

Why True Mother Uses Only One Chair: A Theological Reflection

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Just recently True Mother stopped using two separate chairs for her and True Father in public gatherings. She instead now uses one chair to sit, perhaps giving the impression there was no chair for True Father.

But her reason for the use of only one chair was explained publicly by a Korean leader: it is that God, True Father (Rev. Sun Myung Moon) and True Mother (Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon) have already become completely one, constituting a Trinity. To me, it makes sense. Only one chair would be needed as long as the Trinity of God, True Father and True Mother is there.

Perhaps the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which shows how the three persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are united in the Trinity, can help us understand how God, True Father and True Mother are united in their Trinity.



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A first way how the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity describes the unity of the three persons is by talking about their “mutual indwelling” or “interpenetration” (*perichoresis* in Greek; *circumincessio* in Latin), and it is supported by Jesus’ own words: “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:11).

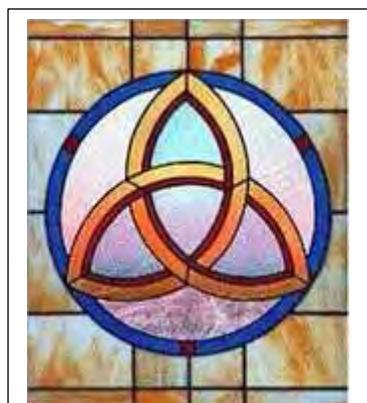
While this Greek term, *perichoresis*, was originally used to describe the relationship of unity between the divine and human natures of Christ, St. John of Damascus (c. 676-749) for the first time extended it to the Trinitarian unity in the sense of mutual indwelling or interpenetration, and its Latin translation, *circumincessio*, came later. Whether in Greek or Latin, it became a technical term for the Trinitarian relationship in the above sense. In the same way, we can perhaps say that God, True Father and True Mother, in their Trinity, have the relationship of mutual indwelling or interpenetration.

A second way the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity describes the unity of the three persons concerns their “outward operations” (*opera trinitatis ad extra*) in the divine economy. Usually considered to have come from St. Augustine (354-430), it says that the three outward operations of “creation,” “redemption” and “sanctification” in the divine economy, which may be attributed primarily to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively, are nevertheless “indivisible” (*opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*), so that all three persons are involved in each of these outward operations.

This means the Son and the Holy Spirit, too, are involved in the operation of “creation,” which is attributed primarily to the Father; that the Father and the Holy Spirit, too, are involved in the operation of “redemption,” which is attributed primarily to the Son; and that the Father and the Son, too, are involved in the operation of “sanctification,” which is attributed primarily to the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, we can perhaps say that True Father and True Mother are deeply involved in the godly

operation which is attributed primarily to God; that God and True Mother, too, are deeply involved in the masculine, fatherly operation which is attributed primarily to True Father; and that God and True Father, too, are deeply involved in the feminine, motherly operation which is attributed primarily to True Mother.



A stained glass symbol of perichoresis

The above two ways can explain why True Mother again and again looks, sounds and does things like God and True Father would do. For example, look at her profound insights on tackling issues such as the environmental problem of the earth. They are like God's. Also, look at her recent bold decisions and moves, such as conducting a rally of 80,000 people in Korea and traveling to Senegal to hold the World Africa Summit. To some, they might seem very masculine like those of True Father. Look at her strong confidence in what she is doing. It evokes True Father.

One might, however, ask if the above two ways of describing the Trinitarian unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Christianity can legitimately be used to explain the relationship of God, True Father and True Mother in the Divine Principle. For whereas the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same substance within the Godhead, aren't True Father and True Mother creatures discrete from God?

In fact, there is one significant difference between the Christian and Unification doctrines of the Trinity. It is that while Christianity only talks about the Trinity within the Godhead, the Divine Principle talks not only about the Trinity within the Godhead but also about the "substantial Trinity" of God, True Father and True Mother, which involves the realm of creation.

In Christianity, the Trinity within the Godhead refers to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit within the Godhead, constituting the so-called "essential Trinity." In the Divine Principle, the Trinity within the Godhead references the three basic attributes of God which are heart and God's own dual characteristics, and it can be called the "inner Trinity." The Divine Principle additionally talks about what can be called the "outer Trinity," which is the substantial Trinity of God, True Father and True Mother, involving the created realm.



In Christianity, of course, the "essential Trinity" of the Godhead is also called the "economic Trinity," when its outward Trinitarian operations of creation, redemption and sanctification in the divine economy are paid attention to; this economic Trinity may look like the outer, substantial Trinity in the Divine Principle. But the economic Trinity is not at all discrete from the essential Trinity in Christianity. The essential and economic Trinity are merely two different names of one and the same Trinity within the Godhead. The Divine Principle, by contrast, distinguishes between the inner Trinity within the Godhead (heart and God's own dual characteristics) and the outer, substantial Trinity (God, True Father and True

Mother), making the two discrete sets of the Trinity.

Here, however, the important thing we have to know to address the above question is that the inner and outer Trinity, even if discrete from one other, can be perfectly united according to the Divine Principle because the outer, substantial Trinity is the complete reflection or substantiation of the inner Trinity. The Divine Principle's unique ontology of give-and-take action in dual characteristics, which can consistently apply to the whole of reality including God and creation, can maintain that the realm of God and that of creation can be perfectly united, whereas Christianity, having no such ontology and therefore considering God and creation to be infinite and finite, respectively, cannot affirm their perfect unity.

This is the reason why even the Greek notion of *perichoresis* and the medieval phrase of *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, which can usually apply to the Trinity within the Godhead in Christianity and perhaps to the inner Trinity within the Godhead in the Divine Principle, can legitimately be used to explain the relationship of the outer, substantial Trinity of God, True Father and True Mother in the Divine Principle. The age of *Cheon Il Guk* has come in which God's ideal of creation is substantially established, and in which the substantial Trinity, even visible now in the use of one chair, is the center of our lives in place of the Trinity within the Godhead alone.

One point of caution, however, is that this does not mean to say that True Father and True Mother are each God in *Cheon Il Guk*. They are discrete from God as well as from each other. Therefore we do not idolatry True Parents, nor do we equate True Father and True Mother. Simply, the Unification ontology of give-and-take action, which goes beyond the limitation of Christian ontology, allows for the perfect unity of God, True Father and True Mother in the substantial Trinity. This perfect unity gives us rebirth both spiritually and physically and also constitutes a precious standard for us all to follow. It goes without saying that True Father and True Mother have walked their path of the cross to reach this point of victory.

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