

Trinitarian Perspectives on Ecology

Lucio Florio

FLORIO, L.: Trinitarian Perspectives on Ecology. *Studia Aloisiana*, 6, 2015, 3, S. 17 – 31.

The New Testament incorporates the concept of the Trinity to express the novelty of the message of Jesus Christ about the divine ontology. In Mt 28:19, we are presented with Jesus Christ resurrected who exhorts his disciples to announce the Gospel and to “baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. In Christian theology, this idea called for the elaboration of a new category of being: the substantial relation. Primitive Christianity thought that the deepest reality was this substantially relational reality. In fact, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “to be for the other” absolutes in the single nature or divine substance. Then, God is conceived as a mystery of communion; thus, the expression *perichoresis* was elaborated to indicate this relationship. It means that each of the divine persons is in the other without confounding or annulling one another.

The projection of this idea of a “God-communion” into a perception of Nature is present in some of the first theologians. This paper aims to show the Trinitarian understanding of Nature some of them had and the possible consequences for an ecological theology.

Keywords: Trinity, ecology, perichoresis

Introduction

The image of the God of Jesus Christ originated in the New Testament includes, in our view, elements that can be further developed to illuminate an increasingly dramatic environmental situation.¹ In recent years, some sketches of Trinitarian thinking about ecology, nourished in the Trinitarian renewal of the preceding decades, have become available.²

1 S. Morandini presents this idea in these words: “Crediamo che la dimensione trinitaria della presenza di Dio nella creazione sia importante anche per una etica teologica dell’ambiente; essa supera quello stretto antropocentrismo cui abbiamo visto esposto un pensiero esclusivamente cristocentrico...” (MORANDINI, S.: *Teologia ed Ecologia*. Brescia : Morcelliana, 2005, p. 188.)

2 Cf. SALVATI, G. M.: La dottrina trinitaria nella teologia cattolica postconciliare : Autore e prospettive. In: SALVATI, G. M.: *Sul Dio cristiano : Contributi di teologia trinitaria*. Roma, 1993.

1. Trinitarian Monotheism

Christianity has supplied the concept of a Trinitarian absolute together with the idea of an incarnation or humanization of God. The novelty in the message of Jesus Christ about divine ontology is that God is three “persons” – i.e., Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a singular reality with three personal poles: a triple fragmentation within a single, unique transcendent reference. In other words, the ultimate horizon is conceived as one and simultaneously, three-parted. The gospel of Matthew 28:19 presents a resurrected Jesus Christ who exhorts his disciples to “baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. The fact is that the primitive Christian community believed God to be one and plural at the same time; this certainty is at the core of belief and forms part of the liturgy of primitive Christianity. Moreover, it establishes an outstanding difference with the Jewish uni-personalist monotheism.

1.1. The New Testament

According to the New Testament, Christ is the one who overtly reveals God because he is the very eternal Word incarnated in a human being (cf. Jn 1:1). His life and predication show this divine intimacy at several moments. Moreover, he manifests the novelty of the existence of the three, unlike the Jewish mono-personalist God, as aforementioned; in fact, Jesus speaks about his Father (cf. Lk 15; Jn 14:1-14), the Paraclete – or Holy Spirit – (cf. Jn 16:4-15), and of himself as the Son.

1.1.1. Son/Logos

The prologue to the Gospel according to John (John 1:1-14) proposes Jesus Christ before the incarnation as the *Logos* (from the Greek, *λόγος*, word or verb). The semantic scope of this expression has been studied for centuries and its theological application has become central to the understanding of the Christian idea of God.³ Its original meaning can be found in the Jewish world;⁴ nevertheless, its utilization in the Greek tradition has Hellenized the idea because of its translation into the term *λόγος*, a multifaceted word in the Greek culture. Then, *Logos* was conceived in analogy with human thought and a substantial part of the Trinitarian theology was thus built on this perspective. Consequently, for the Western tradition, there is a reality in God that can

3 Cf. ESPINEL, J. L.: *Logos*. In: *Diccionario Teológico : El Dios cristiano*. Salamanca : Secretariado Trinitario, 1992, pp. 841–852; BROWN, R. E.: *El Evangelio según Juan*. Madrid : Cristiandad, 1979, pp. 1495–1511.

4 As Brown points out: “To sum up, it seems the notion of the Word in the Prologue is closer to Jewish thought than to purely Hellenistic ideas. In the idea of the theologian composing the Prologue, the creating word of God, the word of the Lord communicated to the prophets, has become person in Jesus, who incarnates divine revelation. Jesus pre-exists divine Wisdom, only now appearing among men to reveal his doctrine and give them life.” (BROWN, R. E.: *El Evangelio según Juan*, p. 1501.)

be defined from rationality. Anyway, this second person has saturated with rationality the created cosmos, because the Logos was both designer and Creator of the cosmos. Finally, this eternal Logos introduces himself into his opus as a human being.

