

SZYMON CIEĆKO

PREMISES OF CREATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE PASCHAL EVENT

The subject of this article is the creatology in the light of the Paschal event. I will give an answer to the question of how to understand creation through the prism of Passover by referring primarily to the reflections on that topic by a contemporary Italian philosopher and theologian Giuseppe Maria Zanghí. Considering the fact that this thinker is not known more widely in the non-Italian scholarly community, before moving on to the main part of this essay, I will briefly outline the figure of the scholar. The substantive part of this paper will consist of three points: the Easter trinitology, the ontological implications of the Paschal event and the premise of creation in the perspective of the Paschal event.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF GIUSEPPE MARIA ZANGHÍ¹

Giuseppe Maria Zanghí was born on December 16, 1929 in Syracuse. The family of Zanghí often travelled because of Giuseppe Maria Zanghí's father's work, so young Giuseppe obtained his basic education in different schools, for example, in 1940 the family returned to their native region, where Giuseppe Maria Zanghí graduated from

¹ Cfr. Sz. K. Ciećko, "On The Relationship Between The Gospel And Culture In Selected Works Of Giuseppe Maria Zanghí," *STV* 1 (2017) 145-158, at 146-148.

high school, but two years later they moved to Ragusa and remained there until 1949, where growing up Giuseppe ended lycée and then enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Catania. In 1949, the family finally moved to Syracuse, while Giuseppe Maria Zanghí graduated in the studies with honors, having written a diploma thesis entitled “Il misticismo speculativo di Plotino”.

Two years later, in 1951, through friends who were members of the “La Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana”, he met Graziella De Luca, who came to Syracuse to talk about the novel idea of the evangelical life promoted by the Focolare Movement that was funded by Chiara Lubich. Giuseppe Maria Zanghí, extremely touched by this proposition of life, joined the Movement and completely returned and converted to Christianity. Already in 1954, he joined the Movement in Syracuse, but soon moved to various Italian cities, and in 1956 he finally moved to Rome, where the Center of the Movement is based, to contribute to the development of theological studies and research. From there, always for the sake of the Movement, he set off on numerous journeys not only to European countries, and when, in the early 1960s, the first international town of the Focolare Movement was established in Loppiano, where the International Institute for the Religious Studies “Mystici Corporis” was founded, Giuseppe Maria Zanghí was asked to lead classes in philosophy and theology. Also in this period, he began working in the cultural magazine “Ecclesia”.

He was ordained in 1973, and six years later he started working for “Nuova Umanità”, a scholarly magazine published by the Movement and he was to be its director for more than 20 years and was going to publish most of his papers there.

With time passing, the cooperation between Chiara Lubich and Giuseppe Maria Zanghí intensified more and more, so that at her request he took up the organization of the “Università Popolare Mariana”, whose task would be the theological formation of the Movement members. Giuseppe Maria Zanghí died in Rome on January 23, 2015.

PASCHAL TRINITOLOGY

While developing the Trinitarian doctrine, one should not start from an *a priori* idea of Absolute Being, but from the salvific event of Jesus Christ because it is the life, the passion and the death together with the resurrection of the Nazarene that are points of access to the mystery of God.

What is meant by the “Paschal event” in the thought of Giuseppe Maria Zanghí is the Passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, he focuses on one particular aspect of this episode, namely, abandonment of Jesus on the cross² for at least two reasons. Firstly, on the cross and in the cry of abandonment, one may see “not only the fulfillment of the salvation, but also the completely revealed life of the Three: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in their mystery of unity and distinction.”³ Secondly, our non-being, accepted and freed by Jesus from sin, in that abandonment, becomes, and in fact becomes anew, what it originally was: a created image of the Trinitarian life.”⁴ Taking into account the subject of this article, first of all, I will analyze the first theme.

