

THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY TRINITY



ALPHA INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

Thalassery, Kerala, India - 670 101

Ph: 0490 2344727, 2343707

Web: www.alphathalassery.org, Email: alphits@gmail.com

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The Roots of Christian Trinitarianism

The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion - the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another.

Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.” In this Trinity of Persons the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet, notwithstanding this difference as to origin, the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent. This, the Church teaches, is the revelation regarding God’s nature which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came upon earth to deliver to the world: and which she proposes to man as the foundation of her whole dogmatic system.

In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together. The word *trias* (of which the Latin *trinitas* is a translation)

is first found in Theophilus of Antioch about A.D. 180. He speaks of “the Trinity of God [the Father], His Word and His Wisdom (*To Autolytus* II.15). The term may, of course, have been in use before his time. Afterwards it appears in its Latin form of *trinitas* in Tertullian (*On Pudicity* 21). In the next century the word is in general use. It is found in many passages of Origen (“In Ps. xvii”, 15). The first creed in which it appears is that of Origen’s pupil, Gregory Thaumaturgus. In his *Ekthesis tes pisteos* composed between 260 and 270, he writes:

There is therefore nothing created, nothing subject to another in the Trinity: nor is there anything that has been added as though it once had not existed, but had entered afterwards: therefore the Father has never been without the Son, nor the Son without the Spirit: and this same Trinity is immutable and unalterable forever (P.G., X, 986).

It is manifest that a dogma so mysterious presupposes a Divine revelation. When the fact of revelation, understood in its full sense as the speech of God to man, is no longer admitted, the rejection of the doctrine follows as a necessary consequence. For this reason it has no place in the Liberal Protestantism of today. The writers of this school contend that the doctrine of the Trinity, as professed by the Church, is not contained in the New Testament, but that it was first formulated in the second century and received final approbation in the fourth, as the result of the Arian and Macedonian controversies. In view of this assertion it is necessary to consider in some detail the evidence afforded by Holy Scripture. Attempts have been made recently to apply the more extreme theories of comparative religion to the doctrine of the Trinity, and to account for it by an imaginary law of nature compelling men to group the objects of their worship in threes. It seems needless to give more than a reference to these extravagant views, which serious thinkers of every school reject as destitute of foundation.

The Plurality of God in the Old Testament

The Christian God is triune. How do we account for this? For centuries, Christian theology tried to solve this problem either by referring to the underdeveloped nature of Old Testament faith before the coming of the Messiah or, more often, by searching for potential

trinitarian proof texts in the Bible. These proof texts run from Genesis 1:26 (“Let *us* make...”), which current exegesis regards as an example of plurality of majesty (not unlike the pronouncement of royal individuals in the form of “We declare...”), to the famous Isaianic threefold “Holy, holy, holy” exclamation (6:3), to passages such as Genesis 18, in which the theophanies of the “Angel of Yahweh” are seen as preincarnation appearances of the Second Person of the Trinity. In light of contemporary exegesis, however, these and similar examples do not hold. They also raise the question of how to come up with a distinctively Trinitarian - why not, for example, binitarian - view of God. It is also problematic to regard the Old Testament view of God as infantile, especially since the New Testament, and Jesus himself, did not.

Contemporary theology has taken a different route to account for the emergence of early Christian faith in a Triune God in light of Jewish monotheism. This has meant revisiting and revising some canons of theological scholarship.

It is used to be the conventional wisdom of New Testament scholars that predication of a divine nature to Jesus came about as a result of the impact of Hellenistic culture outside Israel and the ideas that culture had about the Divine. The assumption was that early Jews in tune with their monotheistic language would not use such language of anyone but Yahweh. The oneness of God ruled out speaking of multiple persons in the Godhead.

One of the most recent counters to this assumption has come from Richard Bauckham, a theologian and New Testament scholar. He has argued that the early Jewish definition of God could include the person of the Son without violating monotheism. What distinguished Yahwistic faith from polytheistic faiths was the desire not to place Yahweh at the summit of a hierarchy of divinity but to place him in an “absolutely unique category, beyond comparison with anything else.” In other words, even the highest angels or heavenly powers so highly appreciated especially in apocalyptic literature, while participating in God’s rule over the earth, did not share God’s essence. However, distinctions within one Godhead, such as between God’s Spirit and God’s Word, were not necessarily understood as compromises to divine unity. Consequently, Bauckham concludes - and this is highly significant

for a New Testament Trinitarian outlook - “the second Temple Jewish understanding of the divine uniqueness... does not make distinctions within the divine identity inconceivable.”

Despite the undeniable emphasis on God’s unity in the Old Testament, there are also elements that point to plurality. For example, God’s “Wisdom,” “Word,” and “Spirit” sometimes function synonymously and are not always distinguished systematically. According to Gerald O’Collins, all three terms are “vivid personified agents of divine activity,” often operating with personal characteristic. According to Proverbs, “Wisdom” is created by God “at the beginning of his work” (8:22). The “Word” is always active, powerfully (Isa. 55:11), and creative (genesis 1). Sometimes “Spirit” and “Word” are connected, as in the psalmist’s interpretation of the creation story (33:6). The term Spirit as such (*ruah*, “breath”) occurs over four hundred times in the Old Testament.

On the basis of these considerations, contemporary scholars believe the gradual emergence of Trinitarian faith is consistent with, though goes beyond, the witness of the Old Testament. How did the New Testament handle this Old Testament dynamic between God’s unity and his plurality in unity?

Trinitarian Orientations in the New Testament

Students of Christian theology may be disappointed to hear how a recent textbook on the Trinity summarizes the New Testament’s approach to the Trinity: “There is no mention of the word ‘trinity’ in the New Testament. What we do discover from the New Testament writers, though, is a consistent argument for the filial uniqueness of Jesus Christ in relationship to the Father of the old covenant.” Although this summary of current scholarship does not seem to promise much, it is precisely in this binitarianism that we can discern the roots for a more developed Trinitarian theology of the New testament. Clearly, the New Testament introduces its trinitarianism through the person of Jesus Christ, who, according to the early Christians, shares in the divinity of the Father God.

During his life, Jesus claimed to have been sent by God (John 5:37) and, more importantly, to have been given the authority to give

life as the Father does (5:21) and to execute judgment as the Father does (5:22). Indeed, Jesus claimed that whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father (5:23). According to the Matthean Jesus, “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (11:27).

Before his cross and resurrection, Jesus claimed to have the authority and the approval of his Father. When, as Romans 1:3- 4 maintains, Jesus was raised from the dead by his Father, the early Christians saw this as divine confirmation. Such a belief was crucial for the emergence of the doctrine of the deity of Jesus, a claim that was of course hotly contested during Jesus’ lifetime by his Jewish opponents; they accused him of blasphemy (John 5:18).

Furthermore, the New Testament applies to the risen and exalted Son the title *Kyrios*, “Lord,” which is reserved for the Father in the Septuagint. The *Kyrios*, Son, could be invoked in prayer (a possible interpretation of 2 Cor. 12:8), and the title was put on par with the term *theos*, “God,” in the confession of Thomas (John 20:28). In addition, Paul and the writer of Hebrews argue for the Son’s preexistence (Col. 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2-3).

Clearly, there are sufficient grounds for speaking of a binitarian foundation. What about the third member of the trinity as developed in later theology? The Spirit is presented as the “medium of the communion of Jesus with the Father and the mediator of the participation of believers in Christ.” Jesus Christ was raised and his divine sonship declared by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 1:4); the God who raised Jesus from the dead will by his Spirit, who dwells in those who believe in Christ, also give mortal bodies eternal life (8:11). The Spirit of sonship who is given to Christians (8:15) is the Spirit of Christ (8:14). The Gospels also link Jesus and the Spirit. Mark viewed the miracles of Jesus as the work of the Spirit (3:29-30), Matthew attributed exorcism to the same Spirit (12:28), and Luke depicted Jesus as filled with the Spirit (4:1, 14; etc.).

Wolfhart Pannenberg accurately summarizes the rise of Trinitarian orientations in the New Testament:

The involvement of the Spirit in God's presence in the work of Jesus and in the fellowship of the Son with the Father is the basis of the fact that the Christian understanding of God found its developed and definitive form in the doctrine of the Trinity and not in a biunity of the Father and the Son.... The New Testament statements do not clarify the interrelations of the three but they clearly emphasize the fact that they are interrelated.

There are few passages in which all three members of the Godhead are mentioned. The early appearance of the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19) undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the emerging Trinitarian view of God. The baptismal narrative of Jesus himself found in all four Gospels (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34) records the Father speaking from heaven to the Son, on whom the Spirit rests in the form of a dove. Furthermore, Trinitarian formulae such as benedictions ("May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" [2 Cor. 13:14] and some passages seem to be structured according to a Trinitarian pattern (Rom. 15:16; 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22), as are some larger biblical sections such as Ephesians 1:1-14. These are but a few examples of how the appearance of Jesus as the One sent by his Father in the power of the Spirit led New Testament writers to an understanding of God as triune.

Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in Patristic Period

It is obvious that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity has from the earliest times been taught by the Catholic Church and professed by her members. As none deny this for any period subsequent to the Arian and Macedonian controversies, it will be sufficient if we here consider the faith of the first four centuries only. An argument of very great weight is provided in the liturgical forms of the Church. The highest probative force must necessarily attach to these, since they express not the private opinion of a single individual, but the public belief of the whole body of the faithful. Nor can it be objected that the notions of Christians on the subject were vague and confused, and that their liturgical forms reflect this frame of mind. On such a point vagueness was impossible. Any Christian might be called on to seal with his blood his belief that there is but One God. The answer of Saint Maximus (c. A.D. 250) to the command of the proconsul that he should sacrifice to the gods, "I offer no sacrifice save

to the One True God,” is typical of many such replies in the Acts of the martyrs. It is out of the question to suppose that men who were prepared to give their lives on behalf of this fundamental truth were in point of fact in so great confusion in regard to it that they were unaware whether their creed was monotheistic, ditheistic, or tritheistic. Moreover, we know that their instruction regarding the doctrines of their religion was solid. The writers of that age bear witness that even the unlettered were thoroughly familiar with the truths of faith (cf. Justin, *First Apology* 60; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.4.2).

1. Baptismal formulas

We may notice first the baptismal formula, which all acknowledge to be primitive. It has already been shown that the words as prescribed by Christ (Matthew 28:19) clearly express the Godhead of the Three Persons as well as their distinction, but another consideration may here be added. Baptism, with its formal renunciation of Satan and his works, was understood to be the rejection of the idolatry of paganism and the solemn consecration of the baptized to the one true God (Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 4; Justin, *First Apology* 4). The act of consecration was the invocation over them of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The supposition that they regarded the Second and Third Persons as created beings, and were in fact consecrating themselves to the service of creatures, is manifestly absurd. St. Hippolytus has expressed the faith of the Church in the clearest terms: “He who descends into this laver of regeneration with faith forsakes the Evil One and engages himself to Christ, renounces the enemy and confesses that Christ is God... he returns from the font a son of God and a coheir of Christ. To Whom with the all holy, the good and life-giving Spirit be glory now and always, forever and ever. Amen” (*Sermon on Theophany* 10).

2. The doxologies

The witness of the doxologies is no less striking. The form now universal, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,” so clearly expresses the Trinitarian dogma that the Arians found it necessary to deny that it had been in use previous

to the time of Flavian of Antioch (Philostorgius, “Hist. eccl.,” III, xiii).

It is true that up to the period of the Arian controversy another form, “Glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit,” had been more common (cf. *Clement’s Epistle to the Corinthians* 58-59; Justin, *First Apology* 67). This latter form is indeed perfectly consistent with Trinitarian belief: it, however, expresses not the coequality of the Three Persons, but their operation in regard to man. We live in the Spirit, and through Him we are made partakers in Christ (Galatians 5:25; Romans 8:9); and it is through Christ, as His members, that we are worthy to offer praise to God (Hebrews 13:15).

But there are many passages in the ante-Nicene Fathers which show that the form, “Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to [with] the Holy Spirit,” was also in use.

- ♦ In the narrative of St. Polycarp’s martyrdom we read: “With Whom to Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory now and for the ages to come” (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14; cf. 22).
- ♦ Clement of Alexandria bids men “give thanks and praise to the only Father and Son, to the Son and Father with the Holy Spirit” (*The Pedagogue* III.12).
- ♦ St. Hippolytus closes his work against Noetus with the words: “To Him be glory and power with the Father and the Holy Spirit in Holy Church now and always for ever and ever. Amen” (*Against Noetus* 18).
- ♦ Denis of Alexandria uses almost the same words: “To God the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit be honour and glory forever and ever, Amen” (in St. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 29.72).
- ♦ St. Basil further tells us that it was an immemorial custom among Christians when they lit the evening lamp to give thanks to God with prayer: *Ainoumen Patera kai Gion kai Hagion Pneuma Theou* (“We praise the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God”).

3. Other patristic writings

The doctrine of the Trinity is formally taught in every class of ecclesiastical writing. From among the apologists we may note Justin, *First Apology* 6; Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* 12. The latter tells us that Christians "are conducted to the future life by this one thing alone, that they know God and His Logos, what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, what the communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these three, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father, and their distinction in unity." It would be impossible to be more explicit. And we may be sure that an apologist, writing for pagans, would weigh well the words in which he dealt with this doctrine.

Amongst polemical writers we may refer to Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* I.22 and IV.20.1-6). In these passages he rejects the Gnostic figment that the world was created by aeons who had emanated from God, but were not consubstantial with Him, and teaches the consubstantiality of the Word and the Spirit by Whom God created all things.

Clement of Alexandria professes the doctrine in *The Pedagogue* I.6, and somewhat later Gregory Thaumaturgus, as we have already seen, lays it down in the most express terms in his Creed.

4. As contrasted with heretical teachings

Yet further evidence regarding the Church's doctrine is furnished by a comparison of her teaching with that of heretical sects.

The controversy with the Sabellians in the third century proves conclusively that she would tolerate no deviation from Trinitarian doctrine. Noetus of Smyrna, the originator of the error, was condemned by a local synod, about A.D. 200. Sabellius, who propagated the same heresy at Rome c. A.D. 220, was excommunicated by St. Callistus.

It is notorious that the sect made no appeal to tradition: it found Trinitarianism in possession wherever it appeared - at Smyrna, at Rome, in Africa, in Egypt. On the other hand, St. Hippolytus, who

combats it in the "Contra Noetum", claims Apostolic tradition for the doctrine of the Catholic Church: "Let us believe, beloved brethren, in accordance with the tradition of the Apostles, that God the Word came down from heaven to the holy Virgin Mary to save man."

Somewhat later (c. A.D. 260) Denis of Alexandria found that the error was widespread in the Libyan Pentapolis, and he addressed a dogmatic letter against it to two bishops, Euphranor and Ammonius. In this, in order to emphasize the distinction between the Persons, he termed the Son *poiema tou Theou* and used other expressions capable of suggesting that the Son is to be reckoned among creatures. He was accused of heterodoxy to St. Dionysius of Rome, who held a council and addressed to him a letter dealing with the true Catholic doctrine on the point in question. The Bishop of Alexandria replied with a defense of his orthodoxy entitled "*Elegchos kai apologia*," in which he corrected whatever had been erroneous. He expressly professes his belief in the consubstantiality of the Son, using the very term, *homoousios*, which afterwards became the touchstone of orthodoxy at Nicaea (P.G., XXV, 505). The story of the controversy is conclusive as to the doctrinal standard of the Church. It shows us that she was firm in rejecting on the one hand any confusion of the Persons and on the other hand any denial of their consubstantiality.

The information we possess regarding another heresy - that of Montanus - supplies us with further proof that the doctrine of the Trinity was the Church's teaching in A.D. 150. Tertullian affirms in the clearest terms that what he held as to the Trinity when a Catholic he still holds as a Montanist (*Against Praxeas* 2); and in the same work he explicitly teaches the Divinity of the Three Persons, their distinction, the eternity of God the Son (*Against Praxeas* 27). Epiphanius in the same way asserts the orthodoxy of the Montanists on this subject (Haer., lxviii). Now it is not to be supposed that the Montanists had accepted any novel teaching from the Catholic Church since their secession in the middle of the second century. Hence, inasmuch as there was full agreement between the two bodies in regard to the Trinity, we have here again a clear proof that Trinitarianism was

an article of faith at a time when the Apostolic tradition was far too recent for any error to have arisen on a point so vital.

Later Controversy

Notwithstanding the force of the arguments we have just summarised, a vigorous controversy has been carried on from the end of the seventeenth century to the present day regarding the Trinitarian doctrine of the ante-Nicene Fathers. The Socinian writers of the seventeenth century (e.g. Sand, “Nucleus historiae ecclesiastic”, Amsterdam, 1668) asserted that the language of the early Fathers in many passages of their works shows that they agreed not with Athanasius, but with Arius. Petavius, who was at that period engaged on his great theological work, was convinced by their arguments, and allowed that at least some of these Fathers had fallen into grave errors. On the other hand, their orthodoxy was vigorously defended by the Anglican divine Dr. George Bull (“Defensio Fidei Nicaean”, Oxford, 1685) and subsequently by Bossuet, Thomassinus, and other Catholic theologians. Those who take the less favourable view assert that they teach the following points inconsistent with the post-Nicene belief of the Church:

- ◆ That the Son even as regards His Divine Nature is inferior and not equal to the Father;
- ◆ that the Son alone appeared in the theophanies of the Old Testament, inasmuch as the Father is essentially invisible, the Son, however, not so;
- ◆ that the Son is a created being;
- ◆ that the generation of the Son is not eternal, but took place in time.

We shall examine these four points in order.

1. In proof of the assertion that many of the Fathers deny the equality of the Son with the Father, passages are cited from Justin (*First Apology* 13, 32), Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* III.8.3), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* VII.2), Hippolytus (*Against Noetus* 14), Origen (*Against Celsus* VIII.15). Thus Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* III.8.3) says: “He commanded, and they were created... Whom did He

command? His Word, by whom, says the Scripture, the heavens were established. And Origen (*Against Celsus* VIII.15) says: “We declare that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but inferior to Him. And this belief we ground on the saying of Jesus Himself: “The Father who sent me is greater than I.”

Now in regard to these passages it must be borne in mind that there are two ways of considering the Trinity. We may view the Three Persons insofar as they are equally possessed of the Divine Nature or we may consider the Son and the Spirit as deriving from the Father, Who is the sole source of Godhead, and from Whom They receive all They have and are. The former mode of considering them has been the more common since the Arian heresy. The latter, however, was more frequent previously to that period. Under this aspect, the Father, as being the sole source of all, may be termed greater than the Son. Thus Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Fathers of the Council of Sardica, in their synodical letter, all treat our Lord’s words, teaches “The Father is greater than I” as having reference to His Godhead (cf. Petavius, “De Trin.”, II, ii, 7, vi, 11). From this point of view it may be said that in the creation of the world the Father commanded, the Son obeyed. The expression is not one which would have been employed by Latin writers who insist that creation and all God’s works proceed from Him as One and not from the Persons as distinct from each other. But this truth was unfamiliar to the early Fathers.

2. Justin (*Dialogue with Trypho* 60) Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* IV.20.7-11), Tertullian (“C. Marc.”, II, 27; *Against Praxeas* 15-16), Novatian (*On the Trinity* 18.25), Theophilus (*To Autolytus* II.22), are accused of teaching that the theophanies were incompatible with the essential nature of the Father, yet not incompatible with that of the Son. In this case also the difficulty is largely removed if it be remembered that these writers regarded all the Divine operations as proceeding from the Three Persons as such, and not from the Godhead viewed as one. Now Revelation teaches us that in the work of the creation and redemption of the world the

Father effects His purpose through the Son. Through Him He made the world; through Him He redeemed it; through Him He will judge it. Hence it was believed by these writers that, having regard to the present disposition of Providence, the theophanies could only have been the work of the Son. Moreover, in Colossians 1:15, the Son is expressly termed “the image of the invisible God” (*eikon tou Theou rou aoratou*). This expression they seem to have taken with strict literalness. The function of an *eikon* is to manifest what is itself hidden (cf. St. John Damascene, “De imagin.,” III, n. 17). Hence they held that the work of revealing the Father belongs by nature to the Second Person of the Trinity, and concluded that the theophanies were His work.

3. Expressions which appear to contain the statement that the Son was created are found in Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* V.14 and VI.7), Tatian (*Address to the Greeks* 5), Tertullian (*Against Praxeas* 6; *Against Hermogenes* 18-20), Origen (*Commentary on John* I.22). Clement speaks of Wisdom as “created before all things” (*protoktistos*), and Tatian terms the Word the “first-begotten work of (*ergon prototokon*) the Father.”

Yet the meaning of these authors is clear. In Colossians 1:16, St. Paul says that all things were created in the Son. This was understood to signify that creation took place according to exemplar ideas predetermined by God and existing in the Word. In view of this, it might be said that the Father *created* the Word, this term being used in place of the more accurate *generated*, inasmuch as the exemplar ideas of creation were communicated by the Father to the Son. Or, again, the actual Creation of the world might be termed the creation of the Word, since it takes place according to the ideas which exist in the Word. The context invariably shows that the passage is to be understood in one or another of these senses.

The expression is undoubtedly very harsh, and it certainly would never have been employed but for the verse, Proverbs 8:22, which is rendered in the Septuagint and the old Latin versions, “The Lord created (*ektise*) me, who am the beginning of His ways.” As the passage was understood as having reference to the Son, it gave

rise to the question how it could be said that Wisdom was created (Origen, *De Principiis* I.2.3). It is further to be remembered that accurate terminology in regard to the relations between the Three Persons was the fruit of the controversies which sprang up in the fourth century. The writers of an earlier period were not concerned with Arianism, and employed expressions which in the light of subsequent errors are seen to be not merely inaccurate, but dangerous.

