

Biblical Trinity Doctrine and Christology

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Jesus Christ,¹ after He was risen from the dead, commanded His disciples to baptize all nations into the name of ‘*the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*’ (Mt 28:19).² Here we are dealing with the deepest of all mysteries – with the inner life of God. The doctrine of the Trinity³ tries to answer the following questions: Why or in which sense is Christ called ‘the Son of God’⁴ and ‘the Word of God’⁵ in the Scriptures? Who or what is the Holy Spirit? Which relation holds between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? I am going to defend the classical Catholic answers to these questions provided by the Trinity Doctrine and the Two-Natures Doctrine,⁶ which found wide acceptance within Christianity, being opposed, however, by Unitarians of different kinds (Ebionites, Theodotians, Arians, Socinians, Christadelphians, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Oneness Pentecostals, for example). My argumentation is based mainly on the Scriptures of the Bible,⁷ which has been correctly interpreted by the mainstream of Catholic tradition (as I intend to show in the footnotes and in chapter 6). Additional philosophical reflections are used only to clarify certain aspects of the concept that is to be defended here as biblical.

¹ ‘*Jesus*’ (or more precise ‘*Jesus of Nazareth*’ is the name of the founder of Christianity who appeared roughly. 2000 years ago in Israel (for the meaning of the name see footnote 46); ‘*Christ*’ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew title ‘*Messiah*’ meaning ‘the anointed one’, referring to the eschatological Saviour announced and expected by the Old Testament prophets. The title alludes to the dignity of the King, Priest and Prophet, because in the Old Testament times kings, priests and prophets have been anointed with oil at their inauguration into office (for further details about the expected Messiah see footnote 38). In the New Testament, Jesus is seen as the expected Christ/Messiah (cf. Mt 16,16; John 4,25–26) and is addressed with this title 538 times; so the title ‘*Christ*’ occurs much more frequent as Jesus’ designations as ‘Son of God’ (see footnote 4).

² The quotations from the Bible are my own translations of the original texts; the abbreviations used for the Biblical Scriptures are for the 46 Scriptures of the Old Testament *Gen* (Genesis), *Ex* (Exodus), *Lev* (Leviticus), *Num* (Numbers), *Deut* (Deuteronomium), *Jos* (Joshua), *Judg* (Judges), *Rut*, *1 Sam* (1 Samuel), *2 Sam* (2 Samuel), *1 Kings*, *2 Kings*, *1 Chr* (1 Chronicles), *2 Chr* (2 Chronicles), *Ezra*, *Neh* (Nehemiah), *Tob* (Tobit), *Jdt* (Judith), *Est* (Esther), *1 Macc* (1 Maccabees), *2 Macc* (2 Maccabees), *Job*, *P*s (Psalms), *Prov* (Proverbs), *Ecc* (Ecclesiastes), *Cant* (Song of Solomon), *Wis* (Wisdom), *Sir* (Sirach), *Isa* (Isaiah), *Jer* (Jeremiah), *Lam* (Lamentations), *Bar* (Baruch), *Ezek* (Ezekiel), *Dan* (Daniel), *Hos* (Hosea), *Joel*, *Am* (Amos), *Ob* (Obadiah), *Jon* (Jonah), *Mic* (Micah), *Nah* (Nahum), *Hab* (Habakkuk), *Zeph* (Zephaniah), *Hag* (Haggai), *Zech* (Zechariah), *Mal* (Malachi), and for the 27 Scriptures of the New Testament *Mt* (Gospel of Matthew), *Mk* (Gospel of Mark), *Lk* (Gospel of Luke), *John* (Gospel of John), *Acts* (Acts of the Apostles), *Rom* (Romans), *1 Cor* (1 Corinthians), *2 Cor* (2 Corinthians), *Gal* (Galatians), *Eph* (Ephesians), *Phil* (Philippians), *Col* (Colossians), *1 Thess* (1 Thessalonians), *2 Thess* (2 Thessalonians), *1 Tim* (1 Timothy), *2 Tim* (2 Timothy), *Tit* (Titus), *Phlm* (Philemon), *Heb* (Hebrews), *Jas* (James), *1 Pet* (1 Peter), *2 Pet* (2 Peter), *1 John*, *2 John*, *3 John*, *Jude*, *Rev* (Revelation).

³ The Greek word for ‘Trinity’, i.e. Threeness (‘*trias*’) first occurs with respect to the Christian God in the writing *To Autolytus* of St. Theophilus of Antioch (written c. AD 180) in the phrase “*Trinity of God and His Word and of His Wisdom*” (Ad Autolytus 2,15), where ‘Word’ refers to the Son (cf. John 1), and ‘Wisdom’ to the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:25, although others have appropriated God’s Wisdom to the Son, as St. Paul had done already in 1 Cor 1:24; for the so-called *appropriations* see p. 11 with footnote 40). A more detailed account of the Trinity Doctrine had already been presented some years earlier (c. 177) by the Christian philosopher *Athenagoras of Athens* (see footnote 255). For still earlier trinitarian expressions of *Valentinus* (fl. 140–160) and *Basilides* (c. 135) see footnotes 18 and 121. The earliest expressions, of course, are found in the Bible, as we shall see.

The Latin word for ‘Trinity’ (‘*trinitas*’) was first used to describe the Christian God by the Christian lawyer *Tertullian* (* c. 160; † after 220) in his writings *Adversus Praxeum* (written c. 215 AD) and *De pudicitia* (written c. 218 AD). In *De pudicitia* (his last work), Tertullian speaks in chapter 2,16 of “*the Trinity of the one Divinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit*”. In chapter 2,4 (cf. also 4,2) of *Adversus Praxeum*, he explains his views, setting himself apart from Praxeas’ modalistic Trinity concept (see footnote 129): “*They [Father, Son and Holy Spirit] are of the one, namely by unity of the substance, while nonetheless is guarded the mystery of that natural order [oikonomia] which disposes the unity into a trinity [quae unitatem in trinitatem disponit], setting forth Father and Son and Spirit as three, three however not in quality [statu] but in sequence/grade/rank [gradu], not in substance but in form [forma], not in power but in manifestation [specie], yet of one substance and one quality and one power; seeing it is one God from whom those ranks and forms and manifestations are reckoned out in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*” In chapter 25,1, he adds: “*qui tres unum sunt, non unus*”, i.e. the three are ‘unum’ (= one and the same being, thing, substance or essence), but not ‘unus’ (one and the same person).

As is well known, Tertullian left the Catholic Church and became member of the rigorist movement founded by the self-declared ‘prophet’ Montanus (which is why Tertullian isn’t considered a saint; for Montanus cf. footnote 99), and his writings after 213 are from his ‘Montanist’ epoch. Moreover, some scholars have claimed that he was not quite orthodox in his views about Trinity, and the same accusation has been made for other (and virtually all) Christian theologians before the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), such as St. *Ignatius of Antioch* (c. † 108), St. *Justin Martyr* († 165), St. *Irenaeus of Lyons* († 202). But these Fathers seem to be plainly orthodox, if we carefully examine the content of their teaching, not the wording (for Ignatius, see footnote 215; for another precise Pre-Nicene explanation of the Trinity, that of *Athenagoras*, see footnote 255; for Pope St. *Dionysius*’ equally exact account see footnote 129; for the alleged error of the Pre-Nicene Fathers cf. footnote 121), because the terminology has been refined in later centuries (cf. footnote 18). An interesting analogy for this phenomenon is the fact that (as shown in footnote 65) the word ‘to adore’ (or the Latin equivalent ‘*adorare*’) is used today by ecclesiastical authorities as a ‘terminus technicus’ for absolute veneration, allowed to be offered only to God; whereas in earlier times (even in the Vulgate translation of the Bible) ‘*adorare*’ describes also acts of legitimate honor offered to humans. But, of course, it would be an error to conclude that earlier theologians, because they used ‘*adorare*’ in a broader sense than we do today, had no orthodox view in this matter. The same error is done, in my opinion, if one argues that Tertullian, because he speaks of ‘ranks’ in the Trinity, has a *subordinationist* view (i.e. holding, that the Son is a God of ‘lower quality’ than the Father). For, Tertullian emphasizes explicitly in the above quotation, that the persons are *not* three ‘in quality’ [statu]; so the ‘rank’ or ‘sequence’ is to be interpreted in the orthodox sense of a natural order of honor (due to the eternal relations of origin) between essentially equal persons (see below pp. 8 and 25). And if in chapter 9,2 of *Adversus Praxeum* Tertullian writes that “*the Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole, as He Himself acknowledges: My Father is greater than I*” (cf. John 10:30), we should remember that in the later orthodox Trinity Doctrine, too, the Son ‘derives’ His being from the Father; and while in orthodox terminology we do not say that He is a ‘part’ of the Father’s *substance*, the Father still has not transmitted to the Son the attributes of ‘fatherhood’ and of ‘being unbegotten’, whence it would be right to say that the Son has inherited only a part of the Father’s *attributes*. The view that the Father has a priority of honor within the Trinity is also orthodox; also some orthodox Post-Nicene Fathers referred Christ’s statement John 10:30 (*My Father is greater than I*) to the Father’s greater honor in the order of origin (see footnote 250). Thus, although Tertullian and other Pre-Nicene Fathers had not yet found in every instance the later sophisticated terminology, it is remarkable thought, that Tertullian was able to describe the Trinity in a very precise manner even with respect to terminology. For Tertullian, see further footnotes 6, 24, 25, 99, 129 and 158. Apart from theological writings, there are also some other impressive testimonies for the trinitarian faith of Christian communities in the first centuries, as for example the famous Vesper Hymn *Phos Hilaron*, dating back probably to the 2nd century: “*Having come to the setting of the sun, and beholding the evening light, we sing in praise to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit of God.*” Here, the Trinity is just praised, without any theological sophistry.

⁴ There are plenty of Scripture verses that ascribe to Jesus the title ‘Son of God’ in the New Testament, see *Mt* 2:15, 3:17, 4:3, 4:6, 8:29, 11:27, 14:33, 16:16, 17:5, 21:37, 24:36, 26:63–64, 27:40, 27:54, 28:19, *Mk* 1:1, 1:11, 3:11, 5:7, 9:7, 12:6, 13:32, 14:61–62, 15:39, *Lk* 1:32, 1:35, 3:22, 4:3, 4:9, 4:41, 8:28, 9:35, 10:22, 20:13; 22:70; *John* 1:18 (version); 1:34; 1:49; 3:16–18; 3:35–36; 5:18–26; 6:40; 8:35–38; 10:36; 11:4; 11:27; 14:13; 17:1; 19:7; 20:31; *Acts* 8:37; 9:20, 13:33, *Rom* 1:3, 1:9, 5:10, 8:3, 8:29, 8:32, *1 Cor* 1:9, *2 Cor* 1:19, 15:28, *Gal* 1:16, 2:20, 4:4, 4:6, *Eph* 4:13, *Col* 1:13, *1 Thess* 1:10, *Heb* 1:2–8, 3:6, 4:14, 5:5, 5:8, 6:6, 7:3, 7:28, 10:29, *2 Pet* 1:17, *1 John* 1:3, 1:7, 2:22–24, 3:8, 3:23, 4:9–10, 4:14–15, 5:5, 5:9–13, 5:20, *2 John* 1:3, 1:9, *Rev* 2:18. In the Old Testament see 2 Sam 7:14 (cf. Heb 1:5a), Ps 2:7,12 (cf. Heb 1:5b), Prov 30:4; Hos 11:1 (cf. Mt 2:15); as indirect testimonies also Isa 7:14, 9:6–7, Dan 3:25, Mic 5:1–5. Additionally,

1. Unity in Essence and Personal Distinction between Father and Son

"I and the Father are one" says Christ (John 10:30). According to the Church Fathers the kind of unity meant in this sentence is not only a unity of the will or of love, but a deeper kind of unity, namely the *unity of essence*: essential unity.

This implies that almost everything the Father possesses, does and is, can be ascribed to Christ, the Son of God, as well. For example, we read in John 16:15 (cf. Mt 11:27, Lk 10:22, John 3:35, 5:26; 13:3, 17:10): *"all things that the Father has are mine"* (so Father and Son have a kind of 'joint property', and if 'all things' include the essence, this is also an immediate proof for a 'unity of essence'), and in John 5:19: whatever things the Father does, *"these things also the Son does in like manner."* Therefore, for instance, (just as the Father) also the Son has created the world (Heb 1:10) and all things that are created (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6), and also the Son raises the dead and gives them life (John 5:21), while He has live in himself just as the Father has (John 5,26, which seems to imply equality in essence). Moreover, the Son (just like the Father) is almighty (cf. Mt 28:18 and John 3:35), He knows everything (John 16:30; 21:17), He is above all (John 3:31, Rom 9:5,⁸ Eph 1:21, Col 2:10, Heb 1:4, 1 Pet 3:22) and is called *'the true God'* (1 John 5:20, see 8th argument in chapter 2). So the Son seems to resemble the Father in almost every aspect. However, there must be exceptions, that allow us to speak about two distinct persons. The Bible says nowhere, that the Father 'is' the Son, neither is it possible to conceive that somebody is his own son. Moreover, Christ prayed to the Father, and this presupposes of course a personal distinction between the two. So what is the difference between the Son and the Father? Of course, we have to say at least that the Father 'generates' the Son and not vice versa. According to a couple of Scripture verses (Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; Heb 5:5) the Father said to the Son: *"today I have begotten you"*. While these words may remind us to a temporal event, which can be seen as a birth of the Son (e.g. the terrestrial birth of Jesus 2000 years ago, or his resurrection, which can be seen as a kind of rebirth and seems to be meant in Acts 13:33) these temporal 'births' are not the fundamental constitution of the Son, since the Son according to John 17:5 (cf. John 1:1–18, 6:38,42, 8:58, 16:28, 17:24, Col 1:17; cf. also Ps 110:3, Prov 8:23–27, 30:4, Mic 5:1–5) existed before his terrestrial life and has been with the Father even before the world had been created. The primary and first generation of the Son must, therefore, be a process 'in eternity' before and beyond cosmical time. This generation has to be distinguished from a normal generation in two aspects. First of all, it is obviously not a corporal process (for God the Father, being a mere spiritual entity, has no corporal body). Secondly, it seems not to be a process in time, where something moves or changes until it comes to an end. Such a process would be called a creation, which the Church distinguishes from the generation of the Son in the Nicene Creed. As understood by the Church Fathers, the eternal generation of the Son can be described as a 'timeless' process that is going on from eternity to eternity (in the eternal 'today') without interruption, change or movement, being a status rather than a process, in which the Son receives at every instant his whole essence from God the Father and is related to him as the permanent source of his being (in an analogous manner also the created universe is permanently sustained into existence by God). As for the Scriptural base for asserting such a timeless generation, we will discuss this more accurately at the very end of this treatise.⁹ According to what has been said so far, Father and Son could be two separated persons with equal characteristics, one of them giving life to the other. Symbolically we could compare the Father to a sun, whose rays come together to bring about another sun resembling the first one, being a perfect image of it. The relation between the two could be named essential equality or *equality of essence*. But *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30) implies according to ecclesiastical understanding much more, namely essential unity or *unity of essence*, so that Father and Son have not (and are not) *two equal essences*, but have (and are) *one and the same essence*, that is one and the same Divine Nature, Substance and Being. I will defend this interpretation of John 10:30 later (see first argument for the unity of essence). Here, I am concerned only with the concept and its possibility.

So how is it possible that two distinct persons share one and the same essence? We have no clear biblical or official ecclesiastical answer, but there have been made various speculative efforts to provide an answer. In order to see that the concept is not contradictory, any possible explanation will do. Therefore, I will give my own very short speculative explanation. In this (and any other) explanation the crucial step is to spell out the difference between 'person' and 'essence'.

So what is a person? It is *the contrary of a 'thing'*. Every *substance* (in the sense of an entity that is not merely an attribute of another entity; see below) is either a person or a thing. For example, humans are persons, not things; a stone is a thing, not a person.

some Scripture verses refer to other 'children' of God (angels as well as human daughters and sons; see footnote 29).

⁵ John 1:1 (cf. 1:14), Rev 19:13, cf. also Quran 4:172. Being God's Word, He also "speaks the words of God" (John 3:34; cf. 8:26, 12:49, 14:24).

⁶ The Two-Natures Doctrine, too, can be found in considerably clear expression already in Tertullian's work *Adversus Praxean* (see footnote 3), where he writes in chapter 27 about Jesus Christ, the Son of God: *"But in truth we find him definitely explained as both God and man"* (27,10), and: *"We see two natures/states [duplicem statum], not mixed but joined together in one person [non confusum, sed coniunctum in una persona], God and man Jesus"* (27,11). This doctrine can be found already hundred years before Tertullian, in the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch (see footnote 215).

⁷ According to Catholic Tradition (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* of 1992, § 120) the Bible includes 73 Holy Scriptures, of which 46 Pre-Christian Jewish Scriptures constitute the Old Testament (OT) and 27 Greek Christian Scriptures the New Testament (NT): see the list in footnote 2. This content was defined by decisions of *Pope St. Damasus* in 382 and *Pope St. Innocent I.* in 405, and most solemnly by declarations of two ecumenical councils: of the *Council of Florence* in 1442 and of the *Council of Trent* in 1546; the wording of these and other ecclesiastical decisions can be found in the *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* of Denzinger and Hünermann (Freiburg: Herder, 37th edition 1992), abbreviated with 'DH'; cf. in our case DH 179–180, 213, 1335, and 1502–1504. The Catholic OT include the 7 so-called 'deuterocanonical' Scriptures [viz. Tob, Jdt, 1 Macc, 2 Macc, Bar, Sir, Wis; and also Greek additions to Dan and Est], that are extant today in complete form only in a Greek translation, while of the remaining 39 Scriptures of the OT we have complete versions in the Hebrew and Aramaic original language. The deuterocanonical Scriptures (called 'Apocrypha' by the Protestants) have been removed from the Bible by Rabbinic Judaism in 90–100 AD, and likewise later by most Protestant Churches. However, in our argumentation the deuterocanonical Scriptures do not occur significantly, because the arguments are based mainly on the New Testament.

⁸ For Rom 9:5 cf. footnote 42.

⁹ See the answer to argument 14 in chapter 8.3.

For persons we use the pronouns ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘he’, ‘she’ while for things we use the pronoun ‘it’. A person can act consciously and voluntarily, which things cannot do. A person can be the subject and origin of conscious acting, while a thing can be only the object and goal of such acting, or can be used as a tool. The main property of a person seems to be, that a person has its own acting and being ‘in its own hands’, meaning that a person disposes and rules over itself. A thing doesn’t rule over itself (at least not in the described sense), but can be ‘in the hands’ of persons. So the main difference is: *Persons are ordained to possess things as well as themselves*, while *things are ordained to be in possessed by persons*. To make this difference clear, one can envision a person as having arms grasping and encompassing itself, while things have no arms but are in the hands of persons. So we could say: The characteristic of a person distinguishing it from things is a kind of ‘self-embrace’. Now we come to the concept of essence: What is meant by the ‘essence of a person’ in contradistinction to ‘the person itself’? One can view a person from two sides:

1. Normally one sees a person as the subject (origin) of its self-ownership and self-embrace: as the owner of itself and as someone who grasps and encompasses itself. This is the imagination of the ‘person itself’.
2. On the other hand, one might see a person also as the object (the goal) of self-ownership and self-embrace: as possession of itself and as something that is grasped and encompassed by itself. Seen in this perspective, the person is viewed as a thing that is (so to speak) non-personal, and this is the ‘essence of the person’.

Thus, ‘the person itself’ and ‘its essence’ stand opposite to each other like owner and his possession, whereby the essence is no outer, losable possession; it is the innermost possession of the owner, not separable from (but identical with) himself.

The self-ownership or self-embrace of a person is a very mysterious reality: What is it that allows a person to be somehow related to itself? We don’t know exactly. But we are aware of a plurality of different build-in features in our own person which contribute to our self-relation, the most important seem to be *self-consciousness*, *self-knowledge* and *self-love*. While these features are different to each other, ‘the person itself’ and ‘its essence’ are not two distinct entities (otherwise the person would not own *itself* by being owner of its essence); they are only two distinct ‘sides’ of one and the same entity. Now it seems to be logically possible at least, that a certain person has a plurality of build-in features A, B, and C, each of which is sufficient *without the others* to enable the person to relate to itself, such that the self-ownership (or self-embrace) of that person would be *over-determined thrice*. This is not the case for the features of self-consciousness, self-knowledge and self-love, for these abilities are *dependent* on each other¹⁰ and therefore come together to build only one personality. But in another person there may be features A, B, C as described, each of which is itself a bundle of self-consciousness, self-knowledge and self-love and thus a kind of personality on His own, whereby the difference may be, for example, that in A dominates self-consciousness, in B self-knowledge and in C self-love. And thus, it seems possible that in God we have three distinct features that somehow introduce three distinct forms of self-ownership (and accordingly three distinct personalities) within the one Divine Being. Admittedly we must aware, that if we use the above explanation of ‘person itself’ in contradistinction to the ‘essence of the person’, we would have to say that God is *only one person*. But if His self-ownership has distinct modes, each of which constitutes the self-ownership independently and sufficiently, then these distinct modes (or different manners, in which God encompass, possesses and is the one Divine Being) might constitute distinct personalities. Therefore, in order to introduce *distinct Divine Persons*, it seems that one has to define a ‘Divine Person’ in an unusual special manner, namely:

A Divine Person is God seen as subject of only one mode of His multiple self-embrace.

If we accept this definition, there can be indeed a plurality of Divine Persons, having (and being) one and the same Divine Essence. Thus, Father and Son could be ‘two Divine Persons’, but ‘one and the same thing’ (i.e. viewed as essences, they are one and the same). They constitute also ‘only one person’, if we understand ‘person’ in the usual sense of the word. But the distinction between both is based in the *manner*, in which Father and Son encompass, possess and are the one Divine Being.

In traditional Trinity Doctrine, one speaks not only of *three Persons*, called Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but also of *three Hypostases*, and *three modes of Subsistence* (or sometimes also *three Subsistences*) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, on says that there is only *one Divine Essence* (called *Godhead*), *one Divine Nature* and *one Divine Substance*. The terms Essence, Nature and Substance are taken to be synonymous here,¹¹ although within the realm of creatures, they have slightly different meanings: The (physical) *essence* of an entity is the sum of all its characteristics, that are necessary for its identity;¹² while the (concrete) *nature* of an entity is the part of its physical essence that specifies its characteristic actions and operations.¹³

A (concrete) *substance* (derived from Latin *sub* = *under*, and *stare* = *to stay*) is defined to be an entity that is not an attribute ‘attached to’, ‘inhering’ and therefore ‘dependent on’ another underlying entity (like the so-called *accidents* or accidental properties, e.g. colors, shapes, sizes of an entity, that determine its outer appearance or unfold its internal condition); thus, a substance is an entity that does not exist ‘in another’ but ‘*in itself*’, being an independent bearer that supports his own existence (standard

¹⁰ Clearly, self-consciousness without any self-knowledge seems to be impossible and vice versa, and self-love presupposes self-knowledge. Probably, also self-knowledge presupposes self-love, for in order to come to know oneself, one must focus attention on oneself, i.e. ‘love’ oneself to a certain extent.

¹¹ The Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (see also footnote 176) declared in 1215: “there is *only one true God*, eternal and immeasurable, almighty, unchangeable, incomprehensible and ineffable, *Father and Son and Holy Spirit: three Persons, but one Essence, Substance or Nature* being simple in all respects [...]” (DH 800). The uniqueness and simplicity (undivided unity) of God has been solemnly stated again 1870 by the First Vatican Council (DH 3001–3002).

¹² *Essence* is derived from Latin ‘essentia’, is the abstraction term of ‘esse’ = to be, and means that what the object really is. The Greek term for essence, ‘ousia’, has the same meaning, for it is derived from the Greek feminine participle ‘ousa’ of the word of ‘einaí’ = to be. It is used for ‘essence’ and for ‘substance’ as well (see footnote 18). One differentiates between the ‘physical essence’ which is the sum of all its characteristic (including the individual ones) and the ‘metaphysical essence’ containing only the ‘underivable core characteristics’ which must be named in a precise definition of the object.

¹³ *Nature* is derived from Latin ‘natura’, which is derived from Latin ‘natus’ = to be born; the Greek word for nature is ‘physis’, which is derived from ‘phyo’ = to plant. Thus, the ‘nature’ of an entity means originally its impetus it has had since birth, by virtue of being planted. One differentiates between the ‘concrete nature’ that exists in a concrete individual, and the ‘abstract nature’ of a species or genus, common to many individuals of that species.

examples are minerals, plants, animals, humans, Angels, and God). A substance is recognized by us in most cases as an entity that has an underlying reality ‘beneath’ (i.e. ‘hidden under’) its accidental visible appearance. So, if one considers an entity that is a substance, then this entity usually includes some changing accidents and a hidden non-accidental part that remains unchanged, which can be described as the ‘bearer’ of the changing accidents. This underlying part of the entity is then called ‘the carrier substance’ of the entity; this substance is a ‘substance in the stricter sense’, while the entity is a ‘substance in a broader sense’, consisting of its ‘carrier substance’ and its accidents. It is clear that in an ordinary created entity the nature is part of the essence, which in turn is a part of its (carrier) substance, which in turn is also a part of the whole entity. However in God, it is assumed that He is not a bearer of changing accidents, that He has no non-essential characteristics and has no ‘non-activated’ parts (but is ‘pure act’ as the Thomists have put it); if that is true, then it seems that indeed His Nature, His Essence and His Substance are identical among themselves and with the simple Divine Entity as a whole. In view of the meaning of ‘Essence’, ‘Nature’ and ‘Substance’ one can say that the Divine Persons, being owners of one and the same Divine Nature, Essence and Substance, ‘dwell in’ one and the same Divine Essence, ‘act through’ one and the same one Nature and ‘consist of’ one and the same Divine Substance.

It remains to explain the terms ‘hypostasis’ and ‘subsistence’. *Hypostasis* is derived from Greek *hypo* = *underneath*, and *stasis* = *standing*; thus, etymologically, *hypostasis* has the same meaning as the Latin term *substance*. But in fact, the meaning of ‘hypostasis’ is slightly more special: A hypostasis is an entity endowed with *complete independence* or, more concretely, an entity being independent in two respects: an entity that is (1) ‘in itself’ and (2) ‘for itself’. The first independency (being ‘in itself’) means, of course, that the hypostasis is a concrete substance. But the second (being ‘for itself’) requires, that the hypostasis is not a substance that is *essentially* dependent on another substance, such that it naturally destined to be united with one or more other substances, so as to be a part of a greater whole (as for example the human soul or the human body or its limbs are created to be only parts of the whole human being); thus the hypostasis exists ‘for itself’ (as the whole human person does, which is a hypostasis), that is: it is a complete whole that can exist by nature separated from and independently of other substances.¹⁴ Obviously, then, every person is a hypostasis, but probably not every hypostasis is a person: there might exist non-personal hypostases as well (for example animals and plants, and probably also homogeneous lifeless entities that are separated from the surrounding, e.g. crystals). At any case, a *person* can be defined as a ‘rational hypostasis’, where being ‘rational’ means having by nature the tendency to develop and maintain a self-consciousness life, being able to reflect upon and dispose upon oneself by intellect and free will. Since a hypostasis is an ‘independent substance’ in the explained sense, it follows that a person is a ‘rational independent substance’.¹⁵ Now one could argue: If there are three Divine Persons, then these are three Divine Hypostases, and in the last analysis three independent Divine Substances, that is: three independent Gods; but this leads us into the heresy of Tritheism.¹⁶ In order to avoid this, we have given a very unusual meaning to the notion of ‘Person’ with respect to God; and the same must be done with the notion of ‘Hypostasis’, if we want to talk of ‘three Divine Hypostases’ without falling into Tritheism. In order to do so, we start with the observation, that *every* hypostasis (even a non-personal one) is in a certain sense ‘owner of itself’ although this is more clearly the case for personal, self-conscious hypostases than for non-personal ‘thing-like’ hypostases. For there must be some entity which, when added to the nature or essence of the hypostasis, bestows it with the ‘complete independence’ that is characteristic for the hypostasis.

This entity is called the *subsistence* (from Latin *sub* = *under* and *sistere* = *to cause to stay*). Therefore, via subsistence, the hypostasis owns itself, and can be viewed either as subject or as object of its self-ownership; so we can view the hypostasis from two sides and distinguish the ‘hypostasis itself’ (the subject of this self-ownership) and the ‘essence/nature’ of the hypostasis (the object of self-ownership). If the hypostasis is a person, the mysterious ‘subsistence’ has relatively clear contours: It seems to be the ‘personal core’ or ‘individual center point’ of the person, the point from where acts go out and in which impacts from the outside come together and are received, and seems to be moreover the bearer of self-consciousness, and the starting point as well as destination point of self-knowledge and self-love. For non-personal hypostases the subsistence seemingly reduces itself to the ‘center of acting and of being affected’.¹⁷ Thus, at least for the subsistence of a *person* it seems to be possible, due to its complexity, that it consists of a *bundle of multiple modes of subsistence*, each of which would be individually sufficient to bestow the hypostasis with its independence; while for the subsistence of a non-personal entity, the existence of such a multiplicity of modes is questionable. In any case, we have to define a ‘Divine Hypostasis’ (which is of course the same as a ‘Divine Person’) as follows:

A Divine Hypostasis is God seen as subject of only one of His modes of subsistence.

¹⁴ In spite of this, it is not excluded that a hypostasis is extended by assuming new substantial parts from outside (as is done, if a human person is growing up); what is excluded, is the extension of a hypostasis by unification with other hypostases. This is meant by the ‘incommunicability’ of the hypostasis, which is counted to its essential properties: A hypostasis cannot communicate herself to another hypostasis to become part of a more complex hypostasis. The notion of incommunicability has been brought into the discussion by the theologian Richard of St. Victor († 1173) in his definition of a Divine Person (see footnote 15).

¹⁵ This matches to the famous definition of the Christian philosopher Boëthius († 524), who defined a ‘person’ in his treatise *De Persona et Duabus Naturis Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* (c. 2) to be an ‘individual substance of a rational nature’ (*naturæ rationalis individua substantia*). If one interprets ‘individual’ to mean or to imply ‘undistributable / not communicable’, the ‘individual substance’ is a ‘hypostasis’ and the ‘individual substance of a rational nature’ is a ‘rational hypostasis’. Richard of St. Victor († 1173) tried to apply Boëthius’ definition to the Divine Persons in his work *De Trinitate* (4:22), thereby modifying it, stating that a ‘Divine Person’ is ‘an incommunicable existence of the Divine Nature’ (*divine naturæ incommunicabilis existentia*); our definition, that has been explained above, is a more concrete one, according to which a Divine Person is ‘God seen as subject of only one mode of His multiple self-embracement’. Before the development of the Trinity Doctrine, the meaning of the word ‘person’ (in Latin ‘persona’, in Greek ‘prosopon’) was quite different from the modern one; therefore, its use in the Trinity Doctrine was not uncontroversial (see footnote 18). Originally, ‘person’ was used to describe a ‘mask’ or a ‘face’ (in this sense it was understood by the Sabellians, see footnote 129); the meaning ‘face’, that the word has still in modern Greek, transformed easily into the modern philosophical meaning, for the face often mirrors the inner rational individuality of a human person.

¹⁶ See footnote 131.

¹⁷ The Scholastics stated that ‘to act and to be affected is predicated of the hypostasis’ (*acta et passiones sunt suppositorum*). Indeed, properly speaking, it is not the mouth that speaks, the eye that sees, the mind (or soul) that thinks; but *the person* (hypostasis) speaks, sees and thinks, doing this *through* the mouth, eye or mind. Speaking still more properly, the acting and being affected is to be attributed to *the core or center point* of the person or hypostasis, i.e. to its *subsistence*.

Thereby, within the Trinity Doctrine, one assumes that there are *exactly three modes of subsistence* in God (sometimes also called, less accurately, ‘three subsistences’) that are constitutive for the three Divine Hypostases or Divine Persons. It should be stressed that according to the usual classical definitions of ‘hypostasis’ and ‘person’ one has to say that there is only one Divine Person and one Divine Hypostasis; the real sources of hypostatic or personal distinctions are the subsistence modes, which in turn (as we shall see in more detail in chapter 4) are a result of the co-called processions in God.

Thus, if the church had decided to do so, one could have used a different terminology, according to which, for example, there would be ‘only one Divine Hypostasis’. But in order to discern unity and trinity in God without confusion, it was expedient to establish a **standardized terminology**. According to this terminological standard, one speaks of *one Divine Essence*, *one Divine Nature* (also called *one Divinity* or *one Godhead*), and *one Divine Substance* (or *one Divine Being*, or simply *one God*), but of *three Divine Persons* (in modern times also called *three Individuals* or *three I’s*) and of *three Divine Hypostases* (also called *three Supposita* or *three Subjects*), called Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and also of *three Divine Modes of Subsistence* (or, in less accurate talk, *three Subsistences*) of the three Persons. Before these basic standardizations of speech had been established at the end of the 4th century, there has been a lot of terminological confusion.¹⁸

It is notable, though, that the established terminology can be called also ‘Biblical’ insofar the Bible seems to support it:

The word ‘*hypostasis*’ occurs 5 times in the original Greek text of the New Testament, and 20 times in the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the OT. Most notably, the word occurs in the remarkable verse Heb 1:3, where it is stated that the Son is “[the] effulgence of His [the Father’s] glory and [the] character [i.e. stamp, exact imprint] of his hypostasis”. The word ‘hypostasis’ here is often rendered as ‘substance’ or ‘essence’, but since an ‘imprint’ seems to be a copy (numerically distinct, though substantively identical with the original), this translation would imply that one has to do with two equal essences/substances (which would contradict the later trinitarian terminology); whereas, if we let the word denote just an ‘hypostasis’ then it is said that the hypostasis of the Son is distinct from but equal to the hypostasis of the Father, in full accordance of Trinity Doctrine.¹⁹

The Greek word for ‘*person*’, namely ‘*prosopon*’, occurs 78 times in the New Testament, meaning ‘face’ in the most instances (cf. e.g. Acts 6:15), which matches to its etymology.²⁰ It occurs also over 850 times in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, most often as translation for Hebrew *panim*, again meaning ‘face’. But at least in some instances, it seems to have already in the Bible the later meaning of a person, cf. in the New Testament Mk 12:14, Lk 20:21, Gal 2:6, Jude 1:16 and especially 2 Kor 1:11, where the Apostle Paul speaks about a supplication made “by many persons”. In the deuterocanonical (originally Greek) part of the Old Testament, the verse Est 8,12ℓ (or Est 16,11 according to the Vulgate-numbering) is also especially interesting: Here, the Persian Vizier Haman is called “the second person [prosopon] of the royal throne”.²¹ In modern Greek, the word ‘prosopon’ has still the two meanings ‘face’ and ‘person’. Moreover, if the word prosopon (person) is used for the ‘face’ of God (very impressively e.g. in Ps 17:15), we have to take into account, that God literally has no corporal ‘face’; thus, something spiritual must be

¹⁸ Eastern (Greek speaking) theologians refused to speak of ‘three persons’ and preferred to speak of ‘three hypostases’, because they understood the Greek word for ‘person’, *prosopon*, to denote a mask only (which matches the etymology, see footnote 129, see also footnote 15), thus, in this sense ‘three persons’ would denote only a merely apparent (and no real) plurality of persons. On the other hand, Western (Latin speaking) theologians refused to speak of ‘three hypostases’ because they equated ‘hypostasis’ with ‘substance’ (which was also done by the Council of Nicaea, see footnote 124, and also by the Council of Ephesus, see footnote 143, and which again was etymologically correct) and pointed out, that there is only one Divine Substance; for example in 262, Pope St. Dionysius abandoned the confession of ‘three hypostases’ as an expression for the belief in three Gods, i.e. for Tritheism (see footnote 126). A hundred years later, at the Synod (or local Council) of Alexandria in 362, convoked by Patriarch St. Athanasius of Alexandria, it was recognized that such differences were a matter of terminology only (i.e. the parties in dispute used different terminology, but, as regards content, had in fact one and the same faith).

In 416/17 Church Father St. Augustine still reported in his main opus *De Trinitate* 7,4,8 (cf. 5,9,10), that the Greeks (or according to 15,3,5 ‘some Greeks’) name ‘three substances’ – which was Augustine’s translation of the Greek expression ‘three hypostases’ – and ‘one essence’ (*tres substantias, unam essentiam*), whereas ‘we’, the Latins, name ‘three persons’ and ‘one essence or substance’ (*tres personas, unam essentiam vel substantiam*). Augustine justifies in *De Trinitate* 15,3,5 (cf. 5,10,9) the use of the word ‘person’, arguing that the word is „used through the needs of speech, that there might be one term by which to answer, when it is asked what the three are.“ Still more perplexing, Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra († 374) rejected both manners of speaking, attributed them to the (not longer extant) writing ‘*On the three natures*’ of the Gnostic *Valentinus* (fl. 140–160, for Gnosticism see footnote 124; see also footnote 121 for the even earlier Gnostic *Basilides*): *Valentinus*, according to Marcellus, “was the first to invent *three hypostases* and *three persons* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”, whereby Marcellus somewhat foolishly thinks that *Valentinus* has “filched this from *Hermes* and *Plato*” (cf. *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol.51/1, April 2000, p. 95). For Marcellus, cf. footnotes 130 and 158. The standardized terminology of the Trinity Doctrine prevailed in the 5th century under the decisive influence of St. Augustine († 430), the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), and Pope St. Leo I. († 461).

The problem of non-fixed terminology had concerned even the famous word ‘*ousia*’ (essence, substance; see footnote 12): While the Synod (or local Council) of Antioch in 268/9 had rejected the expression ‘*homo-ousios*’ (meaning ‘being of equal or common essence or substance’), as it had been used by the heretic Paul of Samosata (see footnote 120), while the later Ecumenical Council of Nicaea had solemnly affirmed, that the Son and the Father are ‘*homo-ousios*’ in the sense of having the same essence/substance (see footnote 122). It is unclear what Paul of Samosata had in mind when he used this term; probably he equated the Logos (God’s Word) with the person of the Father (thus taking ‘*homoousios*’ to mean ‘personal identity’), in order to separate the Logos from Jesus Christ, who, according to Paul, was only a mere human. Also the Gnostic *Basilides* used the term ‘*homoousios*’, but in an unknown sense; see footnote 121.

