

Letter to the Editor

Sincere thanks are due to Gustavo Polit for his courteous clarification of Schuon's metaphysical modalism of the Trinity, as distinct from the theological modalism of Sabellius. Thus, Schuon (and others) distinguish between 'two degrees of Divine Reality' within the uncreated order—Beyond-Being and Being—and consider the Trinity as comprised in Being, yet also comprised and prefigured in Beyond-Being'. Some Christians, myself included, insist on the possibility of distinguishing only the Trinity (*ousia* and *hypostases*) in the uncreated order, as comprising Being and Beyond-Being in one perichoretic degree of Reality, however paradoxical. This can be taken as concordant with Mr. Polit's quotation from Schuon, that 'the entire doctrine of the Word constitutes a system of points of reference at the level of the one metaphysics, and in this sense it is possible to speak of a metaphysics that is Christian in its formulation'. I do not claim, however, as Mr. Polit suggests, that 'there exists an explicit metaphysics... incumbent upon all Christians'. The Christian tradition is rich in variant perspectives, and I have told Patrick Moore, an earlier participant in this discussion, that I consider our difference on this a matter of theological opinion. I have only wanted to defend a certain possibility.

Thanks also to James Cutsinger for his concise exposition of the monarchial perspective on the Trinity, with which I have no dispute—but will simply observe in passing that the Athanasian Creed, in contrast with the Nicene, is at pains to emphasize the equality of the Persons, as distinct from their hierarchy, and that Gregory Nazianzen (the Theologian), in his Orations 30 and 31, likewise is at pains to emphasize their

equality. In any case, whether the the Unity of the Three (their Triunity indeed) is considered by way of the Father's monarchy, or by way of their perichoretic circumcession, in which they do not 'associate' *with* God, but *within* God; either way it is their essential Unity that rings true with Islamic doctrine. And on the Muslim side, ibn Arabi's notion of degrees of oneness acknowledges the Trinity as such a degree. (Qaiser Shahzad, 'Accomodating Trinity', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol 48, No 1, p. 114.)

I also wish to thank Dr. Cutsinger for clarifying his disagreement with Metropolitan Kallistos, to which I alluded in the previous letter, namely that they had previously discussed the matter and the bishop had acknowledged the orthodoxy of Dr. Cutsinger's view, as a *theologumenon* or theological opinion. Given the crisis of episcopal authority throughout the Western Church, I confess to being rather sensitized to the apperception of a layman contradicting an orthodox (indeed Orthodox) bishop in public. If my misinterpretation of the matter caused anyone to be appalled, I hereby apologize.

And now, God willing, may the Peace that passes all human understanding, govern our hearts and minds.

Larry Rinehart
Dover Pennsylvania USA