4. Greater difficulty is perhaps presented by a series of passages which appear to assert that prior to the Creation of the world the Word was not a distinct hypostasis from the Father. These are found in Justin (*Dialogue with Trypho* 61), Tatian (*Address to the Greeks* 5), Athenagoras (*A Plea for the Christians* 10), Theophilus (*To Autolytus* II.10); Hippolytus (*Against Noetus* 10); Tertullian (*Against Praxeas* 5-7; *Against Hermogenes* 18). Thus Theophilus writes (*To Autolytus* II.22):

What else is this voice [heard in Paradise] but the Word of God Who is also His Son?... For before anything came into being, He had Him as a counsellor, being His own mind and thought [i.e. as the *logos endiathetos*, c. x]). But when God wished to make all that He had determined on, then did He beget Him as the uttered Word [*logos prophorikos*], the firstborn of all creation, not, however, Himself being left without Reason (*logos*), but having begotten Reason, and ever holding converse with Reason.

Expressions such as these are undoubtedly due to the influence of the Stoic philosophy: the *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos* were current conceptions of that school. It is evident that these apologists were seeking to explain the Christian Faith to their pagan readers in terms with which the latter were familiar. Some Catholic writers have indeed thought that the influence of their previous training did lead some of them into Subordinationism, although the Church herself was never involved in the error (see LOGOS). Yet it does not seem necessary to adopt this conclusion. If the point of view of the writers be borne in mind, the expressions, strange as they are, will be seen not to be incompatible with orthodox belief. The

early Fathers, as we have said, regarded Proverbs 8:22, and Colossians 1:15, as distinctly teaching that there is a sense in which the Word, begotten before all worlds, may rightly be said to have been begotten also in time. This temporal generation they conceived to be none other than the act of creation. They viewed this as the complement of the eternal generation, inasmuch as it is the external manifestation of those creative ideas which from all eternity the Father has communicated to the Eternal Word. Since, in the very same works which contain these perplexing expressions, other passages are found teaching explicitly the eternity of the Son, it appears most natural to interpret them in this sense.

It should further be remembered that throughout this period theologians, when treating of the relation of the Divine Persons to each other, invariably regard them in connection with the cosmogony. Only later, in the Nicene epoch, did they learn to prescind from the question of creation and deal with the threefold Personality exclusively from the point of view of the Divine life of the Godhead. When that stage was reached expressions such as these became impossible.

The Trinity as a Mystery

The Vatican Council has explained the meaning to be attributed to the term *mystery* in theology. It lays down that a mystery is a truth which we are not merely incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, but which, even when revealed, remains "hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped, so to speak, by a kind of darkness" (Constitution, "De fide. cath.", iv). In other words, our understanding of it remains only partial, even after we have accepted it as part of the Divine message. Through analogies and types we can form a representative concept expressive of what is revealed, but we cannot attain that fuller knowledge which supposes that the various elements of the concept are clearly grasped and their reciprocal compatibility manifest. As regards the vindication of a mystery, the office of the natural reason is solely to show that it contains no intrinsic impossibility, that any objection urged against it on Reason. "Expressions such as these are undoubtedly the score that it violates the laws of thought is invalid. More than this it cannot do.

The Vatican Council further defined that the Christian Faith contains mysteries strictly so called (can. 4). All theologians admit that the doctrine of the Trinity is of the number of these. Indeed, of all revealed truths this is the most impenetrable to reason. Hence, to declare this to be no mystery would be a virtual denial of the canon in question. Moreover, our Lord's words, Matthew 11:27, "No one knoweth the Son, but the Father," seem to declare expressly that the plurality of Persons in the Godhead is a truth entirely beyond the scope of any created intellect. The Fathers supply many passages in which the incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature is affirmed. St. Jerome says, in a well-known phrase: "The true profession of the mystery of the Trinity is to own that we do not comprehend it" (*De mysterio Trinitatus recta confessio est ignoratio scientiae* - "Proem ad 1. xviii in Isai."). The controversy with the Eunomians, who declared that the Divine Essence was fully expressed in the absolutely simple notion of "the Innascible" (*agennetos*), and that this was fully comprehensible by the human mind, led many of the Greek Fathers to insist on the incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature, more especially in regard to the internal processions. St. Basil, *Against Eunomius* I. 14; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* VI; St. John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* I.2, etc.).

At a later date, however, some famous names are to be found defending a contrary opinion. Anselm ("Monol.", 64), Abelard ("In Ep. ad Rom."), Hugo of St. Victor ("De sacram." III, xi), and Richard of St. Victor ("De Trin.", III, v) all declare that it is possible to assign peremptory reasons why God should be both One and Three. In explanation of this it should be noted that at that period the relation of philosophy to revealed doctrine was but obscurely understood. Only after the Aristotelean system had obtained recognition from theologians was this question thoroughly treated. In the intellectual ferment of the time Abelard initiated a Rationalistic tendency: not merely did he claim a knowledge of the Trinity for the pagan philosophers, but his own Trinitarian doctrine was practically Sabellian. Anselm's error was due not to Rationalism, but to too wide an application of the Augustinian principle "Crede ut intelligas". Hugh and Richard of St. Victor were, however, certainly influenced

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by Abelard's teaching. Raymond Lully's (1235-1315) errors in this regard were even more extreme. They were expressly condemned by Gregory XI in 1376. In the nineteenth century the influence of the prevailing Rationalism manifested itself in several Catholic writers. Frohschammer and Günther both asserted that the dogma of the Trinity was capable of proof. Pius IX reprobated their opinions on more than one occasion (Denzinger, 1655 sq., 1666 sq., 1709 sq.), and it was to guard against this tendency that the Vatican Council issued the decrees to which reference has been made. A somewhat similar, though less aggravated, error on the part of Rosmini was condemned, 14 December, 1887 (Denz., 1915).

Chapter 3

Trinitarian Doctrine Greek and Latin Interpretations

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is interpreted and understood differently in the Greek and Latin liturgical traditions. Even though, these two interpretations are mutually inclusive, certain terminologies as well as nuances are different in the Greek and Latin traditions.

1. Trinitarian Doctrine interpreted in Greek theology

Nature and personality

The Greek Fathers approached the problem of Trinitarian doctrine in a way which differs in an important particular from that which, since the days of St. Augustine, has become traditional in Latin theology.

In Latin theology thought fixed first on the Nature and only subsequently on the Persons. Personality is viewed as being, so to speak, the final complement of the Nature: the Nature is regarded as logically prior to the Personality. Hence, because God's Nature is one, He is known to us as One God before He can be known as Three Persons. And when theologians speak of God without special mention of a Person, conceive Him under this aspect.

This is entirely different from the Greek point of view. Greek thought fixed primarily on the Three distinct Persons: the Father, to Whom, as the source and origin of all, the name of God (*Theos*) more especially belongs; the Son, proceeding from the Father by an eternal generation, and therefore rightly termed God also; and the Divine Spirit, proceeding from the Father through the Son. The Personality is treated as logically prior to the Nature. Just as human nature is something which the individual man possesses, and which can only be conceived as belonging to and dependent on the individual, so the Divine Nature is something which belongs to the Persons and cannot be conceived independently of Them.

The contrast appears strikingly in regard to the question of creation. All Western theologians teach that creation, like all God's external works, proceeds from Him as One: the separate Personalities do not enter into consideration. The Greeks invariably speak as though, in all the Divine works, each Person exercises a separate office. Irenaeus replies to the Gnostics, who held that the world was created by a demiurge other than the supreme God, by affirming that God is the one Creator, and that He made all things by His Word and His Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit (*Against Heresies* I.22, II.4.4-5, II.30.9 and IV.20.1). A formula often found among the Greek Fathers is that all things are from the Father and are effected by the Son in the Spirit (Athanasius, "Ad Serap.", I, xxxi; Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 38; Cyril of Alexandria, "De Trin. dial.", VI). Thus, too, Hippolytus (*Against Noetus* 10) says that God has fashioned all things by His Word and His Wisdom creating them by His Word, adorning them by His Wisdom (*gar ta genomena dia Logou kai Sophias technazetai, Logo men ktizon Sophia de kosmon*). The Nicene Creed still preserves for us this point of view. In it we still profess our belief "in one God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth... and in one Lord Jesus Christ... by Whom all things were made... and in the Holy Ghost."

The divine unity

The Greek Fathers did not neglect to safeguard the doctrine of the Divine Unity, though manifestly their standpoint requires a different

treatment from that employed in the West. The consubstantiality of the Persons is asserted by St. Irenæus when he tells us that God created the world by His Son and His Spirit, "His two hands" (*Against Heresies* IV.20.1). The purport of the phrase is evidently to indicate that the Second and Third Persons are not substantially distinct from the First. A more philosophical description is the doctrine of the Recapitulation (*sygkephalaiosis*). This seems to be first found in the correspondence between St. Denis of Alexandria and St. Dionysius of Rome. The former writes: "We thus [i.e., by the twofold procession] extend the Monad [the First Person] to the Trinity, without causing any division, and were capitulate the Trinity in the Monad without causing diminution" (*outo men emeis eis te ten Triada ten Monada, platynomen adiaireton, kai ten Triada palin ameioton eis ten Monada sygkephalaiousmetha*- P.G., XXV, 504). Here the consubstantiality is affirmed on the ground that the Son and Spirit, proceeding from the Father, are nevertheless not separated from Him; while they again, with all their perfections, can be regarded as contained within Him.

This doctrine supposes a point of view very different from that with which we are now familiar. The Greek Fathers regarded the Son as the Wisdom and power of the Father (1 Corinthians 1:24) in a formal sense, and in like manner, the Spirit as His Sanctity. Apart from the Son the Father would be without His Wisdom; apart from the Spirit He would be without His Sanctity. Thus the Son and the Spirit are termed "Powers" (*Dynameis*) of the Father. But while in creatures the powers and faculties are mere accidental perfections, in the Godhead they are subsistent hypostases. Denis of Alexandria regarding the Second and Third Persons as the Father's "Powers", speaks of the First Person as being "extended" to them, and not divided from them. And, since whatever they have and are flows from Him, this writer asserts that if we fix our thoughts on the sole source of Deity alone, we find in Him undiminished all that is contained in them.

The Arian controversy led to insistence on the Homoïusia. But with the Greeks this is not a starting point, but a conclusion, the result of reflective analysis. The sonship of the Second Person implies that He

has received the Divine Nature in its fullness, for all generation implies the origination of one who is like in nature to the originating principle. But here, mere specific unity is out of the question. The Divine Essence is not capable of numerical multiplication; it is therefore, they reasoned, identically the same nature which both possess. A similar line of argument establishes that the Divine Nature as communicated to the Holy Spirit is not specifically, but numerically, one with that of the Father and the Son. Unity of nature was understood by the Greek Fathers as involving unity of will and unity of action (*energeia*). This they declared the Three Persons to possess (Athanasius, “Adv. Sabell.,” xii, 13; Basil, Epistle 189, no. 7; Gregory of Nyssa, “De orat. dom.,” John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* III.14). Here we see an important advance in the theology of the Godhead. For, as we have noted, the earlier Fathers invariably conceive the Three Persons as each exercising a distinct and separate function.

Finally we have the doctrine of Circuminsession (*perichoresis*). By this is signified the reciprocal inexistence and compenetration of the Three Persons. The term *perichoresis* is first used by St. John Damascene. Yet the doctrine is found much earlier. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the Son is called the Word and Wisdom of the Father “because of the reciprocal inherence of these and the mind” (*dia ten eis allela..., hos an eipoi tis, antembolen*). St. John Damascene assigns a twofold basis for this inexistence of the Persons. In some passages he explains it by the doctrine already mentioned, that the Son and the Spirit are *dynameis* of the Father (cf. “De recta sententia”). Thus understood, the Circuminsession is a corollary of the doctrine of Recapitulation. He also understands it as signifying the identity of essence, will, and action in the Persons. Wherever these are peculiar to the individual, as is the case in all creatures, there, he tells us, we have separate existence (*kechorismenos einai*). In the Godhead the essence, will, and action are but one. Hence we have not separate existence, but Circuminsession (*perichoresis*) (*Of the Orthodox Faith* I.8). Here, then, the Circuminsession has its basis in the Homöusia.

It is easy to see that the Greek system was less well adapted to meet the cavils of the Arian and Macedonian heretics than was that subsequently developed by St. Augustine. Indeed the controversies of the fourth century brought some of the Greek Fathers notably nearer to the positions of Latin theology. We have seen that they were led to affirm the action of the Three Persons to be but one. Didymus even employs expressions which seem to show that he, like the Latins, conceived the Nature as logically antecedent to the Persons. He understands the term *Godas* signifying the whole Trinity, and not, as do the other Greeks, the Father alone: “When we pray, whether we say ‘Kyrie eleison’, or ‘O God aid us’, we do not miss our mark: for we include the whole of the Blessed Trinity in one Godhead” (*De Trin.*, II, xix).

Mediate and immediate procession

The doctrine that the Spirit is the image of the Son, as the Son is the image of the Father, is characteristic of Greek theology. It is asserted by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus in his Creed. It is assumed by St. Athanasius as an indisputable premise in his controversy with the Macedonians (*Ad Serap.*, I, xx, xxi, xxiv; II, i, iv). It is implied in the comparisons employed both by him (*Ad Serap.* I, xix) and by St. Gregory Nazianzen (*Orations* 31.31-32), of the Three Divine Persons to the sun, the ray, the light; and to the source, the spring, and the stream. We find it also in St. Cyril of Alexandria (“Thesaurus assert.,” 33), St. John Damascene (*Of the Orthodox Faith* I.13), etc. This supposes that the procession of the Son from the Father is immediate; that of the Spirit from the Father is mediate. He proceeds from the Father through the Son.

Bessarion rightly observes that the Fathers who used these expressions conceived the Divine Procession as taking place, so to speak, along a straight line (*P.G.*, CLXI, 224). On the other hand, in Western theology the symbolic diagram of the Trinity has ever been the triangle, the relations of the Three Persons one to another being precisely similar. The point is worth noting, for this diversity of symbolic representation leads inevitably to very different expressions of the same dogmatic truth. It is plain that these Fathers

would have rejected no less firmly than the Latins the later Photian heresy that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. (For this question the reader is referred to HOLY GHOST.)

The Son

The Greek theology of the Divine Generation differs in certain particulars from the Latin. Most Western theologians base their theory on the name, *Logos*, given by St. John to the Second Person. This they understand in the sense of “concept” (*verbum mentale*), and hold that the Divine Generation is analogous to the act by which the created intellect produces its concept. Among Greek writers this explanation is unknown. They declare the manner of the Divine Generation to be altogether beyond our comprehension. We know by revelation that God has a Son; and various other terms besides *Son* employed regarding Him in Scripture, such as *Word*, *Brightness of His glory*, etc., show us that His sonship must be conceived as free from any relation. More we know not (cf. Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 29.8, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* XI.19; John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* I.8). One explanation only can be given, namely, that the perfection we call fecundity must needs be found in God the Absolutely Perfect (St. John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* I.8). Indeed it would seem that the great majority of the Greek Fathers understood *logos* not of the mental thought; but of the uttered word (Athanasius, *Dionysius of Alexandria*, *ibid.*; Cyril of Alexandria, “De Trin.”, II). They did not see in the term a revelation that the Son is begotten by way of intellectual procession, but viewed it as a metaphor intended to exclude the material associations of human sonship (Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* IV; Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 30; Basil, “Hom. xvi”; Cyril of Alexandria, “Thesaurus assert.”, vi).

We have already adverted to the view that the Son is the Wisdom and Power of the Father in the full and formal sense. This teaching constantly recurs from the time of Origen to that of St. John Damascene (Origen *apud* Athanasius, *De decr. Nic.*; Athanasius, *Against the Arians* I; Cyril of Alexandria, “Thesaurus”; John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* I.12). It is based on the

Platonic philosophy accepted by the Alexandrine School. This differs in a fundamental point from the Aristoteleanism of the Scholastic theologians. In Aristotelean philosophy perfection is always conceived statically. No action, transient or immanent, can proceed from any agent unless that agent, as statically conceived, possesses whatever perfection is contained in the action. The Alexandrine standpoint was other than this. To them perfection must be sought in dynamic activity. God, as the supreme perfection, is from all eternity self-moving, ever adorning Himself with His own attributes: they issue from Him and, being Divine, are not accidents, but subsistent realities. To these thinkers, therefore, there was no impossibility in the supposition that God is wise with the Wisdom which is the result of His own immanent action, powerful with the Power which proceeds from Him. The arguments of the Greek Fathers frequently presuppose this philosophy as their basis; and unless it be clearly grasped, reasoning which on their premises is conclusive will appear to us invalid and fallacious. Thus it is sometimes urged as a reason for rejecting Arianism that, if there were a time when the Son was not, it follows that God must then have been devoid of Wisdom and of Power - a conclusion from which even Arians would shrink.

The Holy Spirit

A point which in Western theology gives occasion for some discussion is the question as to why the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is termed the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine suggests that it is because He proceeds from both the Father and the Son, and hence He rightly receives a name applicable to both (*On the Trinity* XV.37). To the Greek Fathers, who developed the theology of the Spirit in the light of the philosophical principles which we have just noticed, the question presented no difficulty. His name, they held, reveals to us His distinctive character as the Third Person, just as the names *Father* and *Son* manifest the distinctive characters of the First and Second Persons (cf. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Declaration of Faith*; Basil, Epistle 214.4; Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 25.16). He is *autoagiotos*, the hypostatic holiness of God, the holiness by which God is holy. Just as the Son is the Wisdom and Power by which God is wise and powerful, so the Spirit is the Holiness by which

He is holy. Had there ever been a time, as the Macedonians dared to say, when the Holy Spirit was not, then at that time God would have not been holy (St. Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 31.4).

On the other hand, *pneuma* was often understood in the light of John 10:22 where Christ, appearing to the Apostles, breathed on them and conferred on them the Holy Spirit. He is the breath of Christ (John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* I.8), breathed by Him into us, and dwelling in us as the breath of life by which we enjoy the supernatural life of God's children (Cyril of Alexandria, "Thesaurus"; cf. Petav., "De Trin", V, viii). The office of the Holy Spirit in thus elevating us to the supernatural order is, however, conceived in a manner somewhat different from that of Western theologians. According to Western doctrine, God bestows on man sanctifying grace, and consequent on that gift the Three Persons come to his soul.

In Greek theology the order is reversed: the Holy Spirit does not come to us because we have received sanctifying grace; but it is through His presence we receive the gift. He is the seal, Himself impressing on us the Divine image. That Divine image is indeed realized in us, but the seal must be present to secure the continued existence of the impression. Apart from Him it is not found (Origen, *Commentary on John* II.6; Didymus, "De Spiritu Sancto", x, 11; Athanasius, "Ep. ad. Serap.", III, iii). This Union with the Holy Spirit constitutes our deification (*theopoiesis*). Inasmuch as He is the image of Christ, He imprints the likeness of Christ upon us; since Christ is the image of the Father, we too receive the true character of God's children (Athanasius, loc. cit.; Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 31.4). It is in reference to this work in our regard that in the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed the Holy Spirit is termed the Giver of life (*zoopoios*). In the West we more naturally speak of grace as the life of the soul. But to the Greeks it was the Spirit through whose personal presence we live. Just as God gave natural life to Adam by breathing into his inanimate frame the breath of life, so did Christ give spiritual life to us when He bestowed on us the gift of the Holy Ghost.

2. The doctrine of Trinity as interpreted in Latin theology

The transition to the Latin theology of the Trinity was the work of St. Augustine. Western theologians have never departed from the main lines which he laid down, although in the Golden Age of Scholasticism his system was developed, its details completed, and its terminology perfected.

It received its final and classical form from St. Thomas Aquinas. But it is necessary first to indicate in what consisted the transition effected by St. Augustine. This may be summed up in three points:

- ♦ He views the Divine Nature as prior to the Personalities. *Deus* is for him not God the Father, but the Trinity. This was a step of the first importance, safeguarding as it did alike the unity of God and the equality of the Persons in a manner which the Greek system could never do. As we have seen, one at least of the Greeks, Didymus, had adopted this standpoint and it is possible that Augustine may have derived this method of viewing the mystery from him. But to make it the basis for the whole treatment of the doctrine was the work of Augustine's genius.
- ♦ He insists that every external operation of God is due to the whole Trinity, and cannot be attributed to one Person alone, save by appropriation (see HOLY GHOST). The Greek Fathers had, as we have seen, been led to affirm that the action (*energeia*) of the Three Persons was one, and one alone. But the doctrine of appropriation was unknown to them, and thus the value of this conclusion was obscured by a traditional theology implying the distinct activities of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ♦ By indicating the analogy between the two processions within the Godhead and the internal acts of thought and will in the human mind (*On the Trinity* IX.3.3 and X.11.17), he became the founder of the psychological theory of the Trinity, which, with a very few exceptions, was accepted by every subsequent Latin writer.

In the following exposition of the Latin doctrines, we shall follow St. Thomas Aquinas, whose treatment of the doctrine is now universally

accepted by Catholic theologians. It should be observed, however, that this is not the only form in which the psychological theory has been proposed. Thus Richard of St. Victor, Alexander of Hales, and St. Bonaventure, while adhering in the main to Western tradition, were more influenced by Greek thought, and give us a system differing somewhat from that of St. Thomas.

