



Conference Paper

The Term *Perichoresis* from Cappadocian Fathers to Maximus Confessor [1]

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To cite this article:

Eirini Artemi. The Term *Perichoresis* from Cappadocian Fathers to Maximus Confessor [1]. *International Journal of European Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2017, pp. 21-29. doi: 10.11648/j.ijes.20170101.14

Received: March 21, 2017; **Accepted:** April 1, 2017; **Published:** May 18, 2017

Abstract: In this paper we are going to expose the meaning of the word *perichoresis* and the role that it had in trinitarian and christological theology of Cappadocian fathers, pseudo- Cyril of Alexandria, Leontius Byzantius and Maximus the Confessor. *Perichoresis* is a Greek term used to describe the triune relationship between each person of the Godhead. It can be defined as co-indwelling, co-inhering, and mutual interpenetration. The relationship of the Triune God is intensified by the relationship of *perichoresis*. This indwelling expresses and realizes fellowship between the Father and the Son. Lossky asserts that Origen was the first to formulate the doctrine which was later to be called *perichoretic*, or the doctrine of the ‘communication of idioms’. The first father who used the noun *perichoresis* was Gregory Nazianzus, one of the Cappadocian fathers. He used the term when he was speaking about the relation between the natures of Christ, divine and human. Another Cappadocian father, Gregory of Nyssa does not use the noun but only the verb *perichoreo* in order to show the Son’s eternal existence. Cyril of Alexandria (pseudo-Cyril) applied *περιχώρησις* in a trinitarian sense to the idea of co-inherence. He saw two causes of divine unity: the identity of essence and the mutual *perichoresis* presupposing their threeness. He applied *περιχώρησις* in a trinitarian sense to the idea of co-inherence. The special contribution of Leontius Byzantius consisted in the clarification of the concept of enhypostasia, according to which the human nature of Christ is fully personal (enhypostatic) by being manifested within the hypostasis of the incarnated Christ, without this hypostasis being an expression of a single nature. Another father, Maximus used the same word *perichoresis* maintained that the human nature of Christ reciprocates with the divine nature of Christ. The confessor maintained that the human nature of Christ reciprocates with the divine nature of Christ. So in fathers’ teaching had to analyze that the fundamental basis of the Trinitarian *perichoresis* is the one essence of the three persons in God and on the other had the term is also applied to the close union of the two natures in Christ. Although the power that unites the two natures proceeds exclusively from Christ’s divinity, the result is a most intimate coalescence. The Godhead, which itself is impenetrable, penetrates the humanity, which is thereby deified without ceasing to be perfectly human.

Keywords: *Perichoresis*, Godhead, Two Natures of Christ, Cappadocian Fathers, Cyril of Alexandria, Leontius Byzantius, Maximus the Confessor

1. Introduction

A brief presentation of the content of the term perichoresis

The word *perichoresis* comes from two Greek words, the preposition “peri”, which means “around,” and the contract verb “choreo- choro”, which means “to give way” or “to make room”. It could be translated “rotation” or “a going around” [2]. August Deneffe argued that *perichoresis* had relation with the stoic concept of mixture, which means a mutual interpenetration of two substances that preserves the identity

and property of each intact and this can be found in the texts of philosopher Anaxagoras [3].

Perichoresis as a theological term cannot found in the Greek New Testament, as many other terms like homoousios, Trinity etc., but it is used in four different theological contexts. First, it refers to the mutual intersecting or “interpenetration” of the three Persons of the Godhead and may help clarify the concept of the Trinity; otherwise to express the doctrine of Trinity. It is a term that expresses intimacy and reciprocity among the Persons of the Godhead. Synonyms for *perichoresis* are

circumincession, *co-inherence* or *co-indwelling* [4]. So this word is used to describe the triune relationship between each person of the Godhead. It can be defined as co-indwelling, co-inhering, and mutual interpenetration. By this way, it allows the individuality of the persons to be maintained, while insisting that each person shares in the life of the other two. Second, *perichoresis* refers to the idea of a “community of being” in which each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them. By this meaning the term doesn’t refer to the relations among the persons of the Triune God, but it refers to the two natures of Christ in perfect union within the same Person, too; so in this case it elaborates the two – nature Christology. Third, it refers to the omnipresence of God as He “intersects” with all creation [5]. It indicates the relation of God to creation. Finally four, it has to do with believers and their deification.

