from within their beings as they are shared in the very “principle of person”. In contrast to the isolation of the individual, a sort of “betweenness” or capacity to participate and to be participated in is specified in the very idea of person or, as we have called it, the “principle of persona”. Following the idea of creation “in the image and likeness” one can suppose a vestige of God imprinted in human beings. It originates from within the personal principle of the divine being and refers to the human beings’ relational character. The above idea of “betweenness” allows us to approach the divine-human antinomy with the least degree of intellectual confusion. Participating and being participated in Himself, God impels human beings likewise to participate in each other, though we must always keep in mind the superiority of the inner Trinitarian relations.

The long entangled history of the Trinitarian controversies shows that resisting inconsistencies as they have appeared from time to time right up to the present day is no easy task. In apostolic times and afterwards the main efforts of the

apologists were devoted to persuading first the Jews and then the gentiles that God and His Embodiment Jesus Christ is the One God with no division or separation affecting the divine essence. The unique character of the inner divine relationship as it is witnessed in the Scriptures, draws forth the unity of the essence of the One God which is not an abstraction but a reality knowable to the particular human beings. While there is an antinomy of one divine nature and the eternally inter-related Persons of the Father and the Son, both the paternal and filial relations are characteristic of the same God as He reveals Himself in both the Old and New Testaments. The “betweenness” of these relations was formulated by the Cappadocians with the help of the term *homoousios* (of one essence). Proceeding from the Father and resting on the Son in His Revelation to the world the Holy Spirit confirms that both before and after the Incarnation this perpetual divine relationship or, as we have called it, *true dialogue* takes place between the Father and the Son. With the help of some of the main patristic sources and their commentaries we will examine the idea of dialogue as it runs through the Christian thought of that time. One might hope to learn something as to the nature of *true dialogue* by discussing it through the example of the divine relations as they are witnessed in the Scriptures and in the patristic writings.

The witness of the Holy Spirit brings with it an invitation for Christian believers to participate in the divine-human dialogue through partaking in the sacrifice of Christ. Outside this dialogue only the contemplation of a God Who is always unknowable and incomprehensible to the creation is possible. But the sacrificial act of God, which has done nothing to impair the divine all-sufficiency, has the effect of confirming this dialogue in which the divine-human relations are perfect and fulfilled. The divinity of the Man Jesus Christ is confirmed by the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father and enables men and women to share in the divine *true dialogue* as it takes place between the Father and His Incarnate Son. The

role of the Holy Spirit was a matter of particular dispute in the late fourth century when, like the divinity of Christ before it, it had been called into question.

One can analyze how the dialogical content of the Nicene-Constantinople creed was formed over the course of the first four centuries. If God was an impersonal Absolute there would be no possibility of a relationship and, therefore, dialogue with Him. For a dialogue to occur there have to be at least two parties; hence a dialogical perspective can only be discovered in the divinity when the Son is considered to be a Person differing from the Person of the Father. It took some time for the apologists to develop this position of the Person of the Son. And then more time was needed to discover the role of the Holy Spirit as the third party of the confirmed divine dialogue. We will follow the dialogical perspective as it can be seen through the Trinitarian relations as they were gradually understood and interpreted first in the Scriptures and then in the writings of the various Church authors of the following epoch.

### **3.1. Learning dialogue from the Scriptures.**

#### **3.1.1. Dialogue in the Old Testament.**

God's deep involvement in the story of Israel, his relations with its leaders, and its righteous ones, is expressed when in the Old Testament (OT) He is called 'Father'. He protects, cherishes, and nourishes a people whose infidelities could also call for discipline, and this name conveys the steadfast commitment and compassionate paternal love of God towards His adopted people. Despite all their sinful failures to live their covenant with God, they were always able to call upon Him as their Father. In this case, the fatherhood was a metaphor, based on God's free and creative choice of the people. It has nothing to do with physical generation; the kings of Israel were not considered to be deified, as if they were in any sense directly begotten from the deity. One can rather apply a dialogical view in order to comprehend the paternal-filial relations between God and His people: a sort of

*true dialogue* would occur when the people listen to God in the same way that obedient sons listen to their father. Something beyond usual human dealings, however, would be heard, if, knowing about the salvation to come, we could see this as a prototype of the relationship between the Father and His Incarnate Son. It has been presented to the people of Israel as an image which would help to prepare them for the Messiah to come. Although it can be found in a variety of historical, prophetic, and sapiential texts, we cannot claim that it is used frequently in the OT, but, as we will see later, it will become the favored name in the New Testament (NT).<sup>217</sup>

There are a little more than 20 occasions in the OT when God is named (or addressed) as Father. Following the order proposed by Gerald O'Collins, let us look first at the cases in the protocanonical books (those 39 books accepted by all as inspired and canonical) and then at those in the (later) deuterocanonical works (or the six books and further portions of the protocanonical books found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew canon of scriptures).<sup>218</sup>

*Proto-Canonical Books.* The dialogue between God and His people was supposed to have been established for an unlimited time and it ceases only when the people are unfaithful and betray God Whose nurturing fidelity and mercy are contrasted with the perverse infidelity of Israel. One of the oldest texts in which God is called Father occurs when Moses, in a song attributed to him, invites the people of Israel to renew their relationship with God: "Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?" (Dt. 32:6, NRSV)<sup>219</sup>. The intimate covenant bond between God and His people is recalled by Moses here and elsewhere in

---

<sup>217</sup> O'Collins, Gerald, S.J. *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>219</sup> We will, when analyzing the biblical texts in this chapter, generally use the New Revised Standard Version, as it is an accurate and readable, yet up-to-date translation of the Bible.

these closing chapters of Deuteronomy. It can be seen as an invitation to the people to enter into dialogue instead of flirting with other religious idols or gods. The latter has led them to deny their true parentage and behave like ungrateful children. “Who are these ‘other gods’? Either the multiform, often ambivalent manifestations of an immanent and impersonal divine, as in Egyptian ‘henotheism’ or the monolatry of so many nations all of whom want to have a god peculiar to themselves to protect and exalt them.”<sup>220</sup> The text from Deuteronomy indicates how the word ‘Father’, when used of God, usually refers to the special covenantal dialogue between God and the people who have been delivered from captivity and called God’s (firstborn) son (e.g., Ex. 4:22-23; Hos. 11:1) or God’s “sons and daughters” (e.g., Dt. 32:19; Is. 1:2; 30:1). God gave them birth (Dt. 32:18) by electing, adopting and prompting them to join Him in a particular intimate relationship which might be called *true dialogue* in the above sense. The divine eternal *Thou* has dwelt among the people enabling them to address each other dialogically while all of them together could address God as *Thou*. “An historical divine choice, and not any kind of sexual activity and physical generation (as in the case of the gendered gods of surrounding nations), made God their Father.”<sup>221</sup>

The divine invitation to dialogue was recalled in a later affirmation of the covenantal promise, conveyed in an oracle through the prophet Nathan to King David:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him

---

<sup>220</sup> Bobrinskoy, Boris. *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1999, p. 15.

<sup>221</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 14.

with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you (2 Sm. 7:12-15).

Rulers were entitled “sons of God” in ancient Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, but in the promise of God concerning an everlasting Davidic dynasty, Solomon, David’s son and successor, is mentioned as a son of God in a rather different way. A new, more personal, kind of dialogical relationship has now appeared between God and His people, represented in the person of their ruler. The belief that the anointed king was chosen by God and deemed to be His adopted son is finely revealed in the royal psalms: “I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you’” (Ps. 2:7). This refers to the day when the king was installed as the people’s leader given by God.<sup>222</sup> The sonship of the king must serve as a sort of guarantee that there is a dialogue between God and His people.

Dialogue has taken a step forward when God’s discipline and providence of the race as rather an impersonal entity gives way before the appearance of a personified representative who is charged with carrying out the duties of the people. Since he is elected from among the people the king enters into dialogue with God on behalf of the people. He bears witness to the people’s current character but he is in addition able to say *Thou* to God Who recognizes his *I*. It was probably the best opportunity the people of Israel were to have to come to know of their God’s quality as a person. In following their king and ruler, they could see God’s gentle paternal care of them. The king’s sonship established by God became the sonship of the whole people. The dialogue has become true, confirmed as it is by God through the king chosen by Him as representative of the people. And the king as a third party in dialogue between God and the people is

---

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

bearing witness in both directions: to the people about their God and to God about His people.

God's choice of the Davidic dynasty, like the divine election of the whole people, has, once and for all, established a new permanent relationship: God is and will remain faithful Father to the people, a fact that is confirmed continually by God through the king. The pagan nations surrounding Israel address their gods as impersonal powers and/or as entities who act on their own, without any sort of relationship, merely being pleased with different kinds of sacrifice. There is another thing, however, which the people of Israel must know: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). Unlike the pagans, by naming God as Father they have recognized His wish to be pleased with entering into *true dialogue* with those human beings who are chosen by Him. The oracle delivered by Nathan (2 Sm. 7), therefore, brings out the unconditional nature of the promise of God and in particular its dialogical character. Sometimes God disciplines the people and its ruler but He will always do it with steadfast love. Unfortunately, after the Babylonian Exile, the promise communicated by Nathan was obscured through the failure of efforts to reestablish the Davidic dynasty and the dialogical relations became problematic.

Parallels to 2 Samuel 7:12-15 are found in 1 Chronicles 17:11-15; 22:9-10; 28:5-6, which repeat Nathan's oracle and God's promise to be Father to the king as the divinely adopted son. The intimacy of the God-king relationship is implied here in an even more personal way for there is no straightforward reference to the discipline that we find in the version of Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel. The result is instead to highlight even more how God is and will be a tender, caring Father with only a hint of the bad consequences revealed in Samuel (cf. 1 Chronicles 17:13).

There are at least two passages in the book of Psalms which speak directly of the divine fatherhood. Psalm 68 praises the God of heaven who is also named as Fa-

ther to the defenseless: “Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation” (Ps. 68:5). In the royal prayer for deliverance God invites the king to address Him as Father, although the address is placed by God in the mouth of the king David.

He shall cry to me, “You are my Father,  
 my God, and the Rock of my salvation!”  
 I will make him the firstborn,  
 the highest of the kings of the earth.  
 For-ever I will keep my steadfast love for him,  
 and my covenant with him will stand firm.  
 I will establish his line for ever,  
 and his throne as long as the heavens endure. (Ps 89: 26-29)

An interesting dialogical perspective appears in the passage. God invites David to reveal his *Thou* as Father and promises to make him His “firstborn”. One might recall the insight of Buber concerning the “eternal *Thou*” who confirms the truth of the dialogue. The “eternal *Thou*” which must remain immanent and unique for every human *Thou* can never become a human *I*. It is only through the reflection of the “eternal *Thou*” within true dialogue that every other *Thou* becomes true. In this case the “eternal *Thou*” will confirm the *Thou* of God the Father enabling the *I* of David the king to say to God “You are my father”. So we can probably recognize this passage as an example of *true dialogue*.

The prophetic literature provides a number of examples of the dialogical perspective. One may start with the prophet Jeremiah and other prophetic material from the late seventh century, when Judah was threatened both by external forces and by internal infidelity. “Have you not just now called to me, ‘My Father, you are the friend of my youth’” (Jer. 3:4). YHWH is here presented as both Father and Friend in youth while, in a second passage from Jeremiah, He is presented as being a Father to his children: “I thought how I would set you among my children, and give you pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of all the nations. And I

thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me” (Jer. 3:19). The prophet declares in a way that is stronger even than in Psalm 89 that the father-son relationship because of its peculiar inner character should never be interrupted. The dialogue with God must be supported by the people at all times despite external threats and occasional infidelities. When this dialogue ceases to be true the “eternal *Thou*” of God uses the prophets to say words of God which will restore to people their personal power and help them to re-establish the relationship with God.

There are two examples of the father-son dialogue in the closing chapters of the prophet Isaiah. At least some of the exiles have returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, and the prophet voices the community’s laments in one of the very few passages in which God is addressed directly as Father and, in fact, addressed as our Father: “For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name” (Is. 63:16). The patriarchs, Abraham and Israel (i.e., Jacob), have died and are of no help. God, the people’s Redeemer from of old, is immortal and as “our Father” revives hopes for salvation. Actual paternal relationship gives them confidence that God will not cease giving His help and care. Staying in dialogue with God is, in fact, of more importance even than honoring their forefathers. In a prayer that God will reveal himself and act again with power, the prophet confesses not only the people’s sin and helplessness but rather their trust in the Father Who has made them: “For you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand” (Is. 64:7-8). There is no dialogue yet as God has hidden His face but, while considering themselves as the work of His hands, people are still able to say “you are our Father” and, therefore, they are ready for dialogue to become true. The Book of Isaiah began by calling God “our God” (Is. 1:10); it ends by addressing YHWH

as “our Father” – the God of the people Who cares for them in their distress, patiently molds them as a potter does with clay, and is ready to renew dialogue with them at any time.<sup>223</sup>

The images of the father-son and master-servant relations are used in a divine oracle from Malachi to illustrate the people’s infidelity: “A son honours his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honour due to me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due to me? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, ‘How have we despised your name?’” (Mal. 1:6). The concept of Father is associated here with that of master to evoke the authority of the divine Master whom Israel should serve. But the context puts the primary emphasis on God as the loving Father who has adopted the people into a covenant dialogical relationship which they have failed to live up to: “I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have you loved us?’ Is not Esau Jacob’s brother? says the LORD. Yet I have loved Jacob” (Mal. 1:2).

*Deuterocanonical Books.* These are the books found in the Greek but not the Hebrew canon of Scriptures. We may begin by looking at the book of Tobit which appears as a piece of didactic and delightful fiction giving vivid examples of the tenacious faith offered by the book’s main protagonists - Tobit, his son Tobiah, and Sarah, the bride-to-be – as they are tested by a series of painful and even terrifying challenges. God shows a loving, paternal concern for Tobit, his family, and all those who suffer in exile (Tb. 13:3-5). The part of the book that is most pertinent to our dialogical argument is Tobit’s concluding hymn of praise to God as “our Father and our God forever”, a passage which was probably added at a later date to the rest: “Exalt him in the presence of every living being, because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our Father and he is God for ever” (Tb. 13:4). God is dialogically present throughout the whole book as free, just, and faithful in the lives of the protagonists, and so Tobit is able here to refer to Him

---

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

in a very personal way and with an assurance that recalls Isaiah 64:8 and anticipates the prayerful relationship to God as “our Father” in the NT.

There are two slight variations to be observed in the elaborate way of addressing God as “Lord, Father, and Master of my life” (Sir. 23:1) and as “Lord, Father, and God of my life” (Sir. 23:4) in the book of Sirach. While mentioning the *Thou* of God in relation to the *I* of “my life”, this address seems to have an *I-Thou* dialogical character. It comes in a prayer for wisdom and self-control. The wisdom is prompted by the “eternal *Thou*” of God and, therefore, can be lived by those who confidently ask for the powerful personal help that God gives when He keeps His followers from falling into sin. In a psalm of thanksgiving that comes in the first of two appendices and that recalls the dialogical appeal to “my Father” of Psalms 89:26, the same book tells its readers: “I cried out, ‘Lord, you are my Father; do not forsake me in the days of trouble’” (Sir. 51:10). God’s power and personal help ensures salvation for those in distress who appeal to Him dialogically as “my Father”.

*The intertestamental literature.* The texts composed by Jews around the time of Jesus but not recognized as canonical scripture include a few examples of dialogically oriented language for God. Nothing surpasses the tenderness of a passage from the *Thanksgiving Hymns of Qumran*, which applies to God a dialogical metaphor (“Thou art a father”) and two similes (“as a woman” and “as a foster-father”): “For Thou art a father to all [the sons] of Thy truth, and as a woman who tenderly loves her babe, so dost Thou rejoice in them; and as a foster-father bearing a child in his lap, so carest Thou for all Thy creatures.”<sup>224</sup> The sons of truth are supposed to stay in the *I-Thou* relation with God Who is considered as their father. One notices, however, that in the Dead Sea Scrolls although the dialogical theme of divine fatherhood and human beings’ filial status is introduced (e.g.,

---

<sup>224</sup> Vermes, G. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 3d ed., 1987, p. 192, as referred in *Ibid.*, p. 22.

4Q372.1.16), the relationship remains unrelated to God's "Spirit."<sup>225</sup>

Another wonderful example of the dialogue of love to be found in Scripture is the image of the nuptial love between God and His people. This is where we might find the highest point of the revelation of Yahweh's love in the OT (Hos. 2:19-20; Jer. 2:2; Is. 54:5-8; and the entire Song of Songs), telling of how God finds the lost, unfaithful wife and restores her to her pristine purity. Some parts of the Jewish tradition considers the Song of Songs as the 'precious point' of Scripture.

(In the Song) is to be found the summary of the whole Torah, of the whole work of Creation, of the mystery of the Patriarchs, of the story of the Egyptian exile, and the Exodus therefrom, and of the Song of the Sea. It is the quintessence of the Decalogue, of the Sinaitic covenant, of the significance of Israel's wandering through the desert, until their arrival in the Promised Land and the building of the Temple. It contains the crowning of the Holy Name with love and joy, the prophecy of Israel's exile among the nations, of their redemption, of the resurrection of the dead, and of all else until that Day which is 'Sabbath of the Lord.' All that was, is, and shall be, is contained in it; and, indeed, even that which will take place on the 'Seventh Day,' which will be the 'Lord's Sabbath,' is indicated in this song.<sup>226</sup>

It should be emphasized that the anthropological themes of the Song of Songs are not simply a means of explaining God through the use of psychological modes that are proper to us. They are not merely metaphors. "On the contrary, by donning words and feelings, God validates them, reveals their true ontology, manifests their infinite source and finality, describes man in his total natural reality, and attracts him to Himself through the alliance and the love in which God and man share the same feelings. The sentiment that best expresses the relation of

---

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> The passage is taken from *The Zohar*, vol. 4, trans. Maurice Simon. London, 1973, p. 6, as referred in Bobrinskoy. *The Mystery of the Trinity*, pp. 59-60.

God and man is that of sharing.’<sup>227</sup> As we have seen above, there are two approaches toward faith – *pistis* and *emuna*. While *pistis* means mainly the unilateral faith man has in God, *emuna* appears rather to be of a reciprocal, dialogical character. God loves man first, believes in him and invites him to rejoin Him in love; and man finds the revival of his own faith-*pistis* in a reciprocal faithfulness-*emuna* which is always a matter of mutual knowledge, of a love that is shared in divine-human *confirmed* dialogue. There is a reciprocal endeavor, because the transformation of man into the divine life - the establishment of an ontological relationship between human and divine - makes the fulfillment of the human being possible in a free manner of *true dialogue*. Here, the image of love is expressed in the multiple terms of nuptial relations of which the Song of Songs represents the culmination.

### 3.1.2. Wisdom of God.

Because of the importance it has assumed in Russian religious philosophy in the twentieth century, there is, in Russian, a substantial literature on the difficult and delicate theme of the Wisdom of God or Sophia. Some part of it has been translated<sup>228</sup> and developed by modern western theologians (e.g. Rowan Williams). It is not an aim of our study to investigate the controversial theme of sophiology; however, when speaking in terms of personal dialogue one cannot avoid the problems of the interpretation of the personification of the Wisdom of God as it appears in some biblical passages. Russian sophiology stands somewhat apart from the traditional treatment of the theme of Wisdom but it contains great riches that could allow a development of certain aspects of biblical sophiology.

Fr. Sergius Bulgakov is the most recent and best known representative of the movement of Russian sophiology. His vision of the divine Wisdom is a vision of

---

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> See, for example, his recently reprinted book: Bulgakov, Sergei. *Sophia. The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology (Library of Russian Philosophy)*. Herndon, VA: Lindisfarne Books, 1993.

the unity of the divine world and the created world which is “a world in God.” It runs through his great theological works like a watermark.<sup>229</sup> He has insisted that “the Divinity in God constitutes the Divine Sophia”<sup>230</sup> and considered Sophia as follows:

Rather, it is God’s own life, inseparable from Personal Divinity, as His self-revelation. For a correct comprehension of the Divine Sophia, as the Divine World, as Divinity in God it is extremely important to understand Her in connection with the Divine Hypostases in the Holy Trinity. As Divinity Sophia is nonhypostatic (is not a “fourth hypostasis”), but She is eternally hypostatized in the Holy Trinity and never exists nonhypostatically or extrahypostatically. She belongs to the Divine Trihypostatic Person as this Person’s life and self-revelation. She exists in Herself but not for Herself. She exists for the hypostatic God. The Divine Sophia contains the entire fullness of Divine Being, but She does not exist in isolation from the Divine Trihypostatic Person. Divinity belongs to the Personal God.<sup>231</sup>

The sophiology of Sergius Bulgakov is still badly understood, especially in non-theological circles. It has been suggested that he uses biblical references to present the feminine mystery of Wisdom/Sophia as a being co-existent with the masculine mystery of the Trinity. In the west some reviewers still assume that in Bulgakov’s vision the created world is full of the Spirit and that only in the marriage of Sophia with the Godhead is the Christian mystery brought to fulfillment.<sup>232</sup> This does not seem to be exactly the case, but a certain nebulosity in his study of the Trinity (especially regarding the connections between the Persons of

---

<sup>229</sup> Bobrinskoy. *The Mystery of the Trinity*, p. 36.

<sup>230</sup> Bulgakov. *Sophia*, p. 33.

<sup>231</sup> Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Bride of the Lamb*. New York & Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002, pp. 38-39.

<sup>232</sup> “[Bulgakov] was a torchbearer for what was coming to be called Sophiology.... His championship of Sophia was clearly an attempt to revitalize Orthodoxy and to reestablish the spirit of the divine feminine, so that the Church should not remain off-balanced by its Christocentric view”. - Caitlin Matthews, author of *Sophia—Goddess of Wisdom: The Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World Soul*. San Rafael, CA: Mandala, 1991.

the Trinity and Sophia) and his implicitly separate personifying of the Wisdom of God (although she is nonhypostatic as divinity, Bugakov insists that she ‘never exists nonhypostatically’) might lead to such a gnostic interpretation which would, obviously, be outside Christian doctrine. Despite efforts to present his sophiology as being consistent with biblical and patristic teaching it was subjected to very severe criticism by Lossky, Florovsky and other major Russian theologians and formally declared by the ecclesiastical authorities to be non-Orthodox.<sup>233</sup>

The theme of wisdom is nonetheless of vital importance for our study in dialogue. Reflection on the two pairs *I-Thou* and *I-It*, as they were considered above, represents a dialogical approach towards the study both of divinity and of the created world. While the divine Wisdom can only be approached through the personal intimate *I-Thou* relationship, human wisdom, being objectified in the mind, presents the *I-It* relation in its subject-object duality. Wisdom, to the extent that it remains a human wisdom, not derived from God and not dependent on Him, runs the risk of usurping the Wisdom of God, so it becomes ambiguous, equivocal: this is, perhaps, one of the meanings of the book of Genesis. Chapter three shows the serpent as a being who is ‘wise’ not as we understand the word today, but shrewd and cunning; and even if such cunning should not be assumed to be in itself diabolical, it is already a rejection of the Wisdom of God, an effort of usurpation through a “relentless inner logic.”<sup>234</sup>

Considering the Wisdom of God in a strictly systematic way, pursuing a “relentless inner logic” and not taking into account the antinomic character of biblical-patristic thought may lead to erroneous presuppositions and/or conclusions. Despite his sincere endeavours to avoid a separate personification of the divine Wis-

---

<sup>233</sup> Lossky accused Bulgakov of “incorrect understanding of the Church Tradition, non-apophatism in considering the Revelation which prompted a gnostic-like system made by philosophical thought and the creative imagination” and “seeking for a ‘mediation’ or an ontological bridge between God and the world, which idea is also shared by gnostics” Lossky, Vladimir. *Debate about Sophia. Articles*. (In Russian). Moscow, 1996, p. 23ff.

<sup>234</sup> Bobrinskoy. *The Mystery of the Trinity*, p. 37.

dom, sophiology, as developed by Bulgakov, is more revealing of his scholarly philosophical insights than faithful to the divine-human meaning of the Bible. Since it misses the depth either of divinity or of humanity, a one-sided reflection will lead either to the elimination of apophatism or to a rejection of Revelation in theology. Both tendencies were identified as heretical movements in the patristic epoch. While advancing towards a modern comprehension of the Wisdom tradition, the dialogical approach, as specified above, might enable us to remain faithful to the Orthodox tradition by supporting the patristic thought that the divine Wisdom in its different biblical appearances signifies both the Word and the Spirit in accordance with an Orthodox understanding of the Trinity. Keeping this in mind, we will further examine whether it is compatible with Orthodoxy to relate the Wisdom of God to His “eternal *Thou*” considered in terms of dialogue. If so, when the Fathers of the Church treat particular passages in a christological sense, one could think of Wisdom as signifying the “eternal *Thou*” of the Word of God; but in other passages it could be understood as the “eternal *Thou*” of the Spirit, i.e. in a pneumatological sense. In the biblical tradition Wisdom is always addressed in a very personal and intimate way, but our dialogical method may help us to avoid misinterpretation since the “eternal *Thou*” in the most accurate sense of the word merely signifies the confirmed and accepted *otherness* of God as the other Person addressing the human *I*.

Generally speaking, dialogue can be seen as a function of *antinomy*, and vice versa. So if it is treated in the antinomic sense, the dialogical approach might be an indispensable help in our endeavors to reflect on the revelatory texts of the Bible. It is especially useful when referring to the books of the Wisdom tradition in both the Proto-Canonical and Deuterocanonical lists: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. True wisdom comes from God alone Who gives humankind the gift of discerning between good and evil. Human wisdom recognizes that so long as it is acting on its own it is ambiguous and incomplete.

A “dialogue between the wisdoms” is needed to strengthen human wisdom and it becomes a *true dialogue* if the “eternal *Thou*” of God is reflected in the “inborn *Thou*” of human wisdom.

The personal way in which Sophia is represented may in many ways be seen as simply the result of the particularly literary character of the Wisdom tradition. But this personification nonetheless poses the question of the relations between Sophia and the Persons of God. “It would express the link between wisdom and God through the literary genre of personification. And the personification of wisdom suggests a profound theological intuition – that of the inalienable, mysterious relation of a Person-Wisdom to the very reality of God.”<sup>235</sup> Reference to the “reality of God” in place of the Persons of God does not do very much to help clarify the matter. When we speak in terms of a personal relationship all the parties must appear as persons. Otherwise our reflections will get into ever greater difficulties until we find that a sort of *I-It* relation has replaced the dialogical *I-Thou*.

If there is a metaphor in the personification of Wisdom, it is a necessary metaphor, an objective metaphor which surpasses the author’s intention, thought, and language. In any case, we cannot fully know what was the intention, the prophetic vision of the one who dared personify and speak of Wisdom in a monotheistic theology, at the risk of bringing up the concept of an almost personal intermediary between God and the human being. In expressing the mystery of Wisdom as well as that of the Word, there is an audacity, an inner logic that surpasses the thought and the language of the authors to evoke a certain evidence in the spiritual awareness, without developing the theological synthesis (if it can be developed) – evidence of a start, evidence of the mystery proper to Wisdom.<sup>236</sup>

There is no personal relationship between Wisdom and God that can be seized by the human mind. It is rather a reflection on the very fact of the true dialogue

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

that can be established between the human person and God. In relation to the human personality the divine Person is original and present in the very “principle of persona” as the Wisdom of God or His “eternal *Thou*”. Thus there must always be a sense of mystery when we refer to the Wisdom of God. She is not a person but rather a living invitation to enter into dialogue with God through His Wisdom as it is reflected in a human person. Wisdom invites men and women to learn about God rather as a person who wanted them to relate to him in a personal way. Thus the Revelation of God through His Word and in His Spirit can be called Wisdom in the sense of the “eternal *Thou*” which characterises both of them.

Thanks to its revelatory and teaching character the theme of Wisdom has been used widely in Christian theology. But present as it is in both testaments in such a personal and intimate way, Wisdom usually holds a sort of intermediate position between the divine and the human, with no attempt being made at a separate personification. It might be referred to as “an invitatory reason” or kind of “betweenness” which makes true dialogue desirable and possible. One could say that the Wisdom tradition is a continual stream running through both the testaments, thus making of them one living and uninterrupted tradition. Boris Bobrinsky proposes three main lines of exegesis and application.<sup>237</sup>

1. *A christological line*, with the identification of the Wisdom of God and Christ, an early identification, present already in the New Testament. The continuity between the sapiential writings and certain texts of the New Testament is evident – the same set of themes, the same terminology – in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, in the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians where Christ is designated as “the true wisdom of God”; also in the Synoptics, where Christ presents Himself as the Teacher of Wisdom. It should be recalled how much the early tradition, especially the Alexandrian and Latin, insisted on this christological interpretation of Wisdom. Consider Origen and the Arians who used the

---

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 38-39.

famous text of Proverbs 8:22 (“Yahweh acquired me” or “created me”) to deny the uncreated character of Wisdom, and thus of the Son. St. Athanasius himself insisted emphatically on this identification, through the very interplay of controversy, but also in the positive developments of his theology.

2. *A pneumatological line*, according to a tradition the witnesses of which are in the minority, but the theological value of which is important. This is explained, among other things, by the close relation between Wisdom and Spirit found in another sapiential text of the Old Testament, the Wisdom of Solomon; and by the fact that Wisdom as well as Spirit is feminine in Hebrew and in Semitic languages.

3. *The eucharistic line*, using above all the passage on “Wisdom as hostess.” Wisdom “has built her house,” “hewn her pillars,” laid her tables – Wisdom who, through her servants, invites people to eat her bread and drink her wine. This is the theme that will be highlighted by sacramental and eucharistic theology, and also by iconography.

As divine personifications in the OT the Word and the Spirit were not yet recognized as persons. Like Wisdom they were given personal characteristics and presented as personified agents of divine activity. The personified agency of Wisdom or Sophia was increasingly related to the divine work of creation, providence, and salvation and as the sapiential thinking develops in the OT it grows in dignity and power. “Within a monotheistic faith, Wisdom takes on functions and attributes of YHWH, and within a strongly patriarchal religion, Wisdom emerges in a feminine way.”<sup>238</sup> This might provide us with the opportunity to present the providence of God as an endless invitation to dialogue. A dialogical way of being might easily be recognized in the masculine and feminine attributes that are found within a single human nature. Likewise, in bearing feminine attributes, the Wisdom of God reveals His dialogical way of addressing the human. The “Eternal *Thou*” is not God in His essence but the invitatory personification of God. An essential attribute of Wisdom is her ability to reflect the divine being as personal. Just as in the relations between man and woman there is a mutual desire to know and to be known, so the feminization of Sophia in the Wisdom tradition enables

---

<sup>238</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 24.

God's will to be known to humans in a very intimate and personal way.

The word *Hokmah*, or wisdom (as noun, adjective, or verb) occurs 318 times in the OT, and nearly 75 percent of these occurrences turn up in Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (*Qobeleth*), Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. Let us pursue the dialogical development of Wisdom chronologically, if possible, from Job to the Wisdom of Solomon.

The Book of Job probably dates to the seventh century B.C. though it may include some later additions. A long dialogue between Job and his three friends in the book is abruptly followed by a poem considered by the scholars as a later insertion and regarded as a sort of interlude or a bridge. It introduces Wisdom, stressing the mysterious inaccessibility of the divine Wisdom, which is quite beyond the reach of human beings (Job 28:12-14, 20-21), utterly precious (Job 28:15-19), and accessible only to God (Job 28:23-27). At this early stage of reflection, Job 28 glorifies Wisdom without presenting it as a person.<sup>239</sup> "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It is not in me', and the sea says, 'It is not with me'" (Job 28:12-14). The depth and the sea are personified here but wisdom is not. This signifies that the preceding portion of the human reflection has been urged by the elements of the world rather than by God. Wisdom appears as not yet personified and as related to the works of creation though distinct from any of them in particular. She seems to be beyond everything, including personification. God alone can see and know the way to the Wisdom which will be seen constantly as a divine gift rather than as a human achievement. With this poem from Job the characteristics of Wisdom which will emerge later in the OT are only in their beginnings but one persistent initial feature has already emerged: her mysterious

---

<sup>239</sup> See Scott, Martin. *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement)*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992, p. 50.

imperviousness to being seized by any external efforts. Later, in the books of Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom invites all to her feast, dwells in Jerusalem, and graciously appears to those who love her. She seems to be more available but the initiative is still with her. Likewise with the “eternal *Thou*”. One could recall the features of the “eternal *Thou*” of God as introduced by Buber and discussed above. The inaccessibility of the *Thou* remains insuperable so long as we remain within the bounds of the *I-It* relation. It is the “eternal *Thou*” that issues the invitation to dialogue and confirms it so that it becomes real and progressive – no one can urge the invitation from within himself. The *I-Thou* relationship cannot arise so long as the *I-It* relation still embraces the whole human being. However, a vestige of the “eternal *Thou*” – the “inborn *Thou*” – brings to the human a sort of being in expectation of the dialogue to which he or she will be personally invited. The “inborn *Thou*”, as mentioned above, might become a guarantee of the human capacity to recognize and answer a call of the “eternal *Thou*” of God which is very likely here to be referred to as His Wisdom.

While including some older material, the final revision of the Book of Proverbs is believed to date from the late sixth or early fifth century B.C. Wisdom looms large in the first nine chapters (1:20-33; 3:13-24; 4:5-9; 8:1-9:6). She preaches her message in a prophetic manner, putting her hearers before a dilemma: either folly and disaster or fear of God and life. Her role as primordial relationship to God and creation is announced as follows: “The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens” (Prov. 3:19). Sophia not only existed with God before everything else (Prov. 8:22) but also accompanied the divine work of all creation and, in particular, human beings: “then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race” (Prov. 8:30-31). An essential characteristic of the “eternal *Thou*” is recognizable here as

present in God and with Him in “in his inhabited world”, i.e. among human beings. The “eternal *Thou*” too is inseparable from both divine and human when they are in relation with each other. Sophia represents God’s personal activity and His “delights”, sharing them with men and women to the extent that they are capable of grasping them. Wisdom builds her house and invites the simple to join her feast of food and wine that symbolize the teaching and the virtue coming from God: “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed <...> and walk in the way of insight” (cf. Prov. 9:1-6). Sharing the bread and wine on the way of mutual understanding signifies a specifically dialogical role of Wisdom as a third party in the human-divine dialogue and provides a eucharistic language for the NT interpretation of Christ as the divine Wisdom in person.