Finally, it is interesting in this context, that the famous medieval theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, considering the fact that the Hebrew word ‘*Elohim*’ used for God is a plural word (meaning ‘Gods’; we will consider this further in chapter 4), stated in his *Summa Theologiae* p. 1 a. 39 q. 3 ad 2. “*Various languages have diverse modes of expression. So as by reason of the plurality of ‘supposita’ the Greeks said ‘three hypostases’, so also in Hebrew ‘Elohim’ is in the plural. We, however, do not apply the plural either to ‘God’ or to ‘substance’ to avoid that plurality is attributed to the substance*”, where St. Thomas seems to accept, in principle, that the expression ‘tree Divine Hypostases’ in Hebrew could have been rendered as ‘three Gods’, if this had not been rejected by the Church in order to avoid confusion.

¹⁹ Additionally, ‘hypostasis’ occurs in Heb 3:14, 11:1, where it denotes probably ‘fundamentum’ or ‘assurance’, and in 2 Cor 9:4, 11:17, where it denotes the underlying situation or the underlying, debated ‘subject/matter’. In the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the OT, the word occurs in Ps 68(69):3 and means ‘ground/foothold’ into the deep mire; in Ps 38(39):6,8, 138(139):15, 88(89):48 it could already mean the ‘ground of existence’ as in later philosophy.

²⁰ See footnote 129.

²¹ Or, in the so-called ‘Alpha-Version’ of that text (there numbered as verse 7,25) “the second person at the royal thrones”. According to Est 8,7–10 we are dealing here with a quotation from a royal edict favorable to the Jews, written by the Jew Mordechai (and Esther) in the name of the Persian King Xerxes (probably King Xerxes I., who reigned 486–465 BC).

meant, and a fitting choice for this spiritual reality seems to be the personal core (the subsistence) of a Divine Person, be it God the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit (likewise, the personal core seems to be meant, if a 'face/prosopon' is attributed to an Angel in Judg 6:22, Acts 6:15, Rev 10:1). And indeed, if puts all Biblical statements about God's face together, it is easy to see that God must have more than one face (prosopon, personal core): First, there is a face of God which no man can see and live, for Yahweh told Moses: "*You cannot see My face [prosopon], for no man [in Hebrew: adam = human] shall see Me, and live*" (Ex 33:20). On the other hand, we are told that Moses in fact *has* seen a face of God and lived on: "*Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*" (Ex 33:11, cf. Num 12:7–8, Deut 34:10). Also others saw God face to face, for example, already before Moses, Jacob had claimed: "*I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*" (Gen 32:31). Now the face that can be seen safely by a human being before death cannot be the Father's face, for Jesus stated: "*Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father*" (John 6:46; cf. 1:18, 5:37, 1 John 4:12.20; by 'not anyone' here it is tacitly meant, 'no human before his death', a restriction that had been made explicit in Ex 33:20; therefore Jesus could claim in Mt 18:10, that the guardian angels see permanently the Fathers' face in the heavens). The Divine Face (or Personality), that *can* be seen by mortal men seems to be that of the Son, for St. Paul mentions "*the glory of God in the face/person [prosopon] of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Cor 4:6), so it seems that the Old Testament saints who saw God's face must have seen the pre-incarnate Son, who is "the image of the invisible God." (Col 1:15; cf. Heb 1:3). Note, that the Bible explicitly mentions the face [prosopon] of the Father (Mt 18:10, cf. Acts 3:20, Heb 9:24, Rev 6:16), and also the face [prosopon] of the Son (2 Cor 2:10 and 4:6; cf. 2 Thess 1:9–10),²² and the face [prosopon] of the Holy Spirit is mentioned at least indirectly by the stylistic device of a so-called parallelism (cf. Ps 51:13, 139:7, cf. Ezek 39:29).

Finally, the Greek word '*ousia*' (used for substance / essence within the Trinity Doctrine) occurs 3 times in the Bible and means 'property': Tob 14,13(G1-Version only), Lk 15:12, and Lk 15:13;²³ fittingly, in Trinity theology '*ousia*' stands for the common property of the Divine Persons.

Also the following terminological rules have been established and seem to be reasonable as well as Biblical: Two or three distinct Divine Persons, e.g. Father and Son, are 'one thing' (unum) but not 'one person' (unus).²⁴ They are 'the same thing' but not 'the same person'. The Son with respect to the Father is 'someone else' (alius), but not 'something else' (aliud). In general, *masculine pronouns* refer to the persons, whereas *neuter pronouns* refer to the essence. So Father and Son are

1. *one thing*, and *the same thing*, and *not something else* because of the unity in essence;
2. *not one person*, and *not the same person*, but the Father (Son) is *someone else* than the Son (Father) because of the multiplicity in persons;

Moreover, in order to emphasize the perfect union between the persons, one usually avoids to say that they are *different*; one says instead, that they are *distinct*.²⁵

As mentioned above, the distinction between Father and Son can be explained by reference to the eternal generation by which the Father generates the Son. This generation can now be described as a process in which the Father commits his own essence to the Son, without giving it up or losing it, with the result that the paternal essence is the essence of both Father and the Son. This mysterious procedure constitute two subsistence-modes (or modes of the self-ownership-relation) in God: The Son relates to the Divine Essence by receiving it from the Father; the Father relates to the same Divine Essence by giving it to the Son.

Now we come to the scriptural confirmation of the concept explained so far. The Bible teaches us

1. the distinction of the persons of the Father and the Son and
2. the unity of the essence of the Father and the Son as well.

The first point follows already from the terms 'Father' and 'Son' (nobody is its own father) as well as from the reported instances of communication between the Father and the Son (which can hardly be monologues). If a more specific Bible verse is needed, one can quote John 8:16, where the Son says: "*I am not alone: But I and the Father, who sent me [we are two witnesses].*" The second point (the essential unity) can be accurately proved by the following ten Scripture arguments.

²² Cf. also the face of the 'Angel of Yahweh' Judg 6:22 and 13:21–22, who seems to represent a visible face of God, i.e. the pre-incarnate Son, for 'the name of the Lord' is within this Angel according to Ex 23:20–21 (cf. also Ex 3:2–4 with Acts 7:30 and Ex 13:21; likewise Gen 16:7,10,13); when in Ex 33:14 God says that his 'face' will go with Moses, this 'Angel' seems to be even equated with the face of Yahweh.

²³ If one takes into account also the apocryphal part of the Septuagint, there is one additional occurrence in 3 Macc 3:28 (where '*ousia*' also means 'property').

²⁴ Cf. Tertullian, who wrote in *Adversus Praxean* (c. 215, see footnote 3), chapter 25,1: "These three are one [neuter pronoun], not one [masculine pronoun], as it is said [in John 10:30] 'I and my Father are One' with respect to the unity of substance, not to the uniqueness of number" (*qui tres unum sunt, non unus, quomodo dictum est: 'Ego et Pater unum sumus', ad substantiae unitatem, non ad numeri singularitatem*). Cf. also St. Augustine († 430), who reported in *De fide et symbolo* 9,18, that 'learned and spiritual men' had explained 'in many books' that and how Father and Son 'is not unus' (one person) but 'are unum' [one thing] (*non unus esset Pater et Filius, sed unum essent*). These learned men included Augustine himself, who wrote in his comment to John 8:15 (*Tractatus 36 in Joannem*, chapter 9): "Hear how thou may believe Father and Son; hear the Son Himself, 'I and the Father are one [unum].' He said not, I am the Father; or, I and the Father is one [unus]; but when He says, 'I and the Father are one [unum]' hear both, both the *one, unum*, and the *are, sumus*, and you shall be delivered both from Charybdis and from Scylla. In these two words, in that He said *one* [unum], He delivers you from Arius [see p. 31]; in that He said *are*, He delivers you from Sabellius [see footnote 129] If *one* [unum], therefore not diverse; if *are*, therefore both Father and Son. For He would not say *are* of one [single person]; but, on the other hand, He would not say *one* of diverse" (*audi quomodo credas Patrem et Filium, audi ipsum Filium: Ego et Pater unum sumus. Non dixit: Pater ego sum, aut, Ego et Pater unus est, sed cum dixit, Ego et Pater unum sumus; utrumque audi, et unum et sumus, et a Charybdi et a Scylla liberaberis. In duobus istis verbis, quod dixit UNUM liberat te ab Ario: quod dixit SUMUS liberat te a Sabellio. Si unum, non ergo diversum; si sumus, ergo et Pater et Filius. Sumus enim, non diceret de uno: sed unum non diceret de diverso*). For the rules of Trinitarian speech cf. also St. Thomas Aquinas († 1274), *Summa Theologiae* I q. 31.

²⁵ Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* (c. 215, see footnote 3), chapter 9,1: "It is not by way of diversity that the Son differs from the Father, but by distribution: it is not by division that He is different, but by distinction" (*non tamen diversitate alium filium a patre sed distributione, non divisione alium, sed distinctione*).

2. The Unity in Essence between the Father and the Son: Ten Biblical Arguments

The first argument is based on the core statement and the gist of Christian faith, namely that Jesus Christ is the ‘Son of God’ in a proper and unique sense, placed above every Angel (Heb 1:4–13; Col 1:16), and that, correspondingly, God is Christ’s ‘own Father’ (John 5:18) which makes himself equal to God (John 5:18; cf. John 10:33), this equality being confirmed in Phil 2,5–7.

The argument focuses on Christ’s unique immediacy to the Father, confirmed by numerous passages in the Holy Scriptures, most notably by Christ’s statement in John 10:30:²⁶ “I and the Father are one”, considered in context with his self-description as ‘Son of God’ (John 10:36) and with his teaching that Father and Son mutually inhere in one another (John 10:38), and that, finally, “anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father” (John 14:9; cf. John 12:45).

To explain this basic argument, we start with a closer look at Christ’s remarkable statement “I and the Father are one”. The opponents of the Trinity Doctrine take this to mean “I and the Father have always the same opinion”, “we understand each other”, “we are one heart and one soul”. In support for this interpretation, they often point to John 17:22, where Jesus says: “they [the disciples] shall be one as we [Father and Son] are one.” But the disciples are not one in essence, but only one in will and love. The same, so it seems, must hold for the Father and the Son, since they are one ‘as’ the disciples should be. But this reasoning is not convincing, for the word ‘as’ need not mean ‘in the same manner as’. If we deal with comparisons between God and men, we should be aware that in most cases we have to apply the *principle of analogy*, meaning that there is no strict equality. For example, if Jesus says to his disciples “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48) nobody doubts that ‘as’ cannot mean ‘in the same manner as’.

Now that indeed in John 10:30 there is meant a unity of essence, seems to follow first of all from a careful analysis of the context (verses 27–30). In verses 27–28 Jesus says, that his sheep (i.e. his disciples) will not perish and nobody will snatch them out of his hand. The following verses seem to provide the reason why the sheep will not be snatched out of Jesus’ hand: “my Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (verse 29). And then follows immediately the proposition: “I and the Father are one” (verse 30). Obviously, what Jesus wanted to say, is something like the following: “Nobody can snatch the sheep out of my hand. For the Father is greater in power than anybody else, so that nobody can snatch them out of his hand; and since I and the father are one, I have the same power.” So the kind of unity we need to think of here, is a kind of unity that assures *equality of power*. For this, unity in will and love is too weak, so we need a stronger kind of unity: *unity in essence*. By the way, the sentence ‘I and the Father are one’ does not only imply only a *unity in essence*, but also a *distinction and multiplicity of the persons*, for Jesus uses the plural saying that He and the Father *are* one, not ‘I *am* the Father’ nor ‘I and the Father *am* one’. In addition to that, He uses for the term ‘one’ the neutral form ‘unum’ [Greek ‘hen’], which refers to the essence, and not the masculine form ‘unus’ [Greek: ‘heis’], which would refer to the persons.²⁷ Both, unity in essence and distinction in persons, can also be inferred from the text passage *immediately following after John 10:30*. The reaction of the Jews hearing Jesus’ bold statement was that they accused him: “You, being a man, make yourself God.” (John 10:33), and, therefore, they wanted to stone him. Jesus defended himself in John 10:34–36, hinting to Ps 82:6 (cf. 58:2), where even unjust judges have been called ‘gods’. So a fortiori, when He, who is not unjust but has been ‘sanctified’ by the Father, calls himself ‘God’s Son’ this is no blasphemy (John 10:36, cf. Mk 14:61–62, Mt 26:63–64). By this reasoning, Jesus did by no means reject his true Divinity, but rather confirmed it again, and went on to require from His hearers to believe and understand, “that the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:38, cf. 8,19, 14:11, 17:21, 1 John 2:23): This equal *in-being* of one Divine Person in the other (the so-called mutual ‘*Perichoresis*’ or ‘*Circumincessio*’ of the Persons, meaning ‘walking around’ in Greek or Latin, respectively) is again a fitting expression of both the unity in essence and the remaining distinction of persons.

The objection, that Jesus calls himself in John 10:36 not ‘God’, but only ‘God’s Son’, is not compelling at all. Admittedly, this expression is the standard title of Jesus,²⁸ and shows clearly the difference in person between Jesus and God his Father. But it implies in no way a difference in essence. For a son – if the word ‘son’ is used in its proper sense (which in the case of Jesus Christ we shall establish below) – has always at least generically exactly the same essence as his father. So between a son and his father there is never an *essential* inferiority or subordination, but perfect *essential* equality (moreover, there are many examples in human history, where a grown-up son even exceeds his father in importance, power and dignity; for example confer King David with his father Isai, or John the Baptist with his father Zechariah), although the father as such has and retains forever a priority with respect to the order of origin; and in this sense he has ‘the first place’ and has to be honored by his son. The Trinity Doctrine accepts this kind of ‘origin-based’ priority of the Father over the Son, but maintains and emphasizes the ‘essence-based’ equality between the two at the same time: As the son of a man is a true man, so the Jesus Christ, if He is the Son of God, He ought to be equal in essence with His Divine Father. This is a completely sound implication, provided that Jesus is ‘the Son’ of God in a proper sense. Correspondingly, Christ’s true Divine nature is implied also, whenever Christ called God His ‘Father’ (which He did very often), provided that Christ’s words are true (which shall be assumed here without further discussion) and that He used the word ‘Father’ not in an analogous sense but in the proper sense.

So we have to ask: Is it indeed the ‘proper sense’ we are dealing with here?

²⁶ This verse (John 10:30) is located quite in the middle of the carefully composed Gospel of St. John, which also points to Christ’s true Godhead right at the beginning (John 1:1) and the end (John 20:28).

²⁷ Cf. also footnote 24.

²⁸ For the title ‘Son of God’ see the vast number of Scripture references in footnote 4; there are, however, also a few instances where Christ is called ‘God’, which we shall specify and discuss below in our exposition of the second argument.

Certainly, when Jesus taught that God is everyone's Father,²⁹ He meant that in an analogous sense only; but it is clear, that He used the word 'Father' in another sense when He spoke about 'His' heavenly Father. For example, according to John 5:18, He declared that God is His 'own' Father, and in John 20:17 He uses the strange formula 'my Father and your Father' instead of 'our Father', which points to His unique and special relationship to the Father, that others do not share. Correspondingly, according to Eph 1:1–6 there are two kinds of 'sons' of God: God the Father *adopts us as sons* 'through' Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5), who is Himself '*the Beloved One*' (Eph 1:6).³⁰ That Christ is a Son of God in a unique sense, follows already from the use of the article 'the' Son of God (John 1:34, 20:31) and, more explicitly, by the title '*the only-begotten Son*' of God (John 3:16, cf. John 1:18), which seems to mean that Jesus is the only Son of God *in the natural sense*.

Now one could argue: Christ is a special 'Son' of God only by His miraculous birth without a human father (cf. Lk 1:35, where the Angel explains to the Virgin Mary: „Holy Spirit shall come upon you [...], therefore also the Holy which shall be born shall be called Son of God“). But here we are told only *one* of the reasons, why Christ will be *called* 'Son of God', not *the most profound reason* why He is God's Son and has been such already *before* his terrestrial birth (cf. John 3:16–17, 17:5,24).

In a most clear way, the uniqueness and true meaning of Christ's title 'Son of God' is explained in the first chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. First, in Heb 1,1–2a ("*In the past, [the] God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets ... but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son*") it is made clear that God's Son must be more than a prophet (cf. also Mt 12:41–42). This does not yet show his Divinity, because also John the Baptist is called "more than a prophet" by Jesus himself (Lk 7:26). But the continuation Heb 1,2b (",... *the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom also He made the eons [ages]*") shows immediately, that the Son is a co-creator with God, existing long before Christ was born on earth, even before all the ages of the universe, which God 'made' through him, i.e. using his assistance and cooperation (cf. also John 1:3,10, 1 Cor 6:8, Col 1:16). So either the Son was a superior Angel, created by the Father alone before all other things, in order to be the Father's assistant for the remaining creation work, or the Son is situated by nature even over *all* the Angels, entirely separated from the creation, staying entirely on God's side, conjuncted somehow with the Divine Essence of the Father. Which of these alternatives is true? The answer is given straightforwardly in the next verse, according to which the Son is "*an effulgence of His [God the Father's] glory and [an] exact expression [or character] of His Hypostasis,*³¹ *and upholding all things by the word of his power*" (Heb 1:3a). Hereby, especially the 'expression of His Hypostasis' seems to be a philosophical term expressing quite clearly the 'consubstantiality' of the Son with the Father, termed by the Creed of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea 325 in order to defend the Son's true Divinity. In any case, this verse seem to lift Christ into God's own sphere, separating him from all creatures including the most high ones: the Angels. By the way, this is in perfect accordance with the statement Col 1:16, according to which Christ is the creator of everything including the Angels, and thus can't be an Angel himself.³² And if anyone still has doubts about the superiority of the Son over the Angels, the text goes on to say that the Son, after his redemption work, "*sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*" (Heb 1:3b) and "*became as much superior to the Angels, as He has inherited a name more excellent than they*" (Heb 1:4). The main point for ontological Christology here is *not* that Christi 'became' superior to the Angels (by sitting down at the right hand of the Divine Majesty over the Angels; cf. Eph 1:21; 1 Pet 3:22), for this is a temporal fact after the ascension of Christ into the heavens only, expressing the honor of His completed earthly mission (during which He had been temporarily inferior to the Angels, as Heb 2:6–9 states); therefore, this says nothing about the Son's essence or ontological rank (God can honor also pure humans – as for example the Virgin Mary – by letting them sit over the Angels in the celestial court). The main point is, instead, the statement that the Son "*has inherited a name more excellent than they*" (Heb 1:4b).³³ This obviously refers to the name 'Son' that the Son had inherited already before the creation of the universe (mentioned before in Heb 1:2b; cf. John 3:31–36; Rom 9:5; Col 2:10) and that characterizes his essence. Thus, Heb 1:4b indicates, that the Son ranks over the Angels *by his essence* (i.e. naturally), and therefore He deserved also *by factual honor* to be placed (again) over them, which was realized after the redemption work.³⁴ The Son's natural (or essential) superiority over the Angels, which would amount to his true Godhead, is again strongly suggested by the next verse, which is a rhetorical question: "*To which of the Angels did God ever say: You are my Son; today I have begotten you? Or again: I will be his Father, and He will be my Son?*" (Heb 1:5). The answer, left to the reader, is of course: *To no one*. So the Son, begotten in the eternal present ('today') over and before creation, is higher by nature than any Angel, and must, therefore, be essentially equal to the Father. If one still has doubts, one should read the following verse: "*And again, when God brings the Firstborn into the world, He says: Let all Angels of God prostrate before him*" (Heb 1:6; cf. Phil 2:10–11). So again: how could He be himself an Angel?³⁵ "*In speaking of the Angels he says: He makes his Angels spirits,*

²⁹ For God as being 'father' of his creatures confer Jesus' statements in Mt 23:9, cf. Mt 5:48, 6:9,32, but also 2 Cor 6:18, Eph 3:14–15, Heb 12:9. In this sense, God has been described as Father and even has been called 'Father' already in the Old Testament, cf. Ex 4:22–23, Deut 1:31, 32:6, 1 Chr 29:10, Tob^{GL,GIH} 13:4, Ps 82:6, 103:13, Prov 23:1–4, Wis 2:16, 14:3, 18:13, Isa 1:2, 43:6, 63:8,16, 64:7, Jer 3:19, 31:9, Hos 1:10 (2:1), 11:1–4, Mal 1:6, 2:10. Moreover, God is called 'Father' of King Solomon (2 Sam 7:14, 1 Chr 17:13, 22:10, 28:6) and Israel's Father (Deut 32:6; cf. 1:31, Ex 4:22–23). But, remarkably, also the messianic Son is called 'Father' in Isa 9:5. Accordingly, there are 'children' of God in a broader sense (angels, and human sons and daughters), cf. Gen 6:2,4, Ex 4:22–23; Deut 14:1, Job 1:6; 2:1, 38:7, Ps 29:1, 73:15, 82:6, 89:7; Isa 43:6, Hos 2:1, Lk 20:36, John 1:12, 11:52; Rom 8:14–17, Gal 3:26, 4:7; Eph 5:1; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:1,2,10.

³⁰ Cf. the Father's statements "this is my beloved Son" in Mt 3:17, 17:5, Mk 9,7 (cf. also Mk 1:11, Lk 3:22, 9:35, John 1:34).

³¹ Cf. Col 1:15, where Christ is called „*the image of the invisible God*“. See also pp. 7, 38 and 63.

³² Col 1:16 reads: "*In him [Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*" In spite of this clear statement, however, some argued that Col 1 confirms that the Son was God's firstborn creature; see for this argument 14 in 8.1 and our answer to argument 14 at the very end of this treatise in chapter 8.3.

³³ See also similar Biblical statements in footnote 60.

³⁴ That the Son ranks above the Angels by nature, is also made clear in Mk 13:32, but this verse has its own difficulties (see the argument 10 in chapter 8.1 and its treatment in chapter 8.3).

³⁵ For the term 'firstborn' see the answer to argument 14 in chapter 8.3. – The superiority of the Son over the Angels is also a belief held already by the earliest Church Fathers (for an example, see footnote 255).

and his servants flames of fire.” (Heb 1:7). So all the Angels are only ‘servants’ of God (cf. Heb 1:14), not ‘sons’ of God or ‘gods’ in the proper sense. In contradistinction to this, finally, the Son is given even the title ‘God’ by his Father, which is the climax of the whole chapter. “*But about the Son he says: Your throne, o God, will last for ever and ever.*” (Heb 1:8)³⁶ and in the continuation of this passage (in Heb 1:10–12) God even attributes to the Son the *foundation of earth and heavens*, and states that *while they will perish, He will remain the same in all eternity: “Your years will have no end”* (Heb 1:12)³⁷. At the end, no reasonable doubts can remain that Heb 1 interprets the title ‘Son’ in the most proper and natural sense. Consider also the final conclusion of the Gospel of St. John: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” (John 20:30–31; cf. 3:36; 1 John 5:12). Obviously, ‘the Son of God’ must have an extraordinary and unique meaning here; as the article shows; and as also the authentication by the adduced signs make clear. And since directly before this sentence, the concluding story of the Gospel was the Creed of Thomas the Apostle, confessing that Christ is ‘my Lord and my God’ (John 20:28), we must conclude that ‘the Son of God’ meant in John 20:31 is a son in the proper sense, who can be called and is essentially ‘our God’.

So it seems that the Jews understood rightly, that Jesus by calling Himself constantly the ‘Son’ of God and claiming his unity with the father in John 10:30, was claiming much more than that he was a pure human Prophet or Messiah.³⁸ According to John 19:7 they explained to Pilate: “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because *he made himself Son of God.*”

Therefore, it is quite understandable that they have been upset after Jesus had claimed his unity with the Father in John 10:30 and that his subsequent declaration to be ‘God’s Son’ (John 10:36) could not mitigate their wrath, expressed by their complaint “*You, being a man, make yourself God*” (John 10:33). Already previously they had wanted to kill him, because, as John 5:18 explains, “he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was *his own Father* [Greek: *Patera idion*, Πατέρα ἰδίου], *making himself equal with God.*” His equality with God, besides, is also confirmed explicitly by the Apostle Paul in the extremely important passage Phil 2:5–7, which we will consider later (in chapter 8.2).

The ‘unity in essence’ is finally strongly supported by many other Scripture verses that show Christ’s unique immediacy to the Father, for example Mt 11:27: “*All things have been committed to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*”; John 5:19–21: “*Whatever the Father does the Son also does. [...] For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it*”; John 5:23: “*all may honor the Son, as they honor the Father*”; John 5:26: “*as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself*”; John 16:15 (cf. Mt 11:27, Lk 10:22, John 3:35, 13:3, 17:10): “*all things that the Father has, are mine*”. So Son and Father have all in common. If this holds really for everything, it holds also for the essence and so this would be a straightforward testimony for the ‘unity in essence’. But perhaps the most perplexing of all these statements is Jesus’ answer to the Apostle Philip, who at the Last Supper had requested: “*Show us the Father*” (John 14,8). Jesus’ famous answer to this request was (John 14:9, cf. John 12:45): “*Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say: Show us the Father?*”

Second argument: Christ is ‘our Lord’ and ‘our God’, though both refers also to the Father.
In addition to the titles ‘Lord’ and ‘God’, also other exclusively Divine attributes are referred to Christ.

The Apostle Paul teaches in 1 Cor 8:5–6: “For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is but *one God, the Father*, ... and there is but *one Lord, Jesus Christ*.” Cf. Jude 1:4, where Christ is called “*our only Sovereign and Lord*”; cf. also 1 Cor 12:4–6 and Eph 4:4–6.

At first glance, 1 Cor 8,5–6 seems to be an argument *against* unity in essence between Father and Son. For if we interpret the sentence ‘for us there is but one God’, namely ‘the Father’, in a straightforward manner, then only the Father, not the Son, is ‘our’ God (although, however, there are many other ‘Gods’ that are not Gods ‘for us’).

But this interpretation cannot be accepted here. If we would accept it, we would have to interpret the statement made about the Lord in exactly the same manner: ‘for us there is but one Lord’, namely Jesus Christ; meaning that only the Son Jesus Christ, not the Father, is ‘our’ Lord (although, however, there are many other ‘Lords’ that are not Lords ‘for us’). But this is evidently false,

³⁶ Heb 1:8 is a quotation from the messianic Psalm 45, verse 7.

³⁷ Heb 1:10–12 is a quotation from Psalm 102:26–28; there the statement refers to Yahweh, here to the Son. For such phenomena, see the fourth argument.

³⁸ Some Old Testament predictions were compatible with the prevailing view of Jesus’ contemporaries, that the Messiah would be a human king only (cf. Gen 3:15, 49:9–10, Num 24:17–19, 2 Sam 7:12–14, Ps 132:11–18, Jer 23:5–6, 33:15–16, Isa 11:1–5, 32:1, 61–62, Ezek 34:23–24, Dan 9:25–26, Zech 3:8, 6:12, 9:9–10). However, other verses point to a mysterious personal coming of God himself (cf. Ps 102:17, Isa 4:5, 7:14, 9:1–6, 35:4; 63:9,19, Ezek 34:10–16, Zech 2:14, Mal 3:1, cf. also Lk 1:78, 7:14) or at least to the coming of a god-like king (Ps 2, 45, 72, 110, Isa 4:2, Mic 5, Dan 7) who according to Mic 5:1–5 and Ps 110:3 is even preexistent (for Christ’s preexistence see pp. 3 and 62) and according to Dan 7:13–14 (cf. footnote 224) will reign forever, being compared with a rising light (cf. Septuagint- and Vulgate-Translations of Sach 3:9; and also Gen 49:9, Tob^{GIL/Vulg} 13:10–13, Ps 100(110):3, 132:17, Isa 2:5, 9:1, 42:6, 60:1–2, Mal 4:2 (3:20), Lk 1:78–79, John 1:9, 3:19; 8:12, 12:35,46, 2 Petr 1:19, Rev 2:28, 21:23–24, 22:16). On the other hand, a suffering Savior was also expected (Isa 42:1–9, 49:1–6, 50:4–11, 52:13–53:12), who would even die for our salvation (Isa 53:8–9, Dan 9:24,26). Moreover, one expected a new prophet like Moses coming out of the people of Israel (Deut 18:18–19), who according to the interpretation of the religious authorities in Jesus’ times was different from the Messiah (cf. John 1:19–24); in Acts 3:22–23 and 7:37 it is claimed that Jesus was this prophet. Especially intriguing is Mal 3:1: “*Behold, I will send my Messenger [or: Angel], and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord [Adon], whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger [or: Angel] of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, he shall come, said Yahweh [the Lord] of hosts.*” Here, a first messenger (who seems to be John the Baptist; cf. Mk 1:2) prepares the way of a Yahweh (Israel’s God) himself; hence, it is Yahweh, who will come as a Lord into his temple (cf. also Isa 4:5). But together with him, so it seems, a second messenger will come, called ‘messenger of the covenant’, who may be as the first one either a Man or an Angel. For a similar riddle, cf. Zech 2:14,16. Now, according to Christian theology based on the New Testament, all this promises have obviously fulfilled in on and the same person: Jesus Christ (see footnote 1), who therefore, so it seems, must have Divine and human features, being God and Man at the same time. This is an important argument for the Two-Natures Doctrine (see chapter 8.2).

for the Father is called 'the Lord' and 'our Lord' several times in the Scriptures of the Old Testament,³⁹ and this occurs also in the New Testament, for example Rev 11:15 reads: "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,*" where evidently the Father is called 'our Lord' (cf. also Mt 4:10).

So, although we have only "*one Lord: Jesus Christ*", nevertheless the Father is 'our Lord' as well. This seems to be a contradiction, unless we assume a kind of 'unity in essence' between Christ and the Father. So 1 Cor 8,5–6 (and Jude 1:4) in connection with the appellation of the Father as 'our Lord' amounts to a proof of a kind of 'unity in essence' between Father and Son. And if the Bible teaches (as it indeed it does) that the Father is 'our Lord', although "*we have but one Lord, Jesus Christ*", then, by the same token, we should also admit that the Son is 'our God' although "*we have but one God, the Father*". Hence, the titles 'God' and 'Lord' can in principle be rightly ascribed to both persons. However, in the New Testament very often 'God' refers to the Father and 'Lord' to the Son (a famous example for this is just the verse under consideration: 1 Cor 8,–6). Theologians have tried to explain this by the notion of *appropriations*: Although each person in God shares fully the common Divine Essence and therefore can be rightly be called by any name properly describing the Divine Essence (as God, Lord, the Most High etc.) some of these descriptions harmonize much better with the peculiarities of one of the persons; such descriptions are called *appropriations* of that person and are used more frequently in the Holy Scriptures to describe this person rather than another. So 'God' is an appropriation of the Father, because the Father is the Origin of the Son in an analogous manner as God is the Origin of the world while 'Lord' is an appropriation of the Son, and 'Ghost/Spirit' an appropriation to the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ But as if Scripture wants to remind us that we deal here with an *appropriation* only (not with exclusive characteristics of one Divine Person), sometimes an appropriation of one Person is attributed also to another Person.

Therefore, also the Son is called 'God' in the following ten Scripture verses (although in three of them this is controversial):

- John 1:1; the Son is called the 'Word' ('Logos'), which was there 'in the beginning' was 'with God' and was itself 'God',
- John 1:18; the Son is called the 'only-begotten God' (this is controversial, for many manuscripts have: 'only-begotten Son'),⁴¹
- John 20:28; Christ is called 'my Lord and my God' by the Apostle Thomas (see the seventh argument),
- Rom 9:5; Christ is called 'God over all, forever praised' (this is controversial: the reference to Christ is not quite clear),⁴²
- 2 Thess 1:12; Christ is called '*our* God here: "according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ",⁴³
- Tit 2:13; Christ is called '*our* great God': "awaiting the ... appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ",
- Heb 1:9; The Son is called 'God' by the Father: "your throne, o God, will last forever" (see the first argument),
- Heb 1:10; In continuation of Heb 1:9 the Son probably is called 'God' again: "therefore [o] God, your God has anointed you",⁴⁴
- 2 Pet 1:1; Christ is called '*our* God' here: "the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ",
- 1 John 5:20; Christ is called 'the true God' (cf. the eighth argument).

Four additional verses of the New Testament indicate (though only indirect), that Christ can be legitimately called 'God': in Acts 20:28 we hear of the 'own blood' of 'God';⁴⁵ in Col 2:9 the Apostle Paul states about Christ, that "in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily", in Phil 2:6 Paul reflects upon Christ's 'subsisting in God's form' (where 'form' means 'nature': see the details in chapter 8.2); and finally in Mt 1:23 Isaiah's prophecy Isa 7:14 about the birth of a savior with the name 'Immanuel' (a Hebrew expression meaning 'God is with us') is applied to Jesus (and, since Jesus was never in fact called 'Immanuel', this seems

³⁹ For example, Yahweh, the only true God and God of Israel (see below, p. 21), is called 'Lord' (*Adon*) without article in Ps 114:7, 'the Lord' (*ha-Adon*) in Mal 3:1; 'the Lord Yahweh' (*ha-Adon Yahweh*) in Ex 34:23, and 'our Lord' (*Adonenu*) in Ps 8:1 and Ps 8:10. But most notably, He is called several hundred times literally 'my Lords' (*Adonai*), which is rightly translated as 'the Lord' (for this mysterious expression see footnote 87). In the ancient Pre-Christian Greek Bible translation, the Septuagint, and also in New Testament quotations from the Old Testament, the names 'Adon/Adonai' and 'Yahweh' are both translated by the Greek word 'Kyrios', meaning 'Lord': e.g. Ps 110:1 ("Yahweh said to my Adon") is rendered in Mt 22:44 with "the Kyrios said to my Kyrios"; and also in Deut 6:13 'Yahweh' is rendered with 'Kyrios'. The Greek word 'Kyrios' occurs 748 times in the NT, and sometimes it refers to the Father (e.g. in Mt 4:10), but in most instances (as for example in the memorable verses Lk 2:11 and 1 Cor 2:8) it refers to Jesus Christ (even according to Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny Christ's Godhead – see footnote 119 – only 237 occurrences of 'Kyrios' in the NT refer to the Father, and in these instances they rendered 'Kyrios' in their New-World-Translation by 'Jehovah', which they take to be the correct form of the name Yahweh and the Father's name only). But according to all the extant New Testament manuscripts, one and the same word 'Kyrios' is used for Jesus Christ and for God the Father as well; and even for Yahweh, the one true God, in quotations from the Old Testament, where the word denoted the one true God (cf. Isa 40:3 with Mk 1:3; Joel 2:32 / 3:5 with Acts 2:21 and Rom 10:13; Isa 44:6 with Rev 1:8,17; cf. also our third and fourth argument). Thus, the use of 'Kyrios' for the one true God and heavenly Father, and for the Son as well (and, by the way, also for the Holy Spirit in 2 Cor 3:17) is an **additional argument** for our claim that the New Testament authors did not hesitate to connect Jesus in the deepest possible way with the one true God of the Old Testament, thereby indicating a 'unity in essence' between the two.

⁴⁰ For the so-called appropriations, see also pp. 27, 57, 58 and footnotes 3, 85, 104, 210.

⁴¹ Nevertheless, the version 'only-begotten God' is the Greek standard text of Nestle-Aland and thus is judged by Kurt Aland to be the original one, obviously on good grounds: It is preserved in the two oldest of the best ancient Bible codices (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, 4th century), as well as in the much older Papyri 66 and 75 (c. 200), and appears in early quotes, e.g. in Origen, *De Principiis* 2,6,3 (written before 231). Moreover it is to be preferred as the '*lectio difficilior*'.

⁴² It is highly probable, though, that indeed Paul in Rom 9:5 is referring to Christ. The question is, whether we have one or two sentences here (this is not quite clear, since there are no punctuation marks in the original Greek). If Christ is not meant, one has to read the passage as follows: "[The Jews have] *the fathers, of whom, according to the flesh, came the Christ. Who is God over all, forever [he shall be] praised, Amen.*" Here we have two sentences and the 'God' in the second sentence could be different from 'Christ' mentioned in the first one. But the whole sounds as bad in Greek as in English; it begins in Greek literally with "the being over all God", which is bad style (in good style it should be said "God, being over all"), and the whole sentence seems unmotivated, if Christ is not identified with God. So it makes much more sense to read the passage as follows: "[The Jews have] *the fathers, from whom, according to the flesh, came the Christ, who is God over all, forever praised, Amen.*" Thus read, Christ is 'God over all' in spite of being from the Jewish fathers, according to the flesh. This contrasting juxtaposition makes good sense and fits neatly into Pauline Theology (see Phil 2:5–7, discussed below in chapter 8.2; cf. also John 3:31).

⁴³ Most English Bible Translations read "according to our God and the Lord Jesus Christ", thus separating God and the Lord Jesus Christ, but the article before 'Lord Jesus Christ' is missing in the original Greek, and hence this separation is not genuine, but artificially induced in the text.

⁴⁴ Heb 1:9 and Heb 1:10 are quotations from the messianic Psalm 45:6–7, that apply in the Psalm to the messianic king, and are applied in Hebrews to Jesus, the Son of God. Almost all agree, that in Heb 1:9 (= Ps 45:6) indeed the Son or messianic king is called 'God' while in the expression 'God, your God' in Heb 1:10 (= Ps 45:7) both instances of the word God may refer to the God the Father and not to the Son or messianic king. But then the repetition of the word seems superfluous. So probably the first 'God' is a vocative referring to the Son or messianic king, who is called God also in the preceding verse, anyway.

⁴⁵ This refers to Christ's death and is an example for the so-called 'communication ideomatum' (see p. 35).

to be a theological name describing Jesus' essence, i.e. stating that He was indeed the incarnate God or 'God with us').⁴⁶ Now, without assuming a kind of 'unity in essence' between Father and Son this seems to be incompatible with the statement in 1 Cor 8:6 that "*for us, there is but one God, the Father*". So, again, 1 Cor 8,5–6 in connection with the appellation of the Son as '*my/our/true God*' amounts to a proof of a kind of 'unity in essence' between Father and Son.