Although the word *perichoresis* doesn’t exist in Bible, its context was used to express the Scriptural facts that the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son; that where the Father is, there the Son and Spirit are [6]; that what the one does the others do -the Father creates, the Son creates, the Spirit creates-, or, as our Lord expresses it, “whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” [7]. So also what the one knows, the others know. “For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” [8].

The content of *Perichoresis*, of co-inherence was used as a powerful weapon against the heresy of Arius and was employed by Athanasius of Alexandria [9] and the later fathers even before the word itself was established a technical term. *Perichoresis* is seen in Jesus’ prayer [10]: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you”. On the other verse of John’s gospel Jesus says that the Holy Spirit “will glorify me” [11]. So, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son, the Son glorifies the Father, and the Father glorifies the Son. The loving relationships within the Trinity result in the Persons of the Godhead giving glory to one another [12]. So by this way, it is revealed that the three persons mutually indwell one another in a dynamic communion but they have the same essence, common attributes, but distinct “idion” hypostatic attributes [13]. Furthermore, *perichoresis* is the fellowship of three co-equal Beings perfectly embraced in love and harmony and expressing an intimacy that it is difficult to be understood by the human mind. Only by this term, it is possible the interpretation that the Father sends the Son [14], and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and was sent by the Son [15].

In conclusion the greek philosophical term *perichoresis* was used from ancient stoic philosophy [16] to Christian theology as *terminus technicus* in order to express the mutual interpenetration of the three hypostases of Triune God in conditions of a eternal and continuous exchange of divine life and love and also to show the Hypostatic Union in Christ by which the two concrete natures are made one personal being, the finite human nature is drawn into substantial communion with the eternal Godhead. So, the doctrine of *perichoresis* can

either be applied christologically, that is, to help explain the relationship of the natures in Christ that are hypostatically united, or it can be applied to the members of the Trinity to show how they are related.

2. Trinitarian Context of the *Perichoresis* from Cappadocian Fathers to Maximus Confessor

Peter van Inwagen argues: “It may be that it is important for us to know that God is (somehow) three Persons in one Being and not at all important for us to have any inkling of how this could be – or even to be able to answer alleged demonstrations that it is self-contradictory. It may be that we cannot understand how God can be three Persons in one Being. It may be that an intellectual grasp of the Trinity is forever beyond us. And why not, really? It is not terribly daring to suppose that reality may contain things whose natures we cannot understand” [17].

Trinitarian *perichoresis* has to do with the distinctness of the divine persons which is maintained by the fact that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead who occupy distinct roles throughout redemptive history [18]. One of the major themes throughout redemptive history is that God has revealed Himself to be a monotheistic being, yet also, three persons [19]. Essentially, Scripture testifies to the fact that God is a tri-personal being. It is impossible to encounter one Person or the Triune God without also encountering the others. This of course is a concept that perhaps the human mind will never comprehend, but one that can be spoken of and discussed with great enthusiasm due to God’s revelation of Himself. The focus of this essay will tend towards the doctrine of the Trinity and how it is that the three persons of the Trinity interact with one another as pertains to being, within creation, and in redemption [20].

Basilios of Caesarea manages to explain that the God Father, God Son and God Holy Spirit are coeternal, entirely unique, concrete and distinct as to who they were, yet indissolubly identical in what they were – namely, truly divine. Basilios avoids the temptation to understand the Trinity as three separate Gods. Any persons of the Trinity exist at all. God is being in communion. Basilios analyses this dogmatic truth underlying that the unity of the Godhead lies in His essence-ousia and not to logic or to mathematics: “In delivering the formula of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost [21], our Lord did not connect the gift with number. He did not say into First, Second, and Third, nor yet into one, two, and three, but He gave us the boon of the knowledge of the faith which leads to salvation, by means of holy names. So that what saves us is our faith. Number has been devised as a symbol indicative of the quantity of objects... Count, if you must; but you must not by counting do damage to the faith. Either let the ineffable be honoured by silence; or let holy things be counted consistently with true religion. There is one God and Father, one Only-begotten, and one Holy Ghost. We proclaim each of the hypostases singly; and, when count we must, we do not let an

ignorant arithmetic carry us away to the idea of a plurality of Gods" [22]. For the bishop of Caesarea, the divine Persons exist in a perichoresis -interpenetration or a "community of nature" [23]. The Triune God is simultaneously both One and Three. Besides this community of nature in the Trinity, there is the communion of the Godhead [24]. The three persons constitute the Godhead. Of course the term perichoresis isn't exist as word in the dogmatic teaching of Great Basilus, but it is described by the development of his theological thought.

