

Logos, Trinity, Creation

Abstract

In this text Mr. Prof. Popescu write down his theological considerations and critique on Mr. Prof. Moltmann's article and doctrine of Trinity. He underlines the essential meaning of the *orthodox doctrine of the uncreated energies* without which no open Trinity can exist. God creates, preserves and releases the world by his uncreated energies which excludes an isolation of God in the transcendency and therefore every secularisation.

The perichoretical unity of Trinity is the model par excellence for the unity of the church, as long as the ecclesiastical unity is founded by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The perichoretical unity of Trinity which cannot be separated from God's unity of being may not ignore the uniqueness of the work of every trinitarian person.

Also the *Christology from below* may not overlook the meaning of the *Christology from above*. Jesus Christ is the Logos by which the world was created. The rationality of the world grounds on the Logos and has its gravitational centre in him. The uncreated energies irradiate from the Trinity and are the instruments by which the incarnated Logos comes into the world to take up the world in the community with the Trinity. There is a direct connection between the created energies of creation and the uncreated energies of God. Even the internal longing of the human being for the community with God is rooted in his creation as *imago Dei* and in his configuration with the grace of God.

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Moreover, Mr. Prof. Popescu appreciates in his article the continuous openness of Mr. Prof. Moltmann for the dialogue with Orthodoxy and expresses his great joy for the vivacity of our contemporary ecumenism.

Keywords

Logos, Trinity, Creation, Christology from above, uncreated energies, innertrinitarian relations, person, God the Father

23 years ago, in my function as a Director of Studies for the Conference of European Churches, I organized a colloquium on “The Reconciliatory Power of the Holy Trinity” where Prof. Moltmann delivered the keynote address. More than two decades later, Prof. Moltmann is now delivering a lecture on “God the Father and the Life of the Holy Trinity.” So far, the recent Occidental Trinitarian theology has been centered on the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. God the Father has been hardly taken into consideration in the Trinitarian sense.

A revival in the Trinitarian thinking has lately occurred, however, in the Occidental Trinitarian thinking, and there are numerous theological books, dedicated to it. Unfortunately, Prof. Moltmann states, it has been often believed that the Early Church’s teachings on the Trinity were indebted to the philosophical hellenization of Christianity and not to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “I want to demonstrate”, he adds, “that the Early Church teachings concerning the Trinity are a result of the canonization of the Gospel, and not of speculation. Together with some of my colleagues, I am convinced that the modern construction of the theology on the divine Trinity, is based either on God’s self-awareness (Hegel), nor or God’s self-revelation (Barth) nor on God’s self-communication (Rahner) – all this have failed.¹”

Prof. Moltmann starts with the premise that in the constitution of the Holy Trinity there is clearly a priority of the Father, whether or not it is called “monarchy of the Father”: the unity of the Trinity originates from the Father, before all ages. In the life of the Holy Trinity, however, the three Persons are “one,” for they live in absolute self-giving to one another. This is described by the intratrinitarian concept of perichoresis. There is no precedence of a Person over the other in the perichoretic life of the Holy Trinity, not even a priority of the Father. The Holy Trinity is a communion

¹ J. Moltmann, God the Father in the Life of the Holy Trinity, in: *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 1:1 (2010), p. 40.

of equals, without a hierarchy. The unity of the Trinity is not achieved through the monarchy of the Father, nor through the bond of the “unity in the Holy Spirit,” but through the perichoresis of eternal love: Trinitarian intersubjectivity itself is this unity.²” The perichoretic communion of the Father and the Son remains the primordial model, and Christ’s community, the Church, is the model open to analogy, in the sense of likeness. The Church does not correspond to the monarchy of the Father, to the uniqueness of the Son, or to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit³. Or, in the words of St. Cyprian, “the Church is the people reunited by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Prof. Moltmann makes three assertions:

- a) Firstly, his considerations on Jesus start from the Jesus of the earthly history to the Son of the Father, because He sacrifices Himself as a man on the cross and becomes aware of His belonging to the Holy Trinity by His Ascension. Therefore “in structuring the teaching on the Trinity we must start from the biblical history of salvation, in other words from the reality of Jesus as a man, in order attain the Trinity⁴.
- b) Secondly, Jesus is assumed by the Father in the Trinitarian sphere, because the Son in the Trinity belongs to divinity. Although Trinitarian unity remains “open”, the Trinity does not descend to the human level, and the man must elevate his mind to reach the Trinity.
- c) Thirdly, the stress laid on the identity between Person and relation, as well as the theory of mutual indwelling, underlying the Trinitarian unity, emphasize the connection among the Trinitarian persons so strongly, that it is difficult to understand their specific action. The Holy Trinity remains circumscribed within the sphere of divine transcendence.

