SEMINAR ON TRINITY AND WORLD PROCESS

The seminar on Trinity and World Process was headed by three panelists (Joseph Bracken, S.J., of Marquette University, William Hill, O.P., of The Catholic University of America, and Robert Sears, S.J., of Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago) and a discussion leader (Elizabeth Dreyer, likewise of Marquette University). The format of the seminar was as follows. On the first day, Ms. Dreyer began with a brief overview of the text chosen for prior reading, namely, Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*.[1] The three panelists then offered their own criticism of Moltmann's book, specifically in the matter of his doctrine of the Trinity. The session concluded with a general discussion between panelists and members of the audience as to the merits of Moltmann's work. In the second session, each of the panelists presented his own theory of the Trinity, based on articles already published or on research currently in progress. Afterwards, Ms. Dreyer led a group discussion of the three points of view thus presented, at the end of which she asked the audience for topics to be discussed at the third and final session the following day. These topics included (a) further specification of the relation of the Trinity to human history and to world process; (b) the role of sin and conversion from sin in the process of joining (or originally forming) a Christian community after the model of the Trinity; (c) the deeper relationship between the Thomistic understanding of *act* and the notion of *process* as employed by two of the panelists; (d) finally, the relationship of Karl Barth's *Seinsweisen* to the notion of *person* employed by all three of the panelists. The third session began with an attempt by one of the panelists, namely, Robert Sears, to respond to the first of these topics. The ensuing discussion ranged, however, over all the topics, with the possible exception of the last. Finally, as time ran out, Joseph Bracken called attention to the fact that Kenan Osborne, O.F.M., the President-elect of the Society, was open to continuing this same seminar next year, if a suitable topic and discussion leader(s) could be found. The session ended, however, without any decision as to what topic should be chosen and/or who should assume responsibility for next year's seminar.

In the following pages, this schematic outline of the proceedings of the seminar will be fleshed out in the following manner. Each of the three panelists will present, first, his criticism of Moltmann and, second, his own position on the Trinity. Then all three panelists will try jointly to summarize and evaluate the discussion on each of the three days. Thus there will be four parts to the rest of the paper. Bracken will present his comments in the first part; Sears in the second part; Hill in the third part.

[1] J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. by R. Wilson and J. Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

The fourth part will contain the composite judgement of all three panelists on the outcome of the discussion.

I. PRESENTATION BY JOSEPH BRACKEN

In *The Crucified God*, Jürgen Moltmann clearly intends to challenge the concept of God in classical theism. As he says, for example, in one place, "the cross stands at the heart of the Trinitarian being of God; it divides and conjoins the persons in their relationships to each other and portrays them in a specific way. . . .From the life of these three, which has within it the death of Jesus, there then emerges who God is and what Godhead means."[2] But the concept of God which thus emerges is substantially different from that worked out at Nicaea and the other early councils of the Church. At Nicaea and again at the first Council of Constantinople, for example, the church Fathers declared that Jesus Christ as the Son of God was begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Hence, like the Father, he is immutable and unchangeable in his divine nature. In his human nature, to be sure, he was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered the ordinary pains of human existence, and eventually died on the cross. Furthermore, in virtue of the doctrine of the communication of idioms, one can say that all this happened to the Son of God, but only "in the flesh," i.e., in his conjoined human nature. The divine nature as such, which he shares with the Father and the Spirit, must remain thereby quite unaffected.

According to Moltmann, however, the entire Trinity is deeply involved in the death of Jesus on the cross. Taking as his starting-point Romans 8:31 ("If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?"), Moltmann argues that the Father grieves over the death of his Son: "The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son."[3] In effect, Jesus on the cross experiences the agony of being temporarily forsaken by the Father, while the Father in the same moment experiences the anguish of being separated from his Son, hence of losing his own identity as Father. Yet, says Moltmann, in this surrender of their mutual identity as Father and Son for the sake of sinful human beings, Jesus and the Father experience a new unity with one another in the Spirit. The Spirit, in other words, precisely as the personification of self-giving love, re-establishes the community between Father and Son in the very moment that they are prepared to renounce it for the sake of their sinful creatures. Furthermore, the Spirit is thereby set loose in the world to reconcile men and women with their God and thus to set up the conditions for a deeper and richer form of human life.

Moltmann favors this new concept of God, because in his mind the traditional opposition between theism and atheism is thereby overcome. That is, the God of classical theism was by definition an absolute being, impervious to all human pain and suffering in his own internal life and

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 207.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

activity. Reflective human beings, accordingly, unable to cope with God's apparent impassivity in the face of such enormous evil, chose rather to be atheists, to believe that there was no God, than to admit that God did not care enough to share the pain and suffering with them and thus to offer them the hope of eventual redemption. According to Moltmann's theory, however, the Father suffers the loss of his Son (and his own fatherhood) in the death of Jesus on the cross, without angrily seeking revenge on his rational creatures. The Son suffers the pain of Godforsakenness and ultimately of death itself, so that he will forever after be in a position to console those human beings who suffer a similar plight. Finally, the Spirit is now released into human history to communicate to men and women the power of self-giving love, i.e., the inner life of the three divine persons, which alone is able to overcome the effects of sin, the destructive power of evil, in today's world.

What I find distinctive about Moltmann's presentation here is the artful way in which he combines the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, above all, as interpreted by Karl Barth, with the perspectives of Alfred North Whitehead and other process thinkers on the nature of God. To be specific, Karl Barth speaks movingly of God's willingness to endure the consequences of sin in order to redeem his rational creatures.[4] But all this is done in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, who in his human nature suffered the psychological pain of rejection, the physical sufferings of the crucifixion, etc. Within the inner life of the Trinity, none of this pain and suffering is to be found. There the three divine persons enjoy the blessedness which has been theirs from all eternity. Alfred North Whitehead and other process thinkers, on the other hand, quite willingly concede that God is really affected by the events taking place within creation, but by and large they do not think of God in specifically Trinitarian terms. They are, in other words, monotheists, who think of God and the world as complimentary realities within a single comprehensive process.

For Whitehead, for example, God is personal without being tripersonal. That is, God is the one "actual entity" who "prehends" all the other actual entities and thus gives a unity and direction to the world process which it otherwise would not have.[5] Evil, accordingly, is present in God because it is concomitantly present in the world. At the same time, evil in this world is not an ultimate reality; it has already been transformed into good by reason of its inclusion within the "consequent" nature of God. Similarly, theologians who have used Whitehead's philosophy to work out a new Christian understanding of creation, grace, eschatology, etc., have for the most part not been explicitly Trinitarian thinkers. Charles Hartshorne, for example, speaks of God as social; but by that he means that God is really related to his creatures by bonds of love and sympathy, hence that he is not the impassible Absolute of traditional metaphysics.[6] Furthermore, neither

[4] K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II, 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 163-68.

[5] A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 519-33.

[6] C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 25-26.

John Cobb, David Griffin nor Schubert Ogden appear to conceive God in Trinitarian terms; for each of them God is eminently personal, but not tripersonal. Lewis Ford, to be sure, in an article entitled "Process Trinitarianism," suggests that there is a triunity of principles within God: namely, the non-temporal creative act of God, its outcome within his primordial nature, and the divine experience of the world as his consequent nature. But, says Ford, this does not imply "a plurality of subjects in personal interaction within the Godhead."[7] For him, this would be equivalent to an espousal of tritheism over monotheism.[8]

Moltmann, however, as noted above, manages to combine traditional belief in the Trinity with a notion of God as process. Is his merger of these two traditions really successful or only apparent? What struck me on reading the book is that Moltmann has not provided an underlying conceptual framework within which to integrate the two traditions. That is, he merely states that the Father grieves over the death of his Son and that the Son experiences abandonment by his Father on the cross. He does not go on to show how the reality of three distinct persons is possible within a process-approach to God. Similarly, he merely states that human history is taken up into the inner life of God and thus becomes part of the "history" of the Trinity itself. But he does not make clear, from a systematic point of view, how this is possible without sacrificing either divine transcendence or human freedom. What is needed, in other words, is a thoroughgoing process approach which begins with the premise that God is a community of three divine persons and then proceeds to show how this triune life of God is somehow continued in the process of creation as a whole, but above all in the lives of human beings redeemed by Jesus. Short of this broad systematic development, Moltmann's scheme, however provocative it might be in itself, seems to remain more at the level of pious metaphor than established hypothesis.

