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A CONTEMPORARY VIEW ON THE IMMANENT
AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS
OF SELECTED TRINITARIAN TERMINOLOGY OF THE CREED

Abstract: The article examines the immanent and economic aspects of selected Trinitarian terminology of the *Creed*. The analysis is focused on six expressions arranged in three groups. The first concerns the omnipotence of God the Father, the “almighty” (παντοκράτωρ) “creator” (ποιητής). The second regards the incarnation of the Son of God “the only begotten” (μονογενής), who “took flesh” (σαρκωθέντα) and “was made man” (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα). The third considers the action of the Holy Spirit “the giver of life” (ζωοποιός). The novelty of this approach consists in re-reading of the ancient conciliar texts in the context of the overall development of Christian reflection with a special emphasis on contemporary dogmatic thought (mainly of H. de Lubac and H. U. von Balthasar). The main results include: a clear distinction between immanent almightiness and economic creative omnipotence of God the Father (section 1), a deeper understanding of the correspondence between Christological and Mariological aspects of the mystery of incarnation (section 2) and a new perspective on immanent dimension of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit as the giver of life (section 3).

Keywords: Creed; immanent Trinity; economic Trinity; almightiness; incarnation; giver of life

INTRODUCTION

The Profession of Faith established in the 4th century at the councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), known as the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* (or *Symbol*), has stood the test of time and, despite some subsequent discussions,

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controversies and even slight modifications¹, it survived almost unchanged in its essential form and serves up to the present day as the most common (alongside the *Apostles' Creed*) and binding profession of faith among Christians.

The historical context of its composition, terminology used in the *Symbol* and its dogmatic meaning have already been comprehensively studied with an extensive use of historical, patristic, dogmatic and linguistic methods². Taking into account the abundance of existing studies and literature, the results ob-

¹ The most famous one is the modification associated with the *Filioque* problem, which will not be considered in this work. It is worth to consult in this regard: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, vol. 3: *The Spirit of Truth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005); Yves Congar, *La Parole et le Souffle* (Paris: Desclée, 1984); Piotr Liszka, *Duch Święty, który od Ojca (i Syna) pochodzi* (Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, 2000). Another famous modification concerns the very first word occurring in the *Creed*, which often serves as its title. The original conciliar formulation represented the faith of the whole assembly of conciliar fathers and used the plural form: Πιστεύομεν which in principle should be translated into Latin: *Credimus* (cf. Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no.125). However, in the liturgical practice of early Church, the *Creed* had been principally professed individually as a part of the rite of baptism and hence the singular form *Credo* prevailed in liturgical texts (cf. Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no. 150). As a result the official Latin version begins with and bears the title of *Credo*. For further discussion regarding this issue cf.: Marcin Cholewa and Marek Gilski, *Język soborów pierwszego tysiąclecia* (Kraków: WAM, 2018), 21-22. In this work we will not refer to either Latin version of the title, instead we will use interchangeably the terms *Creed* and *Symbol*.

² In this regard, among the most important publications, one should mention at least the following three categories of works: 1) classical references: Joseph Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne*, vol. 1: *La théologie anténicéenne* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1930); Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, *El Símbolo Niceno* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1947), Giovanni Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum. Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1960); Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople* (Paris: Éditions de l'Orante, 1963); Giuseppe Dossetti, *Il simbolo di Nicea e di Constantinopoli: Edizione critica* (Roma-Freiburg-Basel-Barcelona-Wien: Herder, 1967); 2) More recent historical-dogmatic works: Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical councils*, vol. 1: *Nicaea I to Lateran V* (London-Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990); Bernard Sesboüé and Joseph Woliński, *Historie des Dogmes*, vol. 1: *Le Dieu du salut* (Paris: Desclée, 1994); Klaus Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien: Brennpunkte der Kirchengeschichte* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008); Ángel Fabrega Grau, *Historia de los concilios ecuménicos* (Barcelona: Balmes, 2009); Marek Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielnego Kościoła* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2016); 3) Works concentrating on terminological and linguistic issues: Norman Tanner, "Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church councils: Nicea I (325) to Nicea II (787)," *Gregorianum* 90, no. 1 (2009): 52-57; Gabino Uríbarri Bilbao, "La gramática de los seis primeros concilios ecuménicos. Implicaciones de la ontología trinitaria y cristología para la antropología y soteriología," *Gregorianum* 91, no. 2 (2010): 240-254; Cholewa and Gilski, *Język soborów pierwszego tysiąclecia*; Scott Ables, "Development in Theological Method and Argument in John of Damascus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28, no. 4 (2020): 625-653.

tained with the use of these approaches can be considered as fairly comprehensive and exhaustive. That does not mean that the studies regarding the meaning of the terminology used in the *Creed* need to be considered completed and closed for good.

In fact, it is quite the opposite. The 1700th anniversary of the council of Nicaea has sparked a new interest in the study of its texts not only from historical and patristic points of view but also – or maybe even mainly – from the point of view of a current faithful who every Sunday repeat almost exactly the same words and truths as their 4th century counterparts but applying to them an updated and better understood meaning at which the Church has arrived after seventeen centuries of constant development of its Tradition and teaching. Moreover, with the development of modern research methods in theology, new perspectives and new ways of looking at the same well-known and well-elaborated terms and expressions have emerged in our times.

Thus, the novelty of the view presented in the present article will consist in the re-reading of the ancient conciliar texts in the context of the overall development of Christian reflection, the Tradition and the teaching of the Church up to the present day. Unlike in the case of most traditional approaches, our analysis will not be restricted to historical data and theological concepts and meanings available only at the times when these conciliar texts had been written. For the purposes of this article the approach we take will be called the “Lubac-Balthasar method” as both of these well-known contemporary authors had used it with a great success in their research and – what’s even more important – had provided us with their own explicit methodological description and justification of this kind of approach.

