

20TH CENTURY AND BEYOND

Triune God

KARL BARTH (1886-1968)

- God is known by us only as God gives himself to us.
 - All speculation about the inner life of God is vain human curiosity.
- God is known as God only in his address to us
 - God reveals, God reveals himself, God reveals through himself (Hill, 116)
- The Trinity is essential because it is the mode of God's revelation to us. In revelation we are shown that God is Trinity. The distinction of the persons is given in revelation and does not need to be reduced to a philosophical theory.
 - "Person" does not reveal something additional about God but is rather the conventional word used to distinguish between Father, Son, and Spirit—modes of being is better (Hill, 116-117)
- The problem of analogy
 - *analogia entis* refers to a continuity between divine and human realms "which is argued to underlie and is justifiably presupposed, therefore, by theological statements independently of the consideration of God's Self-revelation in the person of Christ." Perhaps the analogy of being gained an undeserved prominence in Catholic Thomistic theology, partly through the stress given it by E. Przywara. See Th. Inv. 5 (Alan Torrance, 123, n.6)
 - Aquinas's understanding of analogy was developed by Thomas Cajetan, Sylvester of Ferrara and John of St. Thomas—especially the first. (Alan Torrance, 129)
 - "What Barth fears was precisely what Aquinas also set out to oppose, namely, an approach to theological affirmation which is per posterius et prius as this stems from an *analogia duorum ad tertium*—the supposed analogical attribution of the number three, for example, to both the Trinity and some humanly designated *vestigium trinitatis* where the controlling determinant too easily becomes the number three." (Alan Torrance, 203)
 - Analogy, properly speaking, is applied between two different beings in which what is applied to each of them is recognized to differ in kind according to their being. The beings themselves differ because the different essences (govern) different sorts of *esse*. All of this is possible because all beings are united by their participation in being. (Alan Torrance, 73-74)
 - Mondin wants to show that "the roots of the Thomist doctrine of analogy are to be found in a cosmological principle—a principle of universal (as this includes the divine realm) similarity between agents and that which they cause to exist or produce." (Alan Torrance, 143)
 - Torrance argues that this principle subsumes God and creation under the common category of agency, derived from the created order. (Alan Torrance, 144)
 - The reference of language to God is determined by God's gift of himself in Word and Spirit. For Barth, there can be no *priori* to this gift. (Alan Torrance, 150)

PAUL TILLICH (1886-1965)

- Humanity is always seeking to realize its essence. This tension gives rise to the question of God, which is only fully realized in Christ, where human possibility is seen to converge and be identical with divinity. Humans are in this tension between existence and essence and so most appropriately conceive of God as trinity, reflecting in God the dynamic constitution of human

life. The experience of Christ evokes talk of the Trinity. "The Trinitarian formula is merely a way of stating this essential oneness of man's true nature with God, as already achieved in Christ under the conditions of temporal existence." (Hill, 94--the rest reflects Hill, 91-94)

- God is the absolute, the ground of being. Everything else said about him is symbolic (Fortman, 266)
- It seems that the threeness of God is based in our perception (Fortman, 266)

KARL RAHNER (1904-1984)

