

CHAPTER Two The Holy Trinity

Come, all peoples, and let us worship the one Godhead in three persons, the Son in the Father with the Holy Spirit. For the Father gave birth outside time to the Son, co-eternal and enthroned with Him; and the Holy Spirit is glorified in the Father together with the Son: one power, one essence, one Godhead, Whom we all worship, and to Whom we say: Holy God, Who hast created all things through the Son, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. Holy Mighty, through Whom we know the Father, and through Whom the Holy Spirit came to dwell within the world. Holy Immortal, Paraclete Spirit, proceeding from the Father and resting on the Son. Holy Trinity, Glory to Thee (Vespers of Pentecost Sunday).

We saw in the last chapter that the introduction of the Filioque into the Creed in Rome was a significant factor in the dissolution of the unity between the Church of Rome and the Orthodox Church. Many people, however, simply cannot understand why this should be so. If both confess faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, what possible difference could it make whether one believes that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son together?

It is crucial that we understand that the controversy over the Filioque was -and is-not an argument about mere words. Nor was it primarily an argument about who has the authority to define doctrine in the Church-although that certainly played a part. Ultimately, the issue goes to the very nature of the God we claim to worship. Just because the East and West both use the term "Trinity," it does not mean that we mean the same thing. Pelikan sums up the issue well:

The Filioque was not only illegitimate [from the Eastern viewpoint-C.C.], it was also mistaken. It was based on certain theological premises which the East found to be inadequate or erroneous and which became visible in the course of the debates. Several of these lay in the area of what must be called 'theological method/ for they involved differences over the way trinitarian doctrine was to be arrived at. Beyond such methodological differences lay some ultimate, metaphysical differences in the doctrine of God itself...'¹

To understand the Orthodox view of the Trinity, and, consequently, why the Orthodox reject the Filioque so vehemently, we must consider how and why the doctrine was developed in the first place. Thus, a brief historical sketch is in order.

¹Pelikan, Spirit, pp. 192-193.

The Philosophical Challenge

Our story begins at the dawn of the fourth Christian century, a century that produced four of the brightest lights that the Church has ever seen: St. Athanasius the Great, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzen). To these men fell the task of expressing in words the mystery of the Trinity, which is beyond all words and human conceptions.

Christianity was born in Jerusalem. The Church is the true Israel, the fulfillment of the promises made by God to the People of Israel. Nevertheless, this Semitic faith was born into a Hellenistic

world - that is, a world that had been shaped by the ideas of Greek philosophy and culture. From the very beginning Christians had to find ways to express their faith in a way that was intelligible to a world shaped by Greek modes of thought.²

As Christianity expanded throughout the known world, so too did the need to reflect on the mystery of faith and express it more systematically. Yet, the pervasive nature of Greek thought created problems for those who wanted to remain faithful to the essence of the original Christian message.³

²This is evident in St. John's use of Logos or Word in the prologue to his Gospel. For over a century, however, Protestant historians have made a cottage industry out of perpetuating the myth that Judaea was somehow exempt from the influences of Hellenism and that one could differentiate between the purely Semitic strains of Christianity (usually represented by St. Paul) and the corrupted, Hellenistic strains represented by later theologians. Martin Hengel brilliantly explodes this myth in *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989).

³Cf. Gonzalez, Vol. 1, pp. 159-160.

The second century was the century of the "Apologists" - those who sought to defend Christianity against the attacks of pagan critics. On the whole, the Apologists took one of two approaches to the problem: they either rejected the claims of Greek philosophy outright or they tried to harmonize pagan thought with Christianity, even going so far as to ascribe to Greek philosophy a preparatory role in the advent of Christ parallel to the role played by Israel.⁴

In the third century the influence of the Apologists gave way to the influence of the great school theologians of Alexandria, Egypt. For centuries, Alexandria had been a center of Hellenistic culture and education. It was here that the great Jewish theologian Philo synthesized Jewish and Greek thought (first century BC), and it was here that the first great school of Christian theology was founded.

Clement of Alexandria and Origen stand astride the third century like giants, towering over other theologians of the day. Unfortunately, they were not always successful in their attempt to balance Christian thought with Greek philosophy.⁵ Neither is venerated by the Church as a Saint, and Origen's thought was actually condemned by the Church as heresy in 553.

⁴For a general overview see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics Inc., 1986), pp. 186-253.

⁵See Quasten, Vol. 2, pp. 1-101.