A Paschal trinitology is associated with the understanding of the “mystery of unity and distinction” about which teaches the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon (451). The definition of the Ecumenical Council mentioned above is a doctrinal answer explaining the controversy of the unity of Christ in the context of his divine-human duality. The Council’s teaching discusses the mystery of duality in Christ through four expressions: firstly, Jesus is the perfect God and perfect man; secondly, He is true God and a real

² The theme of Jesus Abandonment [from Italian “Gesù Addnadonato”] is analyzed explicite, inter alia, in the following papers of this Author: “Spunti per una teologia di Gesù Abbandonato,” *NU* 102 (1995), “Alcuni cenni su Gesù Abbandonato,” *NU* 103 (1996), “Che cos’è pensare? Una riflessione alla luce di Gesù Abbandonato,” 125 (1999), “Gesù Crocifisso e Abbandonato chiave della spiritualità di comunione,” *NU* 137 (2001), “La luce di Gesù Abbandonato,” *NU* 177 (2008).

³ G. M. Zanghí, *Notte della cultura europea* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2007) 56.

⁴ Cfr. *Ibidem*, 66.

man; thirdly, Jesus is co-existent to God in the Divinity and to man in humanity (in everything except the sin); finally, fourthly, He is doubly born.

The consequence of the proper understanding of those doctrinal statements is the rejection of two extreme and mutually exclusive postulates, according to which either unity is saved sacrificing duality (pluralism) or pluralism (duality) is saved, sacrificing unity⁵. Analyzing the life of Jesus of Nazareth, especially at its peak moment, which is the Passover, one comes to the conviction that Christ always refers Himself in the constitutive relationship to the Other with whom He is in an absolute unity although in perfect distinction⁶: “One, proposed to us by Christ, is not an impersonal structure [lit. background – from Italian word “fondo”], which absorbs and destroys diversity (duality) but is the Difference-which-Is-One. The One is in Himself the Difference and therefore He can, without destruction, bring duality to the unity.”⁷

The event of the cross, which is a trinitological event as long as it is a christological one, at the moment of abandonment is the summit of the revelation of Trinitarian life, the opening of intimacy, in which God is God⁸. From the Gospel texts that describe the death of Christ, it follows that if He was the Son of God, then God at that moment left Him: “My God, my God, why did you leave me?” (Mc 15, 34). Evangelist Luke observes that “Jesus, shouting loudly, said: «Father, into my hands I entrust my spirit»” (Lc 23, 46), referring to the Spirit who came upon Him after His baptism, who led Him to the desert and to whom, shortly before His death, he entrusted Himself in order to fulfill His opera. Christ at the time of abandonment lived “what for His humanity is the drama of separation from the Father for the

⁵ Cfr. G. M. Zanghí, “Per una cultura dell’unità,” *NU* 10-11 (1980) 8-28, at 15.

⁶ Cfr. G. M. Zanghí, “Spunti per una teologia di Gesù Abbandonato,” *NU* 102 (1995) 9-31, at 28.

⁷ Cfr. Zanghí, “Per una cultura dell’unità,” 22.

⁸ Cfr. Zanghí, “Spunti per una teologia,” 14. Cfr. Idem, *Notte della cultura europea*, 78.

realization of redemption” as well as what is “joyful relationship of unity-differentiation with the Father”⁹ for his divinity because “in abandonment of humanity, Jesus shows kenosis which is *Verbum* in the Trinity.”¹⁰ Giuseppe Maria Zanghí notes that most exegetes interpret verse J 19, 30 as a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit for the world, but in his opinion we are dealing first of all with the gift for the Father which the Father gave to his Son in this eternal birth and in incarnation. “*Verbum* at the peak of His mission-and therefore His existence-speaks up, giving Himself (God is Love!): And this gift is Another – the Spirit. It is in the Spirit that the Son is Himself, He speaks completely.”¹¹

“In His turning from the cross to the Father, as well as in the eternal abyss of the Trinity, the Son-*Verbum* cannot «use» the word as it is the only Word spoken by the Father. If *Verbum* spoke with a «different» Word he would place Himself in the place of the Father who is the only one to say [lit. generate] *Verbum* within the Trinity. And that would be the height of ungodliness.”¹² To express Himself, to call the Second “Father”, Christ must be the Word and not be the Word¹³. This is happening in the Third, in the Spirit, in a Different from the *Verbum*-Son¹⁴. On the cross, especially in the cry of abandonment, when One defines the Second as the Father the eternal return of the Son to the Father in the Spirit is presented to the world.

