

A TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE OF CREATION?:  
CONSIDERING BARTH AS A GUIDE

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What insights are gained by presenting the doctrine of creation from a trinitarian perspective? What difference does it make? Karl Barth is often credited with reviving trinitarian theology and therefore it will be profitable to respond to this question by considering Barth's doctrine of creation.

1. *Introduction*

Has Barth successfully employed the doctrine of the Trinity in his doctrine of creation? Herbert Hartwell has written that in Barth's doctrine of creation, creation is "intrinsically trinitarian in its ontology."<sup>1</sup> Barth affirms that the identity of the Creator is the triune God. Nevertheless, one critique of Barth's doctrine of creation concerns his trinitarian approach, or lack thereof, with respect to the doctrine of creation. This assessment comes primarily from Salai Hla Aung. While Aung praises Barth for taking a trinitarian approach to the doctrine of creation and for somewhat considering the social sense of the Trinity, Aung, nevertheless, finds Barth's trinitarian application inconsistent.<sup>2</sup>

1. Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1964), 114.

2. Similarly, Thomas F. Torrance complains that Barth's doctrine of creation was not "from an overarching *Trinitarian* perspective" in *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind* (ed. Donald K. McKim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 61.

## 2. *Image of God*

First, Aung considers Barth's teaching of the image of God and determines that Barth was correct to interpret the image of God in a social sense. Hugo Meynell similarly argues that Barth is consistent by interpreting the creation of human beings in the light of the covenant. Following a rejection of any analogy of being (*analogia entis*) between God and humanity, Barth argues that the image of God is not a matter of being but of relation. Man is given a covenant partner to remind him of the covenant with God. Meynell writes, the man-woman relation "is one of the clearest illustrations of the internal basis of creation in the covenant which is the very reason for its existence."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, Aung argues that Barth erred by interpreting the image of God in a twofold fashion as an I-Thou relationship. Aung understands Barth to mean that "humans [were] created after the model of the Trinity" and Aung therefore believes that a truly trinitarian understanding of the image of God must be threefold.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, he follows Elizabeth Frykberg's critique of Barth, which interprets the trinitarian image of God in a threefold fashion as an I-Thou-He/It relationship, with the third person being a child. Aung suggests that this threefold interpretation is concordant with concrete human relationships.

With respect to Aung's proposed advance regarding the image of God, the I-Thou-He/It model he subscribes too seems arbitrary, or at best a product of natural theology. The latter seems to be the case where he appeals to concrete human relationships. What would keep one from adding another fourth aspect or from supplying something else in place of the relation to the child? Perhaps in liberation theology one would wish to place a relation across cultural or racial boundaries into the image of God. Thus the model would be I-Thou-Other Culture.

Aung wrongly understands Barth to be interpreting the image of God in a twofold fashion, exclusively in terms of male/female relationships.<sup>5</sup> The image of God is based only on an analogy—an analogy of

3. Hugo A. Meynell, *Grace versus Nature: Studies in Karl Barth's "Church Dogmatics"* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 86.

4. Salai Hla Aung, *The Doctrine of Creation in the Theology of Barth, Moltmann and Pannenberg: Creation in Theological, Ecological and Philosophical-Scientific Perspective* (Regensburg: Roderer Verlag, 1998), 34-35, 268, 274.

5. Aung, *Doctrine of Creation*, 268. Cf. Gordon Watson, *God and the Creature: The Trinity and Creation in Karl Barth* (Brisbane: Uniting Church Print, 1995), 105.

relations. The image of God is found in differentiation and relationship: as God is uniquely and originally relational being, humans are made relational beings. This is seen in male and female relationships. All analogies point to discontinuity. Accordingly, Barth points out that there is no sexuality in God. Likewise, one should note that the divine persons are not individuals like humans and that humans do not have the perichoretic unity found among the divine persons. As the limits of analogy are understood, one can understand that Barth is not presenting a two-fold interpretation of the image of God. Rather than searching for a threefold interpretation of the image of God, it is important to understand that Barth correctly recognizes the relational aspect of the image of God. No more than this is meant to be expressed in the idea of “I-Thou” relationships. It does not suggest that the image of God is only expressed in a relationship between two people, but rather simply that it is expressed in relationship. Focus should not be placed on the number three, or on a dual sexuality. The analogy is of “free differentiation and relation.”<sup>6</sup>