The context of the term is clearer in the theology of Gregory of Nazianzen [25]. The latter addressed the verb "perichoreo - περιχωρέω" with the meaning of the permeation. He uses this verb with theological meaning only once, although the verb is found four times in Gregory's writings [26]. In this Epistle CI, "To Cledonius the Priest against Apollinarius," the verb "perichoreo" is referred to the two natures of Christ [27] and doesn't have Trinitarian context in Gregory's epistle. By christological meaning the term will be examined in the chapter for Christological perichoresis. Specially, Prestige supports that the term perichoresis was used for Christology as technicus terminus in the beginning and only later taken up as a means of explicating the ontology of the Trinity [28].

Another cappadocian father, Gregory of Nyssa, doesn't use the term perichoresis synonyms but he put into service "two other equally evocative and dynamic terms: peripheresis and anacyclisis, as well as one which is implicit: cyclophoroumene" [29]. Also, he employs the verb five times [30], but the verbs don't reveal the interpenetration of the divine Persons. Despite of the omission of the word perichoresis of Gregory's works, it is implied in his Trinitarian theology. Stramara underlines: "Perhaps the primary reason why Gregory of Nyssa never borrows the term perichoresis, is the physical connotation of the Stoic usage. The term refers to the admixture of material elements. God, inasmuch as God is essence, is a spiritual 'substance'" [31]. The bishop of Nyssa teaches that the hypostases do not differ substantively; they are distinguished only by their hypostatic attributes. And because they share in the identical *ousia*, we cannot separate them in our contemplation of Holy Scripture [32]. He speaks about co-inherence, *perichoresis*, of the hypostases in the eternal being of the Godhead: "Likewise anyone who receives the Father, in effect receives with him both the Son and the Spirit as well, for in no way is it possible to conceive of a severance or division, such that the Son should be thought of apart from the Father or the Spirit be disjoined from the Son. Yet both the communion and the distinction apprehended in them are, beyond a certain point ineffable and inconceivable, in which neither the distinction of the hypostases ever sunders the continuity of nature, nor the commonality of substance ever dissolves the distinguishing notes" [33].

Besides the Cappadocian fathers, Macarius of Egypt (301-391 A.D.) uses the verbal type "perichoreo" with the meaning of "encircle" or "encompass" [34], but this doesn't refer to holy Triune God, but to the relation of the prayer and God. Because of God's love the prayer can participate in God's energies but not in his essence [35].

It is underlined the trinitarian application of the term

perichoresis by Pseudo- Cyril in his work *On the Holy Trinity* [36]. There, a similarity of this passage with the text of Gregory Nazianzen [37] is profane, because the hypostases "possess co-inherence in each other though without confusion or division" [38]. By this way the co-inherence of the three persons of God is used to reinforce the acceptance of their identity of their *ousia*. Of course it is unquestionable that if we accept the term *perichoresis* for the three persons of Trinity at the same time we should accept their distinctness.

Later in Leontius' of Byzantium texts and in Maximus's Confessor writings, the term *perichoresis* has to do mainly with the Christological context. Despite its Christological meaning, the word *perichoresis* is referred to the triadological teaching of these fathers of the Church, too.

As conclusion, it should be underlined that the penetration and indwelling of the three divine persons reciprocally in one another. In the Greek fathers' conception of the Trinity there is an emphasis on the mutual penetration of the three persons, thus bringing out the unity of the divine essence. Finally the term *Perichoresis* enters the image in the Trinity doctrine to give an answer to the question of how there can be one God, yet three Persons.

2.1. Christological Context of the Perichoresis from Cappadocian Fathers to Maximus Confessor

Besides the Trinitarian meaning for *perichoresis* which is the one essence of the three persons in God, the term is also applied to the close union of the two natures in Christ [39]. Although the power that unites the two natures proceeds exclusively from Christ's divinity, the result is a most intimate coalescence. The Godhead, which itself is impenetrable, penetrates the humanity, which is thereby deified without ceasing to be perfectly human. The two natures of Christ, or the persons of the Trinity, can be said to be united in such an intimate way that, in the case of the Trinity, there are 'not three gods, but one god', and, in the case of the hypostatic union, that there are not two entities in one body, but two natures held together in perfect union in one person [40].