The Son

Among the terms employed in Scripture to designate the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the Word (John 1:1). This is understood by St. Thomas of the *Verbum mentale*, or intellectual concept. As applied to the Son, the name, he holds, signifies that He proceeds from the Father as the term of an intellectual procession, in a manner analogous to that in which a concept is generated by the human mind in all acts of natural knowledge. It is, indeed, of faith that the Son proceeds from the Father by a veritable generation. He is, says the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, begotten before all worlds". But the Procession of a Divine Person as the term of the act by which God knows His own nature is rightly called *generation*. This may be readily shown. As an act of intellectual conception, it necessarily produces the likeness of the object known. And further, being Divine action, it is not an accidental act resulting in a term, itself a mere accident, but the act is the very substance of the Divinity, and the term is likewise substantial. A process tending necessarily to the production of a substantial term like in nature to the Person from Whom it proceeds is a process of generation. In regard to this view as to the procession of the Son, a difficulty was felt by St. Anselm (Monol., lxiv) on the score that it would seem to involve that each of the Three Persons must needs generate a subsistent Word. Since all the Powers possess the same mind, does it not follow, he asked, that in each case thought produces a similar term? This difficulty St. Thomas succeeds in removing. According to his psychology the formation of a concept is not essential to thought as such, though absolutely requisite to all natural human knowledge. There is, therefore, no ground in reason, apart from revelation, for holding that the Divine intellect produces a *Verbum mentale*. It is the testimony of Scripture alone which tells us that the Father has from

all eternity begotten His consubstantial Word. But neither reason nor revelation suggests it in the case of the Second and Third Persons (I:34:1, ad 3).

Not a few writers of great weight hold that there is sufficient consensus among the Fathers and Scholastic theologians as to the meaning of the names *Word* and *Wisdom* (Proverbs 8), applied to the Son, for us to regard the intellectual procession of the Second Person as at least theologically certain, if not a revealed truth (cf. Francisco Suárez, "De Trin.", I, v, p. 4; Petavius, VI, i, 7; Franzelin, "De Trin.", Thesis xxvi). This, however, seems to be an exaggeration. The immense majority of the Greek Fathers, as we have already noticed, interpret *logos* of the spoken word, and consider the significance of the name to lie not in any teaching as to intellectual procession, but in the fact that it implies a mode of generation devoid of all passion. Nor is the tradition as to the interpretation of Proverbs 8, in any sense unanimous. In view of these facts the opinion of those theologians seems the sounder who regard this explanation of the procession simply as a theological opinion of great probability and harmonizing well with revealed truth.

The Holy Spirit

Just as the Son proceeds as the term of the immanent act of the intellect, so does the Holy Spirit proceed as the term of the act of the Divine will. In human love, as St. Thomas teaches (I:27:3), even though the object be external to us, yet the immanent act of love arouses in the soul a state of ardour which is, as it were, an impression of the thing loved. In virtue of this the object of love is present to our affections, much as, by means of the concept, the object of thought is present to our intellect. This experience is the term of the internal act. The Holy Spirit, it is contended, proceeds from the Father and the Son as the term of the love by which God loves Himself. He is not the love of God in the sense of being Himself formally the love by which God loves; but in loving Himself God breathes forth this subsistent term. He is Hypostatic Love. Here, however, it is necessary to safeguard a point of revealed doctrine. It is of faith that the procession of the Holy Spirit is not generation. The Son is "the only begotten of the Father"

(John 1:14). And the Athanasian Creed expressly lays it down that the Holy Ghost is “from the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.”

If the immanent act of the intellect is rightly termed *generation*, on what grounds can that name be denied to the act of the will? The answers given in reply to this difficulty by St. Thomas, Richard of St. Victor, and Alexander of Hales are very different. It will be sufficient here to note St. Thomas’s solution. Intellectual procession, he says, is of its very nature the production of a term in the likeness of the thing conceived. This is not so in regard to the act of the will. Here the primary result is simply to attract the subject to the object of his love. This difference in the acts explains why the name *generation* is applicable only to the act of the intellect. Generation is essentially the production of like by like. And no process which is not essentially of that character can claim the name.

The doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit by means of the act of the Divine will is due entirely to Augustine. It is nowhere found among the Greeks, who simply declare the procession of the Spirit to be beyond our comprehension, nor is it found in the Latins before his time. He mentions the opinion with favour in the “De fide et symbolo” (A.D. 393); and in the “De Trinitate” (A.D. 415) develops it at length. His teaching was accepted by the West. The Scholastics seek for Scriptural support for it in the name *Holy Spirit*. This must, they argue, be, like the names *Father* and *Son*, a name expressive of a relation within the Godhead proper to the Person who bears it. Now the attribute *holy*, as applied to person or thing, signifies that the being of which it is affirmed is devoted to God. It follows therefore that, when applied to a Divine Person as designating the relation uniting Him to the other Persons, it must signify that the procession determining His origin is one which of its nature involves devotion to God. But that by which any person is devoted to God is love. The argument is ingenious, but hardly convincing; and the same may be said of a somewhat similar piece of reasoning regarding the name *Spirit* (I:36:1). The Latin theory is a noble effort of the human reason to penetrate the verities which revelation has left veiled in mystery. It harmonizes, as we have said, with all

the truths of faith. It is admirably adapted to assist us to a fuller comprehension of the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. But more than this must not be claimed. It does not possess the sanction of revelation.

The divine relations

The existence of relations in the Godhead may be immediately inferred from the doctrine of processions, and as such is a truth of Revelation. Where there is a real procession the principle and the term are really related. Hence, both the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit must involve the existence of real and objective relations. This part of Trinitarian doctrine was familiar to the Greek Fathers. In answer to the Eunomian objection, that consubstantiality rendered any distinction between the Persons impossible, Gregory of Nyssa replies: “Though we hold that the nature [in the Three Persons] is not different, we do not deny the difference arising in regard of the source and that which proceeds from the source [*ten katato aition kai to aitiaion diaphoran*]; but in this alone do we admit that one Person differs from another” (“Quod non sunt tres dii”; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Fifth Theological Oration* 9; John Damascene, *Of the Orthodox Faith* I.8). Augustine insists that of the ten Aristotelean categories two, stance and relation, are found in God (*On the Trinity* V.5). But it was at the hands the Scholastic theologians that the question received its full development. The results to which they led, though not to be reckoned as part of the dogma, were found to throw great light upon the mystery, and to be of vast service in the objections urged against it.

From the fact that there are two processions in Godhead, each involving both a principle and term, it follows that there must be four relations, two origination (*paternitas* and *spiratio*) and two of procession (*filiatio* and *processio*). These relations are what constitute the distinction between the Persons. They cannot be distinguished by any absolute attribute, for every absolute attribute must belong to the infinite Divine Nature and this is common to the Three Persons. Whatever distinction there is must be in the relations alone. This conclusion is held as absolutely certain by all theologians. Equivalently contained in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, it was

clearly enunciated by St. Anselm (“De process. Sp. S.”, ii) and received ecclesiastical sanction in the “Decretum pro Jacobitis” in the form: “[In divinis] omnia sunt unum ubi non obviat relationis oppositio.” Since this is so, it is manifest that the four relations suppose but Three Persons. For there is no relative opposition between spiration on the one hand and either paternity or filiation on the other. Hence the attribute of spiration is found in conjunction with each of these, and in virtue of it they are each distinguished from procession. As they share one and the same Divine Nature, so they possess the same *virtus spirationis*, and thus constitute a single originating principle of the Holy Spirit.

Inasmuch as the relations, and they alone, are distinct realities in the Godhead, it follows that the Divine Persons are none other than these relations. The Father is the Divine Paternity, the Son the Divine Filiation, the Holy Spirit the Divine Procession. Here it must be borne in mind that the relations are not mere accidental determinations as these abstract terms might suggest. Whatever is in God must needs be subsistent. He is the Supreme Substance, transcending the divisions of the Aristotelean categories. Hence, at one and the same time He is both substance and relation. (How it is that there should be in God real relations, though it is altogether impossible that quantity or quality should be found in Him, is a question involving a discussion regarding the metaphysics of relations, which would be out of place in an article such as the present.)

It will be seen that the doctrine of the Divine relations provides an answer to the objection that the dogma of the Trinity involves the falsity of the axiom that things which are identical with the same thing are identical one with another. We reply that the axiom is perfectly true in regard to absolute entities, to which alone it refers. But in the dogma of the Trinity when we affirm that the Father and Son are alike identical with the Divine Essence, we are affirming that the Supreme Infinite Substance is identical not with two absolute entities, but with each of two relations. These relations, in virtue of their nature as correlatives, are necessarily opposed the one to the other and therefore different. Again it is said that if there are Three Persons in the Godhead none can be infinite, for each must lack

something which the others possess. We reply that a relation, viewed precisely as such, is not, like quantity or quality, an intrinsic perfection. When we affirm again it is relation of anything, we affirm that it regards something other than itself. The whole perfection of the Godhead is contained in the one infinite Divine Essence. The Father is that Essence as it eternally regards the Son and the Spirit; the Son is that Essence as it eternally regards the Father and the Spirit; the Holy Spirit is that Essence as it eternally regards the Father and the Son. But the eternal regard by which each of the Three Persons is constituted is not an addition to the infinite perfection of the Godhead.

The theory of relations also indicates the solution to the difficulty now most frequently proposed by anti-Trinitarians. It is urged that since there are Three Persons there must be three self-consciousnesses: but the Divine mind *ex hypothesi* is one, and therefore can possess but one self-consciousness; in other words, the dogma contains an irreconcilable contradiction. This whole objection rests on a *petitio principii*: for it takes for granted the identification of person and of mind with self-consciousness. This identification is rejected by Catholic philosophers as altogether misleading. Neither person nor mind is self-consciousness; though a person must needs possess self-consciousness, and consciousness attests the existence of mind. Granted that in the infinite mind, in which the categories are transcended, there are three relations which are subsistent realities, distinguished one from another in virtue of their relative opposition then it will follow that the same mind will have a three-fold consciousness, knowing itself in three ways in accordance with its three modes of existence. It is impossible to establish that, in regard of the infinite mind, such a supposition involves a contradiction.

The question was raised by the Scholastics: In what sense are we to understand the Divine act of generation? As we conceive things, the relations of paternity and filiation are due to an act by which the Father generates the Son; the relations of spiration and procession, to an act by which Father and Son breathe forth the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas replies that the acts are identical with the relations of generation and spiration; only the mode of expression on our part is different (I:41:3, ad 2). This is due to the fact that the forms alike of

our thought and our language are moulded upon the material world in which we live. In this world origination is in every case due to the effecting of a change. We call the effecting of the change *action*, and its reception *passion*. Thus, action and passion are different from the permanent relations consequent on them. But in the Godhead origination is eternal: it is not the result of change. Hence the term signifying action denotes not the production of the relation, but purely the relation of the Originator to the Originated. The terminology is unavoidable because the limitations of our experience force us to represent this relation as due to an act. Indeed throughout this whole subject we are hampered by the imperfection of human language as an instrument wherewith to express verities higher than the facts of the world. When, for instance, we say that the Son possesses filiation and spiration the terms seem to suggest that these are forms inherent in Him as in a subject. We know, indeed, that in the Divine Persons there can be no composition: they are absolutely simple. Yet we are forced to speak thus: for the one Personality, notwithstanding its simplicity, is related to both the others, and by different relations. We cannot express this save by attributing to Him filiation and spiration (I:32:2).

Divine Mission

It has been seen that every action of God in regard of the created world proceeds from the Three Persons indifferently. In what sense, then, are we to understand such texts as “God sent... his Son into the world” (John 3:17), and “the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father” (John 15:26)? What is meant by the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? To this it is answered that mission supposes two conditions:

- ◆ That the person sent should in some way proceed from the sender.
- ◆ that the person sent should come to be at the place indicated.

The procession, however, may take place in various ways - by command, or counsel, or even origination. Thus we say that a king sends a messenger, and that a tree sends forth buds. The second condition, too, is satisfied either if the person sent comes to

be somewhere where previously he was not, or if, although he was already there, he comes to be there in a new manner. Though God the Son was already present in the world by reason of His Godhead, His Incarnation made Him present there in a new way. In virtue of this new presence and of His procession from the Father, He is rightly said to have been sent into the world. So, too, in regard to the mission of the Holy Spirit. The gift of grace renders the Blessed Trinity present to the soul in a new manner: that is, as the object of direct, though inchoative, knowledge and as the object of experimental love. By reason of this new mode of presence common to the whole Trinity, the Second and the Third Persons, inasmuch as each receives the Divine Nature by means of a procession, may be said to be sent into the soul.

Chapter 4

Procession of the Holy Spirit and the *Filioque* Controversy

We have already discussed at length on the precise meaning of the *Procession* in God. It will suffice here to remark that by this word we mean the relation of origin that exists between one Divine Person and another, or between one and the two others as its principle of origin. The Son proceeds from the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The latter truth will be specially treated here.

That the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father has always been admitted by all Christians; the truth is expressly stated in John 15:26. But the Greeks, after Photius, deny that He proceeds from the Son. And yet such is manifestly the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Fathers.

In the New Testament

(a) The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6), the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7). These terms imply a relation of the Spirit to the Son, which can only be a relation of origin. This conclusion is so much the more indisputable

as all admit the similar argument to explain why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father. Thus St. Augustine argues (Tractate 99 on the Gospel of John, nos. 6-7): “You hear the Lord himself declare: ‘It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you’. Likewise you hear the Apostle declare: ‘God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. Could there then be two spirits, one the spirit of the Father, the other the spirit of the Son? Certainly not. Just as there is only one Father, just as there is only one Lord or one Son, so there is only one Spirit, Who is, consequently, the Spirit of both... Why then should you refuse to believe that He proceeds also from the Son, since He is also the Spirit of the Son? If He did not proceed from Him, Jesus, when He appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection, would not have breathed on them, saying: ‘Receive ye the Holy Spirit’. What, indeed, does this breathing signify, but that the Spirit proceeds also from Him?” St. Athanasius had argued in exactly the same way (De Trinit. et Spir. S., n. 19, in P.G., XXVI, 1212), and concluded: “We say that the Son of God is also the source of the Spirit.”

(b) The Holy Spirit *receives* from the Son, according to John 16:13-15: “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come he will teach you all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but what things so ever he shall hear, he shall speak; and the things that are to come, he shall shew you. He shall glorify me; because he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* to you. All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine. Therefore I said, that he shall receive of mine, and show *it* to you.” Now, one Divine Person can receive from another only by Procession, being related to that other as to a principle. What the Paraclete will receive from the Son is immanent knowledge, which He will afterwards manifest exteriorly. But this immanent knowledge is the very essence of the Holy Spirit. The latter, therefore, has His origin in the Son, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son. “He shall not speak of Himself”, says St. Augustine (Tractate 99 on the Gospel of John, no. 4), “because He is not from Himself, but He shall tell you all He shall have heard. He shall hear from him from whom He proceeds. In His case, to hear is to know, and to know is to be. He derives His knowledge from Him from Whom He derives His essence.” St. Cyril

of Alexandria remarks that the words: “He shall receive of mine” signify “the nature” which the Holy Spirit has from the Son, as the Son has His from the Father (De Trinit., dialog. vi, in P.G., LXXV, 1011). Besides, Jesus gives this reason of His assertion: “He shall receive of mine”: “All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine Now, since the Father has with regard to the Holy Spirit the relation we term Active Spiration, the Son has it also; and in the Holy Spirit there exists, consequently, with regard to both, Passive Spiration or Procession.

The Teachings of the Fathers

This fact is undisputed as far as the Western Fathers are concerned; but the Greeks deny it in the case of the Easterns. We will cite, therefore, a few witnesses from among the latter. The testimony of St. Athanasius has been quoted above, to the effect that “the Son is the source of the Spirit”, and the statement of Cyril of Alexandria that the Holy Spirit has His “nature” from the Son. The latter saint further asserts (Thesaur., assert. xxxiv in P.G., LXXV, 585); “When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, He makes us like to God, because He proceeds from the Father and the Son”; and again (Epist., xvii, Ad Nestorium, De excommunicatione in P.G., LXXVII, 117): “The Holy Spirit is not unconnected with the Son, for He is called the Spirit of Truth, and Christ is the Truth; so He proceeds from Him as well as from God the Father.” St. Basil (*On the Holy Spirit* 18) wishes us not to depart from the traditional order in mentioning the Three Divine Persons, because “as the Son is to the Father, so is the Spirit to the Son, in accordance with the ancient order of the names in the formula of baptism”. St. Epiphanius writes (Ancor., viii, in P.G., XLIII, 29, 30) that the Paraclete “is not to be considered as unconnected with the Father and the Son, for He is with Them one in substance and divinity”, and states that “He is from the Father and the Son”; a little further, he adds (op. cit., xi, in P.G., XLIII, 35): “No one knows the Spirit, besides the Father, except the Son, from Whom He proceeds and of Whom He receives.” Lastly, a council held at Seleucia in 410 proclaims its faith “in the Holy Living Spirit, the Holy Living Paraclete, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son” (Lamy, “Concilium Seleuciæ”, Louvain, 1868).

However, when we compare the Latin writers, as a body, with the Eastern writers, we notice a difference in language: while the former almost unanimously affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and *from* the Son, the latter generally say that He proceeds from the Father *through* the Son. In reality the thought expressed by both Greeks and Latins is one and the same, only the manner of expressing it is slightly different: the Greek formula *ek tou patros dia tou ouiou* expresses directly the order according to which the Father and the Son are the principle of the Holy Spirit, and implies their equality as principle; the Latin formula expresses directly this equality, and implies the order. As the Son Himself proceeds from the Father, it is from the Father that He receives, with everything else, the virtue that makes Him the principle of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Father alone is *principium absque principio, aitia anarchos prokatarktike*, and, comparatively, the Son is an intermediate principle. The distinct use of the two prepositions, *ek* (from) and *dia* (through), implies nothing else. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Greek theologians Blemmidus, Beccus, Calecas, and Bessarion called attention to this, explaining that the two particles have the same signification, but that *from* is better suited to the First Person, Who is the source of the others, and *through* to the Second Person, Who comes from the Father. Long before their time St. Basil had written (*On the Holy Spirit* 8.21): “The expression *di ou* expresses acknowledgment of the primordial principle [*tes prokatarktikas aitas*]”; and St. Chrysostom (Homily 5 on the Gospel of John, no. 2): “If it be said *through Him*, it is said solely in order that no one may imagine that the Son is not generated”: It may be added that the terminology used by the Eastern and Western writers, respectively, to express the idea is far from being invariable. Just as Cyril, Epiphanius, and other Greeks affirm the Procession *ex utroque*, so several Latin writers did not consider they were departing from the teaching of their Church in expressing themselves like the Greeks. Thus Tertullian (*Against Praxeas* 4): “*Spiritum non aliunde puto quam a Patre per Filium*”; and St. Hilary (*On the Holy Trinity* XII.57), addressing himself to the Father, protests that he wishes to adore, with Him and the Son “Thy Holy Spirit, Who comes from Thee through thy only Son”. And yet the same writer had said, a little higher (op. cit.,

lib. II, 29, in P.L., X, 69), “that we must confess the Holy Spirit coming from the Father and the Son”, a clear proof that the two formulæ were regarded as substantially equivalent.

Proceeding both from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, proceeds from Them as from a single principle. This truth is, at the very least insinuated in the passage of John 16:15 (cited above), where Christ establishes a necessary connection between His own sharing in all the Father has and the Procession of the Holy Spirit. Hence it follows, indeed, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the two other Persons, not in so far as They are distinct, but inasmuch as Their Divine perfection is numerically one. Besides, such is the explicit teaching of ecclesiastical tradition, which is concisely put by St. Augustine (*On the Holy Trinity* V.14): “As the Father and the Son are only one God and, relatively to the creature, only one Creator and one Lord, so, relatively to the Holy Spirit, They are only one principle.” This doctrine was defined in the following words by the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons [Denzinger, “Enchiridion” (1908), n. 460]: “We confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles, but as from one principle, not by two spirations, but by one single spiration.” The teaching was again laid down by the Council of Florence (ibid., n. 691), and by Eugene IV in his Bull “Cantate Domino” (ibid., n. 703 sq.).

It is likewise an article of faith that the Holy Spirit does not proceed, like the Second Person of the Trinity, by way of generation. Not only is the Second Person alone called *Son* in the Scriptures, not only is He alone said to be *begotten*, but He is also called the *only Son of God*; the ancient symbol that bears the name of Saint Athanasius states expressly that “the Holy Spirit comes from the Father and from the Son not made, not created, not generated, but proceeding”. As we are utterly incapable of otherwise fixing the meaning of the mysterious mode affecting this relation of origin, we apply to it the name *spiration*, the signification of which is principally negative and by way of contrast, in the sense that it affirms a Procession peculiar to the Holy Spirit and exclusive of filiation. But though we distinguish absolutely and essentially between generation and spiration, it is a very delicate and difficult task to say what the difference is. St.