Writing about conciliar texts Henri de Lubac affirmed: “they contain, since the Holy Spirit himself acts at the council, much more content than their human author consciously put into them. However, if one wants to delve into this wealth, one will quickly notice that in this process probably no other work will be as helpful as the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar”.³

The French Jesuit rightly points out here to the heritage of his great Swizz student and long-time friend. In fact, Balthasar has developed the idea of Lubac regarding the action of the Holy Spirit within the Tradition of the Church and explained it in much more detailed way:

³ Henri de Lubac, *Świadek Chrystusa w Kościele*, „Communio” 48, no. 6 (1988): 8 [own translation]. To be precise, these particular words of Lubac are said in the context of the Second Vatican Council, but obviously, as far as the assistance of the Holy Spirit is concerned, they are as well true for all other Ecumenical Councils including these on which the Church has established the *Creed*.

As the Spirit has “received” the Word, so, and not otherwise, in just that form, with that shape, with that emphasis, he has caused it to be written for the Church. And since that which he has heard in truth is infinitely richer and deeper than what can be comprised in a body made of letters, he has also undertaken, as the Spirit, to explain to the Church that which he has heard, in the Church’s *Tradition*. Because letter cannot of its very nature be the same thing as spirit, and because what is written is necessarily fragmentary (Jn 20:30; 21:25), the Church is the interpreter of what has already been uttered in Revelation, but is continually being illuminated in new ways as the meditation of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, presents it to the light of conscious faith. Ultimately, the continuity of this interpretation does not reside in the human consciousness of believers or of the Church, but in the Holy Spirit. And what is continuity for him is apt, often enough, to look incomprehensibly disjointed to men. It is not only that the Spirit is not limited to any one stage or interpretation of truth that has already been attained; it is not only that the outpouring of his sovereign power can seem at first sight like a sweeping away of all the dikes and containing banks, and is only recognizable *ex post* by hindsight as having been in fact under the control of a different and much deeper continuity. It is also that, in a sort of *generatio aequivoca*, he can bring up what seem to be new mysteries out of the depths of the revelation accomplished in Christ – mysteries which were indeed present in it, but hitherto not noticed or suspected or regarded as possible by anyone at all. When he does this, he never fails, indeed, to show the point at which the “new” things are linked on to the old, the crater out of which they erupt, the “letter” which they interpret.⁴

The above described method corresponds to the Benedict XVI approach to the application of the so called integral or canonical method used in dogmatic-exegetical studies of biblical texts. The method itself consists in reading a given biblical text in the light of the entirety of the Scripture. However, the Scripture can never be properly understood if it is not referred to the entirety of the Revelation. Hence, together with the Second Vatican Council, Benedict XVI strongly emphasizes that proper, catholic analysis of a given biblical term, text or book needs to be performed not only in the light of the other canonical books and the history of their composition, but also and sometimes

⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologie der Geschichte. Ein Grundriss* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1959), 78-79 [transl. based on: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A theology of history* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994) and partially on Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Teologia dziejów* (Znak, Kraków 1996)].

even mostly in the perspective of the entire Tradition of the Church, including its contemporary component⁵.

The aim of the present article is to present an example of such contemporary view on selected (immanent and economic) aspects of the trinitarian terminology used in the *Creed*. The main emphasis will be put on the contemporary dogmatic interpretation along the lines of the Lubac-Balthasar method in order to shed with its help a new light on the understanding of terms and expressions contained in the *Creed* which – technically speaking – had been written down seventeenth centuries ago, but – as both Lubac and Balthasar strongly emphasized – not without the assistance of the Holy Spirit ensuring that the depth of the meaning of these terms would need to be discovered by several generations of theologians up to the present times and hopefully also beyond.⁶

The choice of examined terminology and its aspects will necessarily be quite limited due to the size of an article. It is impossible to exhaustively discuss in such a short text all the immanent and economic Trinitarian references

⁵ In his post-synodal exhortation *Verbum Domini* Benedict XVI discusses the benefits of application of canonical method in biblical studies and presents the reasons why it has gained the support of the Magisterium of the Church (Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Verbum Domini*, no. 29–41). Subsequently he shows in his monumental work *Jesus of Nazareth* how to apply this method in practice, emphasizing its importance in the foreword: “In these words from the past, we can discern the question concerning their meaning for today; a voice greater than man’s echoes in Scripture’s human words; the individual writings [*Schrifte*] of the Bible point somehow to the living process that shapes the one Scripture [*Schrift*]. Indeed, the realization of this last point some thirty years ago led American scholars to develop the project of “canonical exegesis.” The aim of this exegesis is to read individual texts within the totality of the one Scripture, which then sheds new light on all the individual texts. Paragraph 12 of the Second Vatican council’s Constitution on Divine Revelation had already clearly underscored this as a fundamental principle of theological exegesis: If you want to understand the Scripture in the spirit in which it is written, you have to attend to the content and to the unity of Scripture as a whole. The council goes on to stress the need for taking account of the living tradition of the whole Church and of the analogy of faith (the intrinsic correspondences within the faith).” (Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York–London: Doubleday, 2007), xviii).

⁶ The trinitarian drive of our approach comes directly from Balthasar’s attitude in his own commentary to the *Creed* as indicated by M. Kehl in his introduction to it: “The preeminent value of this exposition of the creed, which set it apart from other similar attempts, lies in the consistently reasoned and inter-balanced way in which von Balthasar brings out the trinitarian structure of the Christian Faith, both as a whole and as unfolded in the twelve «articles of faith»” (Medard Kehl, *Introduction in: Hans Urs von Balthasar, Credo: Meditations on the Apostles’ Creed* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 8). However, as far as particular topics of interest of our analysis are concerned they will be borrowed from and developed on other Balthasar works with his trilogy being the primary source.

which can be found in the *Symbol*⁷. The analysis will be focused on six expressions arranged in three groups – each group consisting of the terminology associated with one divine person and described in a separate section.