The same path with Gregory's theological teaching for the term *perichoresis* is followed by Maximus the Confessor, Leontius Byzantius and Cyril of Alexandria (pseudo Cyril). Gregory Nazianzen, as it is referred earlier in this paper, used the term *perichoresis* to describe the intimate communion between the two natures of Christ, the two natures, divine and human, exist simultaneously in the one person of Christ. Otto analyses this passage: "*Perichoresis* thus signifies the attribution of one nature's prerogatives to the other, subsequently termed *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of attributes), by virtue of the interpenetration, but not commingling, of these (two) natures" [41].

In *On the Holy Trinity*, a work pseudonymously ascribed to saint Cyril of Alexandria, besides the trinitarian *perichoresis* [42], there is an amplification of the interrelation of Christ's divinity and humanity [43]. Besides this, the whole Christological teaching of Cyril of Alexandria implies the term *perichoresis*, when he teaches that the Incarnate Son of God has the properties of both divine nature he had from the

eternity and the human nature he took on in Holy Virgin Mary's womb [44].

Maximus the Confessor employs this term most of times for the hypostatic union of Christ's, enfleshed Word's, natures. Because of the two natures' *perichoresis*, we have *communicatio idiomatum* [45]. An example of this would be John 17:5 is where Jesus, the man, says, "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" [46]. Jesus who was born on earth says He had glory with the Father before the world was. This is because the one person of Christ has two natures: God and man. Jesus is the Divine Word made flesh [47]. We see in the single person of Christ both the attributes of divinity and humanity. Maximus analyses in his work *Ambiguorum Liber* [48] that the human nature of Christ reciprocates with the divine nature of Christ. In this passage of his work, it is obvious the influence of Gregory of Nazianzus [49], who supports that the two opposites are revealed as complementary sides of a single concrete object by the rotation of that object: the two natures reciprocate not merely in name, but in practical effect and operation [50]. Generally, Maximus' use of the concept and term of the noun *perichoresis* or the verb *perichoreo* is underlined not only in his *Questions to Thalassius* [51], *Ambigua* 1-5 [52] but also in his 2nd letter to Thomas [53].

Also, Leontius Byzantius uses the term *perichoresis* in order to explain that the two – natures of Christ hold together in one person, because the latter is the subject of both natures. However, sometimes instead of this term, a derivative compound word, *antiperichoreo* is used of Leontius' writings with the meaning of being interchangeable each of Christ's two natures. By this way the byzantine father underlines that each nature can be predicated, instead of the other, of the one Christ who is both [54].

Maximus the Confessor in his *scholia on Dionysius Areopagites* [55], he quotes *perichoreo* of the two natures of Christ from Gregory of Nazianzus [56], so the latter is used as an opponent of the monothelitism heresy [57]. The human nature hypostatically and unconfusedly is united with the divine. Maximus uses the verb *περιχωρέω* [58] meaning "reciprocal". By this way the term expresses that the both natures of Christ, human and divine are perfect consubstantial. This was declared in the 6th Ecumenical Council against the heresy of Monoenergism and Monothelitism.

The *perichoresis* to Christology according to Maximus has the meaning of the reciprocity of action. He analyses in the sense of 'reciprocity of action', as in the case of spoken word and concept [59] or of cutting and burning in the case of a red-hot knife [60]. By this way Christ's divinity and humanity did not change into a compound nature; they united hypostatically, they receive an unconfused *perichoresis* from one another. Divine nature, having penetrated flesh, offers to flesh a *perichoresis* with itself flowing from the divinity, a one-sided process [61]. So it can be said that in Christ, the human nature interpenetrates the divine nature, to which it is united without any confusion [62]. By employing the word *Perichoresis*, Maximus supports that Christ's two natures are

permitted to mix together, - without having any accusation of Nestorianism- while simultaneously remaining distinct – hence avoiding Eutychianism. By this way, Maximus became the first theologian who protected both the unity of Christ's personhood while at the same time protecting the distinction of His two natures [63].