Thomas (I.27), following St. Augustine (*On the Holy Trinity* XV.27), finds the explanation and, as it were, the epitome, of the doctrine in principle that, in God, the Son proceeds through the Intellect and the Holy Spirit through the Will. The Son is, in the language of Scripture, the *image* of the Invisible God, His Word, His uncreated *wisdom*. God contemplates Himself and knows Himself from all eternity, and, knowing Himself, He forms within Himself a substantial idea of Himself, and this substantial thought is His Word. Now every act of knowledge is accomplished by the production in the intellect of a representation of the object known; from this head, then the process offers a certain analogy with generation, which is the production by a living being of a being partaking of the same nature; and the analogy is only so much the more striking when there is question of this act of Divine knowledge, the eternal term of which is a substantial being, consubstantial within the knowing subject. As to the Holy Spirit, according to the common doctrine of theologians, He proceeds through the will. The Holy Spirit, as His name indicates, is Holy in virtue of His origin, His *spiration*; He comes therefore from a holy principle; now holiness resides in the will, as wisdom is in the intellect. That is also the reason why He is so often called *par excellence*, in the writings of the Fathers, *Love* and *Charity*. The Father and the Son love one another from all eternity, with a perfect ineffable love; the term of this infinite fruitful mutual love is Their Spirit Who is co-eternal and con-substantial with Them. Only, the Holy Spirit is not indebted to the manner of His Procession precisely for this perfect resemblance to His principle, in other words for His consubstantiality; for to will or love an object does not formally imply the production of its immanent image in the soul that loves, but rather a tendency, a movement of the will towards the thing loved, to be united to it and enjoy it. So, making every allowance for the feebleness of our intellects in knowing, and the unsuitability of our words for expressing the mysteries of the Divine life, if we can grasp how the word *generation*, freed from all the imperfections of the material order may be applied by analogy to the Procession of the Word, so we may see that the term can in no way befittingly applied to the Procession of the Holy Spirit.

Filioque Controversy

Having treated of the part taken by the Son in the Procession of the Holy Spirit, we come next to consider the introduction of the expression *Filioque* into the Creed of Constantinople. The author of the addition is unknown, but the first trace of it is found in Spain. The *Filioque* was successively introduced into the Symbol of the Council of Toledo in 447, then, in pursuance of an order of another synod held in the same place (589), it was inserted in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Admitted likewise into the Symbol *Quicumque*, it began to appear in France in the eighth century. It was chanted in 767, in Charlemagne's chapel at Gentilly, where it was heard by ambassadors from Constantine Copronymus. The Greeks were astonished and protested, explanations were given by the Latins, and many discussions followed. The Archbishop of Aquileia, Paulinus, defended the addition at the Council of Friuli, in 796. It was afterwards accepted by a council held at Aachen, in 809. However, as it proved a stumbling-block to the Greeks Pope Leo III disapproved of it; and, though he entirely agreed with the Franks on the question of the doctrine, he advised them to omit the new word. He himself caused two large silver tablets, on which the creed with the disputed expression omitted was engraved to be erected in St. Peter's. His advice was unheeded by the Franks; and, as the conduct and schism of Photius seemed to justify the Westerns in paying no more regard to the feelings of the Greeks, the addition of the words was accepted by the Roman Church under Benedict VIII (cf. Funk, "Kirchengeschichte", Paderborn, 1902, p. 243).

The Greeks have always blamed the Latins for making the addition. They considered that, quite apart from the question of doctrine involved by the expression, the insertion was made in violation of a decree of the Council of Ephesus, forbidding anyone "to produce, write, or compose a confession of faith other than the one defined by the Fathers of Nicæa". Such a reason will not bear examination. Supposing the truth of the dogma (established above), it is inadmissible that the Church could or would have deprived herself of the right to mention it in the symbol. If the opinion be adhered to, and it has strong

arguments to support it, which considers that the developments of the Creed in what concerns the Holy Spirit were approved by the Council of Constantinople (381), at once it might be laid down that the bishops at Ephesus (431) certainly did not think of condemning or blaming those of Constantinople. But, from the fact that the disputed expression was authorized by the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, we conclude that the prohibition of the Council of Ephesus was never understood, and ought not to be understood, in an absolute sense. It may be considered either as a doctrinal, or as a merely disciplinary pronouncement. In the first case it would exclude any addition or modification opposed to, or at variance with, the deposit of Revelation; and such seems to be its historic import, for it was proposed and accepted by the Fathers to oppose a formula tainted with Nestorianism. In the second case considered as a disciplinary measure, it can bind only those who are not the depositaries of the supreme power in the Church. The latter, as it is their duty to teach the revealed truth and to preserve it from error, possess, by Divine authority, the power and right to draw up and propose to the faithful such confessions of faith as circumstances may demand. This right is as unconfined as it is inalienable.

Chapter 5

The Development of The Trinitarian Doctrine

The philosophy existing at the time of the apologists considered the matter as the original principle of things. For the Greek philosophy-particularly for Plato-matter is eternal and its existence is independent of God, i.e. it pre-exists before the action of the Demiurge. Hence, the idea of ‘creation *ex nihilo*’ could not find a place in Platonic system. It was also opposed to the Gnostic thinking according to which the emergence of the world is the result of the degradation, by stages, of eon from the divine status.

In order to respond to these theories, Justin and Theophilus of Antioch insist on the fact that God of Christians does not function like a human artisan but he *creates* (a biblical vocabulary). God alone is eternal and matter is temporary and transitory. Hence, on the basis of this view, world is radically distinct-even in its most internal principles-from God.

St Irenaeus of Lyons would extend this reflection in two ways: (1) by affirming creation from nothing against the Gnostic view of emanations and (2) by the Trinitarian

doctrine of creation which affirms that the creation was accomplished by the three divine persons.

Gnostics held that God creates through a multiplicity of intermediaries. Against this idea, the Christian apologists said that God did not create through intermediaries but through his Son and his Spirit, who are not intermediaries at all. This elaboration of the doctrine of creation was thus capable of ensuring the transcendence and sovereign power of God. It could also avoid the Gnostic pantheism. Thus, the doctrine of ‘creation *ex nihilo*’ is an element proper to the Christian faith.

As far as our topic is concerned, it must be noted that the reflection on creation led to the elaboration of the Trinitarian faith.

1. St. Justin and the Doctrine of the Logos

The apologists tried to highlight the reasonableness of the Christian faith by bridging the theology with philosophy.

1. Universal Participation in the Logos

According to Justin, the Trinitarian faith can be reasonably presented because all men participate in the Logos.

This fact helps one to think about the presence of God in every man. Thus, this view provides a bridge between Christian Faith and the reason. Thus, Justin develops the idea of Logos *Spermatikos*, according to which the Logos spreads its seed in the entire world. The terminology has its origin in Stoicism, which sees in the logoi *spermatikoi* (which one may translate as ‘seminal reasons’) the connections or laws written into the things of the world and which make the world a single whole.

When Justin took up the theme of Logos *Spermatikos*, he adapted it to the Christian faith. According to him, the World is present in the act of sowing the doctrines, which the philosophers receive. Thus, the human reason that searches God appears as a copy, an image of the World. The Word is present in every human being. “That which the pagans possess imperfectly, the Christians possess perfectly by confessing the coming of the Logos in flesh” (*Apology*, II, 10). From the above statement it is clear that the doctrine of Logos carries with it a missionary intention.

2. The Mediatory Function of the Logos

According to Justin, the Word is the mediator, above all, in creation: he is the Son through whom the Father creates. The Son is engendered in view of creation; he is begotten, because through whom the Father could create the world. In this theory of Justin, there are two ambiguities: (1) the begetting of the Son is thought to be bound up with creation, (2) in this thinking, the Word appears as the one who executes the will of the Father. It would then appear that the very existence of the son would depend on Father's will. This would call into question the idea of eternal generation of the Son.

Here we just be aware that, at this stage of the development of Christian theology, no one had yet posed question about the eternal generation of the Logos. What was clear in the mind of Justin was that the begetting of the Son took place before the creation and this begetting took place in view of creation. Today, being aware of the distinction between the sphere of eternity and spheres of economy, between immanent Trinity and economic Trinity, we cannot present the matter in the manner of Justin.

3. Divinity of Logos

Justin recognizes that the divinity of the *Logos* (son) and this distinction from the Father. Then, how do we maintain monotheism? Justin tackled this question as follows:

- He is firm on the distinction between the Father and the Son. The Son is not simply an attribute of the Father, but someone who is numerically *other*.
- He elaborates this real distinction through a generation which does not lead to division in God. The generation of the Son does not create any mutation in the Father, and does not imply any loss in the Father. The Word is engendered from the Father just as a fire is lighted from another fire.
- Justin affirms that there is an order in God: an order among Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This order is based on Christian doxology. The unity of divinity is rooted in the person of the Father.

- But Justin fails to elaborate clearly the notion of the equality between among Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (which will happen only later).

2. Theophilus of Antioch: the Immanent Word and Articulated Word

In order to explain what is meant by Word, Theophilus of Antioch makes a distinction between two states of the word: (1) *Logos endiathetos* (= Immanent Word) and (2) *Logos prophorikos* (= Articulated / Pronounced Word). Immanent word stands for the Word, hidden in the heart of the Father. And the *articulated Word* stands for the Logos in as much as it is exteriorly pronounced. The first state exists always. But second state comes in only when there is an act of creation.

In this view of Theophilus too, the generation of the Word is bound up with creation. That is, he too cannot think about an eternal generation of the *Logos*. But it must be noted that the expression *Trinity* appears for the first time in the writings of Theophilus.

We can draw the following conclusions from our discussion of apologists:

- The apologists make an attempt to think about divine unity and the Trinity as a single whole.
- The central point of their reflection is the Word, thought in relationship to the creation.
- They furnish a decisive doctrine on God the creator by deepening the theology of creation *ex nihilo* and the transcendence of God.

3. Irenaeus of Lyon: The Economies and the Trinity

St Irenaeus was the bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, which is now Lyon in France. Born in Smyrna (in Asia Minor, now Izmir in Turkey), Irenaeus succeeded to the martyr St Pothinus and became the second Bishop of Lyon. Almost all his writings were directed against Gnosticism, an off-shoot from Christianity which was spreading at

the expense of what he considered to be Christian orthodoxy. His writings are important as far as the Trinitarian theology is concerned because we find there a clear treatment of the 'economic Trinity', i.e. God's plan for man and the creation as a whole and its realization in history. Irenaeus employs the term economy both in singular and plural. In the singular, it refers to the plan of God in its totality or to a particular action of God. In the Plural, it refers to the multiple actions of God, accomplished for the sake of man's salvation and the stages through which he realizes his plan of salvation. Irenaeus conceives economies in a Trinitarian perspective.

The Aim of Economies

According to Irenaeus, God's intention is to make men sons in his proper Son. Consequently, within this framework, the aim of economies is to provide access to the vision of the Father. The whole purpose of incarnation is to make God visible in Christ. In Irenaeus' view, to see God is to live and to live to see God.

The first steps of the economy began with creation and the economy continually progresses in and through God's actions for man. Thus, the perfection of man, which began at creation, finds its central and culminating point in the incarnated Word. The incarnated Son leads us to the Father not only by what he does but also by what he is (God). In Irenaeus, the affirmation of the Trinity is like the conclusion of his reflection on the economy, i.e. on the salvation accomplished in history.

Creative and Saving Trinity

Although Irenaeus came to be interested also in Trinity as such in eternity, his main interest was centered on trinity in as much it is active in economy. According to him, because God is reasonable we can assume that he has a Word; in the same way, because God is Spirit, we can assume that He has a Holy Spirit.

In trinity, says Irenaeus, the source of all initiative is the Father. The Son, according to him, is the one through whom the Father makes everything and the Spirit is reasonable for the harmony among various

elements of the unity, the Word is behind their consistence and existence.

In the order of salvation, Spirit brings us closer to the word, who in his turn brings us closer to the Father. The mediatory role of the Son and Spirit is expressed by Irenaeus by making use of the imagery of the two hands of God (*Contra Haereses* IV, Praefatio). This imagery expresses the permanent action of the Father to create man and to bring him to perfection through the Son and the Spirit. The Father acts through them in order to mould man in his own image. This imagery also shows that creation and salvation are thought to be Trinitarian actions, i.e. the Father does not act alone.

Trinitarian Unfolding of the Economies

It is in and through the economies that the Trinity is revealed to man. Irenaeus presents the activity of the Trinity in two levels:

- In the action of each person: the action of each person has reference to another person.
- In the stages of economies: Each stage of economy is presented in reference particularly to a Person, who prepares the ensuing stage in reference to another Person, who prepares the ensuing stage in reference to another Person.

It is a trinitarian understanding of history that is developed by Irenaeus. In each stage, our manner of seeing God is different. Thus, before incarnation, we saw God through the Spirit. In incarnation, we saw God in his Son and we will see God face to face in his paternity at the end of our earthly history. In every stage of economy, the initiative comes from the Father. Also, each of these economies is leading us to the Father.

The trinitarian theology of Irenaeus is bound up the themes of economies, creation and salvation. The economies manifest to us the divine Persons in their unity and in their mutual relation.

4. Divine Monarchy in Tertullian

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (ca. 155-230) was a notable early Christian writer. He was born, lived and died in Carthage,

in what is today Tunisia. He introduced the term *Trinitas* (Trinity) (originally used by Theophilus of Antioch) to the Christian vocabulary and also probably coined the formula *tres Personae, una Substantia* (three Persons, one Substance)

One of his works, *Adversus Praxeam* (written between 213 and 217) is considered to be the oldest theological treatise on Holy Trinity. It is noted for its attack on the Monarchianism of Modalists.

The Challenge of Heresies: Adoptionism and Monarchianism (Modalism)

One of the earliest heresies opposed to the Trinitarian faith was Adoptionism, an error which sees Christ as a man elevated to the rank of the Son of God by God the Father. When one considers Christ simply as a pure man who becomes the Son of God by grace, one refuses not only the filiation within God but also very existence of the Trinity. In the adoptionist view God is only a solitary figure.

Monarchianism was another current which challenged the Trinitarian faith. It maintains the monarchy of God in an exclusive manner, i.e. by an excessive accent on the unity of God, it evaporates the possibility of Trinity. This heresy is also called Modalism. According to this error, the Father; the Son and the Holy Spirit are nothing but different modes or manifestations of one and the same unique God. Hence, if Jesus is God, he must be the Father himself. It is the Father manifested himself as Son, and suffered and was crucified (In this aspect, this error is known as Partipassionism).

The same heresy will be developed by Sabellius (from whom, it will get the name, Sabellianism), for whom God is a monad and an absolute unique. He calls this God “Huiopater”, i.e. Son-Father. That is, God is at once Father and Son, these words being two names for designating the same reality: God manifests himself as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Divine Monarchy according Tertullian

Tertullian does accept the term ‘monarchy’ to speak of God, but he does not accept the notion of monarchy as presented by Praxeas (cf. *Adversus Praxeam*). According to Tertullian, the monarchy in

God does not rule out Trinity. To explain this, he makes use of particular linguistic and conceptual tools.

First of all he uses the word *dispositio* (disposition), used by him to translate the Greek word . Tertullian uses this word in two shades of meaning: (1) it is used designate what Trinity accomplishes in history; (2) it is also used to designate what exists in God eternally, i.e. the order in the eternal Trinity. That is to say, as far as Tertullian is concerned, it is the same disposition, which eternally exists in God and is manifested in history. God not only manifests himself as Trinity, but He is also Trinity in himself. In other words, God who intervenes in history manifests himself, as he is, i.e. Trinity.

There is another word in the vocabulary of Tertullian, viz. *substantia* (substance). In Trinity, the substance (or divine nature) belongs fully to the Father, who is the total substance. Then this totality is received by the Son and by the Spirit. Hence, there is a degree in the possession of the divine nature, which we can understand in the manner of order. The divine nature is first in the Father, then it is communicated to the Son and then to the Spirit.

Thus, we see that the word disposition helps Tertullian to speak about plurality in God. And word *substantia* allows him to speak about the unity in God. Both these terms are articulated around the idea of monarchy.

The Generation of the Son and Procession of the Holy Spirit

1. The Generation of the Son

According to Tertullian, the divinity of the Son and Spirit comes from the unity of substance of the Father. In order to explain the divinity of the Son, he distinguishes between two states of the Word: (1) the act by which the Word is present in the Father as the Wisdom to think about the creative work to make and (2) the act of generation / begetting by which Word is projected outside for the accomplishment of the creative action.

Tertullian is interested more particularly in the second state of the Word. He finds the ground for the first state of the Word (i.e. his existence in God) in the ‘reasonableness of God’, i.e. because God is

reasonable, He has an interior Word. This shows that the Word pre-existed the creation. The Word existed in the Father and is distinct from the Father even before the coming into being of the universe. To explain this, Tertullian employs three imageries: (a) the root and branches, (b) source and river and (c) Sun and rays. These imageries show that the Father and the Son have the same substance, although one (Son) springs from the other (Father). The distinction of persons here is linked to their unity. There is a real distinction but in the continuity of the same substance.

2. The Procession of the Spirit

The person of the Holy Spirit was not yet fully discussed at this stage of the theological development. Nevertheless, Tertullian applies to the Spirit whatever he has spoken of the Son. Thus, he speaks about the procession of the Spirit and the Son. It is the substance which ensures the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son receives substance from the Father and Spirit receives substance from the Father through the son. Thus, Tertullian affirms the divinity of the Spirit.

Unity and Distinction in God: Substantia - Persona

In the writings of Tertullian we find word ‘substantia’ used some 400 times and the word ‘persona’ some 100 times. This shows that the author makes use of these terms in a technical and systematic way. He speaks of God as one substance and three persons. In his view, the expression “the first Person” of the Trinity refers to the Father, “the second Person” to the Son and “the third Person” to the Holy spirit.

The word substance designates the basis or the foundation of the reality of a thing. In Trinitarian theology of Tertullian, this word refers to the totality of what which God is. This totality belongs first to the Father, then to the Son and then to the Spirit. Hence, substance refers to the aspect of unity in God together with the idea of monarchy. Tertullian developed this term in the context of his need to defend faith against Modalism. That is why he gives much weight to the fact that the Son possesses the divine substance; that he really exists and that he has a proper consistence.

As far as word persona is concerned, we can identify the following elements which led to its promotion in Trinitarian theology:

- As a response to Modalism: a term was required to express what is plural in God, a term that would not be confused with the term which designates the divine unity (substance).
- Biblical heritage and Latin Culture: The Greek word ‘prosonon’ often appears in the Bible to designate the face of man or of God. It was often translated into Latin by the word ‘persona’, which can also designate a person in his manifestation. Hence, Tertullian, having taken up this word, gives to it a deeper meaning.

In this first stage of the development of Trinitarian, theology, the word ‘persona’ stands for a particular individual, to whom we can attribute something. That is, it does not mean simply an external appearance, but something that really exists, a Particular individual.

The vocabulary of substance and person is, even today, essential for articulating the mystery of the Trinitarian God. The influence of Tertullian the later development of Trinitarian theology is considerable. By developing the notion of person, he developed a concept which can link between divine unity and diversity. But in his concept of degrees and monarchy, he did not fully succeed in accounting for the divine unity: the words are there, but lack sufficient content.

5. Doctrinal Elaboration by Origen

Origen (ca. 185-254) was an early Christian scholar, theologian, and one of the most distinguished of the early Fathers of the Christian Church. He made a decisive contribution towards the elaboration of the Trinitarian doctrine. It is interesting to note that his doctrines in some ways prepared the way for both Arianism and Cappadocian Orthodoxy (of St Basil of Caesaria, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus). As far Trinitarian theology is concerned, his main work is called *Peri Archon*, i.e. the Treatise on Principles, written in around 220 CE.

Eternal Generation of the Son

Origen was totally against anthropomorphism which conceived God in a human way, having body. He was firm on the immateriality

of God. Hence, he rejects idea of the generation of the Word, conceived in a corporeal manner (which was common among Gnostics). In this context, he clarifies the eternity of the generation of the Son. It is here that we find the originality and novelty of Origen.

The generation of the Son, according to him, is eternal; it is such that we cannot think of any beginning or succession, even in the order of thinking. Here Origen avoids Modalism by affirming that the Son subsists in a substantial manner and that he is a hypostasis. For Origen, God is eternal and immutable in the generation. On this point, Origen also excludes what would be the slogan of Arius a century later viz. that there was a time when the Son did not exist. Thus, Origen is the first theologian to affirm in a clear manner the distinction between that which belongs to the eternity and that which belong to the sphere of becoming.

He also makes it clear that the Son is not generated through a division of the substance of the Father. The Son is, effectively, begotten in a spiritual manner: God is light and the Son is its radiance. One could never exist without the other. (Here, Origen avoids the Gnostic conception which describes the generation of the Word in a corporeal manner.) Thus the eternal spiritual generation implies that the Father and the Son is correlative. Explaining further the nature of the generation of the Son, Origen says that the Son is unceasingly generated. The generation of the Son is not an act of the past, because past, present or future belongs to time, and God is beyond time. Hence, the Son is eternally generated by the Father. His generation, therefore, is the eternal and continual reception of divine life by the Son.

Origen's views have also their limitations. His thinking is still marked by the understanding of the Son and Spirit as instruments or ministers of the Father, implying there by their inferiority vis-à-vis the Father. Because, the one who receives existence must be necessarily inferior to the one who gives it. In Origen's understanding, the distance between the Father and the Son is much wider than that between the Son and the creatures. In this way, he can also be considered as an ancestor of Arianism.

The Three "Hypostases"

Origen felt the need for a technical term which can express and stand for what is plural in God. Hence, he came up with the word 'hypostasis'. Its literal meaning is 'that which stands beneath' i.e. the reality at its stable foundation. Thus, *hypostasis* designates that which has a distinct existence, an individual concrete reality. Origen uses this word to show that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have got a proper consistence.

The point of departure of Origen's Trinitarian thinking is the plurality of persons and not the divine unity, as in Tertullian. Thus, while Origen speaks of three hypostases, Tertullian speaks of a unique substance which is communicated. Origen lays the foundation for the Orthodox vocabulary, viz. that the three hypostases possess the one and the same divinity.

