THE HOLY SPIRIT

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The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship
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THE HOLY SPIRIT

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For Joan

Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world's foundations first were laid,
Come, visit every pious mind;
Come, pour thy joy on humankind;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make thy temples worthy thee.

O source of uncreated light,
The Father's promised Paraclete,
Thrice holy fount, thrice holy fire,
Our hearts with heavenly love inspire;
Come, and thy sacred unction bring
To sanctify us while we sing.

Plenteous of grace, descend from high
Rich in thy sevenfold energy;
Make us eternal truths receive,
And practice all that we believe;
Give us thyself, that we may see
The Father and the Son by thee.

Immortal honour, endless fame,
Attend the almighty Father's name;
The Saviour Son be glorified,
Who for lost man's redemption died;
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Paraclete, to thee.

—John Dryden, 1693

Contents

Foreword

Robert Letham is well known through his theological writings, which include a widely acclaimed work on *The Holy Trinity* and his more recent magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*. Those who are familiar with these works will find that Letham's latest book—*The Holy Spirit*, his study on the person and work of the third person of the Trinity—exhibits several features characteristic of his other writings: careful attention to the catholic church's great tradition of theological reflection on the Holy Trinity, uncompromising respect for the testimony of the canonical Scriptures, and wise judgments regarding disputed questions. Those who are unfamiliar with Letham's works will be introduced to a theologian who combines theological acumen with lucid brevity, a rare combination not often found in books on important theological topics. I am delighted at the opportunity to introduce this new volume.

While reading Letham's *The Holy Spirit*, I could not help but recall a professor's sage advice during my graduate studies in theology. Clearly exasperated with the publication of theological studies that were, in his judgment, born more out of vanity ("publish or perish") than out of an acknowledged need to contribute clarity on a particular theological doctrine, my professor laid down three simple guidelines for would-be authors: (1) the book should make a genuine contribution or fill a gap in the present literature on its topic; (2) the book should present a mature, wise, and thoughtful treatment that exhibits a broad familiarity with its topic; and (3) the book should not be born out of a desire to be clever or innovative, a species of theological whimsy that does not enhance the church's witness to the truth.

By the measure of these guidelines, Letham's study passes the test with flying colors. Sympathetic readers of *The Holy Spirit* will discover a book that makes a much-needed contribution to our understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, especially in the context of the modern emergence of Pentecostal and charismatic views. They will also discover a book whose treatment is deeply rooted in the history of theological reflection on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Far from being a piece of theological whimsy, Letham's handling of the topic is consistently thoughtful, wise, and mature. Readers will also encounter an author who respectfully engages in conversation with theologians who span the course of the history of theology.

The first part of Letham's book, entitled "The Holy Spirit and the Trinity," exhibits his familiarity with the history of theological reflection on the Holy Trinity. Letham views the church's confession of the Trinity as an expression of the "cumulative biblical exegesis of the whole church." While some readers may question Letham's decision to begin with a survey of the church's reflection on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit before treating the biblical witness to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the history of redemption, Letham properly recognizes that the interpretation of Scripture's witness did not begin in the modern period. Accordingly, it is inappropriate to engage directly with the scriptural witness regarding the Holy Spirit, as though modern readers of the biblical text may ignore the church's engagement with this witness throughout the centuries. Thus, unlike many contemporary studies of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the first part of Letham's book lays a foundation for an understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit by taking readers on an extended tour through the history of confessional and theological reflection. Rather than beginning with contemporary voices and emphases, Letham welcomes his readers to join him in exploring the fruits of the church's historic reflection on the Holy Spirit.

In the course of his discussion of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, Letham traces the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the road to the Council of Constantinople I (381). This council represented a kind of watershed in the early church's confession of

the Trinity. In the aftermath of the critical decision of the Council of Nicaea (325) on the deity of the Son, the church reached a consensus that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son—the same in being, yet distinct in person or *hypostasis*. To the affirmation of Nicaea that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, Constantinople added that the church believes "in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets."

Two features of Letham's treatment of the church's historic consensus regarding the Holy Spirit are especially noteworthy.

First, on the dispute between the Eastern and Western church regarding the "double procession" of the Spirit from the Father and the Son (*ex Patre filioque procedit*), Letham steers a middle course. In Letham's estimation, the common Western objection to the Eastern church's denial of the double procession, namely, that it fails to affirm the intimate relation between the Spirit and the Son, is overstated. Since the Eastern church has expressed a willingness to affirm that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son, the claim that the Spirit is not intimately related to the Son within the Eastern view is somewhat exaggerated. Moreover, by virtue of the Eastern church's acknowledgment that the three persons of the Trinity mutually indwell and interpenetrate one another, the procession of the Spirit from the Father is a procession from the Father of the Son, who eternally is "in and with the Father." Because the West's formulation affirms a common procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, Letham maintains that it tends to confuse the distinction between the persons of the Father and the Son in their relation to the Spirit. In order to clarify this possible confusion between the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son, Letham proposes that we use the expression of Cyril of Alexandria (A.D. 378–444): the Spirit proceeds "from the Father *in* the Son." In Letham's judgment, Cyril's formulation better expresses the mutual indwelling of the three Trinitarian persons, avoids any residue of subordinationism (by excluding the Son in respect to the procession of the Spirit), and offers a sure basis for the economic

mission of the Spirit in granting us communion through Christ with the Father.

Although Letham's proposal on the Spirit's procession from the Father in and through the Son will not likely bring about ecumenical consensus between East and West, it certainly deserves consideration as a credible contribution to the resolution of this long-standing controversy. And it does so on the crucial principle that what the triune God does in the history of redemption reveals God as he truly and necessarily is. The "order" of the eternal and necessary relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit within the one being of God is revealed in the economy of all of God's works in creation, providence, and grace. Quoting John Owen, Letham affirms that "the order of operation among the distinct persons depends on the order of their subsistence" in the Trinity. The missions of the three persons in the economy of redemption correspond to the intra-Trinitarian relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All things in creation and redemption come from the Father through the Son in and by the Holy Spirit.

Second, on the basis of his defense of the main axioms of historic Trinitarian theology, Letham critically engages with a diversity of "Spirit Christologies" that have emerged in recent theology. These Spirit Christologies proceed from the conviction that historic Christian theology has not given sufficient attention to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Letham distinguishes between non-Trinitarian and Trinitarian Spirit Christologies. Non-Trinitarian Spirit Christologies tend to be unitarian in their doctrine of God and adoptionistic in their doctrine of Christ. The preexistence of the eternal Son is denied, and Jesus becomes merely an outstanding example of experiencing God by his indwelling Spirit. Trinitarian Spirit Christologies retain a semblance of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity but reverse the relation obtaining between the Son and the Spirit. Rather than the Father's sending the Son, and the Father and Son's sending the Spirit, Trinitarian Spirit Christologies ascribe priority to the Spirit as the one through whom the Son proceeds. Rather than viewing the Spirit's ministry as pointing to and glorifying Christ, Christ is subordinated to the Spirit, and his work

is merely a prelude to the ministry of the Spirit. Letham's critical assessment of these Spirit Christologies demonstrates convincingly that a reversal of the proper order of the eternal relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit has perilous consequences for the church's understanding of the nature of the Spirit's ministry. Rather than viewing the Spirit as the "bond of unity" between believers and Christ, as the "minister of Christ's liberality" whereby we are restored to life-communion with the Father through the Son (Calvin), the Spirit's ministry subverts or takes priority over the ministry of Christ.

In the second part of the book, entitled "The Holy Spirit in the Bible," Letham provides a comprehensive survey of the Spirit's work throughout the history of redemption. Letham's survey respects the progressive nature of the Bible's revelation of the person and work of the Spirit. Although the Old Testament provides hints of the unique person or *hypostasis* of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament provides a more clear and fulsome disclosure of the Holy Spirit's distinct person and ministry. Letham's treatment of the testimony of the New Testament follows the sequence of the great complex of events in redemptive history that include the ministry of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son; the resurrection and ascension of Christ; the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost; the work of the Spirit through the apostolic ministry; the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit's work in bringing all things to their perfection in the coming kingdom of God. Throughout this part of his study, Letham offers a masterly and thorough account of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, one that confirms the truth of the church's historic doctrine of the Trinity. The New Testament's witness supports the Trinitarian axiom that the "works of the triune God are indivisible" (*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*). Letham also shows clearly that the work "appropriate" to the Holy Spirit is to bear witness to, and bring believers into fellowship with, the incarnate Son, whom the Father sent into the world for us and our salvation. The works of the triune God, particularly the work of the Holy Spirit, can be understood only in terms of the Trinitarian relations that the church confesses in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Because Letham's study of the Holy Spirit is governed throughout by the church's historic understanding of the Trinity, several dominant themes emerge in his treatment of the biblical testimony regarding the Spirit's ministry. First, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is always tethered to the Word and apostolic testimony concerning Christ. The Holy Spirit's ministry is self-effacing in its focus on the Word of Christ. The Spirit is pleased to communicate, as the Spirit of truth, all those things he has heard from the Father concerning the Son whom he has sent (John 16:13–15). Where Christ is known and worshiped, you may be sure that the Holy Spirit is present. Second, Letham gently criticizes the overemphasis in theologians such as John Owen on the role of the Spirit in furnishing Christ in his human nature for his ministry as Mediator. Although Letham acknowledges the propriety of this emphasis (it comports with the Trinitarian axiom that the three persons of the Trinity act indivisibly in all their operations), he argues that it may reflect a "Nestorian tendency"to separate the human nature from the divine nature, thereby denying the "communion of the attributes" in one and the same Christ. And third, Letham strongly rejects the Pentecostal and charismatic claim that Pentecost involved a postconversion baptism of some believers and not others. In this connection, Letham offers one of the best, and most theologically grounded, critical assessments of the tendency within Pentecostalism to identify the Spirit's ministry with subjective experiences or empowerments that some believers enjoy in distinction from others. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the one baptism that grounds the incorporation of all believers into the one body of Christ. All believers are incorporated into union with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit through baptism. Rather than associating baptism in the Spirit with subjective experiences of the Spirit's presence, we must view the ministry of the Spirit in theological and Trinitarian categories. Through the Spirit, believers are drawn into fellowship with the Father in and through the Son.