The first section will be devoted to the question of the relation between economic omnipotence and immanent almightiness of God the Father with two main corresponding key terms: “almighty” (παντοκράτωρ) and “creator” (ποιητής). The second section will consist of the analysis of the relationship between Mariological and Christological aspects of the terms concerning the incarnation: “the only begotten” (μονογενής), “took flesh” (σαρκωθέντα) and “was made man” (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα). The third section will be devoted to the problem of the active role of the Holy Spirit in the immanent (intratrinitarian) sense with the expression “the giver of life” (ζωοποιός) serving as the primary focus.

I. THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR

The *Creed* does not talk much about the personal characteristics of God the Father. This is understandable from the obvious fact that very few heresies had arisen that would fundamentally challenge either divinity or one of the basic hypostatic attributes of the first Person of the Trinity. Of course, heresies which directly or indirectly concerned God the Father were not completely lacking⁸, but nevertheless they did not manage to grow to such a scale as to threaten the universal faith of the Church and to require special attention of councils⁹.

⁷ In this article the terms *immanent* and *Immanent Trinity* will refer to the inner reality of the Trinity i.e. intratrinitarian relations, hypostatical characteristics, essential divine attributes, etc. The terms *economic* and *Economic Trinity*, will pertain to the external action of the Trinity in the world, in the history of salvation and in general to its relation with the entirety of creation.

⁸ Among the heresies of this type one can mention *Marcionism* and *Valentinism* being themselves in general branches of *Gnosticism*. They were not directly aimed at God the Father but concerned his person indirectly by undermining the value of the Old Testament and by classifying the God of this Testament as a harsh and cruel being (identifying it often with the *Demiurge* – the creator of the evil material world). All of that in opposition to the God of the New Testament who, in this approach, was seen as good and merciful. Another group was formed by different variants of *Modalism*, like *Sabellianism* and in a particular way *Patripassianism*. The latter attributed to God the Father the sufferings borne by Christ on the cross. In this work we will not present or analyze any of these (or later mentioned) heresies in details. The reader can consult e.g. Sesboüé and Woliński, *Historie des Dogmes*, vol. 1, 32-37, 179-182 or Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes*, vol. 1, 192-206, 347-363, 482-484.

⁹ For example, when it comes to the aforementioned *Marcionism* and, in general, to quickly spreading in the first centuries Gnostic, and especially Manichean, *Dualism*, as Hans Urs von Balthasar rightly pointed out, great fathers, such as Irenaeus, had managed to counteract these heresies

The *Symbol* contains, however, very interesting, not quantitatively abounding, but qualitatively deep characteristics of the first person of the Trinity. In addition to the obvious mention of uniqueness: “We believe in one God” (Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεόν)¹⁰, which expresses the monotheism of the Christian faith and the fundamental immanent characteristics of God the Father, i.e. precisely his Fatherhood, one can find two other, more specific, terms which deserve closer examination.

The first one refers to Father’s almightiness (παντοκράτωρ – almighty)¹¹, the other one concerns the authorship of creation (ποιητής – creator). Immediately arises the question whether or not we are dealing here with some kind of redundancy. At first glance, it would seem that the omnipotence of God is fully revealed precisely in the work of creation, all the more, the *Creed* specifies that the entire creation is taken into account and not only its visible part: “all [things] visible and invisible” (ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀορατῶν).

There is no doubt that God’s omnipotence in the economic sphere is powerfully manifested in the work of creation. It is therefore necessary to consider whether this economic aspect fully exhausts the Father’s almightiness, or maybe there exists some deeper – immanent – dimension of this feature, which (in the case of a positive answer) would indicate that the *Symbol* may be talking about something more than just creative omnipotence.

It is worth, therefore, to undertake a reflection on God’s almightiness reaching into the immanent depths of the Holy Trinity. A deep reflection on that matter has been undertaken by Balthasar himself in his *Theo-Drama*. He focused his considerations on the aspect of God’s freedom, which he called the *infinite freedom*, in contrast to the freedom available to creation, which he named the *finite freedom*. The depth of Balthasar’s theodramatic reflection

quite effectively in pre-Nicene times: “The Manichean and Marcionist caricature of two gods (a god of power who dominates the Old Testament and a god of love who reveals himself in the New Testament) is so diametrically opposed to the entire structure of the form of revelation that Irenaeus had no trouble whatsoever in demolishing this demonic contrivance” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1: *Seeing the Form* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 656).

¹⁰ If not stated otherwise, here and henceforth original Greek text of the *Creed* and its English translation will be cited in its Constantinopolitan version after: Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no. 150.

¹¹ The Greek term παντοκράτωρ, used in the original terminology of the *Creed*, in its strict etymological understanding means “the mighty ruler of all.” The term can be, however, understood also in a bit broader (abstract) sense as “the one who has the power over everything.” The latter understanding is much closer to the Latin equivalent “omnipotent” and its English counterpart “almighty” and will be assumed throughout the rest of the paper.

concerns precisely the difference and the relationship between these two freedoms¹².

The Balthasar's standpoint on the matter of the aforementioned difference is that it possesses a deep qualitative and not only quantitative character. God's freedom, as opposed to the freedom of created beings, in particular of a human being, does not consist only in the fact that God has infinite range of choice while the human's spectrum of choice is finite. For Balthasar, the difference lies in the object of these freedoms. In essence, this difference reaches to what in philosophy is referred to as a *real difference* or an *ontological difference*, i.e. the difference between the *essence* and the *existence*¹³.