But this new terminology was not without problem. The Greek word was translated into Latin by the word *substantia*. Both words have similarity in that each of them more or less designates 'that which stands beneath'. The difficulty comes from the fact that for Origen hypostases stand for that which is three in God whereas for Tertullian and the Latins, 'substances' - which has a similar etymological meaning - designates that which is one God. This paved way for lot of misunderstandings between those who supported Origen and those who supported Tertullian.

Holy Spirit

Origen is the first Christian writer to present a systematic reflection on Holy Spirit. He clearly affirms that the Holy Spirit is a hypostasis. His reflection is based on two points:

- The rule of faith: The Creed says that the Spirit is of the same rank as the Father and the Son. This is a doxological argument.
- The Mysterious Origin: We do not know exactly whether the Holy Spirit was born or not, or if he is the Son or not. The origin of the Spirit is more difficult to determine than that of the Son.

According to Origen, Spirit is not the Son because in his procession the Son has a role to play. He says, basing himself on Jn 1:3, that the Spirit forms part of those realities which came into being by the Word. Thus, he affirms the intervention of the Son in the substance of Spirit. It is by the Son that the Spirit receives from the Father his being a hypostasis and God.

The Trinitarian reflection of the pre-Nicaean Fathers is very rich. It is rooted in liturgy, rule of faith and the Scriptures. It is a reflection which is developed mainly against the budding heresies of the time. At that time there emerged a question which was never addressed by the NT: How can we say that the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit are really distinct while remaining monotheist?

The initial reflection was centred on the Trinity active in the World. Later, an appeal is made to the reasonableness of God to show that he has a Word and to his spiritual nature to show that he has a Spirit. Finally, a new vocabulary is formulated.

In almost all the pre-Nicaean Fathers we find a tendency to subordinate the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both the Father and the Son. The reason behind this tendency is not the defect of their faith but that of the concepts they made use of. Hence, we must make a distinction between a heretical Subordinationism (e.g., that of Arius) and a Subordinationism of expression, which is still struggling to express perfectly the unity.

Chapter 6

The Arian Crisis

Arius (ca 250/256-336) of Alexandria was an early Christian theologian, who taught that the Son of God was not eternal, and was subordinate to God the Father (a view known generally as Arianism). Although he attracted considerable support at the time (and since), Arius' views were declared heretical at the Council of Nicaea, leading to the formation of the Nicene Creed.

The first act of the Arian controversy takes place at Alexandria. Arius' preaching on the Son of God drew the suspicion of some of his parishioners, who lodged a complaint to the patriarch, Alexander of Alexandria. Following it, Arius was condemned in a local synod and was deposed. But he took refuge with those bishops who supported him (bishops of Caesarea and Nicomedia.)

Arius and the Source of His Thinking

Arius' source in the theological order must be sought in the Alexandrian theology which basically took an opposing stand against Modalism by underlining the distinction among the three hypostases while leaving a

small note of subordination. The problem with Arius was that he radicalized this subordinationism.

In the philosophical order, Arius was deeply influenced by Platonism which conceives God as ungenerated, as the One, an eternal solitary figure who comes into contact with the world only through his intermediaries, i.e. in the case of Arius, through the Son and the Spirit.

Thus, rooted in the above thought-sources, Arius is moved by two convictions:

- God is unique, ungenerated and eternal. But since the Son is generated, he cannot be ungenerated. Hence, he cannot be eternal and, consequently, he cannot be God. The Son is, therefore, only a creature.
- It follows from the aforesaid. Accordingly, Jesus, the incarnated Word, is the subject of change. Effectively, he was born, he grew, he was hungry, thirsty and tired he suffered, etc. These changes are incompatible with the true divinity, which is immutable. The Son is, therefore, by nature, a being of this world which is ever becoming. From this it follows that Christ is neither totally God nor totally man.

In the Confession of Faith of Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, the contemporary of Arius, we find the following fundamental principles which are opposed to that of Arius:

- Eternity: It is from the eternity of God and the non-eternity of the Son that Arius asserts that the latter is only a creature. Bishop Alexander clearly underlines the eternity of both the Father and the Son. According to him, the Son is simultaneous with the father.
- Generation: For Arius, the Son is generated and being generated implies becoming. For Bishop Alexander and the orthodox faith, the Son's generation does not imply becoming.

Hence, we notice here a difficulty of vocabulary between the expressions "being". In Greek the distinction between "ungenerated" and "non-becoming" is very narrow: 'ungenerated' is the translation of "agenetos"; 'non-become' (= did not come to be) is the translation of "agenetos". The solution to the Arian crisis would depend on the

establishment a clear distinction between these two expressions. For Arius, the two expressions go together but not for the mainstream Church.

Theses of Arius

1. The Son is not Eternal

Three phrases express the essentials of Arius' thinking on this point:

- The Father was not always Father.
- There was a time when there was no Son.
- The Son did not exist before he was engendered.

Thus, we see that Arius, introduced time into the generation of the Son. The Son is posterior to the Father because he was generated by the former and because he came to be. We can draw the following conclusions from the above statements of Arius:

- According to Arius, the terms 'Father' and 'Son' do not designate an eternal reality in God. In his view, the eternal property of God is the quality of being "ungenerated". God becomes Father only when he begets the Son.
- From the above, Arius draws the conclusion that the Son is only a creature. The implicit syllogism of Arius is the following: That which comes from another principle cannot be eternal. Consequently, that which is not co-eternal with the Father cannot be God in the strict sense. As a matter of fact, the Son is issued from the Father; hence, the Son cannot be God in the strict sense. Therefore, he is but a creature.

2. The Son was created *ex nihilo* by God by the exercise of his Will

Arius affirms the created nature of the Son by declaring him as created from nothing. He is basing himself on 2 Maccabees 7:28. In so asserting, Arius explicitly denies that the Son is of the same substance as the Father. He even adds that the Son is the product of the will of the Father, a creature of the free creation of God. His status as Son is sheer grace, a gratuitous gift from God.

3. The Son is not true god, equal and consubstantial with the Father

To Arius' mind, only the one who is ungenerated can be true God. The Son, being generated, cannot be, therefore true God. Consequently, he is not consubstantial with God. In his view, if we say that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, we have to also assert that the Father is divided. But this is not possible because God is immutable.

However, it may be recalled that Arius does admit the existence of three hypostases in God. But he considered as three unequal realities which do not have the same substance. This is the reason why the expression "three hypostases in God" was for a long time suspected by the mainstream Church.

4. The Word is Imperfect and is subjected to Change

According to Arius, since the Son is a creature and therefore radically inferior to the Father, he does not know the Father fully, i.e. he does not know the substance of the Father. This is because God remains invisible to and unknowable by the creatures. So, if the Son does not know the Father fully, how can he reveal the Father? According to Arius, he cannot reveal the intimate things of the Father.

Being created, the Son is also liable to change. Thus, Arianism considers the Son as a superior creature placed between God and other creatures.

5. Holy Spirit is not God

When the Arian controversy was making rounds, the question of the Holy Spirit was hardly on the scene. Even the Council of Nicaea did not notice the error in Arius' view on Holy Spirit. According to him, Holy Spirit is a creature inferior not only to the Father but also to the Son.

The First Council of Nicaea (325)

The first Council of Nicaea was convoked by Emperor Constantine in view re-establishing religious peace. He played an important role in the event of the council but also in the execution of its decisions as well as in the destruction of the writings of Arius.

During the deliberations, which lasted for about a month (May-June, 325), the council came up with the following documents: (1) an exposition of faith, (2) a letter to the Egyptians, i.e. to the Church of Alexandria and its surroundings, which were under the influence of the preaching of Arius and (3) the canons of the Council. As far as our topic is concerned, the exposition of faith, which is known as the Nicene Creed, is more important.

The Creed of Nicaea (325)

The Following is the text of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, both in heaven and in earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is coming to judge the living and the dead; And in the Holy spirit. And those who say: "there was a time when he was not", and: "Before he was begotten he was not", and: "He came into being from nothing", or those who pretend that the Son of God is "of another substance" [than the Father] or "created or "alterable" or "mutable", the catholic and apostolic church places under a curse.

In what follows, we will try to discover the meaning the above declarative confessions:

1. "God the Father, Almighty, Maker of all Things Visible and Invisible"

This formula is taken from a Palestinian Symbol of faith. Since all-including Arius-agreed on this point, this article-very essential to the structure of the exposition of the Trinitarian faith-is not much developed.

The expression "Father Almighty, Creator of all the things, visible and invisible" is the object of a verbal construction viz. "We believe" The preposition (= in, towards) indicates the finality of our faith, i.e.

the divine Persons. The first article of the Nicene creed speaks about the first Person of the Trinity, often referred to in the NT as *Theos* / God. That is to say, the term *Theos* / God does not refer to the common divine substance, but to the *Father*, the first Person of the Trinity. Later in the creed, Son is also referred to as “God from God”: this avoids the possibility of polytheism.

The first Person of the Trinity is characterized as “God the Father”: it is not because he is the Father of the world or of men but because he is the Father of the Son. “Father” is the proper name of the first Person of the Trinity. That is to say, the divine paternity is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity. The first Person of the Trinity is Father from all eternity; in the same way, the Son is Son from all eternity.

The *Father* is said to be (Almighty). The Greek term translates the biblical expressions such as Sabaoth (2 Sam 5: 10) or shaddai (Gen 35:11). This word has allusion of also to designation of God as *Pantokrator* in the Apocalypse of St John. It is a term which evokes the activity of God as the one who effectively governs and sustains the world.

The Father is also said to be the creator of the visible and the invisible. The use of the doublet *visible-invisible* is aimed at avoiding the dualism which identifies the visible to the material, which has one source and the invisible to the immaterial, which has another source.

2. “One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father”

It means that the Son is Son through the generation from the substance of the Father and not by grace or adoption. The title, “Lord” is not a title Jesus received after his resurrection but instead this title belongs to him from all eternity: he is Lord because he God from all eternity.

The expression “the only begotten Son of God” is rooted in Jn 1:18: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son”. The notion of begetting has its source in Ps 2:7: “You are my Son; today I have begotten you,” quoted again in Acts 13:33 in order to

apply it to the resurrection of Christ. In the Nicene creed *begetting* is applied neither to the incarnation nor to the resurrection but uniquely to the eternal birth of the Son (a view held by Origen).

To avoid any equivocal understanding, the Son is said to be “of the same substance as the Father.” That is, the Son-by generation-receives the same being as the Father. Hence, if the Son is consubstantial with the Father, he must be God just as the Father. This expression is not biblical but comes from the Church tradition. This formulation was, in some way provoked by Arian controversy. Arius and his followers also held that the Son comes from the Father. But according to them, it was a birth by grace. According to I Nicaea, the Son possesses complete identity of being with the Father.

3. The Son is “God from God, Light from Light, Very God from Very God.”

We have here three propositions. They qualify the eternal generation of the Son from the substance of the Father. The first two prepositions are found in the Creed of Caesarea while the third is found in the Symbol of Jerusalem.

i) God from God

This expression is not literally found in the Bible, but its foundation can be found in the Johannine writings, where it is affirmed that the Son receives everything from the Father (cf. Prologue). The pre-Nicaean Fathers have also used this expression.

ii) Light from Light

The Son is light because he proceeds from the Father who is light. Many biblical sources can be found for this expression: 1 Jn 1:5; Jn 1:9; 8:12; Heb 1:3. Here light stands for the immense holiness of God which is not tainted by any imperfection. The Fathers of the Church often made use of the metaphor of light to speak about the divinity of the Son. Just as a candle lighted from another candle does not take away neither the flame nor the light of the candle from which it is lighted, so also the generation of the Son does not take away anything from the Father.

iii) True God from True God

This expression is also biblical. It is applied to the Father in Jn 17:3 and to the Son in 1 Jn 5:20. It means that the Son is truly God and not simply by participation.

4. “Begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made”

Here we have three affirmations which aim at countering the erroneous claims of Arius:

i) Begotten and not made

This statement speaks of the Son both affirmatively and negatively. He is begotten, but it does not mean that he is created. According to Arius and his followers, one cannot be begotten and be God at the same time. The council clearly states that the relationship between the Father and the Son is not that of creator and creature.

ii) Consubstantial to the Father

The Son being consubstantial is a key expression of the I Nicaea, the corner stone of catholic faith. The Arians rejected this truth for two reasons: (a) this statement is not biblical and (b) to say that the Son is consubstantial with the Father is tantamount to saying that a piece is detached from the Father.

The council accepted this expression because the Scripture alone would not suffice to resist the Arian heresy. Hence, the Fathers adopted a non-biblical word to safeguard the biblical faith. When we say that the Son is consubstantial with the Father we mean that the concrete reality of the Son of God is identical with that of the Father. Their divine being is one and the same reality. Hence, there is not division of substance between Father and the Son.

It may be noted that when the Council says that the Son is ‘consubstantial’ it does not say in what exactly consists the generation of the Son; it does not say either the mode of the generation of the Son. Rather the Council asserts that the Son has the same profound reality as the Father.

- The primary substance: it is the individual or the subject.
- The secondary substance: it is the abstract essence of the individuals. Thus, in the case of man, secondary substance is humanness.

Now the question is: Which is of these above significations is presupposed by I Nicaea when it spoke of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father? Two dangers can come from this unclarity:

- The Father and Son may be considered as the same individual (the heresy of Sabellius).
- If the substance is taken as something very abstract in Father and Son, it leads one to assert that the Father and the Son have the same essence just as all human beings share the same humanness.

We have to also recall the fact the designation of the Son as ‘consubstantial’ with the Father was condemned by the Synod of Antioch in 268. Here, it was not the term itself which was condemned by the monarchist doctrine of Paul of Samosata. His understanding consubstantiality was tainted by Sabellianism. Being aware of this background, we have to say that I Nicaea, while solving a problem, somehow created another.

5. “Through whom all things were made, both in heaven and in earth”

This expression is based the biblical passages such as Jn 1:3, Heb 1:2, to Col 1:16 etc. This shows that the creative action of the Son has the same universality as the creative action of the Father. This formula, coming immediately after asserting the consubstantiality of the son, is also asserting in different words the divinity of the Son. That is, creation being a prerogative of God, to say that the Son has a creative activity is to say that he is divine. The presence of the preposition “through” or “by” denotes that the creative action of the Son has reference to the Father. That is to say, the Son creates as the one who receives his divine creative nature from the Father. The Son is creator in as much as he is begotten by the Father. Here we can identify a complementarity of the consubstantiality and creative action:

- The word ‘consubstantial clarifies the creation: the Son creates, because he is the true God.
- The creative activity of the Son clarifies consubstantiality: the Son has the same creative activity as the Father but he receives it from the Father.

6. Holy Spirit

The Spirit is confessed with the same word and in the same structure as the Son. We believe in the Holy Spirit as we believe in the Father and the Son. Consequently, the Spirit is confessed and revered in the same rank as the Father and the Son, i.e. as God.

But we must remember that at the beginning of the 4th century, the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not at the centre of doctrinal questions.

7. Anathemas and the Problem of Hypostasis

i) Anathemas

If creed is a positive exposition of faith, anathemas can be considered a negative exposition of faith. The formulation of anathema is destined at certain people (Arians) because their doctrines are condemned. Anathematization is an excommunication and not a curse. In the present text five of Arius statements are condemned. They are the following:

- There was a time when the Son did not exist.
- Before being begotten, the Son did not exist.

Both these formulations deny the eternity of the Son. It presents negatively what the creed affirms positively.

- The Son came to be from nothing (*ex nihilo*).

This is again a negative face of the conciliar affirmation according to which the Son comes from the substance of the Father.

- The Son of God is of another hypostasis or substance as the Father.

This represents the negative face of the conciliar assertion about the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son.

ii) Problem of Hypostasis

The Council’s use of the terms ‘hypostasis’ and ‘substance’ in an equivalent manner was a cause of confusion: it could lead to a Sabellian or Modalist interpretation of Trinity. In this context, we should be aware of the following facts:

- At the time of the I Nicaea, the meaning of these terms was not yet fixed. Only the Cappadocian Fathers would, at a later time, bring in some clarity. According to them, *hypostasis* stands for what is individual and *substance (ousia)* designates what is common in God. But at the time of I Nicaea, both these terms stood for ‘the foundation or ground of the divine being or the objective reality of the *three* in God.
- We must be also aware of the fact that Arius recognized the existence of the three hypostases in God which he understood as three different and unequal substances. So Arius was, in a heretical manner, posing the equivalence between hypostases and substances. I Nicaea, in its turn, does the same thing in a different direction and affirmed that there exists only one hypostasis or substance in God.

Concluding this discussion, we may note that from the time of I Nicaea, the Trinitarian doctrine started focusing not only on the economic Trinity but also on the immanent Trinity. This council also became deeply aware of the need to look for non-biblical expressions to explain the biblical faith. It also resisted and rejected the contamination of faith by the Greek philosophical ideas by making use of a terminology which has its roots in philosophy. Thus, we can say that the ‘de-Hellenisation of dogmas took place through a Hellenisation of the language of faith.

Developments after Nicaea I

A. Doctrinal Currents

During the period immediate after the council of Nicaea we find many doctrinal currents. First we find those who were pro-Nicene, i.e. those who accepted the consubstantiality of the Father and Son. They themselves are divided into two groups:

- The Old Nicaeans, i.e. those who accept that the Son is homoousios (= of the same substance) and recognize only one hypostasis in God. They were headed by St Athanasius of Alexandria.
- The Neo-Nicaeans i.e. those who accepted that the Son is homoousios as the Father and also recognize the three hypostases in God. They were headed by St Basil of Caesarea.

Among those who opposed the Council (i.e. the partisans of Arius) we find:

- The *Homoiousians* i.e. those who believed in the divinity of the Son but refused to use the expression *homoousions* fearing that it was too close to Sebellianism. Hence, they preferred to the term *homoiousions* (= the Son has a substance similar to that of the Father) instead of *homoousions*. In so doing they wanted to highlight the distinction of the divine Persons. Thus, the Father and the Son are considered to be two individual of the same kind. Here substance is taken in the sense of secondary substance. This view becomes prominent by the middle of the 4th century and the followers of this view were headed by Basil of Ancyra.
- A third group, known as *Homoeans*, held that Son is similar to the Father but avoids any similitude of substance. It is in this form that Arianism will spread after the middle of the 4th century.
- Another group, known as Anomoeans, were the partisans of the most radical Arianism. According to them, the Son is totally dissimilar to the Father. One of the main proponents of this group was Eunomius Cyzicus (+ c. 393). Hence his followers are also known as Eunomians.

B. Synods and Councils

During the 56 years that separate the I Nicaea (325) and I Constantinople (381), a number of regional synods and councils were held, in which the influence of the above stated currents was variously visible.

- The synod of II Sirmium (357) was dominated by the *Homoeans*. In their view, the words with which the Orthodoxy expresses faith

must be withdrawn because they are not biblical. Besides, according to them, it is impossible to know how the Son was born. Hence, in this sense, Father is superior.

- Two years later (359), at Sirmium itself, another synod was held. In this synod *Homoeans* decided to abolish the term substance from the doctrinal vocabulary, thereby watering down the pertinence of the dogmatic definition of faith. Their attempt was to deprive the Church of a vocabulary to express the unity of the Father and the Son.
- In the same year, two other councils were held: that of Rimini and that of Seleucia. In 360, yet another council will be held in Constantinople. In all these synodal or conciliar gatherings, Arian domination was visible.
- In reaction to this, a synod will be held at Alexandria in 362. This synod aligned itself with the teaching of I Nicaea. It reiterated that the Son is homoousions with the Father. Gradually the terminology of three hypostates gained importance and wider acceptance (i.e. in God, there is one substance and three hypostases). It is at this juncture that the Cappadocian Fathers come to the scene and take this momentum to a conclusive result.

Chapter 7

Eunomianism

Born at Dacora in Cappadocia, Eunomius studied theology at Alexandria under Aetius, whose extreme Arianism he adopted. Afterwards he came under the influence of Eudoxius of Antioch, who ordained him deacon. On the recommendation of Eudoxius he was appointed bishop of Cyzicus in c. 360. His free utterance of extreme Arian views led to popular complaints, and Eudoxius was compelled, by command of the emperor, Constantius II, to depose him from the bishopric within a year of his elevation to it.

He is the founder of the Eunomian heresy. His followers were called Eunomians or Anomoeans from their denial of any substantial similarity between God the Father and God the Son. Eunomius taught that by definition God is unbegotten and that the Son, begotten of the Father, could not therefore be equal to the Father. His learning and sophistication won him many admirers. But St. Basil the Great refuted him in his doctrinal work *Against Eunomius* (364). The Eunomians were condemned at the First Council of Constantinople.

Teaching of Eunomius

A rigorous speculative theologian, Eunomius always held the following principle: *when an affirmation of faith leads to a difficulty of reason, one must submit faith to the demands of reason*. Led by this principle he formulates the following theses:

1. *God is the unbegotten substance*

According to Eunomius, God is the unbegotten substance, i.e. the substance that has no origin. The generation of the Son implies that the Son *has become*, and hence, the Son is only *a creature*

For Eunomius, the term unbegotten is not simply a concept about God but the very being of God; it expresses positively the very substance of God; it designates the ultimate perfection of God. Hence, it does not belong to any category of human words. Hence he concludes that since the Son is begotten, he does not possess the being of God.

Thus, we see that the Eunomian version of Arianism pretends to know the very substance of God (hence, God is comprehensible). It is a case of hyper-realism which makes reality to coincide with language, which is a serious mistake when we speak about god.