CENTRAL THEMES

- Recovery of the significance of the dogma of the Trinity
 - Lack of integration of the doctrine into theology
 - Despite serious theological treatises on the Trinity in the modern era (Petavius, de Régnon, Lebreton, Schmaus, Lonergan) and genuine trinitarian mysticism (Bonaventure, Ruysbroek, Ignatius Loyola, John of the Cross, Marie de l'Incarnation, Bérulle, Elizabeth of the Holy Trinity, Anton Jans), the reality of the Trinity remains unconnected to most theological efforts. (Trinity, 9-10)
 - "Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged." (Trinity, 10-11)
 - The Incarnation, for example, is spoken of as God becoming human in a way that suggests that the Trinitarian dimension of Incarnation is irrelevant. The specific aspect of the incarnation of the Logos is rarely treated (Trinity, 11).
 - In the same way, the doctrine of salvation and of grace is treated as if it regarded the relationship of God to humanity and not the relationship of the Holy Trinity to humanity (and indeed this sentence is often regarded as nonsensical) (see Trinity, 12-13).
 - The Trinity is treated as a theological curiosity revealed for its own sake but having no relevance to human life (Trinity, 14-15).
 - Treatises on God
 - It is not helpful to treat the oneness of God first and then, only then, the Trinity as if it were an appendix.
 - Neither is the psychological analogy helpful because it privileges our own conceptual reflections over the self-revelation of God in history (Trinity, 19)
- God reveals himself in history; the Trinity has direct relevance to salvation
 - Rahner states that if God truly communicates himself to creatures then differences in God as he is communicated to us implies that there are truly these differences in God as he is in himself. He says that "if the difference present in something imparted by God, as such, is *only* on the side of the creature, there can be no question of a self-communication, in which there is a real difference in that which is imparted as such, therefore 'for us,' God must then be differentiated 'in himself,' without prejudice to his unity (which is then characterized as that of the absolute 'essence'), and this differentiation is characterized as the relative mode of the relationship of himself to himself" ("Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise," 96, n. 28). In this statement, which appears in a footnote to the argument that God himself is really given in revelation, Rahner is asserting the Trinitarian dimension of God's action in history.
- The Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and vice versa.
 - Rahner states that if God's self-communication, "contains differences for us (appears as mediated, but not by a mediation of a purely created type, which would destroy its character of real self-communication), then distinction and mediation is eo

ipso affirmed of God as he is in himself and of himself" ("Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise," 96, n. 28). The statement affirms that if a mediation, a non-created mediation, appears in the economy, then a certain distinction and mediation can and must be predicated of God as he is in himself.

- Benefits of recognizing this identity (Trinity, 22):
 - it takes into account binding doctrine presented by the magisterium
 - it does justice to biblical statements concerning the economy of salvation and its threefold structure
 - it helps us to understand that in the Christian's act of faith and life the Trinity is present
- Distinction of persons
 - The distinction of persons is revealed in the economy of salvation.
 - Thus, the Son is distinct from the Spirit in that the Son relates to creation insofar as he can become incarnate and the Spirit relates to creation insofar as he can sanctify.
 - "There is a real difference in God as he is in himself between the one and the same God insofar as he is—at once and necessarily—the unoriginate who mediates himself to himself (Father), the one who is in truth uttered for himself (Son), the one who is received and accepted in love for himself (Spirit)—and insofar as, as a result of this, he is the one who can freely communicate himself." (Trinity, 102)
 - The missions of the Son and Spirit reveal their distinctiveness.
- Use of the term "person"
 - By using the term person, we cannot help but create misunderstanding
 - Better to talk of three different subsistences

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EASTERN ORTHODOX APPROACHES

If we reject the Trinity as the sole ground of all reality and of all thought, we are committed to a road that leads nowhere; we end in aporia, in folly, in the disintegration of our being, in spiritual death. Between the Trinity and hell there lies no other choice. – Lossky 1976, 66

THE TROPARIA TO THE HOLY TRINITY

As we rise from sleep we worship Thee, O good and powerful Lord, and to Thee we sing the Angel's hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God; through the Mother of God, have mercy on us.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Having raised me from bed and sleep, O Lord, enlighten my mind, and open my heart and lips to praise Thee, O Holy Trinity:

Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God; through the Mother of God, have mercy on us.
Now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Suddenly the Judge will come, and the deeds of each will be laid bare; but at midnight let us cry with fear:

Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God; through the Mother of God, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy. (12 times.)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- ▶ Filioque
 - ▶ Third Council of Toledo (589)
 - ▶ Charlemagne (803)
 - ▶ Photius (867)
- ▶ Benedict VIII (1014)
- ▶ Second Council of Lyons (1274)
- ▶ Gregory of Cyprus
- ▶ Gregory Palamas
- ▶ Council of Florence (1439)
 - ▶ Significance for West and for East
- ▶ Vasil V. Bolotov (d. 1900)
 - ▶ Put forth 27 theses claiming that the *filioque* might be held as theologoumenon (Fortman, 279)

MAJOR FIGURES

20th Century

- Sergei Bulgakov
- Georges Florovsky

- Vladimir Lossky
- Dumitru Staniloë
- John Meyendorff

Contemporary Figures

- John Zizioulas
- Christos Yannaras

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- The Spirit as the breath which accompanies the word (see Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 18, 46, cited in Farrelly, 100-101)
- The Son is not the cause of the Spirit but the Spirit proceeds through the Son (see Maximus the Confessor, letter to Marinus, PG 91.136, cited in Farrelly, 101)