1.1.2. The Father

There is a remote history of the revelation of the Father in heathen Mesopotamia, Canaan, Egypt, in villages where the attribution to one or several of the gods appears. However, it is in the biblical revelation that a distinct image of God as Father is configured and the Old Testament has numerous references to this. In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of the Father as the one who is the source and fullness of divinity in its primary origin. The Father, in effect, shows the first way to be God: God the Father is the Creator (Mk 10:6-9) and has spoken in the history of Israel (Mk 7:13); he is provident as well (Mt 5:45). He makes his sun rise on both the evil and the good, rain on the just and the unjust (Mt 6:26.32), he looks after everything, even the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, well aware of our needs (Mt 10:29-3, etc.). Exegetes hold that the Aramaic term *Abba* uttered by Jesus to enter into conversation with his Father at the time of the crucifixion (Mk 14:36) is true because it has not been translated into Greek. They have suggested that it would be an *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, an expression used by Jesus.

1.1.3. The Holy Spirit

The New Testament describes a third figure, the Holy Spirit, with increasingly personal traits and comparable to the other two. In that sense, in the Acts of the Apostles an idea of the Spirit as a "someone" gradually takes shape. The Spirit is the one who makes decisions and orders (cf. Acts 15:28). In the letters of St. Paul, the divine identity of the Spirit is even more clearly configured (see 1 Cor 12:8-9.11) and it is St. John who introduces a new term for the Spirit: *Paraclete* (cf. Jn 14:15-17; 16:7, etc.).⁵

2. An Early Understanding of Trinity

2.1. The *Homo-ousios* conceptualization and the new application of the relation category

After the reception of the image of the God presented of the New Testament there begins a stage of conceptual elaboration about it. The theoretical

⁵ Because it would go beyond the purposes of this paper, the biblical bases for a theology of ecology are not developed here. Cf. FLORIO, L.: *Il messaggio biblico sulla natura : Una nuova visione dell'ecologia*. In: LEVORATTI, A.: *Nuovo commentario biblico : I. I Vangeli*. Roma : Edizioni Borla, 2005, pp.141-147.

debate about this new conception of monotheism produced a series of words of theological validity, even beyond the strictly theological field.⁶

Some elaborations were deemed incoherent by the early Church as regards New Testament data. This was the case, for instance, of Arians, who argued that the Son-Logos was not divine but an absolutely unique creature, created prior to the rest of the universe and at an intermediate stage in the process of creation. The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) did not accept such statement and expressed the ontological status of the Logos appealing to an expression from the Hellenic philosophical world: *ousia* (οὐσία). The Council stated that the Son is *homoousios* (ὁμοούσιος) with God the Father, i.e. Father and Logos share the same *substance* or *nature*; i.e., they are consubstantial between them.⁷

The formula *homoousios* had a clearly Trinitarian aim: to speak about God himself. However, in an indirect way, it offers a key to the interpretation of the creation. In fact, if God is a communication of the same substance – with no separation or partition whatsoever – among three “who”; then, the participated being would be an ontological structure analogous to him.

This conception of God led many thinkers to the search for new ways of conceptualization. St Augustine of Hippo intuited that the issue should be resolved from the relation, which should be thought of not only as a category or accidental predicament, as received from Aristotle:

In Deo autem nihil quidem secundum accidens dicitur, quia nihil in eo mutabile est; nec tamen omne quod dicitur, secundum substantiam dicitur. Dicitur enim ad aliquid, sicut Pater ad Filium, et Filius ad Patrem, quod non est accidens: quia et ille semper Pater, et ille semper Filius...
(*De Trin.*, V, 5, 6)

According to Augustine, not everything that is said about God belongs to the Aristotelian predicament of substance; there is something that belongs to the relation. The expression used by this theologian is: *ad aliquid*. Then, the idea of a tri-personal God caused the elaboration of a new category or predicament of being – unknown by Aristotle: the *substantial relation*.⁸

6 It is the case of the expression “person”, taken from previous philosophical debates but developed in Trinitarian and Christological discussions in centuries III–VIII. Cf. MILANO, A.: *Persona in teologia*. Naples : Dehoniane, 1984.

7 Cf. MILANO, A.: La Trinità dei teologi e dei filosofi, l'intelligenza della persona in Dio. In: PAVAN, A., MILANO, A. (eds.): *Persona e personalismi*. Naples : Dehoniane, 1987, pp. 27–28.