Origen is of concern to us because in many ways he helped to set the stage for the Trinitarian controversies that would rock the fourth century and lead to the formal elucidation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Origen taught-in keeping with Greek philosophy-that the world (cosmos) was eternal. This, of course, was in direct contradiction to what had been taught by the Prophets and Apostles, namely that God had created the world out of nothing.⁶

Origen reasoned that if God is immutable (unchangeable) and if He is properly called "Father," then He must have always had a Son. Otherwise, He would have begun to be Father at some point in time, introducing change into the deity. So far, so good. He went on to reason, however, that since God is also called "Creator," then the world must have always existed, otherwise He would have begun to create at some point in time, again introducing change into the changeless deity.

Origen's logic was impeccable. The problem was that it led him to a conclusion that was in direct contradiction with what the Church had always taught. Here we see very clearly the clash between Greek philosophy - with its preconceived notions about the nature of God -and the Christian faith. It fell to St. Athanasius of Alexandria, the man who would become the champion of the Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, to solve the theological problem created by Origen's philosophical speculations.⁷

⁶I beseech you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed (2 Mace. 7:28, RSV). Cf. Heb. 11:3.

⁷For this section I am greatly indebted to Fr. Georges Rorovsky's study, "St. Athanasius' Concept of Creation" in The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Vol. 4, Aspects of Church History (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1975), pp. 39-62. Cited hereafter as "Creation."

Athanasius' solution was philosophically daring. He drew a sharp distinction between what God is in Himself and what He does. God is Father because that is what He is. On the other hand, He created the world in time by His will. He could have created or not created. The world is neither eternal nor necessary. God is Creator only because He wills to create.

This distinction between God's inner life and the way He acts outside Himself (ad extra) allows us to reflect about God's being in Himself (θεολογία- theology proper) and His activity (οικονομία) separately.⁸ Now there is no question that such a distinction was an affront to traditional Greek ways of thought, for it challenged the very notion of the Divine Simplicity. Nevertheless, Athanasius understood that he was talking about the Christian God, not the god of the philosophers - the God Who had created the world out of nothing, the God Who had taken flesh and become man.

This distinction was absolutely crucial for the solution of the controversy that would follow concerning the doctrine of the Trinity.⁹ Significantly, however, this distinction-between God's inner life and His activity (later called energies)-would be denied by Latin speaking theologians from the Middle Ages right down to the present. We will return to this point later. At the moment, let us note that St. Athanasius solved the problem created by Origen by positing a real distinction within God between His being and His activity.

⁸Florovsky, "Creation," pp. 52-53.

⁹"Now, the question arises: Is the distinction between 'Being' and 'Acting' in God, or, in other terms, between the Divine 'Essence' and 'Energy,' a genuine and ontological distinction-in re ipsa; or is it merely a mental or logical distinction, as it were, κατ' ἐπίνοιαν, which should not be interpreted objectively, lest the Simplicity of the Divine Being is compromised. There cannot be the slightest doubt that for St. Athanasius it was a real and ontological difference. Otherwise his main argument against the Arians would have been invalidated and destroyed." Florovsky, "Creation " pp. 61-62.

The Arian Controversy

We are now ready to turn our attention to the Trinitarian controversies of the fourth century sparked by an Alexandrian presbyter by the name of Arius. In many respects, Arius brought the same set of philosophical presuppositions to the table as Origen had earlier, the difference being that they ended

up with diametrically opposed conclusions. Whereas Origen taught that the world was eternal, Arius taught that the Son and Word of God was created. Neither of them was able (or willing) to make the kind of philosophical distinction between God's being and activity that St. Athanasius had made.

As Origen before him, Arius was concerned to defend a fundamentally Greek philosophical notion of God. If, he reasoned, God has an eternal Son, it would destroy the Divine Simplicity, making multiple Gods.¹⁰ The Word, therefore, must be a created being.¹¹

¹⁰Gonzalez, Vol. 1, pp. 161ff. Pelikan notes Arius' emphasis on the fact that God is by nature one and alone: "The fundamental idea in the Arian doctrine of God was 'one and only' [μᾶνος]...No understanding of the Logos as divine could be permitted in any way to compromise this arithmetical oneness of God, who 'alone' created his 'only' Son. Originally and fundamentally, then, 'God was alone.'" *The Christian Tradition, Vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (200-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 194. Cited hereafter as *Emergence*.

¹¹ Arius certainly believed that the Word was superior to all other created things, being the "firstborn of all creation." Nevertheless, the Word was to be numbered with creation.

From the very beginning, the Church had worshipped Christ as God. If Arius was correct, however, it meant that the Church had been worshipping a creature, which was blasphemy. Not surprisingly, Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, publicly condemned Arius. Unfortunately, the controversy did not end there. Arius had many supporters in Alexandria and found new supporters in Antioch and elsewhere. Before long, "Arianism" became a serious threat to the unity of the Church throughout the world. It was this threat that prompted the Emperor Constantine to call for a universal council of the Church to deal with the problem.