Meynell also critiques Barth’s understanding of the image of God in humans. Meynell finds Barth’s insight that the image of God pertains to relationship valuable but finds no reason to accept this as the exclusive definition of the image of God unless one, like Barth, rejects the *analogia entis*.<sup>7</sup>

I agree in part with Meynell’s critique of Barth’s understanding of the image of God. There is no reason to define the image of God exclusively in terms of relationality. Such concepts as creativity, for example, still seem plausible. With respect to Gen 2:24, which Barth was interpreting, the image of God is found within the context of creativity. In addition, this concept agrees with Barth’s christological insight that Jesus Christ takes part in creating. However, in contrast to Meynell, this challenge to the exclusive definition of the image of God does not require an acceptance of the analogy of being. G.W. Bromiley also critiques Barth

6. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (general translation editors: G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957–1975), vol. III/1, 185 (subsequent references to *Church Dogmatics* will refer to the volume and part numbers, e.g., CD III/1).

7. Meynell, *Grace versus Nature*, 174.

for interpreting the image of God exclusively in terms of relationship, however without affirming an analogy of being.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. *Sphere of God*

Secondly, Aung censures Barth for presenting God as being in a different sphere from the world.<sup>9</sup> Barth was successful in applying the trinitarian formula so that creation was not viewed as a necessary work of God (that is, since God eternally has inner trinitarian fellowship, God did not need to create something to love or relate to). However, in so doing, Aung argues, Barth separates God from the world. Similarly, H. Paul Santmire finds that, according to Barth, God's immanence in the created world is limited to heaven, that is "in the realm of the spiritual, with the angels, not on earth."<sup>10</sup> Along this line of thought, Norman Young labels Barth's doctrine of creation "transcendentalist."<sup>11</sup> Aung finds this problem overcome in Jürgen Moltmann's trinitarian panentheism.

Aung's criticism that Barth presents God as outside the sphere of creation must be qualified. Barth indeed speaks of God as "outside" creation and as having a "divine space" distinct from "creaturely space."<sup>12</sup> However, these affirmations are made in a metaphorical or ontological sense rather than a spatial sense, that is, to say that creation is distinct from God and God exists without creation before he creates. Similarly, Vladimir Lossky notes (quoting St. John of Damascus), creation "is of another nature than God. It exists outside of God, 'not by place but by nature.'"<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Hartwell finds Barth teaching that we learn in Jesus Christ's relationship with God his Father that "there is

8. G.W. Bromiley, "Karl Barth," in Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (ed.), *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 54.

9. Aung, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 270-71.

10. H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 154

11. However, Norman Young suggests that this applies most appropriately to Barth's earlier theology of the 1920s when Barth was most concerned with God's deity, in *Creator, Creation and Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 84.

12. For example, Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (trans. G.T. Thomson; London: SCM Press, 1949), 43-46; I/1, 142; II/1, 536; III/1, 25, 43, 70-71, 97, 349; 3/3, 436ff.

13. Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (trans. Ian and Ithita Kessarcodi-Watson; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 51.

a sphere in which God acts and reveals Himself apart from His own sphere.”<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, it may be added that, in some sense, God the Father is the one who is outside the sphere of creation.

God’s close relation with our created sphere is indicated by the fact that “God is with us” in Jesus Christ. Barth is well aware of this. For example, Barth writes, “In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of man from God or of God from man.”<sup>15</sup> As a result, even though Barth speaks of God’s place being heaven (as Santmire has noted), Barth concludes that “so surely is something done on earth as subsequently and from heaven that it too becomes the place of God.”<sup>16</sup> Oddly enough, before his criticism, Aung had recognized that, according to Barth, God is continually with us through his Word. Thus, Aung writes, “God does not reside in remote transcendence far away from the world,” and “Through the incarnation the whole creation has been lifted up into the realm of God Himself. Creation is no longer outside of God, but lies within the being of God.”<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, when Barth discusses God’s omnipresence he speaks of our space existing within God’s space, God surrounding creation, and even creation existing in God.<sup>18</sup> For Barth, creation is certainly not without or apart from God. The assertion that God is with creation is indeed central to Barth’s doctrine of creation and is expressed in his thesis that the covenant is the internal basis of creation. Barth writes, “It would be a strange love that was satisfied with the mere existence and nature of

14. Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 113.

15. Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser; Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 46.

16. Barth, *CD III/3*, 444.

17. Aung, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 49-50, 67. Also see John Thompson who notes how Barth claims we can only speak of the Son of God as *logos ensarkos*, in John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 98ff., 102ff.

18. Barth, *CD I/2*, 162; *II/1*, 411, 475-477, 500, 503. It should be noted that Barth does not go to the extent of Jürgen Moltmann, who speaks of creation as kenosis in the sense of God withdrawing himself to create a space (nothingness) in which God creates the world. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1981), 108-111; *idem*, *God in Creation* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1985), 86-90; and *idem*, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” in John Polkinghorne (ed.), *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 145-46.

the other, then withdrawing, leaving it to its own devices. Love wills to love.”<sup>19</sup> It is central in Barth’s thought that the Creator creates a relationship.

Where Aung finds what he perceives as Barth’s fault corrected in Moltmann’s panentheism, I suspect that Aung finds a lack in Barth’s pneumatology.<sup>20</sup> However, although Barth does not discuss the Holy Spirit explicitly to any great extent within his doctrine of creation, the ideas are certainly there, as expressed in divine action, and Barth has much to say regarding the Holy Spirit in later volumes of *Church Dogmatics*.

#### 4. *Modalism*

Thirdly, Aung argues that Barth’s concern of safeguarding the unity of God causes him to present God modalistically in His relationship with the world. Aung suggests that an inconsistency results from Barth’s concern:

On the one hand Barth presents God in a trinitarian sense when the subject becomes a question of divine mode of being in His self-revelation and the relationship between the being of God and the creation of the world. On the other hand he presents God in an absolute monotheistic sense when it becomes a question about the unity of God.<sup>21</sup>

It may be said that Aung is justified in saying that Barth is concerned with safeguarding the unity of God. Barth is not, however, a modalist. Aung himself notes the activity between the divine persons in creation (at least between the Father and Son) as expressed by Barth. Rather, Aung’s preference for a social doctrine of the Trinity leads him to this critique. We will further consider how Barth presents the Trinity in the context of the doctrine of creation below.

19. Barth, *CD* III/1, 95.

20. Cf. Webster, who notes that those who complain that Barth lacks “an adequately triune account of God as creator and God’s relation to creation” often do so because they feel something is lacking in Barth’s pneumatology, in John Webster, *Barth* (Outstanding Christian Thinkers; London: Continuum, 2000), 111. Cf. also, Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 180.

21. Aung, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 270.



### 5. Binary Divine Creativity

Lastly, Aung finds that Barth's trinitarian approach is inconsistent in his discussion of divine activity in creation. Aung suggests that Barth's discussion is binary, not trinitarian, because Barth only discusses the role of the Father and Son. Aung writes, "the Father appeared as the one who gave the command and the Son was seen as the one who executed and fulfilled the command. The third person is missing in the process."<sup>22</sup> Aung believes that Barth's "overemphasis on the place of Christ"<sup>23</sup> hindered Barth from consistently following his trinitarian approach in this area.

Aung was wise to note the binary character of divine creative activity in Barth's work. However, Barth does not totally neglect the role of the Holy Spirit—that is, Barth's understanding of creation is, in fact, trinitarian. Aung's critique again stems from his following the social model of the Trinity, which conflicts with Barth's bestowal model.

### 6. The Father

As there are three temporal phases—creation, reconciliation, and redemption—Barth appropriates the first, that is, the role of Creator, to God the Father.<sup>24</sup> That is, the Father is seen to have the dominant role in the work of creation, which makes it most appropriate to identify him as the Creator. This does not deny the existence or the roles of the Son and Spirit in creation. Creation is not exclusive to the Father because there are not three gods.<sup>25</sup> The works of the Trinity are indivisible externally—"opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa."<sup>26</sup> According to Barth, "the particular stress on one of God's modes of being never implies its separation from the others." The doctrine of *perichoresis* "states that the divine modes of being mutually condition and permeate one another so completely that one is always in the other two and the other two in the one." This

implies both a confirmation of the distinction in the modes of being, for none would be what it is (not even the Father) without its co-existence

