

An ecological model of the trinity essay



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An Ecological Model of the Trinity Within The New Cosmology Advancement of modern technology and scientific discovery, as well as the sociological developments of the past century, has changed the way humanity relates to the world. Human culture, particularly American culture, has developed a predominant world-view of earth's resources and human relationships as things to be used and manipulated for personal gain. Scientists are warning with increasing urgency that the survival of the planet is at risk.

Global warming caused by depletion of the ozone layer is negatively affecting climate change and the polar ice caps are melting at previously unimagined rates. Pollution, deforestation, manipulation and indiscriminate consumption of the planet's natural resources have also contributed to an ecological crisis. Much of the environmental destruction can be directly connected to exploitation of people and cultures by business and industry for purposes of economic gain. Science alone cannot persuade the human community to make the swift and pervasive changes needed to begin repairing damage done to the earth.

Human consciousness must begin to understand the interrelatedness of people and ecological systems that sustain life on the planet. The injury done in the name of scientific and economic progress can begin to be mitigated by a response from communities of faith. Contemporary ecological theology establishing creation as a revelation of the divine is a starting point for promoting the need for reconstruction of environmental and cultural systems. Humanity needs more than ever to discover the direct relationship of God's intimate relationship with the universe as well as God's being in intimate relationship with the individuals. Collaboration of current theological

and scientific philosophies can help reveal a God “ so intimately present in the world that the world can be regarded as an incarnate expression of the Trinity, as creative, as expansive, as conscious, as self realizing and self-sharing.

” An ecological theology based on a relational model of the Trinity creates a paradigm allowing the contemporary Christian a way of relating and responding ethically to the world and to each other. Scientific theories of the universeBasic scientific descriptions of prominent contemporary theories of the origin and composition of the universe are helpful in beginning to construct an ecological theology. A foundational description of differentiated life forms existing within larger organic systems illustrates aspects of a trinitarian model of mutual relations found in the physical universe. Current theories of the scientific origination of the universe rely heavily upon what has been called “ the Big Bang theory.

This theory, credited to Edward Hubble posits that approximately fifteen million years ago, a tremendous explosion occurred from which all matter and energy originated. As a result of this explosion the universe, galaxies, stars and planets were created and the universe continues to develop and expand. The earth is the result the cooling process of a minute amount of matter from this explosion over the millennia enabling a process of evolution in which the rich diversity of plants and animals emerged and grew.

Unanswered questions in regard to the Big Bang remain as development of theories in quantam physics progresses. Science continues to discover and revise its hypotheses and theories about the origin and organization of the universe.

However, from the Big Bang theory, two basic conceptualizations of matter appear. The first idea is that all created matter is derived from the same source and therefore interrelated. The second is that from the same particles and energy, a multitude of specific and differentiated life forms occur. Both sameness and difference play major roles.

Like the One and the Many, they will be with us through the whole development. Protons are all alike, but put different numbers of them together, and you get completely different substances. Or, take a certain number of carbon atoms, a number of hydrogens, oxygens, and nitrogens, and, without varying the numbers of each, just put them together in different arrangements, and again you'll get very different substances. " The organization of substances at the atomic level created conditions in which biological ecosystems have evolved. Scientific work in biology, microbiology and genetics support the seminal work of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as the basis for life in its ongoing transformation and diversification in nature. But science cannot and does not presume to answer questions of why the universe came into being or how and why we exist.

That is the work of philosophy and specifically for this paper, the discipline of theology. The place of human beings in the history of this evolving universe, as it has been charted by modern sciences, can only be seen in its complete reality in the light of faith, as a personal history of the engagement of the triune God with creaturely persons (art. 62). " Traditionally, the Christian begins by seeking answers about the origin of the universe and nature of God in the written word of scripture. " And God saw that it was good" Gen 1: 12 NRSV- A Biblical interpretation of creation The story of Genesis provides a <https://assignbuster.com/an-ecological-model-of-the-trinity-essay/>

rich description of the creation of the universe by God. Judaeo-Christian creation accounts, actually two separate stories interwoven in the book of Genesis, describe an ordered process initiated by God.