2. *The Unbegotten cannot beget*

Since 'being unbegotten' is the very substance of God, it is impossible for God to beget another who is equally God. Because, according to Eunomius, if God begets, he divides himself. If he is divided, the result of this division will not be unbegotten. Hence, nothing can co-exist with the unbegotten. Otherwise, God will not be unique.

Besides, if God begets a Son who is God, the two will be God, two unbegotten realities, which is an absurdity and contradiction in the eyes of Eunomius. In his view, God is - in his essence - solitary.

3. *The Son is a creature*

According to Eunomius, if 'being unbegotten' is the substance of God, 'being begotten' is the substance of the Son. Hence, he cannot be but a creature, who is radically dissimilar to the Father. Since there cannot be generation in God, Eunomius argued that engendering is an activity (*energeia*) of God. This divine *energeia* is not eternal.

Only when God begets does he get the name Father. That is to say, the term ‘Father’ does not refer to his substance but to his activity (*energeia*) as generator. God is not Father in his being. Thus, the very heart of the Christian faith is challenged here. The God of Eunomius is a stranger to alterity. Not only the Son is non-divine, but also the activity which produces the Son is non-identical to the substance of God.

- The contemporary theological assertion that the divine Person is Relation owes much to the early Church’s resistance to the doctrine of Eunomius.
- The system developed by Eunomius is neo-Platonic: it explains the genesis of the multiple from a singular. At its summit is found the *unbegotten*. By means of an activity (*energeia*) called being *Father*, this Unbegotten produces a work or creature called *Son*. Hence, this Son is a begotten creature, who in its turn, created another creature, inferior to him, which is called Spirit. Hence, the three persons are radically different.
- We see that Eunomius moulded into a single block the reality of God and the Unbegotten, avoiding other rational possibilities, which would have enabled one to reasonably show how the unbegotten Father begets a Son who is God.

The Response of St. Basil of Caesarea in his Work “Against Eunomius”

1. unbegotten designates a privation and not the substance of God

According to St Basil, the substance of God is incomprehensible. That is, we can neither understand nor speak about what God is in Himself. The substance of the Father is fully understood only by the Son and the Spirit. As far as man is concerned, he can know God only from God’s effect in the world. Hence, our knowledge of God is necessarily analogical and imperfect. Therefore, any name on its own cannot say everything about God. We need innumerable names to speak about the different aspects of God. All of them have to be put

together in a complementary way to make possible a complex knowledge of God. Among these various names of God, some are positive and some are negative. The positive ones speak about what God is, and negative ones speak about what God is not. But both give some knowledge of God in different manners.

Thus the expression, ‘unbegotten’ is a negative concept which describes what God is not (i.e. God does not draw his principle or source from outside). Yet this concept cannot stand for the substance of God, as claimed by Eunomius. It does not say what Father is (his substance) but describes how the Father is, i.e. his mode of existence. Therefore, unbegottenness does not signify the foundation of the being of God.

Arguing in this manner, Basil goes on to say that the Son can be begotten without ceasing to be God, i.e. the Son can be of the substance of the Father without being unbegotten.

2. Not ‘Unbegotten’ and ‘Begotten’ but ‘Father’ and ‘Son’

According to St. Basil, our reasoning and thinking should not revolve around the terms of ‘Unbegotten’ and ‘Begotten’, which come from the Greek philosophy. Rather, the point of departure of our thinking should be the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’, rooted in Revelation. (It may be recalled that Arianism rules out the possibility of God being Father in his being).

3. Relations and Properties

According to St Basil, the names like “Father and Son”, “Unbegotten and Begotten” do not signify the divine substance, but only *Relation*. Hence, when we identify God and Father, or God and Unbegotten in an absolute manner, it will follow that that which is not Father or that which is not Unbegotten is not God at all.

We may note here that it is for the first time that a theologian is exploring the theory of *Relation*, which turned out to be an important discovery in dogmatic theology.

What do we mean by relation here? For instance, the terms man, horse, etc. refer to a relation. As far as God is concerned, we can say

Theology of the Holy Trinity

that his substance is rooted in the sphere of the absolute whereas his personal properties are situated in the level of relation.

4. Usage of the Category of Relation in Trinitarian Theology

By using the category of *relation* St Basil wanted show that by 'not being the Father' the Son does not lose anything of his divinity precisely because Father and Son do not signify the divine being but only a relation. It shows also that the generation in God does not imply any imperfection because Father and Son designate only relation. Thus, the category of relation helps us to explain the eternal co-existence of the Father and the Son. In fact, 'Father' and 'Son' are correlative terms. Correlative realities are naturally simultaneous: the one cannot exist without or before the other. The Father cannot be Father without the Son. This shows that the Son has the same eternity as the Father.

In our consideration of the Trinity, we must take into account two aspects, viz. that which is common in Trinity and that which is proper to each divine Person. That which is common in Trinity is the divine substance, shared by the three persons. At the same time, each of the divine Persons does possess something proper. This property consists in a relation, which St Basil analyses further. Thus, if I am the Son of my Father, I cannot be at the same time the Father of my Father, i.e. two properties cannot be possessed by the same person.

Thus, the manner of the existence of the Father is *not to have a principle or source* as well as *to be the Source*. The manner of existence of the Son is *to be begotten by the Father*. The manner of existence of the Spirit is *to proceed from the Father and the Son*. By their nature, these three properties distinguish the three divine persons in the same and unique substance.

Chapter 8

Pneumatological Heresy

Until this third phase, the theological debate was centred on the Father and the Son. This third phase is concerned with the Spirit. The debate on the Holy Spirit got started by the middle of the 4th century when some people, known as 'Tropics', denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The 'Tropics' of Thmuis and Letters to Serapion by St. Athanasius

1. The 'Tropics' of Thmuis

The Tropics appeared in Egypt cir. 360 C.E. and their presence was reported to St Athanasius of Alexandria by his friend Serapion. Athanasius responded to him in three letters, which are today considered to be the first treatise on Pneumatology. These heretics are called Tropics because when they would find some biblical texts which suggest the divinity of the Holy Spirit, they used to treat them simply as metaphors, the tropoi.

According to them, the Father and the Son are God, but the Spirit is only a creature, produced out of nothing.

He is simply an angel superior to other angels. Here, we are reminded of Arianism. What Arians said of the Son, now the Tropics say of the Spirit. According to them, if the Spirit were not a creature but God proceeding from the Father, then the Father would have two sons. Hence, Spirit would be the brother of the Son.

2. *The Teaching of St. Athanasius*

The Bible tells us that the Spirit is creator. According to Athanasius, creation and sanctification are actions whose author must be God himself. At baptism we receive the Spirit. If the Spirit were not God, we would not be saved by receiving it.

Athanasius taught that the rapport of the Spirit to the Son is similar to that the Son has to the Father. The being of the Spirit comes from the Father through the Son, just as the being of the Son comes from the Father. The Spirit is God because it proceeds from the Father and the Son who are God. Finally, Athanasius affirms that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, broadening, thus, the declaration of the I Nicaea.

3. *Remarks*

We may note, however, that Athanasius does not much look into the mode of origin of the Holy Spirit. That is, he only says that the Holy Spirit comes from God, but does not say how this happens. What he affirms clearly is the divine consubstantiality of the Spirit and its relation to the Son. We may also note that what really inspired the pneumatology of Athanasius was the concern for human salvation. The Holy Spirit who works the sanctification and transformation of the humans cannot be but God. Hence, the God of Christian faith is irreducibly triune. Those who deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit actually destroy trinity.

The Pneumatomaches and the Treatise of St. Basil “On the Holy Spirit”

A. *The Pneumatomaches*

The so-called ‘Pneumatomachs’ are the ‘adversaries of the Spirit’ or spirit-fighters. This group emerged in the region of Constantinople.

At the time of I Constantinople (381), they would be known as ‘Macedonians’, in reference to Macedonius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, deposed in 360 C.E.. This group is also known as semi-Arians as they are orthodox as far as their faith in the Son is concerned, but Arians in their view on the Holy Spirit.

B. *The Teaching of St. Basil*

In order to counter the infiltration of this heretical group, St. Basil wrote his famous treatise, *On the Holy Spirit* in 375 C.E., in which he stresses that the Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, is to be worshipped and glorified.

a. Basil’s doxology

There is an episode which inspired Basil to write his treatise, *On the Holy Spirit*. On a Particular day in September 374, Basil was presiding over a liturgical celebration together with other bishops of his province and, during this celebration, he made use of the newly formulated doxology: “Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to Holy Spirit”. This was gave rise to a protestation by some pneumatomach faithful, who denied the full divinity of the Spirit.

St. Basil insisted that the Christian prayer of praise to the Trinity need not only take the classic form: “glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit” but might legitimately give glory “to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit”. Through the new doxology, Basil wanted to underline the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. Pneumatomaches resisted it, because according to them, the Spirit exercises in our favour an action which is inferior to that of the Father and the Son. Hence, they do not give the same glory to the Spirit.

b. *Homotimia* of the Three Persons

In order to speak about the divinity of the Spirit, Basil avoids using the word, God, because he did not want to light up a dogmatic wildfire. Instead, he speaks about an equality of honour to be given to the three divine persons, which he names as *homotimia*.

c. Holy Spirit accomplishes the Effects of God

Basil was keen on giving a commentary on those Scriptural passages where mention is made of how the Spirit accomplishes the work of God. The activity of the Spirit is inseparable from the activity of the Father and the Son. This inseparability of the action of the three Persons in the world shows clearly that the Spirit is God.

Basil also affirms that the Spirit divinizes by manifesting this divinisation as a perfection or illumination.

- Thus, the Spirit is conceived as an illuminating force. Under the influence of this force, man can elevate himself to contemplate the Son and by this contemplation, can reach up to the archetype which is the Father.
- In this activity, the Spirit works from within. It is in the Spirit that we know God. By baptism, we are in the Spirit, and owing to this fact we know the Father and the Son from within.

3. Synthesis

There are two ways by which come to the knowledge of the Triune God. In the first way, we start from the Spirit to discover the Father and the Son from within. In the second way, movement starts from the Father who communicates his life to the Son and then to the Holy Spirit. Finally, the divine life is communicated to us from the Spirit through the sacraments.

According to this second way, which corresponds to the *order* in Trinity, all divine attributes have their origin in the Father. Here we must be aware that while the divine nature ensures the unity of God (the three persons of the trinity have the same nature), the order is the basis of the distinction of the divine persons without for that matter creating a superiority of one over the others.

We may also note that from the time of St. Basil, the term ‘order’ is going to become a technical term in Trinitarian theology, which designates the distinction without confusion of divine persons in function of their origin.

Creed and Cappadocian Fathers Constantinople

It was the Cappadocian Fathers who prepared the ground for this council by affirming the existence of one unique substance and three hypostases in the Trinity. This affirmation led to the wiping away of the last cloud of Sabellianism which hovered over the term, ‘homoousios’, coined by I Nicaea. Only very few bishops attended this council which was convoked by the Emperor (150 orthodox bishops and 36 Pneumatomach bishops). They were all from the Eastern part of the Empire.

Symbol of I Constantinople

I Constantinople promulgated a creed or rather an exposition of faith which is today known as “Symbol of Nicaea-Constantinople.” This creed is widely used in various liturgical traditions. It is also the basis of ecumenical movement, World Council of Churches, etc.

In the formation of this creed, the Council Fathers made use of three existing documents: (1) Symbol of I Nicaea: The whole text is taken, avoiding doublets. Hence, the new creed is known as “Symbol of Nicaea-

Constantinople.” (2) Roman Symbol: this is the ancestor of the present Symbol of the Apostles. It is completely integrated into the “Symbol of Nicaea-Constantinople.” (3) Symbol of Jerusalem

1. The Creed

We believe in one God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and of earth, and of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten from the Father before all the ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came to be; for us humans and for our salvation he came down from the heavens and became incarnate from the holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, became human and was crucified on our behalf under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried and rose up on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; and he went up into the heavens and is seated at the Father’s right hand; he is coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead; his kingdom will have no end. And in the Spirit, the holy, the lordly and life-giving one, proceeding forth from the Father, co-worshipped and co-glorified with Father and Son, the one who spoke through the prophets; in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. We confess one baptism for the forgiving of sins. We look forward to a resurrection of the dead and life in the age to come. Amen.

In our study of this symbol, we will be concentrating on the part dealing with the Holy Spirit as well as a reference to the Son in the following expression: “his kingdom will have no end”

2. “His Kingdom will have no end”

This expression, taken from Lk 1:33, is not found in the Symbol of I Nicaea. This is inserted in this creed in order to avoid a kind of Sabellianism propagated by Marcel of Ancyra (280-374). He was an opponent of Arius. In his zeal to oppose Arius, he closely united the three persons and ended up having only one divine person.

According to Marcel, the three hypostases in God form but one divine person: an indivisible Monad. Marcelians explain that the *Logos* existed before the creation, but only as a force in God and not as a person. It was a force used by God in the work of creation and

salvation. By creation the Monad had become dyad. And finally, with the effusion of the Spirit after the resurrection of Christ, God became triad. However, they argue, the son and Spirit will be re-absorbed, at the end of the time, into the original unity. That is to say, the reign Christ will have an end, in their view. To support their theory, they cited I Cor 15: 28: “when all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.”

While inserting the expression, “his kingdom will have no end,” into the creed of Nicaea-Constantinople the Fathers had intention to clarify and affirm the faith of the Church in the face of the heresy of the Marcelians. This expression conveys the idea that the Son is a divine Person who subsists eternally and retains his humanity for ever. That is, Trinity is eternal; there will not be a unity beyond the Trinity.

The Affirmations on the Holy Spirit

The Creed clearly affirms our faith “in the Spirit, the holy, the lordly and life-giving one, proceeding forth from the Father, co-worshipped and co-glorified with Father and Son, the one who spoke through the prophets...” In this text, Spirit is first of all given three qualifications viz. that it is holy, lordly, and life-giving. They are followed by three affirmations with regard to the Spirit, viz. that it proceeds from the Father; it is co-worshipped and co-glorified with the Father and the Son and it spoke through the prophets.

1. Holy Spirit is Holy

That which characterises the Spirit, according to St Basil, is the holiness. To say that the Spirit is holy is equal to say that it is divine and has its proper place in the Trinity. It also specifies its action in our favour. But the name *God* is not explicitly affirmed with regard to the spirit. It may sound curious because the very purpose of convoking the council was the proclamation of the divinity of the Spirit. It seems that the Council chose to maintain a discretion shown earlier by St Basil. The reason is that the bible never refers to the Spirit using the word ‘God’. Hence, we must believe that the council opted to use other expressions to achieve its purpose, viz. the proclamation of the divinity of the Spirit.

2. Holy Spirit is Lord

I Nicaea had given the title 'Lord' (a divine name in the OT) to the Son, to show his divinity. Hence, to say that the Spirit is Lord is to put the Spirit also in the same rank as the Father and the Son.

3. Holy Spirit is Life-Giving

This expression has its source in Jn 6:63. Here, accent is laid on the supernatural order, on Spirit as the author of vivification and grace. This is a kind of soteriological argument for the divinity of the Spirit. Since the Spirit vivifies, it must not be of the side of those realities which are vivified but of the side of the reality which vivifies. Hence, Spirit must be God.

4. Holy Spirit Proceeds from the Father

This expression is drawn from Jn 15:26. But the council gives two nuances to the biblical text:

- Firstly, the Fathers make use of the preposition instead of (which is found in the Bible). Hence, it should not be understood as "from the proximity" of the Father but as "from" the Father. This clearly highlights the personal origin of the Spirit and establishes a kind of parallelism with that of the Son.
- Secondly, the Council makes use of the present participle and not the present indicative, as employed by the evangelist. By the use of the present participle, the Council Fathers wanted to evoke the atemporality of the procession of the Holy Spirit.

We may note that while St John was concerned with the gift of the spirit in time, the Council makes use of this expression to speak about the eternal procession of the spirit.

Another point to be noted is that, at the time of I Constantinople, the term 'procession' had acquired a clearer signification and was gradually becoming a technical term. This term was used by Gregory of Nazianzus to define the property of the Spirit: the specificity of the Spirit is that it proceeds from the Father.

e) Holy spirit is Co-worshipped and co-glorified with Father and Son
This phrase amounts to a direct echo of the main argument of St

Basil: *Homotimia* (.See our discussion above on "*Homotimia* of the three Persons").

5. Holy Spirit Spoke through the Prophets

This expression is found in many other anterior symbols (e.g., Symbol of Jerusalem). This expression-initially targeted against the Gnostics-shows that the OT is also coming from the good God. The reasoning was that if the OT is inspired by the Spirit of Christ, it must come from God. It is a way speaking about the unity of the action of God in its various stages. But since the main aim of I Constantinople was to establish the divinity of the Spirit, this expression shows that the Spirit works with the word in the inspiration of the prophets: hence, it is divine.

The Letter of the Bishops Gathered in Constantinople

Immediately after the I Constantinople, participated only by Oriental bishops, another Synod was convoked in Rome by Pope Damasus, a strong defender of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In the wake of it, the Oriental bishops, unable to come to Rome, gathered in Constantinople in the same year. At the end of this synod, they sent a letter or rather a confession of faith to the Church of Rome. Hence, this letter can be considered an authoritative exegesis of the doctrine of I Constantinople. We may take note of following points from this letter:

- From now on the Symbol Nicaea takes a decisive place as the normative expression of the Trinitarian faith.
- The letter clearly states the unity of substance of the three divine Persons (clearly opposed to Arianism in all its forms).
- It also speaks in strong terms about *homotimia* i.e equality of honour given to the three Persons. If the three Persons receive the same honours, it shows that they have one and the same substance.
- The document also affirms the three Hypostases or Persons (thus, takes an opposing stance against Sabellianism and Modalism). In this way, the plurality of persons is definitively established in a doctrinal level.

- In the text, it is neither Son who is affirmed as consubstantial to the Father nor the Spirit consubstantial to the Son, but rather it is the very the Trinity which is declared consubstantial, i.e. the Trinity is one and the same substance, that is to say that the three hypostases, i.e. the Trinity is one and the same substance, that is to say that the three hypostases are not separated.
- The text, in all its formulations, has a single goal: to avoid pitfalls of heresies of the time viz. Aryanism and Sabellianism.

Triadology of the Cappadocian Fathers

1. The Formula of “One Substance (Ousia) and Three Hypostases”

The formula, which defined the Holy Trinity as “One Substance (*Ousia*) and Three Hypostases,” is a contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers. While accepting the doctrine of ‘*homoousions*’ of I Nicaea, they definitively avoided the equivalence between ‘*ousia*’ and ‘*hypostasis*’. According to them, we have in the Trinity one ‘*ousia*’ (this avoids Arianism in all its forms) and three ‘*hypostases*’ (this avoids Monarchianism in all its forms).

‘*Ousia*’ (substance) here stands for the concrete being of God as well as the secondary substance which is abstract. What God is concretely is what He is absolutely in Trinity, that is to say, in substance. To say that the Trinity is consubstantial does not mean that the substance of the three Persons are the same but that it is one and identical.

‘*Hypostasis*’ designates an individual, that which subsists distinctly in virtue of a property. Here, it must be remembered that even the Sabellians spoke of three divine persons, but only in the sense of *forms of manifestation*. That is why St Basil did not use the word ‘person’ but preferred to use ‘hypostasis’. But Gregory of Nazianzus accepted equivalence of hypostasis and person. This came to be later accepted in a wider circle.

2. The Synthesis of Gregory of Nazianzus: The Properties of Hypostases

St Gregory Nazianzen makes some innovations by naming and characterizing the property of the Holy Spirit as ‘*ekporesis*’ (procession). In this, he was inspired by Jn 15:26: “When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father...”

When St Gregory speaks about ‘procession’ he has in mind not only the sending of the Spirit in time but also the eternal procession of the Spirit. Thus, each of the divine hypostases has a property: Father is ungenerated, the Son is generated and the Spirit proceeds. These properties are, therefore, relations. When we say that the Holy Spirit proceeds, we affirm two things:

- That the Spirit is God (unlike the *Pneumatomaches*).
- That the Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son, because its property is different. It means indirectly that a distinction between ‘generation’ and ‘procession’ is reached. The procession implies also a relation of origin to the Son.

Having said that, we must, however, recall that the content of the term ‘procession’ is vague. The Cappadocian Fathers were silent about it. But they have left some hints. According to them, the Spirit, in as much as it proceeds, proceeds through the active participation of the Son, i.e. from the Father with the Son. That is according Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa, the Son plays an active role in the procession of the Spirit. In other words, the Father is the *primary origin* of the *ekporesis*, but the Spirit draws its eternal existence also from the Son.

The Cappadocian Fathers are also very explicit about the unity of operation of the three Divine Persons, on the inseparability of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit in their creative and salvific action. They have this unity in action because they act in the name of their one and identical nature. This unity of action in Trinity is a point of departure in the thinking of Cappadocian Fathers. They observe that the Father, the Son and spirit are united in their creative and salvific action. From this they conclude that the three Divine Persons have the same divine nature; they form but unique divinity. The main purpose of all this reasoning was to establish the divinity of the Son and the Spirit in a reasonable manner.

3. The Formula of Faith of II Council of Constantinople (553)

II Council of Constantinople was convoked to reject the Nestorianism, falsely attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodore of Cyre, Ibas of Edessa. But before taking up the question of Nestorianism, the Council prepared a canon to prepare the expression of faith in Christ and to make a resume of the preceding councils. This text is relevant to the theology of trinity.

The text distinguishes between what is one in God and what is plural in Him. It places accent on the unity of substance. At this stage of the doctrinal developments, the words 'hypostasis' and 'person' are considered equivalent, referring to 'that which exists concretely in God'. Hence, from this time onwards, in order to translate the word '*hypostasis*', the Latins would make use of the word '*subsistentia*'.