To sum up the term *perichoresis*, in the Christological one, *perichoresis* expresses the unity of different natures in one and the same person. The verb *perichorein* was first used in Christology by Gregory theologian and later by Maximus the Confessor. In Christology the term *perichoresis* is signified the communication of idioms of human and divine natures in the unique person of Christ.

2.2. Cosmic Trinitarian and Christological Perichoresis

The *perichoresis* can refer to how God, in His omnipresence, "intersects" with all creation. The apostle Paul writes about this in his epistle to Colossian: "For by him (Jesus) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" [64].

As far as the *perichoresis* and its use to the created world, Harrison explains this use of the term by Maximus: "He (Maximus) sees it first as all a kind of interconnectedness and commingling among created things themselves. Added to this is the mutual indwelling of God and the saints, who, in ever-active repose that is both static and dynamic, become identical to him in energy as far as is possible. By extension, life in the Kingdom can perhaps be envisaged as a mutual interchange of energies, i.e., of the free and conscious personal life and self-manifestation of all who participate in it. There is, in other words, a radical giving of one's own being to God and to all other persons as far as is possible, and a receiving of theirs in return. This *perichoresis* of love is the created likeness and manifestation of the Holy Trinity and it ultimately extends through glorified angelic and human persons to include all varieties of created beings in a co-inherence with God and with each other. Finally, *perichoresis*, which genuinely unites while preserving distinctness and enables mutuality, and interchange of life itself among radically unequal levels of reality, thus stands at the heart of a Christian ontology of love" [65].

There is a perichoretic relationship between God and his redeem creation. So we have profaned the results in the deification of that creation. Deification of creation here doesn't mean any pantheistic teaching about God and nature. The creation can become God by the grace of God and can take part in the energies of God but never in his essence, but this has nothing to do with the pantheism. Generally, it is clear in theological teaching that all relationships which are analogous to God reflect the reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpretation of Triune God's *Perichoresis*: the universe in God and the opposite, pervaded by God's glory. By this way the Creation in the Spirit of God is an understanding which does not merely set creation over against God. It also at the same time puts creation into God, though without divinizing it. In the creative and life – giving powers of the Spirit, God

pervades in His creation.

As for result, it should be underlined that Creation is the act therefore not merely of God, but of the Triune God. Creation is the act of the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. This perichoretic relation between Christ and cosmos and mainly with the church has to be distinguished from the Trinity as a union. We have seen that an analogy exists between the intertrinitarian perichoresis and the union between Christ and the cosmos and mainly with the believers, but it is only an analogy [66].

2.3. *The Salvation of Believers Because of the Perichoresis in God*

Christ showed man such as he had to be become. He put into practice the ultimate purpose of man, the deification and led him within the Holy Trinity's embrace. Believers who respond to God's word and become members of Christ's Body, become intimately united with him: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification" [67]. So The Logos subsists himself as a divine hypostasis and gives subsistence to all the created [68].

The *perichoresis* of God and the believers which has its prototype in the *perichoresis* of the hypostatic union in the person of the Word, enfleshed (sesarkomenos) Logos can be though by Maximus as an organic relation of human freedom and divine grace, as fulfilled in divinizing union. By this way the divinity and humanity of Christ are naturally unlike and yet there is no distance to cause separations within His person, allowing the perichoretic exchange, so too then do God and the human being join, prevailing over their differences. Love enables God and man to be patterns one of another, and through it God and man are drawn together in a single embrace [69]. So Maximus underline that "The soul's salvation is the consummation of faith. This consummation is the revelation of what has been believed. Revelation is the inexpressible interpenetration (*perichoresis*) of the believer with (or toward, "pros") the object of belief and takes place according to each believer's degree of faith. Through that interpenetration, the believer finally returns to his origin. The return is the fulfillment of desire. Fulfillment of desire is ever active repose in the object of desire. Such repose is eternal uninterrupted enjoyment of this object. Enjoyment of this kind entails participation in supernatural divine realities. This participation consists in the participant becoming like that in which he participates. Such likeness involves, so far as this is possible, an identity with respect to energy between the participant and that in which he participates by virtue of the likeness. This identity with respect to energy constitutes the deification of the saints. As both natures of Christ are different but "are harmonized in the hypostasis of the Logos," wherein "each nature... advances through the other", by this way both God and the human soul are "carried outside of themselves" to one another, the latter through the will to self-abandonment, which is absolutely necessary, and draw the other to themselves" [70].