The eternal kenosis is revealed in the temporal kenosis¹⁵ within which the creature finds one of its foundations – “The One, God, calls into existence another one, which is the creation as a whole,

⁹ G. M. Zanghí, “Umanesimo e mistica,” *NU* 57 (1988) 11-31, at 22.

¹⁰ G. M. Zanghí, “Il Padre come luogo della teologia,” *NU* 132 (2000) 928-840, at 836.

¹¹ Zanghí, “Spunti per una teologia,” 24.

¹² G. M. Zanghí, *Gesù Abbandonato maestro di pensiero* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2008) 48.

¹³ Cfr. G. M. Zanghí, *Dio che è amore. Trinità e vita in Cristo* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2004) 103.

¹⁴ Cfr. Zanghí, *Gesù Abbandonato maestro*, 48.

¹⁵ Cfr. Zanghí, *Dio che è amore*, 98.

unified in God's plan. There is, therefore, one Absolute One and one created as «two», which needs to be clarified.¹⁶ Creation is described as good and very good, and therefore duality, in itself, is in no way a bad thing, the Incarnation proves this fact in the mystery of the unity and distinction i.e. the duality of Jesus. However, “accepting oneself as different from the One means accepting oneself different from Being, i.e. as a non-being, but non-being which is.”¹⁷

It can be said that the kenosis of the Son has a foundation in the eternal kenosis, when the Father breaks out of Himself (out of Love) to give birth to the Son. There are other theologians who do not think the term emptying appropriate to express the Father's self-gift to the Son, as emptying means a kind of humiliation or loss, and the Father's eternal generation of the Son does not imply this. Regarding the biblical basis of this expression, it should be noted that the term kenosis comes from the verb “kenò” which means to empty. It has its source in the famous Christological hymn in Flp 2,6-11, in which we read that Christ emptied himself (2,7). It seems important to emphasize that we are dealing with *hapax*, since in the whole Scripture only in this place this word is used in the reflexive form.

To sum up this part of the paper, it should be emphasized that the Paschal event is the moment when Love is revealed as the essence of God who gives Himself, and thus is-not to some extent. This issue will be developed in the next part of the article.

ONTOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PASCHAL EVENT

The abandonment of Jesus is expressed in the cry that reveals that He enters the total kenosis, showing the Being as Love¹⁸ and puts Himself on the side of creation¹⁹. We again deal with an analogy

¹⁶ Zanghí, “Per una cultura dell'unità,” 19.

¹⁷ G. M. Zanghí, “Verso l'Uno che è amore,” *NU* 87 (1993) 3-13, at 9.

¹⁸ Cfr. Zanghí, “Spunti per una teologia,” 10.

¹⁹ Cfr. Zanghí, *Notte della cultura europea*, 75-76.

with the divine life in which the Son gives to the Father what He has received from the latter. The existence in Christ that can be donated becomes non-being. This deprivation of the purpose of giving causes that we do not deal with polarization of two categories, but with their synthesis, which is Love,²⁰ in other words, “this not-being should not be understood as an (impossible) internal limitation in the Being (as it has place in creatures), and even more so as the negation of the Being Itself, but as the supreme explanation of Him and His life. Being-Love speaks this “no” it is, real difference.”²¹ To give the existence to beings means that they, before having received it from Christ, were not-being, nothingness. But there is also nothing-Love, when Love becomes non-being deprived itself because of Love, to be given to another. Confirms Giuseppe Maria Zanghí: “Jesus in the abandonment unites two nothingness: nothing that is Love in so far as it is the Trinity, and nothing that is creation. Creation, in fact, as a creature, in itself is nothing that should also be nothing-love, in its devotion to God (and let us add to the brothers) if it were not for the committed sin which closed the creation in itself, making it negative nothing: closing, submission, rejection of the other. Jesus, in his abandonment, made His own Nothing-Negative by turning it into a positive- Nothing, which is Love.”²²

The abandonment is the culmination in which the negative is turned into a positive and therefore Divine Love manifests itself in its entirety²³. “If the pursuit of human thinking ends in being, a metaphysical summit (...), then on the cross, the Being reveals its name: the infinite [from the Italian word – “inconsumato”] and endless [from the Italian word – “inconsumabile”] love.”²⁴

²⁰ Zanghí, *Gesù Abbandonato maestro*, 47.

