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### Trinitarian Theology from Alcuin to Anselm

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### Abstract and Keywords

This article focuses on Trinitarian theology during the period from the late eighth century to the beginning of the twelfth century. It considers the works of Alcuin of York, Anselm of Canterbury, Gottschalk of Orbais, and John Scotus Eriugena. It explains that Alcuin's work on the undivided Trinity defended the Augustinian emphasis on the divine unity, whereas Eriugena drew on Greek Orthodox theology to emphasize the proper mode of action of the divine persons. Anselm relied upon the Augustinian image and defended the *Filioque* against Greek theologians.

Keywords: Trinitarian theology, Alcuin of York, Anselm of Canterbury, Gottschalk of Orbais, John Scotus Eriugena, undivided Trinity, divine unity, Greek Orthodox theology, divine persons, *Filioque*

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□ □ □ the late eighth century to the beginning of the twelfth century few theologians had the confidence to explore the mystery of the Trinity. Alcuin of York, father of the Carolingian renaissance, and Anselm of Canterbury, progenitor of rational theology, mark the start and the end of the period and are also the main contributors to the development of Trinitarian theology during these centuries. As theological thinkers they are on different levels but their shared perception of the relationship between unity and Trinity in the divine identifies the main line of thought in the Western tradition. Few individuals dared suggest modifications to the *opinio communis* and they met with limited sympathy and understanding.

## Alcuin's Manual on the Trinity

Having retired to St Martin's monastery in Tours, Alcuin did not put the spiritual welfare of the Frankish emperor or his subjects behind him. Around 802 he finished *On the Faith of the Holy and Undivided Trinity* which is a magisterial exposition of the fundamental article of faith and a demonstration of its significance for the body of Christian doctrine. In the letter of dedication, addressed to Charlemagne as newly crowned Roman emperor, Alcuin explained the purpose of the work: in order to secure the eternal bliss of his subjects Charlemagne must ensure that the true faith in God's Trinity is preached throughout the realm; in order to facilitate this daunting task Alcuin offers his manual for use as a textbook in the training of theologians and preachers. Concern for orthodoxy was nothing new in the nascent Carolingian empire; what was new was Alcuin's insistence on orthodoxy in Trinitarian theology as such. Presumably the resurgence and spread of adoptionism in Spain had made Alcuin aware that the fundamentals of Christian religion could (p. 156) not and should not be taken for granted and that advanced theological education was a necessity.

The historical circumstances of the work and the author's guiding motive must be taken into consideration when assessing the significance and importance of Alcuin's manual. The volume cannot be said to be original inasmuch as it is a patchwork of excerpts lifted from the writings of the Church Fathers and especially Augustine (Cavadini 1991). Alcuin openly admitted to writing only what he had found in the works of the Fathers; as he said, those who seek a deeper understanding of God's Trinity should turn to God in prayer (Alcuin 1863: 21D). This circumstance, however, does not detract from the intrinsic merit of Alcuin's work. To him the crucially important challenge was not to find something new to say but to reclaim and appropriate the heritage of the Church Fathers in order to make their thought a living force in the Church of the time. Furthermore, Alcuin's volume testifies to the author's impressive familiarity with the Patristic texts, to his literary skills in weaving together excerpts of authority as well as to his ability to select significant passages and organize them so as to present a clear and coherent exposition. During the Carolingian period Alcuin's manual of Trinitarian doctrine was admired and seen as a testimony on a par with the writings of the Church Fathers; it was widely distributed and popularized in the form of a catechetical abbreviation.

## Alcuin's Understanding of the Trinity

In his manual on Trinitarian theology Alcuin followed Augustine as his guide and he concurred wholeheartedly with the African Father that ignorance of dialectic is one of the

main reasons for faulty understanding of God's unity and Trinity. In the first book Alcuin explains the basic 'facts' of the Trinity and the categories which are employed to classify predications about God. The unity of God's substance and essence Alcuin emphasizes at the very start. Thus he stresses that God is one because the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one substance. Moreover, the three persons should not under any circumstance be thought of as three substances. Equally, there is no way God can be said to be triple (*triplex*); any of the three persons is as fully God and the divine substance as two or three taken together (Alcuin 1863: 15B, 19D). The fundamental distinction between what is said of God according to His single essence and what is said of God according to the three persons Alcuin identifies as a difference between substantial and relative predication. The unity of substance guarantees that substantial predicates or attributes are said of the divine persons both when taken together and when considered in particular; such attributes should always be thought of and spoken of in the singular because of the unity of the divine essence. For instance, the essential properties of being, goodness, and unity cannot be talked of in the plural so as to state that there are three gods or three good beings, even with the intention of indicating the three divine persons.