I make these observations about Letham's study to whet the appetite of any would-be reader to take up and read his fine contribution to our understanding of the Holy Spirit. Those who do so

will discover a rich treasury of theological and biblical insight. If you are looking for a study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that makes a contribution to our understanding and genuinely fills a gap in contemporary literature on the topic, you will not be disappointed. Indeed, you will encounter a theologian who, in his engagement with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, understands well the task of systematic theology as Herman Bavinck aptly describes it:

> Dogmatics [systematic theology] shows us how God, who is all-sufficient in himself, nevertheless glorifies himself in his creation, which, even when it is torn apart by sin, is gathered up again in Christ (Eph. 1:10). It describes for us God, always God, from beginning to end—God in his being, God in his creation, God against sin, God in Christ, God breaking down all resistance through the Holy Spirit and guiding the whole of creation back to the objective he decreed for it: the glory of his name. Dogmatics, therefore, is not a dull and arid science. It is a theodicy, a doxology to all God's virtues and perfections, a hymn of adoration and thanksgiving, a "glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14).[1]

Letham's study is indeed a "glory to God in the highest" that sheds fresh light on the oft-neglected and misunderstood glory of the Holy Spirit.

Cornelis P. Venema

1. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 112.

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I thank Ian R. Hepburn for granting me access to a manuscript of lectures given by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel,

London, in the 1960s, typed by a "very reliable" fellow member of that congregation. Throughout our time in Wales, we have greatly valued the fellowship of Bethel Presbyterian Church, Cardiff, and the loving leadership of the session.

Above all, I am particularly grateful to my wife, Joan. She has been a constant support throughout my career and our current forty-six years of married life. It is exceedingly doubtful whether I could ever have done what I have done, such as it may be, without her. She has eminently exhibited the fruit of the Holy Spirit, in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, not least in the last few months when, suffering herself from ill health, she has willingly tended to me following injuries and, additionally, side effects from surgery. Besides this, she has diligently ministered to the spiritual and material needs of members of our congregation. It is to her that this book is dedicated.

Blessed be the kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of the ages.

Veni, creator Spiritus
Lent 2022

Introduction

This book follows an invitation by the publisher to undertake a trilogy on the Trinitarian persons, stemming from my earlier work on the Holy Trinity (2004, 2019). Further volumes on the Son and the Father are projected. I contemplate this with a sense of overwhelming responsibility. Something in me tells me that it is too much for one individual to give an account of the Holy Trinity in all its uniqueness and glory, and yet also to write of the three *hypostases* or "persons" distinctly. This is literally an awesome task, too great for a mere human to undertake. Yet God has made himself known to us. He has come among us in the person of his Son, living as man. He has poured out his Spirit upon us and within us. We can so speak; indeed, we must speak, if only through trembling and stammering lips. One thing is certain: this book, as all others on the subject, will be nowhere near adequate. John Stott often quoted the words of Charles Simeon, who upon entering the pulpit would remind himself: "One thing I know, I am a fool; of that I am certain."[1] We are all fools, for such wisdom as we have comes from the Holy Spirit alone.

The book has the following outline. The first section is a historical survey of discussion in the church. The focus here is that the Trinity is indivisible and so the works of the Spirit are inseparable from those of the Father and the Son. The second section is biblical,

1. Heard on two occasions, at the Theological Students Fellowship conference at Swanwick in January 1969 and again at an informal gathering for graduates at Westminster Theological Seminary on May 25, 1976, to which Stott had been invited as he was passing through the area. Stott had a lifelong admiration for Simeon, and rightly so.

tracing the pervasive and increasing stress on the Spirit in creation, the history of redemption, the life and ministry of Christ, the work of the apostles, and the establishment of the church, ultimately extending to our own transformation and eventual resurrection. The book comes to its climax with a short chapter that asks how we are to discern where the Spirit is clearly at work. I hope readers will not miss this because, to my mind, it is the single most important chapter. Finally, I have included an appendix on modern developments relating to our understanding of the Spirit. Throughout the book, words that are included in the glossary are in bold at their first appearance in a chapter.

We start with the historical discussions in the church. This hammers home the vital point that the Spirit is God, one of the Trinity. Being so, he is indivisible from the Father and the Son. Moreover, in all the works of God, all three persons work together inseparably, and so when we consider the Spirit, we must not think of him as out on his own. These commitments, at the heart of the faith of the church for centuries, are vital to appreciate when we come to consider the biblical testimony. It is absurd to assume that we must ground everything on our own exegesis of the Bible, while ignoring the cumulative wisdom of the people of God down through the ages. That route invariably leads to disaster. It is an attempt to reinvent the wheel and frequently regurgitates old errors and heresies.

There has been a welter of discussion on the Spirit in recent decades, some of which is still a matter of debate, difference, and sometimes controversy, but I do not focus on such territory. Nor do I wish to be confrontational. The intention is to develop a holistic and canonical view of the Holy Spirit in the context of the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, and redemption. Not that we shy away from disputed matters. The appendix in part addresses these. We can surely disagree freely, as long as we recognize the reality of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

Abbreviations

AugStud	*Augustinian Studies*
BAGD	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957)
BHS	Baptism of the Holy Spirit
C	Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed
CD	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–77)
CO	John Calvin, *Calvini Opera* (*Opera quae supersunt omnia*), ed. Guilelmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, and Eduardus Reuss, 59 vols., *Corpus Reformatorum* 29–87 (Brunswick: 1863–1900)
Institutes	John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. Ford Lewis Battles, trans. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960)
JEPTA	*Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*
JPT	*Journal of Pentecostal Theology*
LN	Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988)
Lumière et Vie	*Lumière et Vie: Revue théologique d'information et de formation*
LXX	Septuagint

NPNF[1]	Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1st ser. (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995)
NPNF[2]	Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ser. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988)
PG	J.-P. Migne et al., eds., *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1857–66)
PL	J.-P. Migne et al., eds., *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1878–90)
Pneuma	*Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
ST	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*
StPatr	*Studia Patristica*
SVTQ	*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
Them	*Themelios*
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

Part 1

The Holy Spirit and the Trinity

The Holy Spirit is one of the three Trinity *hypostases* or "persons," fully God without remainder, of one identical and indivisible being with the Father and the Son. The Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, is Creator and Redeemer. Together with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is to be worshiped and adored. In all of God's works, the Spirit is active inseparably with the Father and the Son. Yet since each of God's works is specifically the work of a particular Trinitarian person, so to the Spirit is attributed the effective power by which these works are accomplished. But we must always see this in the context of harmonious, united, and inseparable action.

All our thought about the Holy Spirit, in terms of both the inner life of the Holy Trinity and also his works in creation and grace, must proceed on this basis.

The church's recognition of these realities took time to develop and come to articulate expression. This section surveys that process. It reflects the cumulative biblical exegesis of the whole church. A knowledge of how that took place will help us to put in perspective questions that arise in our own day.

1

The Road to Constantinople

The Holy Spirit in the Church Fathers

In order to appreciate the presence and work of the Holy Spirit today, we need to ask how this has been seen over the past two thousand years of the church's existence. Such a search is not a merely antiquarian exercise. It is vital for us to ensure that our own thinking is within the parameters shaped by more than fifty generations of those who have gone before us. How else can we be clear that our experience is demonstrably Christian? We have two millennia of accumulated wisdom, biblical exegesis, and concentrated thought to guide us. While not all of it may seem fruitful, much if not most will. Besides, attempting to reinvent the wheel is a fruitless exercise and has frequently led to serious error or even heresy.

The first four centuries of the church involved a slow process through which a clearer grasp of the Holy Spirit's identity emerged. Because of controversial proposals that undermined Christ's divine status, the dominant focus was on the relation of the Son to the Father. Consequently, less attention was given to the Spirit. In the first two centuries, the Spirit was generally considered as the Creator.[1] By the late second century, a threat had emerged from forms

1. Michel R. Barnes, "The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology," *AugStud* 39, no. 2 (2008): 169–86; Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius the Great and Didymus the Blind* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011).

of **monarchianism**, which excessively stressed the unity of God, "the one rule" or **monarchy**, eroding the distinctiveness of the three **persons**. In this, it was held that God's revelation as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit was for the purposes of redemptive history only and did not represent eternal realities. The consequence was that if this were true, we could have no valid knowledge of God, since his revelation in human history would not disclose who he is eternally. This provoked a reaction from Irenaeus and especially Tertullian. Eventually the church rejected this form of **modalism**, known as **Sabellianism**, at the Synod of Antioch in 268.

Irenaeus (A.D. 130–200)

In his developed theology,[2] Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, used a striking image that points to a triadic view of God. Writing against **gnosticism**, which posited a supreme entity, from which a chain of beings emanated, involving angelic intermediaries, Irenaeus repeatedly wrote of the Father's having created by his "two hands." Alluding to Genesis 1:26 and asserting **creation *ex nihilo***, he wrote that God stood in need of no angel to help him, "as if he did not possess his own hands. For with him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, he made all things, to whom also he speaks, saying 'Let us make man after our image and likeness.'"[3] The Son and the Spirit are both coeternal with the Father, he argued, and one with him, for they share in what is exclusively a work of God. So "the Father plans and gives commands, the Son performs and creates, while the Spirit nourishes and increases."[4]

2. Michel René Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," *Nova et Vetera* 7, no. 1 (2009): 67–106, presents a close and thorough case that only in his later works does Irenaeus take the Holy Spirit into consideration in relation to creation. This is largely due to his focus on God as Spirit and his need to defend the faith against gnosticism. Moreover, apart from Athenagoras, there was not a robust doctrine of the Holy Spirit at the time, nor did Irenaeus develop a clear idea of the distinct identity of the Spirit. In large measure, this was due to his living in the second century with the limitations that this imposed.

3. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.1; *PG*, 7:1032.

4. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.38.3; *PG*, 7:1107–8.

Irenaeus extended this metaphor to the creation of Adam and to the incarnation of the second Adam: "For never at any time did Adam escape the *hands of God*, to whom the Father speaking said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' And for this reason in the last times . . . his hands formed a living man, in order that Adam might be created [again] after the image and likeness of God."[5] The translation of Enoch and Elijah followed a similar pattern, for "by means of the very same hands through which they were molded at the beginning, did they receive this translation and assumption. For in Adam the hands of God had become accustomed to set in order, to rule, and to sustain his own workmanship, and to bring it and place it where they pleased."[6] So for Irenaeus, God's whole work of creation, providence, and grace was carried out by his two hands, the Son and the Holy Spirit. At first sight, this seems to subordinate the Son and the Spirit as merely God's agents. In fact, before the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), some form of subordination was endemic. But Irenaeus did not consider the two hands external to God. They are unmistakably divine, always with the Father. There is but one God, while the Son "was always with the Father; and . . . the Spirit was present with Him, anterior to all creation."[7] Henry Swete remarks that as the hands of God, they are divine and coequal.[8] The Father has first place, however, and salvation focuses on union with him.[9]

Irenaeus considered at length neither the internal **relations** of God, of the Son and the Spirit with the Father, nor their preexistence.[10] But he did make a start, with the external works of God, particularly the baptism of Jesus. There the Holy Spirit, like a dove,

5. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.1.3; *PG*, 7:1123.

6. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.5.1; *PG*, 7:1134–35.

7. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.2–4; *PG*, 7:1032–34; Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 5.

8. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of the Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 88.

9. Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. Matthias Westerhoff (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 64.

10. Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 204; Studer, *Trinity*, 62.

descended on Jesus. Receiving the Spirit as a gift from the Father, Jesus then imparted him to his followers, sending the Spirit upon all the earth.[11] Jesus' anointing at the Jordan reveals the triad, for we see he who anoints (the Father); the Son, who is anointed by the Spirit; and the Spirit, who is the anointing.[12] The reverse movement is seen in our redemption, which Irenaeus understood as a form of ascent by steps like a ladder, through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father.[13] Indeed, without the Spirit of God, we cannot be saved.[14]

Montanism

A second-century movement gained ground and posed a different sort of challenge to the church. Montanus, who was from Phrygia in Asia Minor and was a Christian convert, began to prophesy, in an ecstatic, trancelike state, joined by two women, Prisca and Maximilia. They claimed that this was direct revelation from the Holy Spirit. Moreover, they held that the return of Christ was imminent and would happen in Phrygia. Alongside these claims was a rigorous moralism, with fasting emphasized and marriage discouraged. The movement posed a threat to the church, since it implied that the Spirit was giving extra revelation additional to Scripture. Eventually, in A.D. 177, Montanus was excommunicated and Montanism as such became an independent sect.

Tertullian (160–220) shared some Montanist beliefs later in his career. But it is a matter of dispute whether he left the Roman Catholic Church and became a Montanist or, if he did, whether he remained one.[15]

11. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.17.1–3; *PG*, 7:929–31.

12. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.2–3; *PG*, 7:932–34.

13. Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 90–91; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.36.2; 3.24.1; Irenaeus, *Demonstration*, c. 7. Later, John Calvin was to develop this theme; see Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

14. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.36.2.

15. Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 67–83; Augustine, *De haeresibus ad quodvultdeus*, 86, in *PL*, 42:47; Allan G. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 822. I am grateful to Tony Lane for some clarifying remarks on this.

The Third Century

Together with the modalist tendencies of monarchianism, there was a threat from the opposite direction. This was an unreflective form of **subordinationism** in which the Son and the Spirit were seen as clearly distinct from the Father but were accorded lesser status. In refuting Montanism, the move toward distinguishing the Son and the Spirit from the Father may have encouraged this development, since the linguistic tools did not exist to explain how the three could be distinct, yet one and indivisible. John 1:3 was commonly used in support, the Spirit seen as one of the things brought into existence by the Logos.[16] It is difficult to be precise because, in some form or another, this tendency was pervasive. Sometimes Origen (185–254) has been connected with this development, but this view is neither accurate nor fair. In one sense, before the fourth-century crisis, this endemic form of undeveloped subordinationism ought not to be equated with the later repudiation of the deity of the Son and the Spirit. Origen definitely held that both were to be regarded as God, not as creatures.[17]

The Fourth-Century Crisis

A third and crucial stage occurred from the middle of the fourth century, following the controversy provoked by **Arius**, who held that the Son was not coeternal with the Father but had been brought into existence by him. The crisis was later greatly exacerbated by **Eunomius**, who held similar views but was a bishop and far more able. The resulting controversy led eventually to the Trinitarian settlement at Constantinople in 381. The controversy was fueled by subordinationist groups such as the **Homoians** and **Heterousians**.[18] At first, the issues surrounded the relation of the Son to the Father, but in the years leading up to the Council of Constantinople, attention turned to

16. Lewis Ayres, "Innovation and Ressourcement in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," *AugStud* 39, no. 2 (2008): 187–205; DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, *Works on the Spirit*, 12–13.

17. See Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 127–34, esp. his wise comments to the foot of page 132; Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, rev. and expanded ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 100–107.

18. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, *Works on the Spirit*, 13–15.

the status of the Holy Spirit. The **Arians** drew attention to the work of the Spirit, but as a tacit suggestion of his inferiority to the Son, who in turn they regarded as a creature.[19] Lewis Ayres points out that in the fourth century, all sides recognized that there was an **order** among the three persons. Those opposed to the Creed of Nicaea (325) argued that this entailed that the Spirit was less than the Father and the Son. It was generally agreed that the Spirit's status was not immediately clear or explicit in Scripture. This was acknowledged by Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, since they appealed to the "sense of Scripture" and in the latter's case to progressive revelation.[20] The crisis elicited some major works on the Spirit, which we will now consider.

Athanasius (A.D. 295–373)

Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* were the first extensive discussion of the Holy Spirit. He wrote them between 355 and 360 against the *tropicii* (trope-mongers), a small group in Egypt who, while accepting the deity of the Son, balked at ascribing the same status to the Spirit.[21] Serapion, a bishop, asked Athanasius for advice in dealing with this group. Athanasius called them *tropicii* because they appear to have specialized in biblical interpretation by tropes. Athanasius referred to their predilection for "modes of exegesis."[22] He countered their claims, based on Amos 4:13, that God had created the Holy Spirit,[23] and from 1 Timothy 5:21 that the Spirit is to be classed with angels.[24]

The Persons of the Trinity Are Indivisible

The indivisibility of the Trinity was central to Athanasius's argument. He stated that the Father and the Son are not separated,

19. Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 169.

20. Ayres, "Innovation and Ressourcement," *passim*.

21. Ayres indicates that the *tropicii* do not appear outside this context. Ayres, "Innovation and Ressourcement," 187–91.

22. Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, 1.7.2. Quotations are from DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, *Works on the Spirit*.

23. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.3.1f. Note that the Hebrew word *ruach*, translated "wind" in the ESV, is also the common word for "spirit." See chapter 5.

24. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.10.4f.