THE ESSENCE OF GOD

- The essence of God is beyond our knowledge
 - "God in himself is a mystery. Of his inner existence nothing can be said." (Staniloae 1980, 73)
 - "Love constitutes the *being* (*einaï*) of Divinity. But we cannot know what the Essence of Divinity is exactly which the three Persons hypostasize. It transcends not only the abilities of our language, but even our capacity to comprehend the limits of our experience. We are speaking, then, of the incomprehensible mystery of Divinity, the unfathomable truth of the divine Essence." (Yannaras, 28-29)
 - We know the mode of his existence: personal (Yannaras, 29)
 - To say that God is love is to say that God's essence is relational (See Staniloae 1980, 79)
 - God is unknowable precisely as Trinity: "Here apophaticism finds its fulfillment in the revelation of the Holy Trinity as primordial fact, ultimate reality, first datum which cannot be deduced, explained or discovered by way of any other truth; for there is nothing which is prior to it. Apophatic thought, renouncing every support, finds its support in God, whose unknowability appears as Trinity. Here thought gains a stability which cannot be shaken; theology finds its foundation; ignorance passes into knowledge." (Lossky 1976, 64)
- Theologia and oikonomia
 - "To the economy in which God reveals Himself in creating the world and in becoming incarnate, we must respond by theology, confessing the transcendent nature of the Trinity in an ascent of thought which necessarily has an apophatic trust." (Lossky 1985, 15)

THE PERSONS

- Hypostasis versus individual: person as the source of being (see Yannaras, 33-34; Zizioulas, 36-37)
 - "God is not in principle a given Essence, which exists in consequence as a Person. Rather he is in principle a Person, who being absolutely free from every necessity and every predetermination hypostasizes (makes into hypostases) his *Being*, his Essence, giving birth eternally to the Son and sending the Holy Spirit. The Person of God the Father precedes and defines his Essence; he is not predetermined by it. ... Freely and from love, the Father ('timelessly and lovingly') hypostasizes his Being in a Triad of Persons, constitutes the principle and mode of his Existence as a community of personal freedom and love." (Yannaras, 34-35)

- Relations
 - There are no object relations in the Trinity: each person relates to the other as subject (Staniloae 1980, 77)

THE TRINITARIAN ORDER

THE FATHER

- The Father as the source and origin of the Trinity (πεγαία θεότης)
- There is no common essence other than the three persons
- The Father continually has the initiative (Staniloae 1980, 89)

THE SON

THE SPIRIT

- "In general, Orthodox teaching on the Holy Spirit is distinguished by the following characteristics: a) the irreducibility of the Spirit to the Son and the affirmation of his equal importance with the Logos; b) the inseparability of Son or Logos from the Spirit, in fact, their indissoluble connexion; c) the preservation of the filial relation of the Son towards the Father together with the affirmation of the Spirit as Spirit of the Son: this makes of the presence of the Son a source from which filial response, life and divine movement radiate upon men; d) the understanding of the Spirit as a unifying factor, a bridge, a communicative movement between 'I's' which nevertheless does not do away with their liberty." (Staniloae 1980, 106-7)

FILIOQUE

- The Spirit proceeds from the Father and abides in the Son; he "shines forth through the Son and in the Son" (Staniloae 1980, 103).
- The *filioque* damages the relation between the three persons of the Trinity, placing the Father and Son on one side over against the Spirit and gives the Spirit either two sources (Father and Son) or an impersonal source in the divine essence common to the Father and Son (Staniloae 1980, 104).
- "This is why the East has always opposed the formula of *filioque* which seems to impair the monarchy of the Father: either one is forced to destroy the unity by acknowledging two principles of Godhead, or one must ground the unity primarily on the common nature, which thus overshadows the persons and transforms them into relations within the unity of the essence." (Lossky 1976, 58)
- Because of the *filioque*, the characteristics of the Spirit mentioned above are missing from Catholic teaching. Thus among Catholics there is little mention of the Spirit and a virtual reduction of the Spirit to the Son (Staniloae 1980, 107).
- The *filioque* is based on a rationalizing of the Trinity, trying to make sense of the origin of the Spirit and thus postulating a common nature active in the Father and Son (Lossky, 61-62).