Alcuin classifies attributes or predicates which belong to or signify the divine essence as being '*ad se*', which means that they indicate God's unitary being and substance. On (p. 157) the other hand, what is attributed to the three divine persons as such, Alcuin classifies as relative inasmuch as predicates of this kind are said to be with respect to something else (*ad aliquid*). Since the divine persons are distinguished solely by their mutual relationships, it is strictly limited what can be said relatively (*relative*). The Father gives birth to the Son and this relationship of father and son gives rise to both the Father's personal property as well as that of the Son. Accordingly, the Father is He who is from nobody else, while the Son is He who is from only one. Taking his cue from Augustine, Alcuin firmly and repeatedly insists on the *Filioque*. To him it is an established fact that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son in equal measure and, consequently, the relationship of procession gives rise to the personal property of the Spirit, which is to proceed from two (Alcuin 1863: 16D, 20A, 22B).

While the predicates that are said to be substantial and '*ad se*' derive from and indicate the divine nature, the personal relationships and the relative properties to which they give rise seem to be incongruous with the divine. In the world of creatures what is relative belongs squarely to the accidental or non-essential. In God, however, nothing is incidental or changeable; divine nature is immutable and timeless. To Alcuin it is incumbent to explain that the divine relationships and the predicates which signify these relations do not compromise divine nature for the simple reason that the personal relationships in God are eternal and immutable just as the persons are as timeless and unchangeable as the divine essence (Alcuin 1863: 19A sqq.).

Summing up the main points established in the first book Alcuin focuses on the ten Aristotelian categories and elucidates how predicates which accrue to God should be classified. Firstly, Alcuin states, what is said of God in '*ad se*', that is, essential predication, belongs squarely in the category of substance. Of the other nine categories only the category of relation or '*ad aliquid*' is directly applicable to talk of God. This is the category of the personal predicates which are predicated of the divine persons in a relative and non-accidental sense. When something is said of God which belongs in one of the remaining eight categories, one should avoid taking the sentence at face value. Statements about God which contain predicates that as applied to creatures belong to categories such as, for example, position or passion should always be subjected to careful interpretation. Accordingly, when in Holy Scripture God is said to regret something this might seem to imply that there is passion in God. But this cannot be literally true since God is not subject to passions. Consequently, the statement must be conceived as figurative speech, and the theologian should strive to elicit an acceptable meaning. In the same way, God is said to be seated in Heaven which seems to imply the category of position; but this cannot be true in the literal sense and, for this reason, the statement is figurative and in need of exposition (Alcuin 1863: 22C sqq.).

As compared to Augustine's treatment in the fifth book of the *De Trinitate* Alcuin shifted the main point of the discussion in a subtle way. As Alcuin writes,

In all these ways Holy Scripture usually talks of God, but there is a difference between what is said properly, what is said figuratively and what is said relatively. *In the proper sense* God is said to be one substance, the highest and inexpressible, who always is what He is, with whom nothing is accidental.... God is said to be Father and Son (p. 158) and Holy Spirit in a relative manner, as we thoroughly inculcated above. But things like position, vestment, being in place and time, or undergoing passions cannot be said of God in the proper sense but only figuratively [which means] by way of likenesses [to what obtains in the world of creation]. (Alcuin 1863: 22D-23B; Hincmar 1852: 569C)

Alcuin's graduation of the 'literalness' of predications about God serves to underpin the absolute priority of the unity of substance in God; proper statements about God are only possible when talk is of the divine essence and substance. Predications of the personal properties or relationships are certainly not figurative but they are not on a par with what is said on the basis of God as a unitary substance.

Upholding this viewpoint Alcuin chose to disregard the equally pertinent and valid consideration that the term 'substance' is ill suited to describe the divine being, precisely because God does not receive accidents just as there is no difference between what God is, and that whereby God is what He is. The perception that God is 'beyond substance' is

something that Alcuin would have learned from Augustine himself in the seventh book of the *De Trinitate*, but it was certainly also explained in the fourth chapter of Boethius' small treatise on the Trinity, which Alcuin probably knew but chose to disregard.