I turn now to my own hypothesis on the Trinity. Basically, I set it forth in a pair of articles for the *Heythrop Journal* a few years ago.[9] But in the intervening years I have modified it to some extent, partially through reflection on the work of other Trinitarian theologians, notably, Heribert Mühlen in his book *Die Veränderlichkeit Gottes im Horizont einer zukünftigen Christologie*.[10] In the following pages, therefore, I will first summarize Mühlen's work, then indicate how this differs from my own position in the *Heythrop Journal* articles, and finally show how my own position has developed in the light of what Mühlen proposes.

[7] L. Ford, "Process Trinitarianism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43 (1975), 207.

[8] Cf. also N. Pittenger, *God in Process* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967), pp. 49-50. Pittenger refers to God as "The Three in One," but he too believes that tritheism results when the contemporary understanding of *person* as an independent center of consciousness is without further qualification applied to the persons of the Trinity.

[9] J. Bracken, S.J., "The Holy Trinity as a Community of Divine Persons," *Heythrop Journal* 15 (1974), 166-82; 257-70.

[10] H. Mühlen, *Die Veränderlichkeit Gottes als Horizont einer zukünftigen Christologie* (Munster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1969).

Mühlen begins his treatise by taking note of the altered world-consciousness of human beings in this century. The universe is no longer conceived as an impersonal Whole, but rather as an interpersonal We.[11] Being is primarily understood in terms of human beings and their interrelations. Changes, accordingly, are needed in the traditional concepts of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, if Christianity is to keep pace with this altered self-image of the human race. But these changes must be made, as far as possible, in line with the basic intention of the church Fathers, above all at the Council of Nicaea, when they worked out the classical terminology to describe the relation between the Father and the Son. A careful study of pertinent conciliar texts together with the commentaries of Eusebius and Athanasius reveals, for example, that the Fathers at Nicaea meant by the term *homoousios* only to affirm that Jesus was of the same being (*gleichseiendlich*) with the Father.[12] They did not further specify what the being or nature of God in itself is. Admittedly, they may have thought in terms of a single indivisible divine substance, which cannot in any way be divided between Father and Son. But their explicit affirmations at Nicaea were limited to a denial of the Arian heresy, in other words to affirm that Jesus is God, of equal stature with the Father, and therefore not a creature.

Turning then to selected texts from Scripture which appear to describe the nature or essence of God, Mühlen notes, first of all, that Exodus 3:14 ("I am who am") is misinterpreted, if it is used to support philosophical arguments for God as the Pure Act of Being. Rather, it signifies God's promise of fidelity to his people. The divine nature is unchanging, only in the sense that Jahweh will never abandon his people. Similarly, John 10:30, where Jesus says, "The Father and I are one," is not an argument for the unity of the divine substance but rather for the quality of the interpersonal relationship existing between Jesus and the Father. That is, if Jahweh is with his people in general, he is unquestionably with his Son in even more intimate fashion. Together they constitute a community (*Wir-Gemeinschaft*), with the Spirit as the bond of union between the Father and the Son or the communitarian reality of God in person.[13]

In the fourth and final part of the book, Mühlen applies these new thoughts on the nature and essence of God to an understanding of the passion and death of Jesus on the cross. Earlier, in interpreting Exodus 3:14, he had said that the unchanging character of God's nature was his unwavering fidelity to his people, his desire to be with them in all their trials and troubles. Specifying the nature of God still further, Mühlen now says that it consists in the giving away of one's own (*Weggabe des Eigensten*).[14] The Father, accordingly, reveals the divine nature in that he gives up his own Son for our salvation (Rom 8:32); the Son exhibits his divinity in that he allows himself to be thus delivered up for our

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-10.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-25.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

salvation; finally, the Spirit, as the personification of the process of self-giving love within the Godhead, communicates this same "spirit" to human beings at the moment of Christ's death on the cross. Hence Jesus' passion, death and resurrection reveals the mystery of the inner life of God. God is the process of self-giving love; all three divine persons share in that process, although, as noted above, in different ways.

Thus far my summary of Mühlen's hypothesis. I find myself basically in agreement with him on all points except one. It seems to me that he confuses the *person* of the Holy Spirit with the divine *nature*, understood as a process of self-giving love. The Holy Spirit, I would suggest, is not simply the bond of love between the Father and the Son. It is, after all, the function of the divine nature (understood as a process of self-giving love) to bind all three persons together as a community. Rather, the Spirit has a "personality" of its own within the Godhead, equal in dignity and importance to that of the Father and the Son. Thus all three persons are necessary to constitute the divine community which is their common nature. Each serves as the bond of unity between the other two, because without all three the community would cease to exist and God would be no longer God. To clarify these remarks, however, I must now have recourse to the *Heythrop Journal* articles.

Therein I first proposed as a purely philosophical hypothesis that the unity of a community represents a higher level of being and activity, ontologically speaking, than the unity of an individual substance. Thus human beings through their participation in various communities transcend the level of being and activity which is theirs simply as individual entities and become "parts" or members of an ontological totality bigger than themselves. Put in other language, without ceasing to be individuals, human beings become persons, i.e., members of a community. The community, to be sure, cannot exist without the members, but the members cannot achieve the fullness of their own individual being and activity, i.e., their own personhood, except through freely chosen membership in some local human community (and ultimately in the all-embracing community of the race as such).

To support this hypothesis, I researched the writings of various philosophers and sociologists of the present century who have written on the subject of community. These included Max Scheler, George Herbert Mead, Alfred Schutz and, above all, Josiah Royce. The last-named in his work, *The Problem of Christianity*, provided the necessary conceptual framework which I needed to articulate the above-mentioned insight. According to Royce, "a true community is essentially the product of a time-process. A community has a past and will have a future. Its more or less conscious history, real or ideal, is a part of its very essence."[15] The community-building process, says Royce, is constituted by human beings engaged in acts of "interpretation" to one another. That is, they are seeking the truth about themselves, their relations to one another, the world of nature, the history of the universe,

[15] J. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 243.

etc., through ongoing dialogue, continuous exchange of views on these same topics. Thus each of the participants to the dialogue is himself/herself in process, continuously growing in knowledge of self, other human beings, the world, etc.; and the interaction of these persons in process as individual beings constitutes the broader social process which is the community. Key to the whole scheme, however, is the central insight that there are "two profoundly different grades, or levels, of mental beings—namely, the beings that we usually call human individuals, and the beings that we call communities."[16]

Encouraged by this textual evidence in support of my hypothesis, I then applied it to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. It seemed logical to me that, if human beings find the fullness of their personhood not in themselves as individuals but only in community, then the same should be true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the divine persons. They too should find the fullness of their individual personhood (and their unity as one God) in the unity of a community. But, whereas human beings belong usually to many communities at the same time, the divine persons belong only to this one community of which they are the sole members. Furthermore, while human beings may choose to terminate their relationship with one or other community without losing their basic personhood in the process, the divine persons cannot dissolve their relationship to one another without ceasing to be God. Yet there is no danger that this would ever happen, since with their perfect knowledge and love of one another the divine persons have given themselves to one another in a union which is morally indissoluble. Perfect freedom and natural necessity thus coincide within the relationship of the divine persons to one another.

In the intervening years since I wrote these articles, I have not found it necessary to abandon this hypothesis for one reason or another, but instead have found additional evidence in support of it. First of all, the basic weakness of the journal articles was that I could not further specify or concretize what I meant by this higher ontological unity which is a community. As a result, it was considered by some critics to be the unity of a super-person, with the consequent disadvantage that the individual human beings who constitute the community become, ontologically speaking, accidents rather than remain individual substances in their own right. While I knew this to be a false assumption, I could not point to any other reality as a concrete example of the unity of a community. Ultimately, however, it became clear to me that the unity of a community is the unity of a social process which originates and is sustained in existence through the efforts of individual human beings and yet which in its overall operation and effects seems to enjoy a certain autonomy or independence from its members, taken singly. Furthermore, a deeper reading of Royce's *Problem of Christianity* convinced me that this was likewise his view of the matter. A community for Royce is, as noted above, a collective process of interpretation, made up of individuals who are themselves engaged in an ongoing process of interpretation: first of themselves, then of other people, the world of

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

nature, human history, etc. There is, accordingly, no radical leap from the level of the individual to the level of the community. By the very fact that he/she is involved in a personal process of interpretation, the individual human being finds him/herself involved with others in the collective search for meaning, the social process of interpretation which is the community. Thus a closer reading of Royce led me to adopt not only his communitarian approach to life but also his conviction that reality on all levels, both individual and social, is inherently processive.

