

## The Evolution of the Trinitarian Doctrine

In this lesson we will be taking a look at a few Catholic Encyclopedias as they describe to us the evolution of the Trinitarian doctrine. What you should gather from this reading is that this is the work of man's wisdom, which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. (James 3:15) What you are about to hear are summaries of the works of many philosophers and theologians who reasoned amongst themselves over the course of about six hundred years to finally develop their understanding of what they believe is the revealed revelation of God contained in scripture, even though it breaks many foundational truths that are contained within scripture. The Trinitarian doctrine is very clearly a laying aside of the commandments of God, to hold onto the tradition of men. The Apostle Paul instructed the Church to "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col 2:8)

(New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1965, Trinity, p299-300)

"Question of Continuity and Elemental Trinitarianism: From what has been seen thus far, the impression could arise that the Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th-century invention. In a sense, this is true; but it implies an extremely strict interpretation of the key words Trinitarian and dogma. Triadic Consciousness in the Primitive Revelation. The formulation "one God in three Persons" was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title the Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective; among the 2d-century Apologists, little more than a focusing of the problem as that of plurality within the unique Godhead. "

(New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, Volume 13, page 1021,)

"There is the recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians....that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualifications.....New Testament exegesis is now accepted as having shown that not only the verbal idiom but even the patterns of thought characteristic of the patristic and councilian developed would have been quite foreign to the mind and culture of the New Testament writers. The Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th century invention."

This next portion of text is taken from the Catholic Encyclopedia found at [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org) where the evolution of the Trinity is further explained in greater detail.

### **Article: Holy Ghost**

#### **Heading: The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity Tradition**

While corroborating and explaining the testimony of Scripture, Tradition brings more clearly before us the various stages of the evolution of this doctrine.

As early as the first century, St. Clement of Rome gives us important teaching about the Holy Ghost. His "Epistle to the Corinthians" not only tells us that the Spirit inspired and guided the holy writers (8.1; 45.2); that He is the voice of Jesus Christ speaking to us in the Old Testament (22.1 sq.); but it contains further, two very explicit statements about the Trinity. In 46.6 (Funk, "Patres apostolici", 2nd ed., I,158), we read that "we have only one God, one Christ, one only Spirit of grace within us, one same vocation in Christ".

Let me quickly point out that this statement does not support a Trinitarian point of view of the Godhead as the scriptures declare "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" (1 Tim 2:5) The scriptures also declare "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." (Jn 3:34) So this statement of St. Clement of Rome does not support a Trinity of persons in the Godhead.

The same doctrine is declared, in the second and third centuries, by the lips of the martyrs, and is found in the writings of the Fathers. St. Polycarp (d. 155), in his torments, thus professed his faith in the Three Adorable Persons ("Martyrium sancti Polycarpi" in Funk, op. cit., I, 330): "Lord God Almighty, Father of Thy blessed and well beloved Son, Jesus Christ . . . in everything I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee by the eternal and celestial pontiff Jesus Christ, Thy well beloved Son, by whom, to Thee, with Him and with the Holy Ghost, glory now and for ever!"

St. Epipodius spoke more distinctly still (Ruinart, "Acta mart.", Verona edition, p. 65): "I confess that Christ is God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and it is fitting that I should give back my soul to Him Who is my Creator and my Redeemer."

Among the apologists, Athenagoras mentions the Holy Ghost along with, and on the same plane as, the Father and the Son. "Who would not be astonished", says he (A Plea for the Christians 10), "to hear us called atheists, us who confess God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Ghost, and hold them one in power and distinct in order [. . . ten en te henosei dynamin, kai ten en te taxei diairesin]?"

Theophilus of Antioch, who sometimes gives to the Holy Ghost, as to the Son, the name of Wisdom (sophia), mentions besides (To Autolyucus I.7 and II.18) the three terms theos, logos, sophia and, being the first to apply the characteristic word that was afterwards adopted, says expressly (II.15) that they form a trinity (trias).

Irenæus looks upon the Holy Ghost as eternal (Against Heresies V.12.2), existing in God ante omnem constitutionem, and produced by him at the beginning of His ways (IV.20.3). Considered with regard to the Father, the Holy Ghost is his wisdom (IV.20.3); the Son and He are the "two hands" by which God created man (IV.Preface.4, IV.20.20 and V.6.1). Considered with regard to the Church, the same Spirit is truth, grace, a pledge of immortality, a principle of union with God; intimately united to the Church, He gives the sacraments their efficacy and virtue (III.17.2, III.24.1, IV.33.7 and V.8.1).

St. Hippolytus, though he does not speak at all clearly of the Holy Ghost regarded as a distinct person, supposes him, however, to be God, as well as the Father and the Son (Against Noetus 8, 12).

Tertullian is one of the writers of this age whose tendency to Subordinationism is most apparent, and that in spite of his being the author of the definitive formula: "Three persons, one substance". And yet his teaching on the Holy Ghost is in every way remarkable. He seems to have been the first among the Fathers to affirm His Divinity in a clear and absolutely precise manner. In his work "Adversus Praxean" he dwells at length on the greatness of the Paraclete. The Holy Ghost, he says, is God (13); of the substance of the Father (3 and 4); one and the same God with the Father and the Son (2); proceeding from the Father through the Son (4, 8); teaching all truth (2).