8 BROWER, J.: Medieval Theories of Relations. In: ZALTA, E. N. (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/relations-medieval/>: “(...) considerations associated with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity forced them to admit that, in certain relational situations, even substances themselves can qualify as relations. Augustine discusses both types of theological considerations in *De Trinitate V*, especially, 208–215. This text exercised enormous influence on the subsequent medieval treatment of relational situations. Prior to the fourteenth century, however, these sorts of situations were regarded as special cases, rare exceptions to a general rule.”

2.2. An Absolute Communion

Primitive Christianity then thought that the deepest reality was this substantially relational reality that is God himself. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “one for the others” in the single divine substance. They communicate with each other without any kind of reserve of knowledge and love. Patristic thought developed the expression *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις), which translated into Latin by *circumincessio* or *circuminsessio*,⁹ in an attempt to express that each of the three is in the other without mixture or confusion. A suitable term to express this is the concept of *communion*. God would be a mystery of communion in his deepest reality.¹⁰

This image of the “Absolute-communion” has had a great influence on the perception not only of God himself but also of the whole reality. A contemporary theologian, Walter Kasper, explains so:

“By means of analogy, the *communion* Trinitarian unity appears as a Christian way of understanding reality. In fact, the elaboration of the Trinitarian doctrine implies the overcoming of an idea of reality characterized by the pre-eminence of the substance and essence that gives way to the primacy of the person and the relation. The ultimate reality is no longer the substance that lies in itself, but the person who is only conceivable fully in the give and take relation.”¹¹

From Tertullian on, more especially, as from Saint Augustine, there follows a tradition which perceives the Trinitarian structure of the beings. Augustine saw them in the non rational things (*vestigia Trinitatis*) but, above all, in the human world (*imago Trinitatis*), namely “Sed ex qua rerum notarum similitudine vel comparatione credamus, quo etiam nondum notum Deum diligamus, hoc quaeritur” (*De Trinitate*, VIII, 5, 8).

Augustine is not considered to be a very systematic thinker; however, he describes with a certain order the different traces of Trinity in the cosmos and in the human reality. He distinguishes between *vestigia* and *imago Trinitatis*: *vestigia* being the traces of God in non-spiritual creatures, and *imago*

9 Cf. DEWAILLY, L. M.: *Communio-communicatio*. In: *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques*, 1970, pp. 46–63; GRESHAKE, G.: *Trinität als Communio*. In: *Der Dreine Gott: Eine trinitarische Theologie*. Freiburg im Breisgau : Herder, 1998, pp. 179–216.

10 BOFF, L.: *La Santísima Trinidad es la mejor comunidad*. Vol. 4. Colección Caminos. Serie A. Madrid : Ediciones Paulinas, 1990, p. 18: “Communion is the deepest and the most founding reality.” (our translation)

11 KASPER, W.: *El Dios de Jesucristo*. Salamanca : Ediciones Sígueme, 2011, p. 351–352. (our translation)

being the human spirit as the closest reality to that of the Trinity.¹² The topic has continued to be researched upon along the history of theology.¹³

3. Some Trinitarian Projections on Ecology

Is it possible to transfer this view into an ecological sensibility? We propose some lines of reflection that update the Trinitarian issue to enlighten the issue of contemporary ecological crisis.

3.1. Ecological destruction and disappearance of the Trinitarian forms

Neil Vaney, for example, drawing on the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, finds the beauty of creation that mirrors God's beauty as a basis for the moral obligation to preserve all other living species.¹⁴ He states that not only does cosmos mirror the Trinity, but that each of its particular forms mirrors it:

"The specific identity of a particular rock or flower or human person manifests the Word. Its relationship with an ecosystem and an inter-related cosmos manifests the bond of love which is the Holy Spirit (...) The wonderful range of creatures reflects the immensity and mystery of God."¹⁵

12 In *De Trinitate*, Augustine begins with the pre-rational things that he calls *vestigia trinitatis* (see: IV,1,2; VI,10,11; VI,10,11; VI,10,12; VI,10,12). From books VIII–XV the focus is oriented to the human being, i.e., the true *imago Trinitatis*: 1: *amans, amatum, amor* (VIII,10,14); *mens, notitia, amor* (IX,3,3 and IX,12,17); 3: *memoria, intelligentia, voluntas* (X,11,17); 4: *res, visio, animae intentio* (XI,2,2); 5: *memoria (sensitiva), visio (interior), voluntas (unitiva)* (IX,3,6–9); 6: *memoria, scientia, voluntas* (XII,15,25); 7: *Scientia fidei, memoria (interior), voluntas* (XIII,20,26); 8: *scientia Dei, intelligentia Dei, amor Dei* (XIV,12,15).