The strong emphasis on the unity of the divine substance is also present in Alcuin's treatment of divine activity. God's working is exclusively linked to the divine essence or substance and as a cause of creation God is only one (Alcuin 1863: 20C, 24AC). As a matter of course, Alcuin is fully aware that many things and operations are recounted in Scripture as if they originated with or belonged to only one of the divine persons. This is true of the Father's heavenly voice which sounded at the baptism of Jesus and of the assumption of human nature in the Incarnation which is attributed to only the Son. Notwithstanding appearances, Alcuin explains, the biblical testimony does not entail that it is necessary to attribute separate operations to the divine persons. The reason for this is that the heavenly voice as well as the human flesh assumed by Christ was made by the one God, that is, the whole and undivided Trinity (Alcuin 1863: 20D). With this explanation Alcuin appears to sidestep the fundamental issue, i.e. how different manifestations and operations can be ascribed to the single divine persons. However, Alcuin makes up for this in dealing with the divine Word's assumption of human nature in chapter 10 of the third book. Here he adduces one of Augustine's well-known maxims: a work or action may be attributed to a single divine person simply because this work concerns and belongs to only this person (Alcuin 1863: 44CD). This implies that the particularization and specification of the divine person to whom a particular created object or action belongs does not originate on the side of the divine person; instead, it belongs on the side of the created work or action, which as a creature is brought forth by the whole Trinity. In the case of the Incarnation, this entails that Christ's human nature was created so as to concern and belong to only the Son, whereas as a work of creation it depended on all three persons. Accordingly, the incarnation does not entail that the Son operates alone or in separation from the Father or the Holy Spirit.

(p. 159) In the *De Trinitate* Augustine had elaborated a complex comparison between the human soul and its faculties, on the one hand, and, on the other, the unity of essence and Trinity of persons in the divine. This part of Augustine's legacy Alcuin chose to ignore and he did not explain the reason for this omission. Alcuin may have viewed Augustine's depiction of the inner life of the Trinity by way of the analogy with the dynamic interplay of memory, reason, and will in the human soul as simply too sophisticated for the time and as something that could easily lead the more simple-minded to view the divine persons as particular beings and agents. At any rate such a misunderstanding would clearly have gone against Alcuin's obvious wish to emphasize the priority of essential unity and the propriety of essential predication.

## Gottschalk's Challenge to the Carolingian Consensus

One of the more daring thinkers in the Carolingian period was the monk Gottschalk of Orbais, who for many years lived as an itinerant preacher and scholar. Gottschalk's free life was brought to an abrupt halt when he was charged with false teaching on divine predestination. He was condemned at a synod in Mainz in 848 and, the following year, at the provincial synod at Reims; after a public whipping he was sequestered in the abbey of Hautesville. His heresy consisted of a tenacious defence of Augustine's teaching on election and reprobation against the Pelagians and his condemnation became the start of a protracted conflict among Carolingian divines. Early in the struggle, Gottschalk's leading opponent and scourge, the archbishop Hincmar of Reims, was alerted to another heresy of Gottschalk's and this concerned the Trinity. In an attempt to gain additional support for his campaign Hincmar went to great trouble to publicize Gottschalk's doctrinal indiscretion but on this score he won scant support.

Surprisingly, Gottschalk's contribution to Trinitarian theology appeared, at least to his opponents, to compromise Augustinian orthodoxy. The sources to Gottschalk's theology of the Trinity are relatively few. There exist several small treatises of his which have been transmitted in a single manuscript (Gottschalk 1945: ix sqq.; Tavard 1997: 40). Against Gottschalk Hincmar composed a simply monumental and complex work entitled *De una et non trina deitate*. At the beginning of the work Hincmar included a set of notes which Gottschalk had sent to him and which in condensed form presented the main points of the opponent's Trinitarian 'innovation' (Hincmar 1852: 475C sqq.; Gottschalk 1945: 20–6). Against these notes Hincmar built up his defence of what he conceived to be Western orthodoxy.