Three hundred and eighteen bishops from around the world -though mostly from the Middle East, Asia Minor, and the Mediterranean-gathered in Nicea, a suburb of Constantinople, in 325 to deal with the Arian controversy. The Arian case was presented by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, and the Orthodox case by Alexander of Alexandria.¹² When the Fathers of the council heard what Arius had actually taught-that the Word of God was a created being-they reacted violently, tearing the speech from Eusebius' hands.¹³ They drafted a creedal statement that explicitly repudiated the ideas of Arius. This creed, which would become the basis for what we know today as the Nicene Creed, affirmed that the Son was "begotten, not made," clearly admitting the distinction that St. Athanasius had made earlier between the being and activity of God.

In trying to ensure the defeat of Arianism, the Fathers of the council did something controversial. They introduced a philosophical term into the statement that was designed to stress the unity of the Father and the Son. They said that the Son was "of one substance (homoousious) with the Father."¹⁴ The introduction of this term, however, was to prove extremely controversial.

¹²Neither Arius nor Athanasius could vote at the council because they were not bishops.

¹³Gonzalez, Vol. 1, pp. 162-167.

¹⁴ ὁμοουσιον ἡ Πατρι.

Arianism did not go away with the decision of Nicea. In fact, the controversy got worse, thanks primarily to imperial meddling in Church affairs. This is not the place to go into the sordid history of depositions, exiles, and imperial flip-flops that followed the Council of Nicea. What does

concern us, however, is the theological objection to the use of homoousios and the way that objection was met by the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers. It was the theological genius of these men that led to the final vindication of the faith of Nicea and the final form of the Nicene Creed.

The Cappadocian Fathers

Leaving aside the fact that many people switched sides in the controversy depending on which side the emperor happened to be on at the moment, there was a significant number of bishops who were opposed to both Arianism and the use of homoousios. Part of the problem was that homoousios was both unbiblical - that is, it did not appear in the Scriptures - and it had a good deal of "baggage" because of its use in Greek philosophy.¹⁵ More important, however, were the implications the word had for the relationship between the persons of the Trinity.

¹⁵It appears in Plotinus (Enneads 4:4:28 and 4:7:10), Porphyrius Tyrius (de Abstinencia 1:19), and Iamblichus (de Mysteriis, 3:21) among others. See "ὁμο-ουσιος ον" in Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

The use of homoousios - "of the same substance" - clearly affirmed that the Father and the Son were identical in nature. Some bishops feared, however, that in stressing the identity of the persons so strongly, they were in fact eliminating the distinction between the persons. The problem was with the Greek word for person, prosopon. Lacking any kind of philosophical connotation, its primary meaning was that of "face" or even "mask."¹⁶ In fact, it was the word used to denote a dramatic role or character in a play.¹⁷ Thus, many bishops feared that the Church had unintentionally fallen into the heresy of Sabellianism.

Sabellius was a Roman presbyter (early third century) who taught that the Father, Son, and Spirit were three "roles" or "modes" that the one God used at different times. Thus, at one point in history God employed the mode of Father. During the Incarnation, He employed the mode or role of the Son. The image is clearly one of the single God putting on different masks at different times. This heresy became known as Sabellianism or Modalism.

You can easily see why many bishops were concerned. Homoousios was a philosophical term stressing the fact that the Father and the Son were of the same substance or nature. Prosopon, lacking any philosophical import, meant mask or face. The persons of the Trinity were in danger of disappearing into the divine nature.

The problem, however, was not simply that prosopon lacked philosophical weight, but that Greek philosophy had never developed a concept of true "personhood."¹⁸ Indeed, the idea of a person as an

¹⁶Cf. "πρῶσωπον" in Liddell and Scott, where "person" is the last definition listed.

¹⁷The same applies for the Latin word persona. Indeed, dramatis persona is still used to refer to a theatrical character.

¹⁸Cf. (Metropolitan) John Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1985), pp. 27ff. I am greatly indebted to Zizioulas for the material in this section, esp. Chapters One and Two (pp. 27-122).

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object of philosophical inquiry is the result of the development of Christian theology.¹⁹ What was needed at that time, therefore, was nothing less than a philosophical revolution.²⁰

The revolutionaries were three of the most brilliant men of the age, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory the Theologian-the Cappadocian Fathers. Their solution to the problem was to use a new word for person, a word that had previously been a synonym for substance (ousia): hypostasis. In doing this, they literally gave "substance" or philosophical weight to the idea of person. For the first time in human history, "person" became a philosophical term.²¹

The result of this was that now the concept of person had the same philosophical weight as the concept of essence or substance, giving balance to the unity of the Trinity and to the distinctiveness of the three divine persons. The persons of the Trinity are not masks or roles that the one, individual God assumes at different times, but three distinct persons in Whom the one divine nature subsists.