13 This is one classification, according to Erwin Schadel's *Bibliotheca Trinitariorum: ANALOGIA TRINITATIS, trinitarische Symbolik: I. Allg. Studien. II. Historische Aspekte (bes. Augustinus, Bonaventura, Nikolaus v. Kues). III. Charakteristische Einzelbegriffe: III.1. gradatio, ascensus, Aufstieg; III.2. similitudo, Gleichnis, Ähnlichkeit; III.3. vestigium, Spur; III.4. imago (u.a.). IV. Trinitätsanalogien in einzelnen Seinsbereichen. IV.1. in der äusseren Welt (Natur u. Kosmos). IV.1.1. Allgemeines. IV.1.2. Licht- u. Farbsymbolik. IV.1.3. Weitere Einzelsymbole. IV. 2. Im Menschen als Individual- und Sozialwesen: IV.2.1. Allgemeines; IV.2.2. im äusseren Menschen; IV.2.3. im inneren Menschen, d.h. in der 'Seele' bzw. im 'Geist' des Menschen ("psychologische" Trinitätsanalogien). IV.2.4. Familienanalogie. IV.2.5. Geschlechtersymbolik. IV.2.6. Soziale u. staatsphilosophische Triadik. IV.3. in Kunst u. Kultur. IV.3.1. Allgemeines. IV.3.2. Buch-, Theater- Spiegelvergleich. IV.3.3. Dreieck. IV.3.4. Dreizahl. IV.3.5. Kreis, Kugel, Kubus. IV.3.6. Weitere Einzelsymbole. V. Verschiedenen Einzelprobleme. (SCHADEL, E.: *Bibliotheca Trinitaria: International Bibliography of Trinitarian Literature*. Vol. II. München: K. G. Saur, 1988, pp. 35–479.)*

14 Cf. SCHAEFER, J.: Appreciating the Beauty of Earth. In: *Theological Studies*, 62, 2001, 1, pp. 23–52.

15 VANEY, N.: Biodiversity and Beauty. In: *Pacifica*, 8, 1995, pp. 335–345, making reference to the text of S. Th. I, 45, 7.

Not only individuals but also the ecosystems and the biosphere as a whole reflect the triune God: "Every creature, every species, every ecosystem, the Earth itself, and the whole expanding universe are the self-communication of God."¹⁶

Later, he goes on to express:

"In the ecosystems of Earth, rain forests and the great whales are all manifestations of God then their willful destruction is also repudiation against nature but a sin against God. As Thomas Berry has written, 'We should be clear about what happens when we destroy the living forms of the planet. The first consequence is that we destroy modes of divine presence.'"¹⁷

The beauty of God is reflected in the diversity of creation, but this beauty is being eliminated through the annihilation of whole species of plants and animals, that is why he says: "Killing species diminishes the beauty of creation as a whole, thus lessening the external glory of God. This is an act of irreverence inasmuch as it reduces creation's ability to render God praise."¹⁸

The author interprets this phenomenon by appealing to the intra-Trinitarian theology of kenosis: the destruction of nature will be located within the kenosis succession – first inside and then, the economy – of the triune God.¹⁹

3.2. The ecological crisis as a chance for a perception of the relationship between nature and its Trinitarian source

The ecological problem leads to a deepening of the relationships between the Trinity and creation. Thus, for example, Giuseppe Marco Salvati²⁰ wonders when the physical creation is a vestige. His answer to the inquiry is simple: when it lets you discover the creation as a Trinitarian work,²¹ both in its pure condition or modified and perfected by the human hand. In this sense, it is necessary to suggest, again, the mystery of God as the source, model and the end of the whole reality.

The Trinitarian God is, first and foremost, the origin of reality: everything comes from the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Creation is an

16 VANEY, N.: Biodiversity and Beauty. In: *Pacifica*, 8, 1995, pp. 335–345.

17 VANEY, N.: Biodiversity and Beauty. In: *Pacifica*, 8, 1995, pp. 335–345; citing BERRY, T.: *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco : Serra Club Books, 1988, p. 11.

18 VANEY, N.: Biodiversity and Beauty. In: *Pacifica*, 8, 1995, p. 340: "Killing species diminishes the beauty of creation as a whole, thus lessening the external glory of God. This is an act of irreverence inasmuch as it reduces creation's ability to render God praise."