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, or at least the Ekthesis tes pisteos, which is commonly attributed to him, and which dates from the period 260-270, gives us this remarkable passage (P.G., X, 933 sq.): "One is God, Father of the living Word, of the subsisting Wisdom. . . . One the Lord, one of one, God of God, invisible of invisible. . . . One the Holy Ghost, having His subsistence from God. . . . Perfect Trinity, which in eternity, glory, and power, is neither divided, nor separated. . . . Unchanging and immutable Trinity."

In 304, the martyr St. Vincent said (Ruinart, op. cit., 325): "I confess the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father most High, one of one; I recognize Him as one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost."

But we must come down towards the year 360 to find the doctrine on the Holy Ghost explained both fully and clearly. It is St. Athanasius who does so in his "Letters to Serapion" (P.G., XXVI, col. 525 sq.). He had been informed that certain Christians held that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity was a creature. To refute them he questions the Scriptures, and they furnish him with arguments as solid as they are numerous. They tell him, in particular, that the Holy Ghost is united to the Son by relations just like those existing between the Son and the Father; that He is sent by the Son; that He is His mouth-piece and glorifies Him; that, unlike creatures, He has not been made out of nothing, but comes forth from God; that He performs a sanctifying work among men, of which no creature is capable; that in possessing Him we possess God; that the Father created everything by Him; that, in fine, He is immutable, has the attributes of immensity, oneness, and has a right to all the appellations that are used to express the dignity of the Son. Most of these conclusions he supports by means of Scriptural texts, a few from amongst which are given above. But the writer lays special stress on what is read in Matthew 28:19. "The Lord", he writes (Ad Serap., III, n. 6, in P.G., XXVI, 633 sq.), "founded the Faith of the Church on the Trinity, when He said to His Apostles: 'Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' If the Holy Ghost were a creature, Christ would not have associated Him with the Father; He would have avoided making a heterogeneous Trinity, composed of unlike elements. What did God stand in need of? Did He need to join to Himself a being of different nature? . . . No, the Trinity is not composed of the Creator and the creature."

A little later, St. Basil, Didymus of Alexandria, St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory of Nyssa took up the same thesis ex professo, supporting it for the

most part with the same proofs. All these writings had prepared the way for the Council of Constantinople which, in 381, condemned the Pneumatomachians and solemnly proclaimed the true doctrine. This teaching forms part of the Creed of Constantinople, as it is called, where the symbol refers to the Holy Ghost, "Who is also our Lord and Who gives life; Who proceeds from the Father, Who is adored and glorified together with the Father and the Son; Who spoke by the prophets". Was this creed, with these particular words, approved by the council of 381? Formerly that was the common opinion, and even in recent times it has been held by authorities like Hefele, Hergenröther, and Funk; other historians, amongst whom are Harnack and Duchesne, are of the contrary opinion; but all agree in admitting that the creed of which we are speaking was received and approved by the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, and that, at least from that time, it became the official formula of Catholic orthodoxy.

Is the doctrine of the Trinity after the wisdom of man? Sure is. What did the Apostle James tell us about man's wisdom? That is was earthly, sensual, and devilish. (James 3:15) So is the Trinitarian doctrine sensual? Sure is.

## **The Holy Ghost**

### **Procession of the Holy Ghost**

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The Holy Spirit, as His name indicates, is Holy in virtue of His origin, His spiration; He comes therefore from a holy principle; now holiness resides in the will, as wisdom is in the intellect. That is also the reason why He is so often called par excellence, in the writings of the Fathers, Love and Charity. The Father and the Son love one another from all eternity, with a perfect ineffable love; the term of this infinite fruitful mutual love is Their Spirit Who is co-eternal and con-substantial with Them.

## **Holy Ghost**

### **Gifts of the Holy Ghost**

He is the principle of the two other Persons; to the Son we attribute wisdom and the works of wisdom, because He proceeds from the Father by the Intellect; to the Holy Ghost we attribute the operations of grace and the sanctification of souls, and in particular spiritual gifts and fruits, because He proceeds from the Father and the Son as Their mutual love and is called in Holy Writ the goodness and the charity of God.

## **Dogmatic Theology**

### **Division and content of dogmatic theology**

The philosophy of this mystery includes also the doctrine of the Divine properties, notions, appropriations, and missions. Finally, with the doctrine of circuminsession which summarizes the whole theology of the Trinity, the treatment of this dogma is brought to a fitting conclusion.

What is the doctrine of circuminsession? It is the interpersonal relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. The Father is entirely in the Son, likewise in the Holy Spirit; and so is the Son in the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit in the Father and the Son.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of devils and is subverting the hearers and is therefore a damnable doctrine as it leads countless souls into denying the revealed name of God in the New Testament as Jesus and brings about division to the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ of which the Apostle Paul says, “but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”