In order to present Balthasar's thought in a nutshell, it can be said that the difference between finite and infinite freedom consists in the fact that the object of the former pertains only to certain aspects of its *existence* (its whereabouts, its feelings and deeds, how it interacts with other beings, etc.), the object of the latter is the very subject of it, i.e. the *essence* of this subject (in this case, God's nature). God is so free – and for the purposes of the problem considered in this work, one can rephrase it that he is so (all)mighty – that he can decide on his own essence.

God the Father does not owe to anybody not only his existence but also his essence and he is absolutely free and almighty to share the fullness of his divine nature (essence) with his Son (and together with him with the Holy Spirit), without any reservation or subordination (in either direction) completely surrendering himself, while not losing at the same time anything on his part. Balthasar's key observation in this regard is the following:

God is not only by nature free in his self-possession, in his self-disposition; but for that very reason, he is also free to do what he will with his own essence. That is, he can surrender himself; as Father, he can share his Godhead with the Son, and as Father and Son, he can share the same Godhead with the Spirit. [...] The Father, who generates the Son, does not “lose” himself to someone else in this act in order thereby to “regain” himself; for he is always himself by giving himself.¹⁴

¹² As Balthasar himself admits: “the creation of the finite freedom by infinite freedom is the starting point of all theo-drama” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 2: *Dramatis Personae*, part 1: *Man in God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 271).

¹³ For detailed discussion regarding this issue cf.: Angelo Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: Uno stile teologico* (Milano: Jacca Book, 1991) 30.

¹⁴ Cf. Balthasar, *Theodramatik*, vol. 2, part 1, 232.

In case of any creature, all that is stated above is, of course, impossible. Thus, the almightiness of God the Father in the intratrinitarian or immanent sphere means that he has the power to decide about his divine essence. It is important to stress that it does not merely mean that he owes it to no one (the fact that the Father *does not proceed from anyone* is his standard *passive* immanent characteristics within the Trinity). The almightiness, we are talking about here, concerns his *active* immanent characteristics within the Trinity, consisting in his absolutely free and almighty ability to share his divine nature with the Son and the Spirit.¹⁵

From this perspective, one can clearly see that the immanent almightiness of God the Father is something, by far, greater and deeper than just his economic (e.g. creative) omnipotence. Summarizing the above considerations, one can formulate the following distinction: while being a *creator* characterizes God the Father in *economic* terms, his *almightiness* characterizes him – not exclusively, but in the most important and the deepest measure – in the *immanent* sense¹⁶.

II. THE ONLY BEGOTTEN AND INCARNATED WORD

The question of the only-begottenness of the Son of God can be considered from two different perspectives. On one hand, we have an immanent aspect of being eternally born as the only son of the Father, but on the other hand, we

¹⁵ As M. Kehl rightly puts it in his introduction to Balthasar's *Credo*: "It begins with the matter of correctly understanding «God the Father *Almighty*»: his «almightiness» lies not (as often imagined by us) in «being able to do this or that as he chooses», but in the unlimited and free power of his surrender, which can bring forth «an Other in God»" (Kehl, *Introduction*, in Balthasar, *Credo*, 10). See also: Balthasar, *Credo*, 31-32.

¹⁶ In the face of such a clear difference, it is worth asking how the above finding relates to the fundamental *postulate* of Rahner (by some called also Rahner's *axiom* or *Rahner's rule*), identifying the Economic and Immanent Trinity. It is known that this postulate was criticized not only by Balthasar but also by many other contemporary authors (see e.g.: Congar, *La Parole*, 166-167). Theologians, in general, agree that the entire economic action of the Trinity must authentically and faithfully reflect its immanence, but not all share the famous Rahnerian *Umgekehrt* (i.e. vice versa), suggesting that all the depth of immanence must manifest itself in economics. The distinction, indicated here, between the immanent almightiness of God the Father and his economic (e.g., creative) omnipotence seems to support this critique. However, we will not explore this problem in this paper. Some recent views on the subject can be found in: Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ: New Edition* (London-New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 264-276; Fred Sanders, "Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40, no. 3 (2001): 175-182.

should also pay attention to the economic aspect of being born of a Virgin Mother, also as her only son.

There is no doubt that the fundamental aspect emphasized by the *Creed* is the immanent and direct character of the procession of the Son of God from the Father. The statement was absolutely necessary in the context the Arian heresy, against which the council of Nicaea had to emphasize that the Son of God was “begotten not made” (γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα) “before all ages” (πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων), as well as in the context of the heresy of pneumatomachs, against which the uniqueness of the begottenness of the Son (μονογενής) needed to be undelined in relation to a different, though also immanent, intratrinitarian procession of the Holy Spirit.

Much less emphasized, or even often overlooked in the literature, is the economic aspect of the only-begottenness of the Son, which is closely related to Mariological and Pneumatological aspects raised by the First council of Constantinople. As Joseph Ratzinger rightly affirms, already at the First council of Constantinople one should look for the first official formulation of the Marian dogma regarding her perpetual virginity¹⁷. Of course, this is not yet the full (i.e. present) form of this dogma, as it talks “only” about virginal conception – apparently leaving unspecified the *in partu* and *post partum* aspects – but undoubtedly, the further Pneumatological context of the conciliar statement clearly shows that the council fathers emphasized the virginity of this conception in order to exclude the possibility of interference of any earthly male element in the event of the incarnation which is precisely the essence and decisive element of the dogma in question.