Additionally, other exclusively Divine attributes are also referred to Christ: He created the world (Heb 1:3,10; cf. Ps 33:6) and all things (1 Cor 8:6, John 1:3), has live in Himself, i.e. 'aseity' (John 5:21), in him dwells all the fullness of the Deity (Col 2:9), God's glory is displayed in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6), and God gives him the Spirit without limit (cf. John 3:34), he is almighty (Mt 28:18: "All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth"; John 3:35: the Father loves the Son and "has given all things into His hands"; cf. Mt 11:27, Lk 10:22, John 13:3; 16:15) as well as omniscient (John 16:30, 21:17, Heb 4:12–13; Col 2:3), he is above all (John 3:31, Phil 2:9; Heb 1:8) and is to be adored (John 5:23, Phil 2:11, Heb 1:6, Rev 5:8,11–14; 22:3).⁴⁷

Third argument: *Like his Father, Christ is the 'only Sovereign', 'the king of kings', 'the Lord of lords', 'the First and the Last', 'the Alpha and Omega' – expressions that cannot apply to two persons, unless they share numerically the same essence.*

Compare the following Scripture verses:

1 Tim 6:15: Here God (the Father) is called "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords"⁴⁸
 Rev 17:14: Here the Son⁴⁹ is called "Lord of lords and King of kings".
 Jude 1:4: Here the Son is called "our only Sovereign and Lord".

While it may be that many kings exist at the same time, only one of them can obtain the highest position, being 'the king of kings'. Thus, if the Father and the Son are both 'the king of kings', then both must somehow be one and the same king, and this, of course, indicates a kind of 'unity in essence'. Likewise, if the Father and the Son are both 'the only Sovereign' they must be one and the same Sovereign, which again indicates a kind of 'unity in essence'. Compare also the following Scripture verses:

Isa 44:6: "I am the First and I am the Last; apart from me there is no God". The Speaker here is *Yahweh*, the only God.
 Rev 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega." Speaker is *God the almighty*.
 Rev 1:17: "I am the First and the Last." Speaker is *Christ, the Son of God*.
 Rev 21:6: "I am the Alpha and the Omega." Speaker is *God* (cf. verse 7).
 Rev 22:13: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." Speaker is *Jesus*.

The property to be the First and the Last (or, by a symbolic expression, to be the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet) is ascribed to God the Father and also to the Son. Now it seems to be impossible that two persons are both 'the' first or both 'the' last, unless they share numerically one and the same essence.

Fourth argument: *Several expressions and sentences of the Old Testament, that refer to Yahweh, the only God and Lord, are repeated or quoted in the New Testament, but refer to Christ now.*

This seems to be a very compelling argument for the unity of essence between the Son and Yahweh (God the Father):

	referring to God (Father, Yahweh)	referring to the Son (Jesus)
a. I am the one who proves heart and reins	Jer 17:10 ⁵⁰	Rev 2:18–23
b. The heavens shall perish, but you shall endure	Ps 102:26–28	Heb 1:8–12
c. who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved	Joel 3:5 (al. Joel 2:32)	Rom 10:9–13
d. Every knee shall bow, every tongue swear/praise	Isa 45:23–25; Rom 14:9–12	Phil 2,9–11
e. All Angels shall prostrate before him	Deut 32:43 and Ps 97:7b (Sept.)	Heb 1:6
f. our Lord; our God ⁵¹	Ps 8:1; Deut 27:9	1 Cor 8:6; 2 Thess 1:12 ⁵²
g. the Lord of lords ⁵³	Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3	Rev 17:14 and Rev 19:16
h. the First and the Last ⁵⁴	Isa 44:6 (cf. Rev 1:8; Rev 21:6)	Rev 1:17 and Rev 22:13

⁴⁶ It may be that also in Rom 8:9 Christ is called 'God', but this is not sure (cf. footnote 182). Finally, it has also been claimed that the name 'Jesus', meaning 'Yahweh saves', is an indication of Christ's Godhead as well. However, since Jesus was in fact called 'Jesus', this name need not be interpreted as a description of Jesus own essence (equating him with Yahweh). – In addition to the fourteen mentioned instances in the New Testament, there are also verses in the Old Testament, testifying that the promised Christ merits the title 'God'. Apart from the name 'Immanuel' ('God with us') in Isa 7:14 the most clear instance is Isa 9:5, where we read that the promised Messiah will be called 'mighty God'. Cf. also footnote 38.

⁴⁷ For the adoration of Christ, cf. the tenth argument below.

⁴⁸ Cf. also Deut 10:17, where Yahweh, the God of Israel, is called „*God of Gods and Lord of lords*“; Ps 136,3, where He is called "*the Lord of lords*", and 2 Macc 13:4, where He is called "*the king of kings*".

⁴⁹ The 'lamb' mentioned here is Jesus, the Son of God (cf. John 1:29). In Rev 19:16 we have a similar formula "king of kings and Lord of lords", referring to 'the Word of God' (Rev 19,13), that is likewise Jesus, the Son of God (as can be proved by John 1:1–18).

⁵⁰ Cf. 1 Kings 8:39: "You [Yahweh], *only you*, know the hearts of all the sons of men"; cf. also Ps 7:10, 26:2, 44:22, Prov 15:11, Sap 1:6, Jer 11:20, 17:10, 20:12, Acts 1:24.

⁵¹ Cf. the second argument.

⁵² Cf. also John 20:28, 2 Thess 1:12, Tit 2:13, 2 Pet 1:1.

⁵³ Cf. the third argument.

⁵⁴ Cf. the third argument.

Consider also the following noteworthy parallels between promises and fulfillment, and confer:

- the vocational vision of Isaiah (Isa 6:1–11, where Isaiah saw the *glory of Yahweh*) with the account about this (especially about Isa 6:10) in the Gospel of John 12:39–41, where we read in verse 41: “*These things Isaiah said, when he saw his [Christ's!] glory, and he spoke about him*”⁵⁵,
- Isa 35:2 („they will see the glory of Yahweh, the splendor of our God.“) with John 1:14 („We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth“),
- Isa 35:4–6 („Behold, your God! ... *He himself will come and save you*; then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged, then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy“) with Mt 11:3–6 / Lk 7:18–23 (John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to question him: „*Are you the one who is to come*, or should we expect someone else?“), and Jesus replied: „Go back and report to John: ... the blind see, the lame walk, ... the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life ... And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me“),⁵⁶
- Isa 40:3–5 („The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of *Yahweh*“) with Mt 3:3 / Mk 1:3 / Lk 3:4–5 / John 1:23 (John the Baptist was this voice „calling in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the *Lord*“, whereby, as the context shows, the Lord meant here is Jesus Christ),
- Mal 3:1 (the prophecy, that Yahweh's messenger will prepare the way for Yahweh: the Lord (Hebrew: Adon), who “*will come to his Temple*”, see footnote 39) with Mk 1:2 (John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus; cf. also Mt 11:10 and Lk 1:76),
- Zech 12:10 (the prediction of Yahweh: “*they will look on Me whom they have pierced*”) with John 19:34 (cf. also Ps 22:16 and Rev 1:7), where it is said that this prediction has been fulfilled when Jesus' side after his death on the cross has been pierced.

Fifth Argument: *The mysterious request of Jesus: realize, that ‘I am’.*

God revealed His name to Moses at the thorn-bush, saying “*Ehyeh who ehyeh. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: Ehyeh has sent me to you. ... Yahweh, the God of your fathers ... has sent me to you.*” (Ex 3,14-15). The Hebrew word ‘ehyeh’ means ‘*I am*’ or ‘*I will be*’. In the Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek Bible translation, ehyeh is correctly rendered ‘ego eimi’ (I am). Now we find in the Gospel of St. John a couple of passages, where Jesus uses the phrase ‘ego eimi’ (I am) without telling us, *what* or *who* he is. Apparently these words are supposed to remind us to the revelation of God at the thorn-bush, and to bring Christ in a kind of identity relation with the revealing God. Consider the particular examples:

- John 8:24: “If you do not believe that *I am* [ego eimi], you will indeed die in your sins.”
 John 8:28: “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* [ego eimi], ...”⁵⁷
 John 8:58: “Before Abraham was, *I am* [ego eimi].”
 John 13:19: “Now I tell you before it comes [he means the betrayal of Judas], that, when it has come to pass, you may believe that *I am* [ego eimi].”

After Jesus had said for the first ‘I am’ without specifying *what* or *who* he is (in John 8:24), the people asked “*Who are you?*” (John 8:25a). They received a mysterious answer: “*ten archen ho ti lalo hymin*” (John 8:25b), which is difficult to understand in Greek (*ten archen* being the accusative of the word *he arche* = *the beginning, the principle*). According to the Vulgate, Jesus' answer was, that he *is* the *arche* (the Divine principle of creation), which certainly makes sense in view of John 1:1–3 (and which is stated explicitly in Col 1:18 and Rev 3:14),⁵⁸ but this is not what Jesus said according to the Greek text. Here, he says: “*what I say to you about the arche*”, which presupposes that Jesus previously had spoken about the arche (probably in a form similar to the creation hymn in John 1, dealing with the ‘Word and Son’ of God, being ‘with God’, being ‘God’ and being ‘the only-begotten God’ etc.), such that He can allude to this saying: *Who I am, I have already told you in my speech about the arche*. This is no clear answer; so it seems that Jesus wanted that his hearers should meditate on his words and draw their own conclusions from this. Also in John 8:58 the ‘I am’ is especially surprising and noticeable, because according to standard grammar rules, one should expect ‘I was’ rather than ‘I am’. The unusual formula suggests that Jesus lives in a ‘timeless everlasting present’, on an eternally present day without yesterday and tomorrow (cf. Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5,5; cf. also Heb 1:10–12; 13:8). Jesus didn't say: “Before Abraham was, I have been created”, neither “I was”, but simply “I am” – such that the Church Fathers saw here an indication of His uncreated status and of His unchangeable Divinity.

Sixth argument: *The Father gave to the Son his own name (honor and essence); Jesus' name is the most crucial one for salvation.*

In John 17:11 Jesus prays for his disciples: “Holy Father, Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given to me” here it seems to follow, that Jesus has received from the Father His (the Father's) ‘name’ (cf. also Phil 2:9; Heb 1,4;), a name that

⁵⁵ For this verse, see also in chapter 3 the sixth argument for the assertion, that the Holy Spirit is God.

⁵⁶ Cf. also Lk 1:68: “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and provided redemption for His people.” – where Jesus seems to be identified with “the Lord, the God of Israel”, for the one who should visit and redeem Israel was Jesus.

⁵⁷ The sentence continues: “*and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.*” If the ‘ego eimi’ hints to the Divine Nature of Jesus, then this continuation of the sentence hints clearly to the fact that the Son received His Divine Essence from the Father, and so this whole passage teaches not only the ‘unity in essence’ but also the difference in person: The Father is the donator, the Son the receiver of the Divine Essence, such that the Son does and speaks nothing on his own, but He speaks the words that have been given and taught to him from the Father.

⁵⁸ See our comment to the fourteenth argument for the subordination of the Son to the Father in chapter 8.3.

somehow can protect the people. It seems to be clear that such a 'name' cannot be just a means for appellation or designation, because the 'name' in the sense of a mere designation has not the power to protect anyone, and after all, the Father was never called 'Jesus'. So what is meant by the name? The 'name' of a thing or a person originally should express its essence in the sense of the innermost nature and characteristic of the person or thing, and so, the term 'name' often was used as synonym for the 'essence' or 'nature' itself. Therefore, it seems that Jesus indicates here that the Father gave him his essence, and so again this seems to be a testimony for the 'unity in essence' between Father and Son.⁵⁹ This is confirmed by numerous verses, where the name of Jesus is declared to be the most important name for salvation⁶⁰ and that Jesus had the most important and highest position with respect to our salvation.⁶¹ It seems that only the 'unity in essence' between Father and Son can explain why Jesus' name and position can be the highest without offending God the Father whose place must be above all as well. In addition to the 'unity in essence', John 17:11 teaches us also the difference in person. For the Son has received his name (aka essence) from the Father, such that Father and Son face each other as donor and receiver.

Addendum: That the Father transferred his essence to the Son, is also indicated in John 5:26: "*As the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself.*" The Father is the source of life (he has not received life from elsewhere, but has life 'in himself', that is, in the life giving Divine Essence, possessed by him. Having transferred this essence to the Son, he has not only given simply life to the Son – like he has given life to the creatures – but he has given him the property to have life in himself, i.e. to be a source of life, by participating in the possession of the life giving Divine Essence. This is said in accordance to John 10:17–18, where it is said that Jesus has received from the Father the power, to lay his life down, and also the power to take it up again, which seems to mean: After his death, he can resurrect himself out of his own power.⁶² This presupposes, that Jesus has a further nature besides his human nature, and this seems to be the Divine Nature or Essence given to him by the Father.

Seventh argument: Thomas' Profession of Faith in the Divinity of Jesus.

As the risen Christ appeared before the Apostle Thomas, he commanded him to touch his body and to believe. Thereupon Thomas answered and said to Christ: "*My Lord and my God*" (John 28:20).

Here we have quite bluntly a profession of faith in the full divinity of Christ, and if we combine this verse with 1 Cor 8,6 ("for us there is but one God: the Father") then it follows almost inevitably a kind of 'unity in essence' between Father and Son.

Some opponents of this 'unity in essence' try to counter, that Thomas did not mean to say "*My Lord and my God*" to Jesus Christ who stood before him, but rather to the Father in the heavens, insisting at least that "*my God*" refers to the Father.

But such an interpretation is completely out of context, for it is written unambiguously, that Thomas directed those words *to Jesus*: "Thomas said to him: [...]"

Eighth argument: John calls Christ 'the true God'.

1 John 5:20 reads: "We know that the Son of God has come: and he has given us understanding that we may know the true one, and we are in the true one, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life eternal."

It is this passage (to which the Nicene Creed is referring, when it calls the Son "*true God from true God*") the opponents of the 'unity in essence' usually try to connect the crucial sentence "*this is the true God*" to 'the true one' rather than to Christ, whereby 'the true one', according to their understanding, is the Father.⁶³ But there are three good reasons for rejecting this understanding.

⁵⁹ We might ask ourselves whether 'name' may be a synonym for 'honor' instead (for in Joh 5,23 Jesus declared that the Father wants, "*that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father*"), and if 'name' in John 17:11 would be a synonym for 'honor', then the proposition John 17:11 would be true. But 'honor' is certainly not what is properly meant in John 17:11 by the term 'name'. For as the mere designation, honor cannot protect anyone; so the best explanation for the meaning of the term 'name' in John 17:11 remains that the 'essence' is meant here.

⁶⁰ Cf. Heb 1:4 (the Son inherited a name superior to the name of the Angels); Phil 2:9 ("God over-exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name"); Eph 1:21 (the Father has elevated the Son "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come"; cf. also John 3:31, Rom 9:5, Col 2:10, 1 Pet 3:22); Acts 4:12 ("there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved"). That Jesus' name is the most important is also implied in John 3:16–18, 20:31, 1 John 3:23, 5:13, Acts 10:43, Rom 10:9–13.

⁶¹ In addition to the verses in footnote 60 cf. Acts 15:11 and John 6:29. Cf. also my treatises *God's Name and Prayers to Jesus and Adoration of Jesus*.

⁶² That Jesus indeed had the power to resurrect himself after his death, is also asserted in John 2:19–22: "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days. ... But the temple he had spoken of was his body.*" After He was raised from the dead on the third day, "*his disciples remembered what he had said.*"

In addition to the expression, that God (the Father) has raised or will raise Jesus from the dead such that Jesus was raised by the power of another person (e.g. Mt 16:21, 17:9, 17:23, 20:19, 26:36, 27:63–64, 28:6–7, Mk 14:28, 16:6, 16:14, Lk 9:22, 24:6,34, John 2:22, 21:14, Acts 3:15, 4:10, 5:30, 10:40, 13:30, 13:37, Rom 4:24–25, 6:4–9, 7:4, 8:11,34, 10:9, 1 Cor 6:14, 15:4,12,15–17,20, 2 Cor 4:14, 5:15, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:20, Col 2:12, 1 Thess 1:10, 2 Tim 2:8, 1 Pet 1:21, cf. the noun 'egesis' = awakening in Mt 27:53), there occurs also the expression, that Jesus raised himself (an active or intransitive verb: Mk 8:31, 9:9,31, 10:34, 16:9, Lk 18:33, 24:7,46, John 20:9, Acts 10:41, 17:3, 1 Thess 4:14: cf. also the noun 'resurrection' in reference to Jesus in John 11:25, Acts 1:22, 2:31, 17:31, 26:23, Rom 1:1, 6:5, Phil 3:10, 1 Pet 1:3,21); both expressions occur side by side in Lk 24:6–7 (cf. also Lk 9:7–8). To reconcile both one can say that Jesus, insofar He was a human being, He was raised by God the Father, but insofar He participated also in the Divine Nature, He participated in every action of God regarding the creatures, thus He participated also in the Father's task of raising Jesus' human nature from the dead.

However, one has to admit that Scripture speaks about the resurrection in the active voice also with regard to dead people different from Jesus (cf. Mk 12:23–25; Lk 9:8, 16:31, John 11:23–24, Acts 9:40, Eph 5:14, 1 Thess 4:15), hence the expression 'resurrection' (in the active voice) means not always 'to raise oneself with one's own power'. That dead people different from Jesus 'will rise' from the dead could simply mean that the dead, *after having been brought back to life by God*, stand up using their regained power and begin their new active life. The difficulty to understand the exact meaning of the term 'resurrection' goes back to the Apostles, who, when they first heard that word, "they were questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean" (Mk 9,10).

⁶³ Whereas, on the other hand, if "*this is the true God*" refers to Christ, then also "*we are in the true one*" may also refer to Christ rather than to the Father. For in itself it is possible to refer 'the true one' to the Son. Only if the following expression "*in his Son Jesus Christ*" means 'in the Son of the true one', then 'the true one', of course, must be the Father. But 'Son of the true one' would be a strange, nowhere else occurring title of Christ. To avoid this title, it is possible to refer "*in*

1. In the sentence “*this is the true God*” the first word ‘this’ is a translation of the Greek word ‘houtos’. That is a demonstrative pronoun ordinarily used to refer to *the masculine noun which is last mentioned*. In this case, therefore, it should refer to ‘Jesus Christ’, who is mentioned directly before ‘this/houtos’. If John wanted to refer to ‘the true one’ and not to ‘Jesus Christ’, he could and should have used the Greek demonstrative pronoun ‘ekeinos’ instead, for ‘ekeinos’ usually refers to a *masculine noun which is situated farther away, in any case before the last mentioned one*.
2. But let us suppose, that John has used ‘houtos’ to refer to ‘the true one’, which is unusual but noch impossible; and let us also assume, that ‘the true one’ refers to the Father. Then “*This is the true God*” would mean “*the Father is the true God*”. Nobody doubts this, and so the statement would be superfluous. – And by the way: The ‘unity in essence’ between Father and Son would then still be indicated in the preceding passage: “*We are in the true one [the Father], in his Son Jesus Christ*”, where our ‘being in the Father’ seems to be set equal to our ‘being in the Son’, which would be best explained by the ‘unity of essence’ between the two.
3. The whole sentence is: “*This is the true God and life eternal*”. So, if the opponent’s interpretation is the right one, then John would have called the Father ‘life eternal’. But while there is no other passage in the Scriptures, where the Father is called ‘life’, there are a couple of verses, where John teaches that the Son is ‘life’ (cf. John 11:25; John 14:6; 1 John 1:2; cf. also St. Paul in Col 3:4). So this fact makes it probable at least, that also in the present verse, John is referring the attribute ‘life eternal’ to the Son rather than to the Father. But then it is also the Son, who has been called ‘the true God’ here.

Ninth argument: Christ teaches and behaves as God himself.

The teaching of Christ was not comparable with that of the scribes (cf. Mt 7:28, 22:33, Mk 1:22, 2:27, Lk 4:32, Acts 13:12), for he did not only *interpret* the Scriptures, but he taught *new things* (Mt 9:14–17, 13:52, Mk 2:18–22, Lk 5:33–39) and even *corrected the law* (Mt 5:21–48; 19:1–9). Neither was he comparable with the prophets, who referred themselves always to God, announcing “*thus says the Lord*” (413 times in the Bible, e.g. Jer 23:2), while Jesus referred also to himself, using the formula “*I tell you*” (e.g. Mt 5:20) or “*Amen I tell you*” (e.g. Lk 23:43) or even “*Amen, Amen I tell you*” (25 times in the Gospel of St. John). In his famous ‘Sermon on the Mount’, in which he corrects and extends OT commands (Mt 5:21–48), he uses six times a daring formula, unheard before: “*You have heard that it was said to the ancients But I say to you*”. This sounds as if he is not the messenger of God’s commands only (as Moses and the prophets had been), but as if he is identical with the Divine Lawgiver himself.⁶⁴

Tenth argument: Only God deserves to be adored (Mt 4:10), but Christ is also legitimately adored (Rev 22:3).

This is a good argument, but sadly it is often presented by protestant apologists in a sloppy manner, offensive to catholic and orthodox Christians. So it needs to be carefully adjusted. Most theologians (including the catholic and orthodox) agree that only God deserves to be ‘adored’,⁶⁵ since Jesus stated in His reply to the devil, who had proposed that Jesus should fall down and prostrate himself before him: “*Before the Lord you God you shall prostrate yourself, and Him alone you shall serve.*” (Mt 4:10, Lk 4:8).

According to a widespread view in Protestantism, this implies that *each prayer has to be directed to the one true God*, and consequently, all prayers directed to any persons other than God (as for example prayers directed by catholic and orthodox Christians to the Virgin Mary or other Saints and Angels) are examples for false adoration and ‘idolatry’. If this would be true, then one could argue: *Since according to ten verses the New Testament, prayers are legitimately directed to Christ* (cf. John 14:14,⁶⁶ Acts 7:59, 9:14, 21, 22:16, Rom 10:9–13, 1 Cor 1:2, Rev 5:8, 22:20, cf. also John 20:28), *this proves that Christ must be the true God*.⁶⁷ However, all this depends on the flawed premise, that ‘to pray to someone’ means always ‘to adore him or her’. But praying means simply to address one’s speech to a person that does not (or does not anymore) belong

his Son Jesus Christ” not to ‘the true one’ but to the word ‘God’ mentioned previously. Then Jesus would be described here (as usual) as the ‘Son of God’, and then ‘the true one’ could refer to the Son. The meaning of the whole passage would then be: “We know that the Son of God has come: and he has given us understanding that we may know the true one [i.e. that we may know himself as being the true one], and we are in the true one, [i.e.] in his [God’s] Son Jesus Christ. This [Christ himself] is the true God and life eternal.”

⁶⁴ In addition, one has often noticed Christ’s sovereign way of dealing with the Sabbath, declaring himself to be ‘*Lord of the Sabbath*’ (Mt 12:8, Mk 2:23, Lk 6:5), and his claimed *authority to forgive sins* (Mt 9:2, Mk 2:5, Lk 5:20, 7:48) which He also transmitted later to his Apostles (John 28:22–23). His enemies understood all this, in connection to the claim that He is the Son of God, as blasphemous presumptions, by which Jesus made himself equal to God. Therefore, they wanted to put Him to death (cf. John 5:18, 8:59, 10:31–33, 19:7), saying “*who is able to forgive sins except one – God?*” (Mk 2:7, cf. Lk 5:21). However, these are not very strong arguments for Christ’s Divine nature. For one can object that if Jesus could transmit the authority to forgive sins to the Apostles (without making them Divine), then, perhaps, also God could have transmitted this authority to Jesus, even if He was only a man. Likewise, Jesus, when He declared to be the ‘Lord of Sabbath’ He used his title ‘Son of Man’ (alluding to his true human nature that He possessed in addition to his Divine one – see chapter 8.2), in accordance to his teaching that “*the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath*” (Mk 2:27). So, perhaps, He wanted to teach that every man is the Lord of Sabbath. Therefore, this additional argument remains debatable.

⁶⁵ As we shall see, there are two different kinds of veneration (worship, honoring): absolute veneration due to God only, and relative veneration, which is legitimately offered to humans. In the Greek Christian and Jewish writings, there has been *always* a constant terminology, according to which the absolute veneration is called ‘latreia’ or ‘latria’; but *only in modern times*, the English words ‘adoration’ and ‘to adore’ and its Latin equivalents ‘adoratio’ and ‘adorare’ are used exclusively for absolute or ‘latreutic’ veneration. It *classical texts of Christianity, this modern Latin/English terminology was not yet observed*. Even in the famous Latin ‘Vulgate’ translation of the Bible, translated by St. Hieronymus († 420) ‘adorare’ is used for the legitimate veneration of man: From the numerous examples cf. Ex 18:7, where Moses ‘adored’ [Latin: ‘adoravit’] his father-in-law Jethro; this terminology has been retained also in the ‘Neovulgata’ of 1979. This usage of ‘adoration’ can be found also in older official ecclesiastic texts (e.g. in the Encyclical *Cum conventus esset* of Pope John XV. about veneration of Saints, issued AD 993, cf. DH 675). This, of course, is only a matter of terminology, and no proof that in older times the distinction between absolute and relative veneration was ignored. It was only expressed differently (if theologians wanted to express themselves unambiguously, the could, for example, use the loanword ‘latria’).

⁶⁶ In John 14:14 Jesus promised to his disciples: “If you shall ask *Me* anything in My name, I will do it.” The word ‘Me’ (ensuring that Jesus is to be addressed directly) is missing in some manuscripts (the most important of which are the *Codex Alexandrinus* and the *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, both written c. 400 AD). But ‘Me’ is including in the oldest and best manuscripts: in the oldest manuscripts of the whole Bible (Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, both written c. 350), and in the oldest manuscript containing (almost) the whole Gospel of St. John (Papyrus P 66, written c. 200).

entirely to this world; and whether this is a kind of adoration or not, depends of course on the content of speech. Moreover, Christ in Mt 4:10 and Lk 4:8 does not talk about prayer at all, and there is no other Scripture verse that condemns generally all prayers that are not directed to God.⁶⁸ On the contrary, some instances of legitimate prayer to Angels can be found in the Bible (even without an apparition of the Angel, cf. Ps 103:20–21, 148:2, 1 Tim 5:21; cf. also the question Job 5:1 and the intercession of Angels transmitting prayers to God or Christ in Tob 12:12,15, Rev 5:8, 8,3). Moreover in the deuterocanonical Book of Sirach we find a prayer of praise directed to Solomon (Sir 47:14–20) and a prayer directed to Elijah the prophet (Sir 48:4–11; cf. the misunderstanding of Mt 27:47, Mk 15:35). Finally, in the lamentation of the dead it is allowed to address oneself to the dead (2 Sam 1:26, 3:33–34, 1 Kings 13:30).

According to another widespread view within Protestantism, the decisive feature of adoration is a special gesture, expressed in Greek by the noun ‘proskynesis’ or the verb ‘proskyneō’ (meaning ‘to bow down’, ‘to kneel’ or ‘to throw oneself onto the ground’, ‘to prostrate oneself’). If this would be correct, then every Scripture verse showing a legitimate prostration / proskynesis before Jesus Christ would be a proof for His true Godhead, thus, one could point to the verses Mt 2:2,8,11, 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 20:20, 28:9,17, Mk 5:6 (spoken by a possessed man), Mk 15:19 (ironically), Lk 24:52, John 9:38, Heb 1:6, Rev 1:17 (without using ‘proskyneō’) and Rev 5:13–14. This argumentation is better than the previous one, for proskynesis / prostration is indeed what the devil proposed to Jesus, and Jesus rejected this with the words “*Before the Lord you God you shall prostrate yourself, and Him alone you shall serve.*” (Mt 4:10, Lk 4:8). But unfortunately, this argumentation, too, is not convincing. First of all, it would be against the very spirit of the Christ’s Gospel teachings, if we assume that a mere outward gesture should be condemned and prohibited regardless of the inner intention connected with that gesture (cf. Col 2:20–21),⁶⁹ and it seems to be a very unrealistic assumption, that each and every instance of bowing down before a respected person (other than God) has always the intention of adoring that person (instead of merely honoring him or her). What is more, there are abundant examples for legitimate prostrations before humans and angels in both the Old and the New Testament: In the Old Testament, I count 70 (!) examples, and in 63 cases the prostration is rendered by *proskyneō* in the Greek version and by the equivalent words *hischtachawah* or *sagad/segid* in the original Hebrew or Aramaic version of the Bible text, respectively. For the details see my treatise ‘*Biblische Grundlagen für die Verehrung von Heiligen, Reliquien und Ikonen*’ about the *Biblical foundations of the veneration of Saints, Relics and Icons*.⁷⁰ In the New Testament there are also examples (at least three): Heb 11:21 reminds us of the prostration of Jacob before Joseph (Gen 47:31), in Mt 18:25 Jesus tells us about a prostration before a king in the context of a parable (which has to be classified as reverence for a king on earth, even if that king symbolizes the heavenly father), and, finally and most interestingly, in Rev 3:9 Jesus promises to the ‘Angel of the church of Philadelphia’ that he will cause people to “come and prostrate themselves before your feet”. This seems to be a legitimate prostration before a created being, regardless whether the ‘Angel of the church of Philadelphia’ is a real Angel or the human Bishop of that church. In view of these Biblical examples (73 at least!), we have to distinguish between a ‘non-adoring, merely honoring prostration/proskynesis’ that can legitimately be offered to created persons, and an ‘adoring prostration/proskynesis’ that is due to God only. The difference is not a visible one (both being the same gesture), but consists in a different inner intention: *to adore someone* (in the strict sense) is to offer unrestricted veneration (unrestricted admiration, praise of infinite degree and unlimited dedication); so it means “to treat him or her as God” and is, naturally, legitimate only if the adored person is in fact God (cf. Isa 42:8, where God says “I am Yahweh, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another”; cf. also Isa 48:11). This has to be distinguished from *restricted veneration and honor* which should be allowed to be given to worthy creatures (e.g. Angels, saints, kings, elders and so on, cf. Phil 2:29: “*honor people like him*”, Paul’s co-worker Epaphroditus).⁷¹ The Greek verb ‘latreuō’ and the corresponding noun ‘latreia’ (Latinized ‘latría’, meaning originally ‘service’) is used by catholic and orthodox theologians exclusively for adoration or unrestricted veneration (cf. the statement of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787, that “true *latría* pertains alone to the Divine Nature”),⁷² while the Greek verb ‘douleuo’ and the corresponding noun ‘doul(e)ia’ (Latinized ‘dulia’, meaning also originally ‘service’) is used for restricted veneration and human service as well. This reflects exactly the Biblical usage of the word in the NT and the Septuagint translation of the OT: *latreuō* (*latreia*) occurs 21(5) times in the NT and 90(8) times in the OT and denotes exclusively adoration and Divine Service; *douleuo* (*douleia*) occurs 25 (5) times in the NT, 175 (50) times in the OT, and denotes sometimes adoration and sometimes restricted veneration and service on the human level only.⁷³ Now, coming back to the verse Mt 4:10 (Lk 4:8), we see that Jesus uses ‘latreuō’ in exactly the same sense as the later theologians did: “*Before the Lord your God you shall prostrate* [here occurs the verb *proskyneō*] *yourself and Him alone you shall serve* [here occurs *latreuō*].” Note, that Christ refers the word ‘alone’ to the verb ‘latreuō’ only (i.e. to adoration), *not* to the

⁶⁷ It is interesting that ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’ (see footnote 119), who in the wake of Protestantism claim indeed that prayers are to be directed only to the one true God, are nevertheless Unitarians, denying Christ’s true Godhead, and consequently refuse to direct prayers to Christ. But they have some difficulties with the above mentioned Scripture verses. As for John 20:28 and Acts 7:59, they claim that exceptionally we may address ourselves to Christ, if he appears before us; concerning the other verses, they try to argue that these verses do not in fact testify that prayers are directed to Christ (which seems not very plausible to me).

⁶⁸ The Scripture verses adduced from protestants in order to show that to address the deceased Saints is idolatry belong all to the Old Testament (Lev 19:31, 20:6,27, Deut 18:10–12, 2 Kings 11:6, 1 Chr 10:13, 2 Chr 33:6, Isa 8:19) and they actually prohibit only an occult interrogation of the dead. But no Scripture verse prohibits us to address ourselves to our Christian brothers and sisters that died in Christ, as an expression of our community with heavenly Jerusalem. Such a community did not yet exist in Old Testament times, where even the righteous souls had to stay outside paradise in the so-called Sheol and had to await the coming of Christ. Before Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension, the deceased Saints of the Old Covenant couldn’t praise God (Ps 6:6, 30:10, 88:6–7,11–13, 115:17, Job 10:21–22, Isa 38:18, Bar 2:17), and had no knowledge and no participation any longer regarding the events in the world of the living (cf. Ps 146:4, Eccl 9:5–6,10; Sir 17:28); only in a few exceptional cases they got the permission from God to interfere with this world (cf. 1 Sam 28:13–19, 2 Macc 15:11–16, Sir 46:20, Mt 17:3). But this situation has radically changed after Jesus had completed his mission (2 Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15): Mankind regained access to paradise, to the Father and so his heavenly Temple (cf. Lk 23:42, John 14:6, Heb 9:8–12) and is even somehow seated with Christ in heavens (Eph 2:6, cf. 1:3). Since Christ reconciled and united heavens and earth (Eph 1:10, Col 1:20) we can hope, that our community with Christ will not be interrupted by death (cf. Mt 10:28, Rom 14:7–8, 1 Cor 13:8, 2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:21–23, 1 Thess 5:10, Rev 6:9–11, 14:13, 20:4). Most clearly the new situation is expressed in Heb 12:22–23, where our continuing community with God, his Angels and Saints (called here “spirits of the righteous made perfect” and the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven”) is characterized as a new situation of the New Covenant (cf. the wider context Heb 12:18–24). So, when this community exists now, it seems natural that the members communicate with each other.

⁶⁹ Cf. also Mt 12:1–8, 15:1–20, 23:1–36, Mk 2:23–27, 7:1–23, Lk 6:1–5, 11:37–52.

⁷⁰ Die seventy verses are the following: Gen 18:2, 19:1, 23:7,12, 27:29, 33:3,6,7a,7b, 37:7,9,10, 42:6, 43:26,28, 44:14, 47:31, 48:11–12, 49:8, Ex 4:30–31, 11:8, 12:27, 18:7, Num 22:31, Jos 5:14–15, Judg 13:20 (without proskyneō), Rut 2:10, 1 Sam 2:35–36, 20:41, 24:9, 25:23,41, 28:14, 2 Sam 1:2, 9:6,8, 14:4,22,33, 15:5, 16:4, 18:21,28, 19:19 (without proskyneō), 24:20, 1 Kings 1:16,23,31,47,53, 2:13^{LXX}, 2:19, 2 Kings 2:15, 4:37, 1 Chr 21:21, 29:20, 2 Chr 21:17, Jdt 14:7 (Vulg: 13:30), Ps 45:12^M, 45:13^{LXX}, 72:11, Sir 50:17,20–21, Isa 45:17, 49:7,23, 60:14, Dan 2:46, 8:16–18 (without proskyneō), 10:9 (without proskyneō).

⁷¹ For the due honor to human authorities cf. also Mt 19:19, Rom 13:1, 1 Cor 16:16,18, Phil 3:17, 1 Thess 5:12–13, Tit 3:1, Heb 13:17, 1 Pet 2:13–14,17–18; for due honor to Angels see Ex 23:20–21, Jos 5:13–15, Jude 1:8–10.

⁷² The council defended on October 13, 787 (DH 601) the use of icons of the Saints (for this, see our discussion in chapter 6 below), but added that the “*honorable proskynesis*” that should be given to the prototypes of these icons, is to be distinguished from the “*true latreia, that pertains only to the Divine Nature*”.

⁷³ For the latter, cf. Gal 5:13 (“*serve one another*”).

word 'proskyneō' (i.e. prostration).⁷⁴ Accordingly, the verses mentioned above, where proskynesis is offered to Christ, are no unambiguous and straightforward proofs for His true Divinity. A careful examination of the ten verses in Matthew (Mt 2:2,8,11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17) shows that at least the proskynesis in the seven verses Mt 2:2,8,11, 8:2, 9:18, 15:25, 20:20 is no latreutic adoration, but only *a gesture to honor the human king or the human wonder worker*. So, the second 'protestant' version of the argument is also a failure.⁷⁵

After these clarifications, we can put the argument into a valid form: Since Jesus explicitly states in Mt 4:10 and Lk 4:8 that only God deserves adoration (latreia), we have to show that adoration (latreia) is legitimately offered to Christ. And this, indeed, can be inferred from a couple of verses, including John 5:23,⁷⁶ Phil 2:9–11,⁷⁷ Heb 1:6;⁷⁸ Rev 5:12–14⁷⁹ and (above all) Rev 22:3.⁸⁰ In all these verses, it is offered to Christ clearly an unrestricted Divine honor of the highest degree, that simultaneously is offered to God the Father; and what is more, in Rev 22:3 this adoration is *explicitly* described with a form of the word 'latreuo'.⁸¹

There are numerous other Scripture arguments for the unity of essence between Father and Son, an attentive reader of the Scripture discovers more and more. For example, see our additional argument in footnote 39, an argument based on the 'faces' of God (see p. 7) and the soteriological argument, that we will encounter within the seventh argument for the Two-Natures Doctrine in chapter 8.2. Moreover, traces of the Trinity Doctrine can be found even in the Old Testament, as we shall see in chapter 4. – The opponents, however, have likewise a considerable number of verses on their side, that need to be examined with care. The most famous of these verses is John 14:28, where Jesus says: "the Father is greater than I". In order to deal with this counterarguments one need to take in to account, that the Son became a human. We postpone the discussion of counterarguments to chapter 8.

⁷⁴ Jesus tells the devil, that it is thus 'written' and he seems to refer to Deut 6:13. But in the outstanding Hebrew text of Deut 6:13 it is written "Yahweh your God shall you fear and Him shall you serve"; neither 'to prostrate' nor 'alone' does occur in the extant versions of the text; both occurs only in a manuscript of the Greek Septuagint-Translation: the codex Alexandrinus, written c. 400 AD. It seems that both had been included once in the Hebrew Original of Deut 6:13 or maybe of another Scripture Verse, otherwise Jesus' Scripture argument would have been unfounded, and the devil could have easily rejected it. In any case, remarkably, among all the extant Scripture texts in the original languages, only Jesus' word Mt 4:10 (Lk 4:8) expresses explicitly, that latreia is to be offered to God 'alone'.

⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the mentioned 73 scripture verses, some protestants try to prove that proskynesis is strictly forbidden before creatures, by pointing to some special Bible verses. First, in Acts 10:25–26, Cornelius wanted to prostrate himself before the Apostle Peter, which Peter refused to accept; and similarly, in Rev 19:10 and 22:8–9 an Angel stopped the Apostle John, who was about to prostrate himself to that Angel. But one could object: Cornelius and John obviously attempted to adore Peter and the Angel, incorrectly believing that Peter and the Angel, respectively, are apparitions of God himself, for Peter and the Angel had to explain explicitly that this was wrong (cf. Acts 10:26 and Rev 19:10b, 22:9). These incidents may be an indication, that in the works of Luke (Lk and Acts) and of John (Gospel, Letters and Rev) 'proskyneō' is used exclusive or (in John's case) predominantly for *latreutic* prostration (see also footnote 81). Secondly, some point to Acts 14,11–15, where the Apostles Paul and Barnabas, after having caused a miracle cure in Lycaonia, have been thought to be apparitions of the Gods Zeus and Hermes; so the people wanted to honor them as Gods and offer a sacrifice to them, which the Apostles, of course, refused to accept. But here, a prostration is not even mentioned, so this simply misses the topic. Lastly, some point to an Old Testament episode: According to the Book Esther, the Jew Mordechai refused to prostrate himself before the Persian Vizier Haman (Est 3:2–5); this argument could be considerably fortified by a deuterocanonical addition (Est 4:17d–e = 13:12–14 Vulg) – unfortunately not acknowledged by most protestants – where Mordechai spoke out as a maxim, that he *shall prostrate himself to no one except God*. But here we must note that Mordechai doesn't state a *general principle* valid for all faithful, but only *his personal decision*. Prostration before created persons is in principle acceptable, but not obligatory (whereas the prostration before God is obligatory according to Deut 23:43, 2 Kings 17:36, Bar 6:5, Ps 95:6, Dan 14:25, Mt 4:10, Lk 4:8, Heb 1:6; by the way, some modern translations of Bar 6:5 and Dan 14:25 insert wrongly into the text, that one should prostrate oneself 'only' before God). Now what is not obligatory, can and should be avoided under certain circumstances. Therefore occasionally some people, guided by the Holy Spirit, may have the vocation to refuse to prostrate themselves before any created person, in order to show to an arrogant heathen society at a royal court that one should not become a slave of human beings (cf. 1 Cor 7:23), and this obviously was Mordechai's intention, who lived at the Persian court. We may compare Mordechai's special vocation with the vocation of some Christians to life in celibacy (cf. Mt 19,11–12, 1 Cor 7,6–8) in order to witness that God ought to have the first place in our heart (although marriage is generally allowed and good, and married people can also be witnesses for the same truth, albeit in a less radical way).

⁷⁶ In John 5:23 Jesus tells us that the Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son, "*that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father*". Cf. this to Isa 42:8 and 48:11, where God ensures us that he will not give His glory to anyone else (i.e. not to anyone who is not 'one' in essence with the Father).

⁷⁷ Phil 2:9–11 reads: "God over-exalted Him [Christ], and granted to Him the name above all names that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess 'Jesus Christ is Lord' go the glory of God the Father". This honor is given here to Jesus as the bearer of 'the name above all names' which must be the name of the highest (and only true) God, so the universal kneeling down with the confession of all creatures that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' is clearly an adoration; this is confirmed by the fact that it serves ultimately 'to the glory of God the Father'.

⁷⁸ Heb 1:6 reads "*Let all the angels of God prostrate before him [the Son]*." This is adoration: cf. the comment on Heb 1 in our first argument for the 'unity of essence' above.

⁷⁹ In Rev 5:12–14 St. John sees the heavenly court (Angels and Saints) gathered around 'the Lamb' (= Jesus Christ, cf. John 1:36) and 'the throne' (of God the Father, on which according to Rev 3:21b also Christ sat down and on which victorious Christians will also sit) and hears the following praise directed to both, the Lamb and God the Father sitting on the throne: "In a loud voice they were saying: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshiped [form of *proskyneō*]." Thus, one and the same honor is given 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb', and therefore, the proskynesis here is no doubt latreutic. By the way, since 'every creature' everywhere is adoring the Lamb here, the Lamb (Christ) is not among all (mere) creatures here.

⁸⁰ Rev 22:3 reads: "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [in the heavenly Jerusalem]; and His servants shall serve him [form of *latreuo*]." Here, the latreutic service is offered either to 'the Lamb' (= Jesus Christ, cf. John 1:36), or to 'the throne of God and the Lamb'; in any case the Lamb is adored here.

⁸¹ See footnote 80. Cf. also the following verses: In Lk 17:16–18 we are told that Jesus had cured ten lepers, but only one of them returned and "threw himself at his [Jesus'] feet and thanked him." Then Jesus asked: "Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God ...?" Here it seems that Jesus is identified with God, or at least He is brought in close connection to God, such that 'falling at Jesus' feet' is equal to 'giving praise to God'. Moreover it may be, that in St. Luke's writings (Lk and Acts), the word 'proskyneō' is always used for *latreutic* prostration (i.e. adoration), since in Acts 10:25–26, Cornelius' proskynesis before Peter is rejected by the Apostle (see footnote 75). But then the only proskynesis in Luke's works that is offered to Jesus (occurring in Lk 24:52, where the Apostles worshiped Jesus when He ascended into the heavens) must be an act of adoration. Likewise, in the writings of St. John (Gospel, letters and the Apocalypse), 'proskyneō' seems to be used for adoration at least in most cases (although not in every case, Rev 3:9 being a counterexample), since the Angel refused to accept St. John's proskynesis in Rev 19:10 and 22:8–9; see footnote 75. But then, the only proskynesis in John's Gospel that is offered to Jesus (by the blind born man in John 9:38) is probably also an adoration. And while in the Gospel of Matthew 'proskyneō' in most cases is *not* an adoration (as we saw above), in three instances (Mt 14:33 and, more reliable, 28:9 and 28:17) it probably is an act of adoration offered to Jesus Christ. – Incidentally, there have been also Christian authors in antiquity, who used the word *proskyneō* exclusively for adoration. An example is St. Epiphanius, who wrote c 375 in his *Panareion* (heresy 79,7): "Mary should be honored, but the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is to offer proskynesis. Nobody should offer proskynesis to Mary."

3. The Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost

A. The Holy Spirit is a Person.

Based on Lk 1:35 (“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you”) some people argue that the Holy Spirit is only the power of God, seen as a non-personal force. But numerous Bible verses indicate very clearly, that the Holy Spirit is rather a person. Concerning this matter, consider the following verses:

1. First of all, the Holy Spirit speaks to the human persons (Mk 13:11, Acts 1:16, 8:29, 20:23, 28:25, cf. 11:12, 16:6, Heb 3:7, 10:15). But a non-personal force cannot speak, this is proper for a person only.
2. Jesus says about the Holy Spirit: “He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). But a non-personal force can not teach anything, this is proper for a person only.
3. 1 Cor 12:11 (cf. John 3:8) states that the Holy Spirit distributes his gifts “according as he will”, and in Rom 8:27, that God “knows what is the desire of the Spirit”, that he intercedes for the saints. But a non-personal force has no will and no desire.
4. According to 1 Cor 2:10–11 “the Spirit searches/explores all things, even the depths of God” and he “knows the thoughts of God”. But a non-personal force cannot explore or know anything, these are abilities of persons only.
5. St. Paul admonishes us: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph 4:30; cf. Isa 63:10). But one can grieve only a person.
6. St. Paul writes to the bishops of Ephesus: “Take heed ... to all the flock, wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as bishops” (Acts 20:28). Only a person can set persons into an office.
7. St. Peter asked Ananias the deceiver: “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5:3). Now one cannot lie to a thing, one can only lie to a person.
8. The Holy Spirit is called Paraclete (in John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16,7). This Greek word means literally ‘the called up’, the ‘intercessor’, ‘advocate’ or ‘consoler’. Christ also is called a Paraclete in 1 John 2:1. In accordance to this title, the Holy Spirit “will convict the world” (John 16:8), He “intercedes for us with unspeakable groanings” and He helps us, when we do not know what we ought to pray for (Rom 8:26–27). So the title ‘Paraclete’ and the activities of a Paraclete fit to a person only.⁸²

These and many other verses show clearly, that the Holy Spirit is a person.

B. The Holy Spirit as a person is distinct from the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is neither the Father, for he “proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26), nor the Son, for the Son prayed: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you *another* advocate (Paraclete) ... the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–17). That the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son is confirmed by the fact that the Father (John 14:26) and also the Son (John 15:26; John 16:7) are *sending out* the Spirit. But if a person sends a person, then the person who sends must be distinct from the person who is sent.

C. The Holy Spirit is one in essence with the Father and with the Son.

Father and Son are distinct persons but *one* in essence; likewise, the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father and the Son, but is *one* in essence with them. This is confirmed by several arguments.

First argument: *Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and thereby God.*

In Acts 5:3–4 Peter says to Ananias the deceiver: “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied *to the Holy Spirit?* ... You have not lied to men, but *to God.*” Thus, lying to the Holy Spirit is set sequel to lying to God, therefore, the Holy Spirit is God. Moreover, the word ‘God’ appears here with the article (i.e. a fully literal translation would be: “You have not lied to men, but to the God”); therefore, the Holy Spirit is not a subordinated being called ‘God’ in an improper sense like the Angels (as the so called Pneumatomachians contended), but he is the most high being, the one true God in the proper sense.

Second argument: *the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit.*

⁸² As a further Scriptural argument it has been argued that in the Gospel of John the Greek masculine demonstrative pronoun ‘ekeinos’ is used four times for the Spirit in 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13,14, although the word ‘Spirit’ in Greek is grammatically *neuter*. So, the argument runs, John has used false grammar to indicate the Spirit’s personality. If this were true, this would be an additional powerful argument for the Spirit’s personality. But a careful analysis of the context shows, that in each case the pronoun may refer to the masculine word ‘Paraclete’ instead of ‘Spirit’. Thus, this argumentation (although it has many supporters) is not very convincing. At best, one could say that John placed ‘ekeinos’ in a position where one could refer it to the ‘Spirit’ at first glance (this holds especially for John 16:13–14); but as the reader can find in the wider context the word ‘Paraclete’ as the grammatically suitable reference point, the word ‘ekeinos’ is only a (very) weak indication of the Spirit’s personality (if it is such an indication at all). In any case, the word ‘Paraclete’ itself is a much more convincing indication thereof. – Another, albeit *not Scriptural* argument for the personality (and at the same time for the Divinity) of the Holy Spirit is this: According to early Christian tradition, the Holy Spirit had been an object of adoration. This was officially acknowledged in AD 381 by the First Council of Constantinople, where among other statements about the Holy Spirit also the following was added to the Nicene Creed: “*With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified*” (see footnote 127). Already according to Phil 3,3 we “serve God by his Spirit”, that is: the Holy Spirit helps us to serve, adore and pray to God. But as tradition testifies, the early Christians prayed also directly to the Holy Spirit. The earliest written example for a prayer to the Holy Spirit is chapter 27 of the Acts of Thomas, written about 200 AD: “*Come, Holy Spirit, sanctify their reins and their heart and seal them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*”. The most famous prayers to the Holy Spirit are the orthodox prayer ‘Heavenly Father’ (Basileu Ouranie) from the 8th century, the ‘Veni Creator Spiritus’ before the 10th century and the ‘Veni Sancte Spiritus’ from the 13th century. Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, London 1980, p. 101–102.

In Mt 12:31 Jesus teaches: “Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven.” But if the “Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” is the only unforgivable sin, the Holy Spirit should be a Divine Person.

Third argument: *the temple of the Holy Spirit.*

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you?” (1 Cor 6:19; cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16). Now, a temple is a house of God. Hence the Holy Spirit must be God dwelling into the body of the faithful. So when Paul adds: “Therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:20), the ‘God’ meant here is the Holy Spirit.

Fourth argument: *Divine attributes of the Spirit.*

The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Cor 3:17, “the Lord is the Spirit”, where ‘the Lord’ is a Divine title; therefore, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, in order to confess the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, states: “we believe in the Holy Spirit, *the Lord*”.⁸³ In Heb 9:14 it is mentioned the “*eternal Spirit*”, eternity being a property of God that distinguishes him from the creatures: “*Before the mountains were made, or the earth and the world was formed; from eternity and to eternity you are God*” (Ps 90:2). Other exclusive attributes of God are His omniscience and creative power (cf. Isa 43:6–7; 45:18). But as indicated in 1 Cor 2:10 (cf. Wis 1:7) the Spirit is omniscient, and as indicated in Gen 1:2, the Spirit has creative power, too; according to Ps 33:6 He is indeed co-creator with the Word (= Son) of God; also in Ps 104:29–30 He is creator and life-giver.⁸⁴ So, the Spirit must be God.

Fifth argument: *There is only one Spirit, who must be the Father and the Holy Spirit.*

According to 1 Cor 12,4–6 and Eph 4,4–6, there is (on the highest level) only one Spirit, one Lord, and one God; here by ‘Spirit’ obviously, the Holy Spirit is meant. Now, in John 4,24 Jesus teaches us: “*God is Spirit*”, where ‘God’, as John 4,23 indicates, is the Father. Thus, if according to 1 Cor 12,4–6 (on the highest level) there is only one Spirit, then the Holy Spirit and the Father must have one and the same essence.

Sixth argument: *A quotation from the Old Testament referring to Yahweh (the Father) is ascribed in the New Testament to the Son and the Holy Spirit. This indicates the ‘unity of essence’ of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

The Old Testament Prophet Isaiah records in Isa 6,8–10: “*Then I heard the voice of Yahweh saying [...]: Go and tell these people: Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see and shall not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and healed.*”

Now in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul very clearly ascribes this quotation in Acts 28:25–27 to the Holy Spirit: “*The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet: ,Go to these people, and say, Hearing you shall hear and not understand, and seeing you shall see and not perceive.*”

The Apostle John seems to refer the same words to Jesus, the Son of God: “*But though he [Jesus] had done so many miracles before them [the Jews], they believed not in him. [...] For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says [...]: He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they may not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and he spoke of him [of Jesus]*” (John 12,37–41).

Seventh argument: *As the Son and the Father, also The Holy Spirit is ‘the Truth’.*

1 John 5:6 reads: “The Spirit is the Truth”. And in John 14:6, Jesus says: “I am the way and the truth and the life.” This supposes a kind of ‘unity in essence’ between the Son and the Holy Spirit, such that if the former is the one true God, then this must apply also to the latter. Additionally, cf. also 1 John 5:20: “We are in the true one, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life eternal.” Here, the ‘true one’ may be the Father (although, however, it could also be the Son, see footnote 63). If the Father is meant, then the expression ‘the true one’ seem to indicate that the Father is also ‘the truth’ (just as the Son and the Holy spirit), and so we would have again an argument for the ‘unity in essence’ between all three persons.

Eighth argument: *The command to baptize seems to be a direct proof for the ‘unity of essence’ between all three persons (cf. also the sixth and seventh argument).*

In his famous command to baptize (Mt 28,19), Jesus says to his Apostles: “*Go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” To baptize the nations ‘into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ means to commend the nations (first of all by baptizing the individual members of the nations) to the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now since the singular form of the word ‘name’ is used in this formula (baptize them into ‘the name’ not into ‘the names’ or ‘the three names’), this indicates that Father, Son and Holy Spirit have *one and the same name*. But what is the common name of the three? Obviously, it is not meant any common designation (as for example ‘Yahweh’, ‘God’,

⁸³ See footnote 127.

⁸⁴ Cf. also footnote 210. An additional (post-scriptural) argument for the Divinity of the Spirit is that He has been adored in early Christianity (cf. footnote 82).

‘Lord’ etc.), because there are many such common designations. The word ‘name’ in ancient languages often designates the ‘essence’. So, if Father, Son and Holy Spirit have only one name, this shows their ‘unity in essence’ (cf. my treatise *God’s Name*).⁸⁵

Ninth argument: *The Comma Johanneum*.

In some Latin Bible manuscripts and also in ancient Latin Bible quotes of 1 John 5:7–8 we find an inserted text that would be a most remarkable Bible testimony for the Trinity Doctrine (specifically for the so-called Triunity of God), if it would be the original text. But it is almost certainly an insertion, because it is missing in the oldest extant Bible manuscripts (even in the Latin ones); probably it was inserted in the 4th century in Spain, for it occurs for the first time in a text called *Liber Apologeticus* (1:4), written by the Spanish theologian *Priscillian* († 385). The exegetes call this insertion the *Comma* [meaning in Greek ‘short clause’] of *St. John* or the ‘Comma Johanneum’. In the following translation of 1 John 5:7–8 the insertion is set into brackets:

“And there are three who give testimony:

[In heaven: *The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.*

And there are three that give testimony on earth:]

The Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, and *these three are one.*”

The insertion need not be a deliberate forgery, for *even without the insertion* the passage seems to imply, that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are ‘three unanimous witnesses’ (see below). Therefore, a reader might have noted this at the margin of the page, and a later copyist might then have inserted this gloss (by mistake) into the main text. Now let us *try to interpret the passage without the insertion*: We are dealing with three witnesses that give a unanimous testimony, and Verse 5:5 shows that they testify that Jesus Christ is ‘the Son of God’. But who or what are these three witnesses called Spirit, Water and Blood? There are three classical interpretations: The first refers to salvation history, the second to the Trinity and the third to the Sacraments. According to the first, ‘Water’ stands for Jesus’ Baptism, ‘Blood’ for His passion, and ‘Spirit’ for the transmission of the Holy Spirit after His resurrection: three *events* that may bear witness for Jesus’ claims. This interpretation is not implausible, but it should be extended by the most interesting interpretation, according to which the ‘Spirit’ is the Holy Spirit, the ‘Water’ stands for the Father (who gave testimony for Jesus at his Baptism, cf. John 1:33–34 and Mt 3:17) and the ‘Blood’ is the Son Himself (who gave the most impressive testimony at the cross, see John 19:33–38). This ‘trinitarian’ interpretation is supported by three observations:

- The words ‘water’, ‘blood’ and ‘spirit’ have *neuter gender* in Greek, but, strangely, the word ‘three’ doesn’t occur in its neuter form, but in the *masculine gender*. This may indicate, that Water, Blood and Spirit are persons here, not only events.
- 1 John 5:9 (the verse immediately after 1 John 5:7–8) reads: “*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For this is the witness of God*”. So we deal with God’s own testimony here, so the three witnesses should be Divine Persons.
- John 5:36–39, is a parallel text to 1 John 5:7–8 that alludes to the testimony of the Divine Persons. In John 5:36 Jesus says: “the works which the Father has given me to perfect [...] give testimony of me”, thus, *the Son* testifies for Himself by means of His works. Then He goes on to say in John 5:37: “And *the Father* [...] himself has borne witness concerning me.” Finally, he adds in John 5:39: “Search the scriptures [...], and these are they which bear witness of me.” But since the Scriptures are inspired by *the Holy Spirit* (cf. 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), also the Spirit’s testimony is adduced here.

In addition to these interpretations, there is the sacramental one, based on fact, that after the crucifixion ‘water and blood’ flowed out of the wound in Jesus’ side, which was testified with emphasis in John 19:33–38. Water and Blood (seen as flowing out of Jesus’ body) symbolize mystically the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and the ‘Spirit’ may symbolize the ‘Sacrament of the Holy Spirit’ or Confirmation (the post-baptismal unction, alluded to already in 1 John 2:20,27). Since the Sacraments remind us of (and connect us with) Jesus, they testify about Him. – To my opinion, all three interpretations may be intended by St. John, who presents us three cryptic expressions, that seem to ‘invite the reader’ so search for all the hidden senses behind those words.

Tenth argument: *the Spirit shares the common property of the Father and the Son.*

A mysterious indication of the true Godhead of the Spirit may be also seen in the words of Jesus in John 16:13–15: “*The Spirit of truth [...] shall glorify me because he shall receive of mine and shall announce to you. All things that the Father has are mine; on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce to you.*” Here, it seems that the Holy Spirit receives (not a message only, but also) His essence from the Son, or rather from the essence common to the Father and the Son.

⁸⁵ The three persons are mentioned in close connection not only in Mt 28:19, but often in the NT, whereby for the Father it is often used the word ‘God’ and for the Son the word ‘Lord’, which are so-called *appropriations* for the Father and for the Son, respectively (see above, p. 11 with footnote 40). Already in Lk 1:35, where the conception of Jesus is described, we encounter the Trinity: The ‘Holy Spirit’ being the power of ‘the Most High’ (this refers to the Father), effectuates the conception of the ‘Son of God’. Next, the Trinity appears at Jesus’ baptism described in Mt 3:16–17: The voice from the heavens (the Father) accompanied by the Spirit appearing in the form of a dove announces: “This is my Son”. Dying at the cross, Christ according to Heb 9:14 offered himself through the “eternal Spirit” to God (the Father). After his resurrection Christ sends the Holy Spirit from the Father to the Apostles (cf. John 14:16–17; 14:26; 15:26 and Acts 2:33). Cf. also: Mt 28:19: Trinitarian command to baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13–15: The Spirit receives from Jesus (the Son), who has everything in common with the Father.

1 Cor 12:4–6: “the same Spirit ... the same Lord (Son) ... the same God (Father)”.

2 Cor 13:13: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], and the communion of the Holy Spirit, [be] with you all.”

Gal 4:6: The Spirit of the Son calls out “Abba, Father”!

Eph 2:18: through Christ we have access to the Father by the Spirit.

Eph 4:4–6: “one Spirit, ... one Lord ... one God and Father of all.”

1 Pet 1:2: “[...] God the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ [...]”

Cf. also Acts 7:55, 10:38, Rom 15:16, 15:30, 2 Cor 1:21–22, Eph 2:22, 3:14–17, 5:19–20, Tit 3:4–6, Heb 2:3–4, Jude 1:20–21 etc.

The last five arguments have made clear more or less not only the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, but also that the three Divine Persons share one and the same Divine Essence, i.e. that God is tri-une. This leads us already to the subject of the following chapter.

4. The Triune God

As we saw, central points of the Trinity Doctrine are firmly rooted in the Holy Scriptures: the Father is the true God, the Son is the true God, the Holy Spirit is the true God; and Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not the same person, but the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct from each other, and are also both distinct from the Father. Yet, one confesses that there is only one true God; therefore, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are not three true Gods, but only one true God.

Thus, one can say that in God we encounter a kind of unity (one-ness) and simultaneously a kind of trinity (three-ness) and so we speak about a 'tri-une God'. To explain this further, there are two main lines of thought: The Eastern Greek Church Fathers proceed from the Three Persons and try to explain the Unity of God by the In-Being (Perichoresis) of the Persons in each other, whereas the Western Latin Church Fathers proceed from the One-ness (Simplicity) of the Divine Substance and try to explain how within this one Substance a differentiation/distinction of Persons can emerge. These are complementary approaches, further profiled by modern approaches as for example the *Social Trinity* Concept (emphasizing the three-ness of persons) and the *Personal* or *Psychological Trinity* Concept (emphasizing the One-ness of the Divine Mind). My explanation below is more inclined to the Western psychological approach than to the Eastern one.

But first we should take a fresh look on the Biblical base for the claim that God is 'triune'. That despite of God's unity there is also a mysterious plurality in God, is indeed clearly indicated in the Bible (and especially also in the Old Testament), even if we set aside the already discussed 'Comma Johanneum' and other Bible passages discussed above about the Son and the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, numerous passages emphasize the uniqueness of God (cf. Ex 20:3, Deut 4:35, 5:7, 6:4, 32:12,39, 2 Kings 19:15–18, Neh 9,6, Ps 83:19, Wis 12:13, Isa 42:8, 43:10–11, 44:6, 45:5–6, Mal 2:10, Mk 12:29,32–34; John 17:3, Rom 3:30, 1 Cor 8:6, Gal 3:20, 1 Tim 1:17, Jude 1:25). The usual name of the one true God in the Old Testament is *Yahweh* (occurring 6.828 times, meaning 'He is', cf. Ex 3:13–15); cf. the solemn confession of God's 'one-ness' in Deut 6:4: "*Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.*"

On the other hand, a plurality in God is also indicated in the Old Testament. *First and foremost*, a plurality is already indicated by two of the most important names of God in the Old Testament: The name *Elohim* (occurring 2602 times), is the plural form of *Eloah* ('God'),⁸⁶ meaning 'Gods' actually, and in a few passages indeed refers to a plurality of gods in a secondary sense (for example, to false gods in Ex 12:12). In most cases, however, the word is used for the one true God (as for example already in Gen 1:1) and is then *connected with singular verb forms*. Likewise, another famous Name of God, *Adonai* (occurring 434 times in the Old Testament with reference to the one true God), is a plural form of *Adon* ('Lord'), meaning 'my Lords'. If *Adonai* refers to the one true God, this word, too, is *connected with singular verb forms*.⁸⁷ Accordingly, one can conclude that the unity in God seems to be connected somehow with a kind of plurality. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact, that God frequently uses the plural form 'we/us/our' when he refers to himself. For example, God's thoughts before he created men are rendered in Gen 1:26 as follows: "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." As the united mankind decided to build the tower of Babel, God said to himself: "Come, let *us* go down, and there confound their language" (Gen 11:7). In Isa 6:8 God asks: "whom shall I send? Who will go for *us*?" One might object that the plural forms in Gen 1:26 and Gen 11:7 and Isa 6:8 could be a 'majestic plural', but at least in Gen 3:22 his would be out of place, where God resumes the situation after the original sin of men: "Man has now become *like one of us*." This expression does not seem to be a majestic plural. If God wanted to use the majestic plural here, He probably would have said '*man has become like us*', not '*has become like one of us*', which indicates rather a real plurality of persons.

Secondly, a plurality in God is also suggested by Old Testament statements about '*the Spirit of God*' (already in Gen 1:2) and '*the Wisdom of God*' (occurring in a 'personified' form in Job 28, Prov 8, Wis 6:1–11:1, Sir 1:1–9, 24:1–22 and Bar 3:9–4:4, especially Bar 3:39, later in John 1:1–18 the Wisdom was identified with God's Word or 'Logos' and ultimately with the Son of God; cf. also 1 Cor 1:24,30).⁸⁸ It should have been clear already in the Old Testament times that God's Spirit and His Wisdom are entities apart from the created world dwelling in the sphere of God himself; although for a fuller understanding the faithful had to await the New Testament revelation and the subsequent process of clarifications, guided by the Spirit of God within church history (cf. John 16:12–13).

Thirdly, also the different 'faces' of God (see p. 7 above) indicate a plurality of Persons in God, and that we deal with *three* Divine Persons, is somehow indicated in the famous story about God's visitation to Abraham (Gen 18–19), where a visitation of Yahweh (Gen 18:1) is described as a visitation of three men (Gen 18:2). In this mysterious story, plural and singular forms change repeatedly (Gen 18:3 singular; Gen 18,4–9 plural; Gen 18,10–15 singular; Gen 18,16 plural; Gen 18,17–21 singular). In Gen 18:22

⁸⁶ The singular form *Eloah* is also used in the Old Testament, although only 57 times (most occurrences are found in the Book Job).

⁸⁷ Thus, *Adonai*, although meaning literally 'my Lords', is rightly translated as 'the Lord', and *Elohim*, meaning literally 'Gods' is rightly translated as 'the God' or as 'God'. *Adonai* occurs 315 times in immediate connection with *Yahweh* (among these 315 occurrences, the expression '*Yahweh Adonai*' occurs 5 times, and the expression '*Adonai Yahweh*' 310 times). Besides, the singular word for 'Lord', *Adon*, is also used occasionally for the one true God (see footnote 39).

⁸⁸ Note, that in the Book of Proverbs, the Wisdom (Prov 8, cf. especially 8:22,30–31) is described as a playing child of God, and then in Prov 30:4 it occurs a mysterious sequence of questions: "Who has ascended up into heaven, and descended? Who has held the wind [or: Spirit] in his hands? Who has bound up the waters together as in a garment? Who has raised up all the borders of the earth? *What is his name, and what is the name of his Son* – if thou know?" In view of Prov 8 a very plausible answer seems to be: His name is 'Yahweh', and the name of His Son is 'Wisdom'. So the equation God' Wisdom = God's Son seems to be presupposed already in Prov (as later in Paul; cf 1 Cor 1:24,30), although there are also other interesting interpretations of the Divine Wisdom (see footnote 256).

two of the men go to Sodom, who are called ‘Angels’ in Gen 19:1, while the third man remains at the place they met Abraham, and Abraham speaks with him calling him Yahweh. So, the three men have been three Angels obviously, but these Angels represented the three Divine Persons of the tri-une God, at least until two of them left for Sodom. Jesus’ claim that Abraham once had seen Him (John 8:56) seems to refer to this episode, in which it is also said that “Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh” (Gen 19:24), indicating a plurality of persons sharing the name (and essence) of Yahweh. Thus, the mysterious tri-unity of God has been spelled out rightly by the theologians who say that three distinct Divine Persons possess or ‘are’ one and the same Divine Essence.⁸⁹

In order to understand this better, we have to deepen the considerations made in chapter 1, how Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be distinct, if they ‘are’ only one Divine being. In order to show that ‘tri-une’ entities are possible or even realized in the created world, one has pointed out to several examples. In particular, one compares the Divine tri-unity with⁹⁰

1. body, soul and spirit of man,⁹¹ or with the composition of the human mind, that includes memory, intellect and will,
2. with love, encompassing the lover, the loved and their mutual love, or with a family including husband, wife and child,
3. with a human person, considered as first, second and third grammatical person.
4. with the sun, its rays and its light (or heat); or with the sun, its ray and the illumination point out of the beam,
5. with the light into a room that results from three burning candles,
6. with a burning candle, being the result of the co-operation of three entities, namely wax, flame and surrounding air,
7. with the center of a fountain, the fountain and the river; or with the fountain, the river and the sea/irrigation canal,
8. with water (or another physical substance), occurring in the three physical states solid, liquid, and gaseous,
9. with space or a corporal body, having three dimensions; or with a body, considered as matter, form and the union of both,
10. with time, consisting of past, present and future; or with the categories space, time and what is beyond space and time,
11. with an arbitrary entity, having the transcendental attributes of oneness, truth and goodness, or truth, goodness and beauty,
12. with a tree, consisting of roots, trunk and branches (or fruits),
13. with a rose, including rose stem, color and fragrance; or with a three-foiled cloverleaf,
14. with the harmonic triad in music; or with the three moments of thesis, antithesis and synthesis in thought,
15. or simply with a triangle, having three sides, three edges and three angles.

Among other things, these analogies illustrate neatly the fact that trinitarian theologians try to avoid a formal contradiction of the form ‘1 = 3’ by attributing the numbers ‘one’ and ‘three’ *not to one and the same entity in the same respect*. It would be contradictory to say that ‘one triangle’ is ‘three triangles’ or that ‘three sides’ are ‘one side’, but it is consistent (and true) to say that ‘one triangle’ is (obtained by) ‘three sides’. So in Trinity Doctrine one avoids a blunt contradiction from the outset by distributing the numbers ‘one’ and ‘three’ to formally distinct concepts called *Divine Nature* (or *Divine Essence* or *Divine Substance* or *Divinity*) on the one hand, and *Divine Person* (or *Divine Hypostasis* or *Subsistence* or *Subsistence Mode*, or *Subject*, or, in modern times, also *Divine ‘I’*) on the other hand: One speaks of *one* Divine Nature (Essence, Substance, Divinity) or of *one* God; but of *three* Persons (Hypostases, Subsistences, Subsistence Modes, Subjects or ‘I’s’) in God.⁹²

Yet, the mentioned analogies are more dissimilar than similar to the Divine Triunity, and don’t show how the real conceptual problem can be solved. The real problem is this: If one says that one Divine Person (e.g. the Father) ‘is’ the Divine Essence and another Divine Person (e.g. the Son) likewise ‘is’ the Divine Essence, then it seems to follow that the one Person ‘is’ the other Person (e.g. the Father ‘is’ the Son). This follows by the principle of comparativity (‘things equal to the same thing are equal to one another’, that is, if a = c and b = c then a = b), and that means in our case: If Father = Essence, and Son = Essence, and Holy Spirit = Essence, then Father = Son = Holy Spirit.

The catholic philosopher Francisco Suárez († 1617) solved this problem by simply stating that the mentioned principle does not hold for God in the same manner as it holds for creatures (see footnote 107); but for the most theologians and philosophers this seems to be no satisfying solution. Indeed one has not to abandon or restrict the principle: In order to solve the formal problem, one has to observe that in statements like ‘the Father is the Divine Essence’ the word ‘is’ has not the same meaning as ‘is equal to’ in the strict sense of identity (i.e. in the sense of same-ness worked out by Leibniz), and the principle of comparativity applies only to identity *in this strict sense*. What the word ‘is’ may mean in the Trinity Doctrine with regard to content, we will see below. Formally, it suffices to maintain that it means not strict identity, such that it remains a distinction between the Divine Essence and each of the three persons. However, in order to avoid the extension of the Trinity to a Quaternity (three Persons plus Essence as

⁸⁹ Another indication of the tri-une God has been seen in the famous expression “*threefold sun*” in Sir 43:4(3), i.e. in the Latin Vulgate as well as in the Greek Septuagint version of this verse (tripliciter sol; triplasiōs helios). In the Vulgate, ‘threefold’ could be an adjective or adverb, but in the Septuagint (as well as in the Neo-Vulgate version) it is an adverb describing the sun’s operation rather than its being; while in the rediscovered deficient and incomplete Hebrew text, the word is entirely missing. Since ‘threefold’ seems to be an adverb and in verse 5 it is said that the Lord ‘made’ the sun, the ‘threefold sun’ could be taken as a mystical symbol for the so-called ‘*economical*’ Trinity (i.e. the Trinity’s extension into the created world), rather than the proper, ‘*immanent*’ Trinity; see for this difference the end of this chapter.

⁹⁰ See also footnote 99.

⁹¹ Cf. 1 Thess 5:23 and Hebr 4:12. The spirit is not a substance separate of the soul; rather the spirit consists of the higher powers of the soul, that are not bound to matter. The soul is the substantial bearer of the spirit, and at the same time it gives life to the body. Thus, it stands in the middle between body and spirit.

⁹² At this point it is asked whether God resembles a human person suffering by a “multiple personality disorder”, who has three distinct identities or dissociated personality states, e.g. sometimes thinks and acts as a person A, at other times as another person B and then again as another person C. This could be inserted into our list of analogies for the triune God mentioned above, if only we could remove the vast four dissimilarities between God and a human with a split personality: for example God’s ‘three identities’ (if this title may be applied to the Divine Persons) are (1) no illness or illusion; they are (2) always simultaneously present; (3) they know each other and they live and work together in perfect harmony and accordance; (4) they are similar to each other in the highest possible degree.

four ‘things’ on the same ontological level), one must maintain also, that the distinction between each Person and the Essence is *of another kind* and is *essentially ‘smaller’* than the distinction that distinguishes any two of the Persons from each other. In order to emphasize this important point (at least by means of terminology), in scholastic theology the distinction between the persons is called a *real* distinction, by which it is meant that the distinct persons *face each other as two different things standing side by side*, whereas the distinction between a person and the Divine Essence doesn’t amount to a ‘real’ distinction in this sense. Hence, one has to say that a Divine Person and the Divine Essence do *not* face each other as two separate different things, but are two different aspects of one and the same thing, and so the unscriptural extension of the Trinity Doctrine to a ‘Quaternity doctrine’ is avoided.⁹³

Now there are three classical theories that try to determine more specifically the kind of distinction between a Divine Person and the Divine Essence. All of them agree that this distinction lies somewhere between the full-blown, absolutely and properly *real* distinction (which is the greatest of all kinds of distinction and holds between different things, facing each other, as for example between two stars) and the *rational* or *mere logical* distinction (which is the smallest of all kinds of distinction: a distinction which exists only in the mind of the observer without being grounded in real aspects within the observed object itself, for example the difference between the morning star and the evening star, which in reality are one and the same planet Venus, observed at different times; so the distinction exists with respect to inessential, outer relations only). So the three theories try to describe a distinction greater than the ‘rational’ one but smaller than the ‘absolutely real’ one:

- (1) the theory of *virtual* distinctions of St. Thomas Aquinas († 1274)
- (2) the theory of *formal* distinctions of Bl. John Duns Scotus († 1308) and
- (3) the theory of *modal* distinctions of Durandus († 1334), called also ‘modally real’, but not ‘absolutely real’ distinctions.

A *virtual* distinction is a distinction built in our minds (as the mere rational distinction), but being grounded in real features within the observed object itself. If an object is the source of two activities, then these activities are a reality within the object itself, so this leads to a virtual distinction between “the thing as source of one of its activities” and “the same thing as the source of the other activity”. For example, one and the same person P can be at the same time a father and a teacher, based on different activities, and then the distinction between ‘father P’ and ‘teacher P’ is neither a real one, nor a rational one only, but a virtual one.

A *formal* distinction occurs between two entities with different definitions, which can occur even if between the two entities there is no real distinction. For example, wisdom and justice are formally distinct entities (since they have different definitions), yet, they can be realized in one and the same personal subject, and then the instance of wisdom and the instance of justice in this subject need not to be separate ‘things’ (provided that they are not located in different parts of the brain, but in one and the same part); if this is the case, the Scotists say that these entities are ‘different formalities’ but not ‘different realities’, and the distinction between them is called not a ‘real’, but only a ‘formal’ one.

Finally, a *modal* or *modally real* distinction holds between a thing and its modes (for example, between a body and its size, or between a line and each of its end points, or between a surface and its frontier line).