With the personal distinctiveness of each of the persons guaranteed by the use of hypostasis, the unity of the Trinity was guaranteed by the common origin or source of the persons: the person of the Father, Who eternally begets His Son and breathes forth His Spirit in an unbroken communion of love. Early on at the Second Ecumenical Council (381), St. Gregory the Theologian stressed this point:

Now, the name of that which has no beginning is the Father, and of the Beginning the Son, and of that which is with the Beginning, the Holy Spirit, and the three have one Nature -God. And the union is the Father from Whom and to Whom the order of Persons runs its course, not so as to be confounded, but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, of will, or of power.²²

The one God, therefore, is not the divine nature, which each of the persons shares in its totality, but the person of the Father. In the creed we do not say "I believe in one God, the divine nature," but "in one God, the Father almighty." As Zizioulas puts it, "What therefore is important in trinitarian theology is that God 'exists' on account of a person, the Father, and not on account of a substance."²³

¹⁹"Indeed, our ideas of human personality, of that personal quality which makes every human being unique, to be expressed only in terms of itself: this idea of person comes to us from Christian theology. The philosophy of antiquity knew only human individuals." Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1976), p. 53. Cited hereafter as *Mystical Theology*.

²⁰Cf. Zizioulas, p. 36.

²¹"The genius of the Fathers made use of the two synonyms to distinguish in God that which is common-ousia, substance or essence -from that which is particular-UTrooraic, or person." Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 51.

²²Gregory Nazianzus (the Theologian), *Oration XLIII*5.

²³Zizioulas, p. 42. Also: "...the Cappadocians' position -characteristic of all the Greek Fathers-lay, as Karl Rahner (*The Trinity*, 1970) observes, in that the final assertion of ontology in God has to be attached not to the unique ousia of God but to the Father, that is, to a hypostasis or person." p.88.

The Father is thus the principle (ἄρχή), source (πηγαία), and cause (αἴτιον) of the Trinity:

The Father derives from Himself His being, nor does He derive a single quality from another. Rather He is Himself the beginning and cause of the existence of all things both as to their nature and mode of being.... All then that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being: and unless the Father is, neither the Son nor the Spirit is. And unless the Father possesses a certain attribute, neither the Son nor the Spirit possesses it: and through the Father, that is, because of the Father's existence, the Son and the Spirit exist.²⁴

This point is of crucial importance for it underscores the primary concern of the Cappadocian Fathers: to give adequate expression to the God Who had revealed Himself to the Prophets and Apostles. This is not the God of the philosophers-an absolutely simple essence-but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²⁴St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 1:8, quoted in Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 59-60.

The Cappadocians did not "invent" the doctrine of the Trinity. They were trying to answer the challenge posed by the succession of heresies that had been plaguing the Church. Sabellianism, Origenism, Arianism-indeed most of the "isms" that have popped up throughout Christian history - all shared a common element: the tendency to subordinate the God of the Gospels to some preconceived philosophical notion about what God is supposed to be like. The biblical vision of a personal God was inevitably sacrificed for the sake of an absolutely simple and immutable divine essence.

Arianism could never triumph because it made a lie out of the Church's life and worship. She had worshipped Christ from the beginning and knew Him to be God, not a creature.²⁵ Nevertheless, the Church needed an adequate way to express Her faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The personalistic theology of the Cappadocian Fathers was the answer to that need. It was the key to reconciling to the Nicene faith those bishops who had opposed the term homoousion because of their fear of Sabellianism. This took place at the Second Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 381. This would not have happened, however, without the Cappadocians. The faith of Nicea was accepted within the framework set forth by the Cappadocians, and the final form of the Nicene Creed was established.²⁶

²⁵Cf. Gonzalez, Vol. 1, p. 161.

²⁶"Thus, it was this council that definitively proclaimed the doctrine of the Trinity. Its decisions, and the theology reflected in them, were in large measure the result of the work of the Great Cappadocians." Gonzalez, p. 188.

It is often stated that the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians is simply an alternative to other Trinitarian theologies, such as those of St. Augustine or Thomas Aquinas. Nothing could be further from the truth. The theology of the Second Ecumenical Council is the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers. When, therefore, Latin speaking theologians inserted the Filioque into the Nicene Creed, they not only tampered with the text, they tampered with the very theology of the creed itself. This is why the Orthodox Church reacted so strongly to the addition of the Filioque.

The Filioque

It is important to note that the Orthodox did not object to the Filioque solely because they opposed the pope's alleged authority to insert it into the creed. While the question of papal authority did play a part in the controversy (primarily because Rome kept asserting it), it was not the main concern. The Orthodox rejected the Filioque because it was heretical, not simply because the pope claimed the right to insert it into the Nicene Creed.²⁷

At the Second Council of Lyons (1274), considered by the Roman Catholic Church to be the Fourteenth Ecumenical Council,²⁸ the Filioque was defined in this way:

*We profess faithfully and devotedly 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. This the holy Roman Church, mother and mistress of all the faithful, has till now professed, preached and taught; this she firmly holds, preaches, professes and teaches; this is the unchangeable and true belief of the orthodox fathers and doctors, Latin and Greek alike. But because some, on account of ignorance of the said indisputable truth, have fallen into various errors, we, wishing to close the way to such errors, with the approval of the sacred council, condemn and reprove all who presume to deny that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, or rashly to assert that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from two principles and not as from one.*²⁹

Thus, the Roman Catholic Church has officially defined as dogma the belief that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a single source (ab utroque).

²⁷The Roman argument was often the inverse of this: The Filioque is true because the pope affirms it. Such a position, however, precludes any real discussion of the issue. If it has been decided a priori that the pope cannot be wrong, then there is not much reason to debate the merits of the issue itself. Needless to say, the Orthodox flatly reject this presupposition. See Chapter Four, below.

²⁸The council was intended to be a reunion council between the East and West: "It was at this session that the Latin doctrines of purgatory, papal supremacy, and the Filioque were solemnly acknowledged and confessed by the emperor's accredited representatives. To say it once more, no formal public debate on these matters was allowed at the council and none is recorded in the sources. Actually, the addition to the creed was formally declared dogma early in the second session of the council even before the Byzantine delegates had arrived!" Papadakis, *Christian East*, p. 221. Lyons was rejected by the Orthodox. See Appendix C.

²⁹Second Council of Lyons (1274), Constitution 11:1. The Filioque was reaffirmed at the Council of Florence (1483). See also the Catechism of the Catholic Church, §246-248.

The first systematic Orthodox refutation of the Filioque was written by St. Photios the Great, patriarch of Constantinople during the ninth century.³⁰ We will consider the main points of his attack.

Photios' primary concern in his *Mystagogy* was to demonstrate the logical absurdity of the Filioque. According to the Latin doctrine, the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Attributes such as generation and procession, however, must be ascribed to either the divine nature, which is common to the three persons, or to one of the persons.³¹ It is inconceivable, however, that an attribute could be applied to two of the persons without applying to the third. Otherwise there would

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be inequality in the Godhead. This means that the property of "spirating" or "producing" the Spirit must either belong to the divine nature or to one person of the Trinity. It cannot belong to two persons, unless one is prepared to admit that the third person is not equal to the first two.

St. Photios created a logical dilemma from which the supporters of the Filioque were not able to escape. No matter which way you turn, the Holy Spirit ends up as something less than a fully divine person. If one asserts that generation and spiration are properties of nature, then one must assert them of all the divine persons.³² Thus, the persons would all generate and spirate each other. Furthermore, the Spirit, if He is identical in essence with the Father and the Son, must also produce another person (or produce the Father and the Son):

If the Son is begotten from the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Son, by what reason do you not accord the Spirit, Who subsists in the same identical essence, the dignity of another procession from Himself at the same time? Otherwise, you degrade Him who is worthy of equal honor.³³

On the other hand, if procession or spiration are considered to be properties of the person, not of the nature, then how can one possibly explain two of the persons sharing the same property? Does the Father need the Son to produce the Spirit?

But the essence is not the cause of the Word; the Father is the personal cause of the person of the Word. But if, as this ungodly doctrine asserts, the Son is also a cause of the Spirit, then the personal feature of the Father is distributed to the Son. Ultimately you are forced to say this, or else to say that the Son completes the person of the Father. But to say that is to argue that the person of the Father is imperfect, wanting completion, and that the Son takes over the Father's role and title. This is the same thing as reducing the awesome mystery of the Trinity to a mere dyad.³⁴

We should note at this point that one of the primary reasons given for inserting the Filioque into the creed was in order to combat the heresy of Arianism. Most of the barbarian tribes had accepted Arian Christianity.³⁵

³⁰Remember that it was this Photios who was reconciled to Pope John VIII at the Eighth Ecumenical Council held in 879. At that council the Roman Church condemned the addition of the Filioque to the creed. St. Photios lavishly praised Pope John and his successor, Pope Hadrian, for their Orthodoxy: "Now this man, my John (and a majority of others who are our fathers), is a courageous mind, a courageously pious man, courageous because he abhors and casts down unrighteousness and every manner of impiety not only with sacred doctrine, but also with secular power. This man (favored amongst the Roman archbishops by his more-than-illustrious and God-serving legates Paul, Eugene and Peter, bishops and priests of God, who were with us in the council of the Catholic Church of God), confirmed and subscribed to the Symbol of the Faith, with wondrous and notable sayings, with sacred tongue and hand. Yes, and after that, the holy Hadrian wrote to us according to the prescription of an ancient custom, sending us the same doctrine, testifying for the same theology, namely, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father." *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, 88, trans. by Joseph Farrell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987), p. 105. As we saw above, however, in the eleventh century the Frankish popes disowned the Eighth Council and inserted the clause into the creed in Rome.

³¹"According to this line of reasoning, everything not said about the whole, omnipotent, consubstantial and supersubstantial Trinity is said about one of the three persons." *Mystagogy*, 36, p. 76.

³²Among others, Paulinus of Aquileia, Ratramnus, and Peter Damian asserted that the procession of the Spirit was from the divine nature, not the hypostases. See Pelikan, *Spirit*, p. 195.

³³*Mystagogy*, 8, pp. 62-63.

³⁴*Mystagogy*, 15, pp. 65.

³⁵ Alaric the Goth, who sacked Rome in 410, was an Arian.

Although they eventually converted to the Catholic faith, Arianism occasionally made comebacks in the West under various guises. Spain was a particular hotbed of heretical speculation.³⁶ Theologians such as Paulinus of Aquileia employed the Filioque against those who argued that Christ's humanity had been "adopted," thus asserting the full equality of the Son with the Father.³⁷

At first glance, the argument seems sound. If Christ is fully divine, truly God as is His Father, then the Holy Spirit must proceed from Him as well as from the Father. While this may "help" to affirm the full divinity of the Son, it leaves the Holy Spirit out in the cold. If the Son needs to produce the Spirit (with the Father) in order to be equal to the Father, then does the Spirit not also need to produce a person, in order to be equal to the Father and the Son? There is simply no way to assert the Filioque without subordinating the Spirit.³⁸

³⁶ Pelikan, *Growth*, p. 52. Indeed, the resurgence of both Arianism and Nestorianism in the West centuries after these heresies had been officially condemned in the East constitutes what Pelikan has called "the 'theological lag' of the West behind the East." *Spirit*, p. 184. The Filioque may have first been used in an official context at the anti-Arian Council of Toledo in 589. Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (New York: 1981), pp. 361-362.

³⁷ Pelikan, *Spirit*, pp. 185-186.

³⁸ I find it interesting that the "charismatic" or "pentecostal" movement has had very little success in the Orthodox world while Protestants and Roman Catholics alike have enthusiastically embraced it. Could it be that this "rediscovery" of the Spirit in the West is a reaction to the effects of the subordination of the Spirit in Western theology?

To quote St. Photios again:

*Furthermore, if the Son is begotten from the Father, and the Spirit (according to this innovation) proceeds from the Father and the Son, then by the same token another person should proceed from the Spirit, and so we should have not three but four persons! And if the fourth procession is possible, then another procession is possible from that, and so on to an infinite number of processions and persons, until at last this doctrine is transformed into a Greek polytheism!*³⁹

The fact is that although the Filioque may have been used in the adoptionist controversies, the doctrine was not created to fight Arianism. The Filioque had been around in some form since at least the fifth century. Its almost unanimous acceptance by later Latin speaking theologians was due not to its theological necessity (in fighting Arianism) but to the authority of St. Augustine and to the theological method that would become the common currency of Western Christianity:

The most striking, and ecumenically the most fateful, example of the pervasive authority of Augustine in Latin trinitarian theology was the almost automatic manner in which Western theologians accepted the idea of the Filioque.⁴⁰

In accounts of the Filioque controversy, it is almost de rigueur to note that Eastern theologians usually began with the persons of the Trinity and then worked their way to the unity of the nature, while Western theologians usually began with the one nature and worked their way to the plurality of divine persons.⁴¹ Scholarly orthodoxy and ecumenical politeness also require one to immediately

affirm that both approaches are legitimate, so long as neither goes to an extreme in asserting either tritheism or Sabellianism.⁴²

I cannot agree with this. It is not enough merely to state the obvious. The question is why did Eastern and (later) Western theologians take such different approaches? These are not complementary approaches to one and the same mystery, but divergent paths, destined to arrive at different and irreconcilable visions of God. If the Orthodox insistence upon starting with the persons of the Trinity was a reflection of their concern to maintain a fundamentally biblical view of God -the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-the Latin insistence upon starting with the divine nature reflects a fundamentally philosophical approach to theology.⁴³

³⁹Mystagogy, 37, p.77. 40Pelikan, Growth, p.21.

⁴¹Cf. T.R. Martland, "A Study of Cappadocian and Augustinian Trinitarian Methodology," Anglican Theological Review, 47 (1965), p. 256.

⁴²This is true of Orthodox scholars as well. Cf. Lossky, Mystical Theology, p. 52 and Papadakis, Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283-1289) (Crestwood, NY: 1997), p. 86. Both Lossky and Papadakis, however, go on to demonstrate why the Filioque-a logical development from the Western approach to the Trinity-is heretical.

⁴³Cf. Meyendorff, The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1982), pp. 154ff. The same applies to the Nestorian controversy, where it is often asserted that the Nestorians started with the two natures and worked back to the unity of subject in Christ while the Orthodox started with the unity of the subject and reasoned back to the two natures. Again, the question is why? And, again, the answer is the same: the Nestorians were positing an essentially philosophical doctrine of Christ whereas the Orthodox were championing a genuinely biblical vision, which emphasized that it was no less than the Son of God Himself who was born, crucified, and rose again for our salvation.

As with Arius and Origen, defenders of the Filioque were unable to conceive of real distinctions within the Godhead because of their emphasis on the Divine Simplicity. Indeed St. Augustine was quite clear about the simplicity of the divine nature: "God is His own Perfection, is 'simple', so that His wisdom and knowledge, His goodness and power, are His own essence, which is without accidents."⁴⁴

Because of this insistence on the Divine Simplicity, Latin theologians rarely distinguished between the eternal (ontological) procession of the Spirit from the Father and His temporal (economic) manifestation from the Son. Advocates of the Filioque would quote verses such as John 20:22: And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. This, they said, was proof that the Spirit proceeded eternally from the Son as well as the Father. Orthodox theologians pointed out, however, that in the same Gospel Christ Himself delineates between the temporal mission of the Spirit and His eternal procession: But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me (John 15:26).

The Orthodox never denied that the Son sent the Spirit into the world or that the Spirit proceeds through the Son (in reference to His temporal mission).⁴⁵ The Filioquists, however, conflated the temporal mission and the eternal procession of the Spirit.⁴⁶

Similarly, the emphasis placed on the absolute simplicity of divine nature by the advocates of the Filioque could only result in depreciation and undervaluing of the persons. To answer this criticism,

some Latin speaking theologians, attempted to locate the procession 'neither in the ousia, which is common [to all the persons], nor in the person, which is spoken of in itself, but in the relation [between persons].'⁴⁷

Thus, the personal life of the Trinity is reduced to the category of relations. Indeed, it is commonplace even today for Roman Catholic theologians to deny that there is a real (as opposed to a merely semantic) difference between person and nature.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Ft. 1, *Mediaeval Philosophy: Augustine to Bonaventure* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1962), p. 87. This raises several unanswered questions for Augustine's theology. Did this contribute to his doctrine of predestination? If predestination and foreknowledge are one and the same, then God must predestine all that He foreknows.

⁴⁵The *Libri Carolini* specifically asserted that the Spirit proceeds from the Son rather than through the Son. Pelikan, *Spirit*, p. 186.

⁴⁶Pelikan, *Spirit*, pp. 193-194.

⁴⁷Pelikan, *Spirit*, p. 195. The reference is to Anselm of Havelberg, *Dialogues in Constantinople with Nicetas of Nicomedia*, 2:10.

⁴⁸See Francois-Marie Lethel, *Theologie de L'Agonie du Christ* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1979), p. 83.

Thus, from the time of St. Augustine on, Western theologians adopted a fundamentally philosophical approach to theology, one in which speculation about the divine essence predominated. The Filioque is the fruit of this method. Of course, St. Augustine had no intention of being anything other than a faithful son of the Church.⁴⁹ In his *Confessions* one is given a vision of a man of true faith and piety. In his *De Trinitate*, however, Augustine the speculative theologian comes to the fore.⁵⁰

In fairness, we should note that not all scholars agree that St. Augustine posits an "essentialist" or "monistic" view of the Trinity. Rowan Williams argues that Augustine's model of the Trinity is not impersonal or unipersonal, but no less relational than that of the Greek Fathers.⁵¹ Catherine Osborne argues that the conception of the Spirit as an impersonal bond of love between the Father and the Son is not to be found in Augustine.⁵²

⁴⁹Orthodox appraisals of St. Augustine are routinely negative, some needlessly so. I cannot agree with Christos Yannaras' quip that Augustine is "the fount of every distortion and alteration in the Church's truth in the West." *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1984), p. 151, n10. For a more balanced view see Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1983).

⁵⁰For an overview of Augustine's mixture of Aristotelian philosophy and Neo-Platonism in the *De Trinitate* - and the contradictions inherent in that mixture-see A. C. Lloyd, "On Augustine's Concept of a Person" in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by R. A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 191-205.