The importance of the deep conjunction of the Christological aspect of incarnation with the Mariological and the Pneumatological ones, has been especially clearly and strongly emphasized by Balthasar:

The fact that the Son of God allows himself to be conjoined in one form with his human prehistory is not primarily a general historical fact, in virtue of which every man, in spite of his irreducible individuality, is a product of his forebears, his people, his epoch and his environment. Jesus is this as well, in so far as he is genuine man; but already the sign of the virgin birth calls our attention to the fact that he cannot be these things in the same sense as those begotten of an earthly father. Rather, the act of his subjection to the common historical conditioning is also the act of his free incarnation by the Holy Spirit: as one who is not “thrown” into

¹⁷ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum* (Kösel-Verlag München 1968), note no. 52 on p. 229-230.

existence (*ein Ungeworfener*), he enters the condition of those thrown into existence (*die Geworfenen*) and accepts the testimony of history on which he was by no means dependent.¹⁸

For Balthasar, the Mariological dogma of virginal conception together with that of the immaculate conception are the guarantors of the completeness and inviolability of both aspects – divine and human, respectively – of the Christological dogma of incarnation. The aspect of virginity, discussed above, guarantees, according to Balthasar, the exclusiveness and fullness of the divine Fatherhood¹⁹.

On the other hand, the acceptance by Jesus of full humanity from Mary is conditioned, according to Balthasar, upon the state of her immaculateness. For if any part of Mary's humanity was contaminated by sin, her *Fiat* would also be tainted in this respect, and therefore her opening to God would be incomplete, and Christ, who through his incarnation was to participate fully in human nature, except for sin, in this case could not have participated in this particular defiled part of humanity²⁰.

What is particularly interesting, from the point of view of our analysis, is that Balthasar clearly indicates that the Christological-Mariological dogmatic correspondence, described above, can already be found in the pre-Nicene fathers. This is, of course, not much surprising in the part of the question regarding the uniqueness of the Fatherhood of God, and of Mary's virginity²¹.

¹⁸ Balthasar, *The Glory*, vol. 1, 619.

¹⁹ Therefore, exceptionally, but strongly, Balthasar did not agree here with Ratzinger regarding the possibility of Jesus having both earthly parents, without it causing any harm to his divinity. Ratzinger's views on this issue can be found in: Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 225. For the Balthasar's polemic see: Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Empfangen durch den Heiligen Geist, geboren von der Jungfrau Maria," in *Vierzehn Betrachtungen zum Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis*, edited by Wilhelm Sandfuchs (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1982), 39-49. It should be noted however that the Ratzinger's claim has nothing to do with the ancient heresy of Ebionites. The Ebionites maintained the thesis of Christ's origin from both earthly parents in order to contradict his divinity. In Ratzinger's view, the acceptance of the hypothesis of such ancestry in no way violates the doctrine of divinity of Christ.

²⁰ For a full exposition of Balthasar's position, only briefly summarized here, see: Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Maria – Kirche im Ursprung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 2010), 64-79.

²¹ Balthasar refers in this context to the famous saying by Tertullian: "duo jam patres habebuntur, Deus et homo, si non virgo sit mater", see: Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 4,10 (PL 2, 407-408).

Much less obvious are the pre-Nicene sources of the idea of the strict relationship between Mary's immaculateness and the fullness of Christ's humanity. Balthasar stands on the position that this relationship was already intuitively perceived by Irenaeus, even though the depth of his gaze seemed not to be shared by later fathers²².

Even if we agree with Balthasar that Irenaeus may have intuitively envisioned this relationship, one must admit that its explicit formulation we owe rather to Balthasar (who understandably did not want to claim it by himself). For with such a clarity and certainty it could only be stated after the Church officially formulated the dogma of the immaculate conception. Due to the modern character of this formulation, theologians needed to wait for centuries in order to be able to formally refer to it. Once it has finally been done, it allows us to shed some new light on certain conciliar terms and expressions, which we are about to examine²³.

In particular, it is worth analyzing two different terms concerning the incarnation of Christ appearing in the *Creed* (present already in the Nicene version and consistently repeated in Constantinople): he took (or became) flesh (σάρκωθέντα) and became (or was made) man (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα). The use of these two terms is not accidental. It is also not a simple redundancy. It is a testimony of the process of development and separation of two different Christological models: *Logos-sarx* and *Logos-anthropos*, which had already begun before the council of Nicaea.

The statement regarding the reception of the body, emphasized in the *Logos-sarx* model, is clearly directed against docetism. On the other hand, the

²² Balthasar states it in the second volume of his *Glory*, in the chapter devoted to Irenaeus: "What for the later fathers of the Church would become only a sign of his divine purity (namely, that he is not defiled by human procreation, which transmits original sin), is for Irenaeus a double sign, that is, a sign of the true divinity and the true humanity of Christ. As a human, he receives through Mary not only the entirety of Adam's body and blood, but also his archetypal form of creation" (cf. Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, vol. 2, 54-55).

²³ It is worth making a short methodological digression at this moment. This situation provides a strong argument for the adequacy (not to be mistaken with uniqueness or exclusivity) of the method adopted in this work. If one understands the dogma of the Church as an entirety, i.e. as an expression of one coherent deposit of faith, then regardless of whether a given dogma was formulated in the 4th, in the 19th or in the 20th century, the truths contained in them are organically and internally co-related. A proper understanding of the terms and expressions that God's providence allowed in the fourth century's conciliar text may achieve its fullness only in the twentieth century, or later, as one should expect an even deeper understanding with further development of the Church's Tradition and reflection.

model *Logos-anthropos* favors the term inhomination²⁴, meaning the reception of not only the carnal-psychological aspects of humanity (σάρξ and ψυχή) but also the spiritual one, concerning the possession of a human soul (πνεῦμα). The latter aspect has been raised in a response to – formalized by Apollinaris only after the First council of Nicaea but informally developing long before – a heterodox current which eventually would be called precisely by the name of Apollinarianism²⁵.

