

AFTER NICAEEA: DEVELOPING A RELATIONAL MODEL OF THE TRINITY

Georgiana HUIAN

Professor at the Institute of Old Catholic Theology, University of Bern
and St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, Paris

<https://doi.org/10.47433/tv.ci1-4.184>

Abstract

This paper analyses strands in patristic thought and the modern Nicene heritage of inner-Trinitarian relations. First, I examine a link between the Athanasian conception of the Father-Son relation and the dynamics described by Gregory of Nazianzus. Gregory's light imagery builds on a Nicene understanding of apophaticism and induces a new understanding of the Trinity. This links pertinent topological and relational aspects, and also reflects three sources: (1) John's Gospel, (2) the philosophical emphasis on light and illumination, and (3) the Nicene formulation 'Light from Light'. Second, I examine the impact of the relational turn in modern Trinitarian theology. I analyse both Hans Urs von Balthasar's topological and dramatic concepts and John Zizioulas' discussions of the hypostasis. I also examine how Dumitru Stăniloae connects light imagery with Trinitarian intersubjectivity and the perfect communion of love. I conclude by evaluating the creative potential such a model has for contemporary Trinitarian reflections.

Keywords: Trinity, relation, otherness, apophaticism, antinomy, communion

1. Introduction

Approaching recent studies on the link between the Nicene Creed and Trinitarian theology's shaping might leave the unprepared reader impressed but also confused by the technicalities. The Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople is embedded in liturgical life and daily prayer rituals. However, the gulf between the theological language (in either historical or systematic analysis) and relevant liturgical and doxological uses seems to be growing. Bridging a conception of Trinitarian relations and an affirmation of the 'consubstantiality' (*homo-ousios*) of the Son with the Father is a work of 'conceptual translation'. This conceptual translation journeys between Christology (*homooousios*) and Trinitarian theology (up to its relational and dramatic understandings). It also connects