At this point in my reflections, I read Mühlen's *Die Veränderlichkeit Gottes im Horizont einer zukünftigen Christologie*, and, so to speak, the last piece in the puzzle fell into place. If, as Mühlen maintains, the nature of God is to be a process of self-giving love, and if the divine persons exist in and through their participation in that process, then Royce's insight that (created) reality is inherently processive is unexpectedly confirmed. For, granted that God is the supreme exemplar of Being and God's being is processive, then created reality in all its dimensions must likewise be processive. On the other hand, the process which is God's being is interpersonal and communitarian; in virtue of the process of self-giving love the three divine persons are related to one another as an ongoing community. Hence the process of creation, which is the finite imitation of God's being, must likewise be (at least in intention and design) interpersonal and communitarian. That is, creation must have as its goal the eventual formation of a universal community of finite beings who will collectively be the finite counterpart of the divine community.[17] All other forms of process in creation, e.g., organic and inorganic processes in the world of nature, are then radically subordinate to interpersonal process which human beings through their membership in various communities share with the triune God.[18]

Further details would have to be added to make this synthetic overview genuinely comprehensible. But what has been said thus far should make clear that the communitarian reinterpretation of the Trinity which I undertook in the *Heythrop Journal* articles could well be just the first stage in an overall communitarian and processive reinterpretation of systematic theology as a whole. In any case, these further ideas and hypotheses serve to make clear why in the intervening years I have not abandoned the hypothesis of the Trinity as a community of divine persons but instead have kept working at its further implications and consequences in both theology and philosophy.

[17] There seems to be a clear connection here with the thought of Teilhard de Chardin on the goal of the evolutionary process. Cf., for example, P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. by B. Wall (New York: Harper Colophon Books), pp. 237-310.

[18] In this respect, the approach of Alfred North Whitehead and his disciples to world process might have to be revised somewhat. As a natural scientist and mathematician, Whitehead focused primarily on the most minute forms of process on the atomic and subatomic levels rather than on the highest forms of process, i.e., within human communities and in the inner life of the triune God. Hence the notion of process stemming from Whitehead and his school *appears* at least to be impersonal rather than interpersonal and communitarian, as in the above scheme.

II. PRESENTATION BY ROBERT SEARS

A. MOLTMANN'S *THE CRUCIFIED GOD*: CONTRIBUTION AND CRITIQUE

1. *Contribution*

I approach Moltmann from the point of view of method in theology and his relevance for concerns of today. On both these points I think Moltmann has made contributions.

(a) *Relevance:* In an age that more and more needs to see Christianity in the light of world religions, Moltmann has clearly shown the necessity of personal identity in order to be relevant. Relevance cannot be purchased by simply taking note of what is acceptable to modern thinking. As Christians, we need a personal identity in order to be open to others without fear of loss of identity. Identity, however, needs a center of identification, and Moltmann locates that center in the cross of Christ—both as historical and as eschatological event.

(b) *Theological method:* Akin to the question of identity is the need for theology to find a criterion to discern between and among the many approaches pressing for attention: process theology, interpersonal theology, liberation theology, to mention only a few. Each approach has a particular contribution, but all have to be critiqued. In his *Method in Theology* Lonergan has shown the necessity of conversion to ground one's interpretation of doctrines, systems, etc., but conversion itself needs a norm. Moltmann (with others such as Rahner, Barth, Jüngel, etc.) has shown the centrality of the cross/resurrection in this interpretative process. Gordon Kaufman has cogently argued for the necessity of some historical point of reference for any talk about God.[19] Moltmann has developed his view of God with great consistency from the viewpoint of the crucified Christ.

(c) Thirdly, Moltmann has drawn implications from his position for both politics and psychotherapy. He has shown that our thought about God has consequences, and that we can and must argue from God to those consequences, as well as from consequences to a revised notion of God.[20]

2. *Critique*

Having affirmed what I see as contributions of Moltmann, I also want to register a critique. Moltmann's view of the Spirit (similar to Barth's) is actualistic and does not provide an analogical basis for developing a constructive communitarian world view. Moltmann stresses how finding God in Christ's death shows God's freedom (195), how idolatrous images of God are broken (68) so that a crucifying theology is a liberating theology (69). The Spirit's presencing this "event" in believers opens the future and creates life from Calvary (247), creates its own condition of freedom (248), the presupposition for fellowship of

[19] See his *Systematic Theology: an Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1968), pp. 243-52; also pp. 176-79.

[20] J. L. Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974) develops this interconnection in some detail in relation to liberation theology.

sinners and godless with God (276). We are freed from the structures of this world for God, but Moltmann makes little mention of how the Spirit relates believers to one another. In a thorough discussion of eschatology in the cross, he never refers to Pentecost: he presents a critical view of theology (the very subtitle of his book), but not a constructive view.

The basic reason for his neglect of the constructive, I think, is not so much the focus on the crucified God (that datum of revelation must be integrated in any constructive view), but a neglect of analogy and of a consistent analysis of the analogy used. He seems, in fact, to be opposed to such an attempt (following, it would seem, Karl Barth in affirming only an "analogy of faith"). Thus he says in reference to "pure contemplation" which creates a likeness to God (knowledge by analogy): "But in the crucified Christ, abandoned by God and cursed, faith can find no equivalents of this kind which provide it with indirect, analogical knowledge of God, but encounters the very contrary" (68). I would argue, on the other hand, that analogy cannot be avoided, that Moltmann has one implicitly (influenced by Hegelian dialectics and the Protestant protest), and that such a critical image is only valid (as Tillich argued earlier) if there is content ("Catholic substance") to critique. Thus there needs to be a constructive view of Trinity, one that is, I will argue, also interpersonal.

B. A VIEW OF TRINITY FROM A MODEL OF INTERPERSONAL GROWTH

In light of the above critique, I have endeavored to develop a basis for analogical understanding of the Trinity from a model of social-religious growth. It presupposes the analogy of I-Thou-We developed by Heribert Mühlen (see J. Bracken's exposition) with a different interpretation of the nature of "We" in Mühlen's thought. I will first give further support for Bracken's principle, "community is a higher unity than individual substance," give my interpretation of Mühlen's "We," and then present my own position in four theses.

Since I develop a position that persons only exist in community, I found Bracken's suggestion that community is a higher unity than individual substance very enlightening; for we have to apply to God the highest unity we know, and if that is community, then God must be considered a community. Bracken's view, in fact, is confirmed both through depth psychology and evolutionary process. Psychologically, the presupposition that the individual person *is* a unity is false. Personal unity is not measured externally, but through self-knowledge and identity and through unified decision. But the human person is found by psychologists to have multiple personal centers (subpersonalities) and has to achieve individuation in dialogue with other persons.[21] In other words, the unity of an individual person presupposes a community of individuated persons, and that is the highest unity (persons in commun-

[21] Carl Jung has shown extensive evidence for such "multiple centers" in discussing the individuation process. The point is that unification only comes through interrelation with others.

ity) that we know. Further, in evolution (according to Teilhard de Chardin) "unity differentiates." That is, each higher system does not remove the uniqueness of the lower systems, but actually brings them to more complex individuation in their own right at the same time as integrating them in a higher system. Seen dynamically in this way, community does not lessen the individuation of participating members (as both Jung and Freud thought), but rather increases individuation if it is in fact a creative community. Finally, the counter argument that then God would have three wills and three intellects and three consciousnesses (contrary to the tradition) can be responded to if all three of these realities are also seen to exist only communally. There is no intelligence that we know without dialogue (a common language), no willing without one to love, no consciousness without a common sharing in it. Counter to our modern presuppositions, all three are communal notions which presuppose independent yet related participants.

Secondly, my interpretation of Mühlen's "We" differs from Bracken's. He sees the "We," from Mühlen's *Die Veränderlichkeit Gottes* ... (1969), as expression of the divine communal "being" (*einai*) rather than as a relatively distinct personal existence. Since I do not see Mühlen changing his previous position in this work, I see the "We" as expressing a unique personal relationship distinct from the mutual I-Thou relation it presupposes. Mühlen earlier argues, in *Der Heilige Geist als Person* (1966), that an I-Thou relation is distinct from "We" in that as mutual knowledge and love increase so does recognition of difference—the two never meld into one another, but with deepening relationship actually come to greater awareness of distinctiveness (*ibid.*, 73). "We," on the other hand, presupposes this distinctiveness and joins fully free persons in a common (conjoint) action, such as parents giving birth to a child. This analogy of parents and child was seen as limited because the child was seen as separate from the parents. With our growing awareness of continuing psychological interdependence, the analogy may be far closer than we have imagined. In any case, the Spirit is not separate from Father and Son, but is definitely distinct and personal since he/she presupposes the fully personal conjoint love of Father and Son (*ibid.*, 161). Thus each divine person possesses the one divine nature (communal nature I would say with Bracken) in three personally distinct ways according to this analogy. My position endeavors to clarify how we can conceive these relationships at the same time as enlightening and motivating our own existence.

Thesis 1: *The cross/resurrection is not just a tragic accident of history, but a freely chosen self-revelation of God which reveals other-empowering love as the existence of God.*

I begin with this thesis because I see a tendency in Moltmann (and in ourselves?) to see only the tragic aspect of the cross and neglect the fact that it was freely chosen and hence also positive. Scripture, especially John, witnesses the faith that Christ freely chose the cross (see Jn 10:18) and hence must have seen a powerful good hidden in it. Moltmann's interpretation of Christ's cry of abandonment leaves the impression that

the cross was only passively endured and experienced as utter separation from his Father. In the discussion Brother Jim Hansen critiqued this interpretation on the basis of Ps 22's ending with a vision of victory. At any rate, as free expression of God's self-revelation in Jesus, the cross/resurrection must be seen, not just as a condemnation of sin, but also as a revelation of God's own being. The good, therefore, appears in this view as the beauty of God's unconditional other-empowering love, which presupposes "death to self" (and in a sinful world, the cross) for the sake of joint celebration and sharing of their joy. Hebrews 12:2 expresses this positive aspect: "Having joy set before him, he underwent the cross," and this joy of self-surrendering love must also be seen as revealed in the cross/resurrection event. Thus

Thesis 2: *As freely chosen self-revelation of God, the cross/resurrection reveals most perfectly who God is: creative community of other-empowering love.*

This thesis moves from the "economic Trinity" to the "immanent Trinity" (as Rahner, Barth, Jüngel, Moltmann have done). The cross clearly supports the traditional doctrine that there are three distinct existences in God for, as Moltmann has shown, Jesus' death if seen as a self-revelation of God, presupposes a total distinction in God that only death (as full individuation) can fully express to us. If the Father so handed over the Son, then the Father is not the Son (for the Father did not hand himself over, but remains eternally the initiator). Further, the cross/resurrection reveals the distinctiveness of the Spirit, even though awareness of the Spirit's distinctiveness (the "other Paraclete" Jn 14:16) was slow in coming. For Jesus "had to go" (Jn 16:7; 7:39) for the Spirit to come. That is, the surrender by the Father of his Son, and the self-surrender of Jesus in dying, is the presupposition for sending the Spirit of conjoint love. The Spirit then can be seen as celebration of and invitation to God's conjoint love, and empowerment for building community such as expressed in the Lukan description of the early community at Pentecost.

Thesis 3: *I-Thou-We is an analogy well grounded in the history of salvation that helps us interpret God as creative community of other-empowering love.*

This thesis uses Mühlen's analogy as a sort of hypothesis to examine the data of revelation. It presupposes (as I argued earlier) that some image, model or analogy is always implied in human thinking, and that if it is not articulated, it will lead to ungrounded and possibly harmful implications. Analogy indicates where in human experience we are to look for understanding of revelation. Moltmann seems to have used Hegel in his dialectical understanding, but Hegel's dialectic is rational, implying contradictories, whereas a person can never simply be a negation of another. Persons (Father and Son and Spirit) are other, but not rationally other, and interpersonal otherness is articulated by I and Thou and the interpersonal creative union of We. The question arises, is this analogy grounded in revelation (its permanent source) and does it further enlighten it?

Appended is a chart developed by Paul Brant (in an unpublished M.Div. Synthesis at JSTC) which illustrates stages of social religious development that I presented in an earlier article ("Trinitarian Love as Ground of the Church," *Theological Studies*, Dec. 1976) and correlates these with various kinds of suffering. Brant discovered that these types of suffering could be used to determine whether or not a person had in fact entered a certain stage, and they also help correlate the data with salvation history. With that touchstone it becomes clear that the Old Testament never got beyond stage three (individuating faith) in its lived experience. Isaiah 53, the "suffering servant" shows a vision of successive stages, but this vision never became part of later Jewish messianic expectation. The final two stages, therefore, were first realized only in Christ and in the sending of the Spirit.

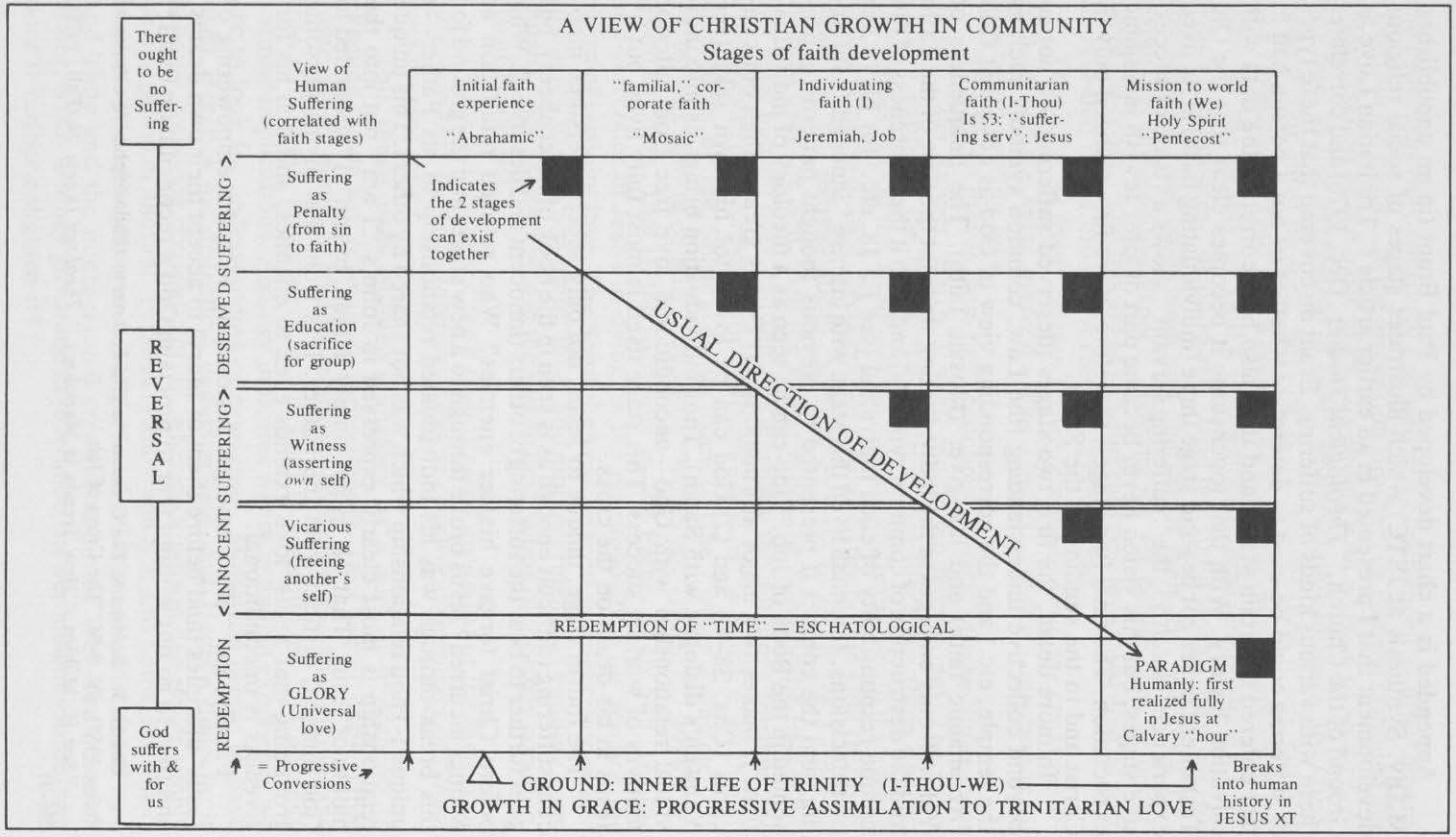
In more detail, the first two stages (deserved suffering) do not go beyond collective understanding (the Law, common symbols such as the temple, etc.) and the corresponding view of God as covenant God (Abrahamic faith) and law-giver (Mosaic faith). The uniqueness of Yahweh only emerges in the individuating stage (at the time of the Exile and the destruction of common symbols) and with it the awareness of the unique responsibility of each individual (see Ez 18, etc.) for his or her own decisions. Jeremiah lived this stage with intense "innocent" suffering, and the conflict it presented to previous thought patterns is presented in the Book of Job.[22] Job can be seen as a theology of individuation. It makes two major affirmations: (1) God is greater than our concepts (Chs. 38-40) and (2) God can be loved for his own sake (see Yahweh's dialogue with Satan). Thus individuation brings us into individual relationship with God—unconditional love free from ulterior motives of worldly success. This stage itself is most fully lived out by Jesus in his death on the cross.