A reading of the creation stories in fact reflects the same process of development that modern science proposes; from light energy to the formation of galaxies and solar systems to the creation of the earth and from it plant, animal life and finally the human species. But the task of these original creation narratives was not so much to tell how and when the universe was created. The purpose of the authors of Genesis was to attempt to respond to questions about the meaning of existence and the nature of God. These are concepts beyond the realm of science. In the Genesis account, God speaks and the universe, whose origin is love, comes into being.

The origin of the substance of the cosmos is not what but who. Then, desiring reciprocity of love, God creates the human being. Out of loving desire for relationship the universe and humanity are born. In biblical terms, " God's being cannot be sought in a rudimentary divine " stuff" of some sort, but rather in the hunger for relationship to which the doctrine of the Trinity witnesses. " Relevance of the Trinity for Contemporary Christianity One of the first things a Catholic child is taught to pray is the sign of the cross.

" In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;" the Trinity is invoked at the beginning and conclusion of almost every experience of prayer from childhood through adult life. Liturgical sacramental celebrations and the Liturgy of the Hours are filled with trinitarian formulas and

doxologies. Christians proclaim their faith in the Trinity each time the creed is recited. Yet most people asked to define the Trinity cannot explain anything more than, " The Trinity is one God, in three persons.

" More than one priest asked to preach a homily on the Trinity has been known to quip, " It's a mystery of faith. What more is there to say? " Yet the theology of the trinity has been one of the core doctrines of Christian faith since its early history. Although the theology of the Trinity remains a central doctrine of faith, the average person remains unaware of any real impact of the Trinity upon their lives. What difference does the doctrine of the Trinity make in the lived experience of twenty-first century Christians? In an attempt to answer this question, theologians of the twenty and twenty-first centuries have begun renewed interpretations of the doctrine of the trinity and its relevance in contemporary Christian life.

History and Development of Trinitarian Theology
In order to create a foundation for contemporary scholarship to construct a relevant ecological theology of the Trinity grounded in mutual relationship between the Creator and creation, it is helpful to provide a brief overview of the development of trinitarian theology in the course of Church history. Trinitarian theology appeared early in the life of the Church. The patristic Church first addressed controversies concerning the nature and exact relationship between the three persons of the Trinity the Arian controversy. The resolution of the debate was to proclaim the Jesus as being of the same substance or homoousios, with the Father at the Council of Nicea in 325 C. E.

and that the Holy Spirit was coequal with the Father and the Son at the Council Constantinople in 381 C. E. This cemented an orthodox Trinitarian doctrine of the Church. However, understanding and explaining these concepts remained a challenge. Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century developed a detailed Trinitarian theology explaining the unity of the three divine persons of the trinity. Augustine then describes separate consciousnesses between the three persons and the process of interaction between them.

In this model known as a psychological analogy, " God is fully conscious and knows and loves God-self and creation. " The psychological analogy was reinterpreted and expanded by Thomas Aquinas one thousand years later. Thomas refined the theology of Augustine, adding a technical systematic approach with specific terminology describing the " processions and relationships between the three persons, ad intra, and then to the divine missions, ad extra," which dealt with the external mission of each person of the Trinity. This organized comprehensive definition of the mystery of the Trinity seemed to articulate a thorough treatment that left little need for further investigation until the twentieth century. The great twentieth century theologian, Karl Rahner is often quoted as saying, " one could dispense with the doctrine of the Trinity as false and the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.

Yet Rahner's work, along with other modern theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, began exploring deeper dimensions and modern implications for a revitalized Trinitarian theology. Modern Trinitarian scholarship reaches beyond simple debates between immanent or economic models and

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addresses a relational theology that implies ethical behavioral praxis for the Christian community. Two Contemporary Relational Interpretations of the Trinity Two contemporary theologians who have made significant contributions to a revived relational model of Trinitarian theology are Leonardo Boff and Elizabeth Johnson. Emphasizing cultural anthropology and the documents of the Second Vatican Council, directing the Church to live in greater relationship with the wider world, liberation theology developed in the Church of Latin America. Liberationist theologian Leonardo Boff develops a distinctively perichoretic model of the Trinity in which “ Each divine Person permeates the other and allows itself to be permeated by that person.