From Gottschalk's notes it transpires that the main purpose of his deliberations on the divine Trinity was to underpin the orthodox middle between polytheism or, as he called it, Arianism, on the one hand, and, on the other, the dreaded Sabellianism. In order to achieve this, Gottschalk argued, it is not enough to state that God is one nature and three (p. 160) persons. Because divine nature is not cut off from or existing outside the persons, it is warranted to say that the deity is not only one but also three. This implies, according to Gottschalk, that every single divine person is God in the full sense and, accordingly, endowed with deity as his own proper principle (Gottschalk 1945: 20; Hincmar 1852: 478C). In other words, divine nature is not only one it is also 'trine' (*trina*) since it is proper to each of the divine persons (Tavard 1997: 45 sqq.). Accordingly, Gottschalk's emphasis on the less than common expression '*trina deitas*' was meant to provide a rationale for viewing the divine persons as substantial beings (Tavard 1997: 67–8).

Gottschalk took great pains to point out that this did not amount to introducing three substances in God. In order to establish this he distinguished sharply between the words 'trine' (*trinus*) and 'triple' (*triplex*); grammatical analysis reveals that the former does not allow of numbering while the latter indicates numerical diversity. Consequently, saying that the divine essence is trine merely implies that the attributes of divine nature, for example, being, holiness, majesty, and truth, pertain not only to divine nature but also to each of the three persons (Jolivet 1977). Equally, Gottschalk was keen to rule out the idea that his theory of the Trinity introduces a quaternity in God, i.e. that the divine nature and the three persons can be counted. Because divine nature is not distinct from the three persons it belongs to each of them in equal measure. As Gottschalk stressed repeatedly, divine nature or deity is naturally one and personally three (Tavard 1997: 65 sqq.).

Gottschalk's reasoning was undoubtedly based on Boethius' definition of person as that which is '*per se una*', which is not surprising in view of Gottschalk's obvious expertise in and predilection for grammar and logic as well as his conviction that grammatical analysis provides the key to theology (Jolivet 1958). But Hincmar was quick to point out that Boethius' definition of person cannot be applied to the divine without modifications and, at any rate, it was not the one favoured by Augustine, according to whom relation is what defines the divine persons (Tavard 1997: 68 sqq.).

Many details in Gottschalk's Trinitarian theology are rather opaque but his main motive was clearly spelled out already in the notes received by Hincmar. According to Gottschalk, it is necessary to affirm that divine nature is trine for the sole reason that divine nature did not assume human nature except in so far as it was the deity of the second person in the Trinity which became incarnate (Gottschalk 1945: 26; Hincmar 1852: 478CD). Because divine operation is inextricably tied to divine nature, Gottschalk argued, and because the divine persons are acting subjects and identifiable as subject terms, the only viable solution is to view the divine essence as both one and trine. If this is not allowed, Gottschalk thought, there would be no way to avoid Sabellianism and the ensuing heresy of Patripassianism.

Hincmar of Reims had little difficulty in refuting many of Gottschalk's arguments from tradition or pointing out the inherent dangers of the Boethian definition of person. Moreover, Hincmar was quick to identify and confront the main point of Gottschalk's theory. At the very start of his rebuttal he accused Gottschalk of having parted company with Alcuin—as well as Augustine—in his analysis of divine agency in God's assumption of human nature. In order to substantiate this claim he saw fit to quote the passage from Alcuin's manual in which the latter explained the assumption of human nature on (p. 161) the basis of Augustine's maxim (Hincmar 1852: 552C–553B). Moreover, Hincmar

retorted that Gottschalk's basic perception entailed the denial of the individuality of the Trinity and, accordingly, it was a short cut to the hateful heresy of tritheism (Hincmar 1852: 553C).

### John Scotus Eriugena and the Legacy of the Greeks

The great Irish scholar and theologian John Scotus Eriugena judiciously avoided public debate on Trinitarian theology. Occasionally Eriugena's interpretation of God's oneness and Trinity has been seen as similar to that of Gottschalk (Cappuyns 1933: 85; Tavad 1997: 78), but the Irishman was rather more daring than the German monk and had more considered reasons for deviating from Alcuin's well-trodden path of Augustinianism. In Eriugena's oeuvre, the Trinity is treated in the monumental *On the Division of Nature* and in his exposition of the prologue of St John's Gospel. In his systematic main work Eriugena considers God's Triunity in connection with the generation of the eternal ideas in the *Verbum Dei* and their realization in the world of creatures through the Holy Spirit. In this context John Scotus adopts the framework and terminology of Platonic causality and the triune God is viewed as both one cause and as three interrelated causes. Accordingly, John Scotus does not hesitate to speak of the divine essence and the divine persons as 'one essence in three substances' just as he without further ado depicts the divine principle as 'three subsisting causes in one essential cause' (Eriugena 1972: 164–5). Like Gottschalk he also refers to God as 'the triune cause of all things' (*trina omnium causa*) (Eriugena 1972: 170). The unusual terminology does not imply, however, that Eriugena distanced himself from the Augustinian heritage; he adopted Augustine's psychological explanation of the Trinity and adroitly adapted it to fit his own framework (Eriugena 1972: 174–6; Scheffczyk 1957).

Eriugena's approach to and perspective on the Trinity was undoubtedly prompted by his admiration for the theological traditions of the Greek Church to which his knowledge of Greek gave him direct access. This influence is not, however, the only explanation for Eriugena's views on Trinitarian theology. The Irish luminary in Charles the Bald's 'palace school' perceived a need to view the divine persons as subjects in their own right and for this he needed to stress their 'ontological' reality. This motive transpires lucidly from Eriugena's treatment of the *Filioque*, which at the time had become almost a Shibboleth of western orthodoxy. Against the united front of Carolingian theologians Eriugena did not waver in maintaining that the procession of the Holy Spirit originates solely from the substance that is proper to the Father, and not from the divine essence which is common to all three persons (Eriugena 1972: 200). Accordingly, the Father was the only cause of the Spirit. Eriugena's willingness to accept that the Holy Spirit proceeds 'through the



Son' (Eriugena 1972: 188–90) was no concession to western (p. 162) sensibility but another reflection of Greek Orthodox tradition. In order to forestall the severe criticism which his speculative audacity openly invited, Eriugena was keen to stress that the Trinity is a lofty matter which can only be imperfectly conceived of and may be even less perfectly talked about (Eriugena 1972: 200).

## Anselm of Canterbury

The divine Trinity was a subject of topical interest in three of Anselm of Canterbury's major works. The first was *Monologion* which was written for the monks in Bec around 1076. Anselm's second treatment of the Trinity is found in the polemical *Letter on the Incarnation of the Word* from 1094. Finally, as renowned theologian and English archbishop in exile Anselm became involved in the debate with the Greeks over the *Filioque*, and his reflections on the subject were set down in the treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* from 1102. Though Anselm's treatments of the Trinity originated under different circumstances and over a period of twenty-five years, they are marked by strong internal consistency and express a clear basic perception.

The *Monologion* is a rational enquiry into the divine being and its salient characteristics in which the legacy from Augustine and his work on the Trinity is apparent throughout (Holopainen 1996). In treating of the Trinity Anselm focuses on the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit as dynamic and interrelated aspects of the inner life of God. In so doing Anselm develops Augustine's psychological analogies whereas he refrains from elucidating the Trinity by way of logical terms and concepts such as '*per se*' and '*per aliud*' predications and the categories of substance and relation (Perino 1952; Schmaus 1975). Anselm defends this choice by arguing that God as the supreme and infinite spirit and the highest good is beyond the immediate grasp of the human intellect. Consequently, it is not possible to conceive of the divine as if it were a limited created object just as it is impossible to talk of God in the direct manner in which ordinary created things can be spoken about. This means that man's intellect must follow a more circuitous route and rely on the similitudes and analogies found in the world of creatures when meditating on God and speaking about the divine. As already Augustine had shown, the human soul presents the highest likeness to God in the created world, and for this reason the Trinity is best described in analogy with the interaction between memory, intellect, and love which characterizes the human soul (Anselm 1968: I, chs. 65–6).

In agreement with this, Anselm is keen to stress that it does not make any important difference which terms are used to signify unity and Trinity in the divine. With him the

difference between the Latin and Greek ways of naming nature and persons in God should not be allowed to overshadow the basic agreement in faith and confession. Since words like 'substance' and 'person' signify independent and separate objects in the world of creatures, it makes little difference whether the divine persons are called 'persons' or 'substances'; what is important is that language does not deceive anybody into thinking (p. 163) of the divine persons as separate or mutually divided (Anselm 1968: I, ch. 78).

Equally, it is not decisive whether divine nature is termed 'essence' or 'substance' as long as it is recognized that God as a substance is not subjected to accidental determinations and that his essence is not a universal nature (Anselm 1968: I, chs. 26–7).