19 Cf. VANEY, N.: Biodiversity and Beauty. In: *Pacifica*, 8, 1995, p. 341.

20 Cf. SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, pp. 145–160.

21 Cf. SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, p. 155.

action carried out in perfect communion by the three Trinitarian persons. The divine persons exist inseparably in every action *ad extra*, thus being the sole cause of all created effect. However, it is possible to verify in creatures a kind of "influence" from each and all of the three persons; in this way, a Trinitarian imprint can be said to have been stamped on creatures.²²

From the point of view of the creation as effect, this appears as a kind of reflection of the intra-divine relationship life. From the perspective of biblical revelation, it can be said that all beings come to light from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. For this reason, everything has a common origin: the love of the Three, and everything else constitutes in itself a reflection of the Trinitarian Creator love who is self-giving, responsive and unitive love.²³

The Father is the source "of all visible and invisible things"²⁴. Consequently, each and every being, within its limitations and precarious reality, is a sign of the love of God and carries an otherness, a reference to another. This, on the one hand, means that God does not empty himself in creation and; on the other hand, guarantees the dignity and autonomy of every creature. This entails the obligation on the part of human beings to relate to the surrounding cosmos in a similar way as the Father has practiced and continues to do so. God the Father has bestowed personally himself on his creatures and these are the fruit of their love; from this follows a call to *familiarity*, to be open to all creatures.²⁵

According to the New Testament, all things were created by the Son (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16, Heb 1:2; Jn 1:3-10). Everything takes a filial imprint, i.e., hospitable, opening not only to the other but also to the infinitely *Other*. This assumes an innate solidarity among all existing beings, including human beings. As *per Verbum* created, every creature is *vox Verbi*. It has, therefore, an intrinsic logical structure: there lies, according to the Christian view, the truth of things and in things.

From the Father, through the Son, all created reality is brought to light in the Holy Spirit. This means, above all, that creation is the result of the personal love of God and, therefore, inherently good. In addition, it indicates that all is marked by a love that, as the Paraclete, establishes the unity and communion of the different beings: the idea of the necessity of communion as the law of created existence is reinforced again.

The contemporary ecological crisis should encourage the acquisition of a deeper perception of nature: it must be traced from its origin in fontal triune God. The deepening of the Trinitarian dimension of the life of God, Salvati

22 Cf. SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, p. 155.

23 Cf. SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, p. 156.

24 Formula of the Council of Nicaea (Ds 125).

25 SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, p. 157: "Quanto più ci si apre, quanto più si diventa 'oblativi', tanto più ci si realizza: ecco la legge che scaturisce dalla realtà del Padre Creatore."

stresses, "is the most appropriate and robust to a new attitude of believers in relation to the foundation created reality"²⁶.

3.3. The *Vestigium* and *Imago Trinitatis* under the evolutionary dimension of the biosphere

A Trinitarian reflection about ecology must necessarily include the temporal dimension of living beings. It is, in fact, an evolutionary living being; thus, it is possible to express that the whole biosphere is evolutionary. This implies that individuals and species vary through a process characterized by selection and genetic information. Although the specific ways in which evolution occurs have yet to be fully elucidated, it is clear that the biosphere – both in its individuals and collectively – mutates over time, producing new species. This leads us to reflect on the Trinitarian dimension of the biosphere in its evolutionary dimension.²⁷ Life – individuals and biosphere, a trace of the Trinity – has to be considered in an evolutionary perspective.²⁸

Contemporary ecological crisis should also be considered in its evolutionary dimension. There is a history of life that at a particular time, that because of the power of the anthropic principle – i.e., the human being – has been deteriorated and become impoverished. The anthropic principle is, from a theological perspective, the *imago trinitatis*; nature being *vestigium trinitatis*. For that reason, it can be said that vestige is brought into crisis by the Trinitarian image. This Trinitarian aspect of an evolving biosphere crisis needs to be emphasized.

²⁶ SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, p. 55. The subject is introduced by Bruno Forte as well: FORTE, B.: Hacia una teología trinitaria de la creación. In: *Teología de la historia*. Salamanca : Ediciones Sígueme, 1995, pp. 232–237.

²⁷ Cf. EDWARDS, D.: *The God of Evolution : A Trinitarian Theology*. Mahwah (NJ) : Paulist Press, 1991.

²⁸ We have further developed this topic in: FLORIO, L.: Ontología trinitaria del ser viviente evolutivo : Algunas posibles líneas de reflexión. In: CSONTOS, L., KIELAK, D., PLAŠIENKOVÁ, Z. (eds.): *Wiara i kultura miejscem dialogu*. Warszawa : Rhetos, 2013, pp. 37–48.

4. Ecology and Cosmic Christology and Pneumatology

4.1. Cosmic Christology turns its interest to Christian theology again²⁹

The bases for this can be found in the texts of the tradition of John (Jn 1:1-18) and Paul (I Cor 8:6; Fil 2:6-11; Rom 8:19-23; Col 1:15-20) but also in the Patristic tradition,³⁰ especially the Greek one. During the Middle Age this topic was forgotten because of the primacy of anthropological soteriology. The revival of this subject in the XVIII century is especially due to the influence of the new sciences that widened the world view and demanded theology to reconsider the impact of the Revelation on the immense universe created by God.³¹

Cosmic Christology aims at becoming an answer to the question of the unity of the reality and *its meaning*.³² In this sense, cosmic Christology tries to connect the ensemble of the created beings – cosmos, human beings, spiritual entities – and their possibilities according to God – creation, redemption, consummation – with the different activities of the Logos – Creator, Redeemer, who brings to perfection – and his phases throughout history – incarnation, death, and resurrection. Cosmic Christology seriously considers the affirmation in Col 1:16 and Jn 1:1-18 which state that all things have been created in the incarnated Verb.