²¹ Zanghí, *Dio che è Amore*, 63.

²² G. M. Zanghí, “Alcuni cenni su Gesù Abbandonato,” *NU* 103 (1996) 33-39, at 35.

²³ Cfr. Zanghí, *Gesù Abbandonato maestro*, 99.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 51.

Creation has its hermeneutical key in the Easter event because in this event the Being really became a creature (man)²⁵: “God has come to us in the abyss of our nothingness, He made it His in the abyss of purity of Being.”²⁶

The ontological implications for anthropology concern the state of sin and salvation. Giuseppe Maria Zanghí states that in “no” expressed in Eden, God offered man “the possibility of continuing in the relation of distinction («no») and unity (obedience to the commandment) with the One.”²⁷ This event was at the same time the beginning of the manifestation of the One God in His deep Trinitarian life, which is why—continues Giuseppe Maria Zanghí—“accepting this «no» by man would mean the possibility of penetrating the mystery of God. However, such decision meant making this «no» and making it a base from which a relationship of love of God could be born. Man, in fact, rejected «no» from fear of a determined, loving response to the power of Love, from fear of accepting one being who does not have his unity in his own self, but in giving himself completely, which is the confirmation of Unity, because giving himself is complete devotion.”²⁸

The nothingness with which sin infects the creature is reversed in Nothing-Love, which is God, to whom creation is called²⁹.

The previous analysis of the Paschal event leads us to say that the moment of abandoning of Christ on the cross allows, on the one hand, to discover that God’s Being is the Love that gives Itself, so that is-not. In the next part, it is therefore necessary to consider how God’s non-being and creation’s not-being can co-exist.

²⁵ Cfr. Zanghí, *Notte della cultura europea*, 75.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 79.

²⁷ Zanghí, “Verso l’Uno che è,” 11.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 11.

²⁹ Cfr. Zanghí, “Spunti per una teologia,” 14.

PREMISES OF CREATION RESULTING FROM THE PASCHAL EVENT

In this section I will explain what the relationship is between the trinitological reflection, arising from the Paschal event, and the creatology.

From the event of the cross and resurrection it follows that God preached by Jesus is the Trinity. Although nothing can be subtracted from the Absolute Being nor added to it from the outside, it is possible to distinguish “something” inside it. That is why Christian reflection faced a very difficult problem – to express the Triune and the Unitrine God, so that none of the terms contradicts the other³⁰. To this end, the Christian reflection is based on the notions of nature and Persons³¹ – “we use the form: «persons» because one Person in God has already been recognized in the cultural and spiritual universe, both Asian and Hebrew.”³² Our author notes: “we must say that the divine Nature is the highest and updated [from the Italian word – “compiuto”] Positive, Being as a pure act, but because of Love Being is shown in the «negativities» which are Persons. We say negativity (knowing perfectly well that we are using an improper term), wanting to mark a dynamic element, in relation to the Being brought to actuality [from the Italian word – “compiuto”] that is appropriate for the Persons. Each of God’s Persons is not the Other. However, everyone is the only God.”³³

The Persons of the Holy Trinity are distinguished by relational “non”: One is not the Other (negativity expressed by Zanghí: “Not-Being not «absolute» (it would be an «absolute» contradiction!), but a relationship, the Father is the only God, the Son is the only God, the

³⁰ Cfr. Zanghí, *Dio che è Amore*, 85.

³¹ Zanghí, *Dio che è Amore*, 87.

³² G. M. Zanghí, “Quale uomo per il terzo millennio?” *NU* 134 (2001) 247-277, at 266. Cfr. Idem, *Dio che è Amore*, 28.87.

³³ Zanghí, *Dio che è Amore*, 91. Pare che G. M. Zanghí affermando un certo divenire all’interno dell’Essere intenda generazione e spirazione.

Holy Spirit is the only God – each of Three is the One: nevertheless, in order to think about this Trinity, we must say, as St. Augustine sensed that the Father really is not the Son, that the Son is not really the Spirit³⁴: the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father (and vice versa). This “no” is absolutely positive because “it is the Distinction of Three as space, the breath of Their Love.”³⁵ Having distinguished Persons, it can be stated that God’s Being is a relational being: the relationship of the Father and the Son is not the same as the Son’s relation to the Father (the same applies to the Spirit and his relationship). In this sense, there is a place for a creature that is not God³⁶, although it is in relation to Him. Creation can really exist, not being God, because in God everyone is not being the Other³⁷. This is the first premise of creation: “Being can co-exist with beings (which are not Being) without contradiction because the Being in Itself is the Trinity (and each of the Three is not the others Two). The Trinity, which is the One, is the form of that which is created and because of this the multiplicity can be lived in unity³⁸.

God’s existence is a kenosis, meaning a complete gift of Himself in Himself³⁹. Here we find the second premise of creation – kenosis as the mutual love of Three⁴⁰. “In creation, the summit of unconditional love (love has no conditions, it is completely free), the Trinity communicates Its own interior, namely this kenotic love, which is divinity. Three Hypostases, in this love that is as strong as death, establish «outside themselves »-[...], in the kenosis, their own God’s nature, Arche, depriving the latter (the incarnation reveals it to us and thus illuminates the act of creation), and in this deprivation which is Love, there is no destruction, but a kenotic extension of divine life,

³⁴ Zanghí, *Notte della cultura europea*, 60.

³⁵ Zanghí, *Gesù Abbandonato maestro*, 89.

³⁶ Cfr. *Ibidem*, 105.

³⁷ Cfr. Zanghí, *Notte della cultura europea*, 65.

³⁸ Zanghí, “Verso l’Uno che è,” 12.

³⁹ Cfr. G. M. Zanghí, “La creazione. 3. La persona e le sue notti”, 214-215(2014) 341-357, at 343.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Zanghí, *Dio che è Amore*, 105.

which gives life to a being different from Itself: created existence.”⁴¹ The third premise of creation is the fact that creation opens in the prolongation of the acts of birth and of the returning of the Word to the Father, i.e. pluralism can exist through the kenosis of *Verbum*. If, therefore, there are premises within the Trinity to create, this creation “for God is an eternal act: God is the Creator from when He is God (let me possibly say so).”⁴²

The subject of this article was the Creatology in the light of the Paschal event. Referring to the thought of Giuseppe Maria Zanghí, I analyzed three fundamental aspects: a paschal trinitology, the ontological implications of the Paschal event and the premises of creation in the perspective of the Paschal event. Discussion of the first point led us to the conclusion that the event of the Cross is the basis of trinitological and theological considerations, if this basis is understood as the analysis of the Being of God, which is love. However, from the fact that Love is the essence of God, and abandonment on the cross reveals the Trinity in its innermost layer, what followed was that in Being Absolute we have a kind of non-being that we have called “relational.” By referring to these points, we were able to analyze the concept of creation in the light of its distinction-unity with God.

Abstract

Author gives an answer to the question of how to understand creation in the light of Passover by referring primarily to the reflections by a contemporary Italian philosopher and theologian Giuseppe Maria Zanghí. The substance of the article consists of three points: the Easter trinitology, the ontological implications of the Paschal event and the premise of creation in the perspective of the Paschal event.

Keywords: Giuseppe Maria Zanghí, the Paschal event, being, not-being, creation

⁴¹ Zanghí, *Gesù Abbandonato maestro*, 83.

⁴² G. M. Zanghí, “La creazione. I. In Dio”, *NU* 212 (2014) 131-144, at 139.

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