

SEMINAR ON TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

This year the two sessions of the Trinity Seminar were devoted to the *filioque*. Since co-organizer Sixto J. Garcia was unable to attend the convention, Earl C. Muller moderated both sessions. Presentations were by Ralph del Colle (Barry University), who reflected on the inter-ecclesial and recent theological dimensions of the question, and Earl Muller (Marquette University), who provided a close reading of *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* of Photius.

The first session was devoted to the presentation of the present inter-ecclesial situation and trends in contemporary, particularly Roman Catholic, trinitarian theology.

Extreme positions exist on both sides of the controversy. On the one hand Vladimir Lossky, representing a more extreme monopatrist position, roots all that is wrong with Roman Catholicism in the *filioque*; on the other Bertrand de Margerie insists on many points Lossky most objects to. These stances are finally incompatible. Greater progress can be made by developing moderate positions on each sides. Yves Congar argues that Florence opens the door for a complementary approach—the decree of that council, particularly its insistence that the *filioque* was added “under the impact of a real need at the time,” provides Catholic theology some room to maneuver. Boris Bobrinskoy provides a comparable mediating position on the Orthodox side, evoking the distinction made by B. Bolotov between dogmas, theologoumena, and theological opinions. One can thus distinguish between the creed and monopatrist or filioquist additions.

Other Christian churches have taken various positions. The Old Catholic Church has most recently taken a monopatrist stance, arguing that the *filioque* is dogmatically erroneous. The Anglican Communion has recommended the deletion of the *filioque*. The World Council of Churches set out a mediating position suggesting a variety of alternate formulae which seek to affirm at once the monarchy of the Father and the intent of the *filioque*—the relation between the Son and the Spirit in the inner life of God: the Spirit proceeds from the Father of the Son; from the Father through the Son; from the Father and receives from the Son; from the Father and rests on the Son; from the Father and shines out through the Son. Future theological work on this issue would have to exploit the “how” of this relation while recognizing the difference between hypostatic origination and inner-trinitarian manifestation.

Within Roman Catholic theology three important emphases are worth further reflection: the increasing tendency to use a relational ontology in linking a trinitarian understanding of God with Christian life (most recently exemplified by Catherine LaCugna); the use of new models to represent the trinitarian relations (eg. the mutual love or bestowal model advocated by David Coffey);

the turn to the divine economy as the starting point for the Christian understanding of God (as insisted on by Karl Rahner).

Speaking of God on the basis of the divine economy requires one to be attentive to the Spirit's work which precedes the coming of Christ and is instrumental in the incarnation. If the sending of the Spirit by the Risen Lord justifies the *filioque* then reflection on this work of the Spirit could require a reciprocal relationship between Son and Spirit (*ex Patre Spirituque*) as suggested by Leonardo Boff. Further, should an apophatic approach not inform our reflections on the inner-trinitarian relations? At any rate any query into the nature of the procession of the Spirit must begin with the economic inseparability of Christology and Pneumatology.

Several participants noted the diversity of pneumatologies in the various Orthodox churches. Peter Hunnemann pointed to the different logics underlying the different conclusions of Rome and Constantinople. If the point of departure is the Father and the Son, then how to speak of the Spirit becomes the problem and can lead one to the *filioque*; if the point of departure is the Father, then one moves toward affirming the monarchy of the Father in strong terms. Fr. Pietro Bilaniuk noted that many Orthodox would accept the *filioque* as an acceptable theologoumenon as long as it was removed from the creed. There are several lines of inquiry—the *kenosis* of the Father and the Spirit as well as the Son, and the trinitarian character of creation—which would provide a unified theological context in which the *filioque* could begin to make sense.

Kenneth Steinhauser noted the tendency to underestimate the effect of Western Arianism on the original insertion of the *filioque* into the creed and the greater need in the West to stress the equality of the Son and the Father. It might be more fruitful to explore what gave rise to the expression in the first place.

Other discussion expanded on themes touched on in the main presentation: a relational ontology, particularly in relation to ecclesiology—a theme examined in a previous seminar; the necessity to touch base continually with the economy; the interrelationship between God's inner life and our Christian life.

In the second session the historical context for the ninth century *filioque* crisis was set forth, followed by a presentation of the text of the *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* alternating with discussion.

Prior to Photius the *filioque* had not been a point of division: Maximus the Confessor had earlier defended it, giving it a thoroughly Eastern interpretation. John Damascene, whose theology moves away from the *filioque*, had not explicitly addressed the issue. The Carolingian insertion of it into the creed took place after his death. Photius first pressed the point during the controversy over the Bulgarian missions and then as part of a theological defense of the Byzantine rites. He composed his *Mystagogy* in the later part of his life when he was again in union with Rome—indeed, he cites here the support of numerous popes.

The *Mystagogy*, an expansion of Photius' letter to the Patriarch of Aquileia, is expressly a gathering together of arguments against the *filioque* and as such

has never really been surpassed. As Ralph del Colle noted, it is an example of an extreme monopatrist position. The usefulness of examining it lies in the fact that all Orthodox look to Photius as a theological source, even if they do not accept his rejection of the *filioque*. Many Orthodox concerns are reflected in those raised by Photius; addressing these will be of maximum ecumenical usefulness.

Relatively little work has been done on the *Mystagogy*. The critical edition remains the Minge version. The first English translation was in 1983; both current translations, as noted by Fr. Bilaniuk, leave something to be desired. The work was intended as a theological treatise and deliberately reaches back to a more classical style. Every word is carefully placed and nuanced, the expression is highly elliptical, and Photius delights in puns and word plays. It is impossible to translate.

The *Mystagogy* can seem haphazard—arguments from authority are alternated with theological ones. Photius gives the plan of composition toward the end where he sets out a two-fold scheme of authorities. The work opens with the authority of Christ and closes with the authority of the sacred oracles, or, rather, the authority of the Spirit. An inner ring appeals to the councils. The second scheme begins with Christ, proceeds through Paul, considers the testimony of various fathers of the Church and ends with the testimony of popes interwoven with the conciliar witness of the other scheme. The fundamental theological arguments, found in paragraphs three and four, are elaborated in a series of repetitions.

The preface sets out the basic extreme monopatrist position—the Son and the Spirit are from the Father alone (*ek monou*). The Spirit is of the Son as consubstantial and sent through him (*di' autou*). Son and Spirit are seemingly distinguished only in the economy. The West will argue that the *filioque* provides the means of distinguishing the two. On the other hand, many Orthodox will object that the West confuses theology and economy.

Paragraphs three and four set out two fundamental arguments: affirmation of the *filioque* requires a correlate affirmation of a *spirituque*; affirmation of the *filioque* introduces divisions into God. Paragraph six carries the argument of paragraph four, which turned on the inseparability of Father and Son, one step further—because of His equal rank the Spirit is also inseparable from Father and Son and must be involved in His own procession. But this produces division. Paragraph three turns on the “need” of the Father in projecting the Spirit, paragraph seven turns the same question around—what has the Son added? Paragraph eight again raises the issue of the *spirituque*. Paragraph nine begins a new repetition focusing now on the specific hypostatic properties. These arguments flow out of John Damascene's *Orthodoxos Pisteos*.

Other issues raised in the discussion included the need to set out clearly what the characteristic property of the Father is. Photius' centering of this on causation represents a shift from John Damascene who centers the characteristic

on unoriginateness. The Western attempt to argue that Father and Son act as one cause in the spiration of the Spirit, while answering one type of objection, threatens to set up an opposition between the inseparability of the Father and the Son and the procession of the Spirit. If the procession is by Person rather than by nature, then to say Father and Son act as one cause threatens to collapse the two into one Person. More work needs to be done, particularly in uncovering Photius' sources.

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