THE DOGMA OF THE TRINITY AND ITS
SOCIAL-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

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My preference is to stay within the sphere more akin to literature than science. I focus on the paradoxical element some think exist in the dogma of the Trinity. The problem concerns human existence as much as it does God’s. This inclines me to consider Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger. If we follow Sartre, we have identity without essence. If we follow Heidegger, we have persons, along with God, as being rather than Existence, which he takes as extremes. The solution may be in Emmanuel Levinas. No nature exists in naked form, but always has a mode of existence. So nature, God’s nature is always ipostasis.

First of all I’d like to say, that I’ll remain in the framework of the Orthodox tradition, in particular it’s style of teaching about the Trinity, which was demonstrated by Bishop Kallistos. I’d also like to comment on remarks made by Professor Swinburne, in his “Modern Anglo-American Philosophy of Religion” in this manuscript, which called to our attention the fact that the Western team at the conference does not have anyone representing the continental tradition. In part, he said that for those representing the Anglo-American tradition, continental philosophy is something foggy and unclear, resembling literature rather than science. I will try to share some thoughts about our conference recommending that we stay in this foggy and unclear sphere, resembling literature rather than science, rather than follow the more strict analytic philosophy of religion style so characteristic of the more general terrain of analytical philosophy and logical positivism, hoping all the while to preserve something in the way of a respectable theology.

In both Western and Eastern reports the main aspects of the teaching of the Trinity were highlighted fairly clearly, nevertheless some questions remain. Bishop Kallistos, which is usually taken to be a credible source of the Orthodox tradition, especially in the Western world, also admitted this fact.
Despite the fact that all Orthodox believers are inclined to think that all of the key dogmas of Christianity, including the dogma of the Trinity, have already been expressed by the works of the Fathers of the Church, mainly in the classical Patristic period of the Fourth–Eighth centuries, still the problem of secondary interpretation of what was said by the ancient teachers of the Eastern Church remain. Questions about the level of theological thinking, even in the strictly Eastern tradition linger. And those of the Eastern tradition have not been showing very much interest in the problem of the content of Christian dogmas.

I would like to focus on one problem, the solving of which will likely decide our understanding of God as Trinity, which is formulated in the Christian tradition according to various social and political realities, more specifically, the reality of human relations. In other words, the implications of the teaching of the Trinity, that Kallistos spoke so clearly about, hinge in large measure upon how we interpret the paradoxical elements some allege exist in the dogma of the Trinity. How the logic goes, determines how the paradoxical is resolved.

I would like to begin with a citation of a credible, and, I think, well-known Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon. In his work, *Truth and Communication*, he draws attention to a certain undecidedness, which he thinks exists in the Christian understanding of existence, and its role in Christian ontology, particularly as we think about formulations about God and his being in relationship. He writes: “There is still the question whether or not being in relation (inakovnost) has some sort of relationship to ontology, in the divine ontological picture. That is, can we speak of God as being one, and at the same time affirm that he is in relation? Or is our ontology here wholly tied to the idea of totality, or to totality as wholeness in such a way as to rule out being in relation? In another place, we read: “Does the oneness of God mean one in an arithmetical sense, or does the oneness mean a form of wholeness? Do such things as relational substance exist?” In a significant way, this remains an open question. That is, the Church has not provided an authoritative map for such concepts that satisfies the inquiring, sometimes troubled mind of the believer.

These questions concern our theological ontology, and the teaching of the Church on the Trinity faces this problem because the dogma in question involves ontological sorts of claims, some of which are viewed by some as generating philosophical worries. Depending upon what sort of being in relation (inakovnost) is allowed will in large measure rest on the meaning that is attached to existence or being, and the notion of being in relation. Hence our ontological picture is pivotal to our religious claims regarding the issue in question. I think that theology is called upon to answer this question and propose a helpful solution so as to satisfy the philosophical mind on matters relating to ontology, even though such a proposal may not find its roots in the