Around 1190 Roscelin of Compiègne, a prominent master of dialectic in the schools of northern France, provoked dismay and confusion by advancing the following consequence,

If the three persons in God are only one thing (*res*)—and are not three things, each one [existing] separately in itself (as do three angels or three souls) and yet [existing] in such way that they are wholly the same in will and power—then the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son. (Anselm 1976: 9)

This is Anselm's rendering of Roscelin's argument and the sole contemporary source for the dialectician's thought on this point (Mews 1992b). The reception accorded Roscelin's excursion into theology was less than favourable; he was summoned to the council of Soissons in 1191 (or 1192) and was forced to recant. Shortly afterwards he retracted his recantation and reaffirmed his original position. This provoked Anselm to counter in public (Mews 1992a).

Anselm does not specify the original context of Roscelin's argument or his precise purpose in advancing it. On the basis of what Anselm indicates, it seems quite unlikely that Roscelin thought or argued along the lines of, for example, Gottschalk so as to target the intricate relationship between the divine essence and the divine persons, on the one hand, and, on the other, divine action in the world of creatures such as the assumption of human nature. It is far more likely that Roscelin aimed at making a logical point. To him it was evident that the proper name of 'God's Word' or 'Son' point to some thing (*res*), since this is what names do. If the object pointed to by this proper name is separate and different from the two other divine persons then the incarnation may be attributed to this subject without further ado. On the contrary, if there is no such separation or division between the divine persons then it is impossible that a noun placed as subject term may designate the second person in the Trinity without at the same time pointing to the remaining two persons. In this latter scenario it will be necessary to attribute the assumption of manhood not only to the Son of God but also to the Father and the Holy Spirit, since they will be pointed to by the subject term. In other words, there are sound

logical and theological reasons for accepting that the three divine persons are persons in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say, that they are three separate things or substances.

To Anselm this line of reasoning is completely superficial and a patent indication of Roscelin's seriously deficient understanding of the divine. In the first place, Anselm points out that Roscelin is mistaken if he thinks that his consequence is evident. In fact, it rests on an equivocation; the noun 'thing' (*res*) is ambiguous since it can be used to signify anything which can be said to be 'something' (*aliquid*). In other words, 'thing' like 'something' can be regarded on a par with transcendental terms. If, in the context of his argument, Roscelin interprets 'thing' as equivalent with 'substance', then he is clearly not a genuine Christian, since this entails the existence of three gods. If, on the other hand, he (p. 164) accepts the distinction between the one nature and the three persons, who are different by way of relations and personal properties, and interprets 'thing' as synonymous with 'person', then Roscelin's argument is totally uncontroversial (Anselm 1968: II, 11–12).

Anselm was convinced that Roscelin wished to claim that the three divine persons are three different substances. At the same time Roscelin claimed to maintain God's unity. This prompts Anselm to examine the possibility that three separate divine persons may come together so as to make up God's unity. Anselm concludes, as a matter of course, that this is no real possibility since God is not made up of parts. Furthermore, Roscelin's suggestion that God's unity may consist in an agreement in will and power between the three persons is simply folly inasmuch as this would debase the divine unity so as to be only accidental and, for this reason, secondary to the separate persons as substances (Anselm 1968: II, 16 sqq.).

In the realm of the divine Roscelin's line of reasoning is, according to Anselm, totally inapposite. He has no appreciation of the fact that God is not an object on a par with created objects and that He does not conform to the rules that apply to corporeal reality or to the imagination of man (Anselm 1968: II, 17–18). In accordance with this appraisal, Anselm undertakes to explain the true nature of the divine to Roscelin; for good order he also refers the reader to the fuller treatment found in the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* (Anselm 1968: II, 20). Anselm focuses on God's ubiquity, eternity, and omnipotence. These attributes do not allow of multiplication, and the reason for this is that what is without limit cannot be separated from something of the same order—for example, two infinite things must be identical, or one of the two is not infinite (Anselm 1968: II, 22). The same holds true when God is seen in His proper nature as the highest good. If, for the sake of argument, it were assumed that there was more than one God, then the several gods would as the highest good be the same God; otherwise there would be

something by which one god was different from another god and, consequently, both could not be the highest good. What is supremely good and perfect is by nature unique (Anselm 1968: II, 22–3). According to Anselm's appraisal, this elementary and necessary demonstration of God's unity is totally destructive of Roscelin's attempt to multiply the divine persons as divine substances. Just how much importance Anselm attached to this line of reasoning transpires from the fact that he could not resist simply repeating the argument towards the end of his treatise (Anselm 1968: II, 33–4).

The stylistically rough composition of Anselm's treatise shows that he found it difficult to argue against an opponent whom he considered to be a theological dilettante. Of course, Anselm felt obliged to repeat the well-known distinctions from Augustine and he explained in very elementary terms and likenesses the nature of the unity of essence and Trinity of persons. To him it was evident that the term 'person' cannot mean precisely the same when used of human persons and of divine persons. This is why it is important to focus on the similitude which justifies the use of the term for the divine persons (Anselm 1968: II, 30). As compared to the *Monologion* Anselm's reply to Roscelin does not signal a significant shift in doctrine. It is true that in the latter work he saw fit to rely on Augustine's logical models of explanation, and in this respect he was presumably motivated by the circumstance that Roscelin had argued solely in terms of logic.

(p. 165) In the late autumn of 1098 Anselm participated in the council at Bari where he debated the procession of the Holy Spirit with the Greek representatives (Gasper 2004). It is not known how the Greeks responded to Anselm's arguments in favour of the *Filioque*, but four years later in the *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* Anselm restated his case (Bertola 1986).

The treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit expands on Anselm's conception of divine simplicity and its implications for the plurality of persons. To Anselm it is incontestable that the Son and the Holy Spirit as divine persons are from the Father and that they have different modes of originating: the Son is generated by the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Since the Father is God and imparts divine nature in full to the two other persons, it is, according to Anselm, of paramount importance to realize that this implies that the Son and the Holy Spirit are 'God from God' (*Deus de Deo*), and that the Son and the Holy Spirit are one and the same God with the Father (Anselm 1968: II, 182–3).

As one of their main theological reasons for rejecting the *Filioque* the Greeks had argued that the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son entails that the third person would have two causes or principles. According to Anselm this is a patent inversion of the western position. At the very core of the Latin conception lie the absolute

simplicity and unity of divine nature which determine the causality in the divine; and from this the *Filioque* follows with inexorable logic. In fact, the perfect unity and simplicity of God make it inconceivable that the third person could be from solely the Father (Anselm 1968: II, 205). Arguing for this Anselm demonstrates that the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot be separate from the Father with respect to the divine essence since the supreme simplicity and unity of the divine essence guarantee that generation and procession communicate the single divine being to the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively. Because the Son is born from the Father as God from God and the Son is the very same divine nature as the Father it follows that the Father and the Son must be the very same principle of the procession of the Holy Spirit. Unless the Son had been split off from the divine essence, there is no manner in which the Son could be isolated or separate with respect to the communication of divine being to the Holy Spirit. This is, however, no real possibility and, as Anselm concludes, the third person in the Trinity cannot be even imagined to proceed from the Father as God from God without proceeding from the Son (Anselm 1968: II, 189).

Somebody might claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds from that by which the Father is Father, that is to say, from the Father's relationship to the Son, and not from the Father's divine nature or essence. Anselm is willing to consider this possibility even though he finds it extremely foolish. As he sees it, even on this—unacceptable—premise it would not be possible to undermine the Latin position, since, in this case, it should be answered that the Son is not cut off from the procession of the Holy Spirit inasmuch as the relationship of being a father and the relationship of being a son imply each other and cannot be separated (Anselm 1968: II, 189–90).

Anselm's defence of the *Filioque* vis-à-vis the Greeks built on precisely the same conception of the absolute simplicity and unity of the divine essence which formed the basis (p. 166) for his refutation of Roscelin. Anselm was clearly aware of this and at the end of his treatise he explicitly referred the reader back to his *Letter on the Incarnation of the Word*; he even recapitulated his favourite argument concerning the infinite self-identity of the divine essence and the fundamental equality of the divine persons (Anselm 1968: II, 218). With equal justification he could, in fact, have referred to the *Monologion*.

Anselm's main contribution to the theology of the Trinity lies in his defence and exposition of the divine nature as that which, on the one hand, ensures that the persons are one and the same God and, on the other, sets a limit to their diversity (Anselm 1968: II, 181–2). His efforts in this respect were of importance for the preservation and development of the legacy from Augustine and the Carolingians and it foreshadowed not only the decree '*Damnamus*' promulgated at the fourth Lateran Council in 1215 but also the '*Sacrosancta Romana*' passed at the council of Florence in 1442 (Hödl 2002).

## Suggested Reading

The following are recommended: Beierwaltes (1994); Courth (1985); Gemeinhardt (2002); Mews (2002).

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