

**THE CHRISTIAN
UNDERSTANDING
OF GOD**

THEO 331 – week 6

THE ELABORATION OF CLASSICAL THEISM

- **The period following the 7th ecumenical council was one elaborating the positions of classical theism already established.**
- **The relative doctrinal peace allowed the flourishing of schools and universities, where theologians attempted to further develop classical theism. Volumes and volumes of works exist discussing fine details of this or that element of the Christian understanding of God.**

THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- **The Bible says that the Spirit proceeds (*ekporesis*) from the Father (cf. John 15:26)**
- **This terminology was confirmed by the creed of Nicea-Constantinople, which said “We believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father”.**
- **However, in response to Arianism in Spain, the Latin Christians added the word “filioque” (which means “and the Son”) to the creed, so it now read “proceeds from the Father and the Son”**

THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

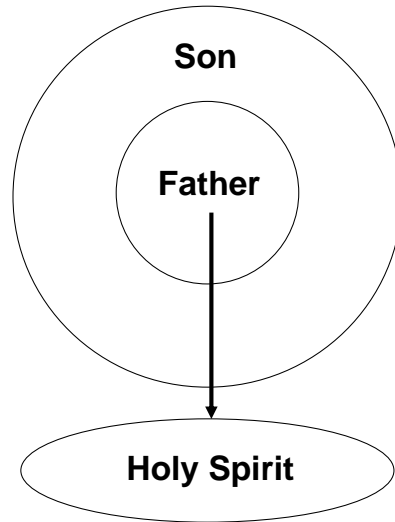
- **The reason for the Filioque was to defend the divinity of Christ.**
 - Unfortunately, when the Latin word “filioque” was translated back into Greek, it sounded like the teaching of the Father as the sole source (mono-arche) of the Trinity was under attack.
- **The Greek Patriarch Photius denounced the addition of the filioque, teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father ALONE.**
 - This, however, also goes beyond the Biblical data.
- **The Greeks proposed to replace the “and” with “through”, i.e. the modified phrase would say “who proceeds from the Father through the Son”**

THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- **The Latins, however, were not satisfied with the proposed language, because it was not sufficient to contradict the Arian problem which led to the use of the filioque in the first place.**
 - **To say “through” made it sound like the Son was merely an instrumental cause by which the Spirit proceeded. The Arians were ok with this.**
 - **To say “and”, on the other hand, was a stronger statement of the co-divinity of the Son with the Father.**

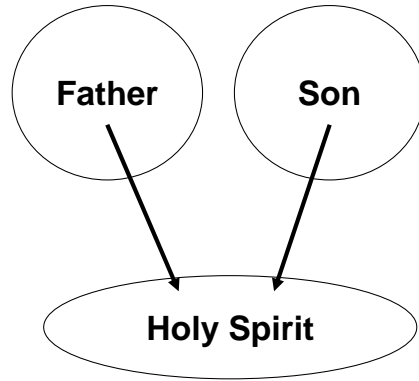
THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- At its root, the Filioque controversy shows the problem of translating precise theological texts. The Latins were trying to show the intimate union of the Father and Son. The word “proceeds” in Latin merely meant a general direction of origin.



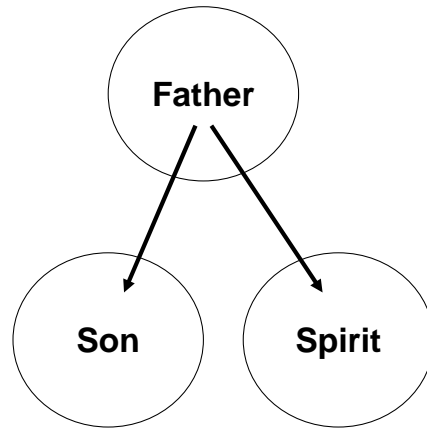
THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- To Greek ears, however, *ekporesis* means more than a direction of origin, but the nature of that origin itself. It sounded like the Latins were saying the Holy Spirit proceeded “from the heart of the Father” AND “from the heart of the Son”.



THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

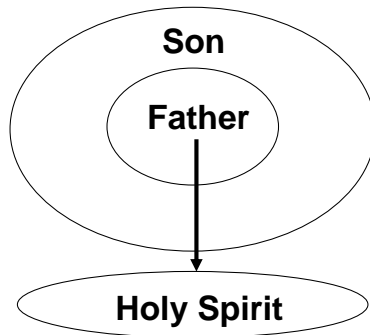
- The response of Photius emphasized the Father as sole origin of the Trinity, but excludes the Son from having a role in the procession of the Spirit. This was never accepted by the Church as a whole.



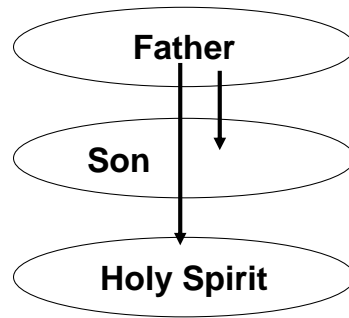
THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

The compromise offered by the Greeks (to use “through” instead of “and”) could have worked, but in the context of the Arian problem seemed weak.

What the Latins wanted



What “through” sounded like



THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- **The Filioque controversy seemed settled in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons, where both Roman Catholic (Latin) and Eastern Orthodox (Greek) representatives agreed on a common interpretation.**
 - **“With faithful and devout profession we confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles but as from one, not by two spirations but by one.”**
 - **This allayed the concerns of the Greeks, but also rejected the monopatrism of Photius.**
 - **Unfortunately, there was ill-will between the two (in part due to the 4th Crusade), which contributed to the collapse of the agreement.**

THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- **A second attempt to settle the filioque controversy was made at the Council of Florence.**
 - **“The Holy Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son, and has his essence and his subsistent being from the Father and the Son simultaneously, and proceeds from both eternally as from one principle and one spiration; we declare that what the holy Doctors and Father say, namely, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, tends to this meaning, that by this is signified that the Son is also according to the Greeks the cause, and according to the Latins the principle of the subsistence of the Holy Spirit, as is the Father also.”**

THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

- **The Council of Florence was rejected by subsequent pastors in the Orthodox (Greek) Church. This led to an unusual situation: the Roman Catholic church considered itself bound by the Council of Florence as an ecumenical council, so it cannot drop the filioque, while the Eastern Orthodox tended to argue that the filioque was “illegally” added to the Creed because it wasn’t added by a valid council! *sigh*...**
- **On a happy note, renewed attempts have been made in the 20th century to overcome this source of division, and a general consensus is slowly emerging that the core faith of each side can be compatible with the core faith of the other.**

THE INCARNATION AND THE EUCHARIST

- **Another controversy that began in the 10th century was initiated by Berengarius of Tours, regarding the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (bread and wine)**
- **The doctrine of the Real Presence goes back to the words of Christ in the gospel of John:**
 - **I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (John 6: 51-55)**

THE INCARNATION AND THE EUCHARIST

- **Recall that the 2nd council of Nicea taught that, because of the new possibilities opened by the incarnation of the Word as Jesus, icons could be venerated.**
- **But what of the Eucharist itself, which was said to be the Body and Blood of Christ? Was this a sacred symbol (an icon) worthy of veneration? Or was it actually a real presence of Christ, such that it was worthy of being worshipped and adored?**

THE INCARNATION AND THE EUCHARIST

- **Berengarius taught that the Eucharist elements could not possibly be the Body and Blood of Christ present under another form, because Christ's body was in heaven.**
- **However, in the Eucharist prayers the elements become the Body and Blood by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the "glue" of the Incarnation in the first place.**
- **Berengarius' view was condemned as an innovation, and a more literal view of the Biblical words was endorsed.**

THE INCARNATION AND THE EUCHARIST

One consequence of the strong Eucharistic doctrine found in the Western Church is the practice of Eucharistic adoration. The Eucharist is placed on display for the praise and worship by the faithful as the real presence of Christ.



THE INCARNATION AND THE EUCHARIST

- **Both the veneration of icons and the worship of the Eucharist were strongly contested starting in the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation.**
- **The Lutheran and Anglican churches generally permitted the use of religious images as long as they were not worshipped in the place of God. The churches stemming from the Reformed tradition, however, were strongly iconoclastic.**
- **Again, the Lutheran and Anglican churches generally agree with the fact of the Real Presence; most Reformed and other Protestant churches do not. All tend to be reticent about Eucharistic worship practices, however.**

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: THOMAS AQUINAS

- **Thomas Aquinas made many great contributions to the doctrine of God, but one of his greatest was a systematic explanation of the origin of the Son and Spirit from the Father.**
- **The Father is the Source, the Unbegotten. His contemplation of himself is so perfect that the inner image receives the fullness of co-equal reality. This is the divine Logos, who is “begotten” of the Father and so is properly called the Son.**

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: THOMAS AQUINAS

- **The Father and Son are identical in every way, except in their relations: the Father has given everything he is to the Son, and the Son receives everything the Father is – except the incommunicable fact of being the Father.**
- **The Father loves the Son, and since the Son reflects the Father he loves him in return. This mutual love, proceeding from the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit.**

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: THOMAS AQUINAS

- **The Son therefore proceeds from the Father by means of divine intellect (logos meaning reason or intellect in certain circumstances). This is called “generation”.**
- **As love is necessarily an act of will, the Spirit proceeds from the Father by means of divine will directed to the Son. This is called “spiration”.**
- **No other procession is necessary or even possible in God “but the procession of Word and of Love”.**

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: GREGORY PALAMAS

- **Gregory Palamas was a 14th century monk who defended the *hesychastic* tradition of contemplative prayer. He taught that it was possible to not simply know God by testimony, but to have a true direct experience of God.**
- **This was possible because of a distinction between God's essence and his "uncreated energies".**

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: GREGORY PALAMAS

- Recall that God is unknowable in principle unless he condescends to us to allow himself to be knowable.
- This requires *kenosis*, i.e. the “self-emptying” of God by God. It is the *tzim tzum*, the withdrawal of God into himself to allow “non-God” to exist.
- God, however, cannot really withdraw his essence into himself: what is withdrawn are his “uncreated energies”, so that God is truly present but with a less-glorified way.

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: GREGORY PALAMAS

- **During his life, we see the incarnate Word (i.e. Jesus) going through stages of re-increase in these energies.**
 - As a child, we see nothing extraordinary.
 - After his baptism, on the other hand, he acts energetically: “power goes out of him”
 - His Transfiguration is an energetic exposé meant to prepare the great *kenosis* of the cross.
 - His Resurrection is a glorious one.
 - On his return on the last day, the “uncreated energies” will flood all of creation.

GREAT THEOLOGIANS: GREGORY PALAMAS

- **The deepest forms of prayer are not an intellectual exercise, but a movement of the will towards God, i.e. in love.**
- **Done in the Holy Spirit, this love of God (and openness to God's love) brings the believer into this process of "divinisation".**
- **The believer does not become divine, but becomes a focal point for the glory of God (i.e. the energies) to enter the world.**
- **This is the explanation for the miracles and signs performed by saints (as well as the artistic representation of halos).**