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes (or, in the Hebrew, Kohelet) represents himself as the son of David, and king over Israel in Jerusalem (Eccl. 1:1, 12, 16; 2:7, 9). The work introduces a kind of autobiographic matter, largely expressed in aphorisms and maxims illuminated in terse paragraphs with reflections on the meaning of life and on the best way of life.<sup>240</sup> Since, as the book argues, the lives of men both wise and foolish end in death, it was emphatically proclaimed that all the actions of man are inherently futile, vain, meaningless, and empty. While the teacher clearly promotes wisdom as a means for a well-lived earthly life, he does not ascribe to it any eternal meaning. In the light of this perceived senselessness, the preacher suggests that one should enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life, such as eating, drinking, and taking enjoyment in one’s wife and one’s work, which are gifts from the hand of God. The point of Kohelet is to state that all is futile under the sun. One should therefore ignore physical pleasures and put all one’s efforts towards that which is above the sun, seeking for the higher wisdom. This is summed up in the second to last verse: “The end of the matter; all has been

---

<sup>240</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastes>

heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone” (Eccl. 12:13). Although all the pleasures and the wisdoms on the earth are to be considered as gifts from God, only Wisdom, beyond all the others, has eternal meaning and allows men and women to address God as Thou while fearing Him and keeping His commandments.

Written probably in the second century B.C. Sirach contains the most extensive example of Jewish wisdom literature we have. Wisdom appears at the beginning of the book (Sir. 1:1-30), at the halfway mark (Sir. 24:1-34), and at the end (Sir. 51:1-27). Just after the Prologue Ben Sirach introduces Sophia as follows: “All wisdom is from the Lord, and with him it remains for ever. <...> Wisdom was created before all other things, and prudent understanding from eternity. <...> Upon all the living according to his gift; he lavished her upon those who love him. <...> To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; she is created with the faithful in the womb” (Sir. 1:1, 4, 10, 14). The above verses again prompt us to recall what has been said about the “eternal *Thou*” of God in relation to the human “inborn *Thou*”. Being “created with the faithful in the womb”, fear of God is peculiar to human beings as long as there is faith which is a matter of love. “Being created” here means rather a sort of “being given,” as a result of the voluntary act of God towards those who love Him. Sophia brings them the willingness to answer dialogically which is inherent to a personal way of being and reflects it in a most appropriate manner.

In the heavenly court, Sophia proclaims her divine origin: “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. <...> Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway” (Sir. 24:3-6). Wisdom looked for a permanent home (“a resting place”). The Creator chose a place for her to dwell in a personal way: “Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance” (Sir. 24:8). In a sort of dialogue with the Creator she said: “Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all

the ages I shall not cease to be. <...> I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion” (Sir. 24:9-10). It does not mean a created status for Sophia in terms of the creation which is to follow but allows us to keep in mind the “principle of persona” as the created, or rather formed, principle of the world to be made capable of knowing its Creator as He is.

Existing with God from “the beginning” and enjoying eternal existence (“I shall not cease to be”), Sophia has followed the divine choice of Israel and made her home in Jerusalem. The metaphor of Sophia’s home indicates that she can be understood in terms of human language and thought, though only so long as they are managed in accordance with God’s choice. Settled in the holy city, she reveals herself as a person sending out an invitation for a great banquet: “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits. For the memory of me is sweeter than honey, and the possession of me sweeter than the honeycomb. Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more” (Sir 24:19-21). At the same time here Sophia herself is the food and the drink, the source of nourishment and life. Both the body and the soul of a human are to be satisfied by the Wisdom of God when she is desired and expected to come. There is a kind of “inborn *Thou*” in the inherent human desire (“you who desire me”) to participate in the personal being of God and to share His Wisdom or “eternal *Thou*” in *true dialogue*. A eucharistic dimension is present here in an even more personal and invitatory way than in the book of Proverbs. Similar language will be applied to Jesus (Mt. 11:28) but John will go beyond Sirach (‘hunger for more’, ‘thirst for more’) by portraying Jesus as permanently satisfying: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (Jn. 6:35).

In his final poem (Sir. 51:1-27), Ben Sirach speaks as an old man, having learnt so much that he has become almost identified with the beloved Wisdom who has brought him such deep satisfaction and serenity: “Draw near to me, you who are

uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction. Why do you say you are lacking in these things, and why do you endure such great thirst? I opened my mouth and said, acquire wisdom for yourselves without money. Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction; it is to be found close by. See with your own eyes that I have laboured but little and found for myself much serenity” (Sir. 51:23-27). Since Wisdom “is to be found close by” he teaches on her behalf and acts in accordance with her will and intention to spread her invitation to those who do not yet know her. Dialogue could take place between them if they were taught by Sophia as Ben Sirach was.

This invitation to the “unlearned” and thirsty will be echoed in Jesus’ offer to those who are poor and overburdened. If only they will take on his light yoke, they will find enduring peace (Mt.11:28-30). As divine Wisdom in person, Jesus dialogically invites His hearers to take up the yoke of His Wisdom and follow her rather than put their trust in the human wisdom of the law which is an unbearable yoke indeed.<sup>241</sup>

The last of the OT books, the Book of Wisdom is believed to have been written shortly before Christ’s birth.<sup>242</sup> The theme of Wisdom in its personal aspect is mainly highlighted in the first half of the book (Wis. 1:1-11:1), which in turn is divided into two sections. The first (Wis. 1:1-6:20) deals with retribution for good and evil and with the eternal life that Sophia is about to bring. The second describes Sophia and her operations within the world and explains how she is to be found (Wis. 6:21-11:1).<sup>243</sup> Sophia herself intentionally “goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought” (Wis. 6:16). She is active in her seeking for the faithful and devoted to those whom she finds. The second section describes Wisdom and how

---

<sup>241</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 27.

<sup>242</sup> See Larcher, J.-C. *Le Livre de la Sagesse ou la Sagesse de Solomon*. Etudes bibliques, 3 vols. Paris: Librairie Lecoivre, 1983-1985, as referred in Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

Solomon is attached to her. The “inborn *Thou*” has made him reputedly the wise man *par excellence*, and he has searched for the “eternal *Thou*” of God. Having been taught and blessed by Sophia, he has entered into true dialogue with God. Urged and maintained by Sophia as it is, this might be considered as one of the most intimate of the human-divine dialogues in the OT. Despite the terminological difficulties we face in considering such a delicate and subtle matter as knowing God through His “eternal *Thou*”, twenty one attributes are given to explain how Sophia can teach a human about the divine:

There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle. For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things (Wis. 7:22-24).

Being here referred to as a spirit “overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle,” Sophia seems to be immanent everywhere. But she is also portrayed as “holy” “free from anxiety,” and “all-powerful,” so the immanence is balanced by her transcendence. The idea of the unity of the immanent and the transcendent in a single person anticipates the theological thought of the hypostatization of the two natures in the Person of Christ and this could clarify a matter of the human-divine dimension in the dialogical issue.

High language is also used of Wisdom’s work in creating and conserving the world. The author of Wisdom who called Sophia the fashioner of all things (Wis. 7:22) now celebrates her role in renewing and ordering all things (Wis. 7:27; 8:1). Wisdom here is not only “living with God” but is also associated constantly with all God’s works (Wis. 8:3, 4). The theme of the unity between Sophia and God reaches a significant climax in Chapter 10, which presents her salvific role. The

author, having already stated that human beings are “saved” by Sophia (Wis. 9:18), now reinterprets Israel’s history by assigning the saving deeds to Sophia. By attributing to Sophia the saving deeds of God which are normally attributed to Yahweh (see Wis. 10:15-18), the Book of Wisdom makes the identification between Sophia and Yahweh closer than ever.<sup>244</sup>

So Sophia was radically related to God by all the OT authors right from the Book of Job. Now her connection is expressed in a manner that goes even beyond “begetting” (Prov. 8:22) or coming “forth from the mouth of the Most High” (Sir. 24:3). As R. E. Murphy says, in a sort of effusion, radiation, or emanation from the divinity, she emerges as a “reflection” or “mirror image” of God.<sup>245</sup> This sheds additional light on the matter of relating Sophia to the “eternal *Thou*” of God. As we have argued, Sophia appears to reflect the very personality of God, the “principle of persona” which is likewise at work within the personal creation.

### 3.1.3. Father-Son dialogue in the New Testament.

We have reviewed the OT writings in an endeavour to discover and learn about dialogue as it occurs there between God and His chosen people represented by their kings, prophets and spiritual leaders. The Wisdom of God taught the people of Israel how to make a personal response toward the invitation of their Lord and God. Once taught by the Wisdom of God, the expectation was that they would be “transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Were these expectations realized and, if so, what kind of relations would be established among those who were being “transformed”? What does “the same image” mean?

---

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>245</sup> Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. NY: Doubleday, 1990, p. 144.

When one postulates the personal principle of created human persons as being a reflection of the image of the Creator, then parental personal relations, both human and divine, can be considered as being of the most intimate and devotional character. Knowing the father-son intimacy as it occurs between human persons, one feels that some ideal of such relations ought to exist. Whether the ideal is or is not realized among humanity, there is an imprint or vestige of it which brings out the supreme and ultimate father-son relation existing before and beyond any existence. This enables us to speak about the eternal Sonship of Christ rather than His adoption as a Son of God. The eternal parental dialogue is at the origin of the creation and extends beyond it. The “principle of persona” implies the supremacy of the divine fatherhood over all other attributes of deity such as, for example, oneness or absoluteness. This would eliminate certain misinterpretations of Christianity which tend to consider God as an Absolute with no inner relation. Saying “father” one should have in mind “son”. When nothing is yet created, the Father eternally relates to His Son as the Son is the image of His Fatherhood originating in Him and coming back to Him, so that the eternal Father is reflected in the eternal Son. Unity appears when there is diversity. The Oneness of God is a reflection of the unity between the Father and the Son eternally confirmed by the Spirit. As they are mirrored within the divine personhood, the absoluteness and oneness of God become not abstract but real and true.

Using the dialogical perspective as it is presented in the NT we will examine further this key Christian issue about the Sonship of Christ which always evokes a great interest in both Christian and non-Christian circles. Is His Sonship eternal or temporal? This question would not need to be asked if the relation was understood in an ontological sense. Is there within the creation at least something that refers ontologically to the Creator? Our key concern is to develop an idea of the relation itself as immanently signifying the deity in itself. Looking back to the first chapter of the present work, we may recall that the “trace” or “vestige” of the

Triune God was considered as appearing in both the personal and the impersonal creation, although only a personal response to the Personal God is to be accepted as adequate.

Another issue, that of the Person of the Holy Spirit, would be of great interest when we speak in terms of the confirmed dialogue, implying as it does the presence of a third party. The NT bears witness to the genuine or true dialogue which is revealed, in particular, in Trinitarian manifestations such as those that occurred at the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ. Our aim will be to explore them along with the other NT witnesses of the personal revelation of the Spirit and learn from the divine dialogue what its genuineness can teach us about relations within the created world.

#### **3.1.3.1. Sonship in the Bible.**

To learn how dialogue functions in the divine parental relations as they are presented in the Bible, we must first examine the Biblical use of the word “son”. That can provide us with a means of understanding the Biblical meaning of Jesus as “the Son of God”. Broadly speaking, “son” can be seen as a term that expresses an intimate dialogical relationship with someone or something; basically, it indicates origin, but it is also used in the Bible to express any close association or identification with particular persons or things. Even when indicating origin, the term is not limited to relations with a father or mother. One may be called “son” of the following: a father or a mother, a family, tribe, people, place of birth (city or country), and also the time or circumstance of one’s birth. The father-son terminology is also used in connection with kings and their vassals or subjects, masters and servants, teachers and disciples, and almost any situation in which someone is subordinate to or dependent on someone else. The basic requirement of the son is to honour and obey his father, but he should also love and emulate him in a personal way. The dialogical *I-Thou* pair would probably be associated

with the father-son relation whereas the *I-It* pair rather signifies the lack of such a relation. As applied to the son, the intimacy and personal devotion to the father reveals clearly the very essence of the dialogical *I-Thou* relationship as discussed above. If a father-son-like relation is evoked even with regard to impersonal things as mentioned above, then clearly the dialogical *I-Thou* pair can also be seen as adequate for considering all relations of a deeply intimate and reciprocal character. “Betweenness” appears to be an identifying characteristic of both the Buberian *I-Thou* relation and the biblical father-son one. Naming the relation as father-son-like inevitably implies that some sort of consanguinity or parentage should, metaphorically at least, be an essential part of it. Reflected in a personal way, this feature might be referred to as a sort of “betweenness” in the Buberian sense.

Luther Engelbrecht and Ernest Hahn in their essay “Jesus as the Son of God” wrote,

The term “son” is used in many other ways in the Bible, some of which are connected with origin but others of which mainly express some sort of association with or resemblance to persons or things. A large, somehow homogeneous group may be called “sons” (occupational and ethnic groups especially). Sometimes characteristics or qualities themselves are personified and regarded as having “sons” – those who possess that same characteristic or quality. Other uses of the term “son” in the Bible reflect the versatile and imaginative use of this term especially in the Hebrew language.<sup>246</sup>

One must emphasize that all those uses somehow show the peculiar Hebrew flavour of the close relations between God and His creation and their reflection within the universe. This flavour is delivered to the Hebrews by God Himself since He wants His people to know Him as Father loving and addressing His beloved sons. As it was presented by Engelbrecht and Hahn, a few of the more idiomatic uses of the term “son” in the Bible (a complete list of the various uses

---

<sup>246</sup> <http://www.answering-islam.org/Hahn/son.html>

would be too long for this paragraph) are listed below, with their literal meanings and the translations of the Bible (New Revised Standard Version).

| <b>Old Testament</b> | <i>Expression (as literally in the original text)</i> | <i>Meaning (as found in the translation)</i> |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Genesis 5:32         | son of five hundred years                             | five hundred years old                       |
| Genesis 15:3         | a son of my house                                     | a servant in my household                    |
| Deuteronomy 25:2     | a son of stripes                                      | deserves to be beaten                        |
| Judges 19:22         | sons of Belial  | wicked men                                   |
| I Samuel 20:31       | a son of death  | he must die                                  |
| I Kings 20:35        | sons of the prophets                                  | a company of prophets                        |
| II Kings 14:14       | sons of pledging                                      | hostages                                     |
| Job 41:28            | son of a bow  | arrow  |
| Isaiah 60: 10        | sons of a foreign land                                | foreigners                                   |
| Lamentations 3:13    | sons of a quiver                                      | arrows from his quivers                      |
| Joel 3:6             | sons of the Grecians                                  | the Greeks                                   |
| Zechariah 4:14       | sons of oil   | anointed                                     |
| <b>New Testament</b> | <i>Expression (as literally in the original text)</i> | <i>Meaning (as found in the translation)</i> |
| Matthew 9:15         | sons of the bridegroom                                | the guests of the bridegroom                 |
| Matthew 12:27        | your sons   | your people                                  |
| Luke 10:6            | a son of peace  | a man of peace                               |

|               |  |   |
|---------------|--|---|
| Luke 16:8     | the sons of this age<br>the sons of lights | the people of this world<br>the people of the light |
| John 17:12    | the son of destruction                     | the one doomed to destruction                       |
| Acts 13:26    | sons of the family of Abraham              | you who come of the stock of Abraham                |
| Galatians 3:7 | those who believe are children of Abraham  | those who believe are the descendants of Abraham    |
| Ephesians 2:2 | the sons of disobedience                   | those who are disobedient                           |

The above are only a few of the many uses of the term “son(s)” in the Holy Bible. The most common uses, which are usually translated literally, have been omitted. However, one such group might be illustrated here: personal, yet non-physical, father-son relationships:

|                     | Father         | Son(s)             |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| I Samuel 3:6        | Eli            | Samuel             |
| I Samuel 24:16      | Saul           | David              |
| I Samuel 25:8       | Nabal          | David              |
| Proverbs 1:8, etc.  | Solomon        | the reader         |
| II Kings 2: 12      | Elijah         | Elisha             |
| II Kings 8:9        | Elisha         | King Ben-Hadad     |
| II Kings 5:13       | Naaman         | his servants       |
| Judges 18:19        | the priest     | the people         |
| Genesis 4:20f       | first musician | all musicians, etc |
| Matthew 9:2         | Jesus          | the paralytic      |
| I Timothy 1:2, etc. | Paul           | Timothy            |

|              |       |          |
|--------------|-------|----------|
| Titus 1:4    | Paul  | Titus    |
| Philemon 10  | Paul  | Onesimus |
| I Peter 5:13 | Peter | Mark     |

The term “son of God” too is used in a variety of ways in the Holy Bible. As Creator, God is the “Father” of Adam and of all mankind (Luke 3:38; Isaiah 64:8; Malachi 2:10; etc.). However, a more specific father-son relationship is achieved by the gracious choice of the Father and the faithful obedience and service of the son, not by creation and certainly not by procreation.<sup>247</sup>

### 3.1.3.2. Jesus’ eternal Sonship.

According to the Christian belief, Jesus’ Sonship does not rest upon His being born of the Virgin Mary. On the contrary, His virgin birth rests upon His Sonship which is inherently attending all the events in Jesus’ earthly life. Dogmatically speaking, Jesus does not become the Son of God, but the Son of God becomes Jesus. He addresses the Father dialogically, although the reply in most cases is implicit in the address. As Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God knew that the people were ignorant of His relationship with the Father (cf. John 10:33). A dialogue would normally imply participation on the part of the Father but the words and deeds of Jesus are also called to bear witness to His relations with God. It is not, however, because of His mighty works and wonderful words that He is the Son of God. On the contrary, He does His mighty works and speaks His wonderful words because He is the Son of God. Both the manner of Jesus’ birth and the nature of His works lend evidence for His Sonship. But neither of them, alone or together, provides the origin or basis for His Sonship which is originated by the Father alone and, therefore, the only true witness to the Sonship is

---

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

the fact of Jesus' staying in dialogue with Him. Thus it is the Father's own words (direct or through the archangel) which provide the ultimate proof that Jesus is the Son of God. They are as follows: 1. The Annunciation: The archangel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that her son would be called "the Son of God" (Luke 1:32, 35); 2. The Baptism: "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17, etc.); 3. The Transfiguration: God's voice once again proclaimed: "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" (Mark 9:7, etc.). At certain times, Jesus was also called the Son of God by others: the Roman centurion and his men confessed at the time of Jesus' crucifixion: "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Matthew 27:54); the apostle Paul writes that Jesus' resurrection from the dead declared Him to be "the Son of God" (Romans 1:4). Madmen and even unclean spirits confessed to Jesus: "You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11; cf. 5:7; Matthew 8:29; Luke 4:41; 8:28). Jesus' disciples also confessed that He is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16; cf. 14:33). Jesus, as a true Son, preferred to give glory to His Father, but He would not deny His own Sonship (Matthew 26:63f; Mark 14:62; John 10:36).

Revealing His eternal origin to the disciples, Jesus speaks to the Father: "Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (John 17:5; cf. Colossians 1:13-20). This signifies that the eternal Son of God entered into the limitations of time and space by the power of God working through the Virgin Mary and was born as a man, called Jesus, in Bethlehem some twenty centuries ago. And in the same way the eternal dialogue of the eternal Son with His eternal Father was made known to created human beings. How could this be? Who could dare to listen to the words of God in the eternal dialogue with His Son and understand them properly? If such divine relations are not to be known by humans is there an alternative way of knowing what place human beings occupy in the providence of God? Would His concern for us be a sort of dictation, or does it imply our true participation as

agents charged with finishing the work of the creation? Has the Scripture given us a means of learning about human dialogue in the perspective of the divine one? Do they actually have something in common?

Let us examine the above proposition and these queries more thoroughly in the light of the dialogical approach as this is a basic part of our task of learning true dialogue from the Scripture. We may learn of the relationship between the Father and the Son in accord with the witnesses of both. In the NT there are several addresses of Christ toward His Father and only one direct answer of the Father in which a dialogue in the strict sense of the word can be said to have occurred: "Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (John 12:28).

On some occasions, however, Christ addressed the Father intimately with no direct reply being given. This took place, for instance, before the resurrection of Lazarus, in the Prayer of Christ and in the prayer in Gethsemane. Those addresses do not seem to require an answer but rather they confirm the Son's confession of the Father's will as if it were His own. The very fact of the eternal dialogue appears to be ultimately confirmed once and for all in the passage we have quoted (John 12:28) - the only place in Scripture in which the dialogical words belonging to God the Father are given. The dialogue expressed by these words emerges here from the eternity of the divine relations, revealing their essence as reflected within the world by the glory of the name of the Father.

For the sake of the people (cf. John 12:30) Christ asks the Father to reveal His name in glory. Coming instantly from above, the reply represents the eternal glory which, in fact, consists in unceasingly naming God and revealing His good will to the creation. We are to know of it constantly as if time were stopped in the act of the glory. That is why the Father said "I will glorify it again" which also of course refers to the glory of the Resurrection. No past, present and future tense would be needed to convey the Father's answer as it reveals an expressed timeless action

in accordance with His will. Whose action is figured here? One would expect that of the Holy Spirit, Who has not yet been named. The Holy Spirit is merely mentioned in the Gospels and there is no word which can unambiguously be identified with Him, though His presence is implied and His characteristic images such as dove, water, cloud and fire have been given in accordance with the current state of the dialogical revelations of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Similarly, a particular revelation of the three-dimensional eternal dialogue can be recognized in John 12:28 where He appears as a Bearer of the eternal glory and a Witness to the eternal Father-Son dialogue.

There is, perhaps, no other writing known and accepted as authentic other than John's Gospel in which the idea of divine Sonship is treated with anything like such fullness and precision.<sup>248</sup> We will consider this further in the following section while discussing the actions of the Spirit since the Sonship can never be rightly understood apart from the role played by the Spirit as a Third Participant in the divine dialogue.

The synoptic Gospels do not provide such obvious examples of dialogue but the Father-Son relationship is established primarily in the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22; see also 2 Peter 1:17). To prevent confusion when examining the synoptics, one must distinguish what Jesus said (or seems to have said) about His divine Sonship from anything others say about him in this connection. We find Jesus speaking absolutely of "the Son" or "the Son of Man" but never of "the Son of God." In an important dialogically oriented passage, heavy with the language of the Wisdom tradition (Matthew 11:25-30; see Luke 10:21-22), Jesus refers to the Father, identified as "Lord of heaven and earth," and claims that a unique and exclusive (salvific) knowledge of "the Father" is possessed by "the Son" who is tacitly identified as "I": "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the

---

<sup>248</sup> Dodd C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: University Press, 1953, p. 253.

Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27). Such possessive exclusiveness is based on the endless and timeless Father-Son dialogue which is about to be revealed to the chosen by the Son. Again the action of the Spirit is only implicit. One may see evidence of the divine dialogue since it is now being confirmed and, therefore, more parties (chosen by the Son in the Spirit) are becoming capable of participating in it.

If the divine-human dialogue turned out not to be true then it would bear false witness to the Father-Son relationship. It might be considered as a sort of *monologue disguised as dialogue* (see paragraph 2.1 above) in which a unilateral denial of the Sonship was proclaimed in a particular form of permanent absolute doubt: “If you were the Son of God... but no one really knows you as such”. Some examples of the *monologue disguised as dialogue* are as follows.

When Jesus was famished after a long fast, the tempter said to Him: “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread” (Matthew 4:3, etc.). This was not the expression of a wish to feed those in hunger but rather a denial of the Sonship expressed in a particularly cynical manner. The tempter wanted the Son to disturb the order of things established by the Creator, thus showing a power which is equal to that of the Father but existing apart from His will. That would mean an interruption of the Father-Son dialogue due to the disobedience of the Son and His consequent fall. Under those circumstances, the divine-human dialogue could not be re-established and the tempter would hold everything in his hands forever. When the Son shows, instead, His intention to remain in permanent dialogue with the Father He is not refusing to feed hungry human beings but offering them the opportunity to be fed on better food. The new food will make them capable of entering into the dialogue with the Father as it has become revealed in the Son and confirmed by the Spirit.

When Jesus was in agony on the cross, the passersby mocked Him and said: “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40). Believing that Jesus was a liar, they could only consider Him in a way they thought they knew already. Therefore, they ask Him to do something they believe He cannot do. Obviously, no answer or action is expected or required. There must always be a sort of mock or counterfeit in monologue disguised as dialogue since one is asking the other who is considered unable to answer and, thus, disgracing him. The mockers were denying Jesus’ continuous relationship with God, Who had sent Him to seek and serve and even suffer to reestablish the true dialogue with those whom He loves, the chosen people of the world. They have not learnt that He does not appear as the son of some earthly ruler, who must show his might and save his pride by proving to be victorious in the eyes of the world, according to the world’s standards. It was precisely because He was the Son of the God of love that He would not use His power for selfish purposes but instead would fulfil the will of His Father perfectly while keeping in dialogue with Him. And the Father chose to reveal Himself and His love through His suffering Servant/Son since it was through His sacrifice that their eternal dialogue would become known and shared by all humanity.

Another example of the false dialogue presented in the NT could be called *technical* (see 2.1): “Demons also came out of many, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah” (Luke 4:41, etc.). Technically, the demons know Christ to be a Son of God and name Him properly. They are afraid of Him since they know objectively that they are fallen. From within their fallen state, however, they are unable to recognize His saving power - they see it as a power of destruction. Demons are called to tempt and damage human beings and so technically, they always see others in the same light. They trust neither others nor themselves; so they never trust God and look on Him as their enemy. On the one hand, the de-

mons know quite correctly of His mighty power, on the other hand, in their view He intends to use this power only to destroy them. Therefore, Christ rebukes them so that such false witness should not be spread. The dialogue has taken place in a technical manner: demons received from Christ exactly what they deserve.

*Genuine* or true dialogue, as considered above, implies “the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship” while having in mind “the other or others in their present and particular being” (see 2.1). When speaking of a personal relationship in terms of *genuine dialogue*, instead of the objective or technical knowledge there must be put a sort of “betweenness” or invitational reason which urges the relationship and is called a “living mutual”. Buber thought of the “inborn Thou” of humanity as a sort of imprint of the “eternal Thou” which provides us with the capacity to enter into true dialogue. Levinas considered responsibility for the other as a moral source for dialogue, a sort of being “for the other” rather than “with the other”. Both of them, however, seem to be missing something which is essential, in particular, if the dialogue is to be true: Buber – sacrifice as a particular feature of true dialogue; Levinas – the divine origin of the human capacity to enter into true dialogue.

Speaking evangelically, the “betweenness” emerges from the voluntary sacrifice made when God takes the initiative in sending His Son to be incarnate and to suffer for our sake. The sacrifice is a result of God’s volitional act which allows us to overcome the limits of a selfish and godless manner of being lacking true dialogue and practicing mostly a soliloquy disguised as dialogue. It was also to affirm a unique mutual knowledge and relationship with Jesus precisely in His nature as *the Son* to the Father, a mutual relationship and obedience out of which Jesus reveals, not a previously unknown God, but the God whom he alone knows in the dialogical fullness and reality. A distinctively new feature in Father-Son dialogue has emerged here. Jesus’ Sonship is closely associated with His suf-

fering (Romans 5:10; 8:32; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 5:8; 6:6). A volitional sacrificial act emerges as a particular necessary characteristic of the dialogue. When speaking in terms of true human dialogue one could expect an image of those sacrificial features peculiar to the divine dialogue and recall the Dostoyevsky idea about our culpability “for everything and for everyone” and its reflection within the ethically concerned philosophy of dialogue by Levinas (see 2.4).

The divine tripartite dialogue as reflected in the NT must, however, be distinguished from the father-son relations as they are presented in the rest of the Bible. Even a casual reading of the NT would show that the use of the dialogical term “Son of God” with reference to Jesus is different both in quality and extent from the other uses mentioned in the previous section. Others were graciously chosen by God as His adopted sons and they can call Him “father” in the rather general sense of someone who is taking care of them; the Son is considered to be with the Father eternally and He may call Him “Father” in a more intimate and exclusive manner. Others obeyed the Father, though imperfectly, as their sins still leave them quite remote from Him; Jesus in His Sonship obeyed Him perfectly, without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Being taught by their father sons should be like him and repeat his deeds. But the only Son is perfect like His Father just as fatherhood itself means nothing if there is no son. The eternal Sonship of Jesus holds everything from the Father’s goodness as He gives Himself completely for His Father and in accordance with the Father’s will for His people. The Father, therefore, has entrusted all judgment to the Son alone so that “all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father” (John 5:22, 23). Only the Son gives life as the Father gives life because they are always in true dialogue and know each other as they are (John 5:21). “For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself” (John 5:26). The Son is obedient to the Father, with the will of the Father becoming concretized in the way of dialogue with the Son, as the Father also listens and gives heed to the Son (John 11:41-44).

Thus there is a “betweenness” of sharing of power, authority, knowledge, glory, and kingship which is indicated by the Spirit as a relationship of equality and mutuality between the Two who are One in their unceasing true dialogue. About what human or even angelic dialogical relations could it be said: “In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word” (Hebrews 1:2f)? Many of the uses of the term “son” in the Holy Bible and in various languages can give clues to the significance of the term “Son of God” with reference to Jesus, but in the end its use, directly applied to Jesus, remains as unique as the genuine dialogue with the Father it expresses is unique. Jesus said: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) and their dialogue as it has appeared in the NT would become the source and archetype for true dialogue whatever might occur within humanity and between humans and God.

O’Collins in his analysis of the synoptic Gospels states that Jesus speaks of “Father,” “my (heavenly) Father,” “your (heavenly) Father,” or “our Father” 51 times altogether. He goes on to say that sometimes there is a Father-saying which has been drawn from Q, or a source (*Quelle* in German) which contains *logia* or sayings of Jesus used by Matthew and Luke (e.g., Matthew 11:25-27; par. in Luke 10:21-22), or else there is a Father-saying which, when attested by Matthew alone (e.g., Matthew 16:17) or by Luke alone (e.g., Luke 22:29), seems to go back to Jesus. Matthew, he points out, shows a preference for *heavenly* and at various points may have added the adjective to sayings that are supposed to be originally spoken only of “your Father” or “my Father” (e.g., Matthew 6:32).<sup>249</sup> This illustrates both the personal intimate father-son and the divine-human relations as they are dialogically shown in Christ and by Him to humans. The word *Father* may at times have been inserted into the sources used by Matthew (e.g.,

---

<sup>249</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 45.

Matthew 6:26; 10:29, 32-33; 12:50; 20:23; 26:29), and even though quite a number of the examples are not to be counted as fully authentic with Jesus' *logia*, it is clear that Jesus spoke fairly frequently of God as Father.<sup>250</sup> We must notice, however, the difference between His naming "Father" and that of the OT and any other occasions that ever occurred. When naming God as "Father", Jesus Christ reveals His personhood to be an intrinsic characteristic of His divinity and makes His eternal uninterrupted dialogue with the Father open for participation by those who recognize Their personhood likewise. Jesus' using the name "Father" evokes the very dialogical "betweenness" which would be acceptable in the case of human personal beings. We have spoken about it in terms of the Wisdom of God or of the *hypostatic principle* of His being. As we argued above, God the Holy Spirit is the only true Revealer of that very principle and the only true Witness of the Father-Son dialogue since "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3, see also Matthew 11:27, Luke 10:22, cf. John 6:44). Thus, the hypostatic divine dialogue, once it is accepted as being tripartite, is opened up for recognition and participation by the personal human beings.

Jesus worked with a view to opening up for His hearers the possibility of a new relationship with God, inviting them to accept God as their loving, merciful Father. However, as O'Collins has remarked, Jesus apparently distinguished between "my" Father and "your" Father (a distinction upheld by Matthew and John, e.g. John 20:17); so the mere fact of being His physical brothers and sisters (cf. Matthew 12:50, Mark 3:35) did not put others on the same level with Him as sons and daughters of God. Having called the disciples "friends", He was inviting them rather to share with Him what He Himself knew from the Father: "I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John 15:14-15). There would be no *identical* relationship of Sonship as between Himself and the disciples and, therefore, no saying has

---

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

been preserved in which Jesus linked the disciples with Himself so that together they could say, “Our Father.” When He encouraged others to pray to God as Father, the wording *Our Father* (Matthew 6:9, unlike Luke 11:2 where there is no “our”) was for others only.<sup>251</sup> The relationship with the Father He was offering them was one that both depended on His (Luke 22:29) and was distinct from it. No one dares, however, to say about Jesus Himself speaking of His Father, that He was conscious of being “Son” in some kind of distinctive way, or that He was even aware even of a unique divine Sonship vis-a-vis “Abba.” One can only consider their relations as dialogical in a very true sense of the word since the true dialogue is presented as originating from within the divine parental-filial relationship of love. We could argue not simply from the fact that Jesus referred to Himself as the Son and to God as my Father – He not only spoke like the Son but also acted like the Son.