In the present work, we want to extend the interpretation of these terms beyond the strict circle of classical Christological models and draw attention to their Christological-Mariological complementarity based on the above presented Balthasarian reflection. This complementarity can be seen by juxtaposing the currently discussed Christological text of the *Creed* with two biblical Mariological scenes: the scene of the Annunciation (Lk 1: 26-38) and the Visitation of St. Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-45).

These two scenes contain two key Mariological terms that characterize the person of Mother of God: the title which the Angel Gabriel bestows on Mary: *full of grace* – κεχαριτωμένη (Lk 1:28) and the title with which Elizabeth addresses herself to Mary: *blessed*, expressed by two Greek terms: εὐλογημένη (Lk 1:42) and μακαρία (Lk 1:45)²⁶.

Referring now to Balthasar's correspondence between Christological and Mariological dogmatic truths, one can establish analogous correspondence between – present in the *Creed* – Christological terms regarding the incarnation

²⁴ The term “inhomination”, even if not officially belonging to the traditional English vocabulary, reflects closely the idea behind the Greek term ἐνανθρώπησις, and is already present in the literature of the subject, cf. e.g. the vocabulary used in: George Dion Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives*, Patristic Theological Library 1 (Rollinsford, New Hampshire: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005).

²⁵ By *Apollinarism* one usually means a doctrine formalized in the mid-fourth century by Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea, stating that Christ's humanity was deprived of a human soul, which was replaced by the Spirit of the Incarnated Word. From this perspective, incarnation was understood as the Word's dwelling in human biological body and performing all spiritual functions in it. Such views, however, were proclaimed long before the emergence of Apollinaris. Already Origen was fighting them strongly, using the term ἐνανθρώπησις to describe the reality of the unification of the divine and human natures in Christ, with a human soul understood as a key element enabling this unification, cf. e.g. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3,14 (PG 11, 937). The tendencies to eliminate from Christ's humanity the element of soul were present also in Arian heresy, see e.g.: Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes*, vol. 1, 24-29; Sesboüé and Woliński, *Historie des Dogmes*, vol. 1, 236-243.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion regarding these biblical Mariological titles and their interpretations see: L. Wołowski, “Mariological Interpretation of the Eight Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–10),” *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2020): 637-679; Bartosz Adamczewski, “Szczęśliwa, która uwierzyła (Łk 1,45),” *Verbum vitae* 5 (2004): 75-87.

(σαρκωθέντα and ἐνανθρωπήσαντα) and the above mentioned biblical Mariological titles (εὐλογημένη/μακαρία and κεχαριτωμένη).

Indeed, as a result of what happened in the scene of the Annunciation, Mary is described as blessed or happy (εὐλογημένη/μακαρία), and therefore lifted up to the heights of spiritual participation in the life of God to the extent that is possible for a human being. In the language of mysticism, one can speak of mystical *ecstasy*. At the same time the Son of God has descended to participate in human nature and to assume human body (σαρκωθέντα). In this case, we are dealing with a *kenosis*.

Precisely when these two opposite movements meet, i.e. at the moment of the incarnation, when Mary utters her word of *Fiat* and accepts the eternal Word of God, she not only (as immaculate) becomes able to receive but actually receives the fullness of God's grace, and hence becomes *full of grace* (κεχαριτωμένη). At the same time, according to the *Creed's* terminology, Christ assumes humanity (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα), and not only a part of it, but thanks to her immaculateness, the fullness of it.

III. THE GIVER OF LIFE WHO HAS SPOKEN THROUGH THE PROPHETS

Patristic and dogmatic literature talks a lot about the passive procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (or through the Son in the Eastern perspective). Much less is said about the Holy Spirit's intratrinitarian activity. Standard Western terminology speaks of the *active spiration* of the Father and the Son as the principle of the procession of the Spirit, and of the *passive spiration* as an immanent characteristic of the Spirit himself. The question then arises: what is the active immanent characteristic of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity?

As was indicated earlier, it is not necessary to fully agree with Rahner's rule regarding the identity of the Economic and Immanent Trinity, but on the other hand, one cannot completely deny it. The awareness of the enormous dynamics and truly unlimited economic activity of the Holy Spirit, combined with the conviction that it must have some translation into his immanent characteristics, prompts us to search for terms with which one can express his immanent activity.

In the Constantinopolitan version of the *Creed* one can find two characteristics that are specifically attributed to the Third Person of the Trinity: The "giver of life" (ζωοποιός) and the one "who has spoken through the prophets"

(λαλήσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν). The other terms used in the *Creed* do not characterize the Spirit in his specific hypostatic properties, but only emphasize his divinity, such as the holiness (ἅγιος) and the lordship (κύριος).

Both the *life-giving* and the *speaking* properties characterize the aspect of activity of the Holy Spirit and it is obvious that both pertain clearly to its economic dimension. However, one should pose for a moment and consider whether this obvious economic dimension exhausts the whole depth of meaning hidden in these expressions.

Using a pure patristic-historical method, one would probably arrive at that type of conclusion. It seems pointless to try to look for an immanent interpretation of any of these terms in pre-Constantinopolitan theological set up.

In the present work, however, we will try to shed a new light on one of these terms, namely, the *giver of life*. We aim to reach to a deeper layer of meaning of this expression and try to uncover hidden in it immanent aspect. For this purpose, we will refer to a slightly later patristic reflection and, as in previous cases, to contemporary dogmatic thought.