Also, at this time, the whole Trinity is declared consubstantial; it forms part of the nature of god. The text of the canon affirms clearly that the dogmatic formulation on Trinity is based on Bible. It has for aim to express the biblical faith in the three Divine Persons who are active in the World.

Chapter 10

In the beginning is the Communion is the Communion of the Three not the Solitude of a One

What is the God of our Faith like? Many Christians imagine God as one infinite being, almighty, and creator of heaven and earth, living alone in heaven with all creation at his feet. He is a kind but solitary God. Others think of him as a merciful father or a harsh judge. But they always think that God is a Supreme Being, Unique, without possible competitors, in the splendor of his own glory. He may be there with saints, male and female, and angels in the heaven. But these are all creatures. As wonderful as they are, they have certainly come from God's hands; they are therefore inferior, only similar to God. God is fundamentally alone, because there is only God. That is the faith of the Old Testament, of Jews, Muslims, and generally of Christians.

1. From the solitude of a One to the Communion of the Three

We need to move from the solitude of the One to the communion of the divine Three - Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit. In the beginning is communion among several, wealth of diversity, union as expression of the surrender of one divine Person to the other.

If God means three divine persons in eternal communion among themselves, then we must conclude that we also, sons and daughters are called to communion. We are image and likeness of the Trinity. Hence, we are community beings. Solitude is hell. No one is an Island. We are surrounded by person, things, and beings on all sides. Because of the Blessed Trinity, we are called to maintain relationships of communion with all, giving and receiving, and together building a rich and open shared life, one that respects differences and does good to all. Christians faith does not deny the assertion that there is only one God, but it understands God's unity differently. According to New Testament revelation what actually exists is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is Trinity; God is communion of the divine Three. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit so love one another and are so commingled one with another that they are ever united. What exists is the union of the three divine Persons. The union is so deep and radical that they are a single God. It is like three springs constituting one and the same lake. Each spring runs toward the other; it surrenders all its water to make up a single lake. Or it is like three bulbs in a lamp constituting a single light.

Our understanding of God must become Christian. God is always the communion of the three divine Persons. God the Father is never without God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Confessing that Jesus is God is not enough. It has to be said that Jesus is the God-the-Son of the Father, along with the Holy Spirit. We cannot speak of one Person without speaking of the other two as Well.

2. In the Beginning is Communion

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in reciprocal communion. They coexist from all eternity; none is before or after, or superior or inferior, to the other, Each Person enwraps the others; all permeate one another and live in one another. This is the reality of Trinitarian communion, so infinite and deep that the divine Three are united and are therefore

one sole God. The divine unity is communitarian because each Person is in communion with the other two.

What does it mean to say that God is communion and therefore Trinity? Only persons can be in communion. It means that one is in the presence of the other, different from the other but open in a radical mutuality. For there to be true communion there must be direct and immediate relationships: eye to eye, face to face, heart to heart. The result of mutual surrender and reciprocal communion is community. Community results from personal relationships in which each is accepted as he or she is, each opens to the other and gives the best of himself or herself.

So to say that God is communion means that the three Eternalones, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are turned toward one another. Each divine Person goes out of self and surrenders to the other two, giving life, love, wisdom, goodness, and everything possessed. The Persons are distinct (the Father is not the Son and the Holy Spirit and so forth) not in order to be separated but to come together and to be able to give themselves to one another.

In the beginning is not the solitude of a One, of an eternal Being, alone and infinite. Rather, in the beginning is the communion of the three Unique Ones. Community is the deepest and most foundational reality that exists. It is because of community that love, friendship, benevolence, and giving exist between human and divine persons. The communion of the Blessed Trinity is not closed in on itself; it opens outward. All creation means an overflow of life and communion of the three divine Persons, inviting all creatures, especially human creatures, to also enter into the play of communion between themselves and with the divine persons. Jesus himself has said; "That they may all be one As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us" (jn 17: 21).

"It has been said beautifully and profoundly, that our God in his most inner mystery is not solitude, but a family. For internally God bears fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of Family, which is love. This love, in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit" (John Paul II at Puebla, on January 28, 1979, speaking to the CELAM Assembly).

3. Why only three divine Persons?

Why not two or just one?

There are many people who are intrigued with the number three of the Trinity, for we say that God is Father, is Son, and is Holy Spirit, and hence three divine Persons. The difficulty is compounded when we say the three are one; that is, the three Persons are only one God. What kind of mathematics is this where three absurdly equals one? Due to such reasoning, they cease believing in the Trinity and give up the core of what is most wonderful in Christianity. Or they say that the proper thing would be to admit three gods or to stay with one sole God.

To begin with, the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) is not about numbers. We are not dealing with mathematics where we add, subtract, divide, or multiply. We are in another realm of thought. When we say “Trinity,” we do not intend to do addition- $1+1+1=3$. The very word Trinity is a creation of our language; it is not found in the Bible. It began to be used around 150 C.E; Theodosius, a heretic, used it first, and it was then taken up by the lay theologian Tertullian (d.220). There is no number in God. When we speak of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are always referring to a Unique One – the Unique One is the denial of all number. The Unique One means there is only one exemplar, as if in the firmament there were only one star, or only one fish in the water, or only one human being on earth, and nothing more. So we must think like this: There only exists the Father as Father and no one else; there only exists the Son as Son and no one else; there only exists the Holy Spirit as Holy Spirit and no one else. Strictly speaking we should not say “three Unique Ones,” but each time, the “Unique Ones” is unique, thus Father, thus the Son, and thus the Holy Spirit. But to make it easier for us to speak we say – imprecisely- “three Unique Ones,” and so “Trinity.”

But we cannot stop with such thinking, or we would be right to say, “So there are three gods, because there is the Unique One times three!” We would then find ourselves in tritheism. At this point we must introduce the other truth, interrelationship, the inclusion of each Person, perichoresis. The Unique Ones are not simply turned in on themselves; they are eternally related to one another. The Father is

ever the Father of the son and of the Holy Spirit. The Son is ever the son of the Father together with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is eternally the Spirit of the Son and of the Father. This interaction and harmonization between each Unique One means that there is only God communion - union.

And it is good that this is how things are: three Persons and only one love, three Unique Ones and only one communion.

If there were only one Unique One, only one God, solitude would ultimately be all there was. Underlying the whole universe, so diverse and so harmonious, would not be communion but only solitude. Everything would end, like the point on a pyramid, at a single, solitary point.

If there were two Unique Ones, the Father and the Son, separation would be uppermost. One would be different from the other; and so there would be exclusion; one would not be the other. There would be no communion between them, and hence no union between Father and Son.

So, with the union and inclusion of the Trinity we reach perfection. Through the Trinity, the solitude of the One is avoided, the separation of the Two (Father and Son) is also overcome, and the exclusion of one from the other (Father from Son, Son from Father) is overcome. The Trinity always for communion and inclusion. The third figure reveals the opening and the union of opposites. Hence, the Holy Spirit the third divine Person as always been understood as union and communion between Father and Son, inasmuch as that Person is the expression of the flow of life and interpenetration. That thrives between the divine Unique One for all eternity.

Hence it is not arbitrary that God is communion of three Unique Ones. The Trinity shows that underlying everything existing and moving there dwells an impulse of unification, communion, and eternal synthesis of those who are distinct in an infinite, living, personal, loving, and absolutely fulfilling whole.

Why deny people the true information, that fundamental right of all to know where they have come from, where they are going,

and who their true family is? We come from the Trinity, from the heart of the Father, the intelligence of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit. We are journeying in pilgrimage toward the region of the Trinity, which is total communion and eternal life.

4. It's dangerous to say : One God in Heaven and One head on earth

Sticking only with faith in one sole God, without thinking of the Blessed Trinity as the union of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is dangerous for society, for political life, and for the church. Saying that God is always the communion of the three divine Persons, however, makes it possible to encourage collaboration, good relationships, and union among the various members of a family, of a community, and of a church. Let us examine the dangers of a rigid monotheism (affirmation of a single God) when not understood as Trinity. It can lead to and justify totalitarianism in politics, authoritarianism in religion, paternalism in society, and machismo in the family.

1. Totalitarianism in Politics. Some people used to say that just as there is one God in Heaven, there must also be one head on earth, thereby giving rise to kings, political leaders, and chiefs who dominated their people with the claim that they were imitating God in heaven. God alone governs and directs the world, without explaining anything to anyone. Political totalitarianism has created arrogance among leaders and submission among the led. Dictators claim to know what is best for the people. They want to exercise freedom; everyone else must accept their orders and obey. Most countries are heirs to such an understanding of power. It has been thrust in to people's heads. That is why it is hard to accept democracy in which everyone exercises freedom and all are children of God.

2. Authoritarianism in Religion. There are also those who say that just as there is only one God, there is only one Christ, so there ought to be only one religion and one religious head. In keeping with this understating, the religious community is organized around a single center of power who knows everything, says everything, does everything; all the rest are simple believers, who must abide by what

they head decides. Yet that is not how things are understood in the Gospels; it is always the community that we see the, and within it are those who serve as coordinators to encourage all.

3. Paternalism in Society. Some imagine God has a great father. He arranges everything and holds all power for himself. The great lords of this world dominate by invoking in society and in the family the name of God as "boss" or "owner". They forget that God has a Son and lives with the Holy Spirit in perfect equality. God the Father does not replace the efforts of the sons and daughters but indeed invites us to collaborate. Only faith in God community and communion helps create and a family spirited common life.

4. Machismo in the family: As Father, God is represented as being male. The male then assumes all values, downgrading the female. That is how male domination arises in a macho oriented culture. This culture has hardened all relationships and has kept people from expressing their tenderness, particularly toward women, who are relegated to simply serving men. God is a Father who generates; in revolution God has displayed female and maternal traits. Hence, God is understood also as mother of boundless goodness. By always thinking of the three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as equals and having the same dignity, we remove the ideological prop for the machismo that he so harmful to our family relationships.

Faith in the blood trinity is a corrective to our deviations and a powerful inspiration for living rightly in the world and in the churches.

If God is Trinity of Persons, community of Father, Son and Holy spirit, then the creative principle sustaining the unity of all group, in society and in the churches, ought to be communion among all participants, that is, loving convergence and brotherly and sisterly consensus.

5. A disintegrated experience of the blessed Trinity

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always together: they create together, save together, and together they bring us in to the communion of life and love. Nothing is done in the Blessed Trinity without the communion of the three persons. The devotion of many believers

reflects a breakdown of the experience of the triune God. Some are left only with the Father, others only with the Son, and finally others only with the Holy Spirit, leading to deviations in our encounter with God that harm the community itself.

1. Religions of the Father alone. The father figure is central in the family and in traditional society- he directs, decides, and knows. Thus, some represent God has an almighty Father; judge over life and death, over sons and daughters. We are all dependent on him, and so we are regarded as minors. Such an understanding can lead Christians to feel resigned to the misery and to nourish a spirit of submission to those in charge, to the pope and the bishops, with no creativity. God is certainly Father, but the father of the son, who, together with the Holy Spirit, live in communion and equality.

2. Religious of the Son alone. Others just stand by the figure of the Son, Jesus Christ. He is the companion, the master, or the leader. Among young people, in the Cursillo movement in particular, there has developed an enthusiastic and young image of Christ, brother of all and fiery leader of men and women. This is a Jesus who has relationships only with those alongside of him, without any vertical dimension toward the Father. Such religion creates Christians who lose contact with the people and with the journey of the communities.

3. Religions of the Holy Spirit alone. Some groups of Christians are utterly focused on the figure of the Holy Spirit. They cultivate the Spirit of prayer, speak in tongues, impose hands, and give vent to their internal and personal emotions. Such Christians forget that the Spirit is always the Spirit of the Son, sent by the Father to continue the liberating work of the Jesus. It is not enough to have a relationship that is internal (Holy Spirit), or alongside as (Son), or solely vertical (Father). The three must be integrated. Where would we be if we didn't have the Father to shelter us? Where would we be if this Father hadn't given us his Son to make us children as well. Where would we be if we had not received the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father at the appeal of the Son, to live within us and complete our salvation? Let us live a complete faith in a complete experience of the complete image of God as Trinity of Person!

The human person, to be fully human, needs to be related in redirections: upward, toward the sides, and inwardly. That is how the Trinity comes to meet us. The Father is the infinite "upward" and the Son is the radical "alongside" and the Spirit is the total "within".

6. The same glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

A Christian begins and ends the day by praying the "Glory be" – to the Father to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. This is much more than a profession of faith in the Christian God, which is ever the triune God; it thrives to the three divine Persons for having revealed themselves in history and having invited us to share in their divine communion. The human response to the revelation of the Blessed Trinity is to give thanks and to glorify. First, we are filled with enthusiasm, because we see that with the existence of the three divine Persons we are surrounded by the life and the love that radiate from their inner communion. Later, we begin to consider how the three Persons are in communion, which qualities each one possesses, and how they relate to creation.

Jesus has revealed to us his secret as a Son and his intimate relationships with the Father in a prayer charged with joy in the Spirit: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth... No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Lk 10:21-22). Thus we too approach the Blessed Trinity through prayer adoration, and thanksgiving.

What are we saying when we pray "Glory be"? Glory in itself is the manifestation of the Trinity just as it is: communion of the divine Three. Glory means revealing the presence of the triune God in history. That presence always brings joy, fascination, and the sense of communion. Knowing that God is communion of three Persons who love another infinitely and eternally means discovering God's beauty, splendor, and joy. One God alone is without beauty and humor. Three persons united in communion and in the same life, eternally committed to one another, dazzle us, and produce inner joy. This joy is all the greater when we feel called to participation.

When we pray the “Glory be” we seek to return the glory that we have discovered from God. Glory is paid with Glory. We give thanks that the Blessed Trinity wished to be made manifest and to come to dwell with us. We thank the Father for having an only begotten Son and for creating us sons and daughters in the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit’s love. We are happy that God has sent his very Son to be our brother and savior. We rejoice because Father and Son have bestowed on us the Holy Spirit, who helps us accept Jesus Christ and teaches us to pray by saying “Our Father” sanctifying us and drawing us into Trinitarian communion, out of our own heart now made temple of the Spirit.

How often while lying in bed at night have I not asked: what is God like what name expresses communion of the divine Three? And I have not found any word nor has any light come to me. I’ve then begun to praise and give glory. That was when my heart became filled with light. I asked no more - I was within the divine communion itself.

7. The blessed Trinity is a mystery ever to be known anew

We commonly say that the Blessed Trinity is the greatest mystery of our faith. How can the Three persons be only one God? Indeed, the blessed Trinity is an august mystery toward which silence is more appropriate than speech. But we must understand currently what we mean when we speak of mystery. Normally mystery is understood to mean a truth revealed by God that cannot be known by human reason: its existence is not known, nor is its content known after its existence has been revealed.

In this sense mystery express the bounds of human reason. It seeks to understand, but when it exhausts its forces, it ceases to think and humbly accepts the revealed truth on the basis of divine authority. This idea mystery was taken on at a time in history when philosophers were seeking to replace divine revelation with philosophy during nineteenth century some thinkers went so far as to say that all the truths of Christianity were nothing but natural truth. And hence that they could dispense with the churches and could assimilate the so-called revealed truths into their systems of thought.

The most original and proper understanding of mystery comes from the ancient church. Mystery did not mean a reality that was hidden and incomprehensible to the human intellect; rather, mystery was God’s plan revealed to privileged persons like the great mystics, holy persons, prophets, and apostles and communicated to everyone else through them. Mystery must be known and recognized by man and woman. It does not mean the bounds of reason, but the boundlessness of reason. The more we know God and God’s design for communion with human beings, the more we are challenged to know and delve deeper.

Indeed, we can delve more deeply for all eternity without ever reaching the end. We go from one level of knowledge to another, forever expanding the horizons into the infinite of divine life without ever sighting a limit. God is thus life, love, and overwhelming communication, into which we ourselves are plunged. This vision of mystery does not cause anguish but expands our heart. The Blessed Trinity is mystery now and will be for all eternity. We will get to know it

more and more, without ever exhausting our desire to know and to be delighted with knowledge that we are gradually acquiring. We know in order to sing, we sing in order to love, and we love in order to be joined in communion with the divine Persons-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “God can be that which we cannot understand (St. Hilary). “O the depth of the riches and Wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ... For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom 11:33,36).

8. Perichoresis: The interpenetration of the three divine Persons

Whenever we speak of the Blessed Trinity we must think of the communion of the divine Three-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This communion means the union of Persons and accordingly the manifestation of the single triune God. How does this communion among the three divine Persons take place? Orthodox theologians have coined a word that began to spread in the seventh Century, especially as used by St. John Damascene (d. 750): Perichoresis.

Since there is no good Translation into Portuguese or English or any other language. We opt to keep it in Greek. But we should understand it well, because it opens up for us a fruitful understanding of the Blessed Trinity. First of all, perichoresis means one Person's action of involvement with the other two. Each divine Person permeates the other and allows itself to be permeated by that person. This interpenetration expresses the love and life that Constitutes the divine nature. It is the very nature of love to be self communicating; life naturally expands and seeks to multiply itself. Thus, the divine Three from all eternity find themselves in an infinite explosion of love and life from one to the other.

The effect of this reciprocal interpenetration is that each person dwells in the other. This is the second meaning of Perichoresis. In simple words it means that the Father is ever in the Son, communicating life and love to him. The son is ever in the Father knowing him and lovingly acknowledging him as Father. Father and Son are in the Holy Spirit as mutual expression of life and love. The Holy Spirit is in the Son and the Father as source and manifestation of life and love of this boundless source. All are in all. The Council of Florence defined it well in 1441: "The Father is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son. None precedes the other in eternity; none exceeds the other in greatness or excels the other in power."

The Blessed Trinity is thus a mystery of inclusion. Such inclusion prevents us from understanding one person without the others. The Father must always be understood together with the Son and the Holy Spirit and so forth. Some one might think: So there are three gods, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? There would be, if one were along side, and unrelated to, the others; there would be, except for the relating and inclusion of the three divine Persons. The Three do not first exist and then relate. Without beginning, they live together eternally and are interconnected. That is why they are one God, God-Trinity.

"In the new world view, the universe is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events... All natural phenomena are ultimately

interconnected, and in order to explain any one of them we need to understand all the others... In that sense, one might say that every part 'contains' all the others, and indeed, a vision of mutual embodiment seems to be characteristic of the mystical experience of nature" (Fritj of Capra, The Taoof Physics).

9. The Father's two hands, the Son and the Holy Spirit

How has the Blessed Trinity been revealed? There are two routes that we must follow. First, the Blessed Trinity has been revealed in people's lives, in religions, in history, and then in the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the communities of the early church and in process of history down to our own time. Even if men and women knew nothing of Blessed Trinity, the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit always dwelled in people's lives. Whenever people followed the calls of their conscience, whenever they obeyed the light more than the illusions of the flesh, whenever they practiced justice and love in human relations, the Blessed Trinity was present. For the triune God is not found outside these values just mentioned. St. Irenaeus (d.c.200) put it well: The Son and the Holy Spirit constitutes the two hands by which the Father touches us, embraces us, and shapes us ever more in his image and likeness. Son and Holy Spirit have been sent into the world to dwell among us and to bring us into Trinitarian communion.

In this sense the Blessed Trinity has ever been present in history, in people's lives and struggles whenever they have lived. We must always distinguish between the reality of the Blessed Trinity and doctrine about it. The reality of the three divine Persons has always accompanied human history. Doctrine arose later when people grasped the revelation of the Blessed Trinity and were able to formulate Trinitarian doctrines.

The specific revelation of the Blessed Trinity with all clarity came only through Christ and through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Until then, in the religions, in the Hebrew prophets, and in some wisdom texts there appeared only hints of the Trinity. With Jesus there has broken out the clear awareness that God is father and sends his only

begotten Son, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who has formed the sacred humanity of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary and filled Jesus with enthusiasm to preach and to heal, and the apostles to bear witness and found Christian communities. We will be able to understand Jesus Christ only if we understand him as the gospels present him to us: as Son of the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not revealed as a doctrine but as a practice: in the deeds and words of Jesus and in the action of the Holy Spirit in the world and people.

Father, stretch out your hand and save us from this misery! And the Father, who hears the cry of his oppressed sons and daughters, has extended his two hands to free us and draw us to his kind bosom: the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(Leonardo Boff)

The Practical Implications of The Doctrine of the Trinity

What practical difference does the doctrine of the Trinity make? We defend the Trinity - we declare it in the creeds and assent to it in our denominational confessions - but does this peculiarly Christian teaching about God make any practical difference to the way we live our lives?

When most Christians try to describe God, they tend first to think of God by discussing his existence and his character, and only come to the Trinity as an afterthought. However, as DB Knox, former principal of Moore Theological College, wrote: "The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of the Christian religion." The Athanasian Creed, the classical statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, holds belief in the Trinity as absolutely essential for the Christian:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he holds the catholic faith. Which faith

except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance...

The Church Fathers took such a strong stand because the strict monotheism of their heretical opponents relegated Jesus to the status of a sort of demi-god. But more than this is true: the doctrine of the Trinity underpins our very existence as Christians; it gives a unique shape to the Christian life.