"but in their hands is the Spirit, who cannot be parted either from him that sent or from him that conveyed him."[25] This insistence on the inseparability of the persons of the Trinity was a constant theme. Following this, Athanasius regarded the Spirit to be inseparably one with the Father and the Son. Since he proceeds from the Father, he is ever in the hands of the Father who sends and of the Son who conveys him.[26] The Spirit is in Christ as the Son is in the Father. What is spoken from God is said through Christ in the Spirit.[27]

Against the argument of the *tropicii* that if the Spirit is from the Father he must be a second son, and brother to the Son, Athanasius replied that there is no other Father than the Father, no other Son than the Son. Hence the one and only Father is Father of a Son who is one and only. As the Son is uniquely related to the Father, so too is the Spirit.[28] The Spirit cannot change, fills all things, and is present in all things.[29]

The Relation between the Spirit and the Son

Athanasius turned to the relation between the Son and the Spirit. He stressed the connection, seen in Jesus' baptism, between the Spirit and salvation. There Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and in turn supplies the Spirit to his church. Since Jesus sanctified himself for our sake, the descent of the Spirit was a descent on us because Jesus bore our body. When he was washed in the Jordan, we were washed in him and by him. Underlying such a claim is the recognition that Jesus' baptism was theologically connected to his crucifixion (Matt. 3:13–15). When he received the Spirit, we received him. The flesh he assumed was anointed, and this for us. Since the Son had united us to himself in his incarnation, only he could unite us to the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is his.

Athanasius affirms repeatedly that the Son is the giver of the Spirit. Elsewhere he writes, "Through whom and from whom was

25. Athanasius, *Defence of Dionysius*, 17; *PG*, 25:503–6.
26. Athanasius, *Statement of Faith*, 4; *PG*, 25:203–6.
27. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.14; *PG*, 26:564–65.
28. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.16; *PG*, 26:568–69.
29. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.26; *PG*, 26:589–93.

it appropriate that the Spirit should be given but through the Son, whose Spirit he is?"—since there was no other way that we could receive him unless through the Son, who was united to us in the form of a servant and, as such, received the Spirit for us. He continues, "Because as man he is said to have received the Spirit, the flesh being first sanctified in him, we subsequently receive the Spirit's grace from his fullness."[30]

The relation of the Spirit to the Son is the most distinctive aspect of Athanasius's discussion in these letters, one that sets his theology of the Spirit apart from others who came later. Clearly, the reason for this is that the *tropicii* held to the deity of the Son. Athanasius builds on this to demonstrate that the Spirit should therefore also be accorded deity; he does not mean to exclude the Father. As the Father is light and the Son his radiance, we see in the Son the Spirit by whom we are enlightened. In turn, when the Spirit enlightens us, Christ in the Spirit enlightens us. As the Father is fountain and the Son is called river, we are said to drink the Spirit. When we drink the Spirit, we drink of Christ. As Christ is true Son, so when we receive the Spirit we are made sons. When the Spirit is given to us, God is in us. When God is in us, the Son is in us. When we are quickened by the Spirit, Christ lives in us.[31] This mutual indwelling of the three underlies their inseparable involvement in the one work of God for our salvation. The Spirit is never apart from the Word, the Son, a point that Athanasius repeats time and time again.[32]

So for Athanasius, the Spirit is the image of the Son, proper to the Son, distinct from the creatures, and one with God. Since the Spirit joins creation to the Word, he cannot belong to the creatures, and since he bestows sonship on creation, he cannot be alien from the Son. He belongs to the Godhead of the Father, and in the Spirit the Word deifies creatures. Consequently, since he makes all things

30. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 1.46–50, here 1.50; *PG*, 26:105–18 (my translation).

31. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.19; *PG*, 26:573–76.

32. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.14, 17, 20, 31; 3.5; 4.4; *PG*, 26:564–65, 569–72, 576–80, 600–605, 632–33, 641–44.

divine, he cannot be outside the Godhead of the Father[33] and is indivisible from the Son.[34] As the Son is in the Spirit as in his own image, so also the Father is in the Son.[35] The Trinity is indivisible, so wherever the Father is mentioned the Son is also understood, and where the Son is the Holy Spirit is in him.[36]

Moreover, as the Son has his particular property—being **begotten**—in relation to the Father, so does the Holy Spirit in relation to the Son[37]; the Son is the image of the Father, but so also the Holy Spirit is the image of the Son.[38] Athanasius denies an obvious rejoinder that there are consequently two sons, maintaining the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit in doing so, but the fact that he feels obliged to make such a point indicates how inseparable he understands the relation of the Son and the Spirit to be. Indeed, the Holy Spirit has the same order or rank (*taxis*) and **nature** (***phūsis***) toward the Son as the Son has toward the Father. The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son, and so also the Holy Spirit is in the Son and the Son is in the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Spirit cannot be divided from the Word.[39] So also the Spirit is in God the Father and from the Father.[40] As the Son comes in the name of the Father, so the Holy Spirit comes in the name of the Son.[41] There is one efficacy and action of the Holy Trinity, for the Father makes all things through the Word by the Holy Spirit.[42]

Similarly, the Spirit receives from the Word, while the Word gives to the Spirit, and whatever the Spirit has he has from the Word. Whatever the Word has in the Father he wishes to be given us through the Spirit.[43] Nothing could be clearer than the intimate, unbreakable relation between the Son and the Holy Spirit in

33. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.24–25; *PG*, 26:585–89.
34. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 3.5; *PG*, 26:632–33.
35. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.20; 3.1; *PG*, 26:576–80, 624–28.
36. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.14; *PG*, 26:564–65.
37. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 3.1; *PG*, 26:624–28.
38. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 4.3; *PG*, 26:640–41.
39. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.20–21; *PG*, 26:576–81.
40. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.25; *PG*, 26:588–89.
41. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.20; *PG*, 26:576–80.
42. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.20, 28, 30; *PG*, 26:576–80, 593–600.
43. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 3.24–25. See also 3.44; *PG*, 26:373–78, 415–18; *PG*, 26:373–78, 415–18.

Athanasius's thought. The three persons indwell one another, are in one another. This applies as much to the Son and the Spirit as to the Son and the Father or the Father and the Spirit.

These relations among the three persons being what they are, Athanasius understands the **procession** and giving of the Spirit to occur in the indivisible union of the triad. The Spirit, he says, proceeds from the Father, since he shines forth, is sent, and is given from the Word, who is from the Father. Furthermore, the Son sends the Spirit. The Son glorifies the Father and the Spirit glorifies the Son. So in order of nature, the Spirit bears the same relation to the Son as the Son to the Father. As the Son, who is in the Father and the Father in him, is not a creature, so the Spirit cannot be ranked with the creatures, since he is in the Son and the Son in him.[44] On the contrary, the Spirit is proper to the Word, and is of the holy triad.

> So, the Trinity is holy and perfect, confessed in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. . . . It is self-consistent and indivisible in nature, and it has one activity. The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit. In this way is the unity of the holy Trinity preserved. . . . It is not a Trinity in name alone . . . but in truth and actual existence. For just as the Father is "he who is," so too is his Word "he who is" and God over all. And the Holy Spirit . . . exists and subsists truly. And the Catholic Church does not entertain the thought of anything less than these three.[45]

Hence, while Athanasius does not state it explicitly in precise words, this demands that the ***homoousios*** is applicable to the Holy Spirit as well as the Son.[46]

44. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.20–21; *PG*, 26:576–81.

45. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.27–28; *PG*, 26:593–96. Unless otherwise mentioned, quotations of Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion* and from Didymus the Blind are from DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, *Works on the Spirit*.

46. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.14, 16–33; 2.2; *PG*, 26:564–65, 568–612.

The Spirit and Our Salvation

In terms of our salvation, we are sealed by the Spirit, and so made partakers of the divine nature, as Peter puts it (2 Peter 1:4), and thus all creation partakes of the Word in the Spirit.[47] It is important to note that Athanasius normally uses the term *metochoi* ("partakers, participants") for the saints but reserves *idios* ("proper") to the relation of the Son and the Spirit to the Father in the indivisible Trinity. We are given to participate in the divine nature by grace (v. 4) and remain creatures, but the Spirit and the Son are **ontologically** one with the Father from eternity. The gifts of the Spirit are also given from the Father through the Son. For all things of the Father are of the Son also, and so those things given from the Son in the Spirit are gifts of the Father. These gifts are given in the triad, from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. When we partake of him, we have the love of the Father and the grace of the Son and the communion of the Spirit himself. Once again, the activity of the triad is one, for all is originated and effected through the Word in the Spirit, for the Spirit is indivisible from the Word.[48] Referring to John 4:21–24, Athanasius says that true worshipers worship the Father in the Spirit and the Truth (the Lord himself), confessing the Son and in him the Spirit.[49] This powerful focus on the relation of the Spirit to the Son was not to be followed by the Greek church.

Didymus the Blind (A.D. 313–98)

Didymus's treatise on the Spirit was written only a few years after Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*, in around 360–65. In it Didymus argues that the deity of the Spirit is demonstrated by his works. His main point is that the Spirit is the source of sanctification for all Christians and angels, which proves that he is not a creature, for a creature could never do such a thing. The Spirit is the fullness of the gifts of God. "If he sanctifies those who are

47. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.23; *PG*, 26:584–85.

48. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.30–31; *PG*, 26:597–605.

49. Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.33; *PG*, 26:605–8. On the inseparability of the Spirit and the Word in Athanasius, see Ayres, "Innovation and Ressourcement," here 197.

capable of participating in him, then he should be placed with the Father and the Son."[50]

Indivisibility and Inseparability

Didymus agrees with Athanasius that the three are indivisible and work inseparably, for "the fact that there is a single grace of the Father and the Son perfected by activity of the Holy Spirit demonstrates that the Trinity is of one **substance**."[51] Consequently, the **attributes** of God, exemplified by love, are possessed equally by all three persons.[52] "Whoever has communion with the Holy Spirit immediately has communion with both the Father and the Son, [and] whenever anyone has the love of the Father, he has it as a gift from the Son through the Holy Spirit. In addition, whenever anyone is a participant of the grace of Jesus Christ, he has the same grace as a gift from the Father through the Holy Spirit."[53] Thus the activity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is the same, and so they are a single indivisible substance.[54]

The Spirit Is Clearly Different from the Creation

Consequently, the Spirit is uncircumscribed,[55] present to and indwelling the angels so that they are holy through **participation** in the Spirit.[56] The Spirit does not share the nature of the creature.[57] He is participated in by creatures and therefore is uncreated.[58] Baptism is incomplete if it is administered in the name of the Father and the Son only.[59]

50. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 19; DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, *Works on the Spirit*, 149, see also 45. See also Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 221–25.

51. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 76.

52. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 77–78. See also 82–98.

53. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 80.

54. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 81, 103, 191.

55. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 23.

56. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 24–25.

57. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29.

58. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 54. See our comments above on Athanasius, *Serapion*, 1.30–31; *PG*, 26:597–605, in note 48.

59. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 101.

There Is an Order among the Three

The Spirit has gone out from the Father[60] and is sent from the Son "without moving from one place to another."[61] "The Father does not send the Spirit without the Son sending him since he comes through the identical will of the Father and Son."[62] In all this, Didymus acknowledges, the Trinity is beyond all material substances, and so "everything we say is said καταχρηστικῶς, that is, in an improper sense."[63]

Basil the Great (A.D. 330–79)

A native of Cappadocia who became bishop of Caesarea, Basil is noteworthy for his organizational skill and his development of monastic life. He wrote a volume, *Against Eunomius*, in 364,[64] but his mature thought on the Holy Spirit and the Trinity is found in his magnum opus, the treatise *On the Holy Spirit* against the ***pneumatomachii***, written around 376.[65] He writes most probably against his former mentor Eustathius, who had latterly taught that the Spirit is subordinate. This work is a staunch defense of the Spirit's deity. Basil has often been thought hesitant in affirming this, while Mark Larson undermined such an interpretation.[66] We will note below Christopher

60. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 111.

61. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 112.

62. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 117.

63. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 167.

64. For a detailed discussion of Eunomius's theology and Basil's response in addition to the literature cited above, see Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1979), vol. 2. Milton V. Anastos, "Basil's *Kata Eunomiou*: A Critical Analysis," in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, ed. Paul Jonathan Fedwick (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), 67–136, considers this work at length, which has neither been published in a critical edition nor been translated into a modern language. On Basil, see Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Volker Henning Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre Des Basilius von Cäsarea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols. (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1992), 3:204–36, esp. 230–33; John Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2, *The Nicene Faith*, pt. 2, *One of the Holy Trinity* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 263–324.

65. See Studer, *Trinity*, 148–51, for a perceptive summary.

66. Mark J. Larson, "A Re-Examination of *De Spiritu Sancto*: Saint Basil's Bold

Beeley's case that he stopped short of what became the Constantinopolitan settlement. Some have pointed out that Basil does not speak of the Spirit as *homoousios* with the Father and the Son,[67] in marked contrast to his friend Gregory of Nazianzus.[68] Larson, however, marshals evidence that Basil says the same thing in other words. Again, scholars have regarded it as read that he never explicitly identifies the Spirit as God.[69] Yet his comments belie this claim, and Gregory of Nazianzus's critical remarks to that effect may well apply to an earlier time.[70] It is probable that Basil was attempting to persuade his readers, including opponents, to align themselves with him and, in doing so, using subtle, diplomatic means to achieve his goal.[71] This is the opinion of Gregory.[72] John Behr adds that Basil may also have wanted, for those reasons, to stick to biblical language.[73] As a master administrator, Basil was more inclined to subtle persuasion than was the volatile Gregory, who was far more at home in scholarship and preaching and was an abject failure at church politics.

Liturgical Origin of the Dispute

Basil points to the liturgical origin of the dispute that occasioned the treatise. Opponents had attacked him for the prepositions he used in the doxology, in which he was accustomed to say "to the Father *with* the Son together *with* the Holy Spirit" rather than their approved form "*through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit." They considered his addition a novelty, extrabiblical, and contradictory. Their preferred form

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Defence of the Spirit's Deity," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 65–84.

67. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 126; Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:232.

68. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 10; *PG*, 36:144.

69. Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:231; Larson, "Re-Examination," 67–69.

70. Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 16.37; 19.49; 21.52; *PG*, 32:133, 155–60, 164–65 (all citations from Basil's treatise *On the Holy Spirit* are from Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit: St. Basil the Great*, trans. Stephen Hildebrand [Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011]); Larson, "Re-Examination," *passim*.

71. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 216–17.

72. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 43*, 8; *PG*, 36:504.

73. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pt. 2, 314.

allowed a clear subordinationist understanding, reducing the Son to an instrument and the Spirit to a creature, which Basil's expression offset.[74]

Distinction between *Ousia* and *Hypostasis*

These terms had been introduced at Nicaea. Their use in Greek thought was ambiguous and sometimes contradictory; much confusion resulted in subsequent years. For his part, Basil distinguished the *hypostases* clearly,[75] a development from Nicaea, where ***hypostasis*** and ***ousia*** were apparently interchangeable, the Father and the Son being said to be of the same *hypostasis*! By using *hypostasis* to denote the way in which God is three, and reserving *ousia* for the way in which he is one, Basil opened the way for clearer language to speak of the Trinity and thus of the internal **processions**.

The Son Is Inseparable from the Father

Basil strongly defended the Son as inseparable from the Father, against the pneumatomachian refusal to recognize the Son or the Spirit as together with the Father.[76] In nature the Son is with the Father, Basil insists, acting inseparably from the will of the Father.[77]

The Works of the Spirit Evidence His Nature

The commonly accepted doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit, Basil continues, is that he is of "the highest nature[,] . . . a necessary, intellectual substance that is infinite in power, unlimited in greatness, immeasurable by times or ages. . . . He perfects others, but himself lacks nothing. . . . He is the source of life[,] . . . complete all at once[,] . . . present everywhere. . . . He fills all things with power"—all terms and descriptions that can apply only to God. Those who are cleansed, he makes spiritual by fellowship with himself and conveys the gifts of "unending joy, remaining in God, kinship with God, and the highest object of desire, becoming God."[78]

74. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 1.3–4. See to 4.6; *PG*, 32:72–73.
75. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 5.7; *PG*, 32:77–81.
76. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 6.13–14; *PG*, 32:88–89.
77. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 7.16–8.20; *PG*, 32:93–105.
78. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 9.22–23; *PG*, 32:108–9.

The Spirit Is Ranked with God

The Holy Spirit is ranked by our Lord with the Father and the Son in the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19). What closer conjunction can there be than this? Basil asks. Our salvation is established in baptism through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.[79] Thus the Spirit is ranked with God, inseparable from the Father and the Son "on account of the communion of nature (ἐκ φύσεως κοινωνίαν)."[80] This fellowship—possibly, some suggest, indicating that Basil had in mind a looser union—is evident in the work of creation. Here the **original cause** of all things made is the Father, the creative cause is the Son, and the perfecting cause the Holy Spirit. Yet the source of all existing things is "one, which makes through the Son, and which perfects in the Spirit." The work of all three (the Lord, the Word, the Spirit) is lacking in nothing, whether taken singularly or together.[81] This inseparable action entails a common **being**. The inseparable conjunction of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son is seen in that, referring to 1 Corinthians 2:8–11, "he is said to be related to God as our spirit is to each of us."[82] He is to be numbered *with* the Father and the Son, not under them as the heretics allege.[83]

The Monarchy Demonstrates That God Is One and That the Relations of the Three Are Distinct

This does not mean that there are three gods, for while the persons are distinct, they are not additions in a numerical sequence. We confess "the particularizing property of the persons and we stay

79. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 10.24–26; *PG*, 32:109–13.

80. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 13.30; 16.37; cf. 11.27; 23.54; *PG*, 32:120–21, 133, 113–16, 168–69. Beeley remarks that Gregory of Nazianzus never used communion language in relation to the intra-Trinitarian relations. Christopher A. Beeley, "The Holy Spirit in the Cappadocians: Past and Present," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 1 (January 2010): 90–119, here 100–101. This language of Basil's might undermine the assertion of indivisibility. Basil died, however, before the full resolution of the crisis and before Gregory's greatest work on the Spirit in his *Theological Orations*. But the phrase could be rendered as "common nature" or "commonality of nature." See note 91 below.

81. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 16.38; *PG*, 32:136–40.

82. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 16.40; *PG*, 32:141–44.

83. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 17.41–43; *PG*, 32:144–48; Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 125; 159.2; *PG*, 32:545–52, 620–21.

within the monarchy." These are distinct persons, but there is only one object of worship, the one God. The Holy Spirit is one "joined through the one Son to the one Father, and through himself, he completes the famed and blessed Trinity."[84] The Spirit in his relations with the Father, however, is distinct from the Son.

