

## The Trinity, The Dogma, The Contradictions Part 2

In the second part of our teaching on “The Trinity, The Dogma, The Contradictions” we will be taking a deeper look at what is considered the most probable theological opinion of the procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**Article: The Blessed Trinity**

**Heading: The doctrine as interpreted in Latin theology**

In the following exposition of the Latin doctrines, we shall follow St. Thomas Aquinas, whose treatment of the doctrine is now universally accepted by Catholic theologians. It should be observed, however, that this is not the only form in which the psychological theory has been proposed.

[**Commentary:** Though there may be other forms in which the psychological theory has been proposed this is the treatment of the doctrine that is “now universally accepted by Catholic theologians.”]

### **The Son**

Among the terms employed in Scripture to designate the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the Word (John 1:1). This is understood by St. Thomas of the *Verbum mentale*, or intellectual concept. As applied to the Son, the name, he holds, signifies that He proceeds from the Father as the term of an intellectual procession, in a manner analogous to that in which a concept is generated by the human mind in all acts of natural knowledge. It is, indeed, of faith that the Son proceeds from the Father by a veritable generation. He is, says the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, begotten before all worlds". But the Procession of a Divine Person as the term of the act by which God knows His own nature is rightly called generation.

[**Commentary:** As we have already seen in our first lesson “It is urged that since there are Three Persons there must be three self-consciousnesses: but the Divine mind *ex hypothesi* is one, and therefore can possess but one self-consciousness; in other words, the dogma contains an irreconcilable contradiction.... Granted that in the infinite mind, in which the categories are transcended, there are three relations which are subsistent realities, distinguished one from another in virtue of their relative opposition then it will follow that the same mind will have a three-fold consciousness, knowing itself in three ways in accordance with its three modes of existence.” Of which they then say, “It is impossible to establish that, in regard of the infinite mind, such a supposition involves a contradiction.” But here we see this statement, “But the Procession of a Divine Person as the term of the act by which God knows His own nature is rightly called generation.” If God knows His own nature then, it will follow that the same mind will have a three-fold consciousness, knowing itself in three ways in accordance with its three modes of existence. And thus once again we see this is an irreconcilable contradiction in the

teaching of the Trinity no matter how many times they deny it. Also it is important to understand that the terms 'Word' and 'Son' are not interchangeable terms. We will discuss this further in part 3 of "The Trinity, The Dogma, The Contradictions".]

This may be readily shown. As an act of intellectual conception, it necessarily produces the likeness of the object known. And further, being Divine action, it is not an accidental act resulting in a term, itself a mere accident, but the act is the very substance of the Divinity, and the term is likewise substantial. A process tending necessarily to the production of a substantial term like in nature to the Person from Whom it proceeds is a process of generation. In regard to this view as to the procession of the Son, a difficulty was felt by St. Anselm (Monol., lxiv) on the score that it would seem to involve that each of the Three Persons must needs generate a subsistent Word. Since all the Powers possess the same mind, does it not follow, he asked, that in each case thought produces a similar term? This difficulty St. Thomas succeeds in removing. According to his psychology the formation of a concept is not essential to thought as such, though absolutely requisite to all natural human knowledge. There is, therefore, no ground in reason, apart from revelation, for holding that the Divine intellect produces a Verbum mentale. It is the testimony of Scripture alone which tells us that the Father has from all eternity begotten His consubstantial Word. But neither reason nor revelation suggests it in the case of the Second and Third Persons (I:34:1, ad 3).

**[Commentary:** Let us take a closer look at what is being taught here. "Among the terms employed in Scripture to designate the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the Word (John 1:1). This is understood by St. Thomas of the Verbum mentale, or intellectual concept. As applied to the Son, the name, he holds, signifies that He proceeds from the Father as the term of an intellectual procession, in a manner analogous to that in which a concept is generated by the human mind in all acts of natural knowledge. It is, indeed, of faith that the Son proceeds from the Father by a veritable generation." Notice carefully this last sentence again, "It is, indeed, of faith that the Son proceeds from the Father by a veritable generation."

We then discover what they mean by the term generation as applied to the Son which is "that He proceeds from the Father as the term of an intellectual procession.... A process tending necessarily to the production of a substantial term like in nature to the Person from Whom it proceeds is a process of generation."

But a bit further down in this lesson we will see under the Heading: Procession of the Holy Ghost, subheading C that it is stated, "It is likewise an article of faith that the Holy Ghost does not proceed, like the Second Person of the Trinity, by way of generation.... As we are utterly incapable of otherwise fixing the meaning of the mysterious mode affecting this relation of origin, we apply to it the name spiration, the signification of which is principally negative and by way of contrast, in the sense that it affirms a Procession peculiar to the Holy Ghost and exclusive of filiation. But though we distinguish absolutely and essentially between generation and spiration, it is a very delicate and difficult task to say what the difference is."