The fourth stage, unique to Jesus, not only accepts personal innocent suffering (difficult enough as is seen in the book of Maccabees), but goes further to bear the suffering of others (innocent and deserved). Who before Christ forgave his/her enemies? Who refused retaliation at wrongs incurred? Jesus broke through to a new stage, and the ground for this break-through was his individuated relationship to his Father—a unique I-Thou relationship which was not shared by others. This unique relationship is most clearly expressed in John's "I am" put into the mouth of Jesus. That "I" is not simply human, but an "I" grounded in God himself, distinct from the Father. It is from that divine personal grounding that Jesus' love extends even to enemies, and that his forgiveness is unconditional.

Finally, the "We" emerges historically with the empowering of Jesus' disciples (and before them of Mary) to accept their own deaths, and thus to go out without fear to proclaim God's reconcilation to all.[23]

[22] See H. W. Robinson, *The Cross in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 9-54 "The Cross of Job."

[23] See H. Mühlen, "New Trends in Mariology," *Theology Digest* 24 (Fall, 1976), 286-91.


A VIEW OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH IN COMMUNITY
Stages of faith development
There ought to be no Suffering
REVERSAL
God suffers with & for us
View of Human Suffering (correlated with faith stages)
Initial faith experience
"Abrahamic"
"familial," corporate faith
"Mosaic"
Individuating faith (I)
Jeremiah, Job
Communitarian faith (I-Thou)
Is 53; "suffering serv"; Jesus
Mission to world faith (We)
Holy Spirit
"Pentecost"
DESERVED SUFFERING
INNOCENT SUFFERING
REDEMPTION
Suffering as Penalty (from sin to faith)
Suffering as Education (sacrifice for group)
Suffering as Witness (asserting own self)
Vicarious Suffering (freeing another's self)
Suffering as GLORY (Universal love)
Indicates the 2 stages of development can exist together
USUAL DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT
REDEMPTION OF "TIME" — ESCHATOLOGICAL
PARADIGM
Humanly: first realized fully in Jesus at Calvary "hour"
= Progressive Conversions
GROUND: INNER LIFE OF TRINITY (I-THOU-WE)
GROWTH IN GRACE: PROGRESSIVE ASSIMILATION TO TRINITARIAN LOVE
Breaks into human history in JESUS XT

This sending of the Spirit presupposes Jesus self-gift on the cross, and empowers the disciples to live out of this same self-giving love. Thus revelation does confirm I-Thou-We as gradually emerging in history corresponding to God's ever fuller self-revelation.

Thesis 4: *Our individual and communal spiritual growth recapitulates these stages of salvation history and calls us to a transformation in the image of Trinity as other-empowering love.*

This thesis is grounded in Mühlen's principle that we are always moving toward the fulness of Christian revelation from patterns similar to Old Testament forms.[24] It shows how Trinity can be seen as the ground of human existence and the goal of all our striving. Analogous understanding always relates not only to God, but to important areas of human existence in any particular age. Thus, the Augustinian analogy served the monk in self-recollection: Richard's analogy clarified love in the age of the troubadours.[25] I am suggesting that in our age personal and social transformation and growth is of utmost importance (witness the interest in psychotherapy and liberation theology), and that a dynamic view of Trinity as creative community of other-empowering love is the key to counter our excessive individualism and distrust in world unity. At the same time, it is not a return to collectivity (a sort of world communism) since it presupposes individuation and willingness to be different for the sake of the other, and it also affirms the individuality of others. This kind of community can only be grace given—grounded in transcendent self-giving love in Christ—and presupposes a returning to seeing God ever active in our world, calling and transforming us in the image of Trinitarian love.

III. PRESENTATION BY WILLIAM HILL

After centuries of neglect and impoverishment, one can only rejoice at the return of the doctrine of the Trinity to a position of centrality in Christian theology. The change began with the theological project launched by Karl Barth and it has been brought to one significant stage of fruition with Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*. The prospects latent in this restoration to the doctrine of its salvational import both illumine the mind and excite the heart. Nonetheless, certain reservations are called for—reservations however that seek not to bypass the insights of this particular questing of faith but rather to further them in a different direction. Accordingly, the following account will attempt two things: (1) to advance certain cautions on Moltmann's theology of the Trinity, and (2) to suggest one way of rethinking his search for understanding in a differing theological context.

A. MOLTMANN'S TRINITY

Underlying Moltmann's endeavor is the collapse, in the late fourteenth century, of that synthesis which was an appropriation of classical

[24] See R. Sears, "Trinitarian Love," p. 663.

[25] See E. Cousins, "A Theology of Interpersonal Relations," *Thought*, 40 (1970), 56-82, for a presentation of Richard's position in the context of medieval love poetry.

philosophy in the interests of a Christian understanding of reality. For better or for worse, this was a sea change that issued eventually in what is known as theological nominalism, and precipitated a new beginning in the sixteenth century. The rise of modern critical philosophy was animated by the rationalism of Descartes, characterized by the empiricism and skepticism of Hume, marked by the move into subjectivity and temporality with Kant, and reached an abiding plateau with the idealism of Hegel. Philosophies of being gave way to philosophies of consciousness; the latter stressing human autonomy to the point of an incompatibility between God and man that culminated in the phenomenon of modern atheism stretching from Feuerbach to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

A consequence of this "Copernican revolution" is that the period prior to modernity has become opaque and largely unintelligible to the contemporary mind. Moltmann, as very much a modern thinker, misreads the earlier tradition when he interprets it as placing God at an ontological remove from the world, indifferent to its plight and suffering. This latter extolling of divine *apatheia* is of Stoic, not Christian, provenance. The work of the early Fathers is not free of some reflection of this attitude, but it always appears in a qualified way and is more resisted than adopted.[26] The mainstream of Christian understanding could hardly be clearer on a God who stands in living *actual* relationship to the world he creates, knows, loves, guides providentially, redeems and saves.[27] Such a God, far from being a self-enclosed Absolute, was a God of self-communication. Later medieval thought made explicit that the grounds for this was a grasp of God as a pure dynamism: the Father eternally uttering his Word, and spirating forth through the Word the Spirit as the person of love. This divine dynamism, moreover, was looked upon as the underlying structure of both creation and salvation.[28]

This specifically Christian mode of thinking, at work from the very beginning, was able to consolidate itself on critical grounds once the real distinction between essence and existence was surmised—a distinction in which existence was grasped as not essence at all but as "act," as something belonging to a totally different order of intelligibility, that did not yield itself up in the concept and could only be affirmed in the judgment. Aquinas notes explicitly that God is not *ens*, not substance, and not even *esse* (in the last instance, preferring the term used by Dionysius, *superesse*).[29] As the pure, subsisting act of to-be (*Ipsum Esse*

[26] Moltmann himself gives two instances of this reluctance, one from Gregory of Nazianzen (p. 158, n. 74), the other from Gregory of Nyssa (p. 280, n. 20).

[27] The Medieval rejection of *real* relations in God to the world is not a denial that God is *actually* related to his creatures but an attempt to avoid thinking of such relationship as categorical. Real relations were understood in the precise and technical sense of Aristotle's category of finitude, as one of the nine accidental modes of predicamental being—which rather obviously could not be used in speech about God. The sole alternative to this, for Medieval thinkers, was to take relation as transcendental, in which case God and world would have to be conceived as existing in mutual interdependence upon one another—a position that they rightly saw as compromising the divine transcendence.

[28] Cf. Aquinas, *S. Theol.*, I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3; q. 45, a. 7.

[29] Cf. *Expositio super librum De causis*, Lib. unicus, lect. 6; I *Sent.*, d. 8, q. 4, ad 2 and q. 1, a. 2, ad 1.

Subsistens), God is best spoken of as act, on analogy with the action of the subject, and his most proper name is "Who is."[30] Modern philosophy, by contrast, marked a return to the reification of being, of its grasp by way of a concept as simply a different sort of essence. God as real thus gives way to an idea of God; the divine is enclosed within a static concept as the Absolute, as infinite essence or substance set over against the world. This leaves unexplained God's involvement with the cosmos, and sets the stage for Hegel's conceiving of God as Spirit rather than substance, and so as essentially processive.[31] The trinitarian processions, formerly viewed as true actions of divine persons, are now reduced to the dialectic indigenous to reason. The rescue of this from the inherent danger of logicizing has led, in contemporary transcendental thought, to the notion of God as "primal temporality" (Heidegger), or, in its theological equivalent, as the "event of revelation" (Barth).

Karl Barth, though enlisting himself on the side of Kierkegaard in a rejection of Hegel's "system," nonetheless begins with what is a theological variant of Hegel's question: how can the God of Christianity, who is not the God of religion, become *our* God? This is the perduring Reformational problem with the *Deus pro nobis*, and Barth answers it as follows: God, who is not God for man but "totally other," freely chooses in primal decision (*Ursgeschichte*) to become such in a communication that is revelation. But as communication *of God*, as self-communication, this unexacted divine decision calls forth an inner differentiation of his own being into the "modes of existing" that constitute him as Trinity. In a decision beyond time, God differentiates himself into Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness. This is not exactly the trinitarianism to be found in what is more strictly called Process Theology today, in which God and world are both subject to the relational process between them as a more ultimate category. It is rather a view of God as transcendent to process, yet freely choosing to locate his own being in becoming for man's sake. A phrase from one of Barth's disciples—Eberhard Jüngel—articulates this with exactitude: "God wills not to be God for himself but God for us and with us . . . [thus] . . . God's being is constituted through historicality."[32] Jüngel makes crystal clear the implications of this: "Thus one will be allowed to say and will have to say that there is—thank God!—no being of God in-and-for-itself without man."[33]

Moltmann extenuates this somewhat in making explicit that God becomes a Trinity in his own innermost being at a moment within history. The Trinity emerges as a consequence of the transaction between Jesus and the Father on the cross, in which the man Jesus becomes the divine Son on the basis of the Father's abandonment of him

[30] *S. Theol.*, q. 13, a. 11.

[31] The full implications of this appear in Hegel's oft-quoted statement from the *Encyclopedia*, 564: "God is God only insofar as he knows himself and this knowledge is his self-consciousness in man, and is in truth the knowledge man himself has of God."

[32] *The Doctrine of the Trinity*: God's Being is in Becoming (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 67.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 108, n. 160.

on the cross and Jesus' correspondence to that altruism in radical obedience; the pouring forth of this divine kenotic love upon the remainder of mankind is the origin of God as Holy Spirit.[34] God truly becomes, and is capable of suffering, not because of any deficiency in his being but rather out of the fullness of his being, i.e. his love.

Among the reservations felt towards this project, four interrelated ones stand out:

1. *God's transcendence is compromised.* The import of Nicaea (as Moltmann himself concedes)[35] was that God is not mutable and subject to change as are creatures. In later theology, immutability was not an attribute of God able to be thematized positively in a concept but a denial to him of a creaturely and finite condition. Such predication explicitly did not intend any compromise of his immanence within the world. Indeed, Aquinas insists that God's transcending of change (not of "act," it should be noted) is the root principle of his immanence, and so he is able to say in effect that God is more intimate to each entity of the world than it is to itself.[36] But it is difficult to see how the changeability of God demanded by Moltmann is not reductively creaturely and finite. He readily concedes the term "panentheistic" as descriptive of his thought (p. 277). His instinct for involving God in the suffering of the world is surely a right one rooted in Christian faith, but Moltmann's manner of doing this jettisons something that belongs to the very deity of God.

2. *God's being is reduced to history.* Moltmann declares himself open to Schleiermacher's "complete reshaping of the doctrine of the Trinity" in which "the nature of God would have to be the human history of Christ and not a divine 'nature' separate from man" (p. 239). He repudiates the phrase "God in history" in favor of "history in God" (pp. 246-47), which appears to historicize divinity and to make God into the primal instance of what we know as human historical becoming. The Trinity is then "no self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open to men on earth, which stems from the cross of Christ" (p. 249). But identifying this process with the triunity of God's own being means reconceiving history in some idiosyncratic sense—for example, such as Barth's *Ursgeschichte*, or Pannenberg's *prolepsis* in which the future is given ontological priority. Moreover, Moltmann's own concept of history is one that seemingly empties the present of ultimate meaning.

3. *God's being is conceived as identical with the event which transforms human existence.* In essence, this is the objection lodged by Helmut Gollwitzer against the thrust of radical Barthian theology.[37] It is a telling criticism that challenges Moltmann's theology more than that of Barth. Jüngel's attempt to counter the objection only appeals to the assumptions which lie at the heart of Barth's theological program.

[34] *The Crucified God, passim;* see especially pp. 244-45, 151-52, 207, 227, 243.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[36] I *Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 1, *solutio* and ad 4.

[37] H. Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God as Confessed by Faith* (London: 1969), trans. of *Die Existenz Gottes im Bekenntnis des Glaubens* (Munich, 1963); Jüngel states Gollwitzer's objection and attempts a reply to it, in *op. cit.*, p. xii.

4. *Infinite love need not require suffering.* Love between persons is an intentional and affective union of lover with beloved, in which the latter is esteemed for his own intrinsic worth, apart from any ulterior motive however exalted. The lover is thus constrained to alleviate any evil that may have befallen the loved one. This means that the finite lover is exposed to the very evil visited upon the beloved, so that in a vicarious sense at least it becomes an evil that afflicts him. But this is due to the condition of finitude rather than to the formality of love itself; the latter bespeaks only acceptance of the beloved as infinitely loveable in his own right, and the seeking of his enrichment including his liberation from wretchedness. This, at any rate, is altruistic love, articulated in the New Testament as *agape*, in which the lover seeks not his own good but that of the beloved. If God is rendered passive and affected by the world, in the sense of genuinely undergoing suffering in his ontic being and nature, then it has to be allowed that the divinity itself can be lessened and diminished in its own being and goodness, and to this extent God assumes an intrinsic condition of finitude. If somehow God guarantees that such suffering eventually leads only to growth and increment, then this demands positing goals that lie beyond God, in a realm of values not yet his own, and denies ultimacy to God here and now.

This is no denial of the paradoxical truth, confessed by faith, that God suffers. In the death of Christ, it is the eternal Word that suffers and not (as Moltmann at one point seems to imply; see p. 228) merely the humanity—though it is true that the Son suffers only in and through his humanity and not his divine nature. But it is to view that entering into the world's anguish as totally redemptive in motive. It is God's willing freely to take on man's condition in order to overthrow sin, as the source of suffering, from within. Moltmann's trinitarianism rather makes suffering to be an intrinsic component of divinity in its own being, and seemingly reduces divine love to a state of finitude.

B. AN ALTERNATIVE TRINITARIANISM[38]

The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, elaborated during the Patristic era from its matrix in the New Testament, traces a torturous dialectical development that is argued fiercely and at times acrimoniously. Its earliest appearance is as an economic trinitarianism (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus) which is displaced in time by Origen's eternal immanent Trinity. The latter, however, cannot be absolved of a persistent element of subordinationism, one that eventually is made fully explicit in Arianism. This set the stage for the work of Athanasius and its culmination in the so-called "Cappadocian settlement," with the formula of orthodoxy: three *hypostases* of one *ousia*. The Cappadocian distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, however, meant that the Trinity revealed in salvation history is not entirely identical with the Trinity of God's inner being—an approach that tended to slight the

[38]The views expressed here are worked out in some detail in a book entitled *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*, scheduled to appear in 1979.

trinitarian dimension of both creation and salvation. Augustine's use of the category "relation" suggests a God of a threefold inner self-referencing, in which the term "persons" is justified solely on the basis of the practice of the Church. A major breakthrough is reached with Aquinas' real distinction between finite essence and existence, in which the latter is understood as act. The members of the Trinity are here viewed in terms of *subsistentia*, a Latin term that closely approximates what the Greeks meant by *hypostasis*. It is also rendered as *persona* (probably from *per se una*) and when used plurally of the Trinity conveys really distinct concrete and objective modes of one unique act of existing. This is the concept of person in its metaphysical sense; it explains distinction within the godhead as real in a purely relative sense. The connotation is more objective than subjective or intersubjective; still, the implication is clear that the divine act of to-be is exercised in a relatively distinct way by each of the *hypostases*.

Contemporary theological speculation suggests the feasibility of a further move beyond that of Aquinas. This consists in a deployment of the category "person," in discourse on the Trinity, in ways that are analogous not only to the metaphysical sense of the term but to its psychological sense as well. The Trinity, so viewed, bespeaks not merely "three modes of existing" (Barth), nor "three modes of subsisting" (Rahner), but three divine *subjects*—subjects both of the act of to-be (person in the metaphysical sense of *hypostasis*) and of the acts of knowing and loving (person as analogous to the psychological use of the term). All danger of tritheism is precluded in the insistence upon three subjects *of one consciousness*, who are distinct in an exclusively relative way. Nature and person as said of God are really identical, but remain conceptually distinct, enabling one to say that there is one consciousness but three who are conscious. The Trinity is thus a community of persons, a divine *kononia*, in which the to-be of God is a to-be-with (*Mitsein*). Conceived as nature, God is beyond change and process; conceived in terms of personhood, he is beyond immutability and necessity. Personhood is situated in the realm of freedom and is realized on the intentional order of conscious knowing and loving. This allows for a view of person as self-constituting and self-positing precisely in the free relating of the self to the personally other in the latter's very otherness. Divine life is thus an intersubjectivity in which the divine persons elect in the mystery of transcendent freedom and love to be *who* (not *what*) they will be vis-à-vis one another. Insofar as a divine person is a subject, not only of essential acts of divinity, but notional or personal acts as well (the processions of origin)—which latter are nothing other than the pure act of relating—the intersubjectivity is an ordered one that precludes confusing the distinct identities of the Three.

It is this divine intersubjectivity that grounds God's dynamic relationality to a world of free human subjects, to the historical world in which novelty is a genuine possibility. The world bears above all the character of the human, and even as cosmos is humanized. It is then a world that unfolds historically—but in necessary relationship to God.

On the assumption of God's unexacted decision to summon a world out of nothingness, he relates to that world—to all dimensions of space (omnipresence) and to all moments of time (eternity)—not contingently and accidentally, but necessarily and essentially. This is true both in the sense that God could not not be related to the universe once it exists, and in the sense that the nature of the relationship could not violate God's nature as wise, good, loving, etc. Nonetheless, the specific character of that all-encompassing relationship, of the concrete communication constituting it, remains undetermined in the mysterious depths of transcendent freedom and infinitely creative love. That is to say that God wishes the communication to occur on the level of personhood, to be not only a self-communication, but one that is intersubjective in kind. His own love chooses to submit itself to the dialogic responses, both positive and negative in kind, of mankind, without ceasing to remain in itself gratuitous. This means that God is in history, but need not mean that he is himself historical. Just so, the world is a world *in* process, but not a world *of* process. Grace empowers nature (as conscious in man) to reduplicate the life of the Trinity. In his own inner being, God is a triunity—three persons present to one another in the self-positing intentionality of a purely actual knowing and loving that is constitutive of the deity in the unicity of its nature. In this eternal self-presence, God transcends even his transcending presence to the world.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

1. *First Day*

There seemed to be general agreement that Moltmann's book is quite stimulating and that it does make the Trinity relevant to contemporary views of man and the world as in process. But there was likewise general agreement that Moltmann's project on the whole is inadequate. This point was made, moreover, from a variety of theological stances and commitments. One participant, for example, argued: "Moltmann makes God become a Trinity at a moment in history, which ignores the truth of what earlier thinkers meant by calling God immutable and eternal." By that he meant that the distinction of three persons within the Trinity only took place with the death of Jesus on the cross, when the Holy Spirit was needed to effect a reconciliation between the Father and the Son thus separated from one another. The panelists all agreed that this was a well-founded objection, although Bracken and Sears pointed out that Mühlen, on whom Moltmann himself depends so heavily for this part of his theory, is much clearer in maintaining the ontological reality of the immanent Trinity, quite apart from its workings in salvation history.

Likewise, it was argued that Moltmann's interpretation of Christ's cry of dereliction from the cross (cf. Mark 15:34) is one-sided. Psalm 22 actually ends on a note of triumph. Since Christ presumably knew how the Psalm ended, his use of it from the cross does not suggest that he felt totally abandoned by the Father, as Moltmann proposes, but rather that

he was sustained by the Father's love even at the moment of death (cf. "Thesis One" in Sears' presentation). From another side, it was argued that Moltmann's thesis of the suffering of God has to be more carefully nuanced. Is divine suffering truly compatible with everything else we believe about God, e.g. his transcendence, immutability, infinity? Or does it compel acceptance of a finite God, as so many of the process thinkers, notably Alfred North Whitehead, concede? In any case, further research should be undertaken into the scholastic understanding of act and the contemporary idea of process.

In the same line, it was argued that Bracken in his critique of Moltmann much too strongly emphasized the role of process thought in Moltmann's hypothesis. Moltmann, it was argued, is basically an Hegelian, not a process thinker after the fashion of Whitehead. To this, Hill replied that an uncritical use of Hegel's thought for the relationship between God and the world will result in pantheism. No distinction will be made, in other words, between the Father's emptying out of himself from all eternity into the Son and the temporal emptying out of the triune God in the act of creation in order to make room for the world within the fullness of their own being. Bracken for his part admitted the ambiguity of his critique of Moltmann. What he was really suggesting was that Moltmann's position, to be consistent, ought to be thought through in process categories. Since Moltmann does not do this, his hypothesis lacks an adequate theoretical foundation.

Finally, it was argued that Moltmann's overall vision is much too anthropomorphic, virtually a myth in the pejorative sense of the term. Yet it was counterargued by more than one participant that the traditional myth of God's imperviousness to pain and suffering is precisely what Moltmann wishes to dislodge from Western consciousness. Hence Moltmann's work will in any case force contemporary Christians to re-evaluate their traditional concept of God. How much does the traditional notion of God as absolute and omnipotent, for example, correspond to an ideal of human life that is basically self-centered and egotistical? Contrarily, what does the cross tell us about the need for compassion and vulnerability in dealing with others? Perhaps the divinity of Christ shines forth more clearly in his utter weakness and powerlessness at the moment of death than in his working of miracles during the public life.