⁵¹"Sapientia and the Trinity: Reflections on the *de Trinitate*," *Augustiniana* 40 (1990), pp. 317-332. Williams argues that in the last two books of *De Trinitate* Augustine suggested a relational or personalistic model for understanding the

Trinity: "The divine essence is not an abstract principle of unity, nor a 'causal' factor over and above the hypostases: to be God at all is to be desirous of and active in giving the divine life (p. 325)." Again: "God is in love with God, and the God whom God loves is the God who loves God: threefold caritas with no extraneous conditioning (p. 325)." I must admit that I find Williams' argument somewhat strained. It is interesting, however, that he flatly denies that Augustine taught the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son as from a single source, noting that for Augustine, the spirit proceeds principally from the Father (p. 328). Although Williams is concerned to challenge the conventional Eastern view of Augustine, he is forced, however, to admit a major point of difference between Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers: "Augustine insists in precisely these passages (xxvi.47-xxvii.48) on the absolute simultaneity of the trinitarian relations, in a way which makes it impossible to accept any crude account of the Father's priority, or even any model of the trinity in which the Father as prime 'possessor' of the divine essence distributes it to the others (we have noted that the divine persons do not 'possess' the divine essence, but are what it is) (p. 328)." Thus, even according to Williams, Augustine was unable to conceive of the Father as the unique source and principle of unity in the Trinity.

⁵²"The nexus amoris in Augustine's Trinity," *Studia Patristica* 18:3, pp. 308-314. Osborne argues that, unlike later Latin writers, Augustine never referred to the Spirit as an impersonal bond of love between the Father and the Son. Indeed, she raises the possibility that later theologians such as Aquinas may have misinterpreted Augustine. In the process, she offers an interesting critique of the idea of the Spirit as the bond of love: "If love is the bond uniting lover to the beloved, such a bond will be formed if God the Father loves God the Son. But if God the Son loves God the Father there will be another bond between lover and beloved in which the Son is lover and the Father beloved. It is hard to see how we could define the two bonds as the same. For a bond to exist it is sufficient that there be a lover and a beloved, and there is no requirement that the love be mutual. Thus although the bond idea may look attractive to supporters of the filioque in fact it seems in danger of resulting in two spirits (p. 313)."

Nevertheless, what we are dealing with here is not so much what Augustine actually said as with what those who followed him thought he said. In other words, we are dealing primarily with Augustine's legacy, rather than with Augustine himself.⁵³

Summary

If this book accomplishes nothing else, I hope that it will lay to rest the oft-repeated opinion that the Filioque controversy is simply an argument about words. First of all, it is an illicit addition to the Nicene Creed. As we have pointed out more than once, Pope John VIII condemned the addition in 879. More importantly, however, it manifests a different vision of the Trinity and a different approach to theology than that of the Cappadocian Fathers, whose theology lay behind the final ratification of the creed in 381.

One final question arises in connection with the Filioque. Pope John Paul II, on a couple of occasions, has recited the creed without the Filioque. Would it satisfy Orthodox objections if the Roman Church agreed to remove the Filioque from the Nicene Creed? The answer is no. The Roman Church has officially declared the Filioque to be a dogma. It cannot simply be dropped from the creed as if it did not exist. It must be recognized as a heresy and formally repudiated.⁵⁴ This issue cannot be swept under the rug. It must be addressed, and its solution requires a true repentance - a true change of mind and heart.

⁵³ Augustine's corpus is so large, and was written over such a long period of time, that it is possible to derive multiple interpretations of Augustine on the same subject. It has often been noted that the Reformation was largely a battle of two distinct emphases within the one Augustinian tradition. If one is intent on finding a single culprit, perhaps more attention should be given to Boethius and his role as an arbiter between classical philosophy and theology in the West. Consider the following from Boethius' *De Trinitate*: "But since no relation can be affirmed of one subject alone, inasmuch as a predicate wanting relation is a predicate of substance, the manifoldness of the category of relation, Trinity is secured through the category of relation, and the Unity is maintained through the fact that there is no

difference of substance, or operation, or generally of any substantial predicate. So then, the divine substance preserves the Unity, the divine relations bring about the Trinity" (De Trin. VI).

⁵⁴The service for the reception of Roman Catholics into the Orthodox Church requires candidates to specifically renounce the filioque: "Dost thou renounce the false doctrine that, for the expression of the dogma touching the Procession of the Holy Spirit, the declaration of our Saviour Christ Himself: 'who proceedeth from the Father': doth not suffice; and that the addition, of man's invention: 'and from the Son': is required?" Isabel Florence I lapgood, Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church (Englewood, NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America), p. 455.