While being with the Father in true confirmed dialogue, He knows and reveals the truth about God, fulfilling the divine law, forgiving sins, being the one through whom and in whom others could become children of God, and acting with total obedience as *the* agent for God’s final kingdom. Jesus applied the dialogical language of divine Sonship personally, filling it with a meaning that lifted the term “Son (of God)” beyond the level of his merely being either a man made like Adam in the divine image (Luke 3:38), or someone perfectly sensitive to the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1,14,18), or someone bringing God’s peace (Luke 2:14; 10:5-6) albeit in his own way (Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:51), or even a/the Davidic king (Luke 1:33) who would in some way restore the kingdom of Israel. Jesus, instead, came across as expressing a unique filial consciousness and as laying claim to a unique paternal-filial dialogue with the God Whom in a startling way He addressed as *Abba*. Implicitly, Jesus claimed an essential, “ontological”

---

<sup>251</sup> See, e.g., Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985, pp. 896-908.

relationship of Sonship toward God that provided the grounds for His functions as revealer, lawgiver, forgiver of sins, and agent of the final kingdom. And those functions (His “doing”) depended on and revealed His ontological dialogical relationship as Son of God (His “being”). Inasmuch as, dialogically, the revelation of the Son necessarily implied the revelation of God the Father and Jesus experienced and expressed Himself as the Son that means that the YHWH of the OT was now known to be Father in a very personal meaning of the word. And it is now possible to learn about and enter into the divine dialogue in a manner appropriate for a human being, since the dialogue will be confirmed by the Spirit of God, acting as a revealer who makes the dialogue true for humans.

### **3.1.3.3. Confirmative actions of the Spirit.**

The eternal Sonship is implicit when we speak of the eternal Fatherhood of God. Since it is eternal, the dialogue must be treated as genuine in the above sense of the term. The “eternal Thou” of God is intrinsic to the eternal divine dialogue and originates naturally from within it. There can, however, be no question of priority when we speak of the divine essence in relation to the dialogically oriented “eternal Thou”. The divine essence is not a source for dialogue. It has nothing to do with dialogue until it is hypostatized or realized in the Three Persons eternally addressing and responding to each other.

Why should dialogue be considered as intrinsic to the very eternity and divinity of God? If we started our discussion with the divine essence, then the unity of God would never be realized; it would remain abstract and speculative only. The category of relation, as we have argued above, is essential when the creature made in the image of God and after His likeness endeavours to learn about Who the Creator really is. Relatedness is not a product of the universe but an imprint of

the divinity on it.<sup>252</sup> When thinking theologically, we have to stress “relatedness”, “betweenness” or “invitatory reason” as inner features of God the Creator. Otherwise we inevitably fall into endless and fruitless speculation. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16); therefore, His “inner state” is characterised by the relationship of love with its “betweenness” shared between both the loving Father and the beloved Son. How is this feature of “betweenness” supposed to be realized and maintained within and outside God the Creator? Does it not require a personified bearer or “detector”? Personhood belongs to a person - if there is no person it simply does not exist. In naming this Person the “Holy Spirit” God allows us to recognize His personhood as a foundation of His divinity and source of His grace by which the universe was made.

The Spirit holds all that is spiritual in a personal or hypostatic order in which the spiritual is realized as the personal. The universe can no longer be divided into material and spiritual, physical and metaphysical but must be considered rather as personal or impersonal according to the divine plan of creation. The Spirit presents the eternal hypostatic relations in a manner that can be understood by all who themselves exist as hypostases, e.g. human beings, and maintains the impersonal universe in an appropriate order so that it may reflect the divine glory in a vestige or imprint of the divine relations. Thus, by the Spirit the “eternal Thou” of the Sonship of Christ becomes an “invitatory reason” prompting human relations to develop in such a way that they become the Church. As the Mediator of human-divine relations the Spirit establishes the dialogical “betweenness” of the Trinity within the Church. The Church afterwards, living in the radiance of these Trinitarian relations, is called to radiate their true light onto the entire universe. Then it makes the whole creation, both personal and impersonal, capable of en-

---

<sup>252</sup> Karl Rahner, for example, argues that “it is God’s ‘indwelling,’ ‘uncreated grace,’ understood not only as a communication of the divine nature, but also and primarily, since it implies a free personal act, since it occurs from person to person, as a communication of ‘persons.’” - Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Trans. by Joseph Donceel. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003, p. 35.

tering into dialogue with the Creator each according to its own particular character. This is a work of the Holy Spirit embracing the world and giving it life in accordance with the providence of God. We shall look in the NT for further arguments in favour of these reflections as we try to consider the confirmative actions of the Holy Spirit as they are found in the Scripture.

The Apostle Paul does not often refer to God's Spirit as the Holy Spirit - only 13 times in the seven letters generally regarded as authentic or written directly by the apostle himself. John's Gospel speaks of the Spirit 20 times but of the Holy Spirit only 4 times. Luke, however, in his Gospel and in Acts refers to the Holy Spirit 54 times. Even in his opening chapter Luke shows his liking for the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15, 35) and in the account of Jesus' baptism he changes Mark's 'the Spirit' (Mark 1:10) to the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). He is thus largely responsible for establishing the traditional name for the third divine Person as the Holy Spirit rather than simply as the Spirit. Does this make a difference in the context of dialogue? Is the aim of the Lucan usage to stress the *distinct* or *personal identity* of the Holy Spirit, or does the evangelist want to insist that the Spirit's outpouring and capacity for endowing people with an inner power are not in contradiction with the transcendent otherness and holiness of the Spirit as the Spirit of God?

Looking through the different meanings of the term "spirit" presented in the Bible we will try to consider its dialogical value and to see how it is used in the NT in the context of the Father-Son eternal dialogue. First, there is a difference in the use of the term "spirit" in Greek (*pneuma*) and in Hebrew (*ruach*). The basic meaning of *pneuma* remains "air in motion" denoting a natural physical or psychological force of divine origin whereas that of *ruach* signifies the *presence of divinity itself*.<sup>253</sup>

Dodd suggested three distinguishable modes of spiritual being or activity in the OT to be denoted by the term *ruach*: 1) a life-force that animates and sustains

---

<sup>253</sup> Breck John. *Spirit of Truth. The Origins of Johannine Pneumatology*. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991, p. 99.

human existence: “When he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived” (Judg. 15:19; cf. I Sam. 30:12); 2) in the historical books it is used of the divine Spirit or the Spirit which played a crucial role in the history of the people of Israel: “The spirit of the LORD rushed on him ... and with it he killed a thousand men” (Judg. 15:14); and 3) it can designate other spirits that are not of divine or human natures. They are those spirits, good or evil, which are sent by God to do His work (e.g., “the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets”, I Kings 22:23), and spirits which imbue chosen individuals with specific moral or charismatic qualities (e.g., “the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they do not know the LORD”, Hos. 5:4; “The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD”, Is. 11:2).

All meanings of *pneuma* derive from its original philosophical use as an “air in motion” (*aer kinoumenos*, cf. Philo, *Quod Deterius Potiori insidari soleat* 83) which was primarily applied to the *wind* (cf. Plato, *Definitiones*), and to the *breath* of living beings.<sup>254</sup> Thus, from this physiological origin, two fundamental meanings developed of concern to us: the one metaphysical, and the other psychological. From an early period, as a life-force or life-principle, *pneuma* is closely identified with the psychological concept “breath-soul” (*psyche*), that invisible factor in the human being in default of which it ceases to live. Different philosophical schools stated the distinction and the relation between *pneuma* and *psyche* in various ways.<sup>255</sup> It appears that the fundamental idea of *pneuma*-wind is that of an active superhuman power, a mysterious, elusive, invisible elemental force which in descending might possess men, impelling them to perform impossible feats of strength. By extension the term can also denote the inspirational power behind mantic prophecy

---

<sup>254</sup> Dodd. *The Interpretation*. P. 213.

<sup>255</sup> It has been analyzed thoroughly in *Ibid.*, pp. 213-227.

and the creative arts.<sup>256</sup>

The role of the prophets is not merely to foretell coming events but also to proclaim both the promises and the judgment of Yahweh Who for that purpose supplemented a fragile and flawed human instrument with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes a man or woman an instrument by which God intervenes in history: "I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets I will bring destruction." (Hosea 12:10). The Spirit transforms a shepherd into a seer (cf. Amos 1:1, 3:8) and similarly makes a slack and wicked human being capable of proclaiming the will of God as if it were in dialogue with Him. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus too will be designated "the Prophet," the incarnate Word of God upon whom the anointing Spirit descends and remains (John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40), although the descending Spirit primarily reveals Jesus' mediating role in the human-divine dialogue. The aim is to make the people of Israel aware of the Incarnated Son of God in Whom all the prophecies are fulfilled so that, being cleansed of their sins, they may become hypostatistically involved in the relationship with God the Creator.

The evangelist John seemed to have deliberately moulded the idea of the Son of God in the first instance upon the prophetic model. When someone had not fully penetrated His secret Jesus firstly appeared to him as a prophet (John 4:19, 9:17). A chosen personality of the prophetic type is, so to speak, the human mould into which the Spirit pours the divine sonship as it arises from the eternal divine dialogue. In that case, there is a clear difference between the prophet and the Son for there is something which the Son possesses in an absolute sense whereas the prophets possess it entirely but not as fully as He, and He possesses permanently what they possess intermittently (cf. John 8:35). Strong emphasis is laid upon the Son's absolute dependence on the Father, especially in the important discourse which begins at John 5:19, therefore the Son should not be considered as pos-

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

sessing inherently or independently that which the prophets possess derivatively. There is a dependence which is of the essence of sonship.<sup>257</sup> This dependence links the Son with the Father in a permanent true dialogue confirmed by the Spirit. The confirmation is always at hand as the Spirit makes this dependence known through the inspired Scriptures.

Dialogically, the absolute inseparability of the Son from the Father is established by John on the basis of the Son's own words and it is impossible to define the extent to which divine powers and prerogatives are exercised by the Son. He refers to the Father as the only source of His powers and co-executor of His deeds. "The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (John 5:19). Their common deeds concern precisely the life of the world animated by the Spirit. While penetrating everything the Spirit makes us aware of the spirit of true dialogue and able on this basis to enter into relations with each other. Given the personhood that characterizes human beings this human dialogue would appear to be of the same origin as the divine dialogue. Once it has been revealed by the Son, the Father-Son dialogue will continue to be revealed by the Holy Spirit as if it was still the Son presenting it to those listening to Him. The Farewell Discourse (John 14-16) is largely to do with His presence among the disciples in the Spirit of truth (*to pneuma tis aletheias*)<sup>258</sup> comforting them and confirming their uninterrupted participation in the Father-Son dialogue.

Let us now examine the *Paraclete-logia*<sup>259</sup> taken from the Farewell Discourse. The sayings are concerned precisely with the confirmative actions of the Holy Spirit and with how these actions are to make the divine dialogue true and, thus, hypothetically revealed in its truth to humanity. The word 'Paraclete' comes from the

---

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>258</sup> Generally, truth (*aletheia*) has in the Fourth Gospel its Hellenistic sense of reality, reality as apprehended, or knowledge of reality. – Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>259</sup> In the *The New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition)* the Greek term *Paraclete* is translated as *Advocate*.

Koine Greek word *parakletos*, “one who consoles, one who intercedes on our behalf, a comforter or an advocate.”<sup>260</sup> The term perhaps corresponds particularly to the personal actions of the Spirit when He addresses men and women in person, dialogically interceding on their behalf, i.e. representing them to God and involving them in the divine dialogue, as did Christ:

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you (John 14:16-17).

Jesus knows the Father and represents Him to human beings; inversely, knowing humanity, He witnesses it dialogically to God. Therefore, when He asks the Father on humanity’s behalf, He will be given whatever is asked. What will He ask for? Another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, Which is already known to the disciples rather than to the world, that is, known only to those who know Christ. The Spirit is in Christ and abides with the disciples along with Him. When they do not have Christ living among them, the Spirit will still be in them. Thus, the dialogue would not cease to be true – its continuing truth is confirmed by the Spirit. Since the Spirit acts eternally it appears as a spiritual guarantee of our eternal relationship with the Son and of our participation in His dialogue with the Father. The disciples became aware of the Spirit acting in Christ when they believed both in Him and in the One Who sent Him. Thus, the eternal dialogue appears true just as it has been revealed to them by the Spirit. Along with Christ Himself as an Advocate for those relying on Him, “another Advocate” (*allos parakletos*) is spoken of as *different in person (allos)* from both the Son and the Father.

---

<sup>260</sup> Summoned, called to one’s side, especially called to one’s aid – Strong’s G3875: <http://cf.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G3875&t=KJV>.

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you (John 14:26).

Teaching and reminding are among the functions of “another Advocate” sent by the Father in the name of Christ. In terms of true dialogue it is a confirmation given by another divine Person (not Christ) summoned to the aid of men and women so that they can be taught and reminded of the Father-Son divine relationship. While He was in the world Jesus revealed His relations with the Father, and His Sonship was confirmed by the Spirit in the crucial events of His life. Once taken out of the world Jesus enables the work of confirmation to be continued through the Spirit, Whose action is in fact unchanged but in the human perspective it appears to be more visible and decisive. The confirmative actions of the Spirit complete the work of the Son that had started in accordance with the will of the Father.

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf (John 15:26).

The role of testifying, together with the above roles of teaching and reminding, are filled by the Spirit on behalf of Christ once He has completed His work and ascended into Heaven. This does not mean, however, that Christ is absent from the earth but again it confirms to humanity that the divine dialogue is still true. The Son is seated at the right hand of the Father and so the human-divine dialogue is finally realized and has become genuine in Christ. His “eternal Thou” has impelled the “inborn Thou” to be revealed in humanity as never before. His personhood has proved to be intrinsic to His divinity and, thus, a human personhood is about to become a hypostatic imprint of the divine personhood. The disciples and the women could not recognize their Master after His Resurrection because the most important thing for them at that time was to recognize His

“eternal Thou” in His personhood as it was revealed in various ways: the gardener meeting Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), the stranger on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), the man standing on the beach (John 21:4-8) etc. The point is that visible recognition of Christ might have prevented people from becoming aware of His divinity and of His relation to the Father. He warns Mary: “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (John 20:17). It is now more important to say the truth than to see the return of the earthly Jesus. And the truth is that His Father is our Father and His God is our God. Thus the human-divine dialogue is about to become true in the ascension and afterwards, when there is no definite person walking in the midst of humanity who can be called “Christ” but there is the *Spirit-Paraclete* testifying on behalf of Christ. Actually, only in the visible absence of Christ can we be made capable of being involved by the Spirit in the divine tripartite dialogue.

If I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement (John 16:7-8).

The ascension of Christ is a condition of the *Paraclete's* being sent, although this condition does not imply any possible alternative. It seems to have been said merely for the disciples' sake (cf. John 11:42; 12:30) in order to convince them of His relationship with the *Paraclete*. We can recognize here the inner reciprocal character of this relationship since the Son does not send the Advocate until He has gone away from the world and ascended to the Father. The Person of the Father is not mentioned but His role is implied as that of accepting the Son and through Him sending the Spirit to the world. The Son does not send the Spirit on His own and the Spirit does not speak to humanity on His own (this becomes clear from the following passage, Jn 16:13). Both the Son and the Spirit stay in their

specific relations to the Father. That is what we are eager to be taught about here – relations in their ultimate state, relations as a basis for the created being that is shared by the multitudes of creatures, and relations as the only way to know God the Creator. We have called them genuine divine dialogue for the purpose of emphasizing their origin, uniqueness, reciprocity, and changeless status. It is confirmed continually through the work of the Paraclete - “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). ‘Jesus is Lord’ is a verbal expression of His Sonship and relations with both God the Father and His creation. And, as the apostle Paul proclaimed, it could not be said except by the Holy Spirit; therefore His confirmative role has become even clearer. Thus, the Trinitarian confirmed dialogue appears to have been opened in such a way that men and women can join it under the guidance of the Spirit of truth.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-15).

The Spirit also has the function of acting as a guide towards the Truth - a role that does not merely belong to Him but is shared by the three divine Persons as eternally staying in true dialogue. All truth is contained in the relationship of the Father and the Son, which is confirmed and declared by the Spirit. The Father has nothing in secret from the Son, and the Son gives what is shared with the Father to the Spirit for declaring it to us. Everything the Father has is shared by His Beloved Son and the Holy Spirit; therefore it also belongs to both the Son and the Spirit Whose actions are directed towards the world. Everything They have in common between Them may also be shared by those who are declared to Them by the Spirit. “The things that are to come” is the destination of the created world as entering into the human-divine true dialogue now that it has been initiated by

the Incarnated God. While declaring these things the Spirit also teaches, reminds us and testifies that the Son and the Father are one and that what they have in common is their personal relationship or eternal dialogue in which both the fatherhood and sonship are realized in fullness and perfection since it is confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

Now in the light of Dodd's interpretation we will summarise the above propositions concerning the actions of the Spirit as they are presented in the Fourth Gospel. In terms of the trinitarian formula John speaks, not of Father, Son and Spirit, but of Father, Son and *Paraclete* – the term *pneuma* being appropriated to deity as such. *Pneuma* connotes reality, or absolute being (*nous*), and as such it is bracketed with truth (*aletheia*).<sup>261</sup> The truth is active, creative and potent together with the reality of *pneuma* which is living, powerful and life-giving in contrast to the powerless flesh (*sarx*). The truth (*aletheia*) as such contains within itself a confirmation of the fact of the true relationship or dialogue and since the *pneuma* is a bearer of truth it enables it to work both inside and outside the deity. It is revealed by the *pneuma* that deity has within itself a principle of distinction so that the union of reciprocal loves may transcend mere arithmetical unity or self-identity.

Once the dialogical relations of divine love are made known to us they can produce human relations of the same character, and the only way for man to rise from the lower life related to the flesh to the higher life of true dialogue is by being born in spirit (*ek pneumatou*), which is also to be born from God (*ek tou theou*). This rebirth is made possible through the descent of the 'Son of Man' which is otherwise expressed in the terms "the Word became flesh" (*o logos sarx egeneto*) (John 1:14). The Logos, being God (*theos*), has the nature of *pneuma*, and consequently is said to be both truth (*aletheia*) and life (*zoe*).

It is only in connection with the incarnation that the idea of birth *ek pneumatou*

---

<sup>261</sup> Dodd, *The Interpretation*, P. 226.

makes sense. Starting as *pneuma*, the Word became *sarx*, and experienced fully the life of this world. He gave Himself to death (the characteristic mark of *sarx*), in love for mankind. It is this, and this alone, that makes rebirth *ek pneumatos* possible for humanity and until Jesus was glorified by God there was for humans no actual participation in *aletheia*. It has become true after rebirth *ek pneumatos*, i.e. through the descent upon human beings of the Spirit Who acts to confirm the truth as it is.

Note how the primitive conception of *pneuma* as breath is still relevant, as is that of *pneuma* as wind. Unlike Acts and the Pauline corpus the Fourth Gospel represents the gift of the Spirit to the Church as the ultimate climax of the personal relations between Jesus and His disciples: “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:22). Maybe it is the most intimate point in the human-divine dialogue as revealed in the Scriptures. Thus the Holy Spirit makes the disciples aware of the Father-Son relationship and invites them to join it in Christ.

Luke and John talk of Christ as sending the Spirit in co-operation with the Father. Exalted “at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,” Christ, along with the Father, pours out the Spirit with perceptible confirmative effects (Acts 2:33; cf. John 16:7; 20:22; Luke 24:49). Unlike them, Paul speaks of the risen Christ as having become “a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), and never quite says that Christ has sent or will send the Spirit. Paul speaks not only of “the Spirit of God” (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:11, 12, 14) but also, occasionally, of “the Spirit of (Jesus) Christ” or “the Spirit of God’s Son” (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Philip. 1:19).

The genitive (the *of* form in English) is exquisitely ambiguous; it can be read as an objective genitive (the Spirit that brings us to God/Christ), as a genitive of origin (the Spirit that comes from or is drawn from God/Christ), or even perhaps as a genitive of identity (the Spirit that is God/Christ). The third (grammatical) possibility leads us to a further, major reflection on the postre-

surrection function and understanding of the Holy Spirit.<sup>262</sup>

One might connect the Spirit's "postresurrection function" with the following confirmation of the true dialogue between God and those who believe in His Son. In the experience of believers, the Spirit is almost identified with the presence of Christ while at the same time confirming that that presence is indeed a reality amongst the believers. The Spirit "in us" (Rom. 5:5; 8:9,11,16; Gal. 4:6) is nearly synonymous with talk about our being "in Christ" (Rom. 6:3, 11, 23; 1 Cor. 1:30; 3:1; 4:15; Philip. 3:1; 4:1-2), i.e. through Him being involved in intimate relations of true dialogue with God. The experience Christians have of the Spirit merges with their experience of the risen Christ (1 Cor. 6:11), and the divine Spirit dwelling "in you" is, for all intents and purposes, equivalent to "having the Spirit of Christ" or to Christ being "in you" (Rom 8:9-11). Such a close inner relationship may be considered as a dialogue becoming true once it has been joined and confirmed. The "Indwelling" may be taken as indicating the "betweenness" or "invitatory reason" as discussed above, in their essential sense.

It is the indwelling Spirit, however, that helps us pray to Abba and to be witnesses to Christ (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6; 1 Cor. 12:3); it is not an indwelling Christ who enables us to pray like that, or to bear witness to the Spirit. Finally, unlike the Spirit, it is the crucified and resurrected Son of God who at the end will subject all things to his Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28). There is a whole series of events and actions which are attributed either to Christ or to the Holy Spirit without being interchangeable. The confirmative actions of the Spirit which we have considered here, for example, cannot be attributed to Jesus, just as much that is attributed to Jesus cannot be attributed to the Holy Spirit.

As it appears mostly in the OT, *ruach* might mean an impersonal power acting within the creation. Paul, too, at times speaks of the Spirit impersonally, for ex-

---

<sup>262</sup> O'Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 63.

ample, as being “poured” (Rom. 5:5), as “seal” (2 Cor. 1:22; cf. Eph. 1:13; 4:30), as “first fruits” (Rom. 8:23), as a “first installment” or “guarantee” (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; cf. Eph. 1:14). However, - and this is more significant - he usually writes of the Spirit in clearly personal language as “leading” (Rom. 8:14), “witnessing” (Rom. 8:16), “interceding” (Rom. 8:26-27), having aims or aspirations (Rom. 8:27), “searching” and “knowing” (1 Cor. 2:10-11), “allotting” gifts (1 Cor. 12:11), and “crying out” in the human heart (Gal. 4:6). Talk of “choosing” (1 Cor. 12:11) and “freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17) also seems incompatible with the Spirit being impersonal. In sum, the language of Paul’s letters implies that the Spirit is a personal subject Who engages in personal activities whose general purpose is to confirm the true Father-Son divine dialogue to the believers in God, making them capable of conscious participation in such a dialogue.

### **3.2. Learning dialogue from the Nicene-Constantinople faith.**

We have now reached a transition point in our study and are about to turn from the NT revelation to Patristic theology. Before leaving Scripture and proceeding to the Fathers, however, it is important to see whether the process we are engaged in of learning dialogue is interrupted when we cross this point or if it continues to draw from the same source. Can the confirmed divine dialogue that we have learnt from the Scriptures, meanwhile, be discovered through the instrumentality of systematic theology? Does the theology developed by the Church bring out the same personal and deeply intimate character of the divine relations, revealing them to those who base their faith upon the Creed? These questions are to do with the very nature of the Revelation and the Church as its bearer; however it is not our aim to consider this matter in full. Rather, one would hope to recognize in the theology of the Fathers the same dialogical vestige as that which we have seen in the light of the Scriptures.

Let us first ask the question: why is so little said about the Spirit in the earthly life

of Christ? He has proclaimed His dialogical relations with the Father and founded the Church, whose members, it was believed, were able to enter into divine dialogue as soon as they had become in a unique sense the possessors of the Spirit.

If every Corinthian Christian could claim some spiritual gift, why is it so rarely said that such gifts were shared by Jesus and his immediate followers? If the apostles, in Acts, were directed at every step by the promptings of the Spirit, why was not their Lord also led in this way?<sup>263</sup>

Having said little of the Spirit, Jesus asserted: "The Kingdom of God is near" (cf. Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20; and many other passages where the same is implied). Speaking rarely of the Kingdom of God, the primitive Church offered personal experience of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:2; John 14:26; 1 Pet. 4:14; and many other passages). Thus consideration of this question opens up the problem of the relationship between the primitive Christian experience of the Spirit and the eschatological proclamation of Jesus about the Kingdom, which can actually be understood as His confirmed eternal dialogue with the Father. One may put the question anew: in what sense can it be said that the teaching of the Church rests upon, or was derived from, that of Jesus? Or, speaking in dialogical terms, does the divine dialogue which has been confirmed and revealed by the Spirit to the Church have the same roots as the relations with the Father which Jesus spoke about?

Some possible solutions to the problem have been described and analysed in C.K.Barrett's study of the Holy Spirit.<sup>264</sup> For instance, it has been suggested that Jesus was prevented from speaking about the spirit because of the hierarchy of spiritual intermediaries such as demons, angels and other spiritual beings which had appeared in pre-Christian Judaism. It was felt that there lay so great a gulf between God in heaven and human beings upon earth that one or more interme-

---

<sup>263</sup> Barrett, C. K. *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*. London, S.P.C.K., 1966, p. 140.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-143.

diate beings were necessary to span it. Such thinking was opposed by Jesus Who was bringing to human beings the possibility of direct intercourse with the Father and so was reluctant to talk about a Spirit Who could be understood as standing between God and humans. Barrett criticizes this approach, pointing out that Jesus seems to have exploited without hesitation the current belief in demons. He goes on to suggest a solution of his own.

The Rule of God, if it means the fullness of the prophetic and apocalyptic hope of God's completed purpose for the world, involves the gift of the Spirit not to the Messiah only, but also to the whole Messianic community, the company of God's saved people. In fact, however, as we have seen, there is in the Synoptic Gospels little or no suggestion that anyone other than Jesus shared in the new gift of the Spirit. Jesus, the Kingdom and the Spirit are brought together in the saying of Mt. 12:28 ("If I by the Spirit (probably correct interpretation of the earlier 'finger') of God cast out demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you"); but there is nothing to establish a similar relation between the disciples, the Kingdom and the Spirit, even though this might have been expected. This is, apparently, because the Kingdom, though present, was not present in the fullness of its power; it too, like Jesus the Messiah, was hidden, and under constraint. Therefore the Spirit was the possession of Jesus, as Messiah, alone, and in him it was veiled; and therefore, strictly speaking, there was no Church before the death of Jesus. The general gift of the Spirit belongs to the time of the vindication and manifestation of the Messiah and of the Messianic Kingdom.<sup>265</sup>

He then relates the gifts of the Spirit to the whole Messianic community, i.e. the Church in whom they were revealed just as they had been revealed previously in the Messiah Himself. One can see how the dialogical context that was then opened in the teaching of the Church in accordance with the Revelation of the Spirit would make the followers of the Church aware of the same Father-Son relations which are known from the Scriptures. It would, moreover, provide humans in their earthly lives with a "betweenness" like that which had originated in

---

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

the ultimate divine true dialogue. This was to be the basis for both the human-divine and human-human true dialogue. Once revealed to the Church by the Spirit it bears His confirmation so that the Church will always be dialogically related to God. As a preparation for the true dialogue that will be revealed to the primitive Church, one might expect to experience the same Spirit Which confirms the divine dialogue as it is revealed in the NT. The main personalities in the early history of the Church and their particular theological preoccupations will now be examined in an effort to find if true dialogue as discussed above can be found and learnt from them.

### 3.2.1. The way to Nicaea.

***St. Ignatius of Antioch.*** The letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch are among the most representative early witnesses, outside the New Testament, to the development both of Church orders and of theological thought. He strongly emphasizes the significance of the bishops, their central position within the structure of the church, and the importance of those around them - the presbyters and deacons. Without these three orders, he argued, the community could not yet be considered the church. He insisted on this in his letters to the churches of Tralles, Ephesus, Magnesia and Smyrna.

But the unity of Christians with their one bishop, in the one Eucharist, is dependent on a prior unity of the apostolic faith. The bishop is not, for Ignatius, the successor of the apostles, nor are the apostles reckoned as the first bishops. There is rather a sort of typology drawn between, on the one hand, the Father, Christ and the apostles, and on the other, the bishop, deacon and presbyters (*Trall.* 3:1; *Magn.* 6:1). The apostles along with Christ and His Father are always

placed on the universal level of the Church whereas the orders of clergy are historically and geographically specific.<sup>266</sup>

The distinction St. Ignatius draws between the apostles and the ranks of the clergy seems to reflect the view of the early church on human-divine relations. Since there was a specific relation of Christ to the apostles He talked to them and about them as men separated from the rest of His followers and from the world.<sup>267</sup> This particular difference was supported afterwards by the Church because of the uniqueness and intimacy of the personal relations with Christ enjoyed by those who had known Him in His immediate relations with the Father (see, for example, the High Priest Prayer (John 17), although the scope of the prayer broadens finally to include all future believers<sup>268</sup>). Since they have been revealed through the Church, such relations have acquired another character while still being true in their realization within the community of believers. Since it has been made known to the twelve apostles through the Son, the Father-Son dialogue will be reflected within the community as a whole by the Spirit in the Eucharist.<sup>269</sup>

The Church of Jerusalem was led by James and his presbyters (elders), while the Twelve had their ministries in the other parts of the country and outside (cf. Acts 21:18). The elders, however, may have taken their place in the Church of Jerusalem before James became its bishop (see, e.g., Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22).<sup>270</sup> The “dea-

---

<sup>266</sup> Behr, John. *The Way to Nicaea. The Formation of Christian Theology. Volume I.* New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, p. 82.

<sup>267</sup> The apostolic authority as coming from Heaven was supported by C. E. Hill, “*Ignatius and the Apostolate: The Witness of Ignatius to the Emergence of Christian Scripture*,” - *Studia Patristica* 37, 2001, pp. 226-248; but refused by W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermania. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, pp. 112-113. See also Clement of Rome. *First Letter* 42 :1,2, ed. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Macmillan, 1989; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989).

<sup>268</sup> Christ finally prays that His followers may all be brought into the perfect unity of the divine life as shared by Father and Son. See, e.g., the commentary in Dodd. *The Interpretation*, pp. 417-418.

<sup>269</sup> See, e.g., Johnston, G. *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament*, PCB, 1943, pp. 46-58.

<sup>270</sup> The origin of the presbyters Zizioulas considers to be an “obscure historical problem”. - Zizioulas, John D. *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three*

cons” appear as an institution which is related to the common table which was at the time connected with the Eucharist.<sup>271</sup> Thus, as John Zizioulas has argued,

The Church of Jerusalem was headed by the triad: James - the presbyters - those who serve (*diakonountes*), which probably replaced the scheme: the Twelve (or the Apostles) - the presbyters -those who serve. This may have formed the model also for the organization of the other Churches which received Christianity from the mother Church of Jerusalem.<sup>272</sup>

Professor George Konidaris has noted that those who took the place of the apostles did not dare to adopt the same name but regarded themselves instead as living “under the shadow of the name of the Apostles and of their authority.”<sup>273</sup> The office of bishop, therefore, could exist even in the apostolic period, overshadowed by the institution of the apostles and linked with the presbyters and deacons. Surrounded by the presbyters and deacons, the bishop from the beginning presided over the Eucharist, noted Zizioulas, as it “is shown by the existing texts even though they do not provide us with clear evidence as to who exactly offered the Divine Eucharist.”<sup>274</sup>

The very title of “Bishop” (*episkopos*) is used by Ignatius most probably because, in keeping with his typological theology, the *episkopos par excellence* is God, Whose place in the eucharistic assembly was now occupied by the bishop. Recalling the image of the eucharistic assembly in the Apocalypse, Zizioulas remarks that Ignatius has the bishop “presiding in the place of God” (*Magn.* 6:1), mainly because

---

*Centuries*. Trans. by Elizabeth Theokritoff. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001, p. 81 (note). See also Dix, G. “Ministry in the Early Church,” in *The Apostolic Ministry* (ed. Kirk), 1946, p. 233f.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245f.

<sup>272</sup> Zizioulas. *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, p. 64. See also Konidaris, G. *On the Supposed Difference in Forms in the Polity of Early Christianity*. (In Greek), 1959, p. 42f, as referred in *Ibid.*, p. 81 (note).

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70 (note).

<sup>274</sup> Zizioulas. *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, p. 64-65. He has also noted, that “the Divine Eucharist could be offered principally and *par excellence* a) by the Apostles or other charismatics such as the prophets, and b) by the Bishop, surrounded by the presbyters and deacons.” – *Ibid.*

that is the place he occupies in the eucharistic assembly, which is described in the heavenly assembly as “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:3).<sup>275</sup> And when Ignatius talks of “the Bishop with the presbyterium” (*Smyrn.* 8:1; *Eph.* 20:2) it is most likely the celebration of the Eucharist which he had in mind.<sup>276</sup>

From the liturgical perspective we could conclude that the divine true dialogue is imprinted within the Eucharist which Ignatius believed determined the structure of the Church: “Be ye subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; that so there may be a union both fleshly and spiritual” (*Magn.* 13:1). Here parental-filial relations become an image of the relations between the members and the bishop of the church. The vestige of the Trinitarian relations learnt from the apostles is laid as a basis for the future dialogical relations whether they are within the Church, of the Church with God the Trinity, and outside the Church “according to the flesh”. “Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever ye do, may prosper both in the flesh and spirit; in faith and love; in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit; in the beginning and in the end” (*Magn.* 13:1).

“Doctrines of the Lord and the apostles” should be understood as referring to the relations within the Trinity, whose vestige as between the Lord and the apostles remains likewise in the eucharistic relations (“whatsoever ye do...in faith and love”). It could be observed that the eucharist was from the beginning identified with the Church of the Trinitarian God. Through this link with the consciousness that in Christ the “many” are related to each other in a specific manner of being united in the One, the eucharist appeared as the highest expression or rather imprint of the dialogical Trinity-like relations in the earthly

---

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 83 (note).

Church. Thus, the eucharistic community is to be identified with the Church of God the Trinity and structured in accordance with the true dialogical relations peculiar to the Trinity which are also expressed in the intimate relationship between Christ and the apostles.

Ignatius also reflects on the double lineage of Christ, found in Paul, and does so by considering further the two aspects of Christ himself “influenced by the Johannine predilection for holding opposites, divinity and flesh, together in unity without mitigating their tension”.<sup>277</sup> In a manner which remains true to the Gospel itself he comes to a “two-nature” Christology affirming all the key points that will be emphasised later in the elaboration of the teaching of the Church: one Lord Jesus Christ, who is both divine and human, with all the properties pertaining to both. It is indeed linked in the closest way with his study of the eucharist and of the Church operating in the realm of relations that evoke the Trinity, although there is something to be added as well. For Ignatius, the one who suffered is impassible, demonstrating life in death, and thus he explores the significance of the suffering of Christ by connecting it to his own impending suffering.

Be deaf, therefore, when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, and of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth; who was also truly raised up from the dead, when his Father raised him up, as in the same manner his Father shall raise up in Christ Jesus us who believe in him, without whom we have no true life. But if, as some affirm who are without God – that is, are unbelievers – his suffering was a pretence (*to dokein*) – although they are a pretence – why am I a prisoner, and why do I pray to fight with the beasts? In that case, I am dying in vain. Then indeed I am lying concerning the Lord (*Trall.* 9-10).<sup>278</sup>

Undoubted suffering and death, resurrection and true life are to be realized both

---

<sup>277</sup> Behr. *The Way to Nicaea*, p. 90.

<sup>278</sup> As cited in *Ibid.*, p. 91.

in Christ and His followers but remain a sort of illusion for those who remain outside Christ and His relations with the Father. Ignatius again emphasizes the bidirectional relations of Christ in His divinity and humanity when He is truly suffering which are lost if His suffering is considered not to be real. What is particularly interesting is the way that this confession of faith is, for Ignatius, intrinsically connected to witness, and for Ignatius himself this is realized in a very personal way, in his impending death as a martyr. As the faith which is confessed is that of the death and resurrection of Christ, so, Ignatius believed, our acceptance of this faith is also our death and our resurrection through our personal relations with Him. To suffer death as a witness to Christ, the “perfect man” (*Smyrn.* 4:2) or the “new man” (*Eph.* 20:1), is to be born into a new life, to emerge with Christ himself, a full human being in uninterrupted true human-divine dialogue.

**Justin Martyr.** While the Apostolic Fathers such as Ignatius wrote to Christian communities, the extant writings of Justin Martyr are directed outwards, ostensibly at least, towards pagans in his *First* and *Second Apologies* and towards the Jews in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. While Justin continues to reflect on the *kerygma* (a Greek word which means “proclamation, announcement, preaching”), his writings are much more sophisticated than those of Ignatius. Since his interest in Scripture is concentrated mainly on its prophetic character, Justin frequently refers to “the Spirit of prophecy” as speaking through the passages of Scripture. The *Apologies* were written for pagans and his use of Scripture is adapted accordingly. He does not appeal there to the Scriptures as an authoritative source of truth but rather tries to provide evidence that the Gospel is not simply a novelty, but a fulfilment of prophecies that had been made a long time previously. Justin writes,

We worship the Creator of the universe <...> with the word of prayer and thanksgiving <...> expressing our thanks to him in words, with solemn ceremonies and hymns <...> The Master, who taught us this worship and who was born to this end, was crucified under Pontius Pilate <...> We are sure

that he is the Son of the true God, and hold him the second in order, with the Spirit of prophecy in the third place. I shall show that the honor we pay is rational (*First Apology* 13).

Here he places the Son in the second and the Spirit in the third place, but a bit later in the *Apology* he refuses to distinguish the Spirit clearly from the incarnate Logos: “It is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God” (33). To the discussion<sup>279</sup> on the above matter O’Collins adds the fact that “the OT at times took God’s Logos and Spirit as parallel and interchangeable personifications of the divine activity; this parallelism would have encouraged Justin and other deeply biblical theologians to entertain at times this identification.”<sup>280</sup>

Here, instead of a sort of parallelism or interchangeability, we could speak about mutuality and “betweenness”. In the OT writings, as argued above, Wisdom appeared to be not a person like Logos or Spirit but a revelation of the divine principle of being as personal or hypostatic. In the interpretations of Trinitarianism by Justin and other early Christian authors, when on occasion they seem to run the Spirit and the Word together, it may be neither parallelism nor interchangeability but something else. Since it is one of the main theological themes in the OT, Wisdom left a deep impression on early interpretations of the NT and on the Christian apologetic writers who were particularly anxious to establish and confirm the OT succession. It would shed light on the real relations between the Spirit “Who spake through the prophets”<sup>281</sup> and the Word as it has emerged in the Johannine writings<sup>282</sup> if Wisdom were to be treated as a sort of betweenness,

---

<sup>279</sup> Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Creeds*. London: Longman, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1972, p. 148.

<sup>280</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 91.

<sup>281</sup> Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

<sup>282</sup> The conception of the Logos, the principle of Law or Reason, was taken up by the Stoics and handed on from them to Philo who had effected the combination of the OT “Word” with the Stoic “Logos”. Seeking common ground with his potential readers rather than proclaiming unfamiliar truth, the evangelist John found that ground in the word “Logos”, which alike for Jew and Gentile represents the ruling fact of the

the “invitatory reason” or “eternal *Thou*” of God. When we speak of Wisdom as the “eternal *Thou*” of God then it becomes possible to put Logos and Spirit together since they are both together in Wisdom, both expressing the same “principle of persona” in God. Both Logos and Spirit are revelations of the Trinitarian relations which are of a personal or hypostatic character and, thus, once it is understood as the “principle of persona”, Wisdom originates all the real knowledge of God the Trinity including, in particular, His oneness.

Endeavouring to emphasize the intrinsic simplicity of God as based on the one essence, the philosophy of Aquinas in both its original and modern interpretations considers essence to be the same as the ‘*supposit*’, which in intellectual substances is called ‘person’. This is said to be the case with regard to the divine but not true, however, when applied to created beings – human nature, for example, is not identical with the particular individual.<sup>283</sup> The certain criticism that can be made of those who think that person and essence are also not identical in God is based on the proposition that they must then consider relations between the three Persons themselves to be only accidents but not realities.<sup>284</sup> The problem arises in particular as they approach the problem that in God there is only one essence, which for the thomist is substantial and ultimate, and there are three Persons multiplied by relation. Turning back to the proposition that the Wisdom of God can be described dialogically as “eternal *Thou*”, one would not completely agree with the above critical proposition but, instead, present the divine dialogical relations as being real since the divine Persons remain eternally in true dialogue. Moreover, since they are confirmed by the Spirit they are then open for participation to human beings who can, through His initial external initiative, enter the

---

universe, and represents that fact as the self-expression of God. - Temple, William. *Readings in St. John's Gospel (first and second series)*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1947, p. 4.

<sup>283</sup> Min, Anselm K. *Paths to the Triune God: an encounter between Aquinas and recent theologies*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 210.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

true dialogue with God in accord with the personhood or hypostatic being of the “eternal *Thou*”.

That the person in God is not identical with the essence makes sense, in particular, when we speak of the *theosis* or deification of humans. If Trinitarian relations can only be considered as an inconceivable unshared reality hidden in the unknowable divine essence then there would be no possibility for any part of the creation to know God the Creator and, therefore, it would appear, no real relation of love toward Him would be possible. So long as the divine person is considered in terms of the essence, the simplicity of God predominates over His triunity, leaving us with no possibility of participating in the divine true dialogue. True dialogue is then impossible for the human, and the “eternal *Thou*” of God remains an abstraction. On the other hand, when the distinction between person and essence in God is taken into account, the divine simplicity can be seen as being deeply rooted in the unity of the Three Persons. Thus, the revelation of the Trinity is known to men and women without disturbing His simplicity and oneness. Referring to Logos and Spirit as alternative revelations of the Wisdom of God, Justin Martyr and other deeply biblical theologians bring out, perhaps, the deepest understanding of the personal relation as characteristic of the divinity while still being distinguished from the divine essence. Justin evokes an order, putting the “Son of the true God” second in order, and the “Spirit of prophecy” as third after the Father. This shows the Trinitarian relations as they have been revealed to humans in a particular order of the tripartite dialogue of God with His Son prophesied through the Spirit. The order does not establish a priority of one person over another but a specificity of their relations with each other.

Concerning the personal principle as original to God, modern Thomism does not seem to stand in opposition to Eastern patristic thought. While in creatures they are accidents, relations in God are the divine essence itself; and that very fact indeed remains beyond our understanding and knowing. We may speculate that it is

only in our way of thinking that the relations in God seem to differ from the essence.<sup>285</sup> In this way we might distinguish person and essence as different in God keeping in mind at the same time that it is not true in the reality, which is unknowable to us. There is no distinction or division in God in the true dialogical relations of the Trinity which are, in fact, His essence. The essence is indeed unknowable to the human; therefore, the principle of the simplicity in God based on the divine unknowable essence continually gives rise to a scholastic theology of *Deus ad intra* and *Deus ad extra*. And, practically, an insuperable gulf between thinking and experiencing, theology and prayer, logics and reality remains, despite the continual efforts that are made to overcome it:

There is a real identity – with only a logical distinction – between person and essence in God, but a real distinction among the three persons themselves. The relations and persons are really distinguished from one another insofar as they are relationally opposed to one another, but not insofar as they are identified with the essence.<sup>286</sup>

Such an *antinomy* of identity and distinction in God would appear to render any attempt at a rational explanation of the mystery of the Trinity futile.

In order to protect the divinity of the Son and His participation in the eternal dialogue with God the Father, Justin insisted on the doctrine of the preexistence of the Son, the “second” or “another (*allos*) God” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 56-62).<sup>287</sup> The eternal begetting of the Son, as Justin argued, was a volitional act and He is said to have been “begotten of the Father by an act of will” (*Dial.* 61). Will was not to be set up in opposition to nature in such way that the one would exclude the other.<sup>288</sup> Justin emphasized the difference in person between the Father and the Son that was originated by an act of will which is peculiar both to the Person

---

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Toom, Tarmo. *Classical trinitarian theology : a textbook*. NY, London: T&T Clark, 2007, p. 61.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

of the Father and to the nature of God. Here what is being revealed may be the distinction between the will or energy of God and His essence, as discussed above, through the distinction of the Persons in the Trinity.

Justin made an invaluable, initial contribution to Trinitarian teaching which is of particular interest for the study of dialogue. His sense of the ineffable transcendence of the Father and Creator of all things led, on the one hand, to a certain subordination of the Son – and of the Holy Spirit, to the extent that the Spirit is mentioned. On the other hand, Justin held that the Son, sharing in the essence (*ousia*) and mind of God, is truly divine. His presentation of the Son as the Logos, Who creates, organizes, and invites the whole cosmos to relate in Him to God, allowed for a positive view of the religious situation of non-Christians. They are viewed as also capable of entering into dialogue with God, the only condition being that they recognize the “principle of persona” as the basis of such dialogue. Without developing the language of “the crucified (Son of) God,” Justin upheld God’s real dialogical involvement in human history and suffering; and his own Trinitarian faith was, for him, literally a matter of life and death.

***Irenaeus of Lyons.*** The next Ante-Nicene writer we wish to discuss, Irenaeus of Lyons was perhaps the greatest biblical theologian in the age of the Apologists so we may expect that his contribution to the Trinitarian teaching could provide something essential for the study of dialogue. Irenaeus drew from St. John’s Gospel a faith in the Logos eternally coexisting with the Father “before” truly becoming flesh, and from St. Paul a sense of Jesus as the last or second Adam. He also expanded Paul’s dyadic confession (1 Cor. 8:6) to include the Holy Spirit and presented the orthodox faith as follows:

In one God Almighty, of whom are all things; and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things, and in the dispensations connected with Him, by means of which the Son of God became man; and a firm belief in the Spirit of God, who furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth, and has set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son, in virtue of which He

dwells with every generation of men, according to the will of the Father (*Adversus Haereses*, 4.33.7).

While defending both the oneness of God and the unity of God's threefold economic activity, Irenaeus, instead of speculating about God *ad intra* – i.e. “theological Trinity,” – proposed a soteriological argument. A doctrine of recapitulation (*anakephalaiosis*; cf. Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 2:9-11) introduced by Irenaeus was later put at the center of the theological and Christological universe of St. Maximus the Confessor who elegantly summarized this doctrine and its principles of operation in a compact sentence: “The One Logos is the many logoi, and the many logoi are the One Logos” (*Ambigua* 7, PG 91:1081C).<sup>289</sup> Despite the fact that the term “recapitulation” appears only twice in the NT, the concept itself might be recognized repeatedly through its principles of operation which may be categorized as follows: 1) preeminence 2) repetition and recontextualization, 3) reversal, and 4) fulfillment.<sup>290</sup> “Recapitulation”, therefore, means not just a transcendent redemptive act when God at one point changes His creation in space and time, but a permanent activity within the creation “penetrating back to the beginning in the original creation retracting and re-affirming in it the divine Will, and reaching forward to the consummation in the new creation in which all things are gathered up, thus *connecting the end with the beginning*.”<sup>291</sup> Seeking for dialogical arguments in the perspective of the Trinitarian approach when the divine-human dialogue is about to become true one would be interested to consider the concept as initially offered by Irenaeus of Lyons.

It is especially interesting here to recall that view on the process of the creation which is in agreement with the *theory of relativity*, stating that where there is no

---

<sup>289</sup> As referred in the web-site: <http://energeticprocession.wordpress.com/2006/06/09/pathway-to-the-truth-the-doctrine-of-recapitulation/>

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Torrance, N. F. *Divine meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995, p. 121.

matter there is no space and time. As we argued above, it is only *relation* that organizes the existent, preparing it to become matter within its space and time. Relation itself, then, is above matter, space and time. It bears the *vestigium trinitatis* “before” the matter exists in time and space. That is the beginning; what, then, is the end to be connected with the beginning through the recapitulation? And how will the *vestigium trinitatis* be borne there? Since it is a particular characteristic of the Creator, *relation* is assumed to bear the *vestigium trinitatis* both in the beginning and in the end, although in a different way. In the beginning the impersonal universe was formed and organized uniquely in accordance with the divine will; but since then, the human will has appeared. And as a result of recapitulation this human will must be brought into accord with God’s will. In terms of the *vestigium trinitatis* (Trinitarian trace) an imprint or *vestige* of the divine relations must be revealed within the human relations. In terms of *true dialogue* the “eternal Thou” of God must be revealed through and confirmed by the Holy Spirit acting in the way in which humanity addresses both God and His universe. All relations are destined in the end to become *true dialogue* confirmed by the Holy Spirit. And *true dialogue* would then appear within the creation as the complete *vestigium trinitatis*, thus establishing the real *connection* between the beginning and the end of the universe.

It is true that the verb *anakephalaioomai* was rarely used as a designation of God’s being one, for its primary use was to denote the consummation of salvation history.<sup>292</sup> The human-divine relations required the operation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Haer.* 3.6.1) in order to become true. Irenaeus wrote that human beings, consisting of the body, soul and spirit (*Haer.* 5.6.1), were created by the Father through his Word and Wisdom, and brought back to God by the incarnation

---

<sup>292</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 64.

of the Son and through deification by the Spirit.<sup>293</sup> The bidirectional movement, as argued, occurs there – in the “theological Trinity,” the movement is from the Father through the Son and to the Spirit, but in the “economical Trinity” the movement is from the Spirit through the Son to the Father.<sup>294</sup> “The Spirit truly preparing man in the Son of God, and the Son leading him to the Father, while the Father, too, confers [upon him] incorruption for eternal life” (*Haer.* 4.20.5). This is recapitulation (*anakephalaiosis*) and also an affirmation of the unity of God’s threefold economic activity. One could speak here about a certain *vestige* of the Trinitarian relations as reflected within the human being who is being urged by God the Trinity to become perfect. Human-divine dialogue becomes true when the “perfect man”, i.e. perfect union of the body, soul and spirit, has met with God, i.e. perfect union of the Father, Son and Spirit.

When interpreting Genesis 1:26, Irenaeus followed Justin, providing the passage with an even clearer Trinitarian meaning.<sup>295</sup> Since, in excluding the possibility of an “angels’ power to make an image of God”, he introduced the image of God’s *two hands*, he was able with greater confidence than his predecessors to link the Word with the Son and Wisdom with the Spirit.

For God did not stand in need of these [beings], in order to the accomplishing of what He had Himself determined with Himself beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess His own hands. For with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, “Let Us make man after Our image and likeness” (*Haer.*

---

<sup>293</sup> Irenaeus defines the perfect human being as consisting of the body, soul and spirit: “For that flesh which has been moulded is not a perfect man in itself, but the body of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the soul itself, considered apart by itself, the man; but it is the soul of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the spirit a man, for it is called the spirit, and not a man; but the commingling and union of all these constitutes the perfect man” (*Haer.* 5.6.1). A sort of *Trinitarian vestige* could be seen there when Irenaeus speaks about the “union of the three” in the perfect human which “might be preserved to the coming of the Lord, unless he was aware of the [future] reintegration and union of the three” (*Haer.* 5.6.1).

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 99.

4.20.1).

The image of God's *two hands*, which were "instrumental" in creating the world, appeared, perhaps, because he was writing an anti-Gnostic polemic and was therefore anxious to avoid anything that threatened the unity of God, even if only by implication.<sup>296</sup> The apparent subordinationism of his argument could be eliminated if we consider the *true dialogue* that is taking place between the divine Persons, although the monarchy of the Father still remains as a principle of Orthodox theology. The Father originates the Word and the Spirit and invites them to take part in creating the human being after the Trinitarian *image and likeness*. Since expressed in the very words "let us make", the "betweenness" in the Trinity is related to the process of the creation. Not a solitary action of the Father but the pre-eternal divine council appears as the starting point for the creation to take place. Nothing could happen without the agreement of the Three, always standing in true dialogical relations. The "invitatory reason" or "eternal *Thou*" is about to enter into the creation as it is already indwelling in God. The same "eternal *Thou*" conveys to the creation the *image and likeness* of the Trinity. And what proved to be imprinted in the creation in accord with the pre-eternal council is, namely, the *true dialogue* of the Father with the Son realized in the Word and Wisdom.

Since Irenaeus identified the preexistent, divine Wisdom with the Holy Spirit and not (as Justin and many other church writers did) with the Son, it becomes even clearer that the Spirit confirms the Word of God, urging human participation in a *true dialogue* with God in His Word. The Wisdom of God, when it is identified with the Spirit, confirms the Word of God as God's creative power realized in the creation by Wisdom, "understanding" and "knowledge" which are almost treated by Irenaeus as synonyms. This recalls our approach to the Wisdom of God un-

---

<sup>296</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 63.

derstood rather as His “personhood” or “principle of persona” than as one of the divine Persons like the Spirit or the Son. Referring to Wisdom as the Spirit, Irenaeus may have had in mind what is expressed in the book of Proverbs, i.e. those impersonal characteristics of God such as knowledge and understanding which are said to have been given as a foundation to the created world.

I have also largely demonstrated, that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation, He declares by Solomon: “God by Wisdom founded the earth, and by understanding hath He established the heaven. By His knowledge the depths burst forth, and the clouds dropped down the dew [Proverbs 3:19-20]” (*Haer.* 4.20.3).

Any discussion about the Spirit being the Wisdom of God is obviously less important than the question of the Spirit’s relationship to the Son. Since he has much more to say about the Son than about the Holy Spirit, Irenaeus does not reflect on the “origin” of the Spirit, though he does, albeit reluctantly, help to initiate the psychological model of the Word. This model presents the Word as being generated like thought coming from the mind or like speech coming onto our lips.<sup>297</sup>

A little later, Irenaeus added: “All things learn through His Word that there is one God the Father, who contains all things, and who grants existence to all <...>. Therefore the Son of the Father declares [Him] from the beginning, inasmuch as He was with the Father from the beginning” (*Haer.* 4.20.6-7). The language of person and personal identity was not yet available, but it is clear that for Irenaeus the Son or Word is always in eternal dialogue with the Father before and after the creation, and the Spirit, or Wisdom, is always present and confirms the Father-Son relationship. The Son or Word is the one and same subject who became “in-

---

<sup>297</sup> O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, p. 103.

carnate for our salvation” to suffer, die, and rise to new life while recapitulating all the creation from the beginning to the end (*Haer.* 3.12.2; 3.16.9).<sup>298</sup>

**Origen.** When trying to understand Origen’s use of theological vocabulary, we should keep in mind the fact that he was active at a time “when theological language was being worked out to express the fundamentally inexpressible Christian mysteries.”<sup>299</sup> It is difficult to give verbal expression to the themes of personhood or personal relations since these are of an experiential rather than rational character. Even when speaking in a purely human context there are no terms which will allow a precise understanding of the dialogical issues we are writing about. All the more should this be taken into account if we are trying to speak of divine things and, in particular, of the inner divine relations. Most erroneous suppositions arise due to the use of experiences that are inappropriate, or to applying mere human logics and/or terms to things that are beyond our comprehension. The distinctions within the Godhead are such a thing, staying ever out of reach of the human mind. Our experience of the multiplicity of the created universe and, particularly, of human beings, however, could be of assistance while thinking about the plurality, with its peculiar distinctions, in God the Creator. When arguing against modalist Monarchians, Origen used the term *hypostasis* respectively to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Comm. Jo.* 2.75) so as to emphasize both the distinction and union there is between them. This use of what was intended to be a technical term requires our special attention.

Since the idea of a personal relation was not yet developed as it would be in the fourth century, Origen’s use of the term *hypostasis* defining the three divine persons as distinct realities still needs a lot of clarification. “There is a danger to read too much into Origen’s assertion that there are three *hypostaseis* in the Trinity.”<sup>300</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Behr. *The Way to Nicaea*, p. 132.

<sup>299</sup> Berthold, in Daly, R. J., ed. *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989*. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium 105. Louvain: Peeters, 1992, p. 446.

<sup>300</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 66.

Philosophically, the word *hypostasis* meant reality of subsistence or “that which stands beneath”<sup>301</sup>, i.e. the inner reality of a thing as opposed to a mere mental notion or conception (*epinoia*; Comm. Jo. 10.246). Since it is normally used by, for instance, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists, to speak of the objective reality of a thing instead of its outer form or illusion, Origen, in his use of the term *hypostasis*, was insisting that the three divine subjects had their own subsistence. He had not yet reached the Niceno-Constantinopolitan formula in which *hypostaseis* were equated to *prosopa*. But his affirmation of the hypostatic existence of the Logos was nevertheless significant, especially in light of the fact that, in Plotinian Neoplatonism, logos as an aspect of the divine Mind, was denied a separate *hypostasis* and considered as a mere “transfer from the Divine Intellectual Being to the third Hypostasis of the World Soul.”<sup>302</sup>

Origen begins his treatise *On First Principles* by establishing, in typical Platonic manner, a divine hierarchical triad; but instead of naming these principles monad, dyad, and world-soul, he calls them “Father,” “Christ,” and “Holy Spirit,” though he goes on to describe these principles using mainly Platonic language.<sup>303</sup> The first of them, the Father, is a perfect unity, complete unto Himself, and without body - a purely spiritual mind. The Father always had, for Origen, an entity existing with Him upon which to exercise His intellectual activity. This entity is Christ the Son, the Logos, or Wisdom of God, the first emanation of the Father. From the Neopythagorean philosopher *Numenius of Apamea* (150-176 A.D.), Origen likely adopted the conception of a “second god” proceeding from a first, ineffable being called the One, “First God,” or Father. Numenius referred to this “second god” as the Demiurge or craftsman, and taught that he

---

<sup>301</sup> Liddell, Henry George and Scott, Robert. *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

<sup>302</sup> Gericke, J. ‘Dimensions of the *Logos* from Logos-Philosophy to *Logos*-Theology.’ *Acta patristica et byzantina* 11, p. 106.

<sup>303</sup> Fieser, James and Dowden, Bradley. *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A Professionally Peer-Reviewed Resource, 2008. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

created the cosmos by imitating the intellectual content of the “First God.” Origen applied this basic notion to his doctrine of Christ, whom he also called Demiurge (*Comm. Jo.* 1.22). The third and last principle of the divine triad is the Holy Spirit, who “proceeds from the Son and is related to Him as the Son is related to the Father.”<sup>304</sup> Here is Origen explaining the status of the Holy Spirit<sup>305</sup>, in a passage preserved in the original Greek:

The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells within the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being (Fragment 9).<sup>306</sup>

Origen also affirmed the equal divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit while still distinguishing between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit according to their *hypostaseis*. There is an additional danger, however, in understanding Origen as suggesting the existence of three divine substances because in the third century the semantic realm of the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* overlapped. Yet, Origen did not teach the existence of three divine substances or three gods but one consubstantial God in three *hypostaseis*. Within the Godhead, there are no hierarchical gradations of divinity. Assuming it is not a later interpolation, the text of *The First Principles* states that in the Trinity (and in the substantial sense), it is not permissible to call anything “greater or lesser” (*maius minusue, Princ.* 1.3.7).<sup>307</sup>

---

<sup>304</sup> Tripolitis, A. *The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen*. New York: Libra 1978, p. 94.

<sup>305</sup> O’Meara, D.J., ed. *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*. New York: State University of New York Press 1982, p. 20.

<sup>306</sup> Origen. *On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth. New York: Harper and Row, 1966, pp. 33-34, and footnote.

<sup>307</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 66-67.

Perhaps, Origen was the first mainstream writer to use the famous word *homoousios* (same nature) in connection with the Trinity. According to the fragment of Pamphilus's citation of the commentary on Hebrews by Origen, Origen contended that the Son's "coming forth" or "effluence" (*aporreusis*) from the Father implied that the source and the effluence were *homoousios*. But later "Origenists" disliked the would-be-orthodox term *homoousios* and the word does not fit well into Origen's theology. One of the reasons was precisely that it was simply too close to "one *hypostasis*" as the word *ousia* could still mean *hypostasis*. Stating that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were *homoousios* could obscure the fact that they had their own subsistence. Arius pressed this connotation further in rejecting the term *homoousios* altogether.<sup>308</sup>

Along with Irenaeus, Origen asserted that the complex unity (the uniplurality) of the one and simple God became evident in the economy (cf. Matthew 11:27). The one God "becomes many things" (*polla ginetai*) in order to redeem the creation (*Comm. Jo.* 1.119) making it aware of His uniplurality and inviting the creation to take part in it. The uniplurality of the one God, according to Origen, was not established in the incarnation but was manifested in it. In a strict opposition to modalism, he insisted that the eternal God had always existed *hypostatically* as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which were distinct from eternity, not just distinguished for the sake of creation and economy. "Unless the distinctions we encounter in the economy are real distinctions in God's own being, then God has not really revealed Godself to us."<sup>309</sup> In Origen's thought the *vestige* of the Trinity in the economy would appear as a real distinction which is peculiar to both God and the creation. While the distinction does not mean an opposition, it does imply the coexistence of one with the other. Dialogue would never become true if there was no other party to be taken into account. Origen's strong emphasis on

---

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>309</sup> Ormerod, N. *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005, p. 13.

both the inner and the outer distinction of the divine *hypostases* helped subsequent Christian theology, when opposing the heretical movements that arose, to present the dialogical divine reality in an unmistakable manner.

Origen presented a Trinitarian doctrine which consisted of a hierarchy of influence beginning with the Father, whose influence was of the most general, universal kind, originating and binding together all things; the influence of the Son only extended as far as sentient beings; the Holy Spirit's influence extended only to the 'elect' or saints who had already achieved salvation (*Princ.* 1.3.5).<sup>310</sup> The pre-existent souls (according to Origen), through their fall, gave rise to a history which is determined both by the Father and by the Son, while the Holy Spirit only enters into human reality to effect a salvific re-orientation toward God that is the result of a history that has already been achieved. The Holy Spirit, then, may be understood as the final cause of a process whose preparatory causes are the Father and Son, the mutual begetters of history. In this sense, the Holy Spirit, limited as it is to interaction with the saints, gives way to the universal power of the Father, which extends to the furthest reaches of reality. Theologizing in this way, Origen, for all his errors, appears as the first systematic thinker of the Trinity. In his Trinitarian model the confirmative work of the Spirit would be mainly considered as finalizing an already achieved true dialogue which, in the dialogical perspective, could only be seen as idealistic. When the true human-divine dialogue is thought of as having been achieved in history, then current events are placed outside even the possibility of being viewed as entering true dialogue, which presupposes a realisation outside history, in eternity.

While arguing for the doctrine of the monarchy of the Father (*Princ.* 4.4.1), Origen distinguished between the three divine *hypostaseis* (*Comm.Jo.* 2.75) and assigned to each of Them Their "special activities" (*Princ.* 1.3.7-8), balancing all this with

---

<sup>310</sup> Dillon, in O'Meara, D.J., ed. *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*. New York: State University of New York Press 1982, p. 20.

the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son (*Princ.* 1.2.4). He rates as a proto-orthodox theologian precisely because he couples his causal subordinationism with the eternal generation of the Son. Origen stressed the monarchy of the Father within the Godhead instead of insisting on the unqualified monarchy of God. He taught that God the Father was the *arche*, the source and principle of causation within the Godhead. His teaching was subordinationist, but in a very special sense. The Father was the “cause” and the Son was the “effect.” But they were not temporal but eternal (*Princ.* 1.2.2; 1.2.11) and, therefore, cause and effect were “simultaneous”. There was no temporal gap between the Father and the Son, and Origen argued for a caused but nontemporal origin of the Son. The Father as the divine Mind was only logically prior to the Son as the Logos, which the Mind thought and uttered. This gives us an idea of how and by Whom the true dialogue could have been started. Since it is eternal, true divine dialogue has no beginning and no end and when reflected in humanity through the “eternal *Thou*” which exists in God the Trinity, it provides us with the very sense of eternity as it can be found only within true dialogical relations.

The basic postulate in Origen’s Trinitarian theology was the affirmation of the one God (*heis theos*; *Princ.* Pref. 4). However, “one God” did not just mean for him that there were no other gods and that God and the Father of Jesus Christ were the same God; it also meant that God was simple and indivisible. Those who introduced divisions into God (e.g., the Marcionites and Valentinians) missed the point that, in simple realities, parts came after the whole (*Princ.* 1.1.6). They also missed the fact that “God is spirit” (John 4:24) and that spiritual or incorporeal realities could not have parts. Only material entities could be compound (they can consist of parts), and only in compound realities do parts come before the whole. The unbreakable wholeness and simplicity of God the Trinity is not opposed to the true Father-Son dialogue but they are to complement each other when God addresses created human beings which are likewise of the same

nature but in different *hypostaseis* and who are also likewise called to enter dialogue.

### 3.2.2. From Nicaea to Constantinople.

It would be of a special interest in the Trinitarian context to learn dialogue from the approach that was developed during the Arian controversies in the fourth century and later. For Origen, as argued above, the eternity and essential immutability of the Father - His monarchy - meant that the generation of the Son could not be an event in time. If the fatherhood is eternal then the sonship must also be eternal. While the monarchy of the Father was crucial for Origen, Arius laid particular emphasis on the Son's caused being. He concluded that God had not always been the Father; He became a Father in begetting the Son, Who, according to Arius, was created out of non-being (*ex ouk onton*). Philosophically, previous non-existence was an essential part of the definition of the word *genetos* (Aristotle, *De caelo* 1.6.281b.25).<sup>311</sup>

For Arius, to be born was to have a beginning. God's fatherhood began when the Son was born. Dialogically, according to Arius, there is in God no relation before He becomes a Father. The divine dialogue could only be generated once the Son was born. The relation itself is created with the Son, and, originally, neither relation nor dialogue would be implied in God. God *ad intra* stays an unknowable Absolute with no *hypostasis* and, therefore, no real being. In this case God is rather an abstract principle of nothingness or lack of any sort of being at all. Thus, eternity must be understood as incompatible with being and all beings, including God the Father and God the Son, have a temporal origin. As there is no "eternal *Thou*" to be considered as a reality, true dialogue becomes a never-to-be realized abstraction.

---

<sup>311</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 79.

Basing his argument seriously on Holy Scripture, Arius rejected the controversial and “unbiblical” term *homoousios*. The Son could not share the Father’s ingenerate *ousia*, otherwise there would be two uncaused causes. Probably, it was Arius’ inability to see how the term *hypostasis* could refer to God *ad intra* that led to his misinterpretation of the term *homoousios*. Remembering that among the five appearances of the term *hypostasis* (2 Cor. 9:4, 11:17; Heb. 1:3, 3:14, 11:1), Scripture declares the Son to be “the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being (*hypostasis*)” (Hebrews 1:3), one could “push the literal meaning of the metaphor ‘imprint’”, imagining “a seal pressed into wax and the form of the seal exactly duplicated in the wax – so the Son exactly duplicates the *hypostasis* of the Father.”<sup>312</sup> The two *hypostaseis* of the Father and of the Son remain in an absolute, truly mutual relation which, in fact, can neither be contemplated nor rationally understood by human beings but has rather to be assured or confirmed by the third *hypostasis* Who is neither the Father nor the Son. It is important to emphasize that in most NT occurrences (except Heb. 1:3) the term *hypostasis* means something like “confidence” or “assurance” and this might be directly referred to the characteristics of the Holy Spirit through Whom the very principle of the *hypostatic* being is revealed.

The term *ousia* occurs only once in the NT (Luke 15:12, 13), where it refers to the property requested and then dissipated by the prodigal son.<sup>313</sup> In pre-Cappadocian times, however, the Greek terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* were interchangeable<sup>314</sup> and one could assume that Arius’ rejection of the common essence of the Son and the Father (the *homoousios*) is related to his conviction that God’s es-

---

<sup>312</sup> Placher, William C. *The Triune God. An Essay in Postliberal Theology*. Louisville – London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, p. 124.

<sup>313</sup> There are also other meanings for *ousia*, outside the NT, including “existence,” “category,” “substance,” “stuff” or “material,” “form,” “definition,” or “truth”. – Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, p. 183.

<sup>314</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav and Hotchkiss, Valerie, ed. *The Nicene Creed, Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, p. 158.

sence (*hypostasis* or *ousia*) was the only cause for both the Father and the Son Who then have no distinct *hypostasis* of their own. Thus, the divine essence in its simplicity and absoluteness would stay undamaged but, being the cause of everything, it reserves real being, *hypostasis*, for itself and leaves the other relational caused beings, including the Father and the Son, with no *hypostasis* (in the sense of *ousia*) at all. Following this line of thought, the Christian faith in an Incarnate God would lose the essential thing – relation as a substantial human-divine dialogical reality which makes us capable of referring to Christ as God.

Athanasius of Alexandria, arguing against Arius in the context of the Nicene Council, initially used both *ousia* and *hypostasis* for what there is one of in the Trinity. For what there is three of he used the term *prosopon* (see paragraph 1.4). As the Trinitarian approach became more confident and definite in its terminology, Athanasius accepted two different uses of the term *hypostasis*: first, as appropriate for the three<sup>315</sup> and then again, keeping far from insisting on any particular terminology, he returned to using the term for God's oneness.<sup>316</sup> This was, nevertheless, a great step toward a dramatic discovery of the relational character of the inner being of God as an essential condition of the process by which humanity could come to know Him.

The Cappadocian theologians – the two brothers Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa along with their friend Gregory of Nazianzus – later clarified the matter, dealing with the problem in a completely new manner and introducing the terminology which has since been deemed appropriate for the theology of Revelation. In the Trinitarian context, while endeavouring to emphasize “division” as the opposite of unity, they identified *hypostasis* with *prosopon* rather than with *ousia*.<sup>317</sup> Ap-

---

<sup>315</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria. *Select Works and Letters*, trans. Archibald Robinson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 4. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 484-485.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>317</sup> “Three in Individualities or Hypostases, if any prefer so to call them, or persons, for we will not quarrel about names so long as the syllables amount to the same meaning; but One in respect of the Substance –

pearing in its time as a radically new approach towards understanding the mystery of the Trinity, it renders our theology of how relations may be developed into dialogue possible. If there is no “eternal *Thou*” to be referred to in God then true dialogue is nothing but nonsense. A principle of otherness and mutual inter-relation is appropriate to God in Himself. This had become evident to the Cappadocians, faced as they were with an arianism that seemed capable of defeating the Church and leaving her with no arguments for the existence of any real connection between God the Absolute and God the Trinity. The Cappadocians’ concern was always, on the one hand, about how to preserve the mystery, not to dispose of it,<sup>318</sup> and, on the other, to show how the mystery had been revealed within a true dialogue between God and humankind in a manner analogous to the dialogical relations of the Trinity. That was the real aim of introducing the new meanings of the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* which could reflect the Revelation of God the Trinity as never before. Let us investigate how the matter of true dialogue emerges through the remarkable writings of the Trinitarian epoch.

***Athanasius of Alexandria.*** For Athanasius the terminology of “being” or “essence” (*ousia*) used to describe the relation between Father and Son “was not meant to supplant that of Scripture, but to reinforce its central point, guaranteeing that we are indeed speaking of God himself.”<sup>319</sup> Criticising the contention that “when we say ‘God,’ or name ‘Father,’ we do not signify the invisible and incomprehensible essence, but something about it” (*Nicaea 22*)<sup>320</sup>, Athanasius held

---

that is, the Godhead. For they are divided without division, if I may so say; and they are united in division.” - Gregory of Nazianzus. Oration 39.11, in *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen*, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 7. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1955, p. 355.

<sup>318</sup> Marion, Jean-Luc. “In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of ‘Negative Theology,’” in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, pp. 35-37.

<sup>319</sup> Behr, John. *The Nicene Faith. Part One. True God of True God*. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004, p. 232.

<sup>320</sup> *Defence of the Nicene Definition.* - Athanasius. *Select Works and Letters*.

that titles such as “God,” “Father,” “Lord,” and “I am” indicate God’s “essence itself”. While it can be signified, the essence remains for him “incomprehensible”. The title “Father” listed here with other titles indicative of the incomprehensible essence of God is the most significant for our present purpose. In this way, Athanasius demonstrates that he is using the term “essence” “not in a generic sense, as referring to the kind of being that God is, but to indicate the very being of God, God himself.”<sup>321</sup> It was strictly argued in both the Creed of Nicaea and in Athanasius’ commentary on it, that God is Father *essentially*, which in turn means that there is a Son, Who is “from the essence of the Father” and so “consubstantial with him” (*homoousios*). This proposition is essential and makes sense, in particular, when we are dealing with the true Father-Son dialogue. In the perspective of the relations and dialogue, true dialogue is to be considered as taking place when the parties are of the same nature or essence since otherwise there can be no “betweenness”. The “principle of person”, however, allows us to speak about the mystery of the *hypostatization* of the two natures in the One Person of Christ. The dialogical “betweenness” in this case is identified with the “principle of person” or the personhood itself rather than with the principle of nature. While, in accordance with the very principle of nature, which remains of an impersonal character, a difference in natures would prevent any possibility of entering into dialogue, a difference in person or in *hypostasis*, on the contrary, is an incitement to participating in dialogue and to engaging with the otherness of the other. Having introduced the “principle of person”, Eastern Orthodoxy argues, along with Athanasius (*Serapion* 1.16), that it is the fatherhood rather than the essence that is the main principle in the Godhead.<sup>322</sup> Thus, the human-divine dialo-

---

<sup>321</sup> Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part One*, p. 232.

<sup>322</sup> See, e.g., Widdicombe, P. *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 159-187. The “*mon-archy*” of the Father should not be understood in a subordinate sense as the sole unoriginated fountainhead of divinity but rather in a dialogical sense as a source of both unity and distinction. - O’Collins. *The Tripersonal God*, pp. 132-133.

gue can become true in Christ despite the apparently insuperable difference of the human and divine natures. Without rationalizing the mystery of the *hypostatization* we can follow what Athanasius has to say about the matter.

‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;’ (2 Cor. 5:19) for the propriety (*idios*) of the Father’s Essence is that Son, in whom the creation was then reconciled with God. Thus what things the Son then wrought are the Father’s works, for the Son is the Form (*eidos*) of that Godhead of the Father, which wrought the works (*Arians* 3.6.2).<sup>323</sup>

In a general sense, the Greek noun *eidos* means “the external or outward appearance”<sup>324</sup> which directly refers to the *hypostatization* of the essence of the Father that occurs in the Son.

It was mostly in his letters to *Serapion of Thmuis* that, defending the uncreatedness of the Spirit, Athanasius addressed the pneumatological issue. He was criticising those whom he calls the *tropici*<sup>325</sup> who claimed that the Spirit is a creature and differs from Christ and the Father in essence. Athanasius argues for the divinity of the Spirit in the same manner as he had done for Christ, that is, by considering the language of Scripture.

Let us look, one by one, at the references to the Holy Spirit in the divine Scriptures, and, like good bankers, let us judge whether the Spirit has any property (*idion ti*) of creatures, or the property of God (*idion tou theou*); that we may call him either a creature or else other than the creatures, proper to and one with the divinity in Trinity (*Serapion* 1.21).

Athanasius’ language of “proper” and “property” (*idios* means “pertaining to

---

<sup>323</sup> Defence against the Arians. - Athanasius. *Select Works and Letters*.

<sup>324</sup> See, e.g., on-line The New Testament Greek Lexicon based Thayer’s and Smith’s Bible Dictionary. <http://www.searchgodsword.org/lex/grk/>

<sup>325</sup> They interpret the scriptural references to the Spirit metaphorically. - Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 127.

one's self, one's own, belonging to one's self<sup>326</sup>) introduces the idea of a "property of creatures" as opposed to that "of God" and invites us to look through the Scriptures in order to estimate, "like good bankers", the real value of each of them as presented there. In the case both of the Son and of the Spirit, the relationship between a proprietor and his inalienable property could be a good way of considering how the Son and the Spirit relate to the Godhead. If there is no property then there would be no proprietor. The Godhead would be left as abstract, non-hypostatic and without content if neither Son nor Spirit were considered to be proper to the divinity. This approach recalls the language of the father-son relationship and the dialogical language of *I* and *Thou*, both of them reminding us about reciprocity which in this case shows that, according to Athanasius, the Spirit is indisputably to be counted together with the Father and the Son as being fully divine. The anti-Arian writings of Athanasius "repeated almost like a chorus" that the Son was not "external" (*exothēn*) but "own" (*idios*) to the Godhead (e.g., *Arians* 1.11-13).<sup>327</sup>

While not being confused with the Son, the Spirit, in the Scriptures, is also called "the Spirit of God and is said to be in God himself and from God himself." Therefore, Athanasius concludes, "if the Son, because he is of the Father, is proper to his essence, it must be that the Spirit, who is said to be from God, is in essence proper to the Son," so that while the Son is spoken of as being Wisdom and Truth, the Power and Glory of God, so the Spirit is called "the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth," "the Spirit of Power and of Glory" (*Serapion* 1.25). It is through His relationship to the Son that the Spirit is seen, as Athanasius puts it, to belong properly to God, to be of God, *homoousios* (*Serapion* 1.27). Figuratively, the Father is Light, the Son is his Radiance, and "we may see in the Son the Spirit, by whom

---

<sup>326</sup> The New Testament Greek Lexicon.

<sup>327</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 89.

we are enlightened” (*Serapion* 1.19).<sup>328</sup> If the Son is the Image of God, then the Spirit, according to Athanasius, can be called “the image of the Son” (*Serapion* 1.24). The Spirit cannot be counted as a creature also because it is “through the Spirit that we are all said to be partakers of God”.

That we are called partakers of Christ and partakers of God shows that the unction and the seal that is in us belongs, not to the nature of things originate but to the nature of the Son who, through the Spirit who is in him, joins us to the Father” (*Serapion* 1.24).

The confirmative work of the Spirit in Christ and, likewise, in humans, shows that He belongs to the same essence as that of the Father. The Spirit, along with the Word, is also “theologized,” confessed as God.<sup>329</sup> Moreover, it is His work that allows us, being the creatures, confess God as He is, i.e. in His divinity.

To avoid a seeming subordinationism in Athanasius’ pneumatology we must separate what in his writings refers to theology from that which pertains to the economy. Between the Creator and the creation, there is a crucial distinction to be drawn which can be considered as “the architectonic center of Athanasius’ theological vision”<sup>330</sup> and the basis “of his construction of the ‘Arian’ heresy.”<sup>331</sup> This distinction was stressed by means of the above “property” language: “*Idios/exothen* expresses the fundamental contrast between God and creature, between what belongs to the divine substance and what is created out of nothing.”<sup>332</sup> Although it had already been employed in Christianity, the distinction in its Trinitarian ap-

---

<sup>328</sup> “The metaphor of light and its radiance indicates a closeness of relationship in generation that is best grasped by speaking about the Son being from ‘the essence of the Father’ and as ‘*homoousios* with the Father”’. – Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and its Legacy. An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: University Press, 2004, p. 142.

<sup>329</sup> Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part One*, p. 235.

<sup>330</sup> Anatolios, K. *Athanasius*. Routledge Early Church Monographs. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 39.

<sup>331</sup> Gwynn, D. M. *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the Arian Controversy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 231.

<sup>332</sup> Louth, A. “The use of the Term *idios* in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril.” *Studia patristica 26: Papers Presented to the International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Oxford). Leuven: Peeters, 1989, p. 198.

plication was mainly a product of the fourth century.<sup>333</sup> It is on the basis of this distinction that we come to the theme of *deification* which is Athanasius' dominant soteriological motif.<sup>334</sup> Dialogically, distinction is needed to reveal otherness and, particularly, the “eternal *Thou*” Which invites humanity to participate in the divine dialogue through the process of deification.

There is another argument given by Athanasius in favour of the dialogical relations between the Father and the Son, based on their common nature and different *hypostaseis*. When applying the term “unoriginated” (*agenetos*) in a uniquely privileged manner to the Father, he distinguished it from the other term “unbegotten” (*agennetos*) which is proper to the Father but improper to the Son as an Offspring (*gennema*) of the Father. If his opponents were to use the term with the meaning “what is not a product but was always,” - i.e. referring to the nature - then, as Athanasius stated, this would also apply to the Son; but if they take the term in the hypostatic sense of “existing but not generated of any nor having a father,” then, he comments:

They shall hear from us that the unoriginate in this sense is only one, namely the Father; and they will gain nothing [for their argument] from hearing such things; for to say that God is in this sense unoriginate does not show that the Son is an originated thing, it being evident from the above proofs that the Word is such as is he who begot him. Therefore, if God be unoriginate (*agenetos*), his image is not originated (*genete*), but is an Offspring (*gennema*), who is his Word and his Wisdom. (*Arians* 1.31.3-4)<sup>335</sup>

The personal names ‘Word’ and ‘Wisdom’ are given as appropriate to the *hypostasis* of the Offspring dialogically related to the Father in the “betweenness” of their common “unoriginated” or uncreated nature. If the Son is originated then there is nothing in common between them and no dialogue would take place. But if the

---

<sup>333</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 90.

<sup>334</sup> See Hess, H. “The Place of Divination in Athanasian Soteriology.” *Studia patristica 26: Papers Presented to the International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Oxford). Leuven: Peeters, 1989, pp. 369-374.

<sup>335</sup> As referred in Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part One*, p. 243.

Son is “unbegotten” then there is no parental relation, which is the only relation known as being appropriate to God and, therefore, such terms as the Word or the Wisdom of God turn out to be applied to nothing. Athanasius has clearly distinguished the term *agenetos* from that of *agennetos* showing in this terminological distinction a very subtle, though very important characteristic of the divine dialogue in which in the one God both unity and difference are realized.

Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria, where Athanasius was deacon at the time of the Nicene Council, had insisted on the correlativity of Father and Son. So did Athanasius when he was faced with his opponents’ question, “whether the Unoriginate be one or two?” (*Arians* 1.30). Because for Athanasius as a Christian committed to monotheism the only possible answer would be “one,” his opponents claimed that the Son must therefore be “among the things originated.” Within the Godhead, Father and Son cannot be thought of as individuals of the same genus, but their hypostatic or realized beings are of the same uncreated (*agenetos*) essence, though different, as the parent/offspring (*gennema*) relationship is not fully equivalent, unlike the relation between brothers. Father remains as Father and Son as Son (*Arians* 14.4). Athanasius’ work was remarkably complemented by that of Basil of Caesarea, especially in his defence of the term *homoousios* (one-in-essence) against the proposed replacement, *homoiousios* (like-in-essence) and in his defence of the full divinity of the Holy Spirit.

***Basil of Caesarea.*** Referring to the works of St. Basil, mainly his three tomes entitled *Against Eunomius*, let us, first, examine what the distinction between the terms *homoousios* and *homoiousios* might bring to our main topic of true dialogue.

The teaching of Eunomius, the former bishop of Cyzicus, who became one of the leading spokesmen for the Arian party after the Council of Constantinople in 360,<sup>336</sup> was mainly based on the singularity of the one God. He proposed that

---

<sup>336</sup> Behr, John. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two. One of the Holy Trinity. The Formation of Christian Theology. Volume II.* New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004, p. 267.

God, as the one Unbegotten essence, does not “share his own distinctive nature with that which is begotten,” as those who support the term *homoousios* would hold, nor does God admit “comparison or association with the thing begotten,” as those who advocate the term *homoiousios* would argue. He wrote in his *Apology*:

We confess that the Son was begotten of the Father and that he is subject to him both in essence and in will, believing him to be neither *homoousios* nor *homoiousios*, since the one implies a generation and division of the essence and the other an equality.<sup>337</sup>

On the one hand, against the term *homoousios* Eunomius reasoned that if one entity were to have its essence in common with another, this would require a separation or division of the essence in order for the other to come into being. But if any sort of sharing or “betweenness” in God is absolutely excluded then His “image and likeness” transfers nothing to the creature and even the act of creation had to be urged by someone other than the one God. Thus, an imprint or vestige of the one singular God would not appear within the creation and there is no means by which created humanity could know about the one God. Therefore, some mediator, lesser than the one God, must have appeared prior to the creation in order to make the world. This is probably why Eunomius introduced the Son as a sort of highest creature, other than anyone or anything else, through Whom all the rest was made. In an apophatic manner, he rejected any likeness in the rest of the creation to the Son, Who is still considered, however, in relation to the one God, to be a creature. The Spirit was presented in a similar way in relation to the Son:

There is ‘one God’, unbegotten, uncreated, unmade, and ‘one Lord, Jesus Christ’, the Son of God, the offspring of the Unbegotten (but not like any other offspring), the creature of the Uncreated (but not like any other crea-

---

<sup>337</sup> *Eunomius: The Extant Works*, text and translation by Richard Paul Vaggione. Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 71.

ture), the ‘thing made’ of the Unmade (but not like any other ‘thing made’) <...>. There is also one Holy Spirit, the first and greatest of all the Only-begotten’s work, made at the commandment of the Father by action and the power of the Son.<sup>338</sup>

Under these circumstances, dialogue will never become true, simply due to the non-availability of the “eternal *Thou*” in his one unparticipated God Who, he claims, remains beyond everything existent, including fatherhood and sonship. Eunomius puts the originating on the same plane as the creating, although the latter would be of a less personal character than the former. Because he misses that very fact, he denies that hypostatic dialogical relations can be characteristic of the Godhead and thus considers God as a monad rather than a triad.

To argue, on the other hand, that the Son is similar in essence to the Father (*homoiousios*) presupposes that they can be compared. The characteristic of “image and likeness” is considered to be peculiar to the creation and in attributing to the Son a special kind of likeness instead of His essential sonship, one would cut Him off from any true dialogical relation with the Father thereby excluding any possibility of a human-divine true dialogue through the Son. Since He is only revealed in originating the Son, Who is a “creature”, the Father too would have to be a “creature” in relation to the one God.

Basil of Caesarea thought that “in the gospel of our salvation there is nothing more important than the dogma of faith in the Father and the Son” (*Eun.* 2.22) and suggested that Eunomius is not even a Christian because he believes in a Creator and a creature, rather than the Father and Son – a faith, Basil believed, sealed by the grace of baptism. As Behr noted, the Council of Constantinople (canon 7) required that Eunomians be baptized as if they were pagans.<sup>339</sup>

---

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>339</sup> Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two*, p. 284.

The propriety of the name “Father” for God, for Basil, is demonstrated by the testimony of Scripture and baptism whereas the term “unbegotten” is simply not found in Scripture. Since both terms designate one who is not derived from another, “Unbegotten” might well be equivalent to “Father”. But the Lord commanded us to baptize in the name of the “Father,” rather than the “Unbegotten,” for the name “Father” unlike that of “unbegotten” also implies the existence of the Son (*Eum.* 1.5). This is exactly what was emphasized when speaking about the “principle of person” as dialogically realized in both Father and Son taken together and never thought of as being separate.

The term “unbegotten”, stressed by Eunomius, separates the Son from God and so deprives the Son of the fullness of His relations with the Father. By substituting the term “unbegotten” for the name “Father,” Eunomius, in fact, according to Basil, missed the whole point of Scripture: “He rejects all the terms delivered by the Holy Spirit for the glorification of the Only-begotten” (*Eum.* 1.18). Instead, using everything that Scripture says about the Son, Basil insisted that it is not possible to speak about a time “before” the Son (cf. Basil *Spirit* 6.14), and, due to the correlativity between the Father and the Son, there is no “interval” of any kind between them. Following Basil’s thought, one could conclude that the transformation of human-divine relations (i.e. *theological activity*) into *true dialogue* is only possible through the Son for He “is not only an unavoidable fact for theological knowledge, but is the locus and even the medium of all theological activity.”<sup>340</sup>

We can learn about God theologically, always keeping it firmly in mind, however, that our real knowledge is ultimately grounded in the manner in which God has revealed Himself. And the manner of His revelation has proved to be of a personal character in accordance with the “principle of persona” peculiar to the Godhead. Turning to the Wisdom and NT texts in their dialogical interpretation, we may recall how the concept of dialogue can be applied when we are speaking

---

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

in terms of perceptible and reciprocal divine-human relations. Basil's main theological proposition seems to be that we can grasp the personal revelation of God, that is, those aspects of it that are accessible to the senses or human perception. And it is through reflecting upon this revelation that we come to apply the term "unbegotten" to God, i.e. that He is derived from, or dependent upon, no one else.

We say that the God of all things is incorruptible and unbegotten, calling him by these names according to different points of view. For when we look to the past ages, finding the life of God extending beyond every beginning, we say that God is unbegotten. And when we extend our minds to the ages to come, we call the indeterminate and unlimited and endless one incorruptible. Now, as that which has no end of life is incorruptible, so also that which has no beginning of it is named "unbegotten," and we perceive both of these by means of conception (*Eum.* 1.7).

God reveals that He has existed always, before and after time. And our reflection upon this particular revelation only tells us that God is "unbegotten" which is obviously not a knowledge of his essence. Referring to a general Aristotelian distinction, Basil wrote: "in thus reasoning, we have found that the concept of "unbegotten" does not occur in the examination of the 'what it is', but rather, I am constrained to use the expression, in the 'how it is'" (*Eum.* 1.15). In other words, Basil has effectively undermined Eunomius' presupposition that if God is "unbegotten," this must be what He is in his essence.<sup>341</sup> As Basil puts it a little later, "the essence of God is 'unbegotten,' but 'the unbegotten' is not his essence" (*Eum.* 1.11). The "unbegottenness" of God is, thus, one of his properties or qualities, alongside others, such as incorruptibility, invisibility, and immortality.<sup>342</sup>

God's revelation precedes every human attempt at understanding Him and af-

---

<sup>341</sup> Disturbing Aristotelian categories, Eunomius insisted: "then what follows from this is the unbegotten, or rather, that he is unbegotten essence" (*Apol.* 7). Cf. *Apol.* 8: "then the unbegotten must be unbegotten essence."

fects it, giving rise to a human reflection on the revelation. The divine essence is not something other than what is known through the activities (or the *divine energies*, see paragraph 1.1.2) and the inaccessibility of the essence should not be taken to imply its complete difference from the divine energies, though the essence itself transcends each particular energy and the sum of them all. According to Basil, some terms, arrived at through reflecting on the activity of God, express what is positively present in God (such as saying that God is good, just, the creator, etc.), while other terms refer to what is absent in God (negative terms, such as unbegotten, incorruptible, invisible, etc.). None of these terms, however, envelops the very being or essence of God: “There is no single name which suffices to embrace the whole nature of God and expresses it satisfactorily” (*Eun.* 1.10). Thus, one could have no reason to regard any one of these aspects as more constitutive of God’s being than any other. As Basil puts it, from both of the above sets of names - the negation of what is not fitting and the confession of those which apply - “a sort of imprint of God is engraved in us” (*Eun.* 1.10). Therefore neither of these kinds of names describes God Himself as He is, independently from us; they refer to Him only as He has revealed Himself, and as we have perceived this revelation and reflected upon our perception.<sup>343</sup>

Through his great intuition and faith Basil helps us theologize in different ways using terms and concepts which can be recognized and experienced as appropriate to revelation. When approaching the dialogical issues introduced by Buber, Levinas and other thinkers whose views may be non-theological or non-Christian, many of their insights can, undoubtedly, be used in a Christian theological account. As Basil, in his *Address to Young Men on the right use of Greek literature*, advised

---

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

them to use it properly “just as in culling roses we avoid the thorns,”<sup>344</sup> so do Christians when dealing with the writings, thoughts and opinions of different authors, some of whom we can believe were inspired by revelations of a personal and intimate sort. Gregory Nazianzen, for instance, was also critical of philosophy but he did, nevertheless, suggest ways in which it could be employed. Apotegmatically, the basic principle “avoid the thorns; pluck the roses” is given in at least two places in his work (*Ad Seleucum* 1.61; *De Vita Sua* 1.472). It is hardly a clear guide, but it does suggest the manner in which his sharp attacks on philosophy are to be understood.<sup>345</sup> The theological mode of personal revelation is precisely what we call the *theology of dialogue* which occurs when true dialogical relations are personally recognized and accepted.

The relationship between the Father and the Son is particularly important to Basil when he names God as “Father”. Considered in themselves, the names “father” and “son”, instead of corporeal passions, “express solely the relation to one another” (*Eum.* 1.11). As God’s “fatherhood” is coextensive with His eternity and the “Son” is implied in the name “Father”, the Son as such is also “before the ages and eternal,” rather than having come into existence (*Eum.* 2.12). There is no interval between the Son and the Father, for the beginning, source, or principle (*arche*)<sup>346</sup> of the Son is the Father, Who Himself has no beginning; the “communion of the Son with God the Father” is eternal, and “our mind moves from the Son, through no gap, to the Father, but joining without separation the Son to the Father” (*ibid.*).

---

<sup>344</sup> Padelford, Frederick Morgan. *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great*. Yale Studies in English 15 (1902), pp. 99-120. *Address to young men on the right use of Greek literature*. As referred in the web-site: [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/basil\\_litterature01.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/basil_litterature01.htm)

<sup>345</sup> Norris, Frederick W. ‘*Of Thorns and Roses: the Logic of Belief in Gregory Nazianzen?*’ Church History, Vol. 53, 1984, p. 455.

<sup>346</sup> A “principle” is wider than a “cause,” which implies diversity of substance and dependence of one on another as well as a distance of perfection and power between cause and effect. - Min, Anselm K. *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 193.

The begetting of the Son cannot be thought of in terms of an occasional act, even one “before” the beginning of time, for that would still imply some kind of quasi-temporality, in which the act began and concluded, and some kind of space, in which the Son is thereafter external to the Father. Any sort of external type of relation between Them would be of a human-like character. Instead of understanding God as eternally remaining the same, we would be imagining a human-type reason replacing a divine one. Eventually, despite what our own reasoning would tell us, no attention would be paid to any sort of personal revelation. The “principle of the Father” is, in fact, the “principle of the person” realized within the divine reality. Following Basil’s thought, the source and origin of any kind of theologizing or philosophizing about God must be His own revelation and the confirmation given to humanity. The ultimate and most original revelation concerns precisely the Father begetting the Son and eternally keeping in dialogue with Him as it is confirmed by the Spirit. On the one hand, this is an ultimately revealed relation to be added to all the other kinds of relations known to human beings. On the other hand, it appears as being of an absolutely different character from any other relation known to us. Our reasoning can only think about a relation as taking place on the basis of a separation either in space or in time between the parties. But now, a totally new kind of relation which is, in our context, called *true dialogue*, is understood as existing in God throughout eternity. Within such a relation there is neither a temporal nor spatial separation between the Father and Son: a “begetting worthy of God,” according to Basil, is “without passion, without division, without separation and non-temporal” (*Eum.* 2:16).<sup>347</sup> The Son’s “begetting” is the particular<sup>348</sup> relationship in which the Son stands to the Father - one of derivation and identity of being rather than the result of a discrete divine

---

<sup>347</sup> A fourfold qualification which evokes the Chalcedonian definition. - Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two*, p. 309 (note).

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

act. No “interval” (*diastema*) of any knowable or thinkable kind separates the Father and the Son: “Thought cannot reach beyond ‘was,’ nor the imagination beyond ‘beginning’” (*Spirit* 6.14). Basil concludes that true piety “contemplates the Son together with the Father” (*ibid.*) for God has no temporal beginning and it is impossible to see beyond the Son Who is in the beginning. It is only through the Son, the “Word in the beginning,” that we come to know God as Father, or more precisely, as the eternal Father of the one with Him in the beginning (*Eun.* 2:16).

If He were not of a divine origin or if He were somehow separated from the divinity itself, the Spirit could never truly confirm the relationship between the Father and the Son. Basil points out that although the Spirit is said to be “of God,” this is not to be taken in the sense that all things are “of God,” but in the sense of “proceeding (*proelthon*) out of God, not by generation, like the Son, but as the Breath (*pneuma*) of his mouth” (*Spirit* 18.46). The Spirit is also called the “Spirit of Christ,” because “he is intimately related to him by nature” and because it is only the Spirit Who can adequately glorify Christ (*ibid.*, cf. John 16.14) and confirm His filial relation with God the Father. In explaining how the Spirit does this, Basil draws a distinction between the Spirit’s relation to the Father and to the Son: “As Counselor he expresses in himself the goodness of the Counselor who sent him, and in his own dignity manifests the majesty of him from whom he proceeded” (*ibid.*, cf. Jn 14.16; 15.26). That is, the Spirit’s dignity derives from His origin – the One from whom He proceeds – while His activity relates to the One Who sent Him in order to comfort those who believe in God the Son. Dialogically, the above distinction can only specify the “three-dimensional” character of *true dialogue* which originates from the very “principle of person” characteristic of the divinity in its threeness. Thus, the Spirit Himself, in turn, is glorified, Basil concludes, “by communion with the Father and the Son” and also by the testimony of the Son, when he asserted that blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgi-

ven (Matthew 12.32; *Spirit* 18.46).

While proclaiming His true divinity, Basil notoriously did not use the word “God” to refer to the Holy Spirit. Instead of calling the Spirit “God” (*theos*) or *homoousios*, Basil argued for the Spirit’s equality of honor (*isotimia*) or co-honor (*homotimia*; cf. Origen, *Princ.* Pref. 4). This was probably the result of the exactitude with which he examines the wording of Scripture, and his insistence on using this as the basis of theology. His friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, however, explains this reticence also as having been a matter of diplomacy (*Orations* 43:68).

**Gregory of Nazianzus.** Gregory’s five *Theological Orations* are arguably one of the best presentations of the classical pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology. He too contended that God’s *ousia* was incomprehensible. “No one has yet discovered or ever will discover what God is in his nature and essence” (*Or.* 28.17). His apophatic point, however, differs significantly from that of the Neoplatonists who argued for the absolute unknowability of the One.<sup>349</sup> In addition to the unknowability of the essence, Gregory also affirmed the knowability of God’s observable gracious activities (*energeiai*), and that these were indeed God (*Or.* 28.7).<sup>350</sup>

Writing that “we admit that in respect of being the cause, the Father is greater than the Son” (*Or.* 29.15), Gregory, along with the other Cappadocian fathers, retained the Origenist causal subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father. The Father alone is the first principle (*arche*), but the doctrine of the monarchy of the Father does not mean, for Gregory, that the Son and the Holy Spi-

---

<sup>349</sup> Plotinus, for instance, maintained that as an object of human knowledge, the One “cludes our words and we have no knowledge or intuition of it” (*Enn.* V.3.14; VI.9.3).

<sup>350</sup> After revealing the very essence of Orthodox theology, Gregory Nazianzen’s teaching of the divine energies was developed by Gregory Palamas later on. While opposing the western doctrine of *filioque*, Gregory Palamas proposed an Orthodox interpretation of the relationship between the Father and the Son in a number of his works; in his Confession of 1351, for instance, he asserts that the Holy Spirit “has the Father as foundation, source, and cause,” but “reposes in the Son” and “is sent – that is, manifested – through the Son” (Papadakis, A. *Crisis in Byzantium*. NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 194). In terms of the transcendent divine energy, although not in terms of substance or hypostatic being, “the Spirit pours itself out from the Father through the Son, and, if you like, from the Son over all those worthy of

rit are lesser Gods: “The three are the single God” (*Or.* 39.11); “Though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in the being” (*Or.* 29.2). The generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit are no involuntary emanations, neither are they mere voluntary and temporal acts that would deprive the Son and the Holy Spirit of their common eternal divine *ousia*. “There is one nature (*ousia*) for all three: God” (*Or.* 42.15).<sup>351</sup>

Gregory defended the divine plenitude against any effort to provide it with a complete technical terminology and admonished his readers to keep in mind that God is, in a sense, even “beyond *ousia*” (*hyperousios*): “I have failed to find anything in this world with which I might compare the divine nature. If a faint resemblance comes my way, the more significant aspect escapes me, leaving me and my illustrations here in this world” (*Or.* 31.31). To call God “Father” or “Unbegotten” or “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod 3:14) is fair enough, yet these titles are conventional designations and do not provide any kind of direct, final, and exhaustive insights into God’s very being. Even though some technical terms, such as *hypostasis*, helped Gregory to explicate his Trinitarian beliefs, he added a dismissive comment immediately after using such technical terms: “Whatever other term one might invent that is more precise than [this] (for what we are thinking and talking about defeats my power of speech!)” (*Or.* 21.10). But although defending the monarchy of the Father and the mystery of the Trinity from inappropriate philosophical speculations, Gregory did clarify the matter by using specific terms:

The three most ancient opinions concerning God are anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy. The first two are the sport of the children of the Greeks, and let them play on! For anarchy is disorderly; and polyarchy is factious, and thus anarchic, and so disorderly. Both thus lead to the same thing, disorder, which

---

it,” a communication which may even be broadly called “procession” (*ekporeusis*) (*Apodeictic Treatise 1*: trans. J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974, pp. 231-232).

<sup>351</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 135.

leads to disintegration, disorder being the prelude to disintegration.

Monarchy is that which we hold in honor. Yet a monarchy not limited to one person (for it is possible for the one (*to ev*), if at variance with itself, to become a plurality), but which consists of an equal honor of nature, a harmony of will, an identity of action, and a convergence towards the one of those that derive from it – which is impossible in the case of created nature – so that even if numerically distinct, there is no division in the essence.

For this reason, “from the beginning” (1 John 1.1; cf. John 1.1), singularity (*monas*) is moved to duality and rests at trinity – and this is, for us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The first is “Begetter” and “Originator” – I mean, impassibly, timelessly, and incorporeally – and of the others, one is the “Begotten” and the other the “Emanation”; I know not how one could express this in terms altogether removed from things visible.

We shall not venture to speak of “an overflowing of goodness,” as one of the Greek philosophers dared to say, “as though a bowl had overflowed” – saying this clearly in his disquisition on primary and secondary causes. We ought never to introduce the notion of involuntary generation (in the sense of some sort of unrestrained natural secretion), which in no way befits our notions concerning divinity.

Therefore, let us stay within our limits and speak of the “Unbegotten,” the “Begotten,” and (as God the Word himself does somewhere) the “One who proceeds from the Father” (John 15.26). (*Or.* 29.2)<sup>352</sup>

This confession can help us develop our Trinitarian approach to understanding dialogue, notably when it is said that “singularity is moved to duality and rests at trinity”. We see that, in Gregory’s view, duality is not a balanced state and, since singularity is to be ‘moved into duality’, trinity appears as the very perfection at which the former two, singularity and duality, have to arrive. Although expressed with the help of these terms, this is and always will be a mystery. Similarly, when monologue is turned into dialogue, the latter becomes perfect or true if it is confirmed by the third party involved. Paraphrasing, one could say that “monologue is moved to dialogue and rests at true dialogue”. The distinction between the Begotten and the Emanation is implicit in the two different names, Begetter and Originator, used to characterise the Father. In Him, as the First Principle, the

---

<sup>352</sup> As referred in Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two*, p. 342-343.

other two rest, although they are still distinguished from Him and from each other. Likewise, while causing human dialogue and being distinguished from the parties to it, the “eternal *Thou*” of God the Spirit confirms and makes it true, while distinguishing the parties of the dialogue from each other and resting upon their unity.

For Gregory, as McGuckin argued, the causation is synonymous with the Father’s “dynamic communication of the divine nature” to the Son and to the Spirit, in the act of generating the Son and originating the Spirit hypostatically. The Son and Spirit have no other being except that which is the Father’s and “the Father’s greatness is particularly and properly the fact that He is the source and origin of the selfsame divine being which He communicates to the Son and Spirit.”<sup>353</sup> Therefore they cannot be defined as inferior in divinity to Their cause. The causality, therefore, is not attributable to the divine *ousia*, as such but must be referred to the relation of the *hypostaseis* having one and the same single nature, that of the Father, and by virtue of that fact being one God, and co-equal. For better explanation Gregory used here the analogous idea of the class and the specific individual (the dead man and the death of humanity).<sup>354</sup>

Just as there is a single humanity yet a plurality of human beings, one might likewise be inclined to think of divinity improperly as an abstract category of which the Father, Son, and Spirit are parallel members or representatives. Instead, for Gregory, the being of the Father is what divinity is exactly and, as such, it is also what the Son and the Spirit are, for They are of His being. Therefore, far from any sort of abstractness, the divinity of the Godhead refers to the Persons of the

---

<sup>353</sup> McGuckin, John A. *St Gregory of Nazianzus: an intellectual biography*. NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001, p. 295.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, see also Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two*, pp. 347-348. – “To use Gregory’s analogy, it would be like saying that “man X is dead” and drawing the inference that “ ‘man,’ without qualification, is dead”; the error lies in not taking into account that “is dead” is applied to X and not simply “man.” Likewise, the “is greater” is taken, by Gregory, as applying to the Father *qua* Father, that is, “as cause” of the Son, and not to the Father as God, for the Son is truly God just as the Father.”

Father, Son and Spirit, i.e. Those staying in the relationship of love and eternal three-dimensional dialogue. The Person of the Father is also the source of His being and, thus, of divinity which is joined by both beings of the Son and Spirit. According to Gregory, the being of the Father is the being of the Son and of the Spirit so we can, as long as we are clear about what we are enumerating, still use numbers.

When I speak of ‘God,’ you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in particularities, or *hypostases*, if any one prefers so to call them, or persons <...> but one according to the principle of essence, that is, divinity. For it is divided without division, if I may so say, and they are united distinctly. For the divinity is one in three, and three in one – those in whom the divinity is, or to speak more exactly, who are the divinity <...>. For us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things; yet these words, “of whom,” “by whom,” and “in whom” do not denote a difference of natures <...> but they characterize the particularities of a nature which is one and unconfused. (*Or.* 39.11, 12)

If we are considering “divinity,” or, as this is the being of the Father, if we contemplate the First Cause and His monarchy, we only see one, but looking at those in whom we find this divinity – those who, because derived from the First Cause, share in the monarchy, the single rule of the one God (cf. *Or.* 29.2) – we contemplate three. As God is Father, we cannot contemplate God without at the same time contemplating His Son and His Spirit – not least because it is only through the Son and in the Spirit that we contemplate the one God as Father.<sup>355</sup>

Although it can bring nothing new or alien to our understanding of the Trinity in itself, a dialogical approach can be of assistance when endeavouring to look at relatedness as something crucial in a multicultural and ever-changing world. Due to technological progress, different parts of the world now seem to be closer together, demanding that relations should be reconsidered thoroughly in the pers-

---

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 364-365.

pective of their ultimate and most natural state. Theologically, there is no place in which this consideration can start other than with the relations of the Trinity. When we study the most thoroughgoing presentation of the theology of the Trinity, that of Gregory Nazianzen, the same dialogical theme can be discovered as in the philosophical and biblical passages considered above. The “Flash of light”, both one and three, “divided without division”, must illumine those who are speaking of God, for God is “one in three”. This is a principle both of nature (one) and of person (three), and the “particularities” of one nature are to be revealed personally rather than understood rationally. Their relatedness itself belongs to their eternity and so needs no temporal basis but instead, once it is believed and accepted, it offers a means of looking at eternity from within temporality. And, conversely, relations in the temporal world could be restored in accordance with their archetypal analogue from above.<sup>356</sup> Two principles can be discerned in God – “of essence” and “of person” – but we, along with Gregory, call on God as ‘Father’, and it is the latter - the personal principle - that is of ultimate value for us as it was for him. This becomes even more obvious in the writings of the third Cappadocian – the younger brother of Basil and “a largely enigmatic figure.”<sup>357</sup>

**Gregory of Nyssa.** Once Basil of Caesarea had put the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* at the centre of the debate, Gregory of Nyssa, without providing definitions for the two terms, generally explained this distinction with a compari-

---

<sup>356</sup> Along with Moltmann, one has to be aware of the modern bourgeois concept of personality, the subject that “seems to make traditional talk about the three Persons of the Trinity impossible.” Moltmann admonishes us, that “if the subjectivity of acting and receiving is transferred from the three divine Persons to the one divine subject, then the three Persons are bound to be degraded to modes of being, or modes of subsistence, of the one identical subject.” - Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and The Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Trans. by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981, p. 139.

<sup>357</sup> Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two*, p. 409.

son.<sup>358</sup> In his *Letter to Peter. On the Difference between Ousia and Hypostasis* Gregory gives the example of a term, “man”, which is applied to many objects and, therefore, denotes the common nature that those objects share. As indicating something general, an “indefinite concept,” the common element is an abstraction and does not exist by itself; it is not a thing (*pragma*), an entity, that actually exists. Only particular entities denoted by particular names indicate subsistence of nature. If, however, we are to talk not simply about “man in general,” but specifically about Peter or Paul then the common element (*koinotis*) needs to be further delimited. A term such as “man” indicates what kind of being something is, the *ousia*, while a particular name denotes a concrete, specific object (“thing,” *pragma*), the *ousia* subsisting in a particular manner, delimited and denoted by the *hypostasis*.<sup>359</sup> For Gregory, the term *hypostasis* refers not so much to the particular entity itself (for which, at least in the created realm, he uses *pragma*), but the particularizing properties by which it is made known: “it is the conception which, by means of the specific notes it indicates, restricts and circumscribes in a particular thing what is general and uncircumscribed” (*Ep.* 38, 3). Thus, the exact naming of a human being requires that the *nature* as a common be delimited by the *hypostasis* as a particular. However, the process requires that there must be at least one other person to do the naming, i.e. in order to name Peter there must be some Paul hypostatically capable of doing it. So a dialogical interrelation necessarily occurs when we consider how *hypostasis* can denote *ousia*. But the concept of a hypostatic relation makes no sense if there is nothing in common, i.e. there is no *ousia*. Dialogically, such a lack of “betweenness” means that no dialogue can take place. The names “Father” and “Son” did not designate essences; instead, according to Gregory, they designated relation (*schesis*): “Who does not know that some nouns

---

<sup>358</sup> Lienhard, Joseph T., SJ. ‘*Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of “One Hypostasis”*’, in *The Trinity*, ed. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ, Gerald O’Collins, SJ. Oxford: University Press, 1999, p. 107.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

<...> are used to express relation” (*Eun.* 1.38). “The title of Father does not present to us the essence, but only indicates the relation to the Son” (*Eun.* 2.3). As mentioned above (section 1.1.1), the Greek Fathers, when they used the term *schesis*, were thinking in particular about psychical relations and their binding character. The term *schesis* might be used to talk about “the Son of the Father” or “the Spirit of the Father”, though never in a sense of bondage.<sup>360</sup> Referring to the Godhead, the names “Father” and “Son” concerned the how rather than the what. They showed the relational mode of existence of the Father, Son, and Spirit – though being in relation presupposed entities that could be in relation, and one should not assert that the names “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” were merely designations of a relation and nothing more. Thus, Gregory did not affirm what Toom calls the ‘relationality’ of the divine persons at the expense of their being an essence. Tarmo Toom criticizes some contemporary theories of the Trinity (e.g., Moltmann and Zizioulas) which seem to him to “reduce God’s *ousia* to relationality and thereby undo the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, forfeit the simplicity of God’s nature, and come rather close to tritheism.”<sup>361</sup>

Let us again turn to dialogue as a correlation established on the basis of the “invitational reason” where there are two things to be taken into account: the “otherness” of the other and something (or, better, someone) in common that enables the invitation to be accepted and the mutual relation made true. Buber considered the common “third party” in dialogical relations as the “eternal *Thou*” which confirms that the dialogue has become true. The “principle of person” becomes the thing that enables the relations to develop into dialogue. While the three *hypostaseis* of God denote His one *ousia*, the “eternal *Thou*” of God the Spirit (Who can be identified with the Wisdom of God) confirms that the eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son is “inner divine” rather than “inter-divine”. This confir-

---

<sup>360</sup> Cavarnos. *The Hellenic-Christian Philosophical Tradition*, p. 79.

<sup>361</sup> Toom. *Classical trinitarian theology*, p. 137.

mation becomes a shield protecting theology against the tritheism which would be suggested by a more humanly oriented analogy. While *ousia* remains an abstraction and inconceivable in an absolute sense, Wisdom brings knowledge of the divine Persons Who remain eternally in the uninterrupted hypostatic relations signified or denoted by the very personhood of God - His "principle of person" or "eternal *Thou*".

For Gregory the names "Father" and "Son" are not only relational names; they are also correlational names. Father implies the existence of a Son and vice versa. Since God cannot be called "Father" unless He has a Son; and God cannot be called "Son" unless He has a Father, Gregory contended that the three Persons differ from one another according to the very significance of their names. The Eunomians, on the other hand, reportedly preferred the designation "supreme and absolute Being" to that of the "Father" in order to avoid exactly these implications of the name "Father" (*Eum.* 1.14).

Gregory does tell us that the Persons can be distinguished using causal language. This argument could be expected to raise the question 'what degree of distinction does this causal language involve?' Scripture demands a logic of eternal distinction which insists that, insofar as we can talk of God as an eternal and distinct reality, so too we can speak of Father and Son and Spirit as eternally distinct realities. At the same time, Scripture also demands that we speak of a unitary divine power and nature. "For those modern commentators who accept the account of east and west as differentiated by a preference for social or mental analogies, failure to deploy some sort of social analogy of necessity implies a failure to distinguish the three persons appropriately. However, such an equation is not a necessary one and its deployment reveals a lack of understanding of the peculiarly modern preoccupations that make it seem plausible."<sup>362</sup>

Another analogy is offered by Gregory in the *Letter to Peter* when he appeals to the

---

<sup>362</sup> Ayres. *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 363.

image of a rainbow, in which the brilliance of the light “is both continuous with itself and separated” into many colors (*Ep.* 38, 5). In this illustration, “when the rays of all the colors are seen together, they are both distinct and yet at the same time filch from our view the points of juncture with one another, so that it is impossible to discover how far the red or the green portion of the radiance extends and at what point it begins to be no longer what it is observed to be in the distinct portion” (*ibid.*). Sarah Coakley points out that this analogy

has the particular and additional merits of stressing the incorporative, reflexive flow of the divine ‘persons,’ as ill as the indeterminate boundaries, at least from our human perception, of the ‘persons’ distinctness. Thus it is that Gregory can conclude this discussion by underscoring that pictorial ‘analogies’ such as this do better justice to the matter in hand than strict dogmatic definitions; for they appropriately draw attention to how we become ‘dizzy’ in the making of such distinctions, just as we become dizzy if we look into the sun.<sup>363</sup>

She also thinks we should remind ourselves that “Gregory can on occasion use a ‘psychological’ analogy for the Trinity (our ‘word’ and our ‘breath’ being distinct features of the self), a ploy of course more commonly associated with Augustine and the West, but also giving the lie to the suggestion that Gregory is uniquely fixated on the image of ‘three men.’”<sup>364</sup>

The *hypostaseis* are so intimately related to one another that there is no “gap” between them and it is impossible to think of one without also contemplating the others: “No difference can be perceived in the particularity of the nature of one compared with another, but in the commonality of substance the particular character of each shines forth” (*Ep.* 38, 5). In the image of the rainbow, “that which radiates the many-colored ray is one essence, refracted by the sunbeam, while the

---

<sup>363</sup> Coakley, Sarah. “Persons in the ‘Social’ Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion”, in *The Trinity*, ed. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ, Gerald O’Collins, SJ. Oxford: University Press, 1999, p. 135.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

hue of the phenomenon is multiform” (ibid.). Though in such “difficult to understand” matters he has drawn his example from the created realm, Gregory, along with Basil, suggests that we should work by faith rather than by apprehension, and this faith teaches “that which is separate in *hypostasis* and united in essence” (ibid.). Once again considering both that which is common and that which is particular to each of the Trinity, the discussion leads us to recognize, together with Gregory, that “the principle of commonality refers to the essence, while the *hypostasis* is the particularizing sign of each” (*Ep.* 38, 5).

Critically, Behr points out that Gregory’s account of the one *prosopon* of the Father and the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son thus differs from what is sometimes spoken of in modern theology as a “Trinitarian *perichoresis*.” Since the publication of Zizioulas’ *Being as Communion* some recent studies have put the emphasis on the “mutuality and interdependence” of the three persons in a “communion of love,” so that each person is what they are by virtue of their relationship to the others, thereby revealing “what God is: ecstatic, relational, dynamic, vital” and, consequently, that “the divine unity” is located neither with the divine substance nor with the person of the Father, but rather “in diversity, in a true communion of persons.”<sup>365</sup> Given the strong emphasis he puts on the *prosopon* of the Father one would see Gregory’s position as rather different; but he also argues that we do not see the “unbegottenness” of the Father directly, but only as mediated through the “begottenness” of the Son: seeing the Son we simultaneously know through Him the Father. The fact that the Father is seen in the Son in this way means, finally, that, for Gregory, the Son can be called “the *prosopon* of the knowledge of the Father.” Following Behr, the term *prosopon*, as employed here, does not denote any “personal” content, but rather expresses the “countenance,” the “form” or “figure” in which something is contemplated: it is that

---

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 425. Citing LaCugna, C. M. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991, p. 271.

which is seen, so that when contemplating the Son, it is, as Christ Himself says, the Father that is seen. Gregory wrote:

All the *prosopa* of man do not have their being directly from the same person, but some from one and others from another, as regarding the caused, the causes are many and diverse. But with regard to the Holy Trinity, this is not so: for there is one and the same *prosopon*, that of the Father, from whom the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds. Therefore we properly and confidently say that the one cause, together with his caused, is one God, since he exists together with them.<sup>366</sup>

In the case of the Trinity, unlike human individuals, there is only “one *prosopon*,” for we do not see the Father as a separate *prosopon* apart from, or in distinction to, the *prosopon* of the Son or the Spirit. Etymologically, the meaning of *prosopon* is, as we have seen (1.4), deeply relational and implies a continual relationship with the other, so in saying “one *prosopon*” (even in the above sense of the “form”) one would mean the presence of the *other* in relation to the one. This is exactly what is meant when we talk about the Father and the Son being in eternal dialogue. On the other hand, “the *prosopon* of the knowledge of the Father” might be somehow linked with the Wisdom of God referred to not as a person but rather as personhood itself, the “principle of person” which would, of course, be absurd if there were no really existing persons.

Within Gregory’s theology it is important to recognize both his care to preserve the unity of God as rooted in the Person of the Father, and also the same unity as dialogically revealed in the Son and confirmed by the Spirit. Dialogue cannot occur unless there is a common *ousia*, which cannot be imagined or thought about; but once it has been revealed *hypostatically* *ousia* is seen to be, together with the hypostatic principle of being, a necessary underlying foundation. So long as there is no divine *ousia* laid as a basis, the Trinitarian dialogue cannot occur, but mere *ousia* by itself remains an abstraction and can never give rise to dialogue until it is

---

<sup>366</sup> Gregory of Nyssa. *To the Greeks, On Common Notions*. As referred in Behr. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two*, p. 426.

realized in the *hypostasis* or *prosopon* of the Father which implies a relation with the Son. Dialogue is not a principle of the unity of the Godhead, though true dialogue as confirmed by the “eternal *Thou*” reveals that unity as a mystery which is eternally realized among the Three Persons. The Trinitarian “communion in love”, “relatedness” or *perichoresis* cannot replace notions of the divine *ousia* and of the Father as Cause of the Son and Spirit, but the Wisdom of God, as it appears in the Scripture – while being rather a form (*prosopon* in Gregory’s terminology) of the knowledge of God, not a person distinct from the Three – would discern the mystery of the Trinity within the Trinity-like communion that takes place among humans. We will discuss this matter further in the light of theology of the Eucharist.

Gregory of Nyssa was probably the most brilliant speculative thinker among the Cappadocians, and his metaphysical genius attracted many of the Christian thinkers who came after him. Maximus the Confessor was among them, though he never saw himself as construing a theological system but rather interpreting a tradition that had come down to him. Maximus presents his teaching as something that he has learnt dialogically from an ‘old man’ (*geron*). “It is a way of clothing the teaching he has received in the mantle of a lived tradition, lived out in the ascetic struggle of the holy man or woman, or saint.”<sup>367</sup> Both Gregory and Maximus shared the doctrine (quite unusual for the other fathers) of the double creation of the human person: a first that transcends sexual difference and a second marked by sexual duality which can be viewed as a natural need of a human being to enter into dialogue with another of the same essence but with different features. Maximus, like Gregory, also worked through an understanding of the wholeness of the human person, in which soul and body are mutually complementary.<sup>368</sup> His commentary on the Eucharistic liturgy – the *Mystagogia* – in its dialogical dimen-

---

<sup>367</sup> Louth, Andrew. *Maximus the Confessor*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 22.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

sion might be of special interest for future studies.<sup>369</sup>

---

<sup>369</sup> Maximus draws together in his vision of the cosmic liturgy (*Mystagogia*) the themes of the dialogical movement between God and humankind in the Incarnation, ascetic struggle for healing of divisions within the personal and impersonal universe and the liturgy as celebrating the mutual encounter between divine self-emptying and human deification. - Ibid., p. 77. See also 1.3-1.4 of the current work.

## 4. LITURGY – DIALOGUE OF LOVE

We started with the very positive and undoubtedly creative study of dialogue developed by Martin Buber; we then learned more about dialogue from the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers; but now, turning to the ecumenical perspective, we must look at the reverse side of the matter: is there a negative side to dialogue? Or, searching for additional positive arguments, let us apply the rule of contraries. This would seem to be the intriguing point of critical understanding raised in discourses such as that offered by John Milbank. Taking “the minimum that religions can truly share in common” as the only possible ground for interreligious relations, he concludes that “it will be better to replace ‘dialogue’ with ‘mutual suspicion’” and to engage in a discussion of historical issues instead of an endless and fruitless dialogue “around a neutral common topic.”<sup>370</sup> It is easy to agree that no true dialogue can occur under these circumstances, since it has ceased to be creative. The “neutral common topic” appears really to be “the end of dialogue”. What common ground can truly be said to be shared by the different religions? Is it just a vague minimum tending towards zero (“neutral common topic”), owing to the growing number of religions involved? Or is there perhaps some common value that can be seen to be constant or even growing in importance?

One can search for this within human nature as it is commonly understood by Christians as well as by Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, by those of non-traditional beliefs, and even by non-believers. One may assume that both fatherhood and sonship, for example, are of equal and natural importance for any tradition or culture. The “father-son” dialogic relationship emerges from a reciprocal love which is known as a primordial state, found in all the different periods and

---

<sup>370</sup> Milbank, John. “The End of Dialogue”, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D’Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p. 190.

conditions of human life; were that not so it would have lost its own principle. The father-son relationship tends towards the personal *I-Thou* rather than the objectifying *I-It* dialogical pattern, and there is a creative energy in it that produces the proper personal relation of love. As one of the commentators on Buber's *I and Thou* has argued, "there is the closest possible mystical unity between *I* and *Thou*, but always it is a mysticism of love, which insists upon and respects the *non-identity* of the other."<sup>371</sup> Love guarantees respect for otherness and, conversely, otherness is a basis for love. The trinitarian dimension of any loving father-son relationship consists in the fact that any father is the source and reason of his son and any son in his otherness may prompt a reciprocal love between himself and his father. Brotherly love (*philadelphia*) would be of equal value operating as it does in the presence of the Father. The "eternal *Thou*" of the Heavenly Father would appear to confirm the dialogue of brotherly love participated in by men and women through the Liturgy. The liturgical aspect of dialogue makes clear what true dialogue is in a human sense, i.e. its practical worth.

#### **4.1. Towards Liturgy as true dialogue.**

The creative energy of love, as argued above, proceeding from the divine source, reveals the "eternal *Thou*" of God the Spirit. This "eternal *Thou*" prompts man to look for a true dialogue of love which activates fatherhood and sonship "in the image and likeness" of the Trinitarian paternity and filiation (though, if it can be considered as the prototype of certain human relations, the Trinitarian relationship cannot be reduced to this). Inversely, the father-son relationship, having been understood in human terms as love, can urge us to look for its confirmation by the "eternal *Thou*" which turns this relationship into true dialogue. Thus, true dialogue reveals a triadic communion of love which can be acknowledged and

---

<sup>371</sup> Robinson, John A. T. *Truth is Two-Eyed*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1979, p. 9.

accepted without reservation among men of different cultures and religious traditions. Although the term “communion” has eucharistic associations, it can nevertheless be related to the human being-with-the-other once it has become true dialogue. So the eucharistic dimension of true dialogue could serve as a form of bridge between the dialogic view developed in the modern age and presented in current work, and the long experience of the Christian liturgical perspective. In other words, despite certain difficulties in reconciling Buber’s account with the Western Christian doctrine of the Incarnation<sup>372</sup>, the concept of the Buberian true dialogue can be given a eucharistic meaning when it is approximated to the Orthodox liturgical theology of communion, which is existential rather than doctrinal.

The definition of the eucharist given by the Orthodox scholar Christos Yannaras is mainly personal and existential, stressing its communal character.

The eucharist unifies the life of persons in the community of Christ’s theanthropic nature, and thus restores the image of God’s “ethos,” of the fulness of trinitarian, personal communion, to man’s *being* or mode of existence – it manifests the existential and at the same time *theological* character of ethical perfection in man.<sup>373</sup>

Commenting on Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 4.20.5), John Zizioulas presents another view of the Eucharist which is even more communal and Trinitarian than the previous one. “It is the life of communion with God, such as exists within the Trinity and is actualized within the members of the Eucharistic community. Knowledge and communion are identical.”<sup>374</sup> He emphasizes that the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians mentioned above is bound to be misunderstood if it is not deeply rooted within the Church’s Eucharistic experience, as evidenced,

---

<sup>372</sup> Lochhead, David. *The Dialogical Imperative. A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1988, pp. 51-52.

<sup>373</sup> Yannaras. *The Freedom of Morality*, p. 82.

<sup>374</sup> Zizioulas. *Being as Communion*, p. 81.

for example, in Ignatius and Irenaeus.<sup>375</sup> One might add that the dialogical dimension of the Trinitarian approach as developed in the current work would likewise collapse if the Eucharistic perspective were eliminated.

The foundation of the thought of both Ignatius and Irenaeus is not “an intellectual tradition, but their common experience of the Church as a community, and especially as a *eucharistic* community.”<sup>376</sup> They had to struggle for acknowledgment that there is a reality within the Eucharist – Ignatius against *docetism* and Irenaeus against *gnosticism*. In Christ, truth has become historical without ceasing to be ontological. Zizioulas opposes this actualized truth to that of Aristotle which is found not in life, but prior to it.<sup>377</sup> In Aristotelian thought, life is a function of being, hence truth as the meaning of being is not directly related to life but rather precedes it.<sup>378</sup> Having followed the Johannine understanding of *true life*, Ignatius goes on to identify being with this *true life* signifying it not only as praxis but as being forever, eternal life. This leads him to the “teaching of incorruptibility” (*didachy aphtharsias*) which is identified with truth.<sup>379</sup> Irenaeus has established the relationship between creation and the Eucharist and his concept of incorruptibility is based on that.<sup>380</sup>

Their idea of the immortality and incorruptibility of *true life* rooted in the Eucharist has led to some misinterpretation among scholars who suspect a pagan element within it. However, it has been shown that the “immortality” of the Eucharist is related to eucharistic communion and not to “nature.”<sup>381</sup> Communion with God Incarnate belongs to eternity where the *true life* of man is actualized.

---

<sup>375</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid, p. 80.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>378</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, 402a-b, 431b, 434b.

<sup>379</sup> Ignatius, *Eph.* 17:1, 20:2, *Magn.* 6:2.

<sup>380</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 17:5, 18:4-5; V, 2:2.

<sup>381</sup> Zizioulas. *Being as Communion*, p. 82.

This is a participation in “Christ’s theanthropic nature”, in time, hypostasized in Jesus Christ, enabling man to remain in communion with Him. Zizioulas argues the view that it is impossible “to postulate a divine nature (*physis-ousia*) as the ultimate ontological truth, and to make life and communion depend upon it under the form of Trinity.”<sup>382</sup> As we have emphasized above, it is not an impersonal nature of God but the *hypostasis* of the Father which is the source and reason for the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. Thus, following the tradition of the Cappadocians, *hypostasis* is the main principle of the Trinitarian relationship and, thus, essential to the created world.

Buber showed that life within the created world is life in dialogue. As we have just seen, the *true life* of all human beings is the actual Eucharistic communion with God Incarnate. Can this *true life* be referred to true dialogue as it was presented by Buber? Is there a common meaning to be articulated clearly and inclusive of both? Let us examine these questions in terms of true dialogue.

When speaking of true dialogue, we must indicate a third participant who confirms that the dialogue is true. The “eternal *Thou*” of God in dialogically addressing the *I* gives a token of acknowledgement of the “inborn *Thou*” as reciprocally related to the *I*, thus serving as a means of entering into true dialogue. The dialogical relation is then destined to become a relation of communion. However, lack of firm belief in the Incarnation might form a barrier to that communion becoming transfigured into Eucharistic communion.

In itself a gift of God, belief in the divine origin of Christ is vitalised by the Spirit. A scriptural interpretation of this spiritual operation can be found in the First Epistle of John: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God” (1 John 4:2, NKJV); compare with the Epistle of Paul: “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3, NKJV). The “confessing spirit” might be understood as an

---

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

action of the Spirit realized within man. The sayings relate primarily to prophetic inspiration,<sup>383</sup> but the true believer is not deprived of the spiritual inspiration granted to the prophets.

Upon careful examination, the following passage gives a clear description of that triadic communion in love given above.

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him (1 John 4:12-16, NKJV).

This passage speaks of Eucharistic communion, become apparent in divine love (cf. Jn 5:56).<sup>384</sup> One may also find here the basic dialogical perspective of what has been considered as true or confirmed dialogue. A man's confession that Jesus is the Son of God implies the action of the Holy Spirit within that man. The gift of love is related to that gift of the "inborn *Thou*" to one's *I*, because love is to be reciprocal and shared within the relationship *I-Thou*. Love of God is to be perfected in us through knowing that we are in Him and He in us, and that knowledge is confirmed by the Holy Spirit. And love is bestowed on us to be given expression in all our human relations. Thus relations which have been confirmed by reciprocal love may become true dialogue in its three-dimensional Trinity-like form, because God abides in him who abides in love.

When a person's own "inborn *Thou*" enters into true dialogue with the "eternal *Thou*", it might be said that the reality of the Incarnation is about to be acknowledged unconsciously by someone who, perhaps, does not belong to the Christian

---

<sup>383</sup> Barrett C. K. *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*. London: SPCK, 1966, p. 152.

<sup>384</sup> See e.g. Congar. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. III, p. 230.

fold in any traditional sense. That is, the Holy Spirit, acting through and by means of love, can bring into triadic communion in love all those who by turning to the “eternal *Thou*” have entered into true dialogue with God and with others. Perhaps certain boundaries, limiting dialogue with the differing human traditions and faiths, are necessary; but the limitless love given by the Triune God does not recognize those human boundaries.

The need, and the ability, to seek after dialogue are inborn and natural, just like the Buberian “inborn *Thou*”. However, we must be careful to avoid soliloquizing or pre-empting the dialogue before it has begun. It is easier to get into an *I-It* relation than into a real *I-Thou* relationship, but the “inborn *Thou*” compels us to withdraw from this secondary and not genuine relationship. Then it will lead us to the revelation of the “*I-eternal Thou*” relationship.

The eucharistic dimension is present in such a dialogue, signifying its perfection in reciprocity and love. As it is not acknowledged by those of non-Christian traditions, the eucharistic implication within the real communion of love - wherever it is found - remains hidden but it is, nevertheless, absolutely real. Christians participating in interreligious meetings of any kind must, as a primary intention, bear tacit witness to the eucharist as the revelation of trinitarian *perichoral* love. While recognizing and respecting the otherness of their fellow participants, Christians must avoid denying their own otherness. That Christian otherness must be related to the inner ability given us to enter into a dialogue of reciprocal Trinity-like love. Thus, ideally, interreligious dialogue, once it has achieved through personal reciprocity a divine confirmation, would be transfigured into a triadic communion in love. The sacrificial character of eucharistic love would provide that dialogue with a sacramental dimension. The felicitous term “intrareligious” suggested by Panikkar in place of “interreligious” emphasizes the ultimately religious character of the meeting. The mystery of love which refuses to yield to the merely rationally

oriented mind is easily shared in the sacraments of God by those who believe in His love.

The question is how to enter into dialogue in its whole fullness and truth, which necessitates bringing one's own richness, and allowing oneself to be enriched rather than distorted or absorbed by the other. In Panikkar's words, other religions become a religious question for our religion as well as for our own personalities. The religious question is more a matter of meditation and prayer than of rational analysis. Such prayers and meditations must be observed reciprocally by men and women of different religions throughout the world. For example, the Prayer for the World used in the ascetic monastic life in the Orthodox Church: having as its subject the whole world without exception, this particular prayer is ceaseless and normally follows the Jesus Prayer, asking for mercy and personal forgiveness. Besides the ascetic prayers, there are within the customary services many Christian prayers for the wellbeing of others. Petitions "for the *peace from above*", "for the *union of all*", "for *every city and country*" and "for the *peaceful times*", for example, are included in all daily and liturgical Orthodox services throughout the year.

Prayer is especially powerful when practised by the saints. "A single saint is an extraordinarily precious phenomenon for all mankind."<sup>385</sup> Holiness is, probably, the only personal human attribute which truly raises above all the differences existing in the world. *Christlike* life or *Christianness*, in the words of Panikkar, goes beyond both Christendom (historical Christianity) and Christianity (doctrinal teaching)<sup>386</sup> and may be witnessed in the context of interreligious dialogue as evidence of Christian truth. In his solidarity with Panikkar's "Trinitarian Christianity as the proper foundation for an interreligious engagement", Rowan Williams argues that "the doctrines of Christian credal orthodoxy are not, as is regularly sup-

---

<sup>385</sup> Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *Saint Silouan the Athonite*. Trans. from the Russian by R. Edmonds. Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991, p. 223.

<sup>386</sup> Williams, Rowan. "Trinity and Plurality", *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D'Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p. 10.

posed, insuperable obstacles to dialogue.”<sup>387</sup> Moreover, the concrete future of Christianity “must be conceived in terms of Christlike humanity” which “engages in dialogue and encounter to discover itself more truthfully.”<sup>388</sup> Holiness in Christianity is in a wide sense to be understood as the *Christlike* life. In the light of the disagreements that separate Christians, the *Christlike* life revealed by men and women beyond their specific confessional allegiance might bring forth fundamental Christian fruits which will be of value to the rest of the religious world. And within these common Christian virtues “Trinitarian doctrine is the grammar, the structure, of the Christian ‘school of discipleship’. It instructs about how God is to be known.”<sup>389</sup>

The challenge of the encounter with otherness inevitably brings something new. But it must be dialogically interpreted if the relations are to remain harmonious. Panikkar asserts a specific need for different religious forums to meet, and argues that all the religions, once they have encountered one another, may be changed and even matured thereby.

These mutual studies, relationships, and dialogues change both the opinion of the one partner and the interpretation of the other. Religions change through these contacts; they borrow from each other and also reinforce their respective standpoints, but with less naïveté. <...> We can no longer ignore each other. The religions of others – our neighbors – become a religious question for us, for our religion.<sup>390</sup>

It is certainly true that the religions “can no longer ignore each other”. The type of meeting considered above would result in a clarification of their standpoints. Communion in love cannot any longer remain merely at the level of good intentions. A basic “human-divine” common ground needs to be recognized and mu-

---

<sup>387</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>390</sup> Panikkar, Raimon. *Invisible Harmony. Essays on Contemplation and Responsibility*. Ed. by H. J. Cargas. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, p. 173.

tually shared by all human cultures, traditions and even personalities. At the same time, none of the existing differences are to be excluded or eliminated; there is a natural historical background that corresponds to the religious necessities of the various peoples, enabling them to keep their identities. Love comes not to destroy but always to bring something new. Many fruits have already been borne, and more remain to be borne as love is a creative, desiring and - in the theological meaning of the term – *erotic* force.

#### 4.2. St. Maximus the Confessor on love.

Developing his understanding of love, Maximus provides quite an abstract definition of love using philosophical terminology:

The interpretation of love is <...>, if I might express it in a definition, the inward universal relationship to the first good connected with the universal purpose of our natural kind. <...> This we know as love and so we call it, not divisively assigning one form of love to God and another to human beings, for it is one and the same and universal: owed to God and attaching human beings one to another.<sup>391</sup>

According to Maximus the Confessor, a distinction in the general understanding of love is to be made between natural desire (*eros*) and the divine gift (*agape*). Maximus argued that these two elements, being intimately integrated, are united in love as a normal function of man.<sup>392</sup> Human charity will never lose the element of natural human desire, but through the exercise of the virtues, this natural desire will be borne by divine charity into integrated love. The anthropology of Maximus the Confessor was very Christocentric and concerned to emphasize that

---

<sup>391</sup> Maximus the Confessor. *Letter 2: On Love*, trans. in Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 90.

<sup>392</sup> Thunberg, Lars. *Microcosm and Mediator: the Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*. Foreword by A. M. Allchin, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1995, p. 311. On the contrary, while mentioning Oliver O'Donovan's comment "on the vexed question of Greek and Latin words for love", Louth does not think we should make any great issue over Maximus' use of the words *eros* and *agape*. Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 38.

there are two wills as well as two natures in Christ. Its application in the dialogic perspective would be relevant in certain areas concerning the natural capacities of man, his natural ability to do good and to distinguish good from evil. While natural love is an attribute of the total human nature in Christ, it is also somehow, albeit in a hidden manner, peculiar to each individual. The distinction between *eros* and *agape* makes no sense in relation to God since His love is perfect and indivisible (one may rather talk about God's *eros tis agapis* – desire to love). But it does apply in the case of a human intention to have true dialogue before it has been realized. The *erotic* human will concerns the natural desire to communicate with the other, to make contact since loneliness has become insupportable; but *agape* should be related to brotherly communion in love or to true dialogue as we presented it above. Thus, *eros* and *agape* are destined to be united in one perfect Trinitarian-like love.

#### **4.2.1. St. Maximus and Chalcedonian Christology.**

In terms of the divine-human dialogue it is of great importance to learn of Christology as it was considered in the post-Cappadocian period – the period of the Council of Chalcedon and afterwards, during the time of the heresies of monenergism and monothelitism. The unity of divinity and humanity in Christ was expressed in the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451) by the four 'Chalcedonian' adverbs – *asynchytos*, *atreptos*, *adiairetos*, *achoristos* (translated as 'which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation') and by the repeated use of 'one and the same.' Though initially rather indefinite, this last point was clarified in the course of the sixth century, and it became accepted that it was 'one of the Trinity' - the Son as Second Person of the Trinity – Who is the 'one and the same' referred to in this Definition. Since it expresses the doctrine of Christ in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity – the one Person, who is the Incarnate Christ, is one of the three Persons of the Trinitarian God – this clarification links Chris-

tology and Trinitarian theology.<sup>393</sup>

The Definition also expressed the unity of Christ by using the well-known words ‘person’ (*prosopon*) and ‘subsistent being’ (*hypostasis*), which had been used, as we have seen, in a Trinitarian context to express the distinctness in the Trinity, especially by the Cappadocian Fathers. While expressing what it is that is dual in Christ, the words ‘being’ (*ousia*) and ‘nature’ (*physis*) were also employed to express the unity of the Godhead in Trinitarian theology. In the Chalcedonian Definition, *physis* is used in this way and *ousia* occurs as the root of the term ‘consubstantial’ (*homoousios*). Louth argues that

this tendency to interpret Christological terminology in terms of Trinitarian terminology, and vice versa, was by no means well-established, or even commonplace, in the century before Chalcedon, nor can it be claimed that it is at all likely that the Fathers of Chalcedon clearly intended any such idea: the events in the wake of Chalcedon suggest rather that there was a good deal of confusion as to what the decisions of that council really entailed. But, with hindsight, Chalcedon may be regarded as at least lending encouragement to the use of a consistent terminology to be applied in both Christological and Trinitarian contexts.<sup>394</sup>

Christologically, the human-divine dialogue has become true since there is a sort of “betweenness” implied in the joint divinity and humanity of Christ. Personhood too can serve as a sort of “betweenness” when both the human and divine *physis* are hypostasized within the one Person of the Son Who is *homoousios* with the Father and the Spirit. The four ‘Chalcedonian’ adverbs were used to present the *modus* of the hypostasization of the natures. As we argued above, dialogue would not become true unless the parties to it come to possess a common nature. The monophysites<sup>395</sup> considered that there was only one (divine) nature – and the

---

<sup>393</sup> Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 49.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>395</sup> While making a distinction between *physis* and *ousia* and seeing *hypostasis* as equivalent to *physis*, they accepted the Cappadocian distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia* but could not accept the distinction drawn

monothelites only one (divine) will - in Christ. Under those circumstances no human-divine dialogue could be true, and humanity could never take part in the Trinitarian true dialogue. On the other hand, since they are of a hypostatic character, the unity of the two natures in Christ could only be shared in a hypostatic way. This means that the double-natured personhood of Christ becomes a “betweenness” in the human-divine dialogue. It becomes true when the fact is truly believed that Christ is both true God and true Man.

It is in terms of the above four ‘Chalcedonian’ adverbs that Maximus describes the effects of the Fall on human beings and the universe as a whole. He takes the adverbs as key terms in safeguarding the integrity of the natural order – confusion, change, division and separation almost invariably carry with him a negative connotation. According to Maximus, the effects, however, do not alter the fundamental meaning (*logos*) of natures, but are to be found in the way fallen natures exist and relate. God has created the fundamental reality as disclosed by the *logos* of each nature, and the confusion, division and fragmentation has obscured it. One of the Cappadocians’ ways of explaining the difference between subsistent being (*hypostasis*) and nature in a Trinitarian context becomes for Maximus a fundamental metaphysical distinction. The Cappadocians had used the term ‘mode of existence’ (*tropos tes hyparxeos*) in order to express what it is that is distinctive about the subsistent beings of the Godhead. Maximus supposed that *ousia*, *physis*, and *logos* belong together when, at the level of being, we find natures defined by their principles, meanings or definitions (all of which can be represented in Greek by the term *logos*). At the same time he considered that ‘modes of existence’ – *hyparxis*, *hypostasis*, and *tropos* – belong together at the level of the person.<sup>396</sup> The dia-

---

by Chalcedon between *hypostasis* and *physis* in the Christological realm. – Louth, Andrew. *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*. Oxford: University Press, 2002, p. 113. For a more profound analysis of the above distinction see *ibid.*, pp. 47-53.

<sup>396</sup> On the historical development of the distinction between *logos* and *tropos* see, e.g., Sherwood, P. *The Earlier Ambigua of Maximus the Confessor*, Rome: Orbis Catholicus, Herder (Studia Anselmania, 36), 1955, pp. 155-166.

logical movement in the Trinity – implicit in an expression used by Gregory Nazianzen – was explained very carefully by Maximus:

For the triad is truly monad, because thus it is, and the monad truly triad because thus it subsists. Thus, there is one Godhead that is as monad, and subsists as triad. If, hearing of movement, you wonder how the Godhead that is beyond infinity is moved, understand that what happens is happening in us, and not to the Godhead. For first we are illuminated with the reason [logos] for its being, then we are enlightened about the mode in which it subsists, for we understand that something is before we understand how it is. Therefore movement in the Godhead is constituted by the knowledge about that it is and how it subsists that comes about through revelation to those who receive it (*Opusc.* 1:1036C).<sup>397</sup>

We must exercise similar care when we speak of the divine true dialogue. All that we know through the *invitatory logos* is that the dialogue is confirmed and true, but it is only through hypostatic revelation that we could know how it subsists in the *tropos* of its three dimensions. From seeing Christ as God appearing in human form, theological reflection moved to seeing Christ as the Son of God living a fully human life and maintaining a dialogue both with His Father and with humanity. What is Maximus' explanation of how this takes place? He is guided, as Andrew Louth has argued, by his 'Chalcedonian logic.' The term 'person' is concerned with the way we are (the mode, or *tropos*), not what we are (the principle, or *logos*), and, therefore, it is contrasted to nature. When Christ became incarnate, i.e. assumed human nature, the Word became everything that we are. Being a person, He did it in his own way, just as we are human in our own way, because we are persons. Persons exist, natures are – Maximus expresses this by distinguishing between existence (*hyparxis*) or subsisting (*hyphistanai*, from which the noun, *hypostasis*, is derived) and being (*ousia*, or *einai*). Whatever we have in common with others, we are: it belongs to our nature. But what it is to be a person is not some quality, which we do not share with others. There is not an irreducible something

---

<sup>397</sup> Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 50-51.

within each one of us that makes us the unique persons we are. Instead, what is unique about each one of us is what we have made of the nature: “our own unique mode of existence, which is a matter of our experience in the past, our hopes for the future, the way we live out the nature that we have.”<sup>398</sup> It is the eternal life in a true dialogue of love which Christ enters into in a filial way that makes the Son of God the unique person He is. His divine nature is the basis of His eternal dialogue with the Father, Whose paternity is the source of the dialogue.

#### 4.2.2. True dialogue of love.

Turning to Maximus’ definition of love as “the inward universal relationship to the first good connected with the universal purpose of our natural kind” (*Ep.* 2:401D) we are now able to focus on the “threeness” of love or the universal relatedness of the lover and the beloved to the “first good”. This definition of love can easily be related to the definition of true dialogue presented by Buber and followed within the current work. When it becomes mutual, love acquires a more dialogical meaning, but even while still unrequited, it demands an entering into dialogue. The state of dialogue is characteristic of love, although love will not succeed if there is no relation to “the first good”, i.e. the perfect love revealed by the “eternal *Thou*” as a witness of the true divine dialogue of love. A person seeking for love is seeking for otherness. Thus, his or her particular love becomes dialogue yet demands confirmation in order to be true. The “inborn *Thou*” of a man or a woman is seeking for the other and does not rest until it is found. If it is addressed to the perfection of love which is God Himself in His Trinitarian relations (cf. 1 John 4:8, 16), even the erotic, desiring faculty in its good use can produce among men and women a true dialogue of love. Maximus stated the clear relationship between love for God (*agape*) and the good use of the human erotic

---

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-59.

faculty (*eros*) which can be transformed into a holy desire for God and move man towards Him (*Ep.* 2; PG 91, 397 B).

As we saw, Maximus defines love as an ‘inward relationship’ of the utmost universality (*Ep.* 2:401D), and love, therefore, is about how we relate – to God, to other people and to ourselves. Dialogically, these three kinds of the relations are intimately correlated with each other within the context of mutual love. The person who loves truly and is loved can never do harm without an interruption occurring in the love. Maximus thus sees the passions as affecting our relationships with other people, and indeed as being provoked by such relationships. He does not regard the passions simply as registering the state of the soul but always considers them as emerging from relations. That is why he also gives a prominent place to passions that had been ignored (or subsumed under others) by Evagrius,<sup>399</sup> - especially passions such as envy and resentment, that are essentially about our relationships with others. As long as they are not overcome, the passions, emerging from relations that are unlikely to be understood as dialogical, prevent dialogue from taking place. Maximus’ advice is very useful for those who are learning how to enter into inter-human dialogue and trying to keep it in existence:

As for your own envy, you will be able to check it if you rejoice with the man whom you envy whenever he rejoices, and grieve whenever he grieves, thus fulfilling St Paul’s words, ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep’ (Rom. 12:15) (*Centuries on Love* III.91). <...> If you harbour resentment against anybody, pray for him and you will prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer you will separate your grief from the thought of the wrong he has done you. When you have become loving and compassionate towards him, you will wipe the passion completely from your soul. If somebody regards you with resentment, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company, and you will deliver him from his pas-

---

<sup>399</sup> In the meanwhile Maximus makes much use of Evagrius’ eight principal passions. – Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 39.

sion (*Centuries on Love* III.90).<sup>400</sup>

In the realm of the divine-human dialogical relations, Maximus says that just as the passion-free thought of human things does not compel the intellect to scorn divine things, so the passion-free knowledge of divine things does not compel the intellect to scorn human things. What is required, he insists, is a love for God, called by him “holy love”, more powerful than any love we may have for earthly things.

For in this world truth exists in shadows and conjectures; that is why there is need for the blessed passion of holy love, which binds the intellect to spiritual contemplation and persuades it to prefer what is immaterial to what is material, and what is intelligible and divine to what is apprehended by the senses (*Centuries on Love* III.67).<sup>401</sup>

In the Byzantine ascetic tradition, as Louth argued, ‘passion’ often indicates something evil (even in Maximus, it is more or less the equivalent of ‘vice’) and Maximus also insisted that ‘dispassion (*apatheia*) engenders love’ (*Centuries on Love* I.2), therefore the phrase ‘the blessed passion of holy love’ in Maximus’ passage above may sound odd. It may be, however, that he is aware of the danger of an *apatheia* that is merely disinterestedness – *apatheia* must be a purified love. Having provided his own definition of passion – ‘passion is an impulse of the soul contrary to nature’ (*Centuries on Love* II.16; cf. *ibid.* I.35) – Maximus points to certain natural passions that are perfectly proper and in accordance with unfallen nature. The only passions to be expelled are those that are ‘contrary to nature’. *Apatheia*, then, is the restoration of what is natural in the ultimate sense. Thus we learn that dialogue can become true when all the passions that are ‘contrary to nature’ are expelled, and, instead, ‘the blessed passion of holy love’ is experienced as a despe-

---

<sup>400</sup> As referred in *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

rate need. *Apatheia* opens the way to this experience, when the “eternal *Thou*” of God reveals His unceasing love and longing to share it among all human beings. Thus, in *apatheia*, the irrational parts of the soul are not cut off, rather they are sublimated: desire becomes divine *eros* and the incensive part becomes divine *agape*.

When the human intellect is constantly with God, the desire grows beyond all measure into an intense longing for God and the intensiveness is completely transformed into divine love. For by continual participation in the divine radiance his intellect becomes totally filled with light; and when it has reintegrated its passible aspect, it redirects this aspect towards God, as we have said, filling it with an incomprehensible and intense longing for Him and with unceasing love, thus drawing it entirely away from worldly things to the divine (*Centuries on Love* II.48).<sup>402</sup>

All virtues may be subsumed under love for God, but they are learnt not only from love for God, but more directly from love for one’s neighbour. Maximus points out explicitly that if love for God gives wings to the mind by which to communicate with God, love for the neighbour prepares it to think well of other human beings – two functions of the mind which are obviously interdependent (*Centuries on Love* IV.40). Thus the rational faculty and the mind are also included in the work of love, though here we are primarily concerned with love for God. Thus we learn that the fear of God, understood in a good sense, which presupposes the knowledge of God implied in faith, leads to reverence, i.e. to a form of humility, a virtue of the rational faculty, which ought to be joined with love (*Centuries on Love* I.81-82). It is through love that the integration of the whole of man takes place. Love implies in fact a restored and transformed passibility, which will then accompany a man through all his life as a human being. And this is why Maximus is fully prepared to call love itself a blessed passion (*Centuries on Love* III.67). Maximus’ affirmation about the coexistence of human unity and differen-

---

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

tiation could hardly be more clearly manifested than through his definition of love.<sup>403</sup>

### 4.3. Inter-religious dialogue.

Being a person who experienced different traditions so profoundly that he was able to say “I ‘left’ as a christian, I ‘found’ myself a hindu, and I ‘return’ a buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian,”<sup>404</sup> Raimon (Raimundo) Panikkar turned to interreligious dialogue in a very personal and inner sense. He even called it *intrareligious* dialogue in order to present it as a religious act “that neither unifies nor stifles but re-links us.”<sup>405</sup> He called this dialogue, as an ‘act of assimilation’, eucharistic as “it tries to assimilate the transcendent into our immanence.”<sup>406</sup> He outlined five main possible approaches. Before considering other points of view on interreligious dialogue, let us examine them briefly for their potential for contributing to what we have called ‘true dialogue’.

*Exclusivism.* Only one truth and only one way of knowing it is allowed. Panikkar attributes to this a certain element of heroism. There must be a complete dedication to that which claims to be a universal and absolute truth. But due to the obvious dangers of intolerance and even contempt for others true dialogue is almost impossible.

*Inclusivism.* In claiming the truth of one’s own tradition, one affirms that “it includes at different levels all that there is of truth wherever it exists.”<sup>407</sup> It simplifies relations with other traditions yet the fullness of truth still belongs to one’s own tradition. “An umbrella pattern or a formal structure can easily embrace dif-

---

<sup>403</sup> Thunberg. *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 317.

<sup>404</sup> Panikkar, Raimon. *The Intrareligious Dialogue*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999, p. 42.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid*, p. xvii.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

ferent thought-systems.”<sup>408</sup> While continuing to claim a superior knowledge, one cannot get into true dialogue as the other is implicitly of lesser worth.

*Parallelism.* The different traditions are understood as following parallel paths each with their own appropriate values but with no interaction between them. They are moving independently towards the same goal. This attitude is tolerant; the others are respected and not judged. However, historically this appears to have been of little value, as the different traditions of the world have “usually emerged from mutual interferences, influences, and fertilizations.”<sup>409</sup> True dialogue is not possible here as despite the encounter with others, no proper attention is paid to them.

*Interpenetration.* Traditions do not exist in isolation but interact with one another. One’s religion is seen within the framework of one’s neighbour’s. There is mutual interpenetration without loss of the proper peculiarities of each tradition.<sup>410</sup> A mutually accepted religious frame is proposed that can be shared by all the traditions so that they do indeed supplement each other. There are no tensions, no suspicions, and no indifference to each other. But we are left with the question of whether a hermeneutics really exists which could allow such different and independently developed traditions to interpenetrate in this way. If so, true dialogue might be feasible for those experienced in such hermeneutics. But since this question is usually answered negatively, we cannot say that true dialogue is likely.

---

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

*Pluralism.* “It is the attitude of not breaking the dialogue with the other opinions, because having renounced any absolutization, it keeps the intrareligious dialogue permanently open.”<sup>411</sup> All the real traditions are following a course which is natural to them, hence, by letting them talk a natural language within a natural environment, true dialogic relations might emerge. These are relations of mutual tolerance and respect as fellow beings one with another. Pluralism is a mark of deference toward the world’s Creator Who allows such multiplicity and variety to exist.

Pluralism takes very seriously the fact that during the last six to eight thousand years of human history our fellow beings have not come to an agreement concerning religious beliefs. Our ancestors were not unintelligent, nor were they blind partisans of the respective establishments. A certain evolutionistic thinking, making us believe that we are at the top of the spiritual insights of the human race and all the others were “undeveloped” smacks of modern hybris and ignorant naïvete.<sup>412</sup>

Thus, pluralism gives us a chance of achieving true dialogue as understood in Buberian thought. The confirmation of this dialogue would be given by the “eternal *Thou*”, through listening to any naturally developed tradition. Fatherhood and sonship in the everyday meaning of the terms can easily be understood as a basis of mutual love, witnessed by those who share paternity with the father and filiation with the son. This triadic relationship of love appears very natural to all traditions and cultures, and can be of equal importance to them. The pluralistic approach leaves the traditions their peculiar shape and content, with no external aggression which might have the effect of eliminating something profoundly spiritual existing within any historical tradition.

In the triadic dialogue of love, where the *Thou* of “someone sharing” is the “eternal *Thou*” of God the Holy Spirit, Who is sharing the love of God the Father to-

---

<sup>411</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, p. 10-11.

wards God the Son, the same Spirit is witnessing divine love to those in the world who are listening to Him. “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8, NKJV). Baptism in Christianity is both preceded and fulfilled by birth in the Spirit – otherwise nobody would consciously seek it.

The work of the Spirit can be recognized within other traditions as well. Supporting that statement with the aid of Scripture, the Anglican theologian Alan Race wrote, “The Acts of the Apostles is a fruitful source for those who seek New Testament backing for a more positive and inclusivist appreciation of the operation of God’s Spirit outside Christianity.”<sup>413</sup> Understood as inclusivist with regard to God rather than man, this operation of the Spirit may induce within human relations reciprocal love, mutual understanding, and, as a result, true dialogue rather than the desire either to dominate or to ignore. As has been argued by Ernst Troeltsch, all religions share a common ground in the divine Spirit prompting the finite mind towards becoming further enlightened and more fully conscious. The divine Spirit dwells within the finite spirit whose “final aim is to attain ultimate union with the Spirit.”<sup>414</sup>

Thus, both the Trinitarian approach and the pluralistic attitude can give birth to true *intrareligious* dialogue when it is understood as a personal religious act of relationship full of openness, tolerance, kindness, and mutual enrichment in reciprocal love. In arguing this position, let us consider the different approaches presented by some well-known modern scholars.

First, in this quotation from Mircea Eliade one can see that any encounter with religion, must be undertaken in an appropriate way.

---

<sup>413</sup> Race, Alan. *Christians and Religious Pluralism*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 39.

<sup>414</sup> Troeltsch, Ernst. “The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions”, *Attitudes Toward Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations*. Ed. by Owen C. Thomas. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986, p. 89.

A religious phenomenon will only be recognized as such if it is grasped at its own level, that is to say, if it is studied as something religious. To try to grasp the essence of such a phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it – the element of the sacred. Obviously there are no purely religious phenomena ... you cannot think of man apart from language and society. But it would be hopeless to try to explain religion in terms of any one of those basic functions...<sup>415</sup>

One might add that there is, certainly, a super-transcendent reality, transcending all the religious or nonreligious realities that can be envisaged. The Neo-Platonists called it *hyperousiotes*, that is to say, super-essential essence. This is the inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, immovable, unnamed Oneness. We call it ‘God’ simply in order to show His absoluteness. It is impossible either to accept or to reject this reality, owing to its unknowable character and to its nature, which is completely different from ours. The movements, or energies, of this Oneness are the only factors that can be known. While we will continue to use the name “God”, we cannot sufficiently emphasise the importance of this distinction.

Barth, Brunner and Kraemer, insisting on the exclusive truth of Christianity, were united in maintaining a distinction between “revelation” and “religion”. Brunner said, “Apart from the revelation, the phenomenon of religion cannot be understood.”<sup>416</sup> Having actual knowledge of the non-Christian faiths, Kraemer gave some empirical basis to this distinction. He emphasized the discontinuity between the Christian faith and other faiths, arguing that there can be no legitimate development of Christianity which would be acceptable to them. Interruption prevails over continuity. However, it is not easy to prove this from our observations of the world of religions.

---

<sup>415</sup> Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed, New York: New American Library, 1958, xi, as cited in Hick, John. *An Interpretation of Religion*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989, p. 15.

<sup>416</sup> Brunner, Emil. *Revelation and Reason*, SCM Press, London; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1947, p. 262, as cited in Race. *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, p. 19.

In a famous controversy between Barth and Brunner, Barth protested against the use in Catholic Christianity of concepts such as “natural religion” and “general revelation”. These concepts had arisen through the need to explain the existence of other faiths independent of any knowledge of the Christian revelation. One of the main arguments against exclusivism derives from historical study, which challenges it from the new perspectives which developed after the Enlightenment.<sup>417</sup> Once religion was distinguished from revelation, Barth concurred with Brunner that the Incarnation was the central theological point distinguishing Christianity from other religions.

John Macquarrie believed that dialogue based on increased mutual understanding has reversed the former situation when the different faiths were in rivalry with one another. Nevertheless, rich traditions with their varied histories will not be transformed into some united religion, confining itself to common themes. Advancing his argument against a generalized “natural religion”, he said that it “would kill off all the particularity and concreteness of the actual existing religions.”<sup>418</sup> In his own dialogue with Paul Knitter, Macquarrie asserted the absolute adequacy and definitiveness of Christianity for himself within his “limited faith and experience”. It does not need to be complemented by any other faith.<sup>419</sup> His attitude towards other traditions emerges from the strictly personal impact of their central spiritual figures (mediators).

Defending the *inclusivist* paradigm, Gavin D’Costa tried to argue that the Trinitarian exposition given by Rahner<sup>420</sup> provides a satisfactory position, which “intelligibly reconciles and holds together the axioms of the universal salvific will of God (*pluralist*) and the axiom that salvation alone comes through God in Christ in

---

<sup>417</sup> Race. *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, p. 36.

<sup>418</sup> Macquarrie, John. *The Mediators: Nine Stars in the Human Sky*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995.

<sup>419</sup> Macquarrie, John. “Revisiting the Christological Dimensions of Uniqueness”, *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*. Ed. by Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997, p. 98.

<sup>420</sup> See, e.g., Rahner. *The Trinity*, pp. 24-40.

His Church (*exclusivist*).<sup>421</sup> We are faced with an attempt to find a mode of thinking which could balance the opposing approaches offered by different scholars. This might free the human mind from its previously limited concepts, allowing it to explore this new mode of logical thinking within a dialogue. Then it would be possible to have a continuous dialogue, using this way of thinking, rather than a merely intellectually formulated theory.

The central problem addressed by a philosophy of religious pluralism, according to John Hick, is as follows:

If one community is authentically experiencing the divine Reality as the Yahweh of Israel, can another community be authentically experiencing that Reality as the Allah of the Qur'anic revelation, whilst yet another community is experiencing this same divine Reality as the non-personal Brahman, and yet another as the eternal Dharma or as the ineffable Void which is also the Suchness and the inner meaning of the world?<sup>422</sup>

Some erroneous presuppositions may be hidden in the question when it is raised in this manner. There is an unconscious attempt to attribute to this Reality certain humanly oriented parameters, an unconscious attempt to control and limit this Reality, and an unconscious attempt to consider It externally without "Its permission". One should be aware of the dialogical confirmation of religious experience when it is given from above to both sides of the interreligious dialogue. The problem of pluralism as Hicks sees it arises from adopting an analytical rather than an existential approach.

Insisting as he does that religions must be described phenomenologically, John Hick claims that the concept of God is "the concept of the inexperienceable in-

---

<sup>421</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986, p. 111.

<sup>422</sup> Hick, John. *Problems of Religious Pluralism*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985, p. 103.

describable ground of the range of human religious experience.’<sup>423</sup> Answering the critical remarks of Gavin D’Costa, he asserts:

It is misleading if it presupposes that the Ultimate must be either personal or impersonal, purposive or non-purposive, good or evil, and so on... The Real in itself is beyond the scope of our human concepts, so that none of these pairs of opposites applies to it.<sup>424</sup>

Criticizing this approach one could refer to the Palamite concept of the energies of God, which are God in His movements, totally in accord with God in Himself. Precisely, these energies are the names of God: good, merciful, loving, joyful etc. Whilst not approaching God’s essence itself, one may pronounce His names, which express His essence. Hence, nobody may speak of God without referring to His energies, which reveal His names. There are two mutually supplemental reflections on God in Christianity: *apophatic* and *kataphatic*, which allow the completion of this theology. Speaking of God in a negative sense: incomprehensible, without end, without name etc, one is being *apophatic*. Being *kataphatic*, means naming the names of God: His action which started precisely at the beginning of creation.<sup>425</sup> If, following Hick’s *pluralism*, we referred to ‘the Real’ or God as a ground of different experiences, we would refer to Him in the strictly impersonal sense. That would contradict Hick’s own words cited above, according to which God is neither personal or impersonal. Perhaps a quite useful concept of the *ground* of religious experiences might be expressed in another terminology, which would be more appropriate to this particular case. When described clearly, the concept of this *ground* may be helpful in the pluralistic theology of interreligious dialogue. That *ground*, as we mentioned above, is the *perichoral* Trinitarian love wit-

---

<sup>423</sup> Harold Hewitt, Jr. *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion. Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*. Ed. by Harold Hewitt, Jr. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1991, p. 26.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> See e.g. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 31.

nessed by the Holy Spirit through His operations, which are accessible even to those outside the Christian fold.

In some interreligious encounters the Trinitarian approach may be faced with troubling misinterpretation, as may appear, for instance, in Christian-Muslim dialogue. However, there are many significant points of convergence between Christian and Muslim approaches to the Trinity. Paulus ar-Rahib, bishop of Sidon in the thirteenth century, found a way to explain the concept of the Triune God to a Muslim. In his “Letter to a Muslim” he maintains that God is one being (the Father) who also possesses a reason-*logos* (the Son), and has life (the Spirit). The begetting of the Son is not a sort of corporeal procreation but a different, more subtle form of generation. Hence, there is no subordination between the Father and the Son but a kind of natural relationship just like that of the sun with its light and warmth.<sup>426</sup>

The Islamic rebuttal to Christianity was given by the highly educated Muslim al-Qarafi. He argued that there is no justification for turning such divine qualities as reason and life into divine persons. In his opinion, this hypostatization can lead to personifying any attribute of God. In answering him, the Christians cited the formula that introduces the suras in the Qur’an: “In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate”, which almost looks like a Trinitarian formula. But this is not so, because “it was impossible to find any such thing in the Qur’an, which constantly stresses God’s oneness.”<sup>427</sup>

Say, ‘He is God alone!  
God the eternal!  
He begets not and is not begotten

---

<sup>426</sup> Küng, Hans. *Christianity and the World Religions*. Trans. by Peter Heinegg. New York – London: SCM Press Ltd, 1986, p. 114.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

Nor is there any like him<sup>428</sup>

However, Allah is not just cold and impersonal; it is said that God is closer to a man than his own “jugular vein.”<sup>429</sup>

In modern times the identification of Allah with the Christian God has been argued, notably by Cragg and Zwemer: “Muslims and Christians generally think that they are worshipping the same God and that the other faith community holds heretical views about God.”<sup>430</sup> This means there is a “difference in their understanding of divine character while referring to the same actual identity.”<sup>431</sup> This controversial approach could be clarified if we remind ourselves that any being is of a relational or dialogic character – it always exists in relation to other beings. When Allah addresses people through his prophet Muhammad there might arguably be here a dialogue confirmed by God which might thus become a true dialogue. Again true dialogue appears as a bridge between opposing theologies which might otherwise appear to be irreconcilable.

Being dissatisfied with the pluralist view as often masking a secularizing agenda, Gavin D’Costa goes on to establish an alternative Trinitarian approach to interreligious encounter. He developed the approach to other religions as “vehicles of salvation” – perhaps the approach most closely based on Holy Scripture. A primarily Christian view was extended to the meeting of religions through examination of key passages in the Fourth Gospel i.e. those passages which give Jesus’ sayings concerning the *Paraclete* taken from the Farewell Discourse (Jn 14-16).

---

<sup>428</sup> Koran, 112, as cited in Macquarrie, John. *Mediators Between Human and Divine: From Moses to Muhammad*. New York, 1996, p. 125.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Cragg, Kenneth. *The Call of the Minaret*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1985, p. 30; Zwemer, Samuel. *The Moslem Doctrine of God*. London: Darf, 1987, p. 108, as cited in Ipgrave, Michael. *God and Interfaith Relations: Some Attitudes among British Christians in Theology and the Religions. A Dialogue*. Ed. by Viggo Mortensen. Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cambridge, U.K., 2003, p. 221.

<sup>431</sup> Ipgrave. *God and Interfaith Relations*, p. 221.

Among the passages analyzed by D'Costa it is perhaps the following that has most bearing on the matter of true dialogue with which we are concerned.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (Jn 16:7-11, NKJV).

The departure from earthly life of God Incarnate is to our advantage and the condition needed for the Helper to come. Nothing can be more intriguing. Is God letting the world go its own way? If so, is this a matter of God yielding to man? If not, how will God act subsequently? One may suggest a rather nebulous answer: both *yes* and *no*. Our advantage, in following our own way, is to encounter Him Who will console us. As mentioned above, the human way of life means encounter with others, meeting different personalities, traditions and civilizations. "Through observing the likeness of Jesus in others, will a full sense of Jesus's personality be approximated to."<sup>432</sup> God lets us grow in this dialogic way until we meet and recognize the Helper Who will confirm or deny our dialogue. Different translations provide us with other names: Comforter, Advocate, Counsellor, Intercessor, Strengtheners, Holy Spirit, and even Friend, but, probably, it is best to leave the Greek term *Paraclete*, as it implies more possibilities than any other. That uncertainty about the name suggests something crucial concerning our attitude towards Him. As within Christianity there are many such names for Him Who has filled the Church with His presence since Christ has left His earthly life; how many other names can be found in use by other traditions or individuals who believe they have met the "eternal *Thou*" of God, or, to use Hick's word, Reality.

---

<sup>432</sup> Milbank, John. "The Name of Jesus: Incarnation, Atonement, Ecclesiology", *Modern Theology*, 7, 4, 1991, p. 325.