So what we see in essence is this, "It is, indeed, of faith that the Son proceeds from the Father by a veritable generation" and, "It is likewise an article of faith that the Holy Ghost does not

proceed, like the Second Person of the Trinity, by way of generation.... But though we distinguish absolutely and essentially between generation and spiration, it is a very delicate and difficult task to say what the difference is.”]

Not a few writers of great weight hold that there is sufficient consensus among the Fathers and Scholastic theologians as to the meaning of the names Word and Wisdom (Proverbs 8), applied to the Son, for us to regard the intellectual procession of the Second Person as at least theologically certain, if not a revealed truth (cf. Francisco Suárez, "De Trin.", I, v, p. 4; Petavius, VI, i, 7; Franzelin, "De Trin.", Thesis xxvi). This, however, seems to be an exaggeration. The immense majority of the Greek Fathers, as we have already noticed, interpret logos of the spoken word, and consider the significance of the name to lie not in any teaching as to intellectual procession, but in the fact that it implies a mode of generation devoid of all passion. Nor is the tradition as to the interpretation of Proverbs 8, in any sense unanimous. In view of these facts the opinion of those theologians seems the sounder who regard this explanation of the procession simply as a theological opinion of great probability and harmonizing well with revealed truth.

[**Commentary:** Scripture in no wise backs up this teaching. This is all man made traditions based off of philosophers trying to understand how the Word (Logos) was with God when the Bible clearly tells us that the Word (Logos) was God. John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”]

#### **Article: Holy Ghost**

##### **Heading: Synopsis of the dogma**

- The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.
- Though really distinct, as a Person, from the Father and the Son, He is consubstantial with Them; being God like Them, He possesses with Them one and the same Divine Essence or Nature.
- He proceeds, not by way of generation, but by way of spiration, from the Father and the Son together, as from a single principle.

[**Commentary:** Again notice the contradiction of the Holy Ghost being, “really distinct, as a Person, from the Father and the Son,” versus the one God the scriptures teach. And since this goes against the clear teaching of scriptures they will try to show how God is one yet three persons by saying “He is consubstantial with Them”. Which means one and the same substance, essence, or nature.

Also we are then told that the Holy Ghost, “proceeds, not by way of generation, but by way of spiration, from the Father and the Son together, as from a single principle.” The word spiration meaning the act of breathing. Thus the teaching of the Trinitarian doctrine in regards to the Holy Ghost is that he proceeds from the Father and the Son together by way of God breathing. And since they have stated that it is the Father and the Son doing this breathing and yet they are teaching but one God, it then must be said that this way of spiration is “as from a single principle.” Meaning not two breaths being breathed by two principles but rather that the Holy Ghost proceeds from two other Persons who are one principle by one breath.]

**Article: The Blessed Trinity**  
**Heading: Proof of doctrine from Scripture**  
**New Testament**

In regard to the Divine processions, the doctrine of the first procession is contained in the very terms Father and Son: the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son is taught in the discourse of the Lord reported by St. John (14-17)

**Heading: The doctrine as interpreted in Latin theology**  
**The Holy Spirit**

Just as the Son proceeds as the term of the immanent act of the intellect, so does the Holy Spirit proceed as the term of the act of the Divine will. In human love, as St. Thomas teaches (I:27:3), even though the object be external to us, yet the immanent act of love arouses in the soul a state of ardour which is, as it were, an impression of the thing loved. In virtue of this the object of love is present to our affections, much as, by means of the concept, the object of thought is present to our intellect. This experience is the term of the internal act.

[**Commentary:** Remember the Trinitarian doctrine is teaching that the generation of the Son is by an “immanent act of the intellect” which means taking place within the mind of the subject and having no effect outside of it. “This they understand in the sense of "concept" (verbum mentale), and hold that the Divine Generation is analogous to the act by which the created intellect produces its concept.”

This they say “Just as the Son proceeds as the term of the immanent act of the intellect, so does the Holy Spirit proceed as the term of the act of the Divine will.” So an analogy was given “In human love, as St. Thomas teaches (I:27:3), even though the object be external to us, yet the immanent act of love arouses in the soul a state of ardour which is, as it were, an impression of the thing loved. In virtue of this the object of love is present to our affections, much as, by means of the concept, the object of thought is present to our intellect. This experience is the term of the internal act.”]

The Holy Spirit, it is contended, proceeds from the Father and the Son as the term of the love by which God loves Himself. He is not the love of God in the sense of being Himself formally the love by which God loves; but in loving Himself God breathes forth this subsistent term. He is Hypostatic Love. Here, however, it is necessary to safeguard a point of revealed doctrine. It is of faith that the procession of the Holy Spirit is not generation. The Son is "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). And the Athanasian Creed expressly lays it down that the Holy Ghost is "from the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding."

[**Commentary:** Again notice the contradictions here. “He is not the love of God in the sense of being Himself formally the love by which God loves”. And this they teach is by way of an eternal spiration by means of the Father and the Son eternally breathing out the Holy Ghost and this being a result of the ineffable love of which the Father and the Son love one another from all

eternity. Yet the Holy Ghost is not “Himself formally the love by which God loves”. This is completely contradicting.

It is then stated, “it is necessary to safeguard a point of revealed doctrine. It is of faith that the procession of the Holy Spirit is not generation.” And the reason for why it is by faith that the Holy Ghost does not proceed by generation but rather by spiration is because “The Son is “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). And the Athanasian Creed expressly lays it down that the Holy Ghost is “from the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.””]

### **Article: Holy Ghost**

#### **Heading: Procession of the Holy Ghost**

##### **B**

Proceeding both from the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost, nevertheless, proceeds from Them as from a single principle. This truth is, at the very least insinuated in the passage of John 16:15 (cited above), where Christ establishes a necessary connection between His own sharing in all the Father has and the Procession of the Holy Ghost. Hence it follows, indeed, that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the two other Persons, not in so far as They are distinct, but inasmuch as Their Divine perfection is numerically one. Besides, such is the explicit teaching of ecclesiastical tradition, which is concisely put by St. Augustine (On the Holy Trinity V.14): "As the Father and the Son are only one God and, relatively to the creature, only one Creator and one Lord, so, relatively to the Holy Ghost, They are only one principle." This doctrine was defined in the following words by the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons [Denzinger, "Enchiridion" (1908), n. 460]: "We confess that the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles, but as from one principle, not by two spirations, but by one single spiration." The teaching was again laid down by the Council of Florence (ibid., n. 691), and by Eugene IV in his Bull "Cantate Domino" (ibid., n. 703 sq.).

#### **Heading: Procession of the Holy Ghost**

##### **C**

It is likewise an article of faith that the Holy Ghost does not proceed, like the Second Person of the Trinity, by way of generation. Not only is the Second Person alone called Son in the Scriptures, not only is He alone said to be begotten, but He is also called the only Son of God; the ancient symbol that bears the name of Saint Athanasius states expressly that "the Holy Ghost comes from the Father and from the Son not made, not created, not generated, but proceeding". As we are utterly incapable of otherwise fixing the meaning of the mysterious mode affecting this relation of origin, we apply to it the name spiration, the signification of which is principally negative and by way of contrast, in the sense that it affirms a Procession peculiar to the Holy Ghost and exclusive of filiation. But though we distinguish absolutely and essentially between generation and spiration, it is a very delicate and difficult task to say what the difference is. St. Thomas (I.27), following St. Augustine (On the Holy Trinity XV.27), finds the explanation and, as it were, the epitome, of the doctrine in principle that, in God, the Son proceeds through the Intellect and the Holy Ghost through the Will. The Son is, in the language of Scripture, the image

of the Invisible God, His Word, His uncreated wisdom. God contemplates Himself and knows Himself from all eternity, and, knowing Himself, He forms within Himself a substantial idea of Himself, and this substantial thought is His Word.

[[Commentary: Again this is completely unbiblical.](#)]

Now every act of knowledge is accomplished by the production in the intellect of a representation of the object known; from this head, then the process offers a certain analogy with generation, which is the production by a living being of a being partaking of the same nature; and the analogy is only so much the more striking when there is question of this act of Divine knowledge, the eternal term of which is a substantial being, consubstantial within the knowing subject. As to the Holy Ghost, according to the common doctrine of theologians, He proceeds through the will. 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.

[[Commentary: Is this what the scriptures teach us? “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”?](#) This is man’s wisdom at work.]

Only, the Holy Ghost is not indebted to the manner of His Procession precisely for this perfect resemblance to His principle, in other words for His consubstantiality; for to will or love an object does not formally imply the production of its immanent image in the soul that loves, but rather a tendency, a movement of the will towards the thing loved, to be united to it and enjoy it. So, making every allowance for the feebleness of our intellects in knowing, and the unsuitability of our words for expressing the mysteries of the Divine life, if we can grasp how the word generation, freed from all the imperfections of the material order may be applied by analogy to the Procession of the Word, so we may see that the term can in no way befittingly applied to the Procession of the Holy Ghost.

### **Article: The Blessed Trinity**

#### **Heading: The doctrine as interpreted in Latin theology**

#### **The divine relations**

The existence of relations in the Godhead may be immediately inferred from the doctrine of processions, and as such is a truth of Revelation. Where there is a real procession the principle and the term are really related. Hence, both the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit must involve the existence of real and objective relations. This part of Trinitarian doctrine was familiar to the Greek Fathers.