What could tempt us to neglect the doctrine of the Trinity? First, we may be so concerned to preserve what is true from the attacks of less orthodox theologians that we forget to apply that truth to the real world. We may forget to ask: what does the doctrine of the Trinity *mean* for us? Can we actually *live* the Trinity? Many Christians see the Trinity as an arid metaphysical speculation designed to keep theologians busy on the other six days of the week. It is not generally given practical significance at all; it is applied neither to our worship nor to our witness. Writers and preachers have not often presented the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way that it becomes a reality in the concrete spiritual life of Christians. Will someone ever publish a book entitled *What's So Amazing About the Trinity?*

Second, Protestant evangelicalism, as a Christian movement shaped in the controversies of the Reformation and the revivals of the 18th century, is distinguished from other forms of Christianity *by its teaching about salvation*. That is, what makes evangelicalism different (along with the authority of the Bible) is its insistence on the centrality of the cross and justification by faith alone. It actually holds in common with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. The Trinity is assumed by evangelicals; we are far hotter under the collar about the salvation doctrines. We have given much less attention to the doctrine of God.

I wish to argue that the Trinity is a very 'practical' doctrine. It changes the way we worship, pray and relate to others. Certainly this has been my experience. I will not here attempt a detailed definition

or proof of the Trinity; instead, I shall ask what *use* is the Trinity, or what difference can it make to our faith? For the Trinity is a gospel doctrine through and through. There is always, of course, a reciprocal relationship between what we think and what we do: what does thinking about the Trinity lead us to do?

The doctrine of the Trinity names our God

What use is the Trinity? The Trinity identifies *our* God: it helps us to name him and to know him, to speak to him and about him. In a world that presents us with a smorgasbord of gods, the Trinity specifies who it is we worship—"he who raised Jesus from the dead" by the power of the Spirit (Rom 8:11). In the West, 'God' has been turned into an abstract philosophical concept or a tricky metaphysical problem. In the East, either the god named Allah or the multitude of deities and spirits that are the object of the various Eastern religions are worshipped. When we say 'God', it is no longer to be assumed that there is a common understanding of the term. Certainly, the God of popular understanding—the God of cartoons and jokes and civic prayers—is not the God we Christians worship. Which God is he?

The Hebrews knew their God by the literally unspeakable name, 'YHWH'. God was also identified by what he had done: "I am YHWH, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Exod 20:2). Baal was not God, YHWH was God, as Elijah so clearly demonstrated (1 Kgs 18). He was further identified as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", immediately recalling his relationship to Israel's forefathers. The New Testament gospel is a renaming of this same God in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament writers found themselves referring to God as "him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord" (Rom 4:24; see also 1 Cor 15:15, 2 Cor 1:9, 4:14; Gal 1:1; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 1:21).

Furthermore, the famous words of Jesus himself in Matthew 28:19 urge baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". This formula is rather odd: it attributes three owners to a single common name. And yet it is this name that is to mark the baptism of Christians - the symbol of their cleansing from sin and raising to new life. It is this name that Christians now bear. This

trinitarian name reminds the Christian of what the Father has done *for* me by the Son and does *in* me by the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity explains prayer

The doctrine of the Trinity helps us in our prayers. As we have seen, we can identify the object of our worship in the Trinity. Through biblical, trinitarian lenses we can see how our prayers may be heard and understood. Prayer is part of our sharing through the Holy Spirit in the relationship of Jesus, the incarnate Son, with his Father. As is made plain in Hebrews, there is only one mediator between God and humankind. We participate in his intercessions to the Father by virtue of his atoning work for us as our sole High Priest, sprinkling our consciences clean. Put plainly, in prayer we share in the family of God.

Paul uses the metaphor of adoption to explain how in Christ we are brought into the very family of God. Romans 8:9-17 explains how the Spirit Christians receive is one of ‘sonship’, one that enables us to cry out “Abba, Father!”. It is not because we are created human beings that we can address God as Father; it is because we share in the Son-ship of Jesus by being his “co-heirs”- by having within us the Spirit of Christ himself. Only then can we truly call God “Father”.

In Galatians 4:1-7, Paul expresses in full the liberating impact of the coming of the Son. We are freed from the “elements of the world” that once enslaved us. Paul famously here includes both the Law (*torah*) and demonic powers under the heading of “elements of the world” (called *stoicheia* in Greek). Being able to call God “Abba”, itself the work of the Son’s Spirit in us, frees us from the slaveries of the law and the spirits. What makes true Christian prayer so radically different from prayer in other religions is that it is founded on the trinitarian shape of grace - the access to God the Father that is freely ours by the Spirit in the name of the Son. We can experience a palpable freedom and acceptance on the basis of this magnificent gospel.

I have only ever been apart from my family for Christmas once - about a decade ago. However, a friend’s family invited me to their

table. When I arrived, I was greeted with warmth, given presents and included in the rituals and the banter of the family. My fears of loneliness were soon dispelled. It was an overwhelming and happy day! Could this be an inkling of what Christians enjoy - trinitarianly - in their prayers?

The doctrine of the Trinity shows us how to love

As DB Knox wrote in *The Everlasting God*, the triune nature of God shows us that relationships are central to being a person. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that we are united to one another in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit not only works in us to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and so approach the Father, but also binds us to one another in love. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul wonderfully illustrates the unity in diversity of the congregation by means of trinitarian language. Just as with the Trinity there is both a difference of role and yet a oneness, so with the fellowship of believers. It is the “same Spirit” that these diverse members have in common, uniting them as the body of Christ to one another. The members of the church cannot sever themselves from one another without damaging themselves. They are interdependent. Love - the never-failing, humble, forgiving love of 1 Corinthians 13 - is the key.

The church then, is not merely a sharing of a common passion, common thinking, or even a sense of high regard for one another. It is no mere club. Those who are in Christ are tied far more profoundly and securely to one another than that. All sorts of difficult diversities are accommodated in the body of Christ. Love is the means by which our spiritual unity can be demonstrated. In our acts of love for one another, we express outwardly our connection to one another and, in Christ, to God.

We must be cautious, however, when speaking of the way in which the loving community of Christians reflects God as Trinity. One late 20th-century theological fad is to apply the Trinitarian idea of *perichoresis* to the church. That piece of theological jargon means ‘mutual indwelling’. It is the way in which theologians have explained how the three persons of the Trinity are related to one another: they

live 'in' each other, they are bonded to one another in a unique way. They love each other totally. The language of John 14 - the Father and the Son being 'in' one another - is what this term helps to explain. If the three divine persons enjoy 'perichoretic' relationships with one another, so too, it is said, does the church, which worships Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is love; shouldn't we be like him?

This is dangerously simplistic thinking. Human beings are like God, but we are not, and will never become, God! The bond between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is substantially different to the way human beings relate to one another in church. For one thing, human beings can only reflect God as creatures with bodies. We are not God, but only resemble him. This will be true even in eternity. For another, the inescapable shadow of sin means that within the present age, human beings cannot be made into the perfect images of God, despite the promise of our transformation in the world to come. The relationships of pure love within the Trinity are indeed the model to which the sin-marred, human church ought to aspire. However, within history, at any rate, the realization of this ideal will be limited.

Furthermore, within the present world of sin, the love that has as its goal the perfect world to come ought to follow the form of the cross of Christ. In the present evil age, the Trinity loves the world by giving up the Father's one and only Son to death (John 3:16). The love that is needed for a sin-stained world is a self-giving love. It is a love that bleeds. The Trinity *does* provide a model for our relationships in community this side of Christ's return, but this model is best seen in the passion of God for the salvation of the world such that he would sacrifice his Son. The doctrine of the Trinity drives us to love in practice.

The doctrine of the Trinity leads us to the cross

The focus of the Christian life must be the cross of Jesus Christ. However, the cross itself only makes sense when viewed with trinitarian eyes. On the cross, we do not see an innocent Son arbitrarily punished by an impassive Father for the sins of others. Evangelists and song writers have often unintentionally caricatured the cross as some kind of horrible divine child abuse of a blameless Jesus by the

stern, implacable Father. Instead, we see "the Judge judged", to quote the pithy phrase of theologian Karl Barth. He is not an innocent bystander to the process of reconciliation, or its victim; he is intimately involved with it, laying down his life willingly - only to take it up again (John 10:17). He goes to the cross freely and obediently.

In the cross, more than on any other stage, God revealed himself as he truly is. In one sense, his glory and majesty were completely concealed in the ugliness of Calvary. And yet, ironically, nowhere else does he demonstrate his character more clearly. The lowliness and humility of the cross show us that God is not far off and uninvolved with us, but that he is committed to us and near to us in suffering. The God we serve is the God who serves. Even within the Trinity, there is obedience and humility - that of the Son towards his Father.

Does the Father desert the Son upon the cross? We sing "deserted by *God*, man and friend", but is this really what happened? How should we interpret the cry of dereliction: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)? In one sense, the man on the cross is truly godforsaken, bearing at that moment the sins of the world. However, the emphasis of 2 Corinthians 5:19 - "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" - and other passages, such as Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 5:7 and Romans 8:32, indicate that reconciliation was an event that occurred within God himself. Even at the moment of deepest darkness, God the Father and God the Son were acting together to bring about a reconciliation with the world. Our salvation is achieved entirely by God.

The cross is also a reminder to Christians that they should not be surprised if they suffer. Once again, the doctrine of the Trinity gives us practical help. Suffering plays a large part in the idea of our union with Christ, as Romans 8 and 1 Peter 4 illustrate. It is by sharing in Christ's sufferings that we may hope to share in his glory also. Furthermore, in our feebleness, this Spirit of Christ helps us, interceding for us and drawing us to the Father (Rom 8:26ff), speaking our groans for us. In this way, the trinitarian shape of our spiritual lives offers a unique comfort in time of trial. We do not suffer alone, nor do we suffer in vain. There is purpose in our suffering.

Putting it into practice

The Trinity is, then, a very important Christian doctrine to put into practice. Without it, our faith is far less distinct from any other religion. With it, we see the deepest realities of what it means to be a Christian. It is a truth that needs to be revisited regularly in sermons, Bible studies, youth groups and the like, rather than left high and dry in theological libraries.

The doctrine of the Trinity describes the name of our God - a God unlike any of the other 'pretenders' to the title. It also gives direction to our prayers, reminding us that we only come before the Father through sharing in the sonship of the Son and receiving his Spirit. It teaches us to approach God in humility, as adopted children who are 'at table' with him purely by his grace.

The doctrine of the Trinity also teaches us the true meaning of love, because it shows us the sacrificial nature of God at work. This rich and marvellous truth is so utterly foreign to worldly thinking about love that it merits deep reflection: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has given unto us" (1 John 3:1). Finally, the Trinity reveals God to us in the agony and glory of the cross of Christ, where the relationships within the Trinity are stretched to an almost incomprehensible breaking point. When we reflect on what the suffering of the Son achieved, it puts our own suffering in perspective and enables us to see that to suffer for him is to suffer with him. And when we are in the midst of suffering, that knowledge is immensely practical.

I Believe in God the Father: Trinitarian Theology of CCC

In this chapter, we will present the Trinitarian theology as envisioned in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). This section will enable us to summarize our discussions so far on the theology of Holy Trinity. Paragraphs 232-324 of CCC are given below:

1. "In The Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (232 - 237)

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith". The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin" Christians are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Before receiving the sacrament,

they respond to a three-part question when asked to confess the Father, the Son and the Spirit: “I do.” “The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity.” This paragraph expounds briefly:

- (I) how the mystery of the Blessed Trinity was revealed,
- (II) how the Church has articulated the doctrine of the faith regarding this mystery, and
- (III) how, by the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, God the Father fulfills the “plan of his loving goodness” of creation, redemption and sanctification.

The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*). “Theology” refers to the mystery of God’s inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and “economy” to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God’s works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions. The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the “mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God”. To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel’s faith before the Incarnation of God’s Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Revelation of God as Trinity (238-248)

By calling God “Father”, the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God’s immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith

thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father.

Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Following the apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is “consubstantial” with the Father, that is, one only God with him. The second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381, kept this expression in its formulation of the Nicene Creed and confessed “the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father”.

Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of “another Paraclete” (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously “spoken through the prophets”, the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them “into all the truth”. The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father. The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father. The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus’ glorification reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father *and the Son (filioque)*”. The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: “The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He

has his nature and subsistence at once (*simul*) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one spiration... And, since the Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.” The affirmation of the *filioque* does not appear in the Creed confessed in 381 at Constantinople. But Pope St. Leo I, following an ancient Latin and Alexandrian tradition, had already confessed it dogmatically in 447, even before Rome, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, came to recognize and receive the Symbol of 381. The use of this formula in the Creed was gradually admitted into the Latin liturgy (between the eighth and eleventh centuries). The introduction of the *filioque* into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin liturgy constitutes moreover, even today, a point of disagreement with the Orthodox Churches.

At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father’s character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he “who proceeds from the Father”, it affirms that he *comes from* the Father *through* the Son. The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*). It says this, “legitimately and with good reason”, for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as “the principle without principle”, is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds. This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed.

3. The Holy Trinity In The Teaching Of The Faith (249- 252)

From the beginning, the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity has been at the very root of the Church’s living faith, principally by means of Baptism. It finds its expression in the rule of baptismal faith, formulated in the preaching, catechesis and prayer of the Church. Such

formulations are already found in the apostolic writings, such as this salutation taken up in the Eucharistic liturgy: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

In order to articulate the dogma of the Trinity, the Church had to develop her own terminology with the help of certain notions of philosophical origin: “substance”, “person” or “hypostasis”, “relation” and so on. In doing this, she did not submit the faith to human wisdom, but gave a new and unprecedented meaning to these terms, which from then on would be used to signify an ineffable mystery, “infinitely beyond all that we can humanly understand”. The Church uses

- (I) the term “substance” or *ousia* (rendered also at times by “essence” or “nature”) to designate the divine being in its unity,
- (II) the term “person” or “hypostasis” to designate the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them, and
- (III) the term “relation” to designate the fact that their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the others.

The dogma of the Holy Trinity (253-257)

The following principles are major tenets of the Christian doctrine of trinity

- ❖ *The Trinity is One.* We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the “consubstantial Trinity”. In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), “Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature.”
- ❖ *The divine persons are really distinct from one another.* “God is one but not solitary.” “Father”, “Son”, “Holy Spirit” are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another:
- ❖ *The divine persons are relative to one another.* Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: “In the relational names of the persons the Father is

related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, also called “the Theologian”, entrusts this summary of Trinitarian faith to the catechumens of Constantinople:

Above all guard for me this great deposit of faith for which I live and fight, which I want to take with me as a companion, and which makes me bear all evils and despise all pleasures: I mean the profession of faith in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I entrust it to you today. By it I am soon going to plunge you into water and raise you up from it. I give it to you as the companion and patron of your whole life. I give you but one divinity and power, existing one in three, and containing the three in a distinct way. Divinity without disparity of substance or nature, without superior degree that raises up or inferior degree that casts down... the infinite co-naturality of three infinities. Each person considered in himself is entirely God... the three considered together... I have not even begun to think of unity when the Trinity bathes me in its splendor. I have not even begun to think of the Trinity when unity grasps me...

4. The Divine Works and the Trinitarian Missions (258-268)

- The whole divine economy is the common work of the three divine persons. For as the Trinity has only one and the same natures so too does it have only one and the same operation: “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three principles of creation but one principle.” However, each divine person performs the common work according to his unique personal property.
- Being a work at once common and personal, the whole divine economy makes known both what is proper to the divine persons, and their one divine nature. Hence the whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them.
- The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God’s creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity.

God is Almighty

Of all the divine attributes, only God’s omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives.

- ❖ We believe that his might is *universal*, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God’s power is loving, for he is our Father, and *mysterious*, for only faith can discern it when it “is made perfect in weakness”.
- ❖ God is the *Father* Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us, finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.
- ❖ God’s almighty power is in no way arbitrary: “In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical. Nothing therefore can be in God’s power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect.”

The mystery of God’s apparent powerlessness (272-275)

Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus “the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” It is in Christ’s Resurrection and exaltation that the Father has shown forth “the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe”. Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God’s almighty power. Once our reason has grasped the idea of God’s almighty power, it will easily and without any hesitation admit everything that [the Creed] will afterwards propose for us to believe - even if they be great and marvelous things, far above the ordinary laws of nature.”

God is the Creator (276-290)

The following points are important in understanding the concept of God being the creator.

01. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Holy Scripture begins with these solemn words. The profession of faith takes them up when it confesses that God the Father almighty is "Creator of heaven and earth" (*Apostles' Creed*), "of all that is, seen and unseen" (*Nicene Creed*).
02. Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation" that culminates in Christ
03. Catechesis on creation makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question that men of all times have asked themselves: "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?" "What is our origin?" "What is our end?" "Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?"
04. The scientific discoveries on the origin of cosmos invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers.
05. The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called "God"? And if the world does come from God's wisdom and goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?
06. The truth about creation is so important for all of human life that God in his tenderness wanted to reveal to his People everything that is salutary to know on the subject. Beyond the natural

knowledge that every man can have of the Creator, God progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation.

07. Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant, the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love.
08. Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation - its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation.

5. Creation - Work of the Holy Trinity (290-294)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": three things are affirmed in these first words of Scripture: the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself; he alone is Creator (the verb "create" - Hebrew *bara*- always has God for its subject). The totality of what exists (expressed by the formula "the heavens and the earth") depends on the One who gives it being.

- "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God... all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." The New Testament reveals that God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." The Church's faith likewise confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life", "the Creator Spirit" (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), the "source of every good".
- The Old Testament suggests and the New Covenant reveals the creative action of the Son and the Spirit, inseparably one with that of the Father. Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity.

- Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: “The world was made for the glory of God.” St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it”, for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: “Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand.”

6. The Mystery of Creation (295-299)

We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God’s free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: “For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

- We believe that God needs no pre-existent thing or any help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary emanation from the divine substance. God creates freely “out of nothing”:
- Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them, and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. God “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”
- Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered: Our human understanding, which shares in the light of the divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation, though not without great effort and only in a spirit of humility and respect before the Creator and his work.
- God is infinitely greater than all his works. But because he is the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures’ inmost being.
- With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end.

7. God of Providence (300-305)

Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created “in a state of journeying” (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call “divine providence” the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection.

- ❖ And so we see the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Sacred Scripture, often attributing actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. This is not a “primitive mode of speech”, but a profound way of recalling God’s primacy and absolute Lordship over history and the world, and so of educating his people to trust in him. The prayer of the Psalms is the great school of this trust.
- ❖ God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures’ co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God’s greatness and goodness.
- ❖ To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of “subduing” the earth and having dominion over it. God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors.
- ❖ The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes.

Providence and the Scandal of Evil (306-314)

If God the Father almighty, the Creator of the ordered and good world, cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist? Why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it?

- ✓ With infinite power God could always create something better. But with infinite wisdom and goodness God freely willed to create a world “in a state of journeying” towards its ultimate perfection.

- ✓ In God's plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also *physical evil* as long as creation has not reached perfection.
- ✓ Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has *moral evil*, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it
- ✓ In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: "It was not you", said Joseph to his brothers, "who sent me here, but God. . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." From the greatest moral evil ever committed - the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men - God, by his grace that "abounded all the more", brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good.
- ✓ "We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him." We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history. But the ways of his providence are often unknown to us. Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases, when we see God "face to face", will we fully know the ways by which - even through the dramas of evil and sin - God has guided his creation to that definitive sabbath rest for which he created heaven and earth.

Summary of the Trinitarian Theology

The following 21 paragraphs could be understood as the sum and substance of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity:

01. The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (no. 261).
02. The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God (no. 262).
03. The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (*Jn* 14:26) and by the Son "from the Father" (*Jn* 15:26), reveals that, with them, the Spirit is one and the same God. "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed) (no. 263).
04. "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095 - no. 264)
05. By the grace of Baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light (cf. Paul VI, *CPG* § 9 - (no. 265)
06. "Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal" (Athanasian Creed: DS 75; ND 16). (no. 266)
07. Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do. But within the single divine operation each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, especially in the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit (no. 267).

08. With Job, the just man, we confess: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (*Job* 42:2) - (no. 275)
09. Faithful to the witness of Scripture, the Church often addresses her prayer to the “almighty and eternal God” (“omnipotens sempiternus Deus...”), believing firmly that “nothing will be impossible with God” (*Gen* 18:14; *Lk* 1:37; *Mt* 19:26) - (no. 276).
10. God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. “God, you show your almighty power above all in your mercy and forgiveness...” (*Roman Missal*, 26th Sunday, Opening Prayer- (no. 277).
11. If we do not believe that God’s love is almighty, how can we believe that the Father could create us, the Son redeem us and the Holy Spirit sanctify us? (no. 278).
12. In the creation of the world and of man, God gave the first and universal witness to his almighty love and his wisdom, the first proclamation of the “plan of his loving goodness”, which finds its goal in the new creation in Christ (no. 315).
13. Though the work of creation is attributed to the Father in particular, it is equally a truth of faith that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are the one, indivisible principle of creation (no. 316).
14. God alone created the universe, freely, directly and without any help (no. 317).
15. No creature has the infinite power necessary to “create” in the proper sense of the word, that is, to produce and give being to that which had in no way possessed it (to call into existence “out of nothing”) (cf DS 3624 -(no. 318)
16. God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty- this is the glory for which God created them (no. 319).

17. God created the universe and keeps it in existence by his Word, the Son “upholding the universe by his word of power” (*Heb* 1:3), and by his Creator Spirit, the giver of life (no. 320).
18. Divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end (no. 321).
19. Christ invites us to filial trust in the providence of our heavenly Father (cf. *Mt* 6:26-34), and St. Peter the apostle repeats: “Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you” (*1 Pt* 5:7; cf. *Ps* 55:23 - (no. 322).
20. Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to cooperate freely with his plans (no. 323).
21. The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life (no. 324).