

Vladimir Lossky

The Procession of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox Trinitarian Doctrine

Chapter 4 of *In the Image and Likeness of God*
(SVS Press: Crestwood, NY, 1976), pp. 71-96.

*[Numbers in square brackets refer to page numbers
in the original; numbers in curly braces are footnotes.
Greek expressions have been transliterated.]*

Whether we like it or not, the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit has been the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation of East and West. All the other divergences which, historically, accompanied or followed the first dogmatic controversy about the *Filioque*, in the measure in which they too had some dogmatic importance, are more or less dependent upon that original issue. This is only too easy to understand, when we take into account the importance of the mystery of the Trinity and its place in the whole body of Christian teaching. Thus the polemical battle between the Greeks and the Latins was fought principally about the question of the Holy Spirit. If other questions have arisen and taken the first place in more recent inter-confessional debates, that is chiefly because the dogmatic plane on which the thought of theologians operates is no longer the same as it [72] was in the medieval period. Ecclesiological problems increasingly determine the preoccupations of modern Christian thought. This is as it should be. However the tendency to underestimate and even to despise the pneumatological debates of the past which may be noticed among certain modern Orthodox theologians (and especially among Russians, who are too often ungrateful to Byzantium) suggests that these theologians, so ready to renounce their fathers, lack both dogmatic sense and reverence for the living tradition.

True, it is always necessary to revalue the truths which the Church affirmed in the past in order to meet the needs of the present. But this revaluation is never a devaluation. It is the restatement of the value of that which was said in a different epoch under different historical circumstances. It is the duty of the historian to inform us about the circumstances in which a dogma was first required and to state the historical implications of dogma. But it is not his duty, as a historian, to judge dogmatic values as

such. If this is not remembered, there is a danger that historical theology will become a "Grey Eminence," or rather a "Lay Eminence," in the Church, seeking to establish by the methods of secular science a new canon of tradition. This is a sort of Caesaropapism of the scholars, which might succeed in imposing its authority over the Church, if tradition were not, for Her, a living reality of revelation in the Holy Spirit.

Thus, for example, the learned Russian theologian, V. Bolotov, an eminent historian of theology, on the occasion of the Bonn conversations with the Old Catholics, considered himself able to declare, on the basis of an analysis of Patristic texts, that the *Filioque* hardly constitutes an *impedimentum dirimens* in the path of dogmatic reconciliation.^{1} According to Bolotov, the question concerned two "theologoumena," expressing in two different formulas— *a Filio* and *dia Huiou*— the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit. Bolotov was too good a historian of theology to conclude that the [73] doctrine on both sides was identical. But he lacked the dogmatic sense to perceive the true place of these two formulas in two different triadologies. Even historically, he made a mistake in treating *a Filio* as the opposite of *dia Huiou*, as if these were the two formulas which express the doctrine of the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit. It was *a Patre Filioque* and *ek monou tou Patros*, which, as formulas about the procession, came into conflict and thus exposed a divergence in the theology of the Trinity.^{2} The formula *dia Huiou*, interpreted in the sense of a mediation of the Son in the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit, was a formula of concord adopted by partisans of union in the thirteenth century precisely because their triadology was not the same as that of the adversaries of the *Filioque*. By adopting the interpretation of *dia Huiou* proper to the Latinizing Greeks, Bolotov minimized the doctrinal divergence between the two triadologies; hence he could write about two tolerable "theological opinions."

Our task here will not be that of a historian. We shall leave aside questions concerning the origins of the two different formulas. We shall even admit the possibility of an Orthodox interpretation of *Filioque*, as it first appeared at Toledo for example.^{3} We are not dealing with verbal formulas here, but with two established theological doctrines. We shall try to show the outlines of the Trinitarian theology which Orthodox theologians regard themselves as obliged to defend when they are confronted with the doctrine of the eternal personal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son as from a single principle. We shall confine ourselves to setting forth certain theological principles, of a general character, about the formulas *ek monou tou Patros* and *dia Huiou*. We shall not enter into the controversies of the past in detail. Our sole aim will be to make Orthodox triadology better understood.

Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians agree in recognizing that a certain anonymity characterizes the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. While the names "Father" and "Son" denote very clear personal distinctions, are in no sense interchangeable, and cannot in any case refer to the common nature of the two hypostases, the name "Holy Spirit" has not that advantage. Indeed, we say that God is Spirit, meaning by that the common nature as much as any one of the persons. We say that He is Holy: The triple *Sanctus* of the canon of the Mass alludes to Three Holy Persons, having the common holiness of the same Godhead. Taken in itself, the term "Holy Spirit" thus might be applied, not to a personal distinction, but to the common nature of the Three. In that sense, Thomas Aquinas is right in saying that the Third Person of the Trinity has no name of His own and that the name "Holy Spirit" has been given to Him on the basis of Scriptural usage (*accommodatum ex usu Scripturae*; I, q.36, a.1)

We meet the same difficulty when we wish to define the mode of origin of the Holy Spirit, contrasting his "procession" with the "generation" of the Son. Even more than the name "Holy Spirit," the term "procession" cannot be considered to be, in itself, an expression which exclusively envisages the Third Person. It is a general term, which could be applied, *in abstracto*, to the Son; Latin theology even speaks of *duae processiones*. We leave aside, for the moment, the question of the extent to which such an abstract way of dealing with the mystery of the Trinity is legitimate. The one point which we stress here is that the term "procession" has not the precision of the term "generation." The latter term, while preserving the mysterious character of the divine [75] Fatherhood and Sonship, states a definite relationship between two persons. That is not the case with the term— "procession"— an indefinite expression which confronts us with the mystery of an anonymous person, whose hypostatic origin is presented to us negatively: it is not generation, it is other than that of the Son.^{4} If we seek to treat these expressions positively, we find an image of the economy of the Third Person rather than an image of his hypostatic character: we find the procession of a divine force or Spirit which accomplishes sanctification. We reach a paradoxical conclusion: all that we know of the Holy Spirit refers to his economy; all that we do not know makes us venerate his Person, as we venerate the ineffable diversity of the consubstantial Three.