[[Commentary: All of this teaching concerning the Holy Ghost is based upon the incorrect teaching that the Holy Ghost is a third person that makes up our one God.](#)]

From the fact that there are two processions in Godhead, each involving both a principle and term, it follows that there must be four relations, two origination (paternitas and spiratio) and two of procession (filiatio and processio). These relations are what constitute the distinction between the Persons. They cannot be distinguished by any absolute attribute, for every absolute attribute must belong to the infinite Divine Nature and this is common to the Three Persons. Whatever distinction there is must be in the relations alone. This conclusion is held as absolutely certain by all theologians. Equivalently contained in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, it was clearly enunciated by St. Anselm ("De process. Sp. S.", ii) and received ecclesiastical sanction in the "Decretum pro Jacobitis" in the form: "[In divinis] omnia sunt unum ubi non obviat relationis oppositio." Since this is so, it is manifest that the four relations suppose but Three Persons. For there is no relative opposition between spiration on the one hand and either paternity or filiation on the other. Hence the attribute of spiration is found in conjunction with each of these, and in virtue of it they are each distinguished from procession. As they share one and the same Divine Nature, so they possess the same virtus spirationis, and thus constitute a single originating principle of the Holy Spirit.

**[Commentary:** So they are saying there are four relations in the godhead. Two of them being origination and two of them being processions. This is equal to saying: Father (originating by eternal generation) Son (Proceeding). Father and Son (originating by eternal spiration) Holy Ghost (Proceeding).

Thus you have four relations and three persons, two of which have one spiration because of the one substance consisting of three persons of one God. This versus two spirations from two persons of which the three persons make up the one substance. Of which the one spiration from the two persons is eternally producing one of the three persons of which the one substance consists. And yet the one divine person proceeding by way of this eternal spiration is hypostatic love versus the love of God in the sense of being Himself formally the love by which God loves.]

Inasmuch as the relations, and they alone, are distinct realities in the Godhead, it follows that the Divine Persons are none other than these relations. The Father is the Divine Paternity, the Son the Divine Filiation, the Holy Spirit the Divine Procession. Here it must be borne in mind that the relations are not mere accidental determinations as these abstract terms might suggest. Whatever is in God must needs be subsistent. He is the Supreme Substance, transcending the divisions of the Aristotelean categories. Hence, at one and the same time He is both substance and relation.

But in the dogma of the Trinity when we affirm that the Father and Son are alike identical with the Divine Essence, we are affirming that the Supreme Infinite Substance is identical not with two absolute entities, but with each of two relations. These relations, in virtue of their nature as correlatives, are necessarily opposed the one to the other and therefore different.

The whole perfection of the Godhead is contained in the one infinite Divine Essence. The Father is that Essence as it eternally regards the Son and the Spirit; the Son is that Essence as it eternally regards the Father and the Spirit; the Holy Spirit is that Essence as it eternally regards the Father and the Son. But the eternal regard by which each of the Three Persons is constituted is not an addition to the infinite perfection of the Godhead.



The question was raised by the Scholastics: In what sense are we to understand the Divine act of generation? As we conceive things, the relations of paternity and filiation are due to an act by which the Father generates the Son; the relations of spiration and procession, to an act by which Father and Son breathe forth the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas replies that the acts are identical with the relations of generation and spiration; only the mode of expression on our part is different (I:41:3, ad 2). This is due to the fact that the forms alike of our thought and our language are moulded upon the material world in which we live. In this world origination is in every case due to the effecting of a change. We call the effecting of the change action, and its reception passion. Thus, action and passion are different from the permanent relations consequent on them. But in the Godhead origination is eternal: it is not the result of change. Hence the term signifying action denotes not the production of the relation, but purely the relation of the Originator to the Originated. The terminology is unavoidable because the limitations of our experience force us to represent this relation as due to an act. Indeed throughout this whole subject we are hampered by the imperfection of human language as an instrument wherewith to express verities higher than the facts of the world. When, for instance, we say that the Son possesses filiation and spiration the terms seem to suggest that these are forms inherent in Him as in a subject. We know, indeed, that in the Divine Persons there can be no composition: they are absolutely simple. Yet we are forced to speak thus: for the one Personality, notwithstanding its simplicity, is related to both the others, and by different relations. We cannot express this save by attributing to Him filiation and spiration (I:32:2).

**[Commentary:** The Apostle Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 3:12 “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech”. But the teaching of the Trinitarian doctrine, “Indeed throughout this whole subject we are hampered by the imperfection of human language as an instrument wherewith to express verities higher than the facts of the world.”]