It seems relevant to emphasise that the passing of the Logos through the universe implies important consequences. Primarily, the assumption of the matter and life by the humanized Son provokes a new relationship of those with the divinity. In fact, creation has been made different after the incarnation. That situation means that the universe, never losing its quality of depending metaphysic reality, is at the same time an entity assumed by its Creator and

29 To mention an official text from the Roman Catholic Church, we consider what Pope Benedict XVI stated: "We must have no fears about facing this challenge: Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of all creation and of all history. The believer knows well that 'all things were created through him and for him (...) and in him all things hold together' (Col 1:16- 17). By continually deepening our knowledge of Christ, the centre of the cosmos and of history, we can show the men and women of our time that faith in him is important for humanity's future: indeed, it is the accomplishment of all that is authentically human." (Benedict XVI's address to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Church, Vatican City, February 10th 2006.) It is interesting to consider that the Roman Catholic tradition focuses on the cosmic place of Christ after having disregarded the historic dimension of revelation. However, this position seems to be the effect of a theological rediscovery of the cosmic Christology topic. For more on the cosmic Christology topic, cf. PAPANICOLAU, J.: *Cristología Cómica : Fundamentos bíblicos, aproximación histórica y reflexión sistemática*. Buenos Aires : Epifanía, 2005.

30 Cf. PAPANICOLAU, J.: *Cristología Cómica : Fundamentos bíblicos, aproximación histórica y reflexión sistemática*, pp. 23-96.

31 Cf. PAPANICOLAU, J.: *Cristología Cómica : Fundamentos bíblicos, aproximación histórica y reflexión sistemática*, pp. 97-237.

32 Cf. PAPANICOLAU, J.: *Cristología Cómica : Fundamentos bíblicos, aproximación histórica y reflexión sistemática*, p. 239.

Redeemer. This principle can be applied to the ecological problem: in fact, even in the negativity of environmental destruction, the presence of Christ at the core of the process cannot be denied. Cosmic Christ remains the meaning of the created and the evolutionary living nature. For this reason, we believe there exists a soteriological dimension to the biosphere.

Another topic emerges from this Christological dimension, the question of the destiny of the universe. In fact, if the world can be seen as a chaotic process – moved by unseen chemical, physical, and genetic forces – at the end there would be a point of attraction which is Christ. In such an apparent disorganization, there would be an orienting principle for this whole reality. This seems to be the idea Pierre Teilhard de Chardin has in mind when he speaks on an “Omega point” at the end of the evolutionary process.³³ Consequently, the universe could be observed as a very complex and indeterminate reality and, at the same time, as a unified and oriented entity. Indeterminacy and orientation – or attractions – are not, in fact, contradictory terms because there is a field of autonomy into a design³⁴ established in the Logos and confirmed in his embodiment, death and resurrection. These consequences are valid for the ecological catastrophe as well. The biosphere itself is called to an eschatological plenitude in the person of Christ at the Parousia.

4.2. Theology and a cosmic Pneumatology

Although at a much less developed level than that of Christology, in the last decades theology has seen the development of a cosmic Pneumatology. There is a biblical basis to this line of reflection which would be in accordance with Rom 8:21-23, i.e. “the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God” for “the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains. And not only that: we, too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free”.

The Holy Spirit seems to have the task to generate the new creation, that cosmic transformation inaugurated by Jesus Christ. This mission crosses through the human being, because – in the Pauline line of thought – cosmic redemption is produced by the redeemed human action. In other words, the transformation of the universe into a new creation is produced by means of

33 Cf. TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, P.: *Ciencia y Cristo*. Madrid : Taurus, 1968, pp. 191–192.

34 The concept of design would be understood not just as a fixed notion: God elaborated a determined plan without any possibility of change, but an open one, i.e., where is the place for the novelty. In this sense, John Haught states: “If God is the ultimate source of order, God is no less primordially the source of novelty that sometimes has to disrupt order so as to overcome triviality and monotony. The God of evolution is the inexhaustible wellspring of the new form of order.” (HAUGHT, J.: *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*. New York : Paulist Press, 2001, p. 87. Cf. HAUGHT, J.: *God after Darwin : A Theology of Evolution*. Boulder : Westview Press, 2000, p. 5.)

the mediation of the “new creature”, which is the human being transformed in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Thus, cosmic Pneumatology presupposes cosmic Christology, and both in turn are presupposed in New Testament anthropology.

Such spiritualization process of the cosmos includes living nature; a new humanity could in this way return to its original mission of administering and perfecting the world. This seems to illuminate the anthropic principle in the biosphere. There would be a new anthropic principle, the product of cosmological Christology, pneumatology on the anthropological life, and, through him, on ecological care.

Conclusion

The conceptual crystallization of Trinitarian monotheism seems to contain valuable elements in order to consider contemporary ecological issues, in particular, the idea of unity and diversity. It also seems useful to think about nature being under risk, endangered and threatened by human presence and its action/omission. Although this is an idea which has been traditionally been related to a particular confessional faith, in our opinion, it contains elements that can be transferable to the secular sphere in the discussion about the contemporary ecological crisis.

We have selected some contemporary perspectives addressing the issue of a Trinitarian biosphere crisis. First, a line that highlights the aesthetic character of the destruction of species and ecosystems which refers to a loss in the perception of personal and communal traits of the Trinity in nature. Secondly, the ecological crisis we currently face allows us to rethink the immanent order of God and to perceive the power, diversity and unity of the biosphere. Third, by framing life within an evolutionary perspective, it is possible to think about the dynamic dimension of the *vestigium* and the *imago*, which in this last phase witnesses the negative interference of the “*homo sapiens-Trinitatis imago*” on the “*biosphere-vestigium Trinitatis*”. Finally, the recovery of perspectives such as cosmic Christology and Pneumatology enable us to reflect upon environmental changes on an “economic” Trinitarian keynote.

To sum up, the idea of a Trinitarian foundation of life and of the human being could be a starting point for their Trinitarian application to environmental issues. The Trinity in its communal intimacy – one and diverse –, in its perceptible expression – as a vestige or image – in an evolving biosphere at present distorted by human activity, and in its pneumatological and Christological deployment in the living cosmos, provides us with a frame to think theologically on ecology. The Trinitarian God, who is source, model and destiny of creation and salvation,³⁵ also remains the last key for the dramatic moment of

35 Cf. SALVATI, G. M.: Trinità e Storia, and Trinità e salvezza. In: SALVATI, G. M.: *Io Uno e Trino : La Trinità come modello del cristiano*. Naples : EDI, 2011, pp.101–121.

the biosphere, the place shared by humans and the rest of living beings, and the main scenario of Trinitarian action. If we consider the relationship between the Trinity and creation to be an “open relation”³⁶, then, it is reasonable to think that God, the *relatio subsistens* can certainly illuminate and lead to the fulfillment not only human beings but also that of the biosphere, an ecological chain of dynamic relations.

Finally, the intervention of the Trinity in history has traditionally been read as a “drama”, a “Theo-drama”;³⁷ the history of life, of evolution, has also acquired dramatic dimensions.³⁸ Consequently, under these two perspectives, we can realize creation and history share a “Theo-dramatic” composition. Ecological crisis is at the crossroads of both: humans generate a huge transformation of the biological creation; such is its impact as to place it in the almost concrete probability of a global catastrophe. Consequently, it is possible to think the Theo-dramatic ecology: a Trinitarian God working through his *imago* to ordain the biosphere and allow it to go on with its creative potentialities.

Sources consulted

- AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO: *De Trinitate (On the Trinity)*, circa 399–422/6.
 BERRY, T.: *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco : Serra Club Books, 1988.
 BOFF, L.: *La Santísima Trinidad es la mejor comunidad*. Vol. 4. Colección Caminos. Serie A. Madrid : Ediciones Paulinas, 1990.
 BROWER, J.: Medieval Theories of Relations. In: ZALTA, E. N. (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/relations-medieval>
 BROWN, R. E.: *El Evangelio según Juan*. 2 vols. Madrid : Cristiandad, 1979.
 DAVIS, S. T., KENDALL, D., O'COLLINS, G. (eds.): *The Trinity : An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*. London : Oxford University Press, 1999.
 DEANE-DRUMMOND, C.: *Christ and Evolution : Wonder and Wisdom*. London : SCM Press, 2009.
 DEWAILLY, L. M.: Communio-communicatio. In: *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques*, 1970, pp. 46–63.
 EDWARDS, D.: *The God of Evolution : A Trinitarian Theology*. Mahwah (New Jersey) : Paulist Press, 1991.
 ESPINEL, J. L.: Logos. In: AA. VV. *Diccionario teológico : El Dios cristiano*. Salamanca : Secretariado Trinitario, 1992.