The witnessing role of the *Paraclete* is manifested in the above passage from Jn 16. As Windisch wrote, “the Paraclete is to be taken here in a more general sense as ‘witness’: witness before the world, witness for Jesus (indirectly also for the disciples), witness against the world.”<sup>433</sup> This evokes for us the concept of *confirmed dialogue*. To become a true, human dialogue “*I-Thou*” must be witnessed by the “eternal *Thou*” through the dialogic encounter “*I-eternal Thou*”. The very personal characteristics of the *Paraclete* found in the Gospel, His procession from Christ in the world and in relations with the world might convince us of the possible correspondence between the Buberian “eternal *Thou*” and the Johannine *Paraclete*. While the *Paraclete* convicts the world “of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”, He also operates as Advocate and Comforter. While aiding and guiding, He also gives man strength. These are different actions (or energies) of the same divine Person of the Holy Spirit towards the whole world. One must emphasize the significance of Jesus’ reference to the world as a whole, with no particularities. Therefore, it can be proved from within Christianity that the Holy Spirit acts everywhere, but He is not recognized and acclaimed automatically. He brings divine judgement to the world, not according to human reason - to illumine the world rather than finally to condemn it.<sup>434</sup>

Being concerned to bring “some of the threads together regarding the church and its trinitarian self-understanding”, D’Costa picks out seven important points concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit outside the Church and within other world religions.<sup>435</sup>

*First*, we must be *extremely reticent* about any abstract talk of the “Spirit in other religions”, because the Spirit is only properly related to the ecclesial scheme of events. *Second*, “by saying *a priori* that there is no revelation apart from Christ, one

---

<sup>433</sup> Windisch. *The Spirit-Paraclete*, p. 16.

<sup>434</sup> For the meanings of the Greek *elenkin peri* (to convict of) see e.g. Barrett C. K. *The Gospel According to St. John*. London: SPCK; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978, p. 487-488.

<sup>435</sup> D’Costa, Gavin. *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000, p. 128-131.

is neither circumscribing nor restricting the reality of the Holy Spirit's universal and particular activity."<sup>436</sup> *Third*, in keeping with their own self-understanding, other religions "may generate profoundly Christ-like behavior."<sup>437</sup> *Fourth*, the world may be challenged by a truth already glimpsed through the presence of the Spirit. *Fifth*, the non-Christians' witness might often, by the quality of their lives and teaching call Christians into "more faithful discipleship". *Sixth*, it should not be said that every event prompting a new practice is of the Spirit. *Seventh*, the issues of cultural context and mission need to be further clarified and developed. There is no distinction between mission and dialogue for "Christians have nothing to share with others, other than what has been given so bountifully to them."<sup>438</sup>

Thus, the Catholic theologian Gavin D'Costa asserts that the notion of the Spirit operating through other religious traditions can only be understood in the context of specific Christian engagements with these religions. The Spirit acting within the Church makes possible the discernment of similar practices in other traditions.

In addition to the Trinitarian approach there are other Christian views on interreligious dialogue. Christoph Schwöbel considered the deficiency of both pluralist and exclusivist positions and advanced an approach based on the acknowledgement of both universality and particularity. His ground for dialogue is the understanding of the universality of God as revealed in the particularity of God's self-disclosure in Christ. In criticizing the pluralist view, he points to "the danger that a dialogue which suspends religious truth claims cannot even develop into a dialogue of religions"<sup>439</sup>. It risks simply turning into an encounter of cultural tradi-

---

<sup>436</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

<sup>439</sup> Schwöbel, Christoph. "Particularity, Universality, and the Religions", *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D'Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p. 32.

tions where a humanist critique of all religions takes place, based on principles such as universal tolerance and respect. However, if we hold to Panikkar's idea of *intrareligious* dialogue, that is, dialogue emerging as a religious act, the above danger would not apply. Instead, the fact of the same operation of the same Spirit within other traditions can be confirmed if *intrareligious* dialogue has occurred. The Spirit Himself prompts the disclosure of the universality of God as well as the particularity of His Revelation in Christ, but in terms of dialogue the universality might be attributed to the dialogic pair “*I-Thou*” whereas the particularity belongs to the “*I-It*”. While thinking of the Revelation in this particular manner, one is addressing it as an external fact to be considered rationally. Otherwise, one should address the Revelation in a universal manner as belonging to God's universality.

When returning to the assertion of the possibility of true dialogue within a trinitarian approach as applied to the pluralist perspective after the short review given above, we can conclude that the appropriateness of both theological and multicultural dimensions has been mutually agreed. God cares for everybody: “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt 5:45, NKJV). His universalism is knowable to any person within and through the particularity of his own religious tradition. The *antinomy* of universality and particularity is consistent with the Christian theological antinomies of divine-human, soul-body, and spirit-flesh mentioned above. Along with John Macquarrie, anyone belonging to the true Christian tradition may bear witness that at least one of the world religions in its particularity has everything necessary for the grasp of God's universality.

## 5. CONCLUSION

When the current work began there was no obvious, well-developed central point on the suggested theme “theology of dialogue”. On the one hand, it was our intention to introduce dialogue as a mode of human being that had initially been presented by Buber and his followers from a very human perspective; later we looked at the main ideas from different viewpoints suggested by other great contemporary thinkers. People always exist personally, in a dialogical realm which was viewed by Buber through the prism of the word pair “*I and Thou*” and later rediscovered ethically by Levinas as “*I for Thou*”. We wished to complement the above human approach to dialogue with a sort of theological dimension, which, though not absent from the work of Buber and Levinas, had, strictly speaking, never been viewed from the perspective of Christian Trinitarian theology. This is the context in which the term “theology of dialogue” has been developed in the current work.

On the other hand, Trinitarian theology is a subject that has been highly developed and re-examined thoroughly on the basis of an already well-established permanent foundation. Both the Holy Scripture and the writings of the Fathers were presented as the solid starting point for any further thought on the Trinity. It has to be considered in a way that is mystical – experiential rather than analytical – though it is capable of being known when revealed personally. Our aim was to present the Trinity as an ultimate and eternal source of the relations in the world such as they ought to be. Such relations were considered to be *true dialogue*, i.e. dialogue that has been truly established and confirmed by the “eternal *Thou*” of God. In its pure state, Orthodox Trinitarian theology would be of great help in attaining this aim. While endeavouring properly to interpret the mystery of the Trinity to their contemporaries and to subsequent generations, we believe that the Fathers of the Church were contemplating revelation rather than pursuing their

own human thought. This way of thinking might in itself be seen as a sort of *true dialogue* as understood above. Following the dialogical thought of the Fathers and of Scripture, this approach enabled us to avoid external and rational considerations but instead to examine the subject in agreement both with the initial thought of Buber and with those who have written on the Trinity. Thus we were able to *speak of dialogue in a dialogical way*.

The *first chapter* of this work was dedicated to the concept of *relation*, as it lies naturally implicit within the whole of creation. We started with the different kinds of relationship identified by Aristotle and went on to consider the Trinitarian trace which runs through creation, ordering it in accord with God's plan. Under the impetus of original sin, dramatic changes have occurred but the trace is still believed to exist, albeit in a hidden way. This concept of the Trinitarian trace was approached from the perspective of an Orthodox study of the divine energies as distinguished from the divine essence. Two different views were presented: the western, influenced by the concept of the *filioque* ; and the eastern, where this concept is unknown. It was shown that the *filioque* introduces an 'excess' into the perfect and complete inner divine relations, whereas the concept of the energies, where no such 'excess' is implied, considers that the inner Trinitarian relations are known and can be participated in outside the Trinity.

Turning to the results achieved by modern physics, it was shown that even within the impersonal universe, e.g. on the level of elementary particles, the tripartite relatedness can be observed. Moreover, this modern physics could lead us to the conclusion that the border between physics and metaphysics does not exist in reality. While originating in the Trinitarian order, this relatedness is the ruling principle of the universe where there is no division either between spirit and matter, or between space and time.

Human relations with the created universe were viewed from the perspective of the doctrine of quantum physics which states that any observation changes the

matter which is being observed. The Creator in relating to the creation changes it; and human beings likewise, when observing matter, change it. Their relations with the impersonal universe, therefore, should be managed in accordance with God's plan if the observation is to be done appropriately.

Interpersonal relations are peculiar to human beings as is expressed in the very word 'person' or, in Greek, *prosopon*. One of the significant characteristics of the human person is the fact that two contradictory things are presented simultaneously: particularity and communion. A radical difference between being a person and being a self or an individual was emphasized; similarly, in relation to human nature, two different approaches exist as represented respectively by the person and by the individual.

The *second chapter* presented dialogue from the perspective of the philosophical thought of Buber and Levinas. The key terms "I and *Thou*," "eternal *Thou*," "in-born *Thou*," and *true or confirmed dialogue* were introduced in accordance with their original meanings provided by Buber. Along with Buber's own understanding of the two faiths, Christian and Jewish, his existential thought was rediscovered through the prism of Christian theology in ways that were both positive and critical. Levinas's idea of the Eucharistic dimension of dialogue was endorsed, though not entirely. There is indeed a sort of sacrifice for the other's sake implied when we speak of dialogue – the *I*'s responsibility for the *Thou* rather than their interdependence on an equal basis as proposed by Buber. The ethical issue introduced into dialogue by Levinas, however, does not take into consideration God's involvement in human relations, which had been acknowledged by Buber.

We argued that the theme of dialogue could be helped greatly by the ideas of the Orthodox ascetic and thinker archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) who insisted on the 'principle of persona' as the main principle of unity in the Godhead. The same principle is at the basis of 'the image and likeness of God' within created human beings. He has also suggested that the category of repentance has an es-

sential role to play in human-divine relations if they are to become true dialogue. In the *third chapter* we endeavoured to learn dialogue from the Scriptures and from the writings of the Early Church authors. We reviewed the OT writings in an endeavour to discover and learn dialogue between God and His chosen people represented by their kings, prophets and spiritual leaders. When God was speaking through the prophets and prompting His people to follow His will, this was considered to be rather a divine monologue. The prophets might not be fully aware of the meaning of the words spoken by God but nevertheless, they were obedient to God and did not deny Him. The Wisdom literature bears witness to a higher level of relations between God and His people since the people recognized the divine providence consciously and fulfilled His commandments because they knew Him as their God. But the divine-human relations could still not be called confirmed dialogue, although the human response has become more conscious and sincere. The NT offers a completely new mode of the relationship between God and humans, for God revealed Himself in His Son, became Incarnate and lived among humans. At first, He spoke to people and did works such as no one had done before Him. He taught the apostles, though they did not follow His teaching in full and, therefore, did not understand His dialogical address. After the apostles, later on, had accepted Him as the Son of God, the human-divine dialogue could begin, but it was not confirmed and, thus, not fully true. After they had recognized His divinity, the apostles still denied Him after His arrest and were dispelled. Their dialogue with God became true when the Paraclete (Advocate) came and abided with them providing complete awareness of God the Trinity and God Incarnate. Finally, in the Church, established by Christ and confirmed by the Spirit, the human-divine relationship could be considered *true dialogue* since it is believed that there are real divine sacraments, i.e. realized relationships between human beings and God, Who wants them to know Him as He is. This conclusion is summarized in figure 1.

In terms of the theology of dialogue, the confirmative work of the Spirit is supposed to be of the same character within both the Trinity and the created world. Since its creation the world bears the vestige of the Trinity, that is, **Relations** (the bold type is used here in order to relate the particular terms to the right column in figure 1) which, as argued in the *first chapter*, are characteristic of both the personal and impersonal universe. Then, within the realm of the personal creation, one could speak of the **Monologue** of a human being and of **Dialogue** between the human beings (considered in the *second chapter* as the *modus* of human being). It is through the prophets, revealing the will of God to His people, that the **Divine Monologue** is made known (see 3.1.1). Although not itself a person, it was suggested that the Wisdom of God in the OT books reveals God as a Person Who invites His people to establish a relationship with Him in a personal way. Since then, **Divine-Human Relations** became possible in both directions so long as Wisdom was dwelling among the people of God (section 3.1.2). Through the incarnation, God has addressed the apostles in an even more intimate and personal relation, calling them friends rather than servants (cf. John 15:14). Once it has taken place between Christ and the apostles, the **Human-Divine Dialogue** has become real, though it still cannot be called true (paragraph 3.1.3). Finally, the descending of the Spirit and His confirmation made the human-divine dialogue *true* (**Human-Divine True Dialogue**), i.e. understood properly, accepted and answered by humans through the Church (section 3.2).

The Trinitarian confession of the Fathers of the Church helped us develop our approach to understanding dialogue, notably when Gregory of Nazianzus said that “singularity is moved to duality and rests at trinity”. We have seen that, in patristic view, duality is not a balanced state and, since singularity is to be ‘moved into duality’, trinity appears as the very perfection at which the former two, singularity and duality, have to arrive. Although expressed with the help of these terms, this is and always will be a mystery. Similarly, when monologue is turned into di-

alogue, the latter becomes perfect or true if it is confirmed by the third party involved. Paraphrasing, one could say that “monologue is moved to dialogue and rests at *true dialogue*”.

In chapters *three* and *four*, a special attention was paid to the writers of the Church. Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons and Origen were presented in the section “Way to Nicaea”; Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa in “From Nicaea to Constantinople”; and Maximus the Confessor in “Liturgy and Dialogue”. It is of particular interest to follow their thoughts while also being conscious of the holiness of their lives.<sup>440</sup> Dialogically, this means that their Trinitarian ideas must be understood as part of the revelation of God, known to them in person. While following the speculations on the Trinity by the Cappadocians, for example, they should be understood not as a result of mere logical reasoning but as a real existential knowledge attained from within a true dialogue with God. We have endeavoured to learn dialogue while pursuing the dialogical development of Trinitarian thought throughout the epoch when the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople was formed. A major result gained within the context of the fight against heretical propositions, was that the true human-divine dialogue could be seen to reflect the relations of the Trinity itself insofar as they could be realized within the creation.

In *chapter four* we turn to practical issues while speaking of dialogue in the liturgical context and in the context of interreligious human relations. True dialogue was considered to be based on love and to be central to the Liturgy as a point of intersection of inter-human and human-divine relations. Maximus the Confessor’s definitions of love as *eros* and *agape* shed light on the manner in which the eucharistic dimension enters into dialogue, signifying its perfection in reciprocity and

---

<sup>440</sup> Due to some erroneous theological suggestions, Origen is not considered a father of the Church, although his life is known to have been of an ascetic and devotional Christian character. – See, e.g., Behr. *The Way to Nicaea*, pp. 163-169.

love. As it is not acknowledged by those of non-Christian traditions, the eucharistic implication within the real communion of love remains hidden but, nevertheless, absolutely real. Christians participating in interreligious meetings must, as a matter of primary importance, bring with them a tacit witness of the eucharist as the revelation of trinitarian *perichoral* love. Due to the “inborn *Thou*”, as it was argued, the witness of love which is shared in true dialogue could become an ultimate ground for the unity within creation as it is seen by Him Who made the world.

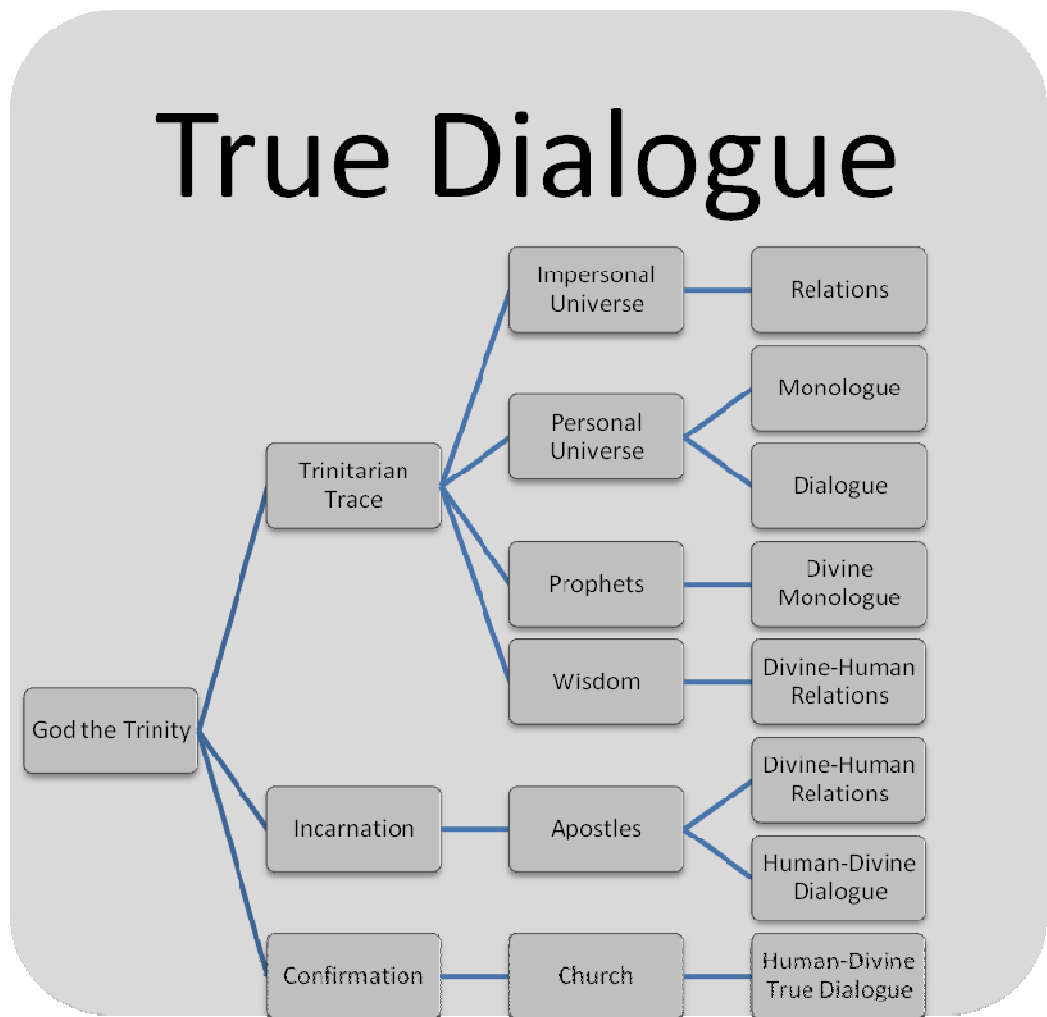


Figure 1. Theology of dialogue.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Books and articles**

- Anatolios, K. *Athanasius*. Routledge Early Church Monographs. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and its Legacy. An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: University Press, 2004.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Martin Buber & Christianity; a dialogue between Israel and the Church*. NY: Macmillan, 1961.
- Barnes, Michael. *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Barrett C. K. *The Gospel According to St. John*. London: SPCK; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.
- Barrett, C. K. *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*. London, S.P.C.K., 1966.
- Barrow, John D. and Tipler, Frank J. *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Volume I, Part 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Trans. G. W. Bromiley. Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1975.
- Behr, John. *The Nicene Faith. Part One. True God of True God. The Formation of Christian Theology. Volume II*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.
- Behr, John. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two. One of the Holy Trinity. The Formation of Christian Theology. Volume II*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.
- Behr, John. *The Way to Nicaea. The Formation of Christian Theology. Volume I*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Berdyaeu, Nicholas. *Solitude and Society*, trans. from the Russian by George Reavey. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938.

- Bobrinskoy, Boris. *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999.
- Boff, L. *Trinity and Society*. London: Burns and Oates, 1988.
- Bonaventure, Saint. *The Breviloquium*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1963.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Creation and Fall*. London, 1959.
- Breck John. *Spirit of Truth. The Origins of Johannine Pneumatology*. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991.
- Brunner, Emil. *Revelation and Reason*, SCM Press, London; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1947.
- Buber, Martin. *Between Man and Man*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Buber, Martin. *Eclipse of God. Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy*. Trans. by M. Friedman. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952.
- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. by R. G. Smith. Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1937.
- Buber, Martin. *Philosophical Interrogations*. Ed. Sidney and Beatrice Rome. New York: Hope, Rinehart & Winston, 1964.
- Buber, Martin. *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*. Ed. with Introductory Essay by Maurice Friedman, trans. M. Friedman and R. G. Smith. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965.
- Buber, Martin. *Two Types of Faith*. Trans. By Norman P. Goldhawk. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951; New York: Macmillan Co., 1952.
- Bulgakov, Sergei. *The Bride of the Lamb*. New York & Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002.
- Bulgakov, Sergei. *Sophia. The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology (Library of Russian Philosophy)*. Herndon, VA: Lindisfarne Books, 1993.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter*. Trans. W. Johnston. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1963.

- Cavarnos, Constantine. *The Hellenic-Christian Philosophical Tradition*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1989.
- Clapsis, Emmanuel. *Orthodoxy in Conversation*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000.
- Clément, Olivier. *The Roots of Christian Mysticism. Texts from the Patristic Era with Commentary*. Trans. by Theodore Berkeley. London: New City, 2002.
- Coakley, Sarah. "Persons in the "Social" Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion", in *The Trinity*, ed. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ, Gerald O'Collins, SJ. Oxford: University Press, 1999.
- O'Collins, Gerald, S.J. *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999.
- Congar, Yves. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. Trans. by David Smith. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003.
- Cragg, Kenneth. *The Call of the Minaret*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1985.
- D'Costa, Gavin, ed. *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 1990.
- D'Costa, Gavin. *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000.
- D'Costa, Gavin. *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986.
- Daly, R. J., ed. *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989*. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovanien-sium 105. Louvain: Peeters, 1992.
- Davies, Paul. *God and the New Physics*. London: J.M. Dent, 1983.
- Denzinger, H. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. Freiburg, 1963.
- Dix, G. "Ministry in the Early Church," in *The Apostolic Ministry* (ed. Kirk), 1946.
- Dodd C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: University Press, 1968.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. David Magarshack. London: Penguin, 1982.

- Edwards, Denis. *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed, New York: New American Library, 1958.
- Feynman, Richard. *QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985.
- Friedman, Maurice S. *Martin Buber's Life and Work*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.
- Friedman, Maurice S. *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960.
- Gericke, J. 'Dimensions of the *Logos* from Logos-Philosophy to *Logos*-Theology.' *Acta patristica et byzantina* 11, pp. 93-116.
- Gwynn, D. M. *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the Arian Controversy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988.
- Hausherr, Irénée. *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*. Foreword by Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, trans. from the French by Anthony P. Gythiel. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1990.
- Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief Story of Time*. London: Bantam Books, 1988.
- Hess, H. "The Place of Divination in Athanasian Soteriology." *Studia patristica 26: Papers Presented to the International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Oxford). Leuven: Peeters, 1989, pp. 369-374.
- Hewitt, Harold, Jr. *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion. Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*. Ed. by Harold Hewitt, Jr. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1991.
- Hick, John. *An Interpretation of Religion*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989.

- Hick, John. *Problems of Religious Pluralism*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985.
- Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos. *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*. Trans. by Esther Williams. Levadia-Hellas: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1999.
- Hill, C. E. "Ignatius and the Apostolate: The Witness of Ignatius to the Emergence of Christian Scripture," - *Studia Patristica* 37, 2001, pp. 226-248.
- Johnston, G. *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament*, PCB, 1943.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Creeds*. London: Longman, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1972.
- Kepler, Johannes. *The Harmony of the World*. Trans. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, J. V. Field. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997.
- Konidaris, G. *On the Supposed Difference in Forms in the Polity of Early Christianity*. (In Greek), 1959.
- Kramer, Kenneth. *Martin Buber's I and Thou: practicing living dialogue*. Kenneth Paul Kramer with Mechthild Gawlick. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2003.
- Küng, Hans. *Christianity and the World Religions*. Trans. by Peter Heinegg. New York – London: SCM Press Ltd, 1986.
- Igrave, Michael. *God and Interfaith Relations: Some Attitudes among British Christians in Theology and the Religions. A Dialogue*. Ed. by Viggo Mortensen. Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cambridge, U.K., 2003.
- Igrave, Michael. *Trinity and Inter Faith Dialogue. Plenitude and Plurality*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2003.
- LaCugna, C. M. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Larcher, J.-C. *Le Livre de la Sagesse ou la Sagesse de Solomon*. Etudes bibliques, 3 vols. Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1983-1985.
- Levinas and Buber : dialogue and difference* / edited by Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice Friedman. Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2004.

- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Trans. S. Hand. London: Athlone Press, 1990.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Proper Name*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard Cohen. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1987.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- Lienhard, Joseph T., SJ. 'Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of "One Hypostasis"', in *The Trinity*, ed. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ, Gerald O'Collins SJ. Oxford: University Press, 1999.
- Lochhead, David. *The Dialogical Imperative. A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1988
- Lossky, Vladimir. *Debate about Sophia. Articles*. (In Russian). Moscow, 1996.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *In the Image and Likeness of God*. Trans. from the French, ed. by John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Trans. from the French, first published in English in 1957. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.
- Louth, Andrew. *Maximus the Confessor*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Louth, Andrew. *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*. Oxford: University Press, 2002.
- Louth, Andrew. "The use of the Term *idios* in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril." *Studia patristica 26: Papers Presented to the International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Oxford). Leuven: Peeters, 1989, pp. 369-374.
- Macquarrie, John. *Mediators Between Human and Divine: From Moses to Muhammad*. New York, 1996.

- Macquarrie, John. "Revisiting the Christological Dimensions of Uniqueness", *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*. Ed. by Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997.
- Macquarrie, John. *The Mediators: Nine Stars in the Human Sky*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995.
- Mantzaridis, Georgios I. *The Deification of Man*. Trans. from the Greek by Liadain Sherrard. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of 'Negative Theology,'" in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- McGuckin, John A. *St Gregory of Nazianzus: an intellectual biography*. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Meyendorff, John. *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974.
- O'Meara, D.J., ed. *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1982.
- Milbank, John. "The End of Dialogue", *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D'Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990.
- Milbank, John. "The Name of Jesus: Incarnation, Atonement, Ecclesiology", *Modern Theology*, 7, 4, 1991.
- Min, Anselm K. *Paths to the Triune God: an encounter between Aquinas and recent theologues*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and The Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Trans. by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981.
- Mondin, Battista. *The principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963.

- Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. NY: Doubleday, 1990.
- Norris, Frederick W. 'Of Thorns and Roses: the Logic of Belief in Gregory Nazianzen,' *Church History*, Vol. 53, 1984.
- Oldham, Joseph Houldsworth. *Real Life Is Meeting*. London: The Sheldon Press; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947.
- Ormerod, N. *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005.
- Padelford, Frederick Morgan. *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great*. Yale Studies in English 15, 1902.
- Panikkar, Raimon. *Invisible Harmony. Essays on Contemplation and Responsibility*. Ed. by H. J. Cargas. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Panikkar, Raimon. *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*. New York: Maryknoll, 1993.
- Panikkar, Raimon. *The Intrareligious Dialogue*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999.
- Panikkar, Raimundo. *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man. Icon–Person–Mystery*. New York – London, 1973.
- Papadakis, A. *Crisis in Byzantium*. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996.
- Pearson, A. C. *The Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes*. London, 1891.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav and Hotchkiss, Valerie, ed. *The Nicene Creed, Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Placher, William C. *The Triune God. An Essay in Postliberal Theology*. Louisville – London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Purcell, Michael. *Levinas and Theology*. Cambridge: University Press, 2006.
- Race, Alan. *Christians and Religious Pluralism*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983.
- Rae, Alastair. *Quantum Physics: Illusion or Reality?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

- Rahner, Karl. *Theological Investigations*. Trans. K. Smith. Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1966.
- Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Trans. by Joseph Donceel. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003.
- Robinson, John A. T. *Truth is Two-Eyed*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1979.
- Sakharov, Nicholas V. *I love, therefore I am. The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.
- Sendler, Egon, S. J. *The Icon. Image of the Invisible. Elements of Theology, Aesthetics and Technique*. Trans. from the French by Fr. Steven Bigham. Oakwood Publications, 1988.
- Schoedel, W. R. *Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermenia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Schwöbel, Christoph. "Particularity, Universality, and the Religions", *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D'Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990.
- Scott, Martin. *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement)*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
- Sherwood, P. *The Earlier Ambigua of Maximus the Confessor*, Rome: Orbis Catholicus, Herder (Studia Anselmania, 36), 1955.
- Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *Birth into the Kingdom Which Cannot Be Moved*. (In Russian) Edited by Nicholas Sakharov. Essex, 1999.
- Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *Letters to Russia*. (In Russian) Edited by Nicholas Sakharov. Moscow, 1997.
- Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *His Life is Mine*. Trans. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977.
- Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *On Prayer*. Trans. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. Essex: Stavropegic monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1996.

- Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *Saint Silouan the Athonite*. Trans. from the Russian by R. Edmonds. Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991.
- Sophrony (Sakharov), archimandrite. *We Shall See Him as He Is*. Trans. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. Essex: Stavropegic monastery of St. John the Baptist, 2004.
- Swinburne, Richard. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Temple, William. *Readings in St. John's Gospel (first and second series)*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1947.
- The Philosophy of Martin Buber* / edited by Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice S. Friedman. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967.
- Thieme, Karl. 'Martin Buber als Interpret der Bibel,' *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* (Köln), Vol. VI, No. 1 (1954), pp. 1-9.
- Thunberg, Lars. *Microcosm and Mediator: the Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*. Foreword by A. M. Allchin, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1995.
- Toom, Tarmo. *Classical trinitarian theology : a textbook*. NY, London: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Torrance, Alan J. *Persons in Communion. An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.
- Torrance, N. F. *Divine meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995.
- Tripolitis, A. *The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen*. New York: Libra 1978.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. "The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions", *Attitudes Toward Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations*. Ed. by Owen C. Thomas. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986.

- Vermes, G. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 3d ed., 1987.
- Widdicombe, P. *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Williams, Rowan. "Trinity and Plurality", *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Ed. by Gavin D'Costa. New York: Orbis Books, 1990.
- Windisch, Hans. *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel*. Trans. by James W. Cox. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968.
- Yannaras, Christos. *The Freedom of Morality*, trans. from the Greek by E. Briere. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Postmodern Metaphysics*. Trans. by Norman Russell. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Variations on the Song of Songs*. Trans. by Norman Russell. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005.
- Zacharias (Zacharou), archimandrite. *Christ, Our Way and Our Life. A presentation of the Theology of Archimandrite Sophrony*. Trans. from the Greek by Sister Magdalen. South Canaan, Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2003.
- Zachman, Randall C. "The Universe as the Living Image of God: Calvin's Doctrine of Creation Reconsidered," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No.4, 1997.
- Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.
- Zizioulas, John D. *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*. Trans. by Elizabeth Theokritoff. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001.
- Zizioulas, John. *Communion and Otherness. Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Edited by Paul McPartlan. NY: T&T Clark, 2006.

Zwemer, Samuel. *The Moslem Doctrine of God*. London: Darf, 1987.

### Primary Sources and Translations

Aquinas, Thomas. *The Summa Theologica, Vol. 2*. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Second and revised edition. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1921. Online edition by Kevin Knight, 2003: <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>

Aristotle. *On the Soul*, trans by J. A. Smith.  
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>

Athanasius of Alexandria. *Select Works and Letters*, trans. Archibald Robinson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 4. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Letters to Serapion*. PG 26. 529-676. Trans. by C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1951.

Augustine, Saint. *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*. Trans. by H. Bettenson. London: Penguin Books, 1972.

Augustine, Saint. *On the Trinity*. Trans. by the Rev. Arthur West Haddan, B.D. Online Edition by K. Knight, 2004. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers>

Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit*. Edited by B. Pruche. SC 17 bis. 1968. Trans. in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 8.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Against Eunomius*. Ed. and French trans. B. Sesboué, with G.-M. Durand and L. Doutreleau, *Basile de Césarée: Contre Eunome suivie de Eunome Apologie*, SC 299, 305. Paris : Serf, 1982, 1983.

Clement of Rome. *First Letter*, ed. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*. Macmillan, 1889; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989.

- Cyril of Jerusalem. *Gregory Nazianzen*, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 7. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1955.
- Eunomius of Cyzicus. *Apology*. Ed. and trans., together with an outline and summary of the *Apology for an Apology*, and an ed. and trans. of the *Confession of Faith*, in R. P. Vaggione, ed. and trans., *Eunomius: The Extant Works*, Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- Gregory of Nazianzus. *Ad Seleucum*. Greek text with Latin translation in Jacques Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus series graeca* (Paris, 1862 ), vol. 37, col. 1581.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *De Vita Sua*, PG, vol. 37, col. 1062. Text. German Tr. and Commentary by Jungck, C. Heidelberg, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Orations*, trans. in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 7.
- Gregory of Nyssa. *Against Eunomius*. Ed. W. Jaeger, *Contra Eunomium libri*, Gregorii Nysseni Opera 1, 2. Leiden: Brill, 2002. Trans. in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 5.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Letter to Peter. On the Difference between Ousia and Hypostasis*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 8. = Basil, *Ep.* 38
- Justin Martyr. *The First and Second Apologies*, Ancient Christian Writers 56, trans. L. W. Barnard. NY : Paulist Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ante-Nicene Fathers 1. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Ignatius of Antioch. *Epistles*, ed. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Macmillan, 1989; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989)
- Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against the Heresies*, Ante-Nicene Fathers 1. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Maximus the Confessor. *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, Patrologia Graeca, 91. Paris, 1865.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Epistula*, Patrologia Graeca, 91. Paris, 1865.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Centuries on Love*, Berthold, G. C. Maximus the Confessor, *Selected Writings*. London : SPCK (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1985;
- Palmer, G. E. H., Philipp Sherrard and Kallistos Ware. *The Philokalia. The Complete Text*, compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, vols. 1 and 2. London : Faber & Faber, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Ascetic Life. The Four Centuries on Charity*. Trans. and annotated by Polycarp Sherwood, O. S. B., S. T. D. London: The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, and Longmans, Green and Co., 1955.
- Origen. *Commentary on John*, trans. A. Menzies, Ante-Nicene Fathers 10. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.
- Plotinus. *Enneads*, Greek text with English translation by A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press, 1966-1988.

### Dictionaries

- Chantraine, Pierre. *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Histoire des mots), vol. III. Paris, 1974.
- Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. C. C. Gillispie. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Encyclopaedia Britannica 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006.
- Fieser, James and Dowden, Bradley. *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A Professionally Peer-Reviewed Resource, 2008. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>
- Frisk, Hjalmar *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg, 1960.

Liddell, Henry George and Scott, Robert. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.

Schwyzler, Eduard. *Griechische Grammatik*, vol. II. Munich, 1950.

Stephanus Henricus. *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*. Paris, 1572.