22. Aung, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 269.

23. Aung, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 269.

24. Barth, *CD* I/1, 398; III/1, 11, 49, and passim.

25. Barth, *CD* III/1, 49.

26. Barth, *CD* I/1, 442; III/1, 49.

with the others, and also a relativisation of this distinction, for none exists as a special individual, but all three “in-exist” or exist only in concert as modes of being of the one God and Lord who posits Himself from eternity to eternity.<sup>27</sup>

Hence, when Barth speaks of God the Father as the Creator, he means God the Father with the Son and Holy Spirit. This appropriation speaks of both the intercommunity of the divine persons and their distinctions.

Barth concedes that he does not find the equation of “Father” and “Creator” in Scripture,<sup>28</sup> but he wishes to conform to the creed which first speaks of the act of creation in context of the Almighty Father. Barth justifies and affirms the appropriation of creation to the Father by means of an analogy of relations. “Creation is the temporal analogue, taking place outside God, of that event in God Himself by which God is the Father of the Son.”<sup>29</sup> The Father is the eternally unoriginate origin, as he is temporally the uncreated Creator. This is an analogy of roles or relations. It is “a reflection, a shadowing forth of this inner divine relationship between God the Father and the Son.”<sup>30</sup> Creation is the Father’s “originate activity *ad extra*.”<sup>31</sup> Already we begin to see that the role of the Holy Spirit is missing for it is only the relationship of the Father with the Son that has been considered.<sup>32</sup>

### 7. *The Son*

In accordance with Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity, God the Son participated in the work of creation: “Jesus Christ is the Word by which

27. Barth, *CD I/1*, 370. Cf. 394, 442.

28. Barth, *CD III/1*, 49. This is interesting because in I/1 he refers to Deut 32:6 and Isa 64:7 which speak of the creative work of the Father (p. 389).

29. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 43. Cf. Barth, *CD III/1*, 49. Whitehouse notes that in Barth, creation “has some analogy to the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father whilst differing from this in its contingency and history,” in Walter A. Whitehouse, “Karl Barth on ‘The Work of Creation’: A Reading of *Church Dogmatics*, III/1,” in Niger Biggar (ed.), *Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Karl Barth’s Birth* (London: Mowbrays, 1988), 46-47.

30. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 43. Cf. Barth, *CD I/1*, 397; III/1, 49.

31. Barth, *CD III/1*, 49.

32. When Barth argues that creation is not necessary because of relationality within God he also focuses only on the relationships of the Father and Son. See Barth, *CD II/1*, 667; III/1, 50, 183.



God created the world out of nothing.”<sup>33</sup> Creation was in (*en*) and through (*dia*) Christ. This does not mean that Christ was just an administrator or helper doing the will of the Father. Nor was Christ an intermediate being. Rather, Barth interprets this to be an affirmation that Christ was the partner or associate of the Father in creation.<sup>34</sup> Jesus Christ is not an intermediate being between God and creation, but “He is the Mediator between God and man, like the ‘wisdom’ of the Old Testament.”<sup>35</sup> Proclamation of the Son’s role in creation is an indirect affirmation of the *homoousios*. Following Athanasius, if Christ had a part in creation, he must be one essence with the Father.<sup>36</sup> To describe Jesus Christ as Creator is to proclaim him as Lord.

When Barth speaks of the Son as Creator, he means Jesus Christ. He states outright, “the world came into being, it was created and sustained by the little child that was born in Bethlehem.”<sup>37</sup> Barth believes that the New Testament writers and the Christian faith proclaims not simply the eternal Son, or *logos asarkos*, as the Creator, but Jesus Christ, the *logos ensarkos*.<sup>38</sup> This is so because Jesus Christ is the elected one, and this election is the beginning of all of God’s works. As the elected one, Jesus Christ “is the eternal archetype and prototype of God’s glory in His externalisation, the archetype and prototype of God’s co-existence with another.”<sup>39</sup>

### 8. *The Holy Spirit*

Clearly Barth should not deny that the Holy Spirit is involved in creation. This should follow from his doctrine of the Trinity. He is explicit in including the Holy Spirit when speaking of the identity of the Creator, that is, the Holy Spirit in God’s being *ad intra*. Barth writes,

33. Barth, *CD I/1*, 442.

34. Barth, *CD III/1*, 52. This interpretation stands in contrast to Pannenberg’s, who suggests that according to Barth “the Son’s part is simply that it was with a view to the Son that the Father created us humans and our world” and that “Barth says nothing about the Son’s own subjectivity” in the act of creation, in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, II (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 30.

35. Barth, *CD III/1*, 53.

36. Barth, *CD I/1*, 442, 447.

37. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 48.

38. Barth, *CD III/1*, 56-58.

39. Barth, *CD II/1*, 667.

The God who created heaven and earth is God “the Father,” i.e., the Father of Jesus Christ, who as such in eternal generation posits Himself in the Son by the Holy Spirit, and is not therefore in any sense posited from without or elsewhere. It is as this Eternal Father, determined in the act of His free expression and therefore not from without but from within, determining Himself in His Son by the Holy Spirit and Himself positing everything else, that He is also the Creator.<sup>40</sup>

Although this is in the context of creation, it only speaks of the Holy Spirit as the *identity* of the Creator.

As with the Son, the credal affirmation that the Holy Spirit is “the giver of life” likewise teaches the deity of the Holy Spirit. He is the breath of God by which things were made (Ps. 33:6).<sup>41</sup> As part of the trinity of God, “without Him God could not partake of the name of Father and Creator.”<sup>42</sup> In the New Testament, the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit is seen as soterio-eschatological. However, Barth remarks, this is only so in light of the original life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. It presupposes the original creative work of the Spirit that is in fact found in the Old Testament. Here the Spirit, the breath of God, is seen as the giver and preserver of life.

It sounds as though Barth is attributing creative work to the Holy Spirit; however when Barth turns from exposition to dogmatics he fails to explicitly state that the Holy Spirit participates in the act of creation. In the context of creation, Barth speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in terms of the relation of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the fundamental condition for the ground of creation,<sup>43</sup> which is “the incarnate Word of God as the content and object of the eternal divine decree of grace.”<sup>44</sup> This decree of grace, and the resultant creative will of God, presupposes that “the unity, love and peace between God the Father and Son are not unsettled or disturbed but transcendently glorified by the fact that the Word of God becomes flesh, that in His Son God takes

40. Barth, *CD* III/1, 11. Cf. III/1, 49.

41. Barth, *CD* I/1, 427.

42. Barth, *CD* III/1, 49.

43. “It is God the Holy Spirit who makes the existence of the creature as such possible, permitting it to exist, maintaining it in its existence, and forming the point of reference of its existence. For it is He who in that counsel anticipates and guarantees its reconciliation with God and redemption by Him in the union of the Father and the Son.” Barth, *CD* III/1, 56.

44. Barth, *CD* III/1, 58.

to Himself man's misery..."<sup>45</sup> It is here that Barth finds the role of the Spirit. The Spirit is the unity of the Father and the Son, and glorifies their fellowship. This, and only this, is the work of the Holy Spirit in creation.<sup>46</sup> Only as the communion of the Father and Son does there exist in Him "the whole order of the relation between God the Creator and His creatures."<sup>47</sup> Barth affirms that "There could be no creature, nor any creation, if God were not also the Holy Spirit and active as such, just as He is also the Father and the Son and active as such."<sup>48</sup> The Holy Spirit is the foundation of the unity between the Father and Son and thus the condition of the creative will and work of the Father and Son.<sup>49</sup>

We see that for Barth the role of the Holy Spirit in creation is actually passive. The Holy Spirit is a condition for original creation. Barth does not directly attribute divine creative activity to the Holy Spirit. With regards to Gen 1:2, which might have implied this, Barth posits that the Spirit brooding over the waters is not something that actually happened, but rather simply a caricature of myth.<sup>50</sup> Barth also does not work out the implications of the Old Testament passages that he refers to regarding the Holy Spirit as giver and preserver of life. Rather, he points to these as confirmation of his view that the Holy Spirit is the foundation for the existence of creation.