Deification of believer, as union and communion with God, was established as the goal of man and of all creation even before they were created; more precisely, all things were created with the purpose that God should become "all in all": "For to this end did He make us" says St. Maximos, "that we should become partakers of the Divine nature and sharers of His Eternity; and that through deification, which proceeds from Grace, we might prove like unto Him. It is for the sake of deification that all existing things are constituted and abide, and all non-existing things are brought into being and come into being" [71].

The *Perichoresis* is the mean that the believer can be united with the energies of God. Generally, Maximus supports that the Creator and the creature are relational terms that are understood better in the context of the other revealing a God who, through the Incarnation, is fully invested in the human being and the believer who is free, by nature, to orient his or her being toward God and become like him in divinization [72].

Since men need to imitate God in their practice of virtue, then they must imitate his attributes: unchangingness; "steadfastness in the good and its unalterable habit of choice". "Christ himself is the substance of virtue in each person" and "is the substance of all virtues," and so to "every person who participates in virtue as a matter of habit unquestionably participates in God, the substance of virtues". Cyril argues that the *perichoresis* of God to man became through the incarnation, passion and resurrection of the Son of God, the fullness (body and soul) whole and man found the way to be reconciled with God [73]. The Salvation of man and his reconciliation with God, therefore, assumes two things, first the unshared unity of the human nature and second the ontological divine compounds with human in Christ [74]. Also the man (Christian) can only knows God by participating in Christ and His Knowledge of God. Culminating at the eternal perichoretic relations within the eternal triune God at which human knowledge of God in Christ and by Spirit finally arrives – penetration and participation by grace into the ellipse of knowing and loving between the persons of the ontological Trinity [75].

All these are underlined better in the teaching of a father who lived in 14th century, Nicolas Cabasilas. According to Cabasilas, man is able to partake in God in the liturgy, and thus to subjectively receive and participate in His presence to the world. The Image of Christ, venerated by the Christians, bears witness to the reality of the Eucharist. The angels, do not partake of the divine nature, but only of the energy and the grace, but men participate in it, they are in communion with the divine nature, at least those who are in communion with the Holy Body of Christ and receive His Blood; for the Body and Blood of Christ are hypostatically united to the divinity and in the Body of Christ, with which we are in communion, there are two natures inseparably united in the hypostasis. We are thus in communion with both natures — with the body, corporally, and with the divinity spiritually, or rather with both in both ways [76].

As conclusion, it can be said that the believer's union with Christ and with the Triune God through the prayer and through the sacred mysteries of the Church. They are united in God through his attributes and not in His ousia.

3. Conclusions

The term *perichoresis* came from the ancient Greek philosophy and mainly it was used by Stoics. The etymology of the Greek word *perichoresis* indicates a cyclical movement or revolving action. *Perichoresis* implies both a static dwelling or resting within another and a dynamic interweaving of things with each other so that the divinity remains without confusion, mixture, anteriority and posteriority of one to the other. The *perichoresis* in its literal meaning is permeation which takes place between physical and physical, but in philosophy and theology it is taken more as a physical symbol for something happening between the spiritual and physical, or between the spiritual and spiritual.

This term doesn't exist as term in Bible but the meaning of *perichoresis* runs into some Biblical and philosophical complications. Its content was employed by Athanasius of Alexandria in order to confront the heresy of Arius. From this father and later the noun *perichoresis* expresses the relations among the persons of the holy Triune God, all the members of the Trinity "indwell" each other. Also *perichoresis* was used to express the unity of the two natures of Christ in one person.

Of course there is a difference between the Christological and Trinitarian *perichoresis*. In the Trinitarian one, it means there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Stated differently, God is one in essence and three in person. These definitions express that, the God Father, the God Son, and the God Holy Spirit are distinct Persons. Each Person is fully God and there is only one God. Also the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, without meaning that any of them is inferior to the other. On this basis, the three divine persons dwell in one another (*perichoresis*) inter-dwelling, co-inherence. Each one of the three acts together with the other two; however, each of them relates to the creation in a personal way: the Father conceives the plan of creation (and of restoration of Creation in His Christ); the Son of God makes the Father's plan of creation (and the salvation of creation) a reality; the Holy Spirit leads God's (the Father's) plan of creation (and restoration of creation in Christ, the incarnate Logos of God) to its perfection. They are all identical in attributes. They are equal in power, love, mercy, justice, holiness, knowledge, and all other qualities, but they have unique hypostatical attributes each of them. They have "koines" and "idies" energies.

