

Introduction

He himself [Jesus Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

—COL. 1:17

The doctrine of the Trinity is an exercise in wonder. It is drawn from the wonder of our own existence and the diverse experiences of the divine encountered by the early Christian community. That pluriform experience eventually gave rise to the doctrine of the Trinity as Christian thinkers attempted to coherently place the Christian experience of the divine somewhere between the pluralistic polytheism of the Greco-Roman world and the singular monotheism of the Jewish tradition. Christianity became a *pluralistic monotheism*, with all the contrasts and creativity that implies. Theologians of the church have drawn on the most sophisticated language and understandings of their time in their attempts to clarify and express that faith, and this task is no different today. It is precisely the continuation of this theological quest that this book will engage in as we reflect on the multiple ways the divine is present to human life for both meaning and hope.

The formative question of this study is: *What can the current scientific understanding of the natural world contribute to our reflection in a Triune fashion on the relationship of God and the world?* This theological question will be explored through the metaphorical appropriation of two central concepts in quantum physics: entanglement (nonlocal relational holism) and superposition with its resulting paradigm of complementarity. These concepts will be used to unpack for contemporary understanding the central expression of the Trinitarian mystery as the dynamic divine relationship of perichoresis.¹ Initially

1. I am indebted to Dr. Kirk Wegter-McNelly for first presenting to me, as one of his readers, the idea of connecting perichoresis and entanglement in his doctoral dissertation, “The World, Entanglement, and God: Quantum Theory and the Christian Doctrine of Creation” (Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, 2003), section 6.4.2. There he does not develop the idea at length but mentions it in passing and credits William Stoeger with raising the idea with him in private conversation. The dissertation has now be published as *The Entangled God: Divine Relationality and Quantum Physics* (New

appropriated by the Cappadocian Fathers from Greek categories, perichoresis is used to describe the “mutual indwelling” of the dynamic becoming of the Trinity. In this work, perichoresis interpreted as entanglement will be employed to affirm the unity-in-diversity that is the Christian conception of God.

The thesis of this study is that *perichoresis evolves within the Trinitarian life of God as entangled superposition, relating Creator and creation in mutual interaction, supporting a panentheistic model of God.* The immanent Trinity exists in simultaneous superposition with the economic Trinity and evolves within the entangled life of God with the creation. Entanglement gives metaphorical clarity to the manner in which panentheism models God’s relationship to the creation, including incarnation and sanctification. Superposition and non-local relational holism provide physical metaphors for the whole within the parts in a way that illuminates a panentheistic model, in which the world exists in God and yet God is more than the world, being both in and beyond it at the same time. We will apply the model of perichoretic Trinitarian panentheism to the specific work of the three persons (hypostases) of the Christian experience of God.

Employing the theological method of correlation, this text is an exercise in constructive theology. It is divided into three parts: part 1, “Foundational Concepts”; part 2, “Trinitarian Development”; and part 3, “Science and the Trinity.” Part 1 will define and develop the critical concepts of faith, knowledge, and theology. Part 2 will address the development of the doctrine of the Trinity from the biblical sources through the Reformation to contemporary expressions. This part will help the reader understand the origination of Trinitarian thinking as well as its historical development, with a view to contextualizing the constructive argument made in the final part. Part 3 summarizes ways of relating science and theology and important concepts in quantum physics before metaphorically appropriating them to elaborate the perichoretic nature of divine relatedness in a panentheistic Trinitarian model of God. This model is then applied to the historic functions of the Trinity in creation, incarnation, and sanctification.

York: Routledge, 2011). This excellent work is a much more detailed exposition of quantum theory (including equations) and entanglement than I am able to do in this introductory text. There in ch. 6 (220), he does briefly, referencing my earlier work, support the understanding of entanglement as mutual indwelling, leading to an enriched understanding of the Trinity. His overall focus, however, is on the relation of God and creation, not on the Trinity. He neither elaborates at length on the Trinity nor places it in a wider panentheistic model, which I am doing in this text. Both works, I believe, can complement one another.

As we shall see in subsequent chapters, human community builds on the dynamic, interconnected community of life in the creation, and this community in turn resides within the dynamic of the divine community of the Trinity. Divine community gives rise to creation and human community such that each interacts with and influences the other. The discoveries of the natural sciences in our time open up new possibilities of expression as well as understanding for this divine interconnection. Through the concept of entanglement (nonlocal relational holism), it is hoped that new light can be shed on the historic understanding of the dynamic interrelatedness of the divine life as that divine energy breaks forth into the entangled reality of the creation. The Holy Mystery exists not only in dynamic interrelatedness to itself but also to all that has come forth from the fecundity of that relatedness. It is the dynamic of this multifold relatedness that the doctrine of the Trinity attempts to express and that forms the beating heart of the Christian faith. This theological vision of faith sees life as existing in, with, and under community for both the divine and the human, for both the Creator and the creation. It is an empowering vision in which we see that “in him all things hold together.”