45. Barth, *CD III/1*, 58. Cf. Walter A. Whitehouse, *Creation Science and Theology: Essays in Response to Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 13, who summarizes Barth: "The will of the Father and Son is made explicit by the Holy Spirit, and He is thus the intra-divine guarantee of the creature's existence. The communion of Father and Son is not disturbed but rather glorified by the existence of creatures."

46. "That this agreement exists and is valid is the work of the Holy Spirit in creation," Barth, *CD III/1*, 57.

47. Barth, *CD III/1*, 56.

48. Barth, *CD III/1*, 58.

49. Accordingly, as Thompson interprets Barth's understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in creation he is only able to speak of the Spirit as the condition, confirmation and guarantor of creation: "God the Father is the Creator, God the Son, the means and goal of creation, God the Holy Spirit, the one who particularly guarantees its existence." See John Thompson, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 23; Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1991), 160.

50. Barth, *CD III/1*, 108.

Aung was correct to note the binary character of divine creative activity in Barth's work. Nevertheless, Barth does not explicitly deny this activity of the Holy Spirit, and its affirmation is certainly implied in his doctrine of the Trinity. There is no hint of modalism in Barth's doctrine of creation. The Creator is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, it is this same doctrine of the Trinity that keeps Barth from explicitly stating the divine creative activity of the Spirit. Barth follows the Augustinian model of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is viewed as the love or unity between the Father and the Son rather than as a divine person in his own right. It is this view of the personhood of the Holy Spirit that hinders Barth. Barth is able to speak of Jesus Christ, but not the Holy Spirit, as the co-creator with the Father. The Holy Spirit appears only as the foundation of this unified work.

### 9. *Conclusions*

It has been suggested that Barth, who ironically would be hailed as the father of contemporary trinitarian theology, is inconsistently trinitarian in his doctrine of creation. It has been suggested that Barth should have proposed a threefold understanding of the image of God. Rather, Barth has correctly interpreted—although perhaps incorrectly as an exclusive interpretation—the image of God in humans as relational. It has also been suggested that Barth presents God as separated from the sphere of creation, in particular in a different sphere from the earth (in contrast to heaven). This is an unjust critique however, for Barth speaks of God outside creation only to emphasize the Creator/creature distinction. Furthermore, Barth speaks of creation being in God's space and constantly reminds his readers that God is present with (and for) creation in Jesus Christ. This becomes clear as Barth argues that the covenant is the internal basis of creation: God creates relationship. Two further critiques of Barth are that he has modalistic tendencies and presents divine creativity in a binary fashion. These latter critiques stem from Aung's preference for a social doctrine of the Trinity. Barth is concerned with safeguarding the unity of God, but he is not modalistic. His doctrine of creation is assuredly trinitarian. Barth confesses that the identity of the Creator is the triune God. On the other hand, Barth does present the divine action of creation in a binary fashion, though he does not deny the role of the Holy Spirit in creation. Barth is limited to this binary presentation to divine creative activity due to his adherence to the bestowal model of

the Trinity. Accordingly, Barth speaks of the Father and Son as creating, but not the Holy Spirit. As the unoriginate divine person, creation is attributed to God the Father; and as the Son—Jesus Christ—is of the same substance with the Father, creative work is ascribed to the Son; but Barth neglects speaking of the Spirit’s activity in creation. The Spirit is viewed as the unity between the Father and Son, and therefore as a fundamental condition of creation. For Barth to consistently hold to the doctrine that works of the trinity are indivisible externally he should have affirmed the creative activity of the Holy Spirit. Could Barth, following the bestowal model of the Trinity, have presented the Holy Spirit as a divine “person” and active *ad extra* in the act of creation? Jürgen Moltmann was correct to say, “Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity is the blueprint of his doctrine of creation, which can be recognized everywhere. Anyone who thinks that this or that part of the structure of his doctrine of creation has to be changed must therefore be in a position to change his doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>51</sup>

To conclude, we return to explicitly propose answers to our opening question in light of this investigation. A trinitarian doctrine of creation will include the following characteristics: (1) It will recognize the relational character of “the image of God;” (2) It will recognize that although creation was not necessary, God is not removed from his creation but rather is immanent to it and remains in relation to it; and, lastly, (3) It will recognize that creation, as the work of the one triune God, is a work of unity and love, being effected by the work of each of the divine persons, who are, notably, the same Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who effect salvation.

51. Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1991), 130.