36 VEZZOSI, G.: La creazione tra tematiche attuali e orizzonte trinitario. In: SALUCCI, A.: “*In principio...*”: *Variatione sul tema della Creazione*. Roma : IF Press, 2011, pp. 410–411.

37 Cf. VON BALTHASAR, H. U.: *Theo-Drama : Vol I. Prolegomena*. San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 1988.

38 Cf. DEANE-DRUMMOND, C.: *Christ and Evolution : Wonder and Wisdom*. London : SCM Press, 2009; FLORIO, L.: Creación y teodrama : Incorporación de la historia de la vida en el horizonte de la *Teodramática* de Hans Urs von Balthasar. <http://bibliotecadigital.uca.edu.ar/repositorio/ponencias/creacion-teodrama-incorporacion-historia-vida.pdf>

- FLORIO, L.: Creación y teodrama : Incorporación de la historia de la vida en el horizonte de la *Teodramática* de Hans Urs von Balthasar. <http://bibliotecadigital.uca.edu.ar/repositorio/ponencias/creacion-teodrama-incorporacion-historia-vida.pdf>
- FLORIO, L.: Il messaggio biblico sulla natura : Una nuova visione dell'ecologia. In: LEVORATTI, A.: *Nuovo comentario bíblico : I. I Vangeli*. Roma : Edizioni Borla, 2005, pp. 141–147.
- FLORIO, L.: Ontología trinitaria del ser viviente evolutivo : Algunas posibles líneas de reflexión. In: CSONTOS, L., KIELAK, D., PLAŠIENKOVÁ, Z. (eds.): *Wiara i kultura miejscem dialogu*. Warszawa : Rhetos, 2013, pp. 37–48.
- FORTE, B.: Hacia una teología trinitaria de la creación. In: *Teología de la historia*. Salamanca : Ediciones Sígueme, 1995.
- GRESHAKE, G.: Trinität als Communio. In: *Der Dreine Gott : Eine trinitarische Theologie*. Freiburg im Breisgau : Herder, 1998, pp. 179–216.
- HAUGHT, J.: *God after Darwin : A Theology of Evolution*. Boulder : Westview Press, 2000.
- HAUGHT, J.: *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*. New York : Paulist Press, 2001.
- KASPER, W.: *El Dios de Jesucristo*. 8^o ed. Salamanca : Ediciones Sígueme, 2011.
- MILANO, A.: *Persona in teología*. Naples : Dehoniane, 1984.
- MORANDINI, S.: *Teologia ed Ecologia*. Brescia : Morcelliana, 2005.
- PAPANICOLAU, J.: *Cristología Cómica : Fundamentos bíblicos, aproximación histórica y reflexión sistemática*. Buenos Aires : Epifanía, 2005.
- PAVAN, A., MILANO, A. (eds.): *Persona e personalismi*. Naples : Dehoniane, 1987.
- PRESTIGE, L.: Περιχώρεώ and περιχώρησις in the Fathers. In: *Journal of Theological Studies*, 29, 1928, pp. 242–252.
- SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sapienza*, 2, 1990, pp. 145–160.
- SALVATI, G. M.: Crisi ecologica e concezione cristiana di Dio. In: *Sul Dio cristiano : Contributi di teología trinitaria*. Roma, 1993.
- SALVATI, G. M.: La doctrina trinitaria en la teología católica postconciliar : Autores y perspectivas. In: *Communio*, 2, 1997, pp. 67–80.
- SALVATI, G. M.: Trinità e Storia, and Trinità e salvezza. In: SALVATI, G. M.: *Io Uno e Trino. La Trinità come modello del cristiano*. 3^o ed. Naples : EDI, 2011, pp.101–121.
- SCHADEL, E.: *Bibliotheca Trinitariorum : Internationale Bibliographie trinitarischer Literatur, International Bibliography of Trinitarian Literature*. 2 vols. München; New York; Paris : K. G. Saur, 1984/88.
- SCHAEFER, J.: Appreciating the Beauty of Earth. In: *Theological Studies*, 62, 2001, 1, pp. 23–52.
- TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, P.: *Ciencia y Cristo*. Madrid : Taurus, 1968.
- VANEY, N.: Biodiversity and Beauty. In: *Pacifica*, 8, 1995, pp. 335–345.

- VEZZOSI, G.: La creazione tra tematiche attuali e orizzonte trinitario. In: Salucci, A.: *'In principio...'* *Variazione sul tema della Creazione*. Roma : IF Press, 2011, pp. 410-411.
- VON BALTHASAR, H. U.: *Theo-Drama : Vol I Prolegomena*. San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 1988.
- ZALTA, E. N. (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2013. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/relations-medieval/>

prof. Dr. Lucio Florio
Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Av. Alicia Moreau de Justo 1300
Buenos Aires, Argentina