The Trinitarian construction presented above has its positive aspects, because it does not confine itself to speaking only about the Holy Spirit, but it takes into consideration the person of the Father as well as the Person of the Saviour. However, it disregards another aspect which is essential in the theology of the undivided Church of the first Christian centuries, namely Lord Jesus Christ’s capacity as a Creative Logos, as a true God. The prologue of the Gospel according to John shows that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was

² Ibidem, p. 46.

³ Ibidem, p. 47.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 40.

God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (Jn 1.1-3), while the Holy Apostle Paul states: "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Eph 1.4).

The Gospel according to John shows that our Saviour is both "the Word" that guides man on the path to salvation, and divine Logos, the Son of the Father, through Whom all things were made, those visible as well as those invisible, the sustainer of the world. The world was conceived by God before all ages and brought to existence in time, according to the Father's will.

In regard to the Holy Trinity, Prof. Moltmann asserts that the Orthodox theology *grants priority to the divine Persons over relations, within the Holy Trinity*. At this point, we must clarify two aspects. On the one hand, we must point out that the divine nature is not monolithic, closed, but it has a relational character, which allows the Person to be integrated into its internal constitution. The union between nature and person is so deep, that the Patristic Eastern theology maintains that when we look at the Person we see the nature, and when looking at the nature we see the Trinity. The cleavage introduced between Persons and unity accounts for the oscillation between the Father who remains above unity, on the one hand, and the divine life in which the Trinity depends on unity, on the other hand. From the Orthodox standpoint, however, the Holy Trinity cannot become a prisoner of unity, because it is moved by love, through the uncreated energies, imparted by the Holy Spirit. If the person and the relations were simultaneous, man would have to elevate himself to reach out to the Holy Trinity, because the Trinity would not descend to reach man. The uncreated energies, radiating from the internal constitution of the Holy Trinity, are the means through which the incarnate Logos descends into the world, so that the world may ascend to God. If the Trinity remained closed upon Itself, it would be hard to see that God loved the world so much, that He gave His only begotten Son as a redeeming price for it.

In its turn, the world is not representing a monad closed upon itself, like a monolithic divine nature, but it has an internal ontological rationality, which stems from the divine rationalities, which proceed from the Logos and have their centre of gravity in the Logos. This rationality, which manifests itself in the created energies of the world, constitutes the means through which the divine reasons (Logoi) work within the creation, with man's participation, to evolve towards its final perfection, according to God's will. This is why the visible creation has developed through God's directing its component energies, until through a special work of God (God's agency), the biological organism was formed, and God's breath

placed within it the rational soul in God's image, a soul able to have a dialogue with God and to aspire towards a deeper communion with Him. Thus man was granted God's grace from the beginning, in order to be placed in a relationship with God⁵.

As a conclusion, we can say that the secularisation of the society that we witness today is the result of a mentality which has turned the visible world into an autonomous reality, functioning independently from God. As God remains isolated in His divine transcendence, man conceives Him an entity pertaining to the imaginary. Not coincidentally, science-fiction has appeared, to populate the skies with extraterrestrial beings, which are the products of the mentality of those who have lost the real sense of Divinity.

Faced with such realities, Orthodox theology has constantly asserted that God sustains the world through the connection between the divine uncreated energies and the created energies of the world, which allow the worshipper to experience the personal encounter with God, who reaches down to man, so that man can ascend to God. When He was transfigured on the Mount Tabor, before His disciples, the Lord's face shone like the sun and His garments became white as the light. This demonstrates that our Saviour can transfigure and deify human nature from inside, as He is true God and true man, the Creator and Provider Logos through Whom everything was made and potentially restored according to the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity.

We owe a debt of gratitude to His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel for summoning this interesting ecumenical meeting and for the competent address he delivered. We thank professor Moltmann for his openness to dialogue with Orthodoxy, which has brought Him repeatedly among us, as well as his considerations on the life and importance of the Holy Trinity for the Western theology. We also thank Father Ștefan Buchiu for organizing today's meeting. We gladly see that in our secular world, ecumenism lives on.

⁵ D. Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă pentru Institutele Teologice* (București: Editura IBMBOR 1978), p. 324.