Will start with Augustine of Hippo. In his famous treatise on the Trinity, *De Trinitate*, he proposed the following interpretation of the role of the Holy Spirit within the realm of intratrinitarian relations:

But yet that Holy Spirit, who is not the Trinity, but is understood as in the Trinity, is spoken of in His proper name of the Holy Spirit relatively, since He is referred both to the Father and to the Son, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son. But the relation is not itself apparent in that name, but it is apparent when He is called the gift of God; for He is the gift of the Father and of the Son, because “He proceeds from the Father,” as the Lord says; and because that which the apostle says, “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,” he says certainly of the Holy Spirit Himself. [...] In order, therefore, that the communion of both may be signified from a name which is suitable to both, the Holy Spirit is called the gift of both.²⁷

Of course, the word “gift” can be understood in purely economic way. And precisely in this sense one often talks about “the gifts of the Holy Spirit”. Augustine, however, points to a much deeper interpretation. Starting from the fact that God the Father loved with the eternal love his Son and that the Son reciprocated this love also eternally, he comes to the conclusion that the Holy

²⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* V, XI.12 (PL 42, 919).

Spirit is the essence, the fruit and the gift of this unique intratrinitarian mutual love of the Father and the Son.

Augustine's thought leading from the economic gifts of the Spirit to the Immanent Gift that itself is the Spirit has been undertaken by Balthasar, who presented it in reversed order:

This demonstrates the whole gift quality of the Holy Spirit in its full dimensions. Since he is gift first of all for Father and Son in the twofold sense that each gives him to the other and each is overtaken by the utter "fruit" quality of the Spirit (that is, he is the unfathomability of divine love, lived out in personal terms, within the Trinity) – he can be the God who is given to the world, too, as utter gift.²⁸

In both of these approaches the Spirit is understood as the personification of the relationship of mutual love between the Father and the Son. This relationship is not *something*, it is *someone*, it is a living person of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the relationship of love between the Father and the Son owes its vitality and its personal character to the Holy Spirit. Thus, he can rightly be called the giver of life to this relationship. On one hand, the Holy Spirit passively receives his being from the Father and the Son, becoming a gift and fruit of their mutual love, but on the other, he acts as an active animator of this relationship – it is he who shapes it and gives it its infinite ever-living dynamics.

Balthasar presents this dynamics in terms of the excess of the intratrinitarian love of the Father and the Son, which reveals in the Person of the Holy Spirit the fullness of its divine vitality:

For both, the event of this oneness is a gift: the *bonum* of a mutual love is a *donum* for the lovers. Thus both, the loving Father and the loving Son, receive this mutuality as a gift. This gift, however, is not the calculable total of their love, nor is it the resultant identity of their love: it is an unfathomable *more*, a fruit (as the child is the fruit of the "one-flesh" relationship of man and wife); for even divine love, and every love that reflects it, is (as we have already said) an "overflowing", because, in it, the pure, unmotivated nature of goodness comes to light, as the ultimate face, *prosōpon*, of the Divinity.²⁹

²⁸ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, vol. 3, 228.

²⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, vol. 3, 227.

In a similar way, Balthasar interprets – formulated in *Credo* in Christological context with a use of the beloved by the pre-Nicene fathers analogy between divine reality and light – the mystery of intra-divine dynamics of procession *lumen de lumine* (φῶς ἐκ φωτός):

In the mystery of *lumen de lumine*, which in union with the Father constitutes essential love, the reference (of persons) as the identity (of essence) finds its crowning. The light is not only the inner light of absolute subjectivity which has become one thing with its being, but it is the absolute love that enters the world only because it is already love in itself.³⁰

The basic tone of the above Balthasarian interpretation is, of course, also Christological, but for us the Pneumatological thread hidden in the background is for the moment more important. It suffices to note that the union of the Father and the Son, which is described here in terms of “essential love”, refers directly to the concept of the intratrinitarian role of the Holy Spirit described above³¹.

It is important to note also at this moment that Adrienne von Speyr – a Swizz mystic who for years shared her mystical visions with Balthasar under his spiritual direction – has at certain point pronounced explicitly the statement regarding the role of the Holy Spirit as a giver of life in the context of its intratrinitarian relation to the Father and Son:

Being in two means death in the long run. To keep the love between the two alive, a third person is always needed, who goes beyond the two who love each other. Therefore, the Holy Spirit in God is the true source of eternal life. Therefore, he is also something most incomprehensible in God, the eternal excess, that which is always more and thus keeps everything alive.³²

Therefore, for the purposes of this work, keeping in mind yet another key Balthasar observation, namely that: “love is the most living thing that there is”³³, one may dare to paraphrase the above-quoted thoughts of both Balthasar and Speyr by stating that the Holy Spirit is love, which gives life to the world,

³⁰ Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, vol. 2, 135.

³¹ Balthasar expresses the same idea in many different places and ways, e.g. when he states that the unity of both (i.e. the Father and the Son) is the Spirit of Love (cf. Balthasar, *Glory*, vol. 1, 479).

³² Cit. after: Hans Urs von Balthasar, „Kommt und seht“ *Meditationen des Lebens Jesu* (Freiburg: Informationszentrum Berufe d. Kirche, 1983), 36 [own translation].

³³ Balthasar, *Credo*, 54.

only because he is in himself the love that gives life to the intratrinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son.

We are dealing here with a correspondence between an immanent action of the Holy Spirit understood as the personification of the Father's and Son's love and his economic action in the world as a giver of life, i.e. a giver of love, which is the essence of both intratrinitarian and human life³⁴.

Finally, it is worth noting that the above considerations are not conditioned upon the necessity to adopt the Western version of the interpretation of the procession of the Spirit, i.e. its procession from the Father *and* the Son. The "transformation" and the "vitality" of the loving relation between the Father and the Son, resulting from the activity of the Spirit, is also reflected in the Eastern principle of intratrinitarian *perichoresis*. In line with this principle, the Trinity lives a constant inner exchange of the mutual gift of love which is the essence of intratrinitarian existence. Also in this setup, the Holy Spirit does not only passively proceeds from the Father through the Son, but also actively participates in and shapes the dynamics of this intratrinitarian life.