2. *Second Day*

Discussion ranged over the individual presentations of the three panelists, with questions addressed now to this panelist, now to that. At the same time, there was general agreement that the three presentations had much in common: notably the belief in the Trinity as a community of three divine persons, the conviction that salvation history is intelligible only as a movement from the Trinity as transcendent source of creation to the Trinity as its ultimate goal, and finally the methodological decision to move from antecedent belief in the Trinity to the explanation of human experience rather than vice-versa. In one way or another, objec-

tions were raised to all three of these presuppositions. For example, with reference to the common methodological decision of the panelists, it was objected that this deductive or strictly metaphysical approach did violence both to the data of Scripture and to the facts of human experience. To this Hill replied that a deeper understanding both of Scripture and of human experience demands that one think systematically, i.e., in terms of an underlying ontology or metaphysics. Sears and Bracken, for their part, insisted that the understanding of the Trinity as a community of divine persons was in large measure derived from reflection on human experience, namely, the experience of becoming a person in and through membership in a community.

With reference to the second presupposition, namely, that the Trinity is both transcendent source and ultimate goal of salvation history, it was objected that the three panelists only paid lip service to the notion of the Trinity as the goal of human history. All attention was focused on the Trinity as the ideal community from which human community, such as it is, is imperfectly derived, and virtually nothing was said about how belief in the Trinity as a divine community can be used to transform the structures of society, improve human life for the better. To this Sears replied that his four stages of religious development (cf. Thesis Three in his presentation) are grounded in the history of salvation, as portrayed in the Bible, and certainly have as their implicit goal the progressive transformation, not only of individuals, but of human society at large. At the same time, it was conceded by all the panelists that this soteriological or eschatological dimension of the doctrine of the Trinity as a community of persons deserves further elaboration, and thus might well be the subject of a panel discussion next year at the CTSA convention in Atlanta.

Finally, with reference to the first presupposition, i.e. the belief in the Trinity as a community of persons, it was pointed out that if one accepts with Mühlen that the Holy Spirit is the "We" or the community of the Father and the Son in person, then in some sense the Father and the Son are subordinate to the Spirit. He/she is the goal of the process of interaction between the other two and as such is God in the fullest sense. Admittedly, in classical Trinitarian theology, the Father as the Unoriginate, the one who generates the Son and, together with the Son, spirates the Spirit, enjoys a similar preeminence over the other two persons. But the claim was never advanced in classical Trinitarian theology that the three divine persons are, strictly speaking, a community. To this Sears replied that Mühlen did not have in mind an inner-Trinitarian process ending in the Holy Spirit, as rather a distinction of persons within the Trinity based on the human experience of the irreducible difference between the personal pronouns I, You and We. Bracken for his part felt that the objection did not touch his own thesis, which differs from that of Mühlen precisely on this point. That is, where Mühlen proposes that the Holy Spirit is the "We" of the Father and the Son in person, Bracken believes that the "We" is constituted by the divine nature, understood as a process of self-giving love in which all three persons share equally.

Thus, if one person is understood to be the bond of love between the other two, then not the Holy Spirit alone, but each of the three persons is the bond of unity between the other two. Perfect equality, in other words, governs the relationship between the persons.

3. *Third Day*

At the end of the second day, four topics were proposed for further discussion in the third session (cf. the Introduction to this report). Sears led off with his own reflections on one of those topics, namely, the relation of the Trinity to human history and to world process. Quoting Gordon Kaufman in his book, *Systematic Theology*, Sears suggested that historicity must be understood in an interpersonal context. That is, historicity implies the historical unity of humanity in virtue of a network of personal choices perpetuated from one generation to the next. One's choices, in other words, affect succeeding generations, in that they set limits and/or open up possibilities not only for oneself but for many others as well. In the same way, meanings and values are given a distinctive shape by the individuals who embody them in any given generation and thus are inevitably transformed in the process of communicating them to one's children and grandchildren. Such a view of human history might well incline one to social determinism, hence to a practical denial of the possibility of personal self-transcendence over against the historical process as a whole. This, however, said Sears, need not be the case. For each human being, there is a possibility of radical self-transcendence. But this implies being grounded in one's true self (the individuation process) rather than being simply defined by others. One's true self, however, is continuously being created in the image of God, i.e., according to the pattern of Christ who lived individuation by facing the cross. Through the cross, therefore, Christ freed his history and ours for universal interpersonal community. Sin is a factor in the historical process, to the extent that individuals lose their grounding in self-transcending love and seek their personal definition simply in terms of inner-world relations, the histsorical process as it has thus far developed and unfolded.

Sears concluded by calling attention to the male-female polarity in human life. A loss of self-transcendence in this critical area of human experience makes itself manifest in stereotyped behavior. There results a dominating/clinging pattern in male-female relationships, which actually reflects the underlying anxiety of making individual historical decisions on the basis of limited self-understanding. Healing here would imply genuine individuation on the part of both men and women and the development of a true relationship which respects the uniqueness of each person, irrespective of sex. Thus the cross, understood as the slow and sometimes painful process of individuation, frees the historical process from destruction and decline.

In response to questions, Sears pointed out that what he meant by "healing" in the above exposition is analogous to what Teilhard de Chardin meant by "radial energy," i.e., the power of mind to transform

the conditions of matter. Likewise, he pointed out that conflict arising out of polarities need not be destructive. Carl Jung, for example, in his *Psychology of Types* (1921), argued that the more intense the psychic polarity, the greater the possibility of consciousness. At this point a seminar participant intervened to suggest that the cause of destructive polarities is human sinfulness. In particular, the relationship between God and human beings will be conflictual, alienating, until the master-slave mentality is overcome in and through Christ's death on the cross. That is, the cross reveals God's powerlessness in the face of evil; yet this same powerlessness upon closer inspection turns out to be strength, a freely chosen vulnerability in the face of evil for the sake of the other's freedom of choice. Seen from this perspective, the potential rivalry of the God-man relationship is eliminated in favor of a new sense of community, based on self-giving love with God taking the initiative and human beings responding.

Here an objection was raised that the proper frame of reference for God's action in the world should be the cosmos, not interpersonal relations as such. In particular, the metaphysical question whether the three divine persons undergo change in virtue of their relationship to the world cannot be long postponed. In response, Hill suggested that God alters in relation to our coming to act, but he does not change in his essence. Sears, relying on Eberhard Jüngel in his *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (1976), proposed that God's full self-expression is accomplished in eternity but that this same process is revealed in creation through a choice made from all eternity. Thus God's being is in becoming, not in the sense that God himself becomes, but rather in the sense that he reveals himself in the phenomenon of becoming, i.e., in creation understood as a world process. Bracken, on the other hand, suggested that perhaps the appropriate model for God's action in the world is in fact interpersonal relations rather than the cosmos as such. For, on the model of interpersonal relations, God can be present to the world, immanent within it, intentionally; and yet simultaneously transcend it, much as human beings transcend their intentional grasp of one another within any I-Thou relationship growth on the part of both parties is necessary for the relationship to develop. Hence, on the model of relationship, hence a fortiori in the God-world relationship. Similarly, within any I-Thou relationship browth on the part of both parties is necessary for the relationship to develop. Hence, on the model of interpersonal relations, God does change in virtue of his relationship to the world (understood, of course, as the community of rational creatures capable of responding to his loving initatives). When we respond to God's love, God is able to love us even more deeply than before. Yet all this makes sense only within an interpersonal context for the God-world relationship.

One last area of discussion dealt with the question of analogies in talking about the Trinity. On the one hand, it is clear that traditional church teaching on the Trinity serves as a kind of "grammar" for the understanding of the doctrine; it sets out the necessary parameters for

further speculation. Yet creativity and originality must also play a role in keeping the dogma relevant to contemporary understanding. Human self-understanding would seem to be the key here. As the notion of the self changes, so too the governing concept of God will be altered. Kierkegaard, for example, conceived the self to be a relational reality, i.e., the ongoing act of relating to others. This contemporary understanding of the self finds striking confirmation in the classical understanding of the divine persons as subsistent relations. Perhaps one can understand better what it means to be a human person from a more intensive study of the classical doctrine of the Trinity, and contrarily the classical understanding of the Trinity might well be rejuvenated by contemporary notions of person and community. In any case, it seemed worthwhile to many to include this topic also among the themes for a future seminar on the Trinity.

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