In the fourth century the question of the Trinity was examined in a Christological context and was raised in connection with the *nature* of the Logos. The term *homoousios*, while assuming the diversity of the Three Persons, was meant to express the identity in the Trinity, by stressing the unity of the common nature against all subordinationism. In the ninth century the Pneumatological controversy between the Latins and the Greeks raised the question of the Trinity in connection with the *hypostasis* of the Holy Spirit.

Both contending parties, while assuming the natural identity of the Three, intended to express hypostatic diversity in the Trinity. The former party strove to establish personal diversity on the basis of the term *homoousios*, Starting from natural identity. The latter party, more conscious of the Trinitarian antinomy of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, while taking into account consubstantiality, stressed the monarchy of the Father, as a safeguard against all danger of a new Sabellianism.^{5} Two doctrines of the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit, *a Patre Filioque tanquam ab uno principio* and *ek monou tou Patros*, represent two different solutions of the question of [76] personal diversity in the Trinity, two different triadologies. It is important that we should describe the general outlines of these triadologies.

3

Starting from the fact that the hypostatic character of the Holy Spirit remains undefined and "anonymous," Latin theology seeks to draw a positive conclusion as to his mode of origin. Since the term "Holy Spirit" is, in some sense, common to the Father and the Son (both are Holy and both are Spirit), it should denote a person related to the Father and the Son in respect of what they have in common.^{6} Even when the matter at hand is the procession, taken as the mode of origin of the Third Person, the term "procession"—which in itself does not signify any mode of origin distinguishable from generation—should denote a relation to the Father and the Son together, to serve as the basis for a Third Person, distinct from the other two. Since a "relation of opposition"^{7} can only be established between two terms, the Holy Spirit should proceed from the Father and the Son, inasmuch as they represent a unity. This is the meaning of the formula according to which the Holy Spirit is said to proceed from the Father and the Son as from one principle of spiration.^{8}

One cannot deny the logical clarity of this process of reasoning, which seeks to base hypostatic diversity on the principle of relations of opposition. This triadological principle, formulated by Thomas Aquinas, becomes unavoidable the moment that the doctrine of the procession of the Holy [77] Spirit *ab utroque* is admitted. It presupposes the following conditions: (1) That relations are the basis of the hypostases,^{9} which define themselves by their mutual opposition, the first to the second, and these two together to the third. (2) That two persons represent a non-personal unity, in that they give rise to a further relation of opposition. (3) That in general the origin of the persons of the Trinity therefore is impersonal, having its real basis in the one essence, which is differentiated by its internal relations. The general character of this triadology may be described as a pre-eminence of natural unity over personal trinity, as an ontological primacy of the essence over the hypostases.

The attitude of Orthodox thought, when confronted with the mysterious name of the Holy Spirit, denoting a divine economy rather than a hypostatic mark of distinction, is far from being simply a refusal to define his personal diversity. On the contrary, because that diversity, or (to speak more generally) the diversity of the Three Persons, is presented as something absolute, we refuse to admit a relation of origin which opposes the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son, taken as a single principle. If this were admitted, personal diversity in the Trinity in effect would be relativized: Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is one hypostasis, the Holy Spirit only represents the unity of the two in their identical nature. Here the logical impossibility of any opposition between *three* terms intervenes, and the clarity of this triadological system shows itself to be extremely superficial. Indeed, on these lines, we cannot reach a mode of distinguishing the three hypostases from each another without confounding them in one way or another with the essence. In fact, the absolute diversity of the Three cannot be based on their relations of opposition without admitting, implicitly or explicitly, the primacy of the essence over the hypostases, by assuming a relative (and therefore secondary) basis for personal diversity, [78] in contrast to natural identity.{10} But that is exactly what Orthodox theology cannot admit.

Against the doctrine of procession *ab utroque* the Orthodox have affirmed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone— *ek monou tou Patros*. This formula, while verbally it may seem novel, represents in its doctrinal tenor nothing more than a very plain affirmation of the traditional teaching about the "monarchy of the Father," unique source of the divine hypostases. It may be objected that this formula for the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone provides no place for any relation of opposition between the Second Person of the Trinity and the Third Person. But those who say this overlook the fact that the very principle of relations of opposition is unacceptable to Orthodox triadology— that the expression "relations of origin" has a different sense in Orthodox theology than it has among defenders of the *Filioque*.

When we state that the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone is distinguished in an ineffable manner from the eternal generation of the Son, who is begotten of the Father alone, no attempt is being made to establish a relation of opposition between the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is not merely because the procession is ineffable (the generation of the Son is no less ineffable){11} but also because relations of origin in the Trinity— filiation, procession— cannot be considered as the basis for the hypostases, as that which determines their absolute diversity.{12} [79] When we say that the procession of the Holy Spirit is a relation which differs absolutely from the generation of the Son, we indicate the difference between them as to mode of origin (*tropos hyparxeos*){13} from that common source in order to affirm that community of origin in no way affects the absolute diversity between the Son and the Spirit.

Here it may be stated that the relations only serve to express the hypostatic diversity of the Three; they are not the basis of it. It is the absolute diversity of the three hypostases which determines their differing relations to one another, not vice versa. Here thought stands still, confronted by the impossibility of defining a personal existence in its absolute difference from any other, and must adopt a negative approach to proclaim that the Father— He who is without beginning (*anarchos*)— is not the Son or the Holy Spirit, that the begotten Son is neither the Holy Spirit nor the Father, that the Holy Spirit, "who proceeds from the Father," is neither the Father nor the Son.{14} Here we cannot speak of relations of opposition but only of relations of diversity.{15} To follow here the positive approach, and to envisage the relations of origin otherwise than as signs of the inexpressible diversity of the persons, is to suppress the absolute quality of this personal diversity, i.e. to relativize the Trinity and in some sense to depersonalize it.

[80] The positive approach employed by Filioquist triadology brings about a certain rationalization of the dogma of the Trinity, insofar as it suppresses the fundamental antinomy between the essence and the hypostases. One has the impression that the heights of theology have been deserted in order to descend to the level of religious philosophy. On the other hand, the negative approach, which places us face to face with the primordial antinomy of absolute identity and no less absolute diversity in God, does not seek to conceal this antinomy but to express it fittingly, so that the mystery of the Trinity might make us transcend the philosophical mode of thinking and that the Truth might make us free from our human limitations, by altering our means of understanding. If in the former approach faith seeks understanding, in order to transpose revelation onto the plane of philosophy, in the latter approach understanding seeks the realities of faith, in order to be transformed, by becoming more and more open to the mysteries of revelation. Since the dogma of the Trinity is the keystone of the arch of all theological thought and belongs to the region which the Greek Fathers called *Theologia par excellence*, it is understandable that a divergence in this culminating point, insignificant as it may seem at first sight, should have a decisive importance. The difference between the two conceptions of the Trinity determines, on both sides, the whole character of theological thought. This is so to such an extent that it becomes difficult to apply, without equivocation, the same name of theology to these two different ways of dealing with divine realities.

If personal diversity in God presents itself as a primordial fact, not to be deduced from any other principle or based on any other idea, that does not mean that the essential identity of the Three is ontologically posterior to their hypostatic diversity. Orthodox triadology is not a counter-blast to Filioquism; it does not run to the other extreme. As we

already have said, relations of origin signify the personal [81] diversity of the Three, but they indicate no less their essential identity. In that the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinguished from the Father, we venerate three Persons; in that they are one with Him, we confess their consubstantiality.{16} Thus the monarchy of the Father maintains the perfect equilibrium between the nature and the persons, without coming down too heavily on either side.{17} There is neither an impersonal substance nor non-consubstantial persons. The one nature and the three hypostases are presented simultaneously to our understanding, with neither prior to the other. The origin of the hypostases is not impersonal, since it is referred to the person of the Father; but it is unthinkable apart from their common possession of the same essence, the "divinity in division undivided." {18} Otherwise we should have Three Divine Individuals, Three Gods bound together by an abstract idea of Godhead. On the other hand, since consubstantiality is the non-hypostatic identity of the Three, in that they have (or rather *are*) a common essence, the unity of the three hypostases is inconceivable apart from the monarchy of the Father, who is the *principle* of the common possession of the same one essence. Otherwise we should be concerned with a simple essence, differentiated by relationships.{19}

It may be asked whether, in seeking to avoid the semi-Sabellianism of the Latins, their Greek adversaries did not fall into subordinationism because of their emphasis on the monarchy of the Father. This might perhaps seem all the more likely to happen, because in Greek patristic literature [82] one often finds the idea of causality applied to the person of the Father. The Father is called the cause (*aitia*) of the hypostases of the Son and the Holy Spirit, or even the "Godhead-source" (*pegaiā Theotes*). Sometimes He is designated simply as "God," with the definite article *ho Theos*, or even as *autotheos*.

It is worthwhile to recall here what we have said before about the negative approach characteristic of Orthodox thought— an approach which radically changes the value of philosophical terms applied to God. Not only the image of – cause," but also such terms as "production," "procession," and "origin" ought to be seen as inadequate expressions of a reality which is foreign to all becoming, to all process, to all beginning. just as relations of origin mean something different from relations of opposition, so causality is nothing but a somewhat defective image, which tries to express the personal unity which determines the origins of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This unique cause is not prior to his effects, for in the Trinity there is no priority and posteriority. He is not superior to his effects, for the perfect cause cannot produce inferior effects. He is thus the cause of their equality with himself.{20} The causality ascribed to the person of the Father, who eternally begets the Son and eternally causes the Holy Spirit to proceed, expresses the same idea as the monarchy of the Father: that the Father is the personal principle of

unity of the Three, the source of their common possession of the same content, of the same essence.

The expressions "Godhead-source" and "source of the Godhead" do not mean that the divine essence is subject to the person of the Father, but only that the person of the Father is the basis of common possession of the same essence, because the person of the Father, not being the sole person of the Godhead, is not to be identified with the essence. In a certain sense it can be said the Father is this possession of [83] the divine essence in common with the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that he would not be a divine Person if he were only a monad: he would then be identified with the divine Essence. Here it may be useful to recall that St. Cyril of Alexandria regarded the name "Father" as superior to the name "God," because the name "God" is given to God in respect of his relations with beings of a different nature.{21}

If the Father is sometimes called simply God— *ho Theos*, or even *autotheos*— nevertheless we cannot find in orthodox writers expressions which treat consubstantiality as participation by the Son and the Holy Spirit in the essence of the Father.{22} Each Person is God by nature, not by participation in the nature of another.

The Father is the cause of the other hypostases in that He is not His essence, i.e. in that He does not have His essence for Himself alone. What the image of causality wishes to express is the idea that the Father, being not merely an essence but a person, is by that very fact the cause of the other consubstantial Persons, who have the same essence as He has.

5

With reference to the Father, causality expresses the idea that He is God— Person, in that He is the cause of other divine persons— the idea that He could not be fully and absolutely Person unless the Son and the Holy Spirit are equal to Him in possession of the same nature and *are* that same nature. This might lead to the idea that each person of the Trinity could be regarded as the cause of the other two, in that each person is not the common essence; this would amount to a new relativization of the hypostases, transforming them into conventional and interchangeable signs of three diversities. Roman Catholic theology avoids this *personal relativism* by [84] professing belief in the procession of the Holy Spirit *ab utroque*, i.e. by falling into an *impersonal relativism*, that of relations of opposition, which are regarded as the basis of the three persons in the unity of a simple essence. Orthodox theology, while taking as its starting-point the initial antinomy of essence and hypostasis, avoids personal relativism by attributing causality to the Father alone. The monarchy of the Father thus sets up irreversible relationships, which enable us to distinguish the two other hypostases from the Father, and yet to relate them to the Father, as a concrete principle of unity in the Trinity. There is not only

unity of the same one nature in the Three, but also unity of the Three Persons of the same one nature. St. Gregory of Nazianzus expresses this neatly: "Each considered in himself is wholly God, as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Spirit, but each preserves his own properties; considered together the Three are God; each (considered in himself is) God because of the consubstantiality, the Three (considered together are) God because of the monarchy."^{23}

According to St. Maximus, God is "identically a monad and a triad."^{24} He is not merely one and three; he is $1=3$ and $3=1$. That is to say, here we are not concerned with number as signifying quantity: absolute diversities cannot be made the subjects of sums of addition; they have not even opposition in common. If, as we have said, a personal God cannot be a monad— if he must be more than a single person— neither can he be a dyad. The dyad is always an opposition of two terms, and, in that sense, it cannot signify an absolute diversity. When we say that God is Trinity we are emerging from the series of countable or calculable numbers.^{25} The procession of the Holy Spirit is an infinite [85] passage beyond the dyad, which consecrates the absolute (as opposed to relative) diversity of the persons. This passage beyond the dyad is not an infinite series of persons but the infinity of the procession of the Third Person: the Triad suffices to denote the Living God of revelation.^{26} If God is a monad equal to a triad, there is no place in him for a dyad. Thus the seemingly necessary opposition between the Father and the Son, which gives rise to a dyad, is purely artificial, the result of an illicit abstraction. Where the Trinity is concerned, we are in the presence of the One or of the Three, but never of two.

The procession of the Holy Spirit *ab utroque* does not signify passage beyond the dyad but rather re-absorption of the dyad in the monad, the return of the monad upon itself. It is a dialectic of the monad opening out into the dyad and closing again into its simplicity.^{27} On the other hand, procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, by emphasizing the monarchy of the Father as the concrete principle of the unity of the Three, passes beyond the dyad without a return to primordial unity, without the necessity of God retiring into the simplicity of the essence. For this reason the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone confronts us with the mystery of the "Tri-Unity." We have here not a simple, self-enclosed essence, upon which relations of opposition have been superimposed in order to masquerade a god of philosophy as the God of Christian revelation. We say "the simple Trinity," and this antinomic expression, characteristic of Orthodox hymnography,^{28} points out a simplicity which the absolute diversity of the three persons can in no way relativize.

When we speak of the Personal God, who cannot be a monad, and when, bearing in mind the celebrated Plotinian [86] passage in the works of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, we say that the Trinity is a passage beyond the dyad and beyond its pair of opposed terms, {29} this in no sense implies the Neo-Platonist idea of *bonum diffusivum sui* or any kind of moral basis for the doctrine of the Trinity, e.g. the idea of love seeking to share its own plenitude with others. If the Father shares His one essence with the Son and the Holy Spirit and in that sharing remains undivided, this is neither an act of will nor an act of internal necessity. In more general terms, it is not an act at all, but the eternal mode of Trinitarian existence in itself. It is a primordial reality which cannot be based on any notion other than itself, for the Trinity is prior to all the qualities— goodness, intelligence, love, power, infinity— in which God manifests Himself and in which He can be known.

When Roman Catholic theology presents the relations of origin as notional acts and speaks of two processions *per modum intellectus* and *per modum voluntatis*, it commits from the point of view of Orthodox triadology— an inadmissible error of confusion concerning the Trinity. In effect, the external qualities of God— intellect, will, or love— are introduced into the interior of the Trinity to designate the relations between the three hypostases. This line of thought gives us a divine individuality rather than a Trinity of persons— an individuality which in thought is conscious of its own essential content (generation of the Word *per modum intellectus*) and which, in knowing himself, loves himself (the procession of the Holy Spirit *ab utroque, per modum voluntatis* or *per modum amoris*). We are here confronted with a philosophical anthropomorphism having nothing in common with Biblical anthropomorphism; for the Biblical theophanies, while showing us in human guise the acts and manifestations of a personal God in the history of the world, also place us face to face with the mystery of His unknowable [87] Being, which Christians nevertheless dare to venerate and to invoke as the unique Being in Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who live and reign in the inaccessible light of their essence.

For us the Trinity remains the *Deus absconditus*, the Holy of Holies of the divine existence, where no "strange fire" may be introduced. Theology will be faithful to tradition in so far as its technical terms— *ousia*, *hypostasis*, consubstantiality, relations of origin, causality, monarchy— serve to present more and more clearly the initial mystery of God the Trinity, without obscuring it with "Trinitarian deductions" derived from another starting-point. By defending the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, Orthodoxy professes its faith in the "simple Trinity," wherein relations of origin denote the absolute diversity of the Three while at the same time indicating their unity, as represented by the Father, who is not simply a monad but— in that he is the Father—

the principle of the Tri-Unity. This means, if God is truly the Living God of revelation and not the simple essence of the philosophers, He can only be God the Trinity. This is a primordial truth, incapable of being based on any process of reasoning whatever, because all reasoning, all truth, and all thought prove to be posterior to the Trinity, the basis of all being and all knowledge.

As we have seen, all triadology depends on the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit:

(1) If the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, this ineffable procession confronts us with the absolute diversity of the three hypostases, excluding all relations of opposition. If He proceeds from the Father and the Son, the relations of origin, instead of being signs of absolute diversity, become determinants of the persons, which emanate from an impersonal principle.

(2) If the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, this procession presents us with a Trinity which escapes the laws of quantitative number, since it goes beyond the dyad of opposed terms, not by means of a synthesis or a new series of numbers, but by an absolutely new diversity which we call the Third Person. If the Holy Spirit proceeds *ab* [88] *utroque*, we get a relativized Trinity, submitted to the laws of number and of relations of opposition— laws which cannot serve as a basis for the diversity of the Three Persons without confusing them either with each other or with their common nature.

(3) If the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, as the hypostatic cause of the consubstantial hypostases, we find the "simple Trinity," where the monarchy of the Father conditions the personal diversity of the Three while at the same time expressing their essential unity. The balance between the hypostases and the *ousia* is safeguarded. If the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from one single principle, essential unity takes precedence over personal diversity, and the Persons become relations of the essence, differentiating themselves from one another by mutual opposition. This is no longer the "simple Trinity" but an absolute simplicity of essence, which is treated as an ontological basis at a point where there can be no basis except the primordial Tri-Unity itself.

7

By the dogma of the *Filioque*, the God of the philosophers and savants is introduced into the heart of the Living God, taking the place of the *Deus absconditus, qui posuit tenebras latibulum suum*. The unknowable essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit receives positive qualifications. It becomes the object of natural theology: we get "God in general," who could be the god of Descartes, or the god of Leibnitz, or even perhaps, to some extent, the god of Voltaire and of the dechristianized Deists of the eighteenth

century. Manuals of theology begin with a demonstration of His existence, thence to deduce, from the simplicity of His essence, the mode in which the perfections found among creatures are to be attributed to this eminently simple essence. From His attributes they go on to a discussion of what He can or cannot do, if He is not to contradict Himself and is to remain true to His essential perfection. Finally a chapter about the relations [89] of the essence— which do not at all abolish its simplicity— serves as a fragile bridge between the god of the philosophers and the God of revelation.

By the dogma of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, the god of the philosophers is forever banished from "the Holy of Holies, which is hid from the gaze of the Seraphim and glorified through the Three Holinesses Who are united into a single Sovereignty and Divinity." {30} The ineffable essence of the Trinity escapes all positive qualification, including that of simplicity. If we speak of the "simple Trinity," this self-contradictory expression means that distinctions between the three hypostases and between them and the essence do not introduce into the Tri-Unity any division into "constituent elements." Where the idea of the monarchy of the Father remains unshakable, no distinction postulated by faith can introduce composition into the Godhead. Precisely because God is unknowable in that which He is, Orthodox theology distinguishes between the essence of God and His energies, between the inaccessible nature of the Holy Trinity and its "natural processions." {31}

When we speak of the Trinity in itself, we are confessing, in our poor and always defective human language, the mode of existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one sole God who cannot but be Trinity, because He is the Living God of Revelation, Who, though unknowable, has made Himself known, through the incarnation of the Son, to all who have received the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father and is sent into the world in the name of the incarnate Son.

Every name except those of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— even the names of "Word" and "Paraclete"— is inappropriate for designating the special characteristics of the hypostases in the inaccessible existence of the Trinity, and refers rather [90] to the external aspect of God, to His manifestation, {32} or even to His economy. The dogma of the Trinity marks the summit of theology, where our thought stands still before the primordial mystery of the existence of the Personal God. Apart from the names denoting the three hypostases and the common name of the Trinity, the innumerable names which we apply to God— the "divine names" which textbook theology calls his attributes— denote God not in his inaccessible Being but in "that which surrounds the essence" (*ta peri tes ousias*). {33} This is the eternal radiance of the common content of the Three Persons, who reveal their incommunicable nature in "energies." This technical term of Byzantine theology, denoting a mode of divine existence besides essence, introduces no

new philosophical notion alien to revelation. The Bible, in its concrete language, speaks of nothing other than "energies" when it tells us of the "glory of God"— a glory with innumerable names which surrounds the inaccessible Being of God, making Him known outside Himself, while concealing what He is in Himself. This is the eternal glory which belongs to the Three Persons, which the Son "had before the world was." And when we speak of the divine energies in relation to the human beings to whom they are communicated and given and by whom they are appropriated, this divine and uncreated reality within us is called Grace.

8

The manifesting energies of God— which signify a mode of divine existence other than that of the Trinity in itself, in its incommunicable nature— do not make a breach in its unity; they do not abolish the "simple Trinity." The same monarchy of the Father, who is the cause of the consubstantial hypostases of the Son and the Holy Spirit, also presides over the external manifestation of the unity of the Trinity. Here the term "causality," applied to the Person of the Father in that He is the principle of the absolute diversities of the Three consubstantial Persons (a term implying the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone), must be clearly distinguished from the revelation or manifestation of the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit. Causality, with all its defects as a term, expresses what it stands for quite well: the hypostatic distinction of the Three which arises from the Person of the Father— a distinction between absolute diversities, brought about by the fact that the Father is not uniquely the essence. It is not possible to replace the conventional term "causality" by that of "manifestation" of the Father— as Fr. Bulgakov has tried to do^{34}— without confounding the two planes of thought: that of the existence of the Trinity in itself, and that of existence *ad extra*, in the radiance of the essential glory of God.

If the Father is the personal cause of the hypostases, He is also, for that very reason, the principle of their common possession of one and the same nature; and in that sense, He is the "source" of the common divinity of the Three. The revelation of this nature, the externalization of the unknowable essence of the Three, is not a reality foreign to the Three hypostases. Every energy, every manifestation, comes from the Father, is expressed in the Son, and goes forth in the Holy Spirit.^{35} This procession— natural, "energetic," manifesting— must be clearly distinguished from hypostatic procession, which is personal, internal, from the Father alone. The same monarchy of the Father conditions both the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit— His personal existence *ek monou tou Patros*— and the manifesting, [92] natural procession of the common Godhead *ad extra* in the Holy Spirit, through the Son— *dia Huiou*.

If, as we have already said, the name "Holy Spirit" expresses more a divine economy than a personal quality, this is because the Third Hypostasis is *par excellence* the hypostasis of manifestation, the Person in whom we know God the Trinity. His Person is hidden from us by the very profusion of the Divinity which He manifests. It is this "personal kenosis" of the Holy Spirit on the plane of manifestation and economy which makes it hard to grasp His hypostatic existence.

The same plane of natural manifestation gives to the name "Logos," as applied to the Son, all its significance. The Logos is "a concise declaration of the nature of the Father," as St. Gregory of Nazianzus says.^{36} When St. Basil speaks to us of the Son who "shows in Himself the whole of the Father, shining with all His glory in resplendence,"^{37} he also is concerned with the manifesting and energetic aspect of the Trinity. Likewise all the patristic passages in which the Son is called "the image of the Father" and the Holy Spirit is called "the image of the Son"^{38} refer to the energetic manifestation of the content common to the Three; for the Son is not the Father, but He is what the Father is; the Holy Spirit is not the Son, but He is what the Son is.^{39} In the order of divine manifestation, the hypostases are not the respective images of the personal diversities but of the common nature: the Father reveals His nature through the Son, and the divinity of the Son is manifested in the Holy Spirit. This is why, in the realm of divine manifestation, it is possible to establish an order of Persons (*taxis*) which, strictly speaking, should not be attributed to Trinitarian existence in itself, despite the "monarchy" and "causality" of the Father: these confer upon Him no hypostatic primacy over the other two [93] hypostases, since He is a person only because the Son and the Holy Spirit are also.

9

Confusion between Trinitarian existence and energetic radiance, between personal causality and natural manifestation, can arise in two different and, in a certain sense, opposite ways: (1) The Trinity may be conceived as an internal revelation of the divine nature in notional acts: the Father expresses His nature in the Word and the two cause the Holy Spirit to proceed as a mutual "bond of love." This is the triadology of Latin Filioquism. (2) The Trinity may be conceived as an internal revelation of the hypostases or of the "Tri-hypostatic subject" in the common nature. This is the triadology of Russian Sophiology, particularly of Fr. Bulgakov. In both cases, the equilibrium between essence and hypostases is broken. The Trinitarian antinomy is suppressed, with the former in favor of the essence, with the latter in favor of the hypostases.

The distinction between the unknowable essence of the Trinity and its energetic processions, clearly defined by the great councils of the fourteenth century, allows Orthodox theology to maintain firmly the difference between tri-hypostatic existence in

itself and tri-hypostatic existence in the common manifestation outside the essence. In His hypostatic existence, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone; and this ineffable procession enables us to confess the absolute diversity of the Three Persons, i.e. our faith in the Tri-Unity. In the order of natural manifestation, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son (*dia Huiou*), after the Word; and this procession reveals to us the common glory of the Three, the eternal splendor of the divine nature.

It is curious to notice that the distinction between the hypostatic existence of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father alone, and His eternal radiance— *eis aidion ekphansin*— through the Son, was formulated in the course of [94] discussions which took place in Constantinople towards the end of the thirteenth century, after the Council of Lyons.^{40} The doctrinal continuity can be recognized here: defense of the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone necessitates a decision as to the import of the phrase *dia Huiou*; this in turn opens the way for the distinction between essence and energies. This is not a "dogmatic development." Rather, one and the same tradition is defended, at different points, by the Orthodox from St. Photius to George of Cyprus and St. Gregory Palamas.

It would not be exact to say, as some Orthodox polemicists have, that the procession *dia Huiou* signifies solely the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the temporal mission of the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit, a new factor is involved: that of will. This will, as we know, can only be the common will of the Trinity. The temporal mission is a specific case of divine manifestation *in the economy*, i.e. in relation to created being. Generally speaking, the divine economy in time expresses the eternal manifestation; but the eternal manifestation is not necessarily the basis of created beings, which could have not existed. Independently of the existence of creatures, the Trinity is manifested in the radiance of its glory. From all eternity, the Father is "the Father of glory" (Eph. 1:17); the Word is "the brightness of His glory" (Heb. 1:3); and the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of glory" (I Peter 4:14).

Poverty of vocabulary sometimes makes it hard to recognize whether it is the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit or the procession of manifestation to which a writer is alluding: both are eternal, though having a different point of reference. Very often the Fathers simultaneously employ expressions referring to the hypostatic existence of the Holy Spirit and to the eternal manifestation of the divine nature in the Holy Spirit, even when defining His personal qualities or distinguishing His person from the other two. Nevertheless, they well distinguished between the two dif[95]ferent modes of hypostatic subsistence and of manifestation. In evidence, we can cite this passage from St. Basil: "From the Father proceeds the Son, through whom are all things, and with whom the

Holy Spirit is ever inseparably known, for none can think of the Son without being enlightened by the Spirit. Thus on one hand the Holy Spirit, the source, of all good things distributed to created beings, is linked to the Son, with whom He is inseparably conceived; on the other hand His being is dependent on the Father, from whom He proceeds. Therefore the characteristic mark of His personal quality is *to be manifested* after the Son and with Him, and *to subsist* in proceeding from the Father."^{41} Many other patristic texts could be cited, in which the writer is concerned simultaneously with the eternal manifestation of the Divinity in the Holy Spirit and with His personal existence.^{42} It was on the basis of these texts that Latinizing Greeks sought to defend the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit "through the Son" in order to reconcile two such different triadologies.

10

It is easy to conceive the difficulties which the distinction between hypostatic existence of the Holy Spirit and eternal manifestation of the divine nature in His person presented to the theologically rude and uneducated minds of Western Christians of the Carolingian period * It may well be supposed that it was the truth of the eternal manifestation which the first Filioquist formulas, in Spain and elsewhere before the ninth century, were intended to express. It is possible that the Filioquism of St. Augustine can also be interpreted in the same sense, although here the problem is more difficult and a theological analysis of the treatise [96] *De Trinitate* is needed— something which has not yet been done by the Orthodox. Filioquism as a doctrine of the hypostatic procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son as from a single principle reached its clear and definitively explicit form in the great centuries of scholasticism. After the councils of Lyons and Florence, it was no longer possible to interpret the Latin formula for the procession of the Holy Spirit in the sense of eternal manifestation of the Divinity. At the same time it also became impossible for Roman Catholic theologians to admit the energetic manifestation of the Trinity as something not contradicting the truth of the divine simplicity. No longer was there any place for the concept of the energies of the Trinity: nothing was admitted to exist outside the divine essence except created effects, acts of will analogous to the act of creation. Western theologians had to profess the created character of glory and of sanctifying grace, to renounce the concept of deification; and in doing this they are quite consistent with the premises of their triadology.

Reconciliation will be possible and *Filioque* will no longer be an *impedimentum dirmens* at that moment when the West, which has been frozen for so long in dogmatic isolation, ceases to consider Byzantine theology as an absurd innovation and recognizes that it only expressed the truths of tradition, which can be found in a less explicit form in the

16

Fathers of the first centuries of the Church. Then it will be recognized that what may seem absurd for a theology in which faith seeks understanding is not so absurd for an understanding open to the full reception of Revelation— open to the acquisition of "the sense of the Scriptures," whose sacred words long ago were "foolishness" to the Greek philosophers. The Greeks have ceased to be Greeks in becoming sons of the Church. That is why they have been able to give to the Christian faith its imperishable theological armory. May the Latins in their turn cease to be solely Latins in their theology! Then together we shall confess our catholic faith in the Holy Trinity, who lives and reigns in the eternal light of His glory.

1. "Thesen ueber das Filioque (von einen russischen Theologen)," *Revue internationale de theologie* (published at Berne by the Old Catholics) 6 (1898), pp. 681-712.
2. Bolotov must have recognized, implicitly, the radical character of the divergences, since, after all, he categorically denied the causal character of the mediation of the Son in the procession of the Holy Spirit: "Aber wenn auch in den innersten geheimnisvollsten Beziehungen des trinitarischen Lebens begrundet, ist das 'durch den Sohn' frei von dem leisesten Anstrich einer *Kausalitaets*-Bedeutung" (op. cit. p. 700; italics Bolotov's).
3. A study of the Filioquism of the Spanish councils of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries would be of capital importance, so that a dogmatic appreciation of these formulas might be made. Here the disinterested work of historical theology could be really useful to the Church.
4. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 20, 11; P.G. 35, col. 1077C. *Or.* 31, 8; P.G. 36, col. 141B.
5. The expression is that of St. Photius, *Mystagogia* 9; P.G. 102, col. 289B: *kai anablastesei palin hemin ho Sabellios, mallon de ti teras heteron hemisabelleion.*
6. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, q.36, a.1, with a reference to St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* I, 11.
7. Thomas uses the expressions *relativa oppositio*, *oppositio relationis* (this above all with reference to the essence), *relatio* (or *respectus*) *ad suum oppositum*, and *relationes oppositae* to signify what we here have called "relation of opposition." In using this expression, we do not in any way misrepresent Thomas' thought, for the idea of opposition is implied in his very definition of relation: "*De ratione autem relationis est respectus unius ad alterum, secundum quem aliquid alteri opponitur relative*" (I, q.28, a.3).

8. I, q.36, a.2 and 4.
9. Thomas Aquinas goes further: for him the persons of the Trinity *are* relations (*persona est relatio*, I, q.40, a.2).
10. Fr. Th. de Regnon, inquiring why Filioquist considerations were never developed in the rich works of the Greek Fathers, asks: "Is this not proof that [such considerations] never occurred to them in their conception of the Trinity?" And he replies with a significant avowal: "In fact all these [Filioquist considerations] presuppose that, in the order of concepts, nature is anterior to person and that the latter represents a kind of efflorescence of the former" (*Etudes de theologie positive sur la Sainte Trinite I* (Paris, 1892), p. 309). He also writes: "Latin philosophy envisages first the nature in itself and then proceeds to the expression; Greek philosophy envisages first the expression and then penetrates it to find the nature. The Latin considers personality as a mode of nature, the Greek considers nature as the content of the person" (ibid. p. 433).
11. St. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* I, 8; P.G. 94, cols. 820-824A.
12. Cf. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *loc. cit.* n. 4 *supra*.
13. More exactly, "mode of subsistence." This expression is found, first of all, in St. Basil, *De spiritu sancto* 18; P.G. 32, col. 152B; and later e.g. in St. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* I, 8 and I, 10; P.G. 94, cols. 828D, 837C. It is heavily used by George of Cyprus, *Apologia*, P.G. 142, col. 254A *et passim*.
14. "To be unbegotten, to be begotten, to proceed— these are the features which characterize the Father, the Son, and Him whom we call the Holy Spirit, in such a way as to safeguard the distinction of the three hypostases in the one nature and majesty of the Divinity; for the Son is not the Father, because there is only one Father, but He is what the Father is; the Holy Spirit, although He proceeds from God, is not the Son, because there is only one Only Begotten Son, but He is what the Son is. The Three are One in divinity and the One is Three in persons. Thus we avoid the unity of Sabellius and the triplicity of the odious present-day heresy." St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 30, 9; P.G. 36, col. 14113-144A.
15. In his polemic against the Latins, St. Mark of Ephesus, in affirming the principle of the diversity of the persons, criticizes the Thomist principle of opposition of the persons. *Capita syllogistica contra Latinos* 24; P.G. 161, cols. 189.193.
16. "For us there is one God, for the Godhead is one, and the Three in whom we believe proceed from and are referred to the One. . . Thus when we look at the Godhead, the First Cause, and the Monarchy, the One appears to us; but when

- we look at the Persons in whom the Godhead is, who timelessly and with equal glory come forth from the First Cause, we adore the Three." St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 31, 14; P.G. 36, cols. 14813-149A.
17. "St. Photius compares the Trinity to a pair of scales, in which the needle represents the Father, and the two platforms represent the Son and the Holy Spirit. *Amphilochia* qu. 181; P.G. 101, col. 896.
 18. "St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 31, 14; P.G. 36, col. 148D.
 19. "The one nature in the Three is God; but the union (*henosis*) is the Father, from whom the others proceed and to whom they refer, not so as to be confounded but rather to have all in common with Him, without distinction of time, will, or power." St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 42; P.G. 36, col. 476B.
 20. "For He would be the origin (*arche*) of petty and unworthy things, or rather the term 'origin' would be used in a petty and unworthy sense, if He were not the origin of the Godhead (*tes Theotetos arche*) and of the goodness contemplated in the Son and in the Spirit: in the former as Son and Word, in the latter as Spirit which proceeds without separation." St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 2, 38; P.G. 35, col. 445.
 21. *Thesaurus*, assert. 5; P.G. 75, cols. 65, 68.
 22. Such a concept may be found in the works of Origen, e.g. *Commentary on St. John* 2, 2; P.G. 14, col. log. On this subject the excellent work of Th. Lieske, *Theologie der Logosmystik bei Origen* (Muenster, 1938), may be usefully consulted.
 23. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 40 (*In sanctum baptisma*), 41; P.G. 36, col. 417B.
 24. *Capita theologica et oeconomica* 2, 13; P.G. 36, col. 1125A.
 25. St. Basil appears to express this idea well: "For we do not count by way of addition, gradually making increase from unity to plurality, saying 'one, two, three' or 'first, second, third.' 'I am the first and I am the last,' says God (Isaiah 44:6). And we have never, even unto our own days, heard of a second God. For in worshipping 'God of God' we both confess the distinction of persons and abide by the Monarchy." *De spiritu sancto* 18; P.G. 32, col. 149B.
 26. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 23 (*De pace* 3), 10; P.G. 35, col. 1161. *Or.* 45 (*In sanctum pascha*); P.G. 36, col. 628C.
 27. The idea of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son is characteristic, in this sense, of Filioquist triadology.

28. Cf. St. Andrew of Crete's Great Canon of repentance, odes 3, 6, 7.
29. "The monad is set in motion on account of its richness; the dyad is surpassed, because Divinity is beyond matter and form; perfection is reached in the triad, the first to surpass the composite quality of the dyad, so that the Divinity neither remains constrained nor expands to infinity." St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 23 (*De pace* 3), 8; P.G. 35, col. 1160C. See also *Or.* 29 (*Theologica* 3), 2; P.G. 36, col. 76B.
30. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 38 (*In Theophaniam*), 8; P.G. 36, col. 32013C.
31. See the acts of the councils of Constantinople in 1341, 1347, and 1350; Mansi, vol. 25, cols. 1147-1150, vol. 26, cols. 105-110, 127-212. St. Gregory Palarnas, *Theophanes*, P.G. 150, cols. 909-960.
32. It is thus that the Logos of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel signifies the Son, in that he *manifests* the nature of the Father– the common nature of the Trinity. In this sense, the Logos also includes the manifesting role of the Holy Spirit: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."
33. 83 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 38 (*In Theophaniam*), 7; P.G. 36, col. 317B.
34. S. Bulgakov, *Le Paraclet* (Paris: Aubier, 1946) pp. 69-75.
35. Thus all the divine names, denoting as they do the common nature, can be applied to each of the Persons, but only in the energetic order– the order of the manifestation of the Divinity. See, for example, St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Macedonianos* 13; P.G. 45, col. 1317: "The source of power is the Father; the power is the Son; the spirit of power is the Holy Spirit." St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 23, 11; P.G. 35, col. 1164A: "The True, the Truth, the Spirit of Truth."
36. *Or.* 30 (*Theologica* 4), 20; P.G. 36, col. 129A.
37. *Adversus Eunomium* 11, 17; P.G. 24, col. 60513.
38. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* assert. 33; P.G. 75, col. 572. St. John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* 111, 18; P.G. 94, cols. 1337D-1340B; *De fide orthodoxa* 1, 13; P.G. 94, col. 856B.
39. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 31 (*Theologica* 5), 9; P.G. 36, col. 144A.
40. See the expression *eis aidion ekphansin* in the works of George of Cyprus: *Expositio fidei*, P.G. 142, col. 241A; *Confessio*, col. 250; *Apologia* cols. 266-267; *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, cols. 290C, 300B.
41. *Ep.* 38, 4; P.G. 32, col. 329C-332A. See also two passages in St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Eunomium* I; P.G. 45, cols. 369A and 416C.

42. For example, the pneumatological formula of the *Synodicon* of St. Tarasius, read at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, in which the distinction between the plane of subsistence and that of eternal manifestation is not noticed; Mansi, vol. 12, col. 1122.