In the Christological one, *perichoresis* expresses the unity of different natures in single divine person (hypostasis) of the Word. Christ was the Eternal Word of God who made manifest incarnated within history. Humanity and divinity are hypostatically united together: the two natures exist in the one person of the Word who became flesh, a divine person (or hypostasis). Christ exists "in two natures", without being of two natures; "the two natures exist united together "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation", according to Chalcedon's Council creed. The consequences of this hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ are the "co-inherence" of human and divine nature, the *communicatio idiomatum*, the natural sonship of Christ's

humanity, one worship of the two natures in Christ, deification of Christ's human nature, Christ's double knowledge and power -however, attributed to one person- and Christ's absolute unsinfulness.

Third, the term *perichoresis* has to do with the relation of World with God. In discussing God's relationship to his creation a distinction is made within Orthodox theology between God's eternal essence and uncreated energies, though it is understood that this does not compromise the divine simplicity. Energies and essence are both inseparably God. The divine energies are the expressions of divine being in action according to Orthodox doctrine, whereas the persons of the Trinity are divine by nature. Hence, created beings are united to God through participation in the divine energies and not the divine essence or ousia.

Finally, the *perichoresis* can be referred to Christ and his union with the believers and the deification of the latter. The union of humanity with divinity in Jesus Christ restored, in the Person of Christ, the mode of existence of humanity, so that those who are incorporated in him may participate in this renewal of the perfect mode of existence, be saved from sin and death, and be united to God in deification. Christians are introduced by the Lord Jesus to an expanded Trinity that brings the corporate man—the Body of Christ—into the enlargement of God and His expression. This does not mean that believers are brought into the godhead to become God as an object of worship. Only God is God and there is none other like Him. Nevertheless, the scriptures are clear that by the dispensing of the life of God into the believers in Christ and by the Spirit, there is a real and expanded oneness within God into which the believers are invited to dwell.

As indisputable conclusion we should keep in our mind that the concept of co-inherence - *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling) cannot be fully comprehended by our natural mind. It is a matter of faith and must be "spiritually discerned," as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:14.