Basil, like Athanasius, was concerned to offset the argument of skeptics that by asserting deity of the Spirit, he was positing a second Son.[85] The Holy Spirit is "from God" not in the way in which all things are from him, but "comes forth from God, not begottenly as the Son does, but as breath of his mouth." Basil distinguished this from human realities; this was to be seen in a way appropriate to God. The mode of **generation** is beyond our understanding. Styled "Spirit of Christ," he has as close a relation to the Son as to the Father.[86] He proceeds from the Father and is God, not something created or a mere minister of God.[87] Thus, according to nature, there is a movement from the Father through the Son to the Spirit, seen in creation and grace, while in terms of our knowledge of God we move in the reverse direction, from the Spirit through the Son to the Father. This order is not that of three separate beings in a hierarchy, which would effectively be polytheism.[88] Basil argued that the Spirit is in status God, for he has the same titles and shares the same works as the Father and the Son.[89] On the other side of the spectrum, his use of the preposition *with* in his doxology refuted Sabellianism by distinguishing the *hypostases*. The preposition affirms simultaneously "the particularity of the persons and the inseparability of their communion."[90] "He who fails to confess the community of **essence** (τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οὐσίας) . . . falls into polytheism [and] he who refuses to grant the distinction of the *hypostases* is carried away into Judaism."

84. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 18.45; *PG*, 32:152; Basil of Caesarea, *The Hexaemeron*, 2.6; *PG*, 29:41–44.

85. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 217.

86. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 18.46; *PG*, 32:152–53.

87. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 125; 159.2; *PG*, 32:545–52, 620–21.

88. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 18.47; *PG*, 32:153.

89. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 19.48–49. See 21.52; 23.54; *PG*, 32:156–60, 164–65, 168–69; Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 90.2; *PG*, 32:473–76.

90. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 25.59; *PG*, 32:176–77.

Merely enumerating the persons is insufficient, for we must confess each person to have a natural existence in real *hypostasis*.[91] Thus, Basil insisted on the oneness in being of the Spirit with the Father and the Son, together with the distinction of *hypostases*; none of the three is subordinate to the others, but the Father is still the source or ultimate principle of the hypostatic relations. In talking of a "community of essence," however, Basil's language might allow for the possibility of a looser union than perhaps Athanasius would have allowed. But τὸ κοινὸν τῆς ουσίας can be rendered as "common essence." Moreover, read in the context of the earlier part of the letter, it is clear that Basil did not intend to posit a loose relation, since he was emphatic that "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are the same in nature and one divinity (φύσις μὲν ἡ αὐτὴ, καὶ θεότης μία)."[92]

The Holy Spirit in Worship and Sanctification

Finally, Basil returned to where he started, with worship and sanctification. In a remarkable figure of speech, he wrote that the Holy Spirit is "the place of those being made holy[,] . . . the proper place for true worship." Referring to John 4:21–24, the place of Christian worship is the Holy Spirit, for "the Spirit is truly the place of the saints, and the saint is the proper place for the Holy Spirit, as he offers himself for indwelling with God and is called a temple of God." The Spirit is in the saints in different kinds of ways, but in relation to the Father and the Son he is not so much in them as with them, denoting that he, together with the Father and the Son, is to be worshiped and glorified.[93] Thus, even in our own worship, the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son.

The Limitations of Human Thought and Language

Basil insisted, in a letter to Gregory of Nazianzus, that no theological term is adequate to the thought of the speaker, for language is too

91. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 210.5; *PG*, 32:773–77. The translation is from *NPNF*^{2}, 8:250. It could be rendered as "common essence." See G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 761.

92. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 210.5; *PG*, 32:773 (my translation).

93. Basil of Caesarea, *Holy Spirit*, 26.62–64; *PG*, 32:184; see 181–85.

weak to act in the service of objects of thought. Yet in turn, our thought itself—let alone our language—is too weak for the reality. Nevertheless, we are compelled to give an answer about God to those who love the Lord.[94] Basil's recognition of the limitations of human thought and language contributed to the relaxation of the strict semantic usage of the technical terminology that had bedeviled the Trinitarian question. As with Athanasius, he recognized that the claims of truth are paramount and that human language and logic must bow before it.

Ousia and *Hypostasis*

Thus, Basil made the vital move of disengaging *ousia* and *hypostasis*.[95] He wrote to Count Terentius that "*ousia* has the same relation to *hypostasis* as the common has to the particular." *Ousia* is common, like goodness or Godhead, "while *hypostasis* is contemplated in the special property of Fatherhood, Sonship, or the power to sanctify." These are perfect, complete, and real *hypostases*, while the *homoousion*, the identical being, is preserved in the unity of the Godhead.[96] Thus, he used *ousia* for the one indivisible being of God and *hypostasis* for the three "persons." This was a major step forward, and it helped in finding a way out of the conceptual maze that had been created by the varieties of ways in which these words had been used.

By his comparison of general to particular, however, Basil may have left the door open for a generic view of God, and a comparison to three men sharing a common human nature. He wrote to his friend Amphilochius that "the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general and the particular." With God we confess one essence but a particular *hypostasis*, so that our conception of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear. If we have no idea of the separate characteristics of fatherhood, sonship, and sanctification but form our conception

94. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 7; *PG*, 32:244–45.

95. Occasionally Basil writes of *phūsis* rather than *ousia*, and *prosōpon* rather than *hypostasis*.

96. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 214.4; *PG*, 32:789. See Dragos A. Giulea, "Divine Being's Modulations: *Ousia* in the Pro-Nicene Context of the Fourth Century," *SVTQ* 59, no. 3 (2015): 307–37.

of God from the general idea of existence, we cannot give a sound account of our faith. We must therefore confess the faith "by adding the particular to the common."[97]

Beeley argues that Basil's Trinitarianism was *homoiousian*, which affirmed a likeness of being among the *hypostases*, rather than identity of being; he was basically an antimodalist and stopped short of being a *homoousian*. He had an agnosticism about the Spirit's mode of origin, being clear only that he was not created, so Beeley considers. He adds that the main sphere of the Spirit's operation is sanctification. Basil had a generic view of the divine nature—the *ousia-hypostasis* distinction based on a distinction between the common and the particular. Nor did he have a strong view of the monarchy of the Father.[98] While this is true, Beeley may be a little harsh. Basil certainly recognized that the Spirit was one with the Father and the Son and possessed all the attributes of God. He had not worked out the full ramifications.[99]

Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 335–95)

Basil's brother Gregory was bishop of Nyssa from 372 and present at the Council of Constantinople in 381.[100] He wrote a vast work,

97. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, 236.6; *PG*, 32; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–81* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 691–92, 696–99; Studer, *Trinity*, 142–43; Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. Edmund J. Fortman, Studies in Historical Theology 1 (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 99–104. For a discussion of the extent to which Basil used the idea of relations, later seen in Aquinas, with largely negative conclusions, see Xavier Morales, "Basile de Césarée est-il l'introducteur du concept de relation en théologie trinitaire?" *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 63 (2017): 141–80.

98. Beeley, "Cappadocians," *passim*.

99. Behr presents a more evenhanded discussion of Basil. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pt. 2, 263–324.

100. Anthony Meredith, "The Idea of God in Gregory of Nyssa," in *Studien zur Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, ed. Hubertus R. Drobner and Christophe Klock, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 127–47; G. Christopher Stead, "Why Not Three Gods? The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Doctrine," in *Studien zur Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, ed. Hubertus R. Drobner and Christophe Klock, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 149–63; Hanson, *Search*, 715–30, 784–87; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 261–62; G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1959), 252–55, 260; Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:254–96.

Against Eunomius, which some recent scholarship considers to have been mostly produced after Constantinople. Beeley correctly considers him to be weak on the Trinity and to have made the least contribution of the three Cappadocians.[101]

Andrew Radde-Gallwitz comments that Gregory's fundamental theme is the Spirit's inseparability from the Father and the Son.[102] Gregory's case is that the Spirit's works are the same as the Father's and the Son's and that this denotes identity of nature.[103] In terms of the manner of operation, "*all* divine activities have a triadic order and . . . the Spirit plays the role of completing or accomplishing the act."[104] In *Against the Macedonians*, Gregory has much to say about the Spirit's anointing of the Son in his incarnate ministry, which, he says, indicates that there is no gap between them. The Son is King by nature, and the dignity of kingship is the Holy Spirit.[105] For Gregory, "the Spirit's deity is shown in his activity within human lives."[106]

In *On the Holy Trinity and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit to Eustathius*, probably written in the year before Constantinople, Gregory argues in a similar vein, saying that we know God not from his essence but from his works. The works of the three persons are one, and so we conclude that their nature is one. These works are inseparable. The Trinity is one Godhead. It follows that the Son is inseparable from the Holy Spirit.[107]

Around the same time, in *On the Holy Spirit against the Followers of Macedonius*, Gregory says that the Holy Spirit is of the same rank as the Father and the Son, exactly identical with them in status, and so equal honor with the other two persons is his due. The three are inseparable, a perfect Trinity, eternally distinct but mutually indwelling.[108]

101. Beeley, "Cappadocians," 105–8.

102. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 73.

103. Radde-Gallwitz, *Doctrinal Works*, 110.

104. Radde-Gallwitz, *Doctrinal Works*, 73.

105. Radde-Gallwitz, *Doctrinal Works*, 74, citing *Against the Macedonians*, 15–16.

106. Radde-Gallwitz, *Doctrinal Works*, 230.

107. *NPNF*^{2}, 5:326–30; *PG*, 46:235; *PG*, 32:683–94, where it is erroneously listed as Letter 189 of Basil.

108. *NPNF*^{2}, 5:315–19; *PG*, 45:1301–33.

Hence, "we are not to think of the Father as ever parted from the Son, nor to look for the Son as separate from the Holy Spirit." Again, in the same place, "the fountain of power is the Father, and the power of the Father is the Son, and the spirit of that power is the Holy Spirit; and creation entirely . . . is the finished work of that divine power . . . beginning from the Father, advancing through the Son, and completed in the Holy Spirit."[109] Consequently, "the Holy Spirit is to be apprehended as joined to the Father and Son," since "except for the distinction of order and person, no variation in any point is to be apprehended."[110] Neither here nor elsewhere does he use "*homoousios* of the Spirit" (for that matter, neither does the Council of Constantinople).[111] But he says all that needs to be said to reach that conclusion.[112]

In *Against Eunomius*, Gregory says that there is one first cause, the Father. The relations of the three he likens to a causal chain of dependence, although he qualifies this by adding that there is no interval between them, for they exist simultaneously, like the sun and a ray of light streaming from it. There is no difference between one light and the other, for both are completely perfect. Hence, there is a very clear order,[113] but one admitting no thought of discord, for the three are coeternal, mutually indwelling one another.[114] Indeed, the expressions "light from light [and] . . . true God from true God" in the creed refer to the Son's "being what the other is, except being that Father," pointing simultaneously to personal distinctions and to identity of being. Since Gregory wrote this within two years after the Council of Constantinople, it is a valuable commentary on phrases that have embedded themselves in the consciousness of the church, East and West, understanding this order (*taxis*) as fully compatible with the oneness of being of the Trinity.[115]

109. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit against the Followers of Macedonius*, 15; *NPNF*², 5:319–20.

110. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Followers of Macedonius*, 16; *NPNF*², 5:320.

111. Hanson, *Search*, 786.

112. Studer, *Trinity*, 152; Kelly, *Doctrines*, 261–63.

113. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 1.34–36.

114. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 1.42; 2:2.

115. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.4. Gregory refers to a creed, citing

So much is clear too from Gregory's teaching on the full mutual relations of the Father and the Son: "Thus we conceive no gap between the anointed Christ and his anointing, . . . but as there is contemplated from all eternity in the Father the Son, . . . so there is contemplated in him the Holy Spirit. . . . For which reason we say that to the holy disciples the mystery of godliness was committed in a form expressing at once union and distinction."[116] This finds expression in worship, where the corollaries of the full mutual indwelling of the three in the one being of God are evident. When the Father is worshiped, so are the Spirit and the Son. Since the Spirit has the same status as the Father and the Son, we worship all three simultaneously. Again, in their mutual indwelling each of the three seeks the glory of the others. There is "a revolving circle of glory from like to like. The Son is glorified by the Spirit; the Father is glorified by the Son; again the Son has his glory from the Father; and the Only-begotten thus becomes the glory of the Spirit. . . . In like manner . . . faith completes the circle, and glorifies the Son by means of the Spirit, and the Father by means of the Son."[117] Worship of any of the three is worship of all three and thus worship of the one.[118]

Gregory feels obliged to defend himself against the slur of **tritheism** in his short but intriguing work *On "Not Three Gods" to Ablabius*, which G. Christopher Stead considers is written sometime after Constantinople.[119] Again he stresses one inseparable operation of the Trinity in which all three work—from the Father, through the Son, perfected in the Holy Spirit.[120] In this work Gregory responds to Ablabius's suggestion that the Trinity is comparable to three men's sharing a common human nature. This analogy follows the generic definition of *ousia* and *hypostasis* that Basil propounded and Gregory himself accepts. The problems are obvious. There are a

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wording common to Nicaea (N) and Constantinople (C). But he omits, as C does, the phrase in N "God of God."

116. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 2.2; see also 4.8.

117. *NPNF*², 5:324.

118. On mutual indwelling, see Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *SVTQ* 35, no. 1 (1991): 53–65.

119. Stead, "Three Gods?"; *NPNF*², 5:27; *PG*, 45:115–36.

120. See Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 249–50.

vast range of possible men who exist, but only three and ever three persons of the Trinity, no more, no fewer. Moreover, the Trinitarian persons indwell one another, which human beings cannot do, for they are separate and autonomous entities. The analogy points to tritheism, not the Trinity. He explains the weaknesses of the analogy further in his treatise *To the Greeks (about Common Notions)*,[121] but here he insists to Ablabius that the works of the Trinity are indivisible. None of the persons works by himself in isolation from the others. Every work of God is originated from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. Yet these are not three different things but one and the same work of God. Moreover, this united action precludes any possibility of referring to God in the plural. While the Father is the cause, this refers not to God's essence but rather to "the difference in manner of existence." We do not divide the essence but simply indicate that the Son exists by generation and the Father without generation. So "the idea of cause differentiates the persons of the Holy Trinity," while the divine nature (essence, being) is "unchangeable and undivided" and is to be referenced in the singular.[122]

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. A.D. 330–90)[123]

Gregory is called by the Eastern church "the theologian," a title shared with the apostle John alone. A friend of Basil, Gregory had a

121. *PG*, 45:180–81. It is effectively refuted by Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 15; *PG*, 36:149. There is considerable uncertainty about whether this is a genuine composition of Gregory. Radde-Gallwitz, *Doctrinal Works*, 123–28.

122. *NPNF*², 5:336, see 333–36; Studer, *Trinity*, 143–44. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 2.2–3; 7.4; *PG*, 32:325–40. Differing assessments of the contours of Gregory's Trinitarianism can be seen in Lucian Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), who stresses relationality and communion in the context of perfect unity, and Radde-Gallwitz, *Doctrinal Works*, 32–163, whose approach is literary, textual, and contextual, and who considers that Gregory was more focused on the indivisible unity and **energies**.

123. For the first biography of Gregory in English, see John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001). The volume contains an extensive bibliography of secondary sources. On Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity, in addition to the general works already cited, see Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 21–40; Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:236–54.

wide education. Ordained in 361, he was briefly bishop of Constantinople, presiding for a while at the council. In 381 at Constantinople, he preached five sermons (the *Theological Orations*) that permanently established his reputation.[124]

The fifth and final discourse, on the Holy Spirit, is the jewel in Gregory's crown. Here the *pneumatomachii* (fighters against the Spirit) were the problem. Their tactic, common to heretics at various times, was biblical fundamentalism. The Arians, Eunomians, and **Macedonians** all appealed to Scripture, contending that the pro-Nicenes used unscriptural terms. "Time and again you repeat the argument about not being in the Bible," Gregory complains. He points out that the fathers, in their handling of the Bible, "saw inside the written text to its inner meaning."[125] Instead, the heretics' "love for the letter is a cloak for irreligion."[126] Scripture uses metaphors and figures of speech. Slavery to a literal interpretation is an erroneous exegetical and theological method.[127] In fact, the heretics' favorite terms for God, "**unbegotten**" and "unoriginated," are not in the Bible at all![128]

Gregory, in common with previous fathers, argued for the Spirit's deity from his works, specifically from **deification**. Beeley also makes this point, stating that "the knowledge of the Holy Spirit [for Gregory] derives directly from the Spirit's saving work of divinization."[129] In salvation we are made God, but if the Holy Spirit is not from eternity, how can he make me God, or join me with the Godhead?[130]

Confusion over the status of the Spirit was rife: "Among our own experts, some took the Holy Spirit as an active process, some

124. *NPNF*^{2}, 7:280.

125. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 21; *PG*, 36:156–57. Citations from *Oration 31* are from Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: On God and Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

126. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 3; *PG*, 36:136–37.

127. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 21–24; *PG*, 36:156–60.

128. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 23; *PG*, 36:157–60.

129. Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light Shall We See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 153–86, here 176.

130. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 4; *PG*, 36:137.

as a creature, some as God. Others were agnostic on the point out of reverence, as they put it, for Scripture, which has given no clear revelation either way. On these grounds they offer him neither worship nor disrespect; they take up a sort of halfway (or should I say 'a thoroughly pitiful?') position about him."[131]

His opponents had asked Gregory to make clear definitions, supposing human logic capable of unfolding the truth about God. He responded that with the procession of the Spirit, as the **begetting** of the Son, language about God cannot be understood in a **univocal** sense.[132] Consequently, we cannot define the procession of the Spirit and the generation of the Son: "What then is 'proceeding'? You explain the ingeneracy of the Father and I will give you a biological account of the Son's begetting and the Spirit's proceeding—and let us go mad, the pair of us[,] for prying into God's secrets."[133]

How, then, does the Spirit differ from the Son? Their **properties** (unbegotten, begotten, proceeding), which concern their relations, have given them their names (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) "to safeguard the distinctness of the three hypostases within the single nature of the Godhead." These properties affect their relations, not the one identical *ousia*. There are "no grounds for any deficiency, for any subordination in being."[134]

Gregory, reflecting the language of John's Gospel, here coined a new word (*procession*) for the distinctive property of the third person. "What, then? Is the Spirit God? Certainly. Is he consubstantial [*homoousios*])? Yes, if he is God."[135] Gregory had mentioned this beforehand in an early episcopal sermon,[136] and in another sermon

131. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 5; *PG*, 36:137.

132. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 7; *PG*, 36:140–41.

133. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 8; *PG*, 36:141. Beeley considers that Gregory develops the idea of the procession of the Holy Spirit, in contrast to Basil, who professed ignorance. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 202. Gregory's comments here belie this claim.

134. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 9; *PG*, 36:141–44; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on the Holy Lights*, 39.11–13; *PG*, 36:345–49.

135. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 10; *PG*, 36:144.

136. "Baptism and the anointing of the head with oil, which is perfected [completed] in the Father almighty, and the only-begotten Logos, and the Holy Spirit, who is also God." Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 12*, 6; *PG*, 35:849 (my translation).

preached shortly after the Council of Constantinople, he was even more emphatic.[137] Whereas Basil and his brother had a reluctance to say this openly, possibly for fear of alienating potential supporters, there is no hesitation with Gregory.[138] Gregory articulated the deity of the Holy Spirit from the start, in a Trinitarian context.[139] Unlike Basil, he never wrote of a mere "communion" in terms of the intra-Trinitarian relations.[140] These were revolutionary statements.

Appropriately, Gregory turned to consider worship. Some had questioned the Spirit's deity on the grounds that there is no record of anyone praying to the Spirit. Gregory affirms that the Spirit is the one *in whom* we worship and pray. Thus, prayer to the Spirit is, in effect, the Spirit offering prayer or adoration to himself. The adoration of the one is adoration of the three, because of the equality of honor and deity among the three.[141]

The questions of the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit are connected—once we acknowledge the former, the other follows.[142] "We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another . . . but the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided [here Gregory means 'distinct']. . . . When we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the sole sovereignty, we have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists . . . we have

137. "These are to be worshipped; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one deity: God the Father, God the Son, God (unless this disturbs your stomach) the Holy Spirit, one nature in three 'properties,' understandings, perfections, distinctness, different in number but by no means in deity." Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 33*, 16; *PG*, 36:236 (my translation).

138. Basil was a bishop, monastic organizer, and church politician; Gregory was a scholar who, while serving for a time as a bishop, was unsuited to public life and lacked diplomatic skills. This may go some way to explaining the difference in explicit treatment of the Spirit by the two.

139. Beeley, "Cappadocians," 99–100.

140. Beeley, "Cappadocians," 100–101.

141. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 12; *PG*, 36:145–48.

142. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 13; *PG*, 36:148.

three objects of worship."[143] This point that no one of the three is more God than the others is vital, for Gregory undercut any idea that because the Father is the first principle, the Son or the Spirit derives his deity from the Father. He avoided the idea of a causal chain of dependence that Basil and his brother implied. The monarchy, the first cause, is the Godhead, and is one. So, as John Calvin was to point out, each is God in himself. "Each of the trinity is in entire unity, as much with himself as with the partnership, by identity of being and power."[144] As Ayres suggests, Gregory's emphasis is the harmony of unity and diversity in God.[145] As Gregory mentioned in *Oration 28*, the Godhead is "one in its distinctions and distinct in its connectedness."[146]

Gregory's reasons for the deity of the Spirit are primarily that his works prove him to be God. He shares with the Son in work of creation and resurrection, and is the author of regeneration. He deifies us in baptism.[147]

Hence, the Holy Spirit "always existed, exists, and always will exist."[148] He has no beginning or end, is everlastingly ranged with the Father and the Son, "ever being partaken but not partaking; . . . deifying, not being deified; . . . invisible, eternal, **incomprehensible**, unchangeable, . . . all-powerful . . . ; life and life-giver; . . . the Lord, . . . builder of his temple, working as he wills; . . . by whom the Father is known and the Son is glorified: and by whom *alone* he is known." Thus, "all that the Father has the Son has also, except being unbegotten; . . . all that the Son has, the Spirit has also, except the generation. And these two matters do not divide the substance, . . . but rather are divisions within the substance."[149]

Gregory ingeniously points to the progressive historical outworking of revelation to explain the comparative reticence of

143. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 14; *PG*, 36:148–49.

144. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 16; *PG*, 36:149–52.

145. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 45–47.

146. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 28*, 1.

147. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 41*, 14; *NPNF*², 7:384, where he cites Pss. 33:6; 104:30; and Job 28:4.

148. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 41*, 9; *NPNF*², 7:382.

149. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 41*, 9; *NPNF*², 7:382.

Scripture on the Spirit: "The old covenant made clear proclamation of the Father, a less definite one of the Son. The new covenant made the Son manifest and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit's Godhead. At the present time, the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before. It was dangerous for the Son to be preached openly, when the Godhead of the Father was still unacknowledged. It was dangerous, too, for the Holy Spirit to be made (and here I use a rather rash expression) an extra burden, when the Son had not been received."[150] In *Oration 41* on Pentecost, he speaks of the Holy Spirit's working on, in, and with various Old Testament figures. Then in Christ there were three distinct stages: before the passion, after the resurrection, and since the ascension. The first made him known indistinctly, the second more expressly, the third more perfectly.[151]

Returning to *Oration 31*, now, in our present era, worship and baptism establish the Spirit's deity, for we "worship the Father as God, the Son as God, the Holy Spirit as God—'three personalities, one Godhead undivided in glory, honor, substance, and sovereignty,' as one inspired saint of recent times wisely expressed it. . . . Were the Spirit not to be worshipped, how could he deify me through baptism? If he is to be worshipped, why not adored? And if to be adored, how can he fail to be God?"[152] Gregory had a clear grasp of the distinct persons while holding firmly to the unity of the indivisible Godhead. For him, the Trinity is not an abstract puzzle but the heart of the Christian faith and the center of true worship. "But when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[153]

Constantinople I (A.D. 381)

Compared with the Creed of Nicaea (325), the declaration of the Council of Constantinople, known popularly as the Nicene Creed, is

150. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 26; *PG*, 36:161.

151. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 41*, 11; *NPNF*^{2}, 7:383.

152. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31*, 28; *PG*, 36:164–65.

153. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ*, 38.8; *PG*, 36:320.

particularly notable for additional clauses on the Holy Spirit, which we will expound in chapter 4.

> [We believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets . . .

In these clauses, a number of things are asserted. The Spirit is the Lord and giver of life, sharing indivisibly with the Father and the Son in creation, providence, and grace. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, affirming his deity. The Spirit spoke by the prophets. Moreover, the following section on the church and sacraments is an outflow of the comment on the Holy Spirit as the Lord and giver of life:

> And in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church;
> We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins;
> We wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age. Amen.

The creed has four main sections—on the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and finally the church and sacraments. It does not explicitly state that the Holy Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and the Son. Yet it follows from everything it states about the Spirit. Moreover, the following year the Synod of Rome pronounced on the matter in its synodical letter, leaving no doubt. The Spirit is "one being, uncreated and of the identical being and eternal trinity."[154] Its series of anathemas undergird the point. These are pronounced against any who deny the eternal generation of the Son from the substance of the Father or that the Holy Spirit is also from the divine substance (*Si quis non dixerit, Spiritum Sanctum de Patre esse vere ac proprie, sicut Filium, de divina substantia et Deum verum: haereticum est*)

154. οὐσια μία ἀκτιστῷ καὶ ὁμοουσιῷ καὶ συναιδιῷ τριαδι. J. Alberigo et al., eds., *Concilium ecumenicorum decreta*, 25–30.

and against any who deny the omniscience and omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, or who say that the Spirit was created, or those who do not say that all things were made through the Son and the Spirit.[155] Again, anyone is anathematized who does not say that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one divinity (*unam divinitatem*), power, majesty, glory, and dominion, with one will; such a one *haereticus est*. This is because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one divinity and power (*unam divinitatem et potentiam*), one God (*unum Deum*).[156]

Key Terms

Arians
Arius
attributes
begetting
begotten
being
creation *ex nihilo*
deification
energies
essence
Eunomius
generation
gnosticism
Heterousians
Homoians
homoousios
hypostasis
incomprehensible
Macedonians
modalism
monarchianism
monarchy
nature
ontologically
order
original cause
ousia
participation
persons
phūsis
pneumatomachii
procession
processions
properties
relations
Sabellianism
subordinationism
substance
tritheism
unbegotten
univocal

155. Peter Hünermann, *Heinrich Denzinger: Kompendium der Glaubensbekentnisse und Kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*, Aktualisierte Auflage 38 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1999), 87.

156. Hünermann, *Heinrich Denzinger*, 88.

Questions for Reflection

1. Consider biblical and historical factors that led the church to consider the status of the Son before sustained attention was directed to the status of the Holy Spirit.
2. What implications can you draw from the confession that the Spirit is to be worshiped together with the Father and the Son? How does the single act of worship of the Trinity bring the three *hypostases* to distinct and indivisible expression?