This interpenetration expresses the love and life that constitutes the divine nature. It is the very nature of love to be self-communicating; life naturally expands and seeks to multiply itself. Boff accentuates the equality of persons within the immanent trinity and uses the concept of the Trinity as Perfect Community to criticize unjust social and political structures which subjugate and oppress people based upon class, race and economic status. Elizabeth Johnson has constructed a Trinitarian theology within a feminist theological framework.

Johnson, approaches the problem of patriarchal language and imagery of the Trinity by presenting language based upon the study of Wisdom literature imaging the persons of the Trinity as Spirit Sophia, Jesus-Sophia and Mother-Sophia. Johnson reclaims the translation of Thomas Aquinas to translate YHWH, the name God gave Moses at the burning bush as “ Qui est” or The One Who Is. “ Johnson argues that, if God is not intrinsically male, if women are truly created in the image of God, then there is cogent reason to name <https://assignbuster.com/an-ecological-model-of-the-trinity-essay/>

Sophia-God “ the one who is,” the one whose very nature is sheer and exuberant aliveness, the profoundly relational source of being, wellspring of life, dynamic act, She Who Is. In this way Elizabeth Johnson attempts to present a vocabulary that images God and the Trinity without the masculine biases implicit in past theologies and scriptural interpretations. The feminist theological model for a Trinitarian theology presented by Elizabeth Johnson expands the Christian imagination and helps to lay a foundation for exploring dimensions of the imago Dei, and the persons of the Trinity that surpass an understanding of God that is exclusively male.

“ Many theologians, and particularly feminist theologians, have identified the power of language for naming God as a critical issue. Johnson’s question concerning the right way to speak about God can be situated within the rising concern of all people who have begun to recognize the profound implications of speech about God both for the future of life on this planet and for the human person’s capacity to know and relate to God. ” Johnson’s Trinitarian model is that of a God of mutual relations who is not a removed observer of human suffering but in the person of Jesus-Sophia becomes vulnerable and able to share in the suffering of humanity. This compassionate God suffers with creation and wishes to draw all humanity and creation into loving union and to heal the world of suffering and evil. Both Boff and Johnson emphasize the imago Dei, the face of God, reflected in the faces of God’s people.

God that bears the image of the suffering and oppressed demands a response of compassion and restoration of just social systems from God’s people. The Universe as the Imago Dei Similar to the theologies of Boff and

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Johnson, Denis Edwards further explores the ecological model of the Trinity in light of Christology. Christianity is par excellence the religion of the incarnation and, in one sense, is about nothing but embodiment. " Jesus, the Word made flesh is the ultimate expression of the imago Dei. In the person of Jesus Christ, the Christian, experiences the incarnate presence of God seeking loving union with humanity.

An ecological theology expands the Christological metaphor of imago Dei, to include a cosmic Christology. " Joining in the creative work is really central to the whole contemplative enterprise. Cosmogogenesis - the generation of the cosmos - can be seen, as Teilhard de Chardin saw it, as " Christogenesis," the growth of the " ever greater Christ. " This Christ has been " growing in stature and wisdom" (Luke 2: 52; read " complexity and consciousness") these last dozen or so billion years and is nowhere near finished yet. " The Universe as God's Body Another ecological theologian, Sallie McFague also constructs a model of God based upon an ecological theology. McFague's concept of the universe as the body of God is accentuates an incarnational Christology stating, " We know God - we have some intimation of the invisible face of God - through divine incarnation in nature and in the paradigmatic Jesus of Nazareth, in the universe as God's body and in the cosmic Christ.

" McFague distinguishes this image of the universe as God's body as metaphorical. It is intended as a vehicle to expand and explore contemporary understanding of the nature of God. This paradigm is not to be understood literally as a reinterpretation of pantheistic theology. Since we

now know that our bodies and spirits (or minds, souls) are on a continuum, is it so odd to think of God as embodied? ..

. Remember that we are thinking analogically or metaphorically. " McFague emphasizes the presence of God in the universe existing as a communion of diversity. " To contemplate divine transcendence as radically and concretely embodied means, of course, that it is not one thing: divine transcendence, in this model would be in the differences, in the concrete embodiments, that constitute the universe. For McFague, knowledge of God is found in understanding the diversity and specificity of life-forms existing within the body of the universe. Using the language of the body enables us to re-imagine the human encounter with the Divine as experienced in and through all creation.

In God " we live and move and have our being," Acts 17: 28 NRSV. The presence of God sacralizes all created matter and establishes the entirety of the material world as the imago Dei. Accepting the universe as the embodiment of God necessitates our intimate relationship with ecology. As we treat the universe, we treat the real presence of God. An Ecological Trinitarian Theology The ecological crisis has increased universal human consciousness about the fragile balance that exists in the worlds environmental communities. Because of this theologians have begun to ask questions about the nature of God embodied in creation and humanity's relationship with the universe.

Many scientists and theologians are beginning to find areas of commonality between the two disciplines rather than seeing one as exclusive of the other.

Australian eco-theologian, Denis Edwards has created an ecological theological conceptualization of Christian cosmology for the twenty first century using Christian revelation in conjunction with current theories in physics and evolution. Denis Edwards builds this model upon a trinitarian God as “ Persons-in-Mutual-Relations” beginning with the creation stories of Genesis and from Christian scripture, particularly in the Gospel of John. In *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology*, Edwards illustrates John’s use of the word abiding or “ indwelling” over forty times in the gospel and twenty-seven times in the Johannine letters referring to the relationship between the persons of the trinity or God’s relationship within human beings. “ According to John, the love of Jesus and the Father in the Spirit, is a dynamic relational life of mutual indwelling, which reaches out to embrace us, catching us up in the open circle of divine love. In addition, Edwards is heavily influenced by the *Wisdom Christology* of Elizabeth Johnson connecting Wisdom literature with God at work in creation.

“ Wisdom is clearly concerned with the whole of creation and with the interrelationships among human beings, the rest of creation and God. ”

Rather than relying only on classical Trinitarian categories and definitions, Edwards retrieves the work of Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) as well as the Trinitarian theories of St.

Bonaventure. Edwards, in describing the theology of Richard of St. Victor of the twelfth century “ suggests that it is friendship which is at the heart of things. I find this a fruitful way to approach an understanding of the God of evolution. ” The friendship described by Richard of St.

Victor is the friendship built upon an Augustinian “ social approach to the Trinity, the trinitarian model of the lover, the beloved, and their love. ”

Richard describes the self-transcendent loving union of human friendship as the human model for understanding the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. The fullness of love shared between the Father and the Son “ ecstatically breaking out beyond the two to include a third. ” Edwards also revives some elements of the trinitarian theology of Bonaventure “ in which the world is a vast symbol of the Trinity and the economy is ontologically grounded in the immanent trinitarian mystery of God.

” For Bonaventure creation is the self-expression of God. Edwards states, “ It is divine community that constitutes reality as it is and as it becomes. It is divine love that enfolds all creatures and enables them to be. It is this sheer relationality, this communion in diversity, which sustains and empowers biological evolution.

” The ecological theology constructed by Edwards, recognizes the permeation of Divine Love in the presence of every particle of created matter, emanating from the source of the Creator’s love and infused with life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Denis Edwards writes, “ the foundation for a theology that takes evolution seriously can be found in the trinitarian vision of God as a God of mutual relations, a God who is communion in love, a God who is friendship beyond all comprehension. This community of self-transcending donation of love is a paradigm illustrating the nature of the Trinity, a conceptualization of the universe, as well as a paradigm for Christian living. Yet these abstract concepts are sometimes difficult for the average Christian to grasp. Edwards suggests, If it is accepted that God is <https://assignbuster.com/an-ecological-model-of-the-trinity-essay/>

communion and that the universe itself is a created communion existing from the divine communion, then this raises the question of how we think about the relationship between the divine communion and the community of creatures. We cannot think about this relationship without some kind of imaginative picture of God's interaction with the universe.

A Story of Trinity and the Universe Long ago in a small village lived a woman. She became known far and wide as the finest cook in the land. An invitation to her home for dinner was coveted by all. Her pastries and main courses were culinary delights but she was best known for her soup. When asked by aspiring chefs for her recipe, she simply smiled and said, " I put love into everything I make and that's what makes the difference.

Every night lucky visitors were treated to an experience they would savor for a lifetime. The woman was very happy. One night a young girl longing to possess the ability to recreate the recipe for the woman's famous soup secretly hid in the old woman's cupboard and watched through a knot hole in the door as the next day's soup was prepared. The girl took careful note as the old woman selected each ingredient, measuring, chopping, mixing with such great reverence and skill it seemed as though if the girl was watching a ballet. Then the young girl was startled as the chef kissed each ingredient just before adding it to the soup. Next even more alarmingly, the young girl watched in amazement as the woman carefully selected and sharpened one of her knives.

She proceeded with great care to place a small slice in her finger and hold it above the soup. Slowly, a few bright red drops fell into the cooking liquid

among the rest of the ingredients. Finally, the old woman singing quietly, it seemed to the pot, leaned over the soup and breathed deliberately as she stirred the mixture. The novice cook stole out of the cupboard and ran home.

She immediately repeated the steps she had just witnessed. One: carefully choreograph preparation and kiss ingredients. Two: prick the finger and add a few drops of blood. Three: blow into soup while stirring. The young girl was giddy with delight.

She could now make the exact recipe that had made the old woman both famous and loved. Now with such a valuable recipe she could sell her soup and become rich and famous throughout the countryside! However, the next day as she set up shop and sold her soup to passersby, the young girl's soup met with limited approval. Her soup hardly left the taster yearning for more. Those who tasted the soup did not express the same praise and satisfaction that the old woman daily received. No one pleaded for permission to return the next day for more.

What could she have left out or done wrong? It simply did not make sense. Plagued by her inability to recreate the woman's soup, the girl decided to go to the old cook and confess her attempt to steal the recipe in order to coax the woman to tell her what went wrong. After the wise old woman listened to the story of the greedy girl, she simply smiled and with a sigh, agreed to share her secret. " You see," she said, " I have no magic recipe. But the three steps you thought you saw were not what they seemed. The first step is that I love what I am creating.

The second step is that I summon the love within myself and physically insert it into my creation. Finally, I share all my energy and love with those who eat my soup. " The young woman went away still perplexed by the crazy old cook. God As Loving Communion The story presents a possible image of God's body as the universe. Within this paradigm, the physical substance of the universe is important and even holy because the Creator has willed it and loved it into being.

The substance of the created world and its differentiated life-forms may be interpreted as the ingredients lovingly used by the old cook. Each ingredient measured and added precisely is necessary to the recipe. Yet, their true value does not reside in the substance of the ingredients. Their real value resides in the fact that each ingredient reflects God's intentional self-gift of love.

God As Incarnate Being Using a metaphor of the universe as God's body, all of creation assumes an incarnational identity. Just as the Christian experiences Jesus as the Word made flesh, the Christian also believes that creation came into being from the expressed will of the Creator. If the first person of the Trinity, is the Giver of life and the Creator of the Word, the second person, Jesus, is the personification of Gift and Creation. " Through the Incarnation of God's Word in Jesus Christ, the gift of God's love, God's very life is immutably turned toward us creatures with whom God has freely and irrevocably entered into the covenant. " The old chef was not satisfied in merely creating a perfectly delicious soup, she desired to share her very life-blood with those who would partake in her creation.

Jesus, the Word made flesh joins God and humanity in intimate union. In the Incarnation, God takes part in the pain and sorrow, joy and love present in our lives. Jesus is the ultimate gift, God's self-giving love. The second person of the Trinity, the Gift is the "piece de resistance" of God's creation.

Not set apart from the universe but fully immersed, part and parcel of creation. The spirituality of the Christian is defined, nourished and empowered by Jesus Christ. The Spirit, The Giver of Life The Incarnation is possible through the power of the Spirit, the ongoing presence of love at work in the world and within the deepest core of the human being. Within the human soul exists the indwelling of God, the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity completes the circle of God's love.

Expressed in three divine persons within one being, the Trinity can be defined as the Creator, the Incarnation and the Spirit. Trinitarian spirituality espouses that God's self-gift of love is incarnated in Jesus Christ that comes to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. Denis Edwards states, "the distinctive work of the Spirit in the ongoing creation of all things can be understood in terms of the power of becoming and the gift of divine communion with each creature. The Holy Spirit is the energizing force within the Trinity.

It is the regenerative power of God's love that enables life to be maintained and proliferated throughout the universe, in the human community and even at the core of the individual human soul. God's greatest gifts to the human spirit; faith, hope and charity through the prompting of the Holy Spirit are called into human consciousness. The Holy Spirit works in and through the

Word. “ In the Son and the Holy Spirit, God is speaking and breathing the divine life in the world. Indeed, throughout Christian history the Holy Spirit has been referred to as the Breath of God.

This is a metaphor with which we can easily identify. For in the human organism without breath there is no life. When we are breathless, we are unable to speak. In imagining God, we can extend this metaphor in saying that without God’s Breath, the Word could not have become present. In further contemplation of cosmic reality, we understand that the breath of the Holy Spirit “ empowers all life and ? gives direction to the teeming life of creation.

Returning to our story, the cook breathed into her soup (which we can now explain allegorically as the universe) because she longed to share her life-giving energy with her friends. The final product of the soup was made of love with the desire to share intimately with those in relationship with the cook around her table. And finally, the old woman gave her energy born of love to those sharing her meal in order that they could be sustained and energized after being fed. Communion of Loving Relationship This story imagines the Trinitarian concept of God’s loving self-communication, expressed distinctly in the three Divine persons. The Trinity is an inextricable unity of loving relationship found in the God we call three and one. Each person of the Trinity exists in a unique individual reality, yet are united within one God.

Greek Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas asserts, “ There is no other model for the proper relation between communion and otherness either for the

Church or for the human being than the Trinitarian God. If the Church wants to be faithful to her true self, she must try to mirror the communion and otherness that exists in the Triune God. The same is true of the human being as the “ image of God. ” Being as Communion Denis Edwards states, a “ foundational concept is that God is a relational God, a God of equal and mutual friendship, and that all of created reality is to be understood as relational. To be is to be in communion.

At the most fundamental level, being is communion. ” The human being exists as unified combination of the organism and soul. The two are inextricable. The human being “ is not a creature composed of two elements but is a single being in whom matter and spirit are essentially united. ” Human beings seem to have an on-going struggle with integration.

Separation of body and mind, assigning evil to things of the body and goodness to the spiritual realm is prevalent in past and present history. This duality has been the struggle of theological controversy over the church’s history. The church has continually held that the essence of the human person is not matter versus spirit, the fully human person exists as matter in cooperation with spirit. In other words, we ought to love and honor the body, our own bodies, and the bodies of all the life-forms on the Planet. The body is not a discardable garment cloaking the real self or essence of the person; rather, it is the shape of form of who we are.

” It is complete interdependence of both body and soul that makes us fully human. Beatrice Bruteau uses scientific methodology in the areas of physics, biology, chemistry and mathematics in combination with philosophy and

theology to explain the nature of cosmic being and reality and applies these theories to the individual. Bruteau uses complex scientific and mathematic formulas in conjunction with theological analogies to create a unified picture of the reality and being within God that is reflected in a Trinitarian communion of persons and in the cosmos. The personhood is reflected in the ability to transcend the self. The unseen untouchable energy of pure love that works in and through the world Judeo-Christianity calls God.

As we read in the Gospel of John, " God is love. " John : , NRSV Christianity defines love (God) as the source of all creative life-giving energy. Each person experiences the origin of creative love as God at work within their being. The presence of God within the human soul imparts Divine love that allows human beings to function in loving relationship with each other, with God and with all of God's created universe. Practical Application Of A Relational Trinitarian Model In contemporary theological discussion, relationality and communion in diversity are the essence of the Trinity within the economy of salvation.

The Christian of modern times is able to comprehend the concept of the tripersonal God as persons in mutual-relationship with each other and the universe. A this model of God impacts all interpersonal relationships between human beings, relationships between entire cultures and our relationships with the entirety of the created universe. For, if all things exist in communion with God, we are inextricably related to each other and all creation. Therefore, the Christian is expected to act responsibly within these communal relationships.

This *communio* is what the human being is called to image and participate in ecclesially, extending to participation in the Body of the Church and beyond to the wider community. The person seeking authentic conversion and deepening union with God must take a new approach toward all relationships. A truly Trinitarian spirituality demands recognition of being in relationship with God in every aspect of existence. Trinitarian spirituality is relational and inclusive of all people and creation. " It is also inclusive of all forms of non-human life and all of creation, indeed the whole world. This communion of the Trinity, in relationship with the human being, the church and the entirety of creation demand an expanded definition of relationship for the Christian.

Beatrice Bruteau asserts, " If the world is the Body of God, then it must be both honored as God and also dealt with in worldly terms. If we are members of the incarnate Deity whose essential nature is to be sharing community, then we must express this reality in appropriate community-sharing arrangements. " The theologies of liberationist and feminist theologians consider the socio-cultural dimensions of an understanding of Trinitarian theology. *Gaudium et spes*, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, called upon the people of God to read the " signs of the times. " This anthropological perspective " called for critical reflection on people's lived reality in the light of faith and its contemporary experience of society and culture.

" As part of the human community, Bruteau asserts that all people share in God's ecstatic reality and so the human community must be fully immersed and participative in social, scientific, artistic and religious aspects of life. As <https://assignbuster.com/an-ecological-model-of-the-trinity-essay/>

Bruteau puts it, " If what we discover by such culture is our membership in the Incarnate Transcendent Community, then we must live this out in terms of deep appreciation of ourselves, of our social communities, of our material, technical, informational, aesthetic, and meaningful world. " The Trinitarian theologies of Elizabeth Johnson and John Zizioulas are different in their approach yet each arrives at a communal model of Trinity. Orthodox Patriarch John Zizioulas' work recalls the patristic concepts of the trinity and the psychological model of Augustine and defines the Trinitarian formula as " three Person's in equal relation [he] recovers a key understanding that the being of God is communion.

" Zizioulas' trinity accentuates ecclesial communion and is most perfectly celebrated in the liturgy. " At the table of the eucharistic liturgy the many-the gathered community joined with the rich diversity of the whole of creation- are constituted by the Spirit into the one Person of Christ. It is as the body of Christ that the many-become-one are offered to God the Source of all being, and are drawn into the communion of the triune God. " Although these two theologians have very different perspectives both arrive at a conceptualization of the trinity as God in intimate loving communion with humanity which presents a way of being and a model for Christian life. " They point to how this central symbol of Christian faith can work to facilitate the participation of believers within God's life, within the human community, and with non-human creation. Relational understanding of an immanent, yet transcendent God in relationship with all of creation and all people demands a radical response from the Christian.