CONCLUSION

Aiming at a concise presentation of the research results obtained in the above investigations, one can state that it concerned deepened examination of the distinction and interrelation between the immanent and economic aspects of selected trinitarian terms found in the *Creed*. The economic aspects were of secondary interest in this particular approach. An important contribution concerned, however, the immanent ones.

In the first section the immanent dimension of the almightiness of God the Father as opposed to his purely economic creative omnipotence has been brought to light and thoroughly discussed. In the second section a rarely discussed relation between immanent eternal generation of the Son and his economic historical incarnation was examined in the light of the correspondence between appropriate Christological and Mariological vocabulary utilized by the *Creed*. The conclusion of the considerations presented in that section can be enclosed in the following statement: as Christ not only took human flesh,

³⁴ The dynamical action of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and implied by it economic consequences are described by Balthasar in terms of immanent "transfiguration" of love between the Father and the Son, performed by the Holy Spirit, and resulting in economic justification of the existence of all creation (cf. Balthasar, *Glory*, vol. 1, 506).

but became fully human, Mary is not only blessed/happy, but becomes full of grace, and vice versa, because she is not only blessed/happy, but also, in her immaculate *Fiat*, participates in the fullness of God's grace, he not only takes flesh, but also, in his limitless kenosis, participates in fullness of humanity. In the third section a new view on the pneumatological title "the giver of life" has been proposed and examined, leading to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is love, which gives life not only to the world, but also to the intratrinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son. In other words, the title "the giver of life" attributed by the *Creed* to the Holy Spirit does not exhaust its meaning merely in its economic trinitarian sense but achieves the fullness of it only on much deeper, immanent trinitarian level.

In the final remark, we want to refer shortly to the – present in the *Creed* but left undiscussed in the third section – characteristics of the Holy Spirit as the one who "has spoken through the prophets". This characteristics has purely economic meaning and since we were primary focused on immanent ones, it did not capture our attention in that particular section. However, some commentary regarding this expression will be appropriate here in the conclusion in the context of the – sometimes in the past unfairly criticized – "Lubac-Balthasar method" applied in our analysis.

The truth of our faith that the Holy Spirit "has spoken through the prophets" does not end on the category of ancient prophets of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit speaks throughout the whole history of salvation which includes the times of development of the Church's Tradition (the councils, the dogmas formulated by the Church's Magisterium, etc.) as well as the times of our present-day "prophets", e.g. saints and/or theologians.³⁵ The ancient conciliar texts, that bear witness to this particular action of the Holy Spirit, are not dead or ossified relics of ancient Christian thought, to which only a sterile linguistic morphological analyses or purely historical-critical methods can be applied.³⁶ These texts are a living word spoken under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who is constantly active in the Church and therefore one not only can, but

³⁵ The problem of relation between the sainthood and theology was thoroughly discussed in: Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Theologie und Heiligkeit" in *Verbum Caro: Skizzen zur Theologie I* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1990) 195-225.

³⁶ Of course, all mentioned here methods (and many others) are perfectly justified and even necessary, as long as they do not claim exclusivity. Regarding the question of the importance of preserving the variety and necessity of development of different methods in theology see: Ables, "Development", 625-653.

indeed must approach them also from an integral dogmatic perspective. Exactly this perspective characterizes the described and used in the present work “Lubac-Balthasar method”.

Thus, just as the depth of truths contained in biblical texts exceeds immeasurably the awareness of their human authors and conceals meanings and messages that were inaccessible to them, but are accessible to the Church who discovers them sometimes centuries later with a constant development and deeper understanding of her Tradition, so also the depth of conciliar texts exceeds the consciousness of conciliar fathers who formulated them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who, as always, also at that times was speaking through them as the prophets.

The task of successive generations of theologians is to extract this depth with the use of both traditional and contemporary interpretation tools and research methods.

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WSPÓŁCZESNE SPOJRZENIE NA IMMANENTNE I EKONOMICZNE ASPEKTY WYBRANYCH TRYNITARNYCH TERMINÓW WYSTĘPUJĄCYCH W CREDO

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje immanentne i ekonomiczne aspekty wybranej terminologii trynitarniej obecnej w Credo. Przeprowadzona analiza skupiona jest na sześciu wyrażeniach uporządkowanych w trzy grupy. Pierwsza dotyczy wszechmocy Boga Ojca „wszechmogącego” (παντοκράτωρ) „stworzyciela” (ποιητής). Druga odnosi się do wcielenia Syna Bożego „jednorodzonego” (μονογενής), który „przyjął ciało” (σάρκωθέντα) i „stał się człowiekiem” (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα). Trzecia skupia się na działaniu Ducha Świętego jako „dawcy życia” (ζωοποιός). Oryginalność zaprezentowanego podejścia polega na ponownym odczytaniu antycznego tekstu soborowego w kontekście całościowego rozwoju refleksji chrześcijańskiej ze szczególnym naciskiem na współczesną myśl dogmatyczną (zwłaszcza H. de Lubca i H. U. von Balthasara). Najważniejsze uzyskane rezultaty dotyczą: jasnego rozróżnienia immanentnej wszechmocności od ekonomicznej wszechmocy stwórczej Boga Ojca (sekcja 1), głębszego zrozumienia odpowiedniości pomiędzy chrystologicznymi i mariologicznymi aspektami misterium wcielenia (sekcja 2) oraz nowego spojrzenia na immanentny wymiar charakterystyki Ducha Świętego jako Ożywiciela (sekcja 3).

Słowa kluczowe: Credo; Trójca immanentna; Trójca ekonomiczna; wszechmoc; wcielenie; dawca życia