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- [11] Jn 16: 14.
- [12] Gregory of Nazianzen, *The Fifth Theological Oration. On the Holy Spirit*, Oration 31, 9, PG 36, 141CD, transl. by Ch. G. Browne and J. Ed. Swallow, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 7. ed. by Ph. Schaff and H. Wace, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1894, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310231.htm> [access: 18.04.2016]: “For the Father is not Son, and yet this is not due to either deficiency or subjection of Essence; but the very fact of being Unbegotten or Begotten, or Proceeding has given the name of Father to the First, of the Son to the Second, and of the Third, Him of Whom we are speaking, of the Holy Ghost that the distinction of the Three Persons may be preserved in the one nature and dignity of the Godhead. For neither is the Son Father, for the Father is One, but He is what the Father is; nor is the Spirit Son because He is of God, for the Only-begotten is One, but He is what the Son is. The Three are One in Godhead, and the One Three in properties;”. Also cf ibidem- Oration 31, 10, PG 36, 144AB; Oration 31, 28, PG 36, 164D, 165A.
- [13] Basilus of Caesarea, *Lettre 214*, 4, PG 32, 789A. Cf. E. Artemi, “The term *idion* and its uses in the teaching of Great Athanasius, Cappadocian fathers and Cyril of Alexandria”, in *Epistimoniki Epitheorosi*, vol. 4th, Hellenic Open University, Patra 2011, p. 63-86.
- [14] Jn 3:16.
- [15] Ibidem 15:26.
- [16] D. Manastireanu supports that the use of this term included the danger of Monophysitism implicit in the Stoic notion of mixture with which Christological perichoresis is associated. Many scholars of theology consider the mere affirmation of the non-commingling of natures in the process of interpenetration to be a sufficient safeguard. Cf. D. Manastireanu, *A Perichoretic Model of the Church. The Trinitarian Ecclesiology of Dumitru Staniloae*, Brunel University 2004, p. 75.
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- [25] C. A. Disandro, “Historia semántica de perikhóresis”, *StPatr* 15, TU 128 (Berlin 1984) 444: “De aquí transcurre a través de San Gregorio Nazianzeno († 390) hasta la prosa de San Máximo Confesor († 662), quien parece dar el vocablo perikhóresis su ubicación semantic definitiva en tres direcciones: a – triadológica; b – Christológica; c – en la teología de la pístis, o sea en la eclesiología”.
- [26] Gregory of Nazianzus, *On the Death of his Father*, Orat. 18, 42, PG 35, 1041A. Here, the word has the meaning “interchange produced by the revolution of successive cycles”. By this way Gregory shows how life and death are present in each other and thus are ‘mixed’ or ‘interpenetrated’, in the Stoic sense. Cf. D. Manastireanu, “Perichoresis and the early Christian doctrine of God”, *Archaeus* XI-XII (2007-2008), (p. 61-93), 65. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Concerning Peace* 2, PG 35, 1136B. Here the word has the context of the things that coinhere or make room for one another and are converted into one another. Gregory of Nazianzus, *To future governors of Nazianzus*, Orat. 17, PG 35, 972A.
- [27] Gregory of Nazianzus, *To Cledonius the Priest against Apollinarius*, Epistle CI, 31, PG 37, 181C.
- [28] Randall Otto, “The use and abuse of Perichoresis in recent theology”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001), p. 366–384; G. L. Prestige, “περιχώρεω and περιχώρησις in the Fathers”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1928), p. 242–252; R. Cross, “Christological predication in John of Damascus”, *Mediaeval Studies* 62 (2000), p. 69–124; and W. Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1977. My rendition of the historical material owes much to these sources. Gregory of Nazianzus, *To Cledonius the Priest against Apollinarius*, Epistle CI, 31, PG 37, 181C.
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- [31] D. F. Stramara jr., “Gregory of Nyssa’s Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis”, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 53.3 (1998), (257–263), p. 258.
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- [33] Ibidem, PG 32, 332D-333A.
- [34] Macarius of Egypt, *Concerning Patience and Discrimination*, PG 34, 869A.
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- [37] Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 39 - In Holy Lights*, 11, PG 36, 345CD.
- [38] Cyril of Alexandria (pseudo Cyril), *On the Holy Trinity*, 10, PG 77, 1144B.
- [39] S. Stamatović, "The Meaning of Perichoresis", *Open Theology* 2 (2016) 303–323, p. 318, ref.64, <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/opth.2016.2.issue-1/opth-2016-0026/opth-2016-0026.xml>: "It is not surprising at all that perichoresis as a technical term appeared only in the late Patristics, i.e. only after those Christological formulas articulated by the Council of Chalcedon (451). For as we know, Chalcedonian Confession defines that one and the same Christ is acknowledged "in Two Natures unconfusedly (ασυγχύτως), unchangeably (ατρέπτως), indivisibly (αδιαρρέτως), inseparably (αχωρίστως), the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis," and the notion of *perichoresis* was coined only as a means to explain how such a thing is possible".
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- [73] "For the Only-Begotten Word of God hath saved us, putting on likeness to us in order that having suffered in the flesh and risen from the dead He might set forth our nature superior to death and decay", Cyril of Alexandria, *Quod unus sit Christus*, SC 97, 775³⁷⁻⁴² (=PG 75, 1357B). See also: "We proclaim the death according to the flesh of the only-begotten Son of God, and confess the return to life from the dead of Jesus Christ, and his ascension into heaven, and thus we perform in the churches an unbloody worship, and in this way approach mystical blessings (eulogia) and are sanctified, becoming participants in the holy flesh and the precious blood of Christ the Savior of us all. We do not receive this as ordinary flesh – God forbid! – or as the flesh of a man sanctified and conjoined to the Word in a unity of dignity, or as the flesh of someone who enjoys a divine indwelling. No, we receive it as truly the life-giving and very flesh of the Word himself", Cyril, Third Letter to Nestorius 7 (trans. John A. McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy [Crestwood: St. Vladimir's, 2004] 270). See Henry Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1951) 145-164; for the Commentary on John, see Lawrence J. Welch, *Theology and Eucharist in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria*, Catholic Scholars' Press, San Francisco 1993.

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