Theologians such as Denis Edwards, Beatrice Bruteau and Sallie McFague have expanded our perception and understanding of the Trinity as relational and communal. If God exists not only within the human soul but also throughout every particle of creation, humanity then must begin to view itself in individual relationship with God and also in a communal relationship with all humanity. Christians that fully embrace the immanent presence of God within and moving through a sacral universe, must now begin to make judgments and act in loving just relationship with the ecological systems in which we live. Elizabeth Johnson's Trinitarian model presents the idea that "to contemplate the mystery of the one Trinitarian God as a living mystery of personal relations at the heart of the universe is to come to know Holy Wisdom, the triune God. This one-God-who-is-three suffers with us and prompts us to ethical action. The movement to ethical action is the dimension that modern theology contributes to a revitalized understanding of the theology of the Trinity pertaining to individual and societal praxis.

The Vatican Document, "Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God" states, "The triune God has revealed his plan to share the communion of Trinitarian life with persons created in his image...Created in the image of God, human beings are by nature bodily and spiritual, men and women made for one another, persons oriented towards communion with God and with one another." (art. 5) And, "In effect, no person is as such alone in the universe, but is always constituted with others and is summoned to form a community with them." (art. 41) The human person does not live independently but exists within social ecological communities.

The document calls the human person to responsibility within these communities “ by gaining scientific understanding of the universe, by caring responsibly for the natural world (including animals and the environment), and by guarding their own biological integrity. (art. 61)” The place of humanity in the created universe is “ front and center. Not because the human being is placed in charge of creation as some older cosmological explanations might assert, but because we are intimately related both in matter and being with the universe.

“ Human persons are one with the universe because they and the universe are held through the ongoing act of creation, not merely in the abstraction “ in being”; they exist in a universe “ located” in the secret recesses of the mystery of Trinitarian communion. Human persons and the universe are one, since together they are eschatologically “ one body” in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. ” In Conclusion In the age of the Industrial Revolution at the turn of the twentieth century, humanity had come to view our natural resources and ecological systems as being at the service of humankind. Indiscriminate consumption and depletion of the earth’s resources without regard for long-term consequences to the environment or the moral implications of the misuse of natural resources has placed the planet and the future of humanity in great jeopardy. Belief in human supremacy on the planet and unchecked attempts to dominate and dissect our habitats and ecological systems has produced catastrophic results.

Moltmann believes that “ the ecological crisis has reached nothing less than apocalyptic proportions. ” In viewing the universe as a community in which we live and participate, humanity can begin to relate to creation with regard

to maintaining integrity of persons and systems. Aldo Leopold, the famous conservationist once said, “ We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

Retrieving a Trinitarian theology based upon the economy of salvation and within the framework of an ecological cosmology, will allow “ the restoration of communion among persons and all creatures living together in a common household. The articulation of this vision is the triumph of the doctrine of the Trinity. ” God’s divine self-giving love expressed in creation, revealed within the human through the power of the Holy Spirit and embodied in the Incarnate Word allows us to see a way of being persons in complete communion with other humans, with creation and with God. The Trinity is no longer an irrelevant exercise in scholastic theological debate but a living reality that communicates God-self to us and empowers us to image that communion of being, sacramentally, ecclesially, socially and ecologically. The essence of the Trinity is all about relationship.

Love poured out freely and shared unconditionally. “ At this time of “ taking stock” at the beginning of the new millennium, there is a challenge to recover the delicate ecology of the human soul along with the fragile ecosystems of the earth. ” What is the greater mystery, the Creator or the Creation? They are in fact inextricable. We only can begin to imagine the immensity of the mystery of God revealing God-self to us. But this mystery continues to unfold in time and space.

Reflecting on the contemplative implications of this new understanding of cosmology, the human being and the nature of God, Beatrice Bruteau concludes in her book *God's Ecstasy*, " You are a participant in the Trinitarian Life Cycle, for you are doing the incarnating and the creating and the realizing and the rejoicing. God's ecstasy creates the world, and the world's ecstasy realizes God. And you are right in the midst of it all. " Bibliography Boff, Leonardo. *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000.

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