Although the proponents of the different theories often assume that one can embrace only one of these three theories and must reject the others, it seems to me that the theories can be used for complementary descriptions for the distinction between each of the Divine Persons and the Divine Essence, and in any case, they don’t really exclude each other. For, as we already saw in chapter 1, a person and its essence are related to each other as the owner and its possession: the person is the ‘owner of’ or ‘possesses’ the essence, while the essence is the inherent ‘possession’ of the person. So the distinction between person and nature/essence seems to be a *virtual* distinction (i.e. a distinction made in our mind based on features of reality, for the self-possession of the person is a reality); but at the same time, it is also a kind of *formal* distinction (for ‘owner’ and ‘possession’ are defined differently) and finally, it involves a *modal* distinction between a thing (the essence) and its mode of being self-possessed (its subsistence mode).⁹⁴ Among these three kinds of distinction the modal distinction has the highest degree of reality (i.e. comes closer to the absolute real distinction than the formal and the virtual distinctions); therefore it is called ‘modally real’, whereas the other distinctions are usually called ‘not real’, although I think that this mode of speaking is not entirely proper, because also the formal and virtual distinctions are based on a minor kind of reality, too.⁹⁵ If they would be entirely non-real, then they would be not suitable to solve our problem: For if two things differ from a third thing only by an *entirely non-real distinction*, it seems to be impossible that the

⁹³ Blessed Pope Eugene III. declared 1148 in the wake of the local Council of Reims against Gilbert de la Porrée, (cf. DH 745), that Person and Nature should not be ‘divided’ in theology, and that we can relate God to the Divine Essence not only in the ablative case (i.e. saying that God is ‘*through* the Divine Essence’), but also in the nominative case (i.e. saying simply, that God is ‘the Divine Essence’), thus avoiding a Quaternity. As it seems, not only Gilbert, but also Patriarch Damian of Alexandria (c. 577) had accepted such a quaternity, whence Damian’s disciples were called Tetratheists (i.e. venerated of four Gods, see footnote 131). In 675, the *Eleventh Council of Toledo* (see p. 40) had refuted a ‘Quaternity’ in another sense, namely the Quaternity that would arise if we would divide the Son into two persons after His incarnation (DH 534). Finally, the *Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Lateran* (see footnote 176) declared in 1215 generally: “*in God there is only a trinity, not a quaternity*”. (DH 804). Thus, any belief in more than three Divine Persons is clearly rejected. Such a belief now and then indeed existed and exists. Not only the Divine Essence or the human nature of Christ was occasionally viewed as a fourth ‘quasi-person’, but also St. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, has been promoted to be a Divine Person in the full sense, either identifying Her with the Holy Spirit (see footnote 131) or producing a kind of ‘*Divine Quaternity*’, adding one more Person into the unique Divine Essence. One could also add a fifth person and come to a ‘*Divine Quinity*’ and so on. There are some concrete examples even for this. The psychoanalyst C.G. Jung felt the need to complete the good Trinity by adding a female or also an evil element (St. Mary or/and the devil) into it. The so-called Army of Mary (also called Community of our Lady of all nations), founded in 1971 by the Catholic mystic Maria-Paul Giguère († 2015), later separated from the Catholic Church (the Church excommunicated the members in 2007) and seems to worship a kind of ‘*Quinity*’ including five persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the Immaculate (Mary’s counterpart in God) and Mme Giguère herself as incarnation of Mary (see <http://www.innerexplorations.com/jc/text/quint.htm>/18.08.2017). According to ‘Kabbalah’ expert Heinrich Elija Benedikt (Die Kabbala, Vol. 2, Munich: Ansata 2003, Vol 2, p. 437–470) the ‘Ten Sefirot’ (Emanations of God) in the Jewish ‘Kabbalah’ tradition are assigned to “five perfect Divine Persons” (p. 437), called *Par’zufim*, namely ‘the Ancient of Days’, the ‘Father’, the ‘Mother’, the ‘Son’ and the ‘Daughter’, so this amounts to a Quinity again (Benedikt holds that Christian counterpart of ‘the Son’ is Jesus Christ, while the counterpart of the ‘Daughter’ is the personified Church: the ‘Daughter Zion’ and ‘Bride of God’).

⁹⁴ It seems that every modal distinction is also a formal and a virtual one, but not vice versa; likewise, every formal distinction seems to be also a virtual one, but it is dubious, whether the converse is also true.

two things can differ from each by a *real* distinction. On the other hand, at least ‘modally real’ distinctions between A and C and between B and C *are indeed sufficient* to explain an ‘absolutely real’ distinction between A and B. Consider, for example, the distinction between a line and each of its end points, which is only a modal distinction, while the distinction between the two end points is an absolutely real distinction, since the end points are clearly separated from each other; thus the points face each other in the same manner as two separate things do.

Now the distinction between each Divine Person and the Divine Essence can be explained in more detail as follows. In humans the nature embraces body and soul as two distinct essential parts, thus the human person ‘owns’ body and soul, making up the two essential parts of his nature or essence. In God the nature is the pure and most perfect being, the source of the main Divine Attributes as Eternity, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnibenevolence, thus each of the Divine Persons ‘owns’ this being with all the said perfections attributed to his supreme being. One says, that the three Divine Persons are ‘in’ the one Divine Nature or Essence, but this does not mean that each Person is located only in a certain *part* of the Divine Essence (or that the Person possesses only certain Divine abilities ‘located’ in that part), as if one Person, for example, would ‘be’ (or would ‘possess’ only God’s omniscient intellect, while the other Person would be (or possess) only God’s omnibenevolent will, and the third Person only His omnipotent power. It means rather that each Person ‘fills out’ (and possesses) *the whole* Essence, which is precisely why one says not only that each Person ‘is in’ the Divine Essence, but also that each Person simply ‘is’ the one Divine Essence: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not ‘parts’ or ‘partial forces’ or ‘specific attributes’ of the Divine Essence, but each of them possesses the whole Divine Essence with all its forces and attributes. Now, if we say that a Divine Person ‘is’ the Divine Essence, we mean not identity in the strictest sense, but in a weaker sense, such that ‘is’ implies ‘fills out totally’ and ‘is in full possession of’, but not ‘is nothing other than’. Therefore, it is not implied that one Person is identical with the other, but only that each of the three Persons possesses all the Essential Divine Properties without restriction: Eternity, Omnipotence, Omniscience and so on. Also all operations of God ‘ad extra’, i.e. His outward activities (namely the creation of the world and all subsequent Divine Activities that effect the creating world), must be ascribed equally to each of the Divine Persons, because all outward activity is performed by using the powers of the common Divine Nature.⁹⁵

Each Divine Person, however, possess the whole Divine Essence *in a way totally different from* the way another of the Persons does possess it, whence a *real* distinction does occur. For the Father possesses the Divine Essence *by donating it* (to the Son and to the Holy Spirit); the Holy Spirit *by receiving it* (from the Father and the Son) and the Son *by simultaneously receiving and donating it* (receiving from the Father, donating it to the Holy Spirit). So, the Father possesses the essence *as donator only*, the Son *as receiver and donator*, and the Holy Spirit *as receiver only*. Now since donating and receiving are quite different actions (that are even opposed to each other), this constitutes ‘really’ distinct persons, in spite of the tenet that each person differs only ‘modally/virtually/formally’ from the essence. In this way, the ‘modal/virtual/formal’ distinction between essence and person should be sufficient to circumvent the principle of comparativity and to let the persons be ‘really’ distinct.

One might object to this explanation, that to donate and to receive *presupposes* already the existence of distinct Divine Persons, thus this cannot be the *explanation* for their distinction. Indeed, from a logical standpoint, it is preferable to start with the consideration of the one Divine Essence (as the western Church Fathers do) and first explain in more detail the mysterious ‘processions’ or ‘transfer actions’ that take place into this one Essence; having done this, one can then go on to introduce the Divine Persons by explaining how the processions constitute a triad of persons together with their distinctions. The processions are conceived as two distinct operations ‘ad intra’, i.e. inward activities that take place and remain within the Divine Essence (in contradistinction to God’s outward activities or ‘ad extra’ operations), which are called *generation* and *spiration*. Considering the two processions, the persons are introduced as follows: the personal God, insofar He is the initiator of these two ‘ad intra’ operations is called ‘the Father’; the same God, insofar He is the result of generation and the initiator of spiration is called the ‘the Son’ and the same God, insofar He is the result of spiration is called ‘the Holy Spirit’. Thus the Father ‘generates’ the Son, while the Son ‘is generated’ by the Father; the Father and the Son ‘spirate’ the Holy Spirit, while the Holy Spirit ‘is spirated’ by a common action of the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Father and from the Son.⁹⁷ Unlike the Divine acts ‘ad extra’ the Divine acts ‘ad intra’ (generating and spirating) are *not* common to all three persons, and therefore can be used to characterize the persons; they constitute the personal distinctions consisting in oppositional relations resulting from the two processions: passive and active generation (i.e. generating and being generated), and passive and active spiration (i.e. spirating and being spirated):

1. the Son proceeds from the Father (not vice versa)
2. the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (not vice versa).

These two processions are clearly mentioned in the Bible: John 8,42 (cf. 8:47, 13:3, 16:27–30, 17:8) shows, that the Son proceeds from the Father, and John 15,46 shows, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. In a secondary sense, the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son, which is not stated directly in the Bible, but is indicated quite sufficiently by the statement that the Son (as the Father) ‘sends out’ the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7; cf. also John 20:22, Acts 2:33). Based on these

⁹⁵ If we try to list the three ‘not absolute real’ distinctions by their ‘grade of reality’ in descending order, then the modal one seems to be the first, followed by the formal one, followed by the virtual one.

⁹⁶ However, it is possible that a specific effect in the world, although *produced by* all three persons, *refers to* one of the persons only and is *directed exclusively to* this person. For example, the incarnation has been caused by a common act of the three persons, but its effect was the union of a human nature with one of the three persons only – with the Son. Cf. the *Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo* (675, see p. 40) in DH 535.

⁹⁷ The clause ‘and from the Son’ (Latin: ‘Filioque’), referring to the procession of the Holy Spirit, is rejected by Eastern Orthodox Church, according to which the Father ‘alone’ is the spirating source. The Filioque, however, has been confirmed by the Council of Florence including the orthodox Greeks attending the council in the Decree of Union with the Greeks *Laetentur Caeli* (1439). For the details see the end of chapter 6.

processions the theologians say that the source of the Holy Spirit is the Father and the Son; the source of the Son is the Father; and the Father has no source and therefore He is called '*the origin of the whole Trinity*' or '*the source of the whole Godhead*'.⁹⁸ In connection with these processions, one has to avoid several false conceptions:

- The processions *do not involve creation acts*, for the Divine Persons do not proceed out from nothing (as the creatures do), but from God.
- The processions *do not involve motions in the sense that a person would come out from and leave the essence*, for the processions are acts remaining within the Divine Essence, such that the Persons remain in God. So, for example, according to John 14:11 the Son remains 'in' the Father and the Father 'in' the Son.
- One has to say even more radically, that the processions *do not involve any motion or change at all*, for in God there is no change and motion (cf. Jas 1:17; Ps 102:26–28); especially one has to reject the idea, that 'originally' there existed only the Father, from whom some time later proceeded the Son, and again some time later Holy Spirit.

So the processions that take place in God are not 'temporal' events like the birth of a human, that have a beginning and an end, and thus occur only at a certain point of time; but they are 'eternal' events non-comparable with temporal ones. If we want to use temporal speech, though, we may analogously say, that they *have occurred in eternity 'beyond and before all time'*, that they *are still occurring in an 'unchanging and timeless present'* and that they *will continue to occur without interruption 'in all eternity'*.

But how can we imagine such processions? The Church Fathers compared an eternal procession with the procession of a ray of light from the sun or the procession of water from a river fountain.⁹⁹ If the sun or the water source would exist from eternity to eternity, then the same would hold for the ray or the outpouring water. The theologian Walter Simonis (1940–2005), in order to remove the difficulty that the light ray and the water 'flow away', refined this picture by comparing the Divine Essence with water in an aquarium; in this picture, the procession of a Divine Person from another person can be imagined as movement of the water permanently remaining inside the aquarium, caused by a nozzle, that initiates a water flow. Then, for example, the Father is symbolized by the water insofar it is active by pressing water through the nozzle, and the Son is the same water insofar it is passive by being pressed through the nozzle. But since the processions are timeless and without motion, the comparison with a real water flow is not entirely adequate, even if it remains into an aquarium. In this respect it would be better to imagine a cause-effect relation without any motion, based on tension within a static system (like Kant's example of a dip in a pillow, caused by a heavy ball lying on the pillow, which shows a kind of causation that could last from eternity to eternity without any motion). So, speaking more properly, the processions are *static relations* existing and standing unchanged from all eternity, establishing a specific order in which one Person owes its essence permanently to another. Thus for example, "the Son proceeds from the Father" means simply: The Son is related to the Father, facing him, orientating himself towards him, receiving from him at every instant his being (in an analogous manner as the creatures receive at every instant their existence from God, sustaining them into existence).

With regard to these relations, there is a certain natural order for the Divine Persons: The 'first' person is the Father (because he has no origin, but is the origin of the two other persons), the 'third' or 'last' person (in a non-temporally sense) is the Holy Spirit (because he proceeds from the other two persons, but is not himself the origin of any other person), and the "second" or 'middle' person is the Son (proceeding from another person, but being also the origin of another person). This order is a mere relational order, it is neither a temporal order, nor does it involve subordination (for all three embrace one and the same absolutely perfect Divine Essence, so there is no inequality with regard to essential perfections). However, there is a precedence of honor (not of nature) among the Divine Persons: The most excellent (i.e. honorable) Divine Person is the Father (as the source of the whole Trinity), then comes the Son (because he is, together with the Father, the source of the Holy Spirit).

As already mentioned above, the procession of the Son from the Father is called *filiation* or *generation* (cf. Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is called *spiration*. With this terminology, one can describe the distinctions between the persons as follows:

1. The Father is ungenerated (unbegotten) and not spirated; he generates the Son and spirates the Holy Spirit.
2. The Son is generated but not spirated by the Father; with the Father he spirates the Holy Spirit, but does not generate.
3. The Spirit is not generated but spirated by the Father and the Son, and he does not generate or spirate.

⁹⁸ Cf. the sixteenth Regional Council of Toledo 693 (DH 568: „confitemur ... Patrem, qui est totius fons et origo divinitatis“).

⁹⁹ Such comparisons are also founded in the Scriptures, cf. Heb 1:3 (the Son is called an 'effulgence' of the Father's glory); cf. also Jer 2:13 ("They have forsaken me, the spring of living water"), Bar 3:12 ("you have left the source of wisdom") and Ps 36:10 ("for with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light"); cf. Ps 4:7, 27:1, 42:3, 43:3, 46:5, 87:7, 97:11. Jes 55:1, John 4:14, 7:37–38. For post-Biblical testimonies, see Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* (c. 215, see footnote 3), chapter 8,5: "God sent forth the Word, [...], just as *the root puts forth the tree, and the fountain the river, and the sun the ray.*" So, Father and Son are like root and tree, fountain and river, sun and ray. Tertullian refers the idea for this comparison to 'the Paraclete', i.e. Montanus (the founder of the Montanist Sect that Tertullian had joined, who flourished c. 157–175; Montanus' adherents did not claim only that he was a prophet, but also, that he was the 'Paraclete', whom Jesus had promised in John 14:16 and 15:26, or at least that he was the Paraclete's mouthpiece). In 8,7 (cf. also footnote 158) Tertullian brings also the Spirit into the play: "the Spirit is third from God and [his] Son, as *the third from the root is the fruit [coming] out of the tree, and the third from the fountain is the [irrigation] canal [coming] out of the river, and the third from the sun is the apex [illumination point at the tip of the light beam] from the light beam.*" Already the Apostolic Father St. Athenagoras of Athens in the 10th chapter of his *Apology* (written c. 177; cf. also footnote 255) had compared the Holy Spirit with a ray of the sun: "We say that the Holy Spirit is *an effluence of God which flows forth from him and returns like a ray of the sun*" (as regards the 'returning' of the light beam, Athenagoras may have alluded to the phenomenon of light reflection in a mirror). Later in the Nicene Creed (325) it was stated that the Son is "*light of light, true God of true God*"; cf. also St. Athanasius († 373), *Epistola de Decretis Nicaenae Symboli* 12, PG 25,414–415; 23, PG 25,456; *Contra Arianos* 3,66–67, PG 26,464 and St. Gregory of Nazianzus the Theologian († 390), who considers in *Oratio* 31,31–32 (PG 36,169A–B), whether one could compare Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with (1) *sun, ray and light* and with (2) *eye, spring and river* (here 'eye' is not to be understood of the member of the body so called, but as the center of a spring or the exact point within the spring from which the water flows). But at the end (*Oratio* 31,33, PG 36,172), Gregory regards these pictures as inadequate shadows only, being remote from the truth.

It is reasonable to use two different terms, namely generation and spirations, for the procession of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit, because these two processions seem to be of an essentially different kind; otherwise (if the two procession of the Holy Spirit would not differ essentially from the procession of the Son, which is called a generation) one would have to say that the Father ‘generates’ the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the Son, and thus the Holy Spirit could be called a ‘second Son’ of God, or a ‘brother’ of the Son. But such a terminology is not found in the Bible.

Concerning the specific kind of the two processions, the speculating theologians, inspired by corresponding texts in the Holy Scriptures, have established the following very plausible theses:

A) The generation of the Son seems to be an act of self-perception, comparable with the procession of an image of oneself in the mind, in which an observer can perceive himself as in a mirror. According to that, the Son is a mirror image of the Father in the Father’s mind. In the Scriptures, this is indicated, when the Son is called God’s ‘Wisdom’ (1 Cor 1:24, cf. 1 Cor 1:30, Col 2:2–3, Prov 8, Wis 7:24–29), ‘the Truth’ (John 14:6), God’s ‘Word’ or ‘Logos’ (John 1:1, Rev 19:13 – the word has to do with our understanding, i.e. with perception in the intellectual sphere) or ‘God’s image’ (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15) and, more explicitly, “*effulgence of his glory and expression of his hypostasis*” (Heb 1:3, cf. Wis 7:25–26). Another clear indication is the word said by Jesus: “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9, cf. 12:45). Moreover, the Son mediates the perception of the Father, as Jesus clearly teaches in Mt 11:27 (= Lk 10:22b): “*All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father, nor does anyone know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son wants to reveal him.*” This can be interpreted as follows. Mt 11:27a (= Lk 10:22a, cf. John 3:35, 13:3, 16:15): The Father delivers to the Son everything, i.e. the Son is the complete mirror image of the paternal essence. Mt 11:27b: No one knows the Son but the Father, i.e. no one can have the knowledge of the Son in the same degree of immediacy as the Father has it, because the Son is image of the paternal self-knowledge. Mt 11:27c: No one knows the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son wants to reveal him, for the Son is the expressed image of the Father, representing this image to the Father and to the external world as well; therefore not only the Father himself, but also everyone else who wants to ‘see’ the Father, can achieve this only ‘through’ the Son’s revelation.

Of course, it would be a misunderstanding of Mt 11:27c, if we would conclude, that only the Son, and therefore neither the Holy Spirit nor the Father himself, has a complete knowledge about the Father. Naturally, the Father knows himself completely, being all-knowing according to the Bible.¹⁰⁰ Also the Holy Spirit perceives and knows the Father completely, as it is stated in 1 Cor 2:10: The Spirit “searches all things, even the depths of God.” A similar misunderstanding could occur with respect to Mt 11:27b, namely, that only the Father, and therefore neither the Holy Spirit nor the Son himself, has a complete knowledge about the Son. There is no doubt that also the Son knows himself, because according to the Scripture, the Son is all-knowing as the Father,¹⁰¹ and that the Holy Spirit, ‘searching everything’ (cf. 1 Cor 2:10) also knows the Son. To be all-knowing is a property of the Divine Essence, to which all three persons have full access. Thus, the knowledge of the three persons does not differ in content, but only in the mode of knowledge: The Son transmits the knowledge about the Father to all persons, and no person can perceive the Son as a self-image – this is proper for the Father only.

B) The spiration seems to be an act of volition,¹⁰² resulting from the mutual love between Father and Son (cf. John 3:35, 14:31), and is often portrayed as a flame, bursting out of the hearts of the Father and of the Son,¹⁰³ proceeding primarily from the Father (John 15:26), but secondly also from the Son, because the Son mirrors (i.e. looks like and has the same features as) the Father in every aspect (cf. John 16:13–15) except the Fatherhood. Thus, the Holy Spirit is “the love between Father and Son”, or the personified love of God. That the Holy Spirit is essentially connected to the Divine Love, is repeatedly indicated in the Holy Scriptures. An example is 1 John 4:8: “*God is love.*” What is the specific meaning of ‘God’ in this verse? Is it the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit or the whole Trinity? Church Father St. Augustine, who posed this question in his famous work about the Trinity, answered it as follows: The preceding verse reads: “*Love is of God*”. So, if love is God that is also ‘of’ God, it seems that it is a Divine Person proceeding from another, and therefore either the Son or the Holy Spirit. That in fact the Holy Spirit is meant, is indicated, according to St. Augustine, by the following verses (12–13): “*If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit.*” So, that love remaining in us seems to be the Holy Spirit. The same is indicated also in Rom 5:5: “*God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*”

Thus, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the personified Divine self-perception and love, respectively; whereas the Father is often identified with the omnipotent Divine Force. Yet, as we also noticed already, it would be an error, if one would say, that Divine Force, Divine Perception and Divine Love are different “parts” of the Divine Essence or substance called Father, Son and Holy Spirit, such that the Son is nothing else than the Divine Mind, the Holy Spirit nothing else than the Divine Will, and the Father nothing else than the Divine Force. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not parts or partial forces or specific attributes of the Divine Essence, but each of them possesses the whole Divine Essence with all its forces and attributes. So the Father has perfect

¹⁰⁰ In the deuterocanonical prayer of Esther (LXX: Esth 4:17U; Vulg: Esth 14:14), Esther refers to “the Lord, the God of Israel” (4:17; 14:3), that is, to the Father, and says to him: “You have knowledge of everything”. This direct statement about God’s knowledge of everything, interestingly, has been transferred in the New Testament to Jesus Christ. For Peter said to Jesus after his resurrection: “Lord, you know everything” (John 21:17), and during the last Supper also the disciples had confessed: “Now we know that you know everything” (John 16:30). Moreover, in Col 2:3 Paul declares that in Christ “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden”. For these verses see also the explanations for argument 10 in chapter 8.3.

¹⁰¹ See footnote 100.

¹⁰² This matches with the original meaning of the name ‘Ghost/Spirit’ in Biblical as well as other languages, which denotes something that is dynamic, moving, life-giving and powerful. The Latin word ‘Spiritus’, the Greek ‘Pneuma’ and the Hebrew/Aramaic ‘Ruach’ all mean ‘wind/breath’ originally (cf. Ps 33:6, 103:16, 104:29–30, John 3:8, Acts 2:2–4). The word ‘Ghost’ comes from the Indogermanic root *gheis-, meaning excitement, amazement, or fear. Cf. also footnote 210.

¹⁰³ Regarding this symbolism, cf. Acts 2:3–4, where the Holy Spirit comes down to the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

knowledge and love in himself, independently from the two other persons, otherwise he would be imperfect. Likewise, the Son has not only the perceptive power, but also love and force in himself, and the Holy Spirit has not only love, but also perception and force in himself. In spite of this, *perception and knowledge* is the mode of existence for the Son, whereas *love* is the mode of existence for the Holy Spirit, and the special mode of existence for the Father is his *force or power*, because the Father is the source of the whole Trinity and the Father has the power to be without a source for his own existence, to donate to the two other Divine Persons. Although the three persons share all the perfections, in the Bible and also in Church Liturgy and in the writings of the Church Fathers some perfection are attributed mostly to one of the three persons and not (or very seldom only) to the other two. These attributes are called the *appropriations* of that person. So the attributes ‘God’ and ‘Creator’ are appropriations of the Father, while ‘Lord’, ‘Wisdom’ ‘Word’, ‘Logos’, ‘Revealer’ and ‘Savior’ are appropriations of the Son, and ‘Spirit’ ‘Love’ ‘Paraclete’ ‘Holy One’, ‘Perfecter’, ‘Giver of life’, ‘Giver of hope’, ‘Illuminator’, ‘Donator of gifts’ are appropriations of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁴

Now the different attributes of God (e.g. omnipotence, omniscience etc.) are perfections increased to the infinite degree and therefore converge to unity (like parallel lines that, according to some mathematicians, intersect each other in infinity), for if one increases a property like omnipotence one necessarily gets also the other perfections (in the sense that, for example, perfect power seems to be impossible without perfect knowledge, for one cannot exercise full power over things not known). Furthermore, infinitely perfect attributes must have also essential autonomy and independence, i.e. must be substances in the strongest philosophical sense. Therefore, they must somehow coincide with the one Divine Essence, and this is the meaning of the old theological axiom: *God is what he has*. So, for example, God ‘has’ love, therefore he ‘is’ love (as stated in 1 John 4:16). That is to say, that the attributes of God do not only inhere superficially to his essence, but they thoroughly penetrate it, such that the attributes ‘subsist’ in God and in a manner of speaking ‘are’ the substance of God. So neither between two Divine Attributes nor between each of them and the Divine Essence there is a ‘real’ distinction, but it remains only a ‘virtual’ and/or ‘formal’ and/or ‘modal’ distinction. This is meant by the so-called *simplicity* of the Divine Essence, that can be derived also from His unsurpassable perfection: The most perfect entity is not composed of parts that are really distinct, because otherwise each part would be imperfect, because each part would not have in itself the perfections of the other.¹⁰⁵ So one could say that God's omnipotence, his omniscience and the Divine Essence are one and the same substance or ‘thing’ in the same manner as the three Divine Persons are one and the same thing as the essence.

So, as a rule, we can say that *all in God is one*, because all is increased to infinity and coincides; and from this rule we have only exception that the oppositional relations of generating and being generated, and of spirating and being spirated, remain ‘really’ distinct even if we increase the perfections involved here to infinity (because the opposition of relations that are opposed to each other is and remains essential for them). This consideration leads us to the famous core axiom of the Christian Trinity Doctrine, expressed at the Ecumenical Council of Florence: *In God “all things are one where the difference of a relation does not prevent this”*.¹⁰⁶ With regard to this formula, the three Persons ought to be identified with opposing relations. In particular, the Son can reasonably be identified with passive generations (being generated), the Holy Spirit with passive spiration (being spirated) and the Father with active generation and spiration (where we have to observe, that generation and spiration coincide, because between the two there is no opposition of relation). So, in this consideration, the Divine Persons are relations, and notably ‘subsisting relations’ (as Thomas Aquinas has put it), because as all other Divine Attributes they must subsist in the Divine Essence.

¹⁰⁴ The *appropriations* (see also above p. 11 with footnote 40) are attributes of the Divine Essence that can rightly be attributed so every Divine Person, but are more appropriate to the proper mode of existence of *one* specific person and are ascribed, therefore, in the most cases to this special person.

From the *appropriations* one has to distinguish the *notions* and the *properties* of the Divine Persons. The ‘notions’ are constitutive characteristics of a Divine Person, that characterize exclusively only one or two Persons, and that describe a dignity. Those notions, that characterize *one* person only, are called ‘properties’ (some theologians, however, don’t distinguish between ‘notion’ and ‘property’, using these terms as synonyms). The properties are the following:

(1) the innascibility (i.e. the property of ‘existing without having an origin’ or of ‘inoriginateness’ for short) is a property of the Father,

(2) the *active generation* (i.e. the property of generating the Son) is a second property of the Father,

(3) the *passive generation* (i.e. the property of being generated) is a property of the Son,

(4) the passive spiration (i.e. the property of being spirated) is a property of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to these properties, that are also notions, there is a fifth notion, namely

(5) the *active spiration* (i.e. the property of spirating the Holy Spirit) is a notion common to the Father and to the Son.

Thereby (2) and (3) are the two relations induced by the generation; whereas (4) and (5) are the two relations induced by the spiration. The three relations (2), (3), and (4), that are also properties, constitute a person and are usually identified the persons themselves (i.e. the active generation ‘is’ the Father, the passive generation ‘is’ the Son, and the passive spiration ‘is’ the Holy Spirit). To sum up, we find in God *one* essence, *two* processions, *three* persons, *four* relations identical with *four* properties, and *five* notions. Deviating from this, some theologians are referring to six notions, namely three for the Father (innascibility, active generation and active spiration), two for the Son (passive generations and active spiration) and one for the Holy Spirit (passive spiration), but this of course is a mistake, because in this numbering the active spiration occurs twice. Certainly, there are additional peculiarities of the persons, namely not-being-spirated (which is a characteristic for the Father and the Son), not-being-generated (a characteristic for the Father and the Holy Spirit), not-spirating and not-generating and not-letting-proceed-a-person (characteristics for the Holy Spirit). But these peculiarities do not belong to the prerogatives and dignities and therefore are not counted as properties or notions. Moreover, there are many further peculiarities of the persons that are not constitutive for them, but express a special relation to the outside world. For example, incarnation, life as a human, having two natures and the resurrection are characteristics of the Son only; to be sent in to the world is a common characteristic of the Son and the Holy Spirit; and to send the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world is a characteristic of the Father. In addition, we have numerous characteristics based on acts and prayers of men: For example, if Peter addresses himself in his prayer to the Father (cf. 1 Pet 1:3), then the Father gets the characteristic of being the addressee of this concrete Petrinian prayer.

¹⁰⁵ In order to conceive an infinitely perfect being, one has not only to increase abilities, but also to concentrate all abilities in one single and simple entity without composition of parts. Consider an office having a lot of different devices for different tasks (a writing machine, a separate calculator, a separate copier and so on). It would be much more perfect, if one could replace all this different stuff by a single device that can do all required tasks: an ‘all-in-one’-device. According to this line of thought, the most perfect being must be an incomposed simple ‘point-like’ entity, in which infinitely many abilities are concentrated.

¹⁰⁶ Council of Florence, Bull of Union with the Copts and Ethiopians *Cantate Domino*, February 4, 1442 (DH 1330).

But many of these details are only vaguely hinted at in the Scriptures. They disclose themselves only in a very attentive meditation over the Holy Scriptures accompanied by a careful philosophical analysis; for God speaks only silently about the secrets of his innermost life. Neither Scripture nor human reason provide us with a *complete* comprehension in these matters. It should be admitted that the Most Holy Trinity, the deepest of all mysteries, exceeds and will forever exceed our proper insight. But two things can and should be shown: First and foremost, that the Trinity Doctrine is in accordance with the Holy Scripture, and secondly, that the doctrine is not irrational and not illogical, even if it exceeds our imagination.¹⁰⁷

The two eternal *processions* in God correspond to (and are extended by) two temporal *missions*: *God has sent the Son and the Holy Spirit into world*: (cf. Isa 48:16), whereby the eternal processions received an extension into the temporal world. The Father ‘sent’ his Son into the world (Lk 20:13, John 3:17,34, 4:34, 5:23–24,30,37, 6:38–39,44, 7:16,18,28,33, 8:16,18,26,29,42, 9:4, 12:44–45,49, 13:20, 14:24, 15:21, 17:3, 20:21, Rom 8:3); and the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7). Thereby the Holy Spirit comes to us in an incorporeal and mostly invisible way, visible only *through his effects*: He edifies the Church, enlightens the Prophets and the faithful, sanctifies them and gives them strength to do good and to serve God in the right manner. On the other hand, the Son came personally and even corporeally into the world, through incarnation, which is another mystery, that shall be explained in the following chapter 5.

With regard to these ‘missions’ of the Son and the Holy Spirit one can say that in addition to the so-called *immanent Trinity*, that we have considered so far, and that exists in God independently of (even before) the creation of the world, there is also a so-called *economical Trinity*, that is the Trinity as it appeared into our temporal world via the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. So the economical Trinity includes the historical Jesus (the incarnated Son of God) and the experienced effects of the Holy Spirit. The economical Trinity is apparently an image of the immanent one, and this can be used for theological conclusions. For example, when Christ ‘breathed’ on the Apostles and thereby transmitted the Holy Spirit to them (John 20:22, cf. Acts 7:55–56), one can conclude that probably also in the immanent Trinity, the Son ‘spirates’ and lets the Spirit proceed; in this way, we get an interesting and very important argument for the ‘Filioque’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ In my view the concept of the Trinity is a consistent concept, and as presented here, it does not involve any clear contradiction to any commonly recognized logical principle. A similar view is held by almost all catholic theologians and philosophers (among the few exceptions the most notable one is *Francisco Suárez*, † 1617, who taught that the principle, that if both *a* and *b* are identical with *c* then *a* must be identical with *b*, is verified only by induction within the realm of creatures, whereas it does not apply straightforwardly to the infinite and uncreated God; about this doctrine cf. *Thomas Marschler*, *Die spekulative Trinitätslehre des Francisco Suárez S.J. in ihrem philosophisch-theologischen Kontext*, Münster 2008, pp. 338–342 with footnote 120). On the other side, it seems that we have no imagination and understanding of the Divine Trinity clear enough to resolve all doubts about its consistency by means of a positive proof, and still less can we prove that the trinitarian structure is necessary for God; therefore it remains *a matter of faith and a mystery in the strict sense*. This was confirmed by the local Council of Cologne in 1860, and seems to be indicated also in the Scripture, for Mt 11:27 and 1 Cor 2,11 seem to imply that the Divine Persons are properly understood only by the three Divine Persons themselves. The same has been expressed by a nice medieval legend about Church Father St. Augustine († 430) that appeared in print more than 800 years after Augustine's death (in the book *Bonum universale de apibus* II 48, pp. 437–439 in the 1627 edition of Balthasar Belleri; written c. 1260 by the Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré): On one day during the many years in which Augustine composed his main work *De Trinitate* (between 400 and 417), Augustine was meditating on the Trinity as he walked along the beach at the North African seashore near of Hippo Regius, and suddenly he encountered a child, sitting in the sand and trying to pour the water of the sea with a shell into a hole he had dug into the sand. While the Saint smiled and pointed out the vanity of such an endeavor, the child responded that he was being just as unreasonable in seeking to explain “the inexplicable Mystery of the undivided Trinity” (p. 438). – Despite of this, a few theologians have tried to prove that God must necessarily include three Divine Persons, and thereby had conceived some really interesting ideas (although some of them have been rebuked by the Catholic Church in the 19th century: namely Günther, Oischinger and Froschhammer). The most famous and recognized of these theologians is *Richard of St. Victor* († 1173), who thought that there are necessary reasons for the trinitarian structure of God: He argues in his *De Trinitate* 3 that since God is perfect, He must have also the greatest perfection, namely ‘love’, in the most perfect manner; his presupposes that there must be in God two persons at least that love each other. But since an exclusive mutual love between two persons is still imperfect, there must be a third Person in God, who is a ‘condilectus’ of the first two lovers (i.e. a person included in their love). Other interesting ideas have been exhibited by *Ramon Llull* († 1316), who speculated, that God, being good and great, must necessarily generate something good and great like him, and thus we have two Divine Persons, one that generates and one that is generated; but the perfection of greatness and goodness requires that out of the generating and the generated person proceed a third good and great entity, that is a third Person. *Anton Günther* († 1863), following ideas of *Hegel* († 1831) and *Schelling* († 1854, see footnotes 114 and 131), speculated that from God's self-consciousness must necessarily arise subject, object and identity as thesis, antithesis and synthesis, thus building a (tritheistic?) Trinity (see footnote 131). Günther's contemporaries had similar ideas, for example *Johann Nepomuk Paul Oischinger* († 1876) developed the Trinity from the notions of life, form and unity, and *Jacob Froschhammer* († 1893) speculated that God as a perfect entity must necessarily have intellect and will; and since his essence, his intellect and his will must be perfect, each of these three entities must have personality; thus, a trinitarian God seems to be necessary. In our days, *Walter Simonis* († 2012) derived the Divine Trinity from the principle that every entity is already a trinity, having the transcendental attributes of goodness, truth and beauty.

¹⁰⁸ See footnote 97 and the end of chapter 6.

5. Trinity and Incarnation

As we saw, the answer to our question ‘who or what was Jesus Christ?’ given by the Trinity Doctrine is this: Christ was one of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God, the Second Divine Person and, ultimately, the one true God himself.

Although this answer seems to be correct, nonetheless it remains very unsatisfactory. God is a spirit (John 4:24), he is invisible (1 Tim 6:16), lives in the heavens (that is: in a transcendent plain of existence outside the ordinary world), he “inhabits inaccessible light” (1 Tim 6:16) and is immortal; whereas Christ lived among us on earth and like us in a visible body, he suffered, was crucified and died. Obviously, there is an infinite difference between God and a human, and Christ seems to have been both at the same time. So we have a great mystery again.

We frequently read in the Bible, that God talks to men, and even appears to them in different forms. For example, God appeared to Abraham in form of three men (Gen 18, as we have seen this was probably an indication of the Trinity) and the Holy Spirit appeared in form of a dove (Lk 3:22) and later in form of tongues of fire (Acts 2:3–4). But it would be false to conclude that God has indeed a voice or the shape of a man or a dove of tongues of fire, for God has no corporal body (cf. John 5:37 and John 4:24 with Lk 24:39) and is invisible (Col 1:15, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16). Thus, God's essence can't be seen with he eyes or be heard with the ears. So when ‘God’ appeared in the Old Testament, it was not directly God himself, but shapes and voices represented him for the duration of the appearance (either in the imagination, or in reality) and dispersed into Nothing afterwards. Several heretics in early Christendom believed that the visible Christ was only such a shape again, through which God had made visible himself. According to this view called *Docetism*¹⁰⁹ He was not a true human, and His suffering and death was an illusion. In contrast, according to the faith of the Church, Christ was truly a human being made of flesh and blood, He suffered and died truly, and afterward was resurrected from the dead. The Church believes, as also the Scripture clearly testifies, that the Son, one of the Trinity, became a ‘human’ indeed (Mk 15:39, Lk 23:47, John 8:40, Rom 5:15, 1 Cor 15:21–22; 1 Tim 2:5), having a corporal body of ‘flesh’ (cf. Lk 24:39, John 1:14, Heb 2:14, 1 John 4:2–3, 2 John 1:7), and a human ‘spirit’ or spiritual ‘soul’ (cf. Mt 26:38, Mk 14:34; Lk 23:46, John 11:33). The true humanity of Jesus is emphasized also in Heb 2:17, where it is stated that the Son “*has been made like the brothers in every respect*”, where the ‘brothers’ are the humans he has sanctified according to Heb 2:10–13.¹¹⁰

But since the Son as God is also unchangeable (Mal 3:6; Heb 1:10–12; Jas 1:17), He could not cease being God. Accordingly, the incarnation was not a *transformation or metamorphosis* of the Second Divine Person into a human, but can only have been an *additional adoption of a human nature*, in such a way that *after* the incarnation the Son possesses *two* natures or essences: the Divine Nature and a human nature, called Christ's *humanity* and Christ's *Divinity* (or Christ's *Godhead*). Consequently, the incarnation occurred in the following way: God created in the womb of the Virgin Mary a human, Jesus (and in this act, as in every creation act, all three persons of the Trinity worked together) and assigned this human being to the Second Divine Person. After this event the Son possesses, encompasses and is realized in two natures (essences, essential substances): apart from and in addition to the Divine Nature also a human nature,¹¹¹ whereas the Father and the Holy Spirit still possess only one nature: the Divine one. Therefore, only the Son has been incarnated, not the Father or the Holy Spirit.

The two natures or essences (divinity and humanity) of the Son are *unconfused (unmixed)* and *unchanged*, otherwise Christ would have been a hermaphrodite, half-god and half-human, which is absurd; he possesses both entire natures completely, and both maintain their integrity in Jesus Christ. So we can and must keep apart both natures. But on the other hand the natures are not *separated or divided*, as if we have to deal with two distinct persons, each of which possesses one of the natures, otherwise there would be two Sons of God, one uncreated Divine Son in heaven and another created human Son on earth; for there is only one Son of God. In order to emphasize this unity, some Church Fathers speak of Jesus Christ, the *God-Man*, but not in the sense of a composite being, partly a god and partly a man, but in the sense of one person, possessing the whole Divine Nature and a whole human nature, being ‘the true God and a true human’ at the same time.¹¹²

Thus, Jesus Christ was conceived and born as a true human, consisting of a human body and a human soul¹¹³ (bearing a human mind, human will and human emotions) and from the moment of his conception He has been closely connected to the Second Divine Person in a unique manner. This deep connection is called *hypostatic (or: personal) union*, in which the two natures are connected by being governed by one and the same person (or one and the same personal subject called ‘hypostasis’ in Greek). That means, that the human Jesus Christ and the Divine Son of God are not two persons and not two hypostases, but one person and one hypostasis only, such that die human Jesus cannot say ‘you’ to the Second Divine Person, because they are one and the same subject, one and the same ‘I’. The God-Man Jesus Christ got no human subsistence (personal core) in addition to the Divine one,

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 124.

¹¹⁰ In addition to the clear testimony for Christ's humanity, that Jesus was ‘in every respect’ like us (Heb 2:17 in the context of Heb 2:10–17), we have another clear statement in Heb 4:14–5,1: “Since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. [...] For every high priest taken from among *men* is ordained for men in things pertaining to God.” See also the arguments for the Subordination of Christ under God exposed and discussed in chapter 8, most of which are rather testimonies for his true humanity.

¹¹¹ Cf. footnote 230.

¹¹² This doctrine was already promoted by Tertullian (c. 215) and St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107); see footnotes 6 and 215. It was defined at the Councils of Ephesus 431 and Chalcedon 451 (see chapter 6).

¹¹³ This was officially stated, for example, by the Fifteenth *Ecumenical Council (the Council of Vienne)* in 1312 (which was attended by Blessed Raimund Lullus, † 1315). According to the council, the Son of God “subsisting eternally together with the Father”, assumed “in the bridal chamber [= womb]” of his virginal mother “a human body capable of suffering and an intellective or rational soul” (DH 900).

but in the incarnation event, the unchanged personal core of the eternal Son, in addition to its function to serve as one of the three subsistence modes of the Divine nature, took over the function to serve as subsistence of the assumed human nature of Christ. As we shall see in chapter 8.2, the hypostatic union has been constituted not only for Christ's earthly life, but will last forever.

Jesus Christ, then, has always been truly the Son of God, and since His incarnation He was (is, and will be forever) true God and true man at the same time. As true man he could really suffer and die, and he could say: "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). But as true God he could say at the same time: "*I and the Father are one*" (John 10:30). Because of the 'personal unity' between the Man Jesus and the Divine Son we can predicate Jesus' acts, sufferings and experiences of God. So for example, it can be said with respect to that unity, that "God came in our world" or that "he suffered and died on the cross". But it should be clear, how this is meant. Strictly speaking, this applies neither to the Trinity nor the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but only the Son; and even for the Son it applies only with respect to His human nature.¹¹⁴

So, the Incarnation Doctrine dealing with the two essences or natures in Christ complements the Trinity Doctrine: While the Trinity Doctrine tries to explain, *who* came to redeem us: The Son of God, one of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation Doctrine tries to explain, *how* the Son came into the world (John 1:1). Only both doctrines, taken together, provide the proper understanding of Christ's identity. Both doctrines can be summarized and memorized by the following formulas:

Trinity Doctrine:	three persons (Father- Son- Holy Spirit) – one essence or nature (Godhead).
Two-Natures-Doctrine:	one person (Son) – two essences or natures (Divinity and Humanity). ¹¹⁵

Whether and how this doctrine is rooted in the Bible, we shall discuss deeper in chapter 8.

¹¹⁴ In order to avoid contradictions, one divides statements about Christ according to their reference to His humanity and His Divinity or Godhead (see also footnote 140). For example, the Creed of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 (see also footnote 176) confesses about Christ: „*Although according to divinity He is immortal and impassible, the very same according to humanity was made passible and mortal*” (DH 801). The first statement, according to which Christ was impassible with reference to His Godhead (meaning that he could not suffer) is directed against the error of the so-called *Theopaschite Heresy*, that is against the doctrine that Christ could suffer even with respect to His Divine Nature (such that 'God as God' is able to suffer), as in the Early Church the *Patipassians* (i.e. *Sabellianists* and *Modalists*: see footnote 129) and later some Monophysites held (see p. 36), as well as since the 19th century some *Idealistic Christian Philosophers* (for example Schelling; see footnotes 107 and 131) and since the 20th century the *Process Theologians* and some *Evangelicals*; the latter mainly due to a much too literal understanding of anthropomorphic statements about God in the Scriptures. This false Theopaschitism has to be distinguished from *orthodox Theopaschitism* (see p. 37 with footnote 148), i.e. the doctrine that God could suffer (only) with respect to the Christ's humanity, which is justified by the hypostatic union of His humanity with His Godhead (this doctrine is expressed in the second statement in the above quotation from the Lateran Council's Creed).

¹¹⁵ Since Christ's human nature consists of body and soul (cf. footnote 113), which can be viewed as 'two (partial) substances', one could add, that the Son consists of *three substances*: body, soul and Divinity. Nevertheless, the statement that Christ consisted of three substances sounded very unusual, when *Archbishop St. Julian II. of Toledo, the first Primate of Spain* († 690) expressed it in his work *Apologia fidei verae*. So *Pope St. Benedikt II.* (684–685) first had objected to this new expression, but after Julian had explained it in his book *Liber responsionis fidei nostrae*, *Pope St. Sergius I.* (687–701) seems to have given his consent. Even shortly before this, the expression appeared in the *Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo* in 675 (DH 535, see p. 40) and was accepted by the *Fourteenth and Fifteenth Council of Toledo* in 688 (cf. DH 567). Later the *Council of Frankfurt*, held in 794 under the patronage of Emperor Charles the Great, rejected it (DH 613), but the claim of this Synod to be ecumenical and to replace the ecumenical Nicaean Council of 787 was not accepted by *Pope Hadrian I* or any other Pope.

6. Development of the Doctrine of Trinity and Incarnation

The doctrine was build principally by the first seven Ecumenical Councils,¹¹⁶ which alternatingly emphasized unity and plurality, whereby, remarkably, the councils with odd numbers stressed the unity and the councils with even numbers the plurality:

- (1) The *First Ecumenical Council* (*First Council of Nicaea* in the year 325) with 318 bishops,¹¹⁷ following *St. Athanasius* (Deacon and later *Patriarch of Alexandria*, † 373), formulated a Creed against the doctrine of the *Arians*, the supporters of the Alexandrian Priest *Arius* († 336), who had taught since 318 that Christ was not God in the full sense, but only the highest and first created Angel.¹¹⁸ This Creed confessed Christ's true Godhead, and thereby refuted also the more radical *Psilanthropism* or *Adoptianism* or *Dynamism* founded about 190 by *Theodotus the Shoemaker of Byzantium* (holding that Christ was a 'mere man' or in Greek 'psilos anthropos', who was 'adopted' by God to be his Son at baptism, where he received a supernatural 'power' or in Greek 'dynamis' to do wonders)¹¹⁹ as well as the less radical *Subordinatianism* ascribed wrongly or rightly to early ecclesiastical teachers such as *Origen* († 254) (holding that Christ was an emanation of God or 'second God')

¹¹⁶ A council (also called *synod*) is a conference of bishops as successors of the Apostles, in order to discuss and settle matters of Church doctrine and practice (cf. Mt 18,18–20). A council is called 'Ecumenical' (from Greek 'oikoumene' = the whole inhabited world), if it has the greatest authority and importance; this implies according to the understanding of the Catholic Church, that the council meets at least the following two requirements:

(1) the pope as successor of Apostle Peter should *convoke* the council and *preside* over it, but at least he has to *approve and ratify* its decisions, using the authority of St. Peter (cf. Mt 16,18–19; Lk 22:32; cf. also Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium 22, DH 4146).

(2) the bishops *invited* to participate are not those of a certain region only, but *all Catholic bishops of the word, who are not excommunicated*; it is not required, however, that all invited bishops must *in fact* participate. This second requirement is alluded to by the word 'ecumenical', so this word has *not* the meaning 'inter-confessional', although non-catholics have often been invited to attend, especially if the council's aim was to restore Christian unity. Also often lower clerics and even laymen have been invited (as advisors or sometimes even with the right to vote), but the final decisions of ecumenical councils are up to the bishops only.

Since ecumenical councils represent in the most solemn form "the Church of living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), they can make so-called 'infallible' decisions (cf. Mt 18:18), i.e. they can set up so-called irreversible dogmas. Not every sentence can be raised to a dogma, this is possible only for a sentence that intends to clarify an aspect of the Christian faith and/or morals contained in the Divine revelation, which has been given once to the Apostles and first disciples of Jesus, and has been handed down to us by them in the apostolic tradition, either in oral form only or (as for the most important doctrines it is the case) at least implicitly in written form (i.e. in the Bible); cf. 2 Thess 2:15. The truth-founding gift of infallibility is a power that Jesus originally has committed to St. Peter alone in Mt 16:19 and afterwards also to other Apostles collectively in Mt 18:18, meaning that Peter *could* decide alone, but *should* use this power only in exceptional urgent cases, while normally he *should* act together with the College of Apostles; analogously infallible/irreversible decisions *could* – and very seldom have been – made by the pope without an ecumenical council, but in ordinary cases *should* be made only on ecumenical councils. Of course, not *all* decisions of a council (or a pope) are infallible (especially mere disciplinary decisions are not, as depositions of bishops, for example), but only those *dealing with clarification of the revealed faith and morals*, whereby the *intention to make an irrevocably definite and universally valid decision is explicitly and clearly expressed*, which can be done, for example, by using words like 'we define', or by 'anathematizing', i.e. solemnly excluding from the Church (cf. 1 Cor 16:22, Gal 1:8–9) anyone who decisively refused to accept the decision. Nevertheless, in certain cases, the question whether a certain text has to be counted as infallible, remains open for debate. For further biblical foundations concerning Tradition, Church Magisterium and Papacy see my treatises *Das Papstamt* and *Mündliche Tradition, kirchliches Lehramt und die Lehre von den sieben Sakramenten* (part 1).

The decisions of councils are not 'democratic' in the sense that a *majority* can impose a final binding decision over a non-convinced minority of bishops; rather it is required *full unanimity*, meaning that *each and every bishop* who remains in communion with the Church subscribes and supports the decision; which sometimes, sadly, can only be achieved by excommunicating individual dissenting bishops. Although usually, there have been only a few numbers of final dissenters (for example, only two at the Council of Nicaea, see footnote 118), this can occasionally can deepen a division within Christianity. In particular, the Council of Chalcedon 451 excommunicated Bishop Dioscorus of Alexandria, which led to the separation of the Miaphysite 'Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria' from the Catholics. Similarly, the Council of Ephesus 431 excommunicated Bishop Nestorius of Constantinople, which deepened the differences between the Catholic Church within the Roman Empire and the 'Church of the East' outside of it in Assyria and Persia; for the Christians in those countries supported Nestorius and later canonized him; yet, since no bishop of the Assyria or Persia had attended the council, the council did not *cause* the split directly. In general, it would be false to say that ecumenical councils have been the ultimate cause for the splitting of Christianity; to the contrary, the councils in general succeeded in their aim to prevent or heal Schisms and restore peace, and thus contributed to Christian unity.

The established Catholic list of ecumenical councils includes 21 councils, in particular the *Councils of Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451, Constantinople II 553, Constantinople III 680–681, Nicaea II 787, Constantinople IV 869–870, Lateran I 1123, Lateran II 1139, Lateran III 1179, Lateran IV 1215, Lyons 1245, Lyons II 1278, Vienne 1311–1312, Constance 1414–1418, Florence 1439–1442 (or: Basel/Ferrara/Florence/Rome 1431–1445), Lateran V 1512–1517, Trent 1545–1563, Vatican I 1869–1870, Vatican II 1962–1965*. This list has no official character, but rests on the consensus of theologians; so different assessments regarding the ecumenicity of certain councils (or parts thereof) remain possible and are open for debate (see, for example, footnotes 125, 146, 152, 168 and especially 191). For example, *Cardinal St. Robert Bellarmine* in 1590 listed 18 Ecumenical Councils from Nicaea to Trent, while today the number is 19 (he omitted the *Council of Constance*, and indeed even today not all of its decisions are accepted, e.g. the declaration *Haec Sancta* of the Council's superiority over the pope is rejected, and Pope Martin V. at that time confirmed only the things done at the Council "in a conciliar manner" without specifying what he meant; moreover, Bellarmine acknowledged only the unextended version of the Council of Florence as 16th Council, i.e. he omitted the sessions held previously in Basel). Bellarmine's list was received by Church historian *Cardinal Cesare Baronio* († 1607) and the 'Roman Collection' of Councils, published under the authority of *Pope Paul V* in 1608–12. Church historian *Joseph Hefele* in 1855 defended as ecumenical all 19 councils of the above list until Trent (Conciliengeschichte, Vol 1, pp. 57–58), and *Pope St. John XXIII.*, in solemnly opening *Vatican II* on October 11, 1962, identified *Vatican II* as "*the twenty-first ecumenical council*", thereby establishing the whole list. In 1974, his successor, *Blessed Pope Paul VI.*, called the councils from Lateran I bis Lyon II at least "*general synods, celebrated in the West*" (*Ludguni in Urbe*, AAS 1974, 620, see also footnote 177). This list, however, could not only be shortened, but also extended: For example, the Biblical 'Apostolic Council of Jerusalem' that took place 48 AD (cf. Acts 15,1–31; Gal 2,1–10) seems to have been an (exceptional) ecumenical council, too, and should be set on the list in my opinion, perhaps to be counted as the 'Zeroth' Ecumenical Council. But the important thing is: The discussion about whether a certain council contained in the list of the 21 councils is really ecumenic or not, does not affect the list of Catholic dogmas: Since the decrees of all 21 councils (with certain exceptions) have been approved by the popes (for the first eight councils, see footnotes 125, 150, 153, 167 and 168, and every other council of the later ones was at least partially presided by the pope personally), all sentences that these councils wanted to dogmatize (except from those contained in decrees that have *not* clearly been approved by the pope), by virtue of *papal authority*, are indeed infallible dogmas.

¹¹⁷ It has often been emphasized, that 118 was the exact number of Abraham's servants in Gen 14,14. This number of 318 '*God-bearing Fathers*' is explicitly given by St. Athanasius and was officially adopted; church historian *Eusebius of Caesarea*, who like Athanasius was also personally attending the council, spoke of more than 250; the most reliable extant copies of lists of participants have c. 230 names, but seem to be incomplete. The first Christian *Emperor Constantine I. the Great* (the son of St. Helena, who in the Orthodox Church is venerated together with Helena as a Saint and 'Equal-to-the-Apostles' and has been called 'the thirteenth Apostle' despite his later Arian tendencies), had convoked the council probably in agreement with *Pope St. Sylvester I.* (who couldn't personally attend due to his age, but was present by his legates), and is said to have invited all known bishops of the empire (about 1000 in the east and 800 in the west), to which he offered public conveyance of his Empire and the financing of the journey; and since every bishop was permitted to take with him two priests and three deacons, the total number of people presented may have been above 1800. Only a very few Bishops, thought, came from the western part of the Empire: at least one of Britain,

subordinate to the Father, being not equal but only similar to Him).¹²⁰ The Council's Creed confessed that Christ was “*of the essence of the Father*”, “*generated, not created*” and “*consubstantial*”¹²¹ with the Father”. The council rejected also the Arian propositions against the Son's immutable eternal existence and His origin out of God's substance, namely the sentences “*there was [a time] when he was not*”,¹²² “*before being born he was not*”, “*he came into existence out of nothing*” or “*out of a different hypostasis or ousia*”,¹²³ or “*he is created or subject to change or alteration*”. So the council's main concern was to confirm the *true Godhead of the Son*. It likewise confessed His true *humanity*, stating that He “*was incarnate and inhumanate*”, i.e. assumed flesh and humanity, which was opposed to the view of the *Docetists* (*Gnostics* and *Manichaeans*, who regarded Christ's body as an illusion)¹²⁴ and to the (later occurring) *Apollinarians* (confessing his true flesh, but denying his true human soul endowed with a human mind; the Apollinarians held that the Logos – Christ's Godhead – took the place of the soul). Last not least, the council emphasized the *unity* of God: “*We believe in one God: The Father [...] [and] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God [...]*”

- (2) The *Second Ecumenical Council* (*First Council of Constantinople*, 381) with 150 attendants,¹²⁵ followed the doctrine of the *three Cappadocian Fathers*: *St. Basil of Caesarea* († 379) who died before the council but influenced it with his magnificent treatise about the Holy Spirit, Basil's younger brother *Bishop St. Gregory of Nyssa* († c. 395) who attended the council, and *St.*

Gaul, Spain, Italy, Carthage and Dalmatia, respectively; overall probably not more than ten. Another small minority were the bishops who came even from beyond the empire: among them at least John, bishop of Peria and India, a Gothic Bishop Theophilus, and Stratophilus, bishop of Pitium in Georgia. Besides *St. Athanasius of Alexandria* (who attended as a Deacon only), and *St. Alexander of Constantinople* (who attended as Priest and legate of the aged Bishop of this city, whose successor he would become later), the famous Bishops said to have attended include *Hosius of Cordoba* in Spain (who probably presided the council as special delegate of *Pope St. Sylvester*, who was presented also by three other ordinary legates), *St. Alexander of Alexandria* (St. Athanasius' Bishop), *St. Eustathius of Antiochia*, *St. Macarius of Jerusalem*, Confessor *St. Paphnutius of Thebes*, *St. Spyridon of Trimythous in Cyprus*, *St. Hypathius of Gangra* and according to tradition also *St. Nicholas of Myra* who is said by a legend to have slapped Arius there in his face (meant probably symbolically). At the end all bishops agreed with the decisions, with two exceptions: bishops Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais in Libya, who were excommunicated together with Arius. Nevertheless, many who had subscribed the Council's Creed, later, following the Emperor and his successors, fell back into Arianism or Semi-Arianism (see footnote 118).

¹¹⁸ Between 325 and 381 (i.e. in the time between the First and the Second Ecumenical Council), different kinds of Arianism and Semi-Arianism (see footnotes 121 and 130) remained widespread, and Arianism even became the ‘mainstream’ Theology within in the Roman Empire, such that temporarily the pope and St. Athanasius were almost the only bishops supporting the Nicene Creed, whereby Athanasius has been sent five times into exile by emperors favoring Arianism. Among the *new-converted German tribes*, who became acquainted with Christendom originally in the form of Arianism (already Ulphilas, † 383, the famous first Gothic Bishop, was an Arian), Arianism endured even longer, dominating until the 6/7th century. The Visigoths in Spain, for example, converted from Arianism to Catholicism under King Rekkared I. at the Third Regional Council of Toledo in 589 (see footnote 159). The Germans seem to have liked the idea that Christ was a Semi-God resembling the superhuman heroes of German mythology (like Thor, Odin's Son, for example), whence certain germanophile movements even today embrace Arianism and call it ‘Aryanism’. The most powerful contemporary adherents to Arianism are *Jehovah's Witnesses* (originating from a Bible Student Movement guided by the teachings of *Charles Taze Russell* since 1879; cf. also footnote 39). However, there are some slight differences between the Witnesses and the original Arians; for example, the Arians prayed to Jesus, whereas the Witnesses pray only to *Jehovah* (their favorite name variant of God's name Yahweh; see my treatise about *God's Name*) and hold that direct prayers to Jesus are a form of idolatry (cf. footnote 67); also, the Arians thought the Holy Spirit like the Logos was a personal creature, whereas the Witnesses think that the Spirit is a non-personal Divine Force. Arianism survives in the ‘*Church of God (Seventh Day) - Salem Conference*’, founded 1933, a minority within the Adventist movement, in which several Arian groups have been formed since the second half of the 19th century, and the ‘*Holy Arian Catholic and Apostolic Church*’, founded in 2005, who canonized Arius in 2006.

¹¹⁹ The idea of Adoptianism is that a man became God rather than that God became man. Before Theodot, certain Jewish Christians belonging to the movement of the *Ebionites* (‘the poor ones’, cf. Mt 5:3) in the early 2nd century may have had similar ideas (cf. also *Cerinthus' doctrine* in footnote 133), whereas other members of that movement (those who believed in the so-called Ebionite Gospel and in the Book of Elcesai) saw Christ as an angelic creature rather, and thus had been precursors of Arius (not of Theodot). The most famous later adherent of Theodotus' sect was *Paul of Samosata*, who reigned as *Bishop (Patriarch) of Antioch* 260–268 and was deposed from his office by a synod (or local council) in Antioch (268/9; see footnote 19); he is mentioned in canon 19 of the Nicene Council (stating that converts returning from Paul of Samosata to the Church, are to be re-baptized; as a rule until today, the Baptism by non-trinitarians is thought to be invalid within the trinitarian Churches). Later adherents of Psilanthropism were the *Photinians* in the 4th century (see footnote 130). The modern Adoptianist/Psilanthropist movement started with Socinianism, founded by the radical reformers Lellio Sozzini († 1562) and his nephew Fausto Sozzini († 1604), who rejected the idea of the preexistence of Christ (for Scripture verses supporting preexistence, see p. 62).

¹²⁰ A subordinatist view has been ascribed to virtually every Pre-Nicene Father (see footnote 3), but it is dubious, whether even Origen really had this view (and undisputed Semi-Arian Subordinationism occurred only after the Nicene Council, see footnote 118). Some researchers defend Origen's orthodoxy: After all, Origen (commenting Heb 1:3) had described the Son as ‘homousios’ (i.e. possessing the same essence as the Father) long before the Nicene Council accepted this description as its main christological formula (see footnote 121). Origen was the first *Catholic* author who applied ‘homousios’ to the Son, but *before him* this was done already by the *Gnostic* teacher *Basilides* (c. 135, for Gnosticism see footnote 124; see also footnote 18 for the subsequent Gnostic *Valentinus*), who, according to Hippolyt (Refutatio 7,22) used the enigmatic expression “*three-part sonship in every respect homousios with the God who is not, begotten from [ek] what does not exist*”. After Origen, the term ‘homousios’ was used by *Paul of Samosata* in a heretical sense and therefore condemned in this sense by the *Synod of Antioch* 268/9, see footnotes 18 and 119). Origen also emphasized the eternity of the Son. In AD 553, Origen was posthumously condemned as heretical (see footnote 147), but not because of his view on the Trinity (although due to his unusual designation of the Son as a ‘second god’ some people classified him as a Bitheist, see 131).

¹²¹ The Greek word was ‘homousios’, being composed of ‘homos’ (meaning ‘common’ as well as ‘equal’) and ‘ousia’ (meaning ‘substance’ or ‘essence’), so the term suggests that Christ and the Father share one and the same *common substance* and are therefore *equal* (for another understanding of homousios, rejected by the Church, see footnote 18; cf. also footnote 120). The later Subordinationists (sometimes called Semi-Arians) replaced this term by ‘homoiousios’ (which differs only by “one iota” – the Greek letter i – from the original term, cf. Mt 5:18), where the word element ‘homos’ was substituted by ‘homoios’, which means ‘similar, but not equal in the full sense’; so ‘homoiousios’ suggests that Father and Son have a similar but not equal Divine Substance. Still others wanted to use only the term ‘homoios’ (similar), without referring to philosophical terms like substance or essence (ousia). The real full-blown Arians, however, rejected all this and stated that the Son was ‘*anhomoios*’ (not similar) to the Father. – It has been criticized that the terms ‘homousios’ and ‘homoiousios’ do not occur in the Bible. But, as already explained, Father and Son share one and the same *name* according to the Bible, and ‘name’ is the biblical expression for ‘essence’ (see our seventh argument in chapter 2), whence the sharing of one and the same name amounts to ‘consubstantiality’ or ‘being homousios’. Moreover, that Father and Son can be called ‘equal’ follows immediately from Phil 2:6; and can be deduced also from Heb 1:3, where the Son in his relation to the Father is called ‘the character [= exact representation] of His [the Father's] hypostasis’.

¹²² This most famous Arian formula reads in the Greek original: *En [pote] hote ouk en, ἦν [πότε] ὅτε οὐκ ἦν*. Interestingly, it had already been rejected more than 60 years before the Council of Nicaea, in the year 262 by Pope St. Dionysius (see footnote 129).

¹²³ One can see here, that Arius and the Council of Nicaea used the word ‘hypostasis’ as synonym for ‘ousia’ (*substance/essence*) and didn't follow the later linguistic standards of the theologians, according to which ‘hypostasis’ as well as ‘prosopon’ denotes the personal core or subsistence mode. For the linguistic problems in early Christian theology see footnote 18.

Gregory of Nazianzus ‘the theologian’ († 390), who was Bishop of Constantinople for a short time 380–381 and resigned from this office at the Council. Also Bishop St. Cyrill of Jerusalem was present. According to tradition this council established the so-called *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* that is used up to the present day in the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and that later was adopted also into the Holy Mass of the Roman Rite.¹²⁶ This Creed was a revision of the older *Creed* of the Council of Nicaea, which had not mentioned any details about the Holy Spirit and had ended with the sentence: “And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit”. The new Creed contained additions in accordance with the doctrine of the new council, that affirmed the true Godhead of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁷ For it was the main concern of the council to refute the teaching of the *Macedonians*, being lead by Bishop *Macedonius of Constantinople* (deposed 360) – called *Pneumatomachians* (Greek word for ‘Fighters against the Spirit’) by their orthodox opponents –, according to which the Holy Spirit was only an Angel created by and subordinated to the Logos, being the most high of the ‘ministering spirits’ (Heb 1:14).¹²⁸ The council condemned also other heresies, among them *Apollinarism* led by Bishop *Apollinaris of Laodicea* († 390) (whose view was contrary to the Nicene Creed already; see above), and *Sabellianism* led by *Sabellius* (fl. 215 in Rome) called also *Modalism* or *Patripassianism*, which over-emphasized unity, holding that the three ‘Persons’ Father, Son and Holy Spirit are only modes,

¹²⁴ *Docetism* (from Greek ‘dokeo’ = ‘to seem’, ‘to appear’) affirms that Jesus Christ had only an apparent body (see also p. 29; also *Nihilianism*, as described in footnote 149 is a mitigated sort of Docetism). For example, the famous heretics *Cerdo* and *Marcion* in the 2nd century have been Docetists (see footnote 131; cf. also the doctrine of *Cerinthus* in footnote 133). Most adherents of Docetism came from ‘Gnostic’ movements: secret communities in the first centuries, claiming to teach a salutary knowledge (= ‘gnosis’ in Greek), false forms of which in 1 Tim 6:20 have been rebuked as “false-named knowledge”, whose doctrine was a synthesis of Christian, Jewish and Heathen doctrines. Important leaders of the Gnostic movement have been in the 1st century the magician *Simon of Gitta* in Samaria († 65, mentioned in Acts 8,5–24) and the *Nicolaites* or *Bileamites* in Minor Asia (c. 100, alluded to in Rev 2:6,9,14–15,20–24, 3:9) and in the 2nd century *Basilides* and *Valentinus* (see footnotes 18 and 120). In the 3rd century, gnostic ideas have been adopted by the *Manichaeans*, founded in Persia by *Mani* († 274); in the 4th century by the *Priscillianists*, founded in Spain by *Priscillian* († 385) and the *Messalians* or *Euchites* in Syria; in the 7th century by the *Paulicians* in Armenia and the Byzantine Empire; in the 10th century by the *Bogomils* in Thracia, and in the 12./13th century by the *Cathars* or *Albigensians* in southern France. Certain forms or reminiscences of the Gnosticism remained in the following centuries (often without inclusion of Docetism) in esoteric movements outside the churches (*Theosophy*, *Anthroposophy*, *New Age* and *Occultism*), but also at the margins of the mainline churches, cf. for example in Catholicism the radical wing of the *Beghards/Lollards & Beghines* and the *Franciscan Spirituals*, in Orthodoxy the ‘Messalianistic’ extremist form of *Hesychasm* (see footnote 195) and in Protestantism parts of *Pentecostalism*. The extreme contrary of Docetism is *Kenoticism*, which has been classified together with Docetism as a false doctrine by Pope Pius XII. in 1951 (see p. 46 with footnote 204; see also p. 53).

¹²⁵ This First Constantinopolitan Council of 381 (convoked by the Emperor *Theodosius I. the Great*, who in the Eastern and Western Church is held in high esteem and who in the East is even venerated as a Saint), raises many questions. The original acts are lost and had to be reconstructed, forged canons had to be removed. The claim that the council composed the ‘Niceno-Constantinopolitan’ Creed, emerged 70 years later at the Council of Chalcedon (451): since then, this Creed became significant (although it still took long time, until it was adopted into the Liturgy, see footnote 126). It is usually assumed that the Council of Constantinople in 381 indeed adopted a new Creed (whose immediate model was probably an older baptismal Creed of Jerusalem, see footnote 127), but that this Creed before the Council of Chalcedon could not supplant the old Nicene Creed its function as the standard norm of the faith. This is confirmed by the Council of Ephesus (431) on which the old Creed was still used, and it was even decreed that this Creed should not be altered (see footnote 168); hence, the Fathers attending the Council of Ephesus in 431 had not yet acknowledged the Council of 381 as ecumenical. Indeed all 150 attendants of the Council of Constantinople in 381 have been exclusively bishops from the Eastern part of the Empire, and Pope St. Damasus was not involved at all; this of course contradicts genuine ecumenicity. Neither is there convincing evidence for the claim that Pope Damasus has afterwards approved the council (although, for sure, Damasus agreed with its dogmatic decisions), for this claim has been made only 500 years later (!) by *Patriarch Photius of Constantinople* (see p. 40). The Popes even did constantly refuse to acknowledge the council’s canon 3 which stated that to the Bishop of Constantinople shall have the prerogative of honor after the Bishop of Rome (and before the other patriarchs); this desired ‘second rank’ was given to the Patriarch of Constantinople by the Pope of Rome only at the Fourth Council of Constantinople in 869 (almost five hundred years after 381!). The first pope, who solemnly approved the Council of Constantinople (along with the whole series of the first five ecumenical councils), was Pope St. *Gregory I the Great*, whose approbation, obviously, extends only to the dogmatic contents and not to canon 3, of which Gregory may have had no knowledge (cf. to him footnote 170). Pope Gregory declared in 591 (more than 200 years after the council) in his Letter *Consideranti mihi* to John von Constantinople and the other patriarchs (Epistula 1,25, PL 77,478, DH 472) that he *accepts and venerates the four first councils* (whose dogmatic achievements he shortly characterizes) *in the same way as [he accepts and venerates] the four Gospels, and adheres to them with innermost approval*; as for the Fifth Council he adds, that he *venerates it with equal strength*. See also the similar approbation of Pope St. *Leo II* in footnote 150.

¹²⁶ The reception of the Creed into the Liturgy seems to have taken place for the first time between 471 und 488 in Antiochia, ordered by the Monophysite Patriarch *Peter Fullo*. The same did Patriarch *Timothy I. of Constantinople* (who was likewise a Monophysite) at or shortly after 511, who spoke of the Creed of the 318 Nicene Fathers, so perhaps he meant the original *Nicene Creed*, that the early Monophysites seem to have preferred. Only the Byzantine Emperor *Justin II.* ordered c. 568 unequivocally the recitation of the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*. In 589 a Latin translation of this Creed was adopted into the Latin Mass by the Third Synod of Toledo in Spain and on the orders of King *Rekkared I.* (and here soon the so-called filioque-insertion was added, see end of this chapter). In 799 the same was done in Aachen on the orders of Frankish Emperor Karl the Great, and finally in 1014 it was done in Rome under Pope *Benedict VIII.* (see footnote 159).

¹²⁷ The council did not work directly on the text of the Nicene Creed, but incorporated almost literally a more advanced Creed that had been probably developed in Jerusalem c. 370 by Bishop St. *Cyrill*, and had been recommended already by St. *Epiphanius of Salamis* at the end of his famous work ‘*Ancoratus*’, written in 374 (cf. DH 42–45). There are several text traditions, Latin and Greek, with some minor differences. To the last sentence of the Nicene Creed “And in the Holy Spirit” ist was added: “the Lord [cf. 2 Cor 3:17] and Giver of life [see footnote 210], who proceeds from the Father [at this point, Pope Benedict VIII added in 1014 ‘and the Son’, in Latin: ‘filioque’; for this, see at the end of this chapter], who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified [see footnote 82], who spoke by the prophets.” After this, it was further added the confession of faith “in one holy catholic and apostolic Church” [here, in the Latin version has ‘and’ instead of ‘in’, and Latin Fathers, as for example St. *Augustine*, argued that we have to believe the Church, but have not to believe ‘in’ the Church, for to believe ‘in’ means to deliver oneself completely, and in the proper sense we should deliver ourselves only to a Divine Person], and the final clause “we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the eon to come.” Moreover, parts of the Nicene Creed expressing the faith in the Father and the Son have been slightly revised. Most notably, it was added that the Son was begotten from the Father “before all eons”, i.e. the beginning-less eternity of the generation of the Son was emphasized (the Nicene Council had done this outside the Creed); the clause that the Son was “of the essence of the Father” was dropped (being superfluous since this follows from the term ‘homoousios’); and it was added that Christ was incarnate “by / out of [Greek: ek] the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary”, thereby inserting an additional information about the operations of the Holy Spirit. Here, the Latin Version has different prepositions before the Spirit and Mary, saying that Christ was incarnate “by / from / of [de] the Holy Spirit out of [ex] the Virgin Mary”. In addition to the three differences between Greek and Latin versions with possible theological importance (1. the filioque, 2. the confession to belief the Church or ‘in’ the Church, 3. different descriptions of the roles of the Spirit and Mary in the incarnation) there are two further without such importance: The Greek version uses plural forms (“we believe/acknowledge/look for”), the Latin with (“I believe/acknowledge/look for”) and the Greek version deletes, while the Latin retains the original Nicaean description of Christ as being “God from God”, which seems theologically superfluous, because it is followed by “true God from true God”; but it enhances the hymnal style of the original Creed.

¹²⁸ A similar heresy was condemned by the local Council of Sens in 1142 (confirmed by Pope *Innocent II*), which listed among the “errors of Peter Abelard” the view that “the Holy Spirit is not of the substance of the Father, but rather the soul of the world” (DH 724).

aspects, manifestations, faces or masks of one and the same Person,¹²⁹ being not really distinct from each other, so that in the passion of Christ really it was the Father that suffered and was crucified.¹³⁰ Although opposed to the Arians and Theodotians, the Sabellians had in common with them, that they rejected the idea of a real plurality of Persons in the supreme God; this common view is called *Monarchianism* (from Greek ‘monos’ = one alone, and ‘arche’ = principle, rule).¹³¹ Obviously, the council’s emphasis lied on *plurality*, not only by confirming the Godhead of the Holy Spirit in addition to the Godhead of the Father and the Son, and thereby extending God to the full Trinity, but also by rejecting the exaggerated unity of Sabellianism.

- (3) The *Third Ecumenical Council (Council of Ephesus, 431)* had 200–250 attendants¹³² and, following *St. Cyrill, the Patriarch of Alexandria* († 444) who was acting at the council also in the name of *Pope St. Celestine I.*, condemned *Nestorianism* lead by *Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople* († c. 450): the thesis that Jesus Christ consists of two separate personal subjects.¹³³ In contrast to this, the council embraced the teaching of *St. Cyrill*, who stated that the Divine nature and a human nature have been united in Christ, insofar as both came together in one and the same personal subject,¹³⁴ that thereby received Divine as well as human properties. The council concluded also with *St. Cyrill*, that Christ’s Mother *St. Mary* may be called *Theotokos* (Mother of God, literally ‘birth giver of God’) and not only, as *Nestorius* had insisted, *Christotokos* (Mother of Christ, literally

¹²⁹ The Greek word for person, *prosopon*, means ‘mask’ or ‘face’ originally and the same holds for the Latin word *persona* (the Greek word is derived from ‘pros ops’ = ‘toward/before the eye(s)’; the Latin from ‘per sonare’ = ‘to sound through’), which is the meaning *Sabellius* (c. 215) and his followers ascribed to the word (for the later philosophical definitions of a ‘person’ see footnote 17). The basis for the ‘Sabellian’ or ‘modalistic’ argumentation that Father, Son and Spirit are totally identical, i.e. are one and the same personal subject bearing different masks (‘prosopa/persons’), was Christ’s statement in *John 14:9* (cf. 12:45): “who has seen me has seen the Father”, from which inferred that Christ is the Father in disguise (cf. also *Isa 9:5*, *John 8:19*, *10:38*, *14:11*, *17:21*; for an anti-sabellian interpretation of *John 14:8* see footnote 24). – *Sabellius* had as predecessors the earlier theologians *Noetus of Smyrna* (c. 190, refuted by *St. Hippolytus of Rome* in his *Philosophoumena* 9,11, written c. 230) and *Praxeas*, who was accused to teach *Patipassianism*, i.e. that the Father was crucified (c. 200, refuted by *Tertullian* in his book *Adversus Praxeum* written c. 215: see footnote 3; see also the similar thesis of *Theopaschitism* in footnote 114), but *Sabellius* was more successful than his two predecessors. Sabellianism was condemned 262 by *Pope St. Dionysius* at a local council held in Rome. In a very interesting letter written 262 by the pope to his namesake, *Patriarch St. Dionysius of Alexandria*, the pope explained his decisions in detail (see DH 112–115): He condemned Sabellianism (“the Son is the Father and vice versa”) as well as *Tritheism* (the confession of “three divinities”, “three Gods” or “separated Hypostases”, where ‘hypostasis’ obviously means the same as ‘substance’ in the later standard language; for *Tritheism*, see also footnote 131), leaving the truth about the “*Divine Triad*” and the “*Divine Unity*” to be in the middle of these extremes, thereby giving a very precise ‘location’ of the orthodox *Trinity Doctrine*. *Pope Dionysius* also rejected already the later Arian idea, that the Son was created and refuted explicitly the sentence “*en hote ouk en*” (meaning “there was a time when He had not been”, see footnote 122; thus, *Arius* obviously had his forerunners already 60 years ago). For *Dionysius’* letter, see also footnotes 3 18, 122, 131 and p. 61. – In modern times, Modalism was embraced since 1744 by the mystic occultist *Emmanuel Swedenborg*; today, the *Oneness-Pentecostals* (having emerged in America in 1913) entertain Sabellian ideas again. For a Biblical refutation of Modalism/Sabellianism see the last sentences of chapter 1 above. – Long before the Modalists, already the Gnostic *Valentinus* had spoken about three prosopa/persons Father, Son and Spirit (although it is unclear, in which sense he did so): see footnote 18.

¹³⁰ Apart from (1) *Sabellians*, (2) *Apollinarians* and (3) *Macedonians* (called *Semi-Arians* and *Pneumatomachians* by the council), the council also condemned:

(4) the *Eunomians* (called also *Anhomioians* by the council), led by *Bishop Eunomius of Cyzicus* († c. 393): a radical Arian, who confessed that the Son with respect to the Father was neither *homoousios* (consubstantial) nor *homoiousios* (of similar substance) – see footnote 122 – but *anhomoios* (of dissimilar substance), and who over-emphasized the unity of God and taught that an adequate comprehension of God is possible, because He is absolutely simple, having only one sole attribute: to be unbegotten;

(5) the *Eudoxians* (called also *Arians* by the council), named after *Patriarch Eudoxus of Antioch* and later of *Constantinople* († 370): a less radical Arian, who taught that Christ was a creature not equal but similar (*homoios*) to the Father, and that He became flesh, but took no human soul (so in this point the *Eudoxians* joint the *Apollinarians*, but the *Apollinarians* were no *Arians*, confessing the full Divinity of the Son); so Christ in the *Eudoxian* view was not a complete man, but a ‘God for us’ with a composite nature, who could suffer in his flesh;

(6) the *Photinians*, named after *Bishop Photinus of Sirmium* († c. 376) who taught that Jesus was only a man born miraculously by a virgin, whom God adopted as his Son and endowed him with Divine Powers; so *Photinus* had an *Adoptionist* and *Psilanthropist* view similar to that of *Theodotus*. He rejected the preexistence not only of Jesus but also of the Logos, by teaching that the Logos did not exist prior to the conception of Jesus;

(7) the *Marcellians*, named after *Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra* († c. 374, cf. footnotes 18 and 158), a strong opponent of *Arianism*, who fell into the opposite extreme and developed a modified Sabellianism, according to which before creation there was only one Divine Person, but at the creation the Logos or Son emanated from the Father and later the Logos became incarnate in Christ; likewise the Holy Spirit emanated from the Father and the Son; but after the final judgment day (1 Cor 15:28) Christ and the Holy Spirit will return into the Father and it will remain again only one Divine Person.

¹³¹ *Monarchianism* is a form of Monotheism called also ‘*Monarchian Monotheism*’, whereas the Monotheism of orthodox Christianity is called ‘*Trinitarian Monotheism*’. The extreme contrary of *Monarchian Monotheism* (confessing one God, being one Person only) is *Tritheism* (confessing three Gods); whereas *Trinitarian Monotheism* is placed in the middle between this two extremes (confessing three Persons in one God). *Monarchianism* has two main branches: *Sabellian/Modalistic Monarchianism* equates the Son and the Holy Spirit personally with the Father (so there is only one Divine Person) whereas *Adoptionistic/Dynamic Monarchianism* excludes the Son and the Holy Spirit entirely from the Divine Essence (so again there is only one Divine Person). That *Trinitarians* reject *Monarchianism* does not mean that they reject also the notion of the ‘*Monarchy*’ of God; this term was embraced by *Pope St. Dionysius* in his letter written in 262 (DH 112, see footnote 129) to emphasize the unity of the (trinitarian) God. Likewise, Church Father *St. Basil* talks about “the pious dogma of the *Monarchy*”, whereas ‘*Triarchy*’ and ‘*Triarchism*’ has rather been connected with heretical *Tritheism*.

Tritheism has been condemned already 262 by *Pope Dionysius* (see footnote 129) and again by a condemnation ascribed to the Roman Synod under *Pope St. Damasus* in the year 382 (DH 176); although it seems that it had never many supporters. *Dionysius* in his letter written 262 (DH 112) mentions already ‘some’ people in *Alexandria* holding this view, without naming them. He named *Marcion* instead, a second century heretic, who separated in 144 from the Church (and according to *Tertullian’s* statement in *De praescriptione Haereticorum* 30,3, shortly before his death c. 160 confessed repentance, but wasn’t able to return to the Church all his followers), whom *Dionysius* considers to have been a *Tritheist* because of his teaching that there are ‘three principles’. According to *Marcion* the God of the Old Testament as an imperfect creator, just and revengeful but not loving; *Marcion* therefore rejected the Old Testament; he thought that the Father of Christ was a perfect loving God, who was unknown before Christ even to the Creator, and Christ was still another God and messenger from the unknown God his Father (as the *Gnostics*, *Marcion* believed that Christ was not a human, and had no have a real body, so *Marcion* was a *Docetist*: cf. footnote 124). However, Christ doesn’t belong to *Marcion’s* principles which are (1) the good God, (2) the Creator and (3) Matter. Similar views have been attributed already to *Marcion’s* precursor *Cerdo* (c. 138). It is clear that this view was a *Trilateralism* (the confession of three principles, not all of which must be necessarily Divine) rather than ordinary *Christian Tritheism*, which implies the division of the Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit into three Gods. Such an ordinary *Tritheism* occurred indeed in the 6th century, when the Aristotelian philosopher *John Philoponus* († 570), a Christian in *Alexandria* belonging to the *Monophysites* (who confessed only ‘one nature’ of Christ), became the first well-known *Christian Tritheist*, the intellectual leader of a *Tritheistic Monophysite* sect, founded by *Philoponus’* contemporary, the *Antiochene Sophist John Ascanages*. This John was also a *Monophysite* Christian, who taught philosophy in *Constantinople* and confessed, according to *Bar-Hebraeus*: “I acknowledge one nature of Christ, the Incarnate Word, but in the Trinity I reckon the natures and substances and Godheads according to the number of the persons.” The 6th century *Tritheist* movement had many followers, among them also bishops (*Conon of Tarsus* and *Eugenius of Seleucia*, for example), up to he 7th century, when the Sixth Ecumenical Council or Third Council of *Constantinople* (680) in its 13th session approved the ‘*Synodal Letter*’ of *St. Sophronius of Jerusalem* († 638), which condemned *Monotheletists* along with *Arians* and ‘new *Tritheists*’ and anathematized by name *Philoponus*, *Conon* and *Eugenius*. Also in the 7th

‘birth giver of Christ’).¹³⁵ For she gave birth to Christ as Man, and thereby, because His Divine Nature is inseparably connected with the human one, also gave birth to God. So the council stressed the unity of natures.¹³⁶ In the wake of this council, the idea of the so-called ‘*communicatio ideomatum*’ (communication of idioms, or communication of properties, allowing statements that interchange Divine and human properties of Christ) was given renewed impetus: a principle which had been developed already by Origen († 254),¹³⁷ and which is a theological consequence of the deep union of the two natures in Christ. This principle states that in view of the hypostatic union *the human properties of Christ* that belong to him due to his human nature *can be rightfully predicated of God* (i.e. of ‘the Son of God’ or ‘God the Son’), while *the Divine Properties of Christ* that belong to him due to his Divine Nature *can be rightfully predicated of a man* (i.e. of Jesus as ‘the Son of Man’). This seems to be a Scriptural teaching, for Scriptures show some clear examples of this mysterious ‘communication’ of properties. The most famous example is Acts 20:28: “*the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood*”, where there is talk of ‘God’s blood’ and so Christ’s human property of having blood is attributed to God. As a second example, consider Acts 3:15: “*You have killed the author of life [= God]*”, where the human property of Christ of having been killed is attributed to God (cf. also 1 Joh 3:16, where ‘he laid down his life for us’ refers probably to God). A third example shows, that also Divine Properties are attributed of the man Jesus: In John 8:28 Jesus said “*Before Abraham was, I am*”. This

century, Muhammad († 632) and the *Quran* seem to have opposed Tritheism rather than Trinitarian Monarchianism (cf. *Quran*, suras 4:171: “do not say: three”, 5:73: “they have disbelieved who say: Allah is one of three” and 5:116: “Allah will say: O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people: take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?”). Interestingly, the ‘third God’ of the kind of Tritheism envisaged here seems to be Jesus’ Mother Mary instead of the Holy Spirit. Indeed Church Father Epiphanius in his letter to the Arabs (370) and his Panareion (Heresy 79) testifies that already in the 4th century there existed in Arabia, Thracia and Scythia a Christian movement called *Collyridianism* or *Philomarianitism*: Adherents (primarily women) venerated St. Mary as a Deity, and in their service priestesses offered up a sacrifice of a certain bread (Collyris) in the name of Mary, and all ate from it. Also Eutychius of Alexandria († 940) mentions in his *Annals* 440 (PG 111,1006), that already at the time of the Council on Nicaea (325) there existed a group of ‘Marianists’ “who asserted that Christ and his Mother were two gods besides God” (qui affirmarent, Christum et Matrem ipsius duos deos esse praeter Deum). Maybe this doctrine was combined with a strange doctrine contained certain Apocrypha (e.g. in the 2nd century ‘Gospel of the Hebrews’), according to which the Holy Spirit is female and was Jesus’ Mother; so maybe the Marian Tritheists thought that St. Mary was an incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

Again in the 11/12th centuries, *Roscelin of Compiègne*, the founder of Nominalism († c. 1125) and Abbas *Joachim of Fiore* († 1202) were Tritheists; their views, which both revoked before their death, were condemned by the Synod (local Council) of Soissons (1092) and the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (1215, see footnote 176), respectively (DH 803–807). In the 19th century, the Catholic Idealistic philosopher *Anton Günther* († 1863) was accused of tritheistic tendencies (see footnote 107); Günther was reprehended by Pope Pius XI in 1857 and submitted himself to the Church. It has been claimed also, that Tritheistic tendencies can be seen in the mystic revelations of *Emmanuel Swedenborg* († 1772), as well as in the writings of *Ellen Gould White*, the Prophetess of Adventism († 1915) and of *Joseph Smith*, the Prophet of Mormonism († 1844). The Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria, Damian, who excommunicated Tritheists in 577, taught that the unity of the three Divine Persons is a superior existence (hyparxis) distinct from the persons, which he called autotheos (God-himself), thus he and his disciples, the *Damianists* (so it appeared at least to their opponents) came to believe in four (instead of three) Gods and therefore were nicknamed *Tetratheists* or *Tetradites* (see also footnote 93). Besides Tritheism and Tetratheism, some Christians seem to have embraced a kind of *indeterminate Polytheism*: the assumption that there are many Gods without a certain number. This charge has been raised, for example, against Greek Orthodox Church Father Gregory Palamas († 1359), due to his doctrine of uncreated Divine visible energies in addition to the invisible essence of God (see footnotes 195 and 184), and also against Mormonism, whose Polytheism seems to be of the Henotheistic kind, that is they worship only one of the many gods thought to exist). Some Christians tended to *Pantheism*, more or less identifying God and Nature, a view that can be found in the Middle Ages in *John Scotus Eriugena* († um 877), *Amalric of Chartres* († before 1207) und *David of Dinant* († after 1215). At the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (1215) Amalric’s doctrine was condemned “as insanity rather than heresy” (DH 808); all three were reprieved 1225 by a local Synod in Paris and in a bull of Pope Honorius III. Christian Pantheism was again very popular in the wake of *German Idealism* in the 19th century, as exposed for example by *Schelling* (see also footnotes 107 and 114); it was then condemned 1864 by Pope St. Pius IX. in his Syllabus of Errors (DH 2901) and 1870 by the First Vatican Council (DH 3001 and 3023). Closely related with Pantheism is *Autotheism*: the self-identification of elitist mystics and popular enthusiasts with God (more or less) or at least the claim to have gained absolute perfection, which occurred frequently among the so-called *Donatists* in Antiquity and various *Gnostics* throughout the centuries (see footnote 124); cf. the corresponding condemnations made by the Council of Vienne (1311/12, DH 891–899) and by Pope John XXII. (1318 und 1329, DH 910–916.960–963.970). Some Christians also embraced *Diarchism* (the ‘Two-Principles-Doctrine’), either in the form of *Dualism* (two principles, not each necessarily of Divine nature) or in the form of proper *Duotheism* (the confession of two Gods, either complementary and working together as in *Bitheism*, or opposed to each other as in *Ditheism*). The Medieval dualistic or Ditheistic Cathars/Albigensians of the 12/13th century, for example (who in this respect succeeded the Gnostics, Marcionites, Manichaeans, Priscillianists and Messalians/Euchites, Paulicians and Bogomils, see footnote 121), assumed that there are two uncreated Principles or Gods, a good one (God) and a bad one (the Devil), which was rejected by the Fourth Lateran Council 1215 (see DH 800). Bitheism has been ascribed to *St. Hippolytus of Rome* († 235) by Pope St. Calixtus I., because he over-emphasized the difference between God Father and the Logos or Son of God; also other early Christians who called the Son a ‘second God’ (as *Origen*, and *St. Justin*) can be categorized as Bitheists. Another Diarchistic system is *Binitarianism*: the assumption that there is one Divine Essence with only two instead of three persons – Father and Son, leaving out the Holy Spirit (this was the view of some Pneumatomachians of the 4th century and also of some minorities within modern Adventism). In contradistinction to Binitarianism and Trinitarianism one finds also the assumption that there are more than three Persons in God leading to a *Quaternity* or *Quinity* (see footnote 93). Finally, in addition to Christian *Deists*, who hold that there is only a Creator who doesn’t interfere with the world by supernatural revelation and miracles (censured by the First Vatican Council in 1870, see DH 3027–2028.3031–3034) there are also contemporary Christian *Atheists*, holding that Jesus himself was an Atheist, at least when he died (cf. Mt 27:46, Mk 15:34); so God is dead and today’s Christians must be Atheists, who should accept Jesus only as a moral advisor.

¹³² The council was convoked by the *Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II*. A personal invitation was dispatched also to the Latin Church Father and African Bishop *St. Augustine*, but the invitation reached his domicile only after his death: St. Augustine had already died on August 28, 430. After *Pope St. Celestine I.*, who supported St. Cyrill at the council, had died five days before the council’s last session in 431, it was acknowledged in 432 by his Celestine’s successor, *Pope St. Sixtus III*, in several circular and private letters. Sixtus also restored the Church St. Maria Maggiore in Rome (probably the first Church in the West dedicated to the Virgin Mary) with its Marian Mosaics in remembrance of the council and dedicated it on August 5, 434. See also footnote 136.

¹³³ *Nestorius* was excommunicated, along with the priest *Caelestius*, whom Nestorius had protected (and who was famous for his support and radicalization of the doctrine of Pelagius, denying original sin and the necessity of redemption and Divine grace). A much more extreme form of ‘*Nestorianism*’ (seen as dividing the Son of God into two subjects) had been already the teaching of *Cerinthus* (c. 100 AD): He separated ‘Jesus’ (a mere human being) and ‘Christ’ (a Divine being) from each other, saying that at baptism, Christ came down on Jesus in the form of a dove, acting together with him during his life until he leaved him before crucifixion. On the other hand, a mitigated form of *Nestorianism* was the later *Nihilianism* occurring in the 12th century (see footnote 149) according to which Christ’s Divine Nature is linked to his humanity only outwardly, like a man is linked to his clothing.

¹³⁴ See footnote 143.

¹³⁵ Cf. the biblical titles “*mother of Jesus*” (John 2:1; cf. 19:25), “*his [Jesus Christ’s] mother*” (Mt 1:18) and “*mother of my Lord*” (Lk 1:43); the last title comes very close to the title “*mother of God*”, since the Lord meant here is Christ, who is called “*my Lord*” and at the same time “*my God*” by St. Thomas in John 20:28, and since in Lk 1:68 – being the next verse after Lk 1:43 where the word ‘Lord’ occurs – “[the] Lord, the God of Israel” is praised. Moreover, Jesus is called “*the Lord*” with article also in Lk 7:19, and in Lk 8,19 the title “*his mother*” must refer back to Lk 7.19, since between Lk 7,19 and 8,19 Jesus is not referred to explicitly by any other name. Thus, it can be said that in Lk 8,19 (quite similar to Lk 1:43) St. Mary is referred to as “*the Lord’s mother*”.

clearly describes a Divine Property of Christ, although Jesus said this in a dialogue, in which he had called himself previously 'a man'.¹³⁸ Cf. also Rom 8:32 (God "has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all"), Lk 2:11 (the 'the Lord' was born), 1 Cor 2:8 (they "crucified the Lord of Glory") and Col 2:9 ("in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"), Zech 12:10: (Yahweh predicted that he will be 'pierced'; cf. John 19:34, Rev 1:7); cf. also Lk 1:35 and John 3:16. The Apostolic Father, St. Ignatius of Antioch (writing c. 107) continued this sort of predication in his famous letters, speaking of "God's blood", "the passion of my God" and God's conception in the womb of Mary.¹³⁹ Thus, the Council of Ephesus, by calling Mary the Theotokos ('Birth giver of God') has obviously applied (and thereby confirmed) the 'communicatio ideomatum' – principle,¹⁴⁰ confirming the strong unity of the two natures in Christ, that is the background for this principle.

- (4) The *Fourth Ecumenical Council (Council of Chalcedon, 451)* took place in Chalcedon in the church of St. Euphemia († 303) and had 520 attendants (more than any other council in the first millennium). The council followed the doctrine of *Pope St. Leo the Great* († 461), whose legates presided over the council and whose 'dogmatic letter' was read out at the council was hailed by the council fathers as the 'voice of St. Peter the Apostle'.¹⁴¹ With Leo the council condemned *Monophysitism* (from Greek 'monos' = one alone, and 'physis' = nature): the thesis, that both natures of Christ merged into *one* nature. Radical supporters added that Christ's human nature was somehow absorbed by His Divine Nature, as the ocean consumes a drop of vinegar. A less radical form of Monophysitism is called *Miaphysitism* (from 'mia' = one), according held that humanity is not totally absorbed, but in Christ the natures came together to form one nature that retained also basic human properties.¹⁴² Radical Monophysitism has been introduced by the *Priest and Archimandrite Eutyches of Constantinople* († after 454), while *Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria* († 454), who supported him first, seems to have developed later a more or less miaphysite view. However, both have been excommunicated by the council, that described the natures in Christ not only as '*undivided*' and '*unseparated*' (by which it summarized the outcome of the preceding Council of Ephesus), but added to this the terms '*unconfused*' and '*unchanged*',¹⁴³ thereby emphasizing the remaining integrity of both natures¹⁴⁴ and saving their plurality (duality), i.e. establishing the Two-Natures Doctrine in the strict sense: *Dyophysitism*.

These four councils make up the base of Trinity and Incarnation Doctrine and are accepted by the Roman Catholic and Byzantine Orthodox Churches as well as by the most Protestant ones.¹⁴⁵ The remaining three councils are accepted only by the Catholic, Orthodox and a few Protestant Churches (e.g. by the Anglican High Church) as well:

- (5) The *Fifth Ecumenical Council (Second Council of Constantinople, 553)* led by patriarch *St. Eutychius von Constantinople* had 165 attendants in the last session and followed Emperor *Justinian I. the Great* († 565), who is venerated as a Saint in the Greek Orthodox Church,¹⁴⁶ in his fight against Nestorianism already condemned by the Third Ecumenical Council, and rejected (among others) the teachings of *Bishop Theodor of Mopsuestia* († c. 428), who has shown Nestorian tendencies (and

¹³⁶ By the way, the proceedings of the Ephesian Council in 431 have been tumultuously, since the Alexandrian-Egyptian fraction under Patriarch Cyril and the Antiochian-Syriac fraction under Patriarch John remained in dissent (although both condemned Nestorius at the end): each Patriarch was excommunicated by the opposite fraction, and they reconciled only after the Council, under the mediation of Pope St. Sixtus III. To a great extent it is due to the Emperor Theodosius II., that the council came to an end at all, and its later recognition is mainly due to the popes Celestine I. and Sixtus III. (see footnote 132). In footnote 168 we shall discuss an interesting disciplinary decision of the Council of Ephesus: It forbade to change the Nicene Creed.

¹³⁷ Cf. Origen, *De principiis* 2,6,3.

¹³⁸ In John 8:40 Jesus had said: "Now you seek to kill me, *a man* who has spoken the truth to you, which I have heard from God."

¹³⁹ See footnote 215.

¹⁴⁰ Theologians have developed in the course of time some detailed rules for the correct linguistic application of the 'communicatio ideomatum' (the assignment of human predicates to God and Divine predicates to Man in Christ), which seem to have been observed in the Scriptures and by the orthodox church fathers and councils as well. The three most important rules are the following ones. First, the communication of properties applies only to concrete terms, but never to abstract ones ("fit in concreto, non in abstracto"), because the concrete terms (e.g. God, man, Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, the Almighty) refer to the person or hypostasis, whereas the abstract terms (e.g. the Divinity, the humanity, the Omnipotence) to the natures. So for example it is right to say that "God suffered, shed his blood and died on the cross" and "this man [= Jesus] created the world" (because this applies rightly to the one person who is God and Man), but it is false to say that "the Divinity or the Divine Nature suffered and died on the cross" and also false that "the humanity or human nature of Jesus created the world". A second rule is that concrete terms used reduplicatively (i.e. with the adjunct 'as Man' or 'as God'; or with the adjunct 'according to humanity' or 'according to Divinity'; see footnote 114) refer to one of the natures only; thus the statement "God *as God* suffered and died on the cross" is false, and the same holds for "this man Jesus *as Man* created the world". A third rule is, that communicatio ideomatum in negative sentences is to be avoided, for this would separate the two natures. Thus, it should be avoided to say "this man [Jesus] is *not* almighty" (even if this is true with respect to one of the two natures: the human one) or "God did *not* become man" (even if this is also true with respect to one of the two natures: the Divine one). In order to exclude misunderstandings, it is recommended here (and also generally) to use the adjuncts 'as Man' and 'as God': "Jesus *as Man* is not almighty" and "Jesus *as God* is not a Man".

¹⁴¹ The council was convoked by the byzantine Emperor *Marcian*, the husband of *St. Pulcheria* (the sister of his predecessor Theodosius II. and granddaughter of Theodosius I., who kept her previous vow of virginity in her marriage, had good connections to *Pope St. Leo I.* and participated herself at the council); Marcian is venerated in the Orthodox Church together with Pulcheria as a Saint. Among the participants of the council was Bishop *St. Nonnus* of Edessa and Heliopolis.

¹⁴² According to our definitions, Miaphysitism is a moderate form von Monophysitism. However, sometimes the term 'Monophysitism' is used to denote what we call 'radical Monophysitism' only. If this usage of words is adopted, Miaphysitism and Monophysitism exclude each other.

¹⁴³ The Council of Chalcedon confirmed in its 'definition' the confession of "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged in Two Natures *unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*" (DH 302). To this definition, the council forbade any deviation and amendment (see footnote 168). The Council of Ephesus had adopted the 12 anathematizations of St. Cyril anathematizing everyone who „in the one Christ after the union *divides* the hypostases [here = substances or natures; see footnote 181] (can. 3, DH 254); as well as everyone who says "that the Word of God Himself was not made our High-priest and Apostle, when it was made flesh, and man in our likeness; but that as it were another self-sustained being *besides* [i.e. separated *from*] Him, a man (born) of a woman" (can. 10, DH 261; cf. also can. 4 and 8, DH 255 and 259).

¹⁴⁴ This had to be emphasized later over and over again. Thus in 1170 Pope Alexander III. urged archbishop William of Sens to command that it should be taught that Christ is „a *perfect God*" and "a *perfect man as well, consisting of soul and body*" (DH 749).

¹⁴⁵ The Arians and other Unitarians do not accept any of the councils; the Nestorian "Church of the East" accepts only the first two, while the Miaphysite "Oriental Orthodox" Churches accept only the first three councils.

in fact had been Nestorius' teacher) a century ago.¹⁴⁷ The council presented a clear exposition of Trinity and Incarnation, stressing again that the two distinct natures of Christ are united by and come together in one and the same 'hypostasis/subject' and person. The council's main distribution is that it made clear that this one sole hypostasis/subject of Christ is *the unchanged Divine Hypostasis of the eternal Son, one of the three hypostases in the Trinitarian God* (thus, the incarnate Son had no additional 'human' hypostasis or personal core, that came somehow together with the Divine Hypostasis of the Son to build a complex Divino-human hypostasis). To emphasize this, the council sanctioned the thesis of Emperor Justinian, that it was "one of the Holy Trinity", who "became man" and "was crucified in the flesh",¹⁴⁸ and since the time of Justinian, this thesis is sung in every Eastern Orthodox celebration of the Divine Liturgy, in which the 'Justinian Incarnation Hymn' was inserted.¹⁴⁹ So, the council, by stating that *one of the Holy Trinity (and therefore God) became man*, has applied again the principle of 'communicatio ideomatum' (just as already the Council of Ephesus had done) and thereby emphasized again the unity of the natures in Christ.

- (6) The Sixth Ecumenical Council (Third Council of Constantinople, 680–681) with its 174 attendants in the last session followed the teaching of Pope St. Martin I. († 653), St. Maximus the Confessor († 662) and also the contemporary Pope at the time of the council, St. Agatho († 681), who played a similar role as Pope St. Leo had played at the Fourth Ecumenical Council: his legates presided over the council and his dogmatic letter was read out and hailed as Apostle Peter's doctrine.¹⁵⁰ A famous participant was St. Barbatus of Benevent. The council, following these saints, took up the fight against Monophysitism again, that was already condemned by the Fourth Ecumenical Council, and in particular rejected a mild form of Monophysitism called *Monothelism* (Greek 'mono' = one alone, and 'thelema' = will), according to which, while Christ has really two natures (as the Council of Chalcedon had declared), He has only *one Will*, the Divine one; and His operations (activities, *energeiai*), accordingly, are not divided into two classes, the Divine and the human, but are 'theandric' (Divino-human) actions; thus the monothelite slogan was: 'one Will' and 'one theandric operation'. Against this view, held by *Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople* († 638) and others,¹⁵¹ the council declared that in order to have a complete human nature (which is supported by Heb 4:15), Christ must have also a human will, that he had to conform with the will of the Father by his own effort (cf. John 5:30; 6:38 and also Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42); for the Divine Will of Christ this was not necessary, because this will is already by essence the same as the Father's. So the council declared that Christ has not only two natures in general, but also two physical energies and two wills: the human and the Divine one, both being *unseparated, unchanged, undivided, unconfused* (these four famous attributes, which the Council of Chalcedon had applied to the two *natures*, have

¹⁴⁶ Pope Vigilius had consented in 550 with Emperor Justinian's project to convoke a council, but as the Second Constantinopolitan Council started in 553, he opposed it, because in his opinion it made too great concessions to the Monophysites, and which therefore took place without the pope's consent. After the council in December 553, however, Pope Vigilius gave a half-hearted approbation to the council's decisions, following some pressure from Emperor Justinian. A whole-hearted approbation was given to it later by Pope St. Gregory I. in 591 (see footnote 125). Emperor Justinian, who convoked the council and influenced the council significantly, is venerated as a Saint in the Orthodox Church, despite of his tendencies to support Monophysitism at (and apparently even more after) the council.

¹⁴⁷ The council condemned only people who had been long dead: apart from the Nestorian teachings and all writings of *Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia* († c. 428) it condemned also certain writings of the great exegete *Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus* († c. 460), namely those written by him against the Council of Ephesus and St. Cyrill, and the letter of *Bishop Ibas of Edessa* († 457) to Maris, the Bishop of Hardashir in Persia (since Theodoret and Ibas both had been acknowledged as orthodox by the Council of Chalcedon; only parts of their writings have been condemned). The said writings of the three bishops (whose persons and work have been called 'the three chapters') had stirred up controversial discussions preceding the council. The council repeated the condemnation *Arius*, *Eunomius*, *Macedonius*, *Apollinaris*, *Nestorius* and *Eutyches* made by previous councils and added the great but controversial theologian *Origen* († c. 254) to the list.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. DH 424 and (especially) DH 426 und DH 432. We are dealing here with the orthodox Theopaschitism (see footnote 114).

¹⁴⁹ There is a tradition according to which Justinian composed this hymn, but it is probably older; another tradition attributes it to St. Athanasius; for the text, see footnote 230. That the personal core of incarnate Son was the Divine one, is also stated very clearly in the Creed of the *Eleventh Council of Toledo* (675, see p. 40) in DH 534. Cf. also the condemnation of a sentence of *Peter Abelard* at the *Synod of Sens* in 1141, conformed by *Pope Innocent II.*, a sentence in which it is denied that „this Person, who is Christ, is the third Person of the Trinity“ (DH 724). Exaggerating the doctrine, that Christ is no human hypostasis, the so-called *Nihilianists* in the 12th century rejected even the proposition, that Christ as Man is 'something' (i.e. a substance), which was a thesis discussed by *Peter Lombard* (in Sent III,10,1). The Nihilianists thought that Christ's Divine Person and Nature was only outwardly united with His humanity, just like a Man is united with his clothes, which seems to be a mitigated form of *Nestorianism* (see footnote 133) and *Docetism* (see footnote 124) at the same time. However, the comparison of the natures of Christ with clothes is a reasonably one and is made also in orthodox and catholic teaching (see footnote 231). In any case, *Pope Alexander III.* in his Letter to archbishop William of Sens, written in 1170, rejected the thesis that Christ as Man is not „something“ (DH 749).

¹⁵⁰ The council had been convoked by the Byzantine Emperor *Constantine III.* (whom the Orthodox Church venerates as a Saint and calls 'Constantine the New') in consent with *Pope St. Agatho*. Since *Agatho* had died before the council's end, his successor *Pope St. Leo II.* confirmed the council in August 682 in his Letter *Regi Regum* to the Emperor *Constantine IV.* with the following remarkable words (PL 96,405/407, cf DH 562): "Because this holy, great and ecumenical sixth council [...] has most fully proclaimed the definition of the right faith, which the Apostolic See of St. Peter the Apostle, whose office we, though unequal to it, are holding, also has reverently received: therefore we also, and through our office this Apostolic See, consent to, and confirm, by the authority of Blessed Peter, those things which have been defined, as being finally set by the Lord Himself on the solid rock which is Christ." He adds: "We accept and strongly proclaim also the five holy ecumenical councils [...] which also the whole Church of Christ approves and follows [...]". Cf. also their approval by Pope Gregory (see footnote 125).

¹⁵¹ Apart from *Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople* († 638), the council anathematized as heretics *Patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria* († 642), the *Patriarchs Paul II* and his successor *Peter of Constantinople* (who held office 641–653 and 653–66, respectively), and *Bishop Theodore of Pharan* (a town on the Sinai Peninsula, † c. 630), all of whom were Monothelites (it approved also St. Sophronius' Synodal letter, where also *Tritheists* were condemned, namely *Philoponus*, *Conon* and *Eugenius*, see footnote 131). Most notably, the council also anathematized posthumously *Pope Honorius I.*, who had reigned 625–638, and seems to have supported the view of the Monothelite *Sergius*. This is no instance against the claim that the pope's 'ex cathedra decisions' are 'infallible', for the letter to *Sergius* was no such decision (for, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, it had less publicity than a modern Encyclical, did not define or condemn, and did not bind the Church to accept its teaching). Moreover the pope's support to *Sergius* is not unequivocal; the pope rather refused to give a clear answer in order to end the confrontations between Mono- and Duothelism, and personally he seemingly was not aware of the importance of the theological issues. So it is unclear whether his statement "we acknowledge one Will of our Lord Jesus Christ" is really meant in the monothelite sense (i.e. denying two *physical* energies and wills) or only in the sense that Christ brought His human will into perfect harmony with His Divine one, which is clearly a Scriptural teaching (cf. John 8:29).

now been applied to the two *energies* and *wills*). So the council emphasized the plurality (duality) and established thereby the Two-Wills-Doctrine: *Dyothelitism*.¹⁵²

- (7) The *Seventh Ecumenical Council* (*Second Council of Nicaea*, 787) had c. 350 attendants¹⁵³ and followed the teachings of the monk and last of the great Greek Church Fathers, *St. John of Damascus* († 749), supporting the use and veneration of icons while forbidding their worship (see footnote 72). Thereby the council brought to an end the first cruel battle between *Iconoclasts* ('icon smashers') and *Iconodules* ('icon-venerators'), that had been initiated by Emperor Leo III in AD 726 with his attack on the icons.¹⁵⁴ The council confirmed the outcome of deep theological discussions about icons in the foregoing decades. The *strong prohibition of images of every kind* is part of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament (images of the true God were prohibited as well as images of creatures):¹⁵⁵ This was the main iconoclastic argument, that had troubled also orthodox Christians in the first centuries, whence most early Christians did not venerate any pictures and hesitated to use them in Liturgy. Thus, what one can learn here is, that some aspects of Divine Revelation were not entirely understood right from the beginning; sometimes centuries were required in order to acknowledge them in full extend (cf. John 16:12–13), and this applies not only to the question of icons, but also to the proper understanding of the Trinity Doctrine.

The crucial new insight concerning icons that finally prevailed after the discussions in the 8th century, was the following: *The reason for the prohibition of icons of God* had been, that in the Old Covenant, *God had not shown himself in visible form* (which is the reason mentioned explicitly in Deut 4,15–18); but after the Incarnation, i.e. in the New Covenant, this reason no longer exists, for "*the goodness and kindness of God our Savior has appeared*" (Tit 3:4), Christ being "*the image of the invisible God*" (Col 1:15, cf. 2 Cor 4:4–6, Col 2:9, Heb 1,3), such that who has seen him "*has seen the Father*" (John 14:9, cf. John 12:45). Thus, icons of Christ as well as of the Father with Christ's features (whether realistic or symbolic) are no longer forbidden, for if the reason for a prohibition disappears, the prohibition itself has to be removed. Rather, such icons are useful and sensible now to illustrate the new situation. As for the prohibition of icons of the creatures, especially icons of just and holy men (the Saints), the reason to prohibit this in the Old Covenant had been, that God in reaction to the sin of the humans had separated mankind from Himself, such that even the righteous could not approach Him (cf. Gen 3:34). So, due to this separation it was entirely inappropriate to put icons of just man (as Abraham, for example) in God's Temple. But this reason, too, does no longer exist in the times of the New Covenant, since Christ has bridged the gap between God and mankind first as God-Man in His own person, and then by his redemption work He reconciled heavens and earth (cf. Eph 1:10; Col 1:20), He even somehow "seated us into the heavens" (Eph 2,5–6; vgl. Eph 1,3) and re-opened paradise (Lk 23:42), such that we now have "*access to the Father*" (Eph 2:18), and also to the "*heavenly Jerusalem*", to "*myriads of Angels*" and to the "*spirits of the righteous made perfect*" (Heb 12:22–23), that is: to the Saints already in heaven. As faithful of the New Covenant, we are "*no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God*" (Eph 2:19; see also footnote 68). Therefore, to illustrate this new situation, it seems very appropriate to put icons of the Saints into the Church.¹⁵⁶ Now the reason adduced above for the ban of images of creatures (namely the sin, that divided God and world) applies strictly speaking only to humanity, not to the Holy Angels, nor to animals and plants, who never sinned. So there is no reason why *these* creatures (Holy Angels, animals and plants) should not have been painted even in the Old Testament; therefore, one

¹⁵² In 691/692 the so-called *Quinisext Council* ('Fifth-Sixth Council') took place in Constantinople in a domed hall (Trullo) of the imperial palace, whence it is called also the Trullanum. It is regarded to be an ecumenical council in the Orthodox Church, but is not acknowledged as such in the Catholic Church. Its aim was to settle mere disciplinary questions rather than dogmatic ones, and to complete in this regard the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils which had neglected the disciplinary regulations. So it is regarded only as a complement of the two previous councils and therefore is not called the Seventh but the Fifth-Sixth Council. It was convoked by Emperor Justinian II. and attended by 211 bishops exclusively from the East; its 102 canons fixed eastern liturgic and canonical customs, that in many cases were at odds with tradition and rites of Western Christianity. Therefore, the pope of that time, *Pope St. Sergius I.*, although he belonged to a Greek family from Antiochia that had moved to Italy, refused to acknowledge the council; preferring, he said, "to die rather than consent to erroneous novelties". Because he refused to sign the council's decrees, Emperor Justinian II ordered his arrest and abduction to Constantinople, but the attempt was frustrated by the militia of the Exarchate of Ravenna and the people protecting the pope. Remarkably, despite of his refusal to acknowledge the Trullanum dear to the Orthodox, *Sergius* is venerated as a Saint not only in the Roman Catholic Church, but in the Eastern Orthodox Church as well.

¹⁵³ The council had been convoked by the byzantine *Empress Irene* (who due to her orthodox faith is venerated in the Orthodox Church, but was never officially recognized as a Saint, presumably because the cruel treatment of her son), who was supported therein by *Patriarch St. Tarasius* (whom she had appointed) and by *Pope Hadrian I.*, whose legates presided the council. A famous participant was Bishop *St. Michael of Synnada* († 826), the great mediator between Eastern and Western Church, who is venerated as a Saint in the Catholic Church as well as in the Orthodox Church. In 794, Pope Hadrian confirmed his approval of the council in his Letter *Dominus ac Redemptor* to Frankish Emperor *Charles the Great* (PL 98,1247–1292): „and therefore we have accepted the council [et ideò ipsam suscepimus synodum]" (PL 988,1291C).

¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, after the council a second phase of iconoclastic battles arose, that came to an end in AD 843 by intervention of Empress Theodora II. This event in 843 is celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Churches as "*the Triumph of Orthodoxy*" every year at the First Sunday of Lent (called the "*Sunday of Orthodoxy*").

¹⁵⁵ The prohibition of icons is expressed in Ex 20:4, 20:23, 34:17, Lev 19:4, 26:1, Deut 4:15–18, 5:8–9, 27:15.

¹⁵⁶ The objection that it is not allowed to abandon one of the famous Ten Commandments, for no iota of the Law should be changed (Mt 5:18), is not valid. The Church has neither abandoned the Commandment nor removed a letter from it, but only has re-assessed its proper scope and meaning for the New Covenant. What the Church has always retained with respect to the Old Testament commandment concerning images is the prohibition of the *idoltrous use of icons* (i.e. the direct veneration of the material side of the icons: wood, colors and shapes – which is more than only the proper reverential treatment of the art work), as well as the prohibition to "make one's own image and concept of God" in the sense of *inventing one's own imagination of God and adjusting Him to one's own wishes*, instead of accepting God as He is and as He shows and reveals Himself. But: To retain a text of the Law without altering one iota and to obey it according to its old literal sense is quite another matter. The latter can be a mistake, for Christ taught us to fulfill the law in a new Spirit. This means that some laws – the so-called 'moral laws', that are founded in unchangeable natural Law and are written into the hearts of everyone – should be fulfilled in the most radical way (see the Lord's Sermon on the Mount Mt 5–7) whereas others (namely the so-called 'ceremonial laws', as for example circumcision, dietary and purity laws, procedures for cult ceremony and so on, that are grounded on positive Divine law and thus are changeable in principle) should not any longer be observed literally; cf. 2 Cor 3:4: We are "ministers of the new testament, not in the letter, but in the spirit"; cf. also Jesus' sovereign way of dealing with the Sabbath law and cf. Mk 7:19b, Acts 15:1–29, Rom 10:4, Eph 2:15, Col 2:16,20–21, Gal 3:24–25, 4:4–5,9–11, 5:2. Among the Ten Commandments there are two mere ceremonial regulations, namely the regulations concerning the Sabbath and the Icons, both being perfectly apt to the Old Covenant, but not in the same degree apt to the New Covenant; for example, the Sunday as resurrection day seemed to overshadow the Saturday that had been determined as holiday by the Sabbath law. Thus, both Commandments have been accordingly adjusted by the Church.

could argue that they should have been excepted from the ban of images. And this was indeed the case. Many Old Testament passages show, that in fact, Angel statues (Cherubim) and also images of animals and plants have been made on God's command: see Ex 25:18–22, 37:7–9, Num 7:89, 1 Kings 6:29, 8:6–9, Ezek 41:17–20,25, Zech 3,9; 4,10; Heb 9:5 (cf. also Rev 3:12). The council pointed to some of these passages explicitly. Now it is very important to see that the question concerning the icons was by no means only a secondary theme about 'mere decoration issues', but is deeply connected with fundamental and absolutely crucial theological insights about Incarnation and Salvation. For it is God's incarnation in Christ (conceived in the right manner) that justifies the emerging possibility and legitimacy to represent Him on icons (and likewise, it is the right view of mankind's salvation and sanctification through Christ, which justifies the portrayal of Saints and its use in the Church). The main contribution of the council to Christology seems to be that the unity of the two natures in Christ is so strong, that the invisible God in a certain sense was made visible to a certain extent, such that a painter painting Christ's human face – albeit symbolically – paints, paradoxically, “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and this can really represent God. That our God became visible/paintable or (with a drawing instrument) ‘circumscribe-able’ (in Greek: ‘*perigraptos*’) with respect to the human nature of Christ (as the council dogmatized, cf. DH 606) is of course again a very perplexing and strong example of the mysterious ‘communication of properties’, on which the Seventh Ecumenical Council is based in the same manner as before the Fifth and Third. Thereby, the Seventh Ecumenical Council had enigmatically emphasized again the unity of the natures, just as the other two previous odd-numbered ecumenical councils had done.

After the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the most disputes and controversies about Trinity and Incarnation had led to a relative complete and satisfactory conclusion; so the following ecumenical councils (generally accepted by the Catholic Church only) as a rule had other main concerns.¹⁵⁷ However, one subtle controversy between Eastern and the Western Christianity regarding the Trinity remained unsolved and gained even more strength. Most eastern theologians in the time of Patriarch *Photius of Constantinople* († 891) insisted (as Photius did) that the Holy Spirit within the Trinity proceeds *only from the Father and not from the Son*, whereas most theologians in the Western Church (especially those from Spain, Gallia and Germany), following St Ambrose of Milan († 397) and St Augustine († 430), held that He proceeded *also from the Son*, which can be expressed in Latin by one single term: ‘*filioque*’, meaning ‘and from the Son’. Interestingly, most Pre-Photinian Greek Fathers seem to have accepted the Western view and expression, although most of them, instead of using the *coordinating formula* favored by the Latin writing Western theologians (procession of the Spirit from the Father ‘and’ the Son) preferred to use the *subordinating formula* (procession of the Spirit from the Father ‘through’ the Son), which had been accepted also in the West as sufficient expression of the truth, while Photius rejected even this formula in the context of the proper *immanent* Trinity and permitted its use only for the economical Trinity.¹⁵⁸ Primarily in the West, from 396 onward, the Filioque even appeared into new-formulated local Creeds (either verbatim or by paraphrase).¹⁵⁹ most notably it was included by paraphrase in the famous *Athanasian Creed*, a remarkably detailed hymnal

¹⁵⁷ The *Eighth Ecumenical Council* (The *Fourth Council of Constantinople*, 869–870) with its 110 attendants, though, defended the veneration of icons once more, it compared the dignity of Christ's icons with the dignity of the Gospel Book and the sign of the cross and argued that who refuses Christ's icons should also not see Christ's shape when he will return in the glory of the Father to glorify His Saints (DH 653–656). But it had also other issues to deal with: It rejected the doctrine that humans have two souls (instead of only one), emphasized the authority of the Church Magisterium and Tradition (DH 650–651, quoting 2 Thess 2:15), complained about interference of secular sovereigns in religious matters regarding councils and regarding ordination of bishops (DH 650–660), hinted to the primacy of the pope (DH 661) and finally deposed *Patriarch Photius of Constantinople*, which had been the council's main concern (see footnote 167).

¹⁵⁸ Already the first of the great Latin writing Western theologians, Tertullian, in *Adversus Praxean* (c. 215, see footnote 3) used *both formulas*: According to chapter 4,1 the Spirit comes *from the Father through the Son* („Spiritus non aliunde puto quam a Patre per Filium“); and according to chapter 8,7, the Spirit comes *from God* [i.e. from the Father] *and the Son* („Spiritus a Deo et Filio“, for the context of this quote see footnote 99). Especially the following Pre-Photinian Greek Fathers seem to have accepted, that the Son somehow participated in the procession of the Holy Spirit: *St. Athanasius* († 373), *St. Basil* († 379), *St. Gregory of Nazianz* († 389), *St. Epiphanius* († 403), *Didymus the Blind* († c. 395), *St. Cyrill of Alexandria* († 444) and *St. Maximus the Confessor* († 662). Even the teaching of *St. John of Damascus* († 749) who defends the formula that the Spirit proceeds from the Father ‘through’ (not ‘out of’, Greek: ‘ek’) the Son (De Fide Orthodoxa 1:12, PG 94,849B), seems at least compatible with the Western view, if the Son is viewed as ‘actively’ forwarding the Spirit and not merely as a mere passive channel. The attempts of later Eastern theologians to interpret the doctrine of these Fathers in a radical *Photinian* way (i.e. claiming, as Photius did, that the Son participates only in the initiation of the ‘outer mission’ of the Spirit, sending him into this world; but that the Son does not participate in *any* spirating process within the immanent Trinity, such that the Spirit proceeds neither ‘from’ nor ‘through’ the Son; for Photius, see also footnote 157) does not seem plausible; even after Photius some Greek Fathers returned to more moderate views on the subject (cf. footnotes 188 and 199; see also footnote 186). As regards the mentioned earlier Fathers, *St. Athanasius* stated that the Spirit has the same relation to the Son as the Son to the Father (Ad Serapion, epistula . 1,21, PG 26,580 and epistula 3,1, PG 26,625) and perhaps he called the Son even the ‘source’ of the Spirit (De incarnatione Verbi Dei et contra Arianos 9; PG 26, 999–1000; this work, however, is often ascribed by modern authors to Marcellus of Ancyra, another eastern bishop and theologian, see footnotes 18 and 130); cf. also the so-called Athanasian Creed (see footnote 160). *St. Basil* states that as the Son comes in order and dignity after the Father, so the Spirit after the Son (Contra Eunomium 3,1, PG 29,656), and that he is “conjoined to the one Father through the one Son” (De Spiritu Sancto 18,45, PG 32,152). *St. Gregory* writes at the end of his poem *Pros Parthenous Parainetikos*: „One God: from the Generator [= Father] through the Son to the great Spirit“ (PG 37,632A); cf. also the analogy between the three Divine Persons Father, Son and Spirit and (1) *sun, ray and light* or (2) *eye, spring and river* discussed by Gregory (see footnote 99). *St. Epiphanius* asserts two times explicitly, that the Spirit is “from the Father and the Son” (Ancoratus 8, PG 43,29C and Ancoratus 9, PG 43,32C; cf. Ancoratus 11, PG 43,36c); he also calls the Spirit „a third light from Father and Son” (Panareion 74,8, PG 42,489B). *Didymus* explains that in John 16:13 the Son wants to teach: The Spirit is ‘from the Father and me’ (De Spiritu Sancto 34, PG 139,1064A). *St. Cyrill* uses explicitly the formula “the holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son” (Thesaurus, assertio 34, PG 75,585). Finally *St. Maximus* explicitly defends the Western (and Cyrill's) expression as legitimate in his Letter to Marinus of Cyprus (PG 91,133–136). In 410 apparently also an Eastern local council, the *Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Persia* formulated in its Creed: “and we confess the living and Holy Spirit ... who is from the Father and the Son”, at least according to the ‘West Syriac recension’ coming from Syrian Orthodox sources (while the ‘East Syriac recension’ – handed down from the Nestorian ‘Church of the East’ – reads “and in the Holy Spirit” only). Some scholars argue that the West Syriac recension is the original one and represents the earliest example of the Filioque clause within a Conciliar Creed. See also footnote 159.

¹⁵⁹ Already in 396, *St. Victorius of Rouen* spoke in his Creed “but the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son” (*Sanctus Spiritus vero de Patre et Filio*), see Victorius, *De laude Sanctorum* 4 (PL 20, 446). A similar formulation seems to have been made by a *Persian Council* in 410 (see footnote 158). Around 434 the *Athanasian Creed* also contained a paraphrase of the filioque (see footnote 160). In 447, *Pope St. Leo I. the Great* wrote in his letter *Quam laudabiliter* to the Spanish Bishop Turribius of Astorga (DH 284), that the Spirit “proceeds from both” (*de utriusque*), and in the same year 447, the term ‘*filioque*’ was inserted into a Creed for the first time, but not yet into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, but into a creed that had been formulated by the First Council of Toledo (a local Spanish council held 400 against Priscillianism, see footnote 124); the insertion was done by a local council held in Spain on Pope Leo's request (probably in

summary of the ecclesiastical Trinity and Incarnation doctrine (which has probably been composed in South Gallia c. 434).¹⁶⁰ A trinitarian Creed still much more elaborated than the Athanasian Creed was the Creed of the famous *Eleventh Council of Toledo*, a Spanish local council held in the year 675; its Creed seems to be the most complete Trinitarian Creed ever; it also includes the Filioque by paraphrase.¹⁶¹ In Spain, the Filioque was even inserted into the Latin version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in the 6th century,¹⁶² and at the end of the 8th century the confession of the Filioque came also to northern Italy and to the Franks,¹⁶³ who finally worked as missionaries in Bulgaria in 866 in the name of Pope St. Nicholas I. the Great (958–967), and thereby distributed the Creed with the Filioque included.¹⁶⁴ This Bulgarian mission was the reason for *Patriarch Photius of Constantinople* (who was a famous scholar and is considered to be a Saint within the Eastern Orthodox Church) to reproach the Latin speaking Westerners guided by the pope, accusing them in his encyclical letter to the eastern patriarchs in 867 with sharp words (among other things) to teach the false doctrine of the Filioque and to have corrupted the Creed by the unlawful act of inserting it therein – although in fact the popes had not yet accepted the insertion.¹⁶⁵ Shortly after this letter, in the same year 876, Photius even convoked a Synod that was held in Constantinople, which dared to excommunicate Pope St. Nicholas, who died in the same year 867 shortly after the Synod, without having heard of this shocking act. Certainly, also Pope Nicholas had previously deposed Photius in 863, on a Synod invoked in the Lateran Church in Rome, but not because of matters of faith, but with respect to the irregular circumstances of his elevation to the patriarchal throne.¹⁶⁶

This quarrel about Photius led to the today still existing disagreement between Roman-Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians about the question which council has to be referred to as the *Eighth Ecumenical Council* and/or *Forth Council of Constantinople*. While the Catholic theologians usually assign both labels to the council held at Constantinople in 869–870 which *deposed Photius and reinstalled his predecessor St. Ignatius* to the patriarchal throne (this is why it is called also the ‘Ignatian’ Council),¹⁶⁷

Toledo; this Toletan Synod of 447 has to be distinguished from the Toletan Council in 527, that is officially counted as ‘Second Council of Toledo’. In 589, the *Third Council of Toledo* (convoked by King Reccared I. who had converted from Arianism to Catholicism – see footnote 119 – and presided by Archbishop *St. Leander of Seville*, who was assisted by his famous brother and successor, the scholar and “last western Church Father of the ancient world” *St. Isidor of Seville*) composed for the also an own confession in order to defeat the Arians, which states that the Spirit proceeds “also from the Son” (*et a filio*: DH 470); this council also introduced the recitation of the Latin version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed into the Holy Mass (in the original form without the Filioque, although later manuscripts of the council’s acts contain the Filioque, which means that the insertion has been made afterwards and ascribed to the council retrospectively); see also footnote 126. The *Sixth Council of Toledo* 638 composed again an own Creed which contained for the first time explicitly the word ‘Filioque’ (DH 490), and, finally, the *Eighth Council of Toledo* 653 was the first council that recited the Latin version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed with the ‘Filioque’ inserted. The *Eleventh Council of Toledo* (675) confessed in its famous Creed (DH 525–541, cf. also footnotes 84, 96, 115, 149, 230 and 240), that the Holy Spirit “has proceeded concurrently from both” (*simul ab utrisque processisse*: DH 527), and the *Sixteenth Council of Toledo* 693 (the last one that composed an own Creed) confessed that The Father is “the source and origin of the whole Godhead” (DH 568) and the Holy Spirit proceeds “from the union of the Father and the Son” (*ex Patris Filiiq[ue] unione*) (DH 569). Also the *Synod of Cividale* in Friaul in Northern Italy (796), presided over by *Patriarch St. Paulinus II. of Aquileia*, composed a Creed with Filioque (DH 617). In Paulinus’ view, the Filioque was no alteration of the creed of 381. He thought, that this creed must not be altered, but that it could be necessary „to define some parts in more detail“; this has been done in an even larger extend with the Nicene creed of 325, when it was expanded and transformed into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in 381 (cf. Bernd Oberdorfer, *Filioque*, Göttingen, 2001, p. 145). The Latin version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed with the Filioque inserted became known finely to the Franks and was inserted into the Liturgy in Aachen in 799 and defended by Emperor Karl I the Great and the Synod in Aachen in 809. But *Pope St. Leo III.*, who had been asked to confirm the Aachen Synod, while confirming the doctrine of the Filioque, refused in 809/10 to approve the insertion into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Instead he engraved the Creed (that in those times wasn’t sung yet in the Roman Holy Mass) in Greek and Latin without the Filioque onto two silver shields, that were brought into St. Peter’s Basilica to be placed each side of the entrance to the grave (the ‘confessio’) of St. Peter, “out of love to and precaution for the orthodox faith”, as the *Liber Pontificalis* (Leo III, No. 84) comments. The Franks, however, continued using the interpolated Creed, especially in 866/867 under *Pope Nicholas I.* the Frankish missionaries in Bulgaria used their Creed with Filioque, which was criticized by Photius, but had not been ordered by the pope. Only much later, *Pope Sergius IV.* at his inauguration 1009 allegedly sent his Creed with the Filioque inserted to *Patriarch Sergios II. of Constantinople*, who in response deleted the pope from the diptychs (writing tablets containing the names of persons of honor who are commemorated in the Liturgy); however, the credibility of this story is debated. In any case it is much better testified that Sergius’ successor, *Pope Benedict VIII.*, in 1014 (on the request of the Frankish Emperor *St. Henry II.*, who at that time had come to Rome for coronation), finally introduced the singing of the Creed in the Holy Mass at Rome, whereby he determined as the text to be used the Latin translation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed with the Filioque.

¹⁶⁰ From the 7th to the 17th century, it was widely accepted, that the ‘Athanasian Creed’ with its description of the filioque (“*Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio: non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus, sed procedens*”) goes back to the Eastern Church Father *St. Athanasius* († 373), indeed it seemed to be an expression of Athanasius’ theology. According to a well-founded modern hypothesis, however, it was composed c. 434 in South Gaul by the monk *St. Vincent of Lérins* or one of his friends. Being more detailed than the Apostolic and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, it was highly esteemed, and since the 13th century it has been even used occasionally in the Liturgy. See also footnote 240.

¹⁶¹ See footnote 159.

¹⁶² This has been ascribed to the Third Council of Toledo 589, but in fact was done afterwards. The first council that recited the Latin version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed with the ‘Filioque’ was the Eighth Council of Toledo 653; see footnote 159.

¹⁶³ Cf. footnote 159 about the Council of Aquileia 796 and the Aachen Liturgy 799.

¹⁶⁴ See footnote 159; cf. also the amazing letter written by Pope St. Nicholas to Khan Boris of Bulgaria on November 13, 866, about basic Christian tenets and customs (DH 643–648), where, however, the Filioque is not mentioned.

¹⁶⁵ See footnote 159, especially the remarks about Pope St. Leo III. To the problem of the ‘insertion’ see also footnotes 168 and 186.

¹⁶⁶ See footnote 167.

¹⁶⁷ The ‘Catholic’ Council of 869/870, however, did not deal with the Filioque, nor with other doctrinal claims of Photius. Instead, Photius was blamed for the manner in which he had fought against the Roman Church and for the irregular manner of his ascension into office: In 858, his predecessor St Ignatius of Constantinople (patriarch since 847, acknowledged as a Saint in East and West) had been deposed by Emperor Bardas, to whom he had refused to give communion due to the Emperor’s suspected relationship to his daughter-in-law; the Emperor had committed the patriarchal throne to Photius, who had been a layman and gained all holy orders within five days only, which seemed to be contrary to ecclesiastical law. Therefore, *Pope St. Nicholas*, following the request of Ignatius’ supporters, had deposed him already on a Synod in the Lateran in 863, which Photius had not accepted; but Photius had been forced to resign in 867 (shortly after the mentioned Synod he had organized to excommunicate Pope St. Nicholas) by the new Emperor Basil I. who reinstalled St. Ignatius as patriarch. So one of the main concerns of the Council of 869–870 has been to confirm Photius’ deposition and his replacement by St. Ignatius as Patriarch of Constantinople. For the other topics the council dealt with, see footnote 157. The council was convoked by Emperor *Basil I the Macedonian* and *Pope Hadrian II* (867–872, successor of Nicholas I.), presided by the pope’s legates and attended by delegates of the Eastern patriarchs and 102 bishops. Pope Hadrian confirmed it in 871 in his letter *Lectis excellentis* to the Emperor (PL 122,1309D), and called ‘ecumenical’ in his Letter *Scripsisti ut nostri presbyteri* to Ignatius (PL 122,1312C). Hadrian’s archivist and church historian *Anastasius Bibliothecarius* († c. 878), who attended the Council and (following the pope’s order) translated its acts into Latin (PL 129,9–196), called it ‘the Holy

the Eastern Orthodox Church considers this council as null and void, and counts the council that was held in Constantinople ten years later (879–880) and *reinstalled Photius as Patriarch* (and therefore is called the ‘Photian’ Council) as the Fourth Council of Constantinople; whereby some (but not all) Eastern Orthodox theologians assign the rank of an ecumenical council to this council and thus claim that it was the Eighth Ecumenical Council (which usually is denied on the Catholic side); some Eastern Orthodox Theologians go on to claim, that this council followed Photius in the condemnation of the Filioque as false doctrine and heresy, and that even the contemporary Pope, John VIII. has fully approved this Photian Council, while he totally rejected the Ignatian one; all this, however is questionable, and in my opinion seems to be very improbable.¹⁶⁸

However, it is true that at that time the ecclesiastical community between East and West was not yet broken permanently. Neither did a final ecclesiastical division occur, when *Pope Benedict VIII.* in 1014, acting on the request of *Frankish Emperor St. Henry II.* inserted finally the Filioque into the Creed to be sung in the Latin Holy Mass in Rome.¹⁶⁹ The final division (‘Great Schism’) between the Catholic Church the Eastern Orthodox Church has traditionally been assigned to the scandal of the 1054, when a mutual excommunication was imposed between Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida (allegedly acting in the name of Pope St. *Leo IX.*, but *after* the death of Leo and before a new Pope was elected!) and *Patriarch Michael I. Cerularius of Constantinople*; in this conflict

Eighth General Synod’. This acknowledgement has probably *not* been canceled ten years later, has been claimed by some (see footnote 168).

¹⁶⁸ The ‘Orthodox’ Council of 879–880 (which, as a rule, is not recognized by the Catholics) was convoked by *Emperor Basil I.* and took place under the presidency of Photius, who after the death of St. Ignatius (877) had returned into office; previously he had been reconciled with St. Ignatius, who had then proposed him as his successor. He even had been acknowledged by the new Pope John VIII. (872–882) as the new patriarch. While Catholics usually do not acknowledge this ‘Photian Council’ 879–880 as Ecumenical, some (but not all) Orthodox theologians count it as ecumenical and call it the proper and ‘Orthodox’ *Eighth Ecumenical Council* and *Fourth Council of Constantinople*, while they reject the previous ‘Roman Catholic’ and ‘Ignatian’ Council held 869–870. The new council was attended (like the previous one) by legates of the pope and delegates of the patriarchs; and by much more bishops than the previous one, namely 383. It confirmed Photius as patriarch, and revoked the council held ten years at least in this respect; it further quoted in its ‘definition’ the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed without the *Filioque* and *imposed deposition of clerics and anathematization of layman who should add or subtract something to this Creed*; however, the council by reproaching additions and subtractions *added the condition “when no heresy is stirred up”*, so it seems to have left open the possibility to modify the Creed, if this should be necessary or useful to defend the faith against (or prevent it from) new heresies; the later Catholic Ecumenical *Council of Florence* claimed 1439 that it had been indeed an imminent necessity that lead to the insertion of the *Filioque* (DH 1302; the opponent, against whom it was aimed, was probably not only the late Arianism in Spain and Gallia/ Germany, but meanwhile also the radical Photianism). Interestingly, already the *Council of Ephesus* had stated in 431 that “*that it is unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different creed as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicaea*” (can. 7, DH 265), and that clergymen which act against this should be deposed, and layman anathematized. The occasion this canon was the formula composed by Theodore of Mopsuestia (Nestorius’ teacher), and given to the council by the Presbyter Charisius of Philadelphia. The Creed that the council wanted to preserve was the original Creed composed 325 at the *Council of Nicaea*, because it was this Creed that St. Cyrill had used in his explanatory letter to his anathematisms, which was added to the council’s acts. But now we have to consider, that at the time of the Council of Ephesus in 431 the Creed of Nicaea had already been altered and extended by the *Council of Constantinople* in 381 (fifty years before), which had added many words confessing the nature of the Holy Spirit in order to defeat the heresy of the Pneumatomachians (see footnote 127). Obviously, this extended Creed had not yet been acknowledged as a normative substitute for the Nicene Creed by the Council of Ephesus in 431; this was done only twenty years later by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (see footnote 125). If this was no striking transgression of the prohibition to alter the Creed, then the prohibition of the Ephesian Council in 431 is to be combined with the same self-evident exception, that was expressed at the Photian Council in 879/80, *that in order to defeat new heresies, the Creed may well be aptly altered*. Besides, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 had formulated an entirely new text, called its ‘definition’ of faith, where some important points have been added to the teachings of the Council of Ephesus, at the end of this ‘definition’ the council added again the formulaic admonition, that nobody should “*bring forward, or to write, or compose a different creed*” (DH 303), which, of course, is to be understood with the same reasonable and self-evident restriction as always: While it is forbidden to introduce a creed which is different in the sense of *contrary* to the council’s, it ought to be allowed to introduce one, that *in line with* the council’s explaining it deeper against new heresies, misunderstandings and challenges, if this is needed (besides, if one adheres to the exact wording, one could quarrel about four other differences between the Greek and Latin versions of the Creed as well, where in one case it is sure that the Latin version is older, while in the other cases this is unclear; see footnote 127). In addition to this, there are two further arguments, why the addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed in the Western Church cannot unquestionably be judged to be an illegal transgression of the rule made by the Photian Council in 879–880 stating the immutability of the text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. For one, the said rule has *no irreversible/infallible character* according to the criteria mentioned in footnote 116 (they are only disciplinary rules, otherwise *every faithful* acting against the decision should have been *anathematized*, but here *clergyman* are only *deposed*), therefore, the pope and later ecumenical councils are not bound by it forever, and so the pope could dispose of (or make an exception to) this rule. But secondly, one should take into account that the *Filioque* has been added *only to the Latin translation*. As the famous Doctor of the Church, St. Anselm of Canterbury remarks in chapter 13 of his writing *De Processione Spiritus Sancti* (1102), that the *original Greek text of the Creed* has remained untouched, this text without the *Filioque* is preserved and venerated also in the West. Thus, Pope St. John Paul II. recited the Greek text of the Creed without the *Filioque* on December 7, 1987 together with Patriarch Demetrios I. (and again on July 29, 1995 together with Patriarch Bartholomew I.), each time during the celebration of the Holy Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica; and the so-called ‘united’ Byzantine Church Communities that remained in or returned to full communion with the Roman Church and the pope, have mostly been allowed to use the original Greek text without the ‘*filioque*’ (which makes a very good sense, see footnote 186), although there have been exceptions to this rule (see again footnote 186). Thus (apart from these exceptions) *the prohibition of altering has been respected at least for the original text*. Cf. also the Vatican ‘Clarification’ on the *Filioque*, issued on September 13, 1995 by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, which reads: “*The Catholic Church acknowledges the [...] normative, and irrevocable value [...] of the Symbol [= Creed] professed in Greek at Constantinople in 381 by the Second Ecumenical Council. [...] No profession of faith peculiar to a particular liturgical tradition can contradict this expression of the faith taught and professed by the undivided Church.*”

To the Greek acts of the Council of 879/80 there was afterwards added a (pretended) letter of Pope John VIII. to Photius, declaring the *Filioque* to be an addition which is rejected by the church of Rome, and the councils against Photius are null and void. But this seems to be a forgery. To be sure, Pope John VIII. had participated in the Photian Council by his legates. Still, he has been not quite satisfied, because his legates had been too indulgent to all requests of Photius. Therefore, as the protestant historian Philip Schaff (1819–1893) remarks in this famous *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA, 1997), Vol. 4, chapter 5, § 70, “he sent the bishop Marinus to Constantinople to declare invalid what the legates had done contrary to his instructions. For this Marinus was shut up in prison for thirty days. After his return Pope John VIII. solemnly pronounced the anathema on Photius”, which might have happened in 881, and also Marinus “renewed the anathema after he was elected pope (882)”. However, it is doubtful whether this is really what happened (the story goes back to an unknown late ninth-century compiler of the acts of the 869/70 Council); there is another story, favored by many contemporary historians since it has been made quite plausible by the research of the Catholic scholar Francis Dvornik (*The Photian Schism: history and Legend*, Cambridge 1948), although his theses have been challenged by Warren H. Carroll 1987 (*The Building of Christendom*, Front Royal, VA., Vol. 2, S. 348–383) and more recently 2013 by David J. Castellan (see <http://www.arcaneknowledge.org/catholic/councils/comment08.htm>), due to a somewhat one-sided pro-Photian interpretation of his sources; thus, Dvornik’s results are not certain beyond all doubts. According to Dvornik, Photius was *not* again condemned and excommunicated by John VIII and his successors, but died in peace with the Roman Church and its pope in 891. It may be true, that *Pope Johann VIII.* (872–882, who due to his leniency towards Photius is said to have been mutated into ‘Pope Joan’ in later legends) and his immediate successors, namely *Marinus* (882–884), *St. Adrian III.* (884–885, who in East and West is venerated as a Saint, and in the Orthodox Church is even called ‘the last orthodox Pope of Rome’) und *Stephan V.* (885–891) have not formally excommunicated Photius again. But also according to Dvornik’s version, Pope John VIII in his letter to Photius in Summer 880, in which He approved the Photian Council in general, added at the end a somewhat cryptic reservation: *that he does not accept whatever his legates may have done against the apostolic instructions*. In particular, as Castellano has shown, he probably

the *Filioque question* was present, but played only a marginal role.¹⁷⁰ But even the ‘Great Schism’ of 1054 was neither the first nor the definite separation,¹⁷¹ but only a further step within a century-long separation process, that had already begun before Photius,¹⁷² and, being interrupted in the centuries after Cerularius by short-living reunifications,¹⁷³ culminated in the 18th century;¹⁷⁴ since then, the separation process has been partially reversed.¹⁷⁵ However, the remaining difference is manifested by the fact that from the fourteen councils that were held after the Seventh Ecumenical Council and are considered to be ecumenical by Catholics, no council is acknowledged to be ecumenical by the Eastern Orthodox Churches until today and some decisions of these councils are often still criticized sharply. After the papal insertion of the Filioque in creed of the Roman Liturgy in the year 1014 it took other 200 years until, in 1215, the content of the Filioque (although not expressed by that term) appeared into the Creed of an ecumenical council: The Creed of the *Twelfth Ecumenical Council* (the *Fourth Council of the Lateran*, i.e. held in the Lateran in Rome) that is acknowledged only by the Catholic Church, because at this point in history the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches had already been separated.¹⁷⁶ Finally, on the *Fourteenth Ecumenical Council* (the *Second Council of Lyons*) in 1274 and

never accepted the condemnation of the Ignatian Council 886–870. One of his successors, Pope Stephen V., wrote to Emperor Basil in 886, that Photius was still trying to get the Council (of 869–70) abrogated. “*Naturally, this does not make sense if John had already abrogated it*”, Castellano rightly comments. Furthermore, Pope Stephen in his letter called Photius a ‘layman’, so he certainly denied the legitimacy of Photius as patriarch, irrespective of whether or not he had been formally excommunicated again. Emperor Basil was dead when Pope Stephen’s letter arrived, and the Emperor’s successor Leo VI., called ‘the wise’, whose teacher Photius had been, deposed Photius again and banished him to a monastery, where he died probably in 891. The Photian Council 879–880, though, has certainly been considered to be dogmatically acceptable for the pope John VIII, and since it seemed to restore peace between East and West, he had approved it with the mentioned reservation. It further seems that the Photian Council had been accepted also by most Western Catholics for the next two centuries. But the claim of some Eastern Orthodox theologians, that this council “condemned the Filioque as a heresy” is clearly false, since no explicit mention of the Filioque has been made on the Council and in order to count as a condemnation, most clear explicitness is required by the axiom of law ‘in dubio pro reo’. On the other hand, the Ignatian Council 869–870 is more rich in dogmatic content than the Photian one (whose only dogmatic issue had been to confirm the sanctity of the Creed) and in this respect it seems more apt to be counted as ecumenical. But who knows: Maybe one time in the future one will agree that both councils (which are contrary only in their assessment of Photius’ canonical status, which has no dogmatic relevance) are parts of one and the same ‘Eighth Ecumenical Council’.

¹⁶⁹ See at the end of footnote 159 the remarks about Benedikt VIII. and his predecessor Sergius IV.

¹⁷⁰ The conflicts preceding the excommunications had been focused on ritual and jurisdictional differences between East and West. This time, the Patriarch’s main concern had been questions of ritual: Cerularius was acting mainly against the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist by the Latins (he later wrote to Peter of Antioch, that initially he had not even heard about the controversy concerning the Filioque), while it was Cardinal Humbert, who reintroduced the question of the Filioque into the battle, claiming that the Filioque had been removed from the Creed by the Pneumatomachians (see p. 33; on the basis of knowledge available today this was a false assumption). However, much more important for the western side was the controversy about the question whether the patriarch of Constantinople has the right to call himself ‘Ecumenical Patriarch’ in the sense of the supreme Patriarch of the whole Church. This title had been assigned officially to the patriarch of Constantinople for the first time on a Synod in Constantinople in 587 or 588. The patriarch at that time was *St. John IV. the Faster*, who has been acknowledged as a Saint also in the Catholic Church, although he had been sharply reproached immediately in 587/8 by *Pope Palegius II.* and again 595 by his successor *Pope St. Gregory I. the Great* for using the title. Since then, most successors of John IV. continued to use it, which has never been approved in Rome, but has been more or less tolerated, as long as the use of the title was not connected with the claim of universal superiority (Cerularius seems to have claimed by this title the supremacy at least over the other Eastern patriarchs).

¹⁷¹ The scandal of 1054 has not been recognized at those times to be exceptionally important. Cardinal Humbert had not acted lawfully in the name of the Holy See (which has been vacant at that time), and apart from this he had not excommunicated the whole Eastern Church, but only Cerularius, two of his allies, and like-minded people (from which he explicitly had excepted the imperial dignitaries and the wise citizens of Constantinople); likewise the synod convoked by Cerularius had excommunicated only the individuals behind Humbert’s bull, but not explicitly the pope or the Western Latin Church. Immediately after 1054, the venerable old Patriarch Peter III. of Antioch (1052–1057), a man of peace, continued to maintain a friendly contact with Rome and Constantinople (he had exchanged with Pope St. Leo IX. the Creed; Leo had praised Peter’s Creed as ‘sound, catholic, and orthodox’ although it didn’t contain the Filioque; likewise Peter seems to have accepted Leo’s Creed with the Filioque inserted). Some decades later, Pope St. Urban II. (1088–1099) in the year 1089 sent a letter to the Byzantine Emperor .Alexios I. Komnenos (1081–1118), asking him why the pope isn’t mentioned the diptychs of Constantinople (i.e. in the Liturgy, cf. footnote 159). In Constantinople, this question was presented to a Synod. The Synod new that the Churches had drifted apart “a long time ago”, but could not find any document about the exclusion of the pope (such a document simply didn’t exist, since in the excommunication of 1054 no pope was mentioned). So Emperor Alexios answered that the pope should sent his ‘letter of enthronement’ with his Creed, then his name would be put back on the diptychs, and one should negotiate about the differences. But this was not realized. The pope probably did not send his Creed for examination, for it was not customary any longer for the pope to sent his Creed to the other patriarchs. Furthermore, the negotiating partner appointed by the Eastern side, Basileios of Reggio, proved to be an adherent of the Antipope Clement III. (1084–1100) who as acting against Urban. So a formal ecclesiastical unity was not achieved, but in spite of this Alexios and Urban understood each other: Alexios asked the pope so provide help against the Muslim Seljuks who were threatening the Byzantine Empire at that time, and Urban indeed called the First Crusade in order to help the Eastern Christians. Moreover, Pope St. Urban II. confirmed in 1089 on the Regional *Council of Bari* the union between the *Greeks in southern Italy* and the pope (see footnote 178): The Provincial Council of Bari was the first (and one of the most successful) ‘union councils’.

¹⁷² Before the ‘Photian Schism’ 867 there have been at least three other East-West-Schisms, most notably the was a greater Schism in 414–519, in 654–681 and in 736–787 due to Monophysite, Monothelete and iconoclastic heresies that affected predominantly the East, with more than a hundred – and according to experts by Byzantine Church History in fact more than two hundred – years of separation before Photius.

¹⁷³ A reunification of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church took place in 1274–1285 as a result of the Second Council of Lyons 1274, and another reunification again 1439–1472 as a result of the Council of Florence 1439.

¹⁷⁴ Two events show, that in the 18th century the division between the Churches was maintained in the most severe form. First, the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Propagation of Faith forbade in 1729 the sacramental communion with heretics and schismatics in general (and the Eastern Orthodox had been considered to belong at least into the second category). So it was forbidden, to receive Sacraments from or to give Sacraments to the Orthodox (albeit the Catholic Church continued to acknowledge the Orthodox Sacraments as valid). Second, the Eastern Orthodox patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem declared in 1755, the that “*we treat western converts who want to join us as unchristened people*”. So Catholic Baptism and every other Sacrament was regarded to be invalid. Before this, the Orthodox Council of Constantinople held in 1484 (see footnote 189) had determined to accept converts by Chrismation only, not by Baptism.

¹⁷⁵ 1965 the mutual excommunication of 1054 has been has ‘removed from memory’ by Blessed Pope Paul VI. and Patriarch Athenagoras; and while sacramental communion with all heretics and schismatics was still forbidden in can. 731 §2 of the old Catholic Canon Law (CIC) of 1917, according to the new Catholic Canon Law (CIC) of 1983 it is allowed under certain conditions especially for “members of Eastern Churches which do not have full communion with the Catholic Church” Churches (see can. 844, §§2–4). On the other side, Catholic Baptism is acknowledged today as valid by most Orthodox.

¹⁷⁶ The *Fourth Council of the Lateran* confessed in 1215, that “*the Father is from none, the Son from the Father alone, and the holy Spirit from both equally* [pariter ab utroque]” (DH 800; see for this council also footnotes 11, 93, 114 and 131). Finally, in 1267 Pope Clement IV. submitted a Creed to emperor Michael Palaiologos VIII., that contained the term ‘filioque’, and this Creed was accepted 1274 by the *Fourteenth Ecumenical Council* (the *Second Council of Lyons*, see

again on the *Seventeenth Ecumenical Council* (the *Council of Florence*) in 1442 the doctrine expressed by the Filioque has been raised to a formal dogma of the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁷

Now, the substantive discussion about the Filioque was carried out as follows. The Eastern theologians argued that in John 15:26b it is said that “*the Spirit of truth [...] proceeds from the Father*” without the addition ‘and from the Son’ and that the original text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, as it was formulated by the First Council of Constantinople in 381, reads “*and [we believe] in the Holy Spirit [...] who proceeds from the Father*”, likewise without the ‘filioque’. The Western theologians could reply to this that, just as the original *Nicene Creed* has been augmented by insertions to build the extended *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*, so this Creed in turn could be further augmented by the insertion of the ‘filioque’. This augmentation does not alter the original meaning, but adds a further determination (in the same way as the claim, that the Spirit proceeds ‘only’ from the Father, would also be an insertion to the original text, which is open to both insertions). A main speculative argument for the filioque was adduced by St. Thomas Aquinas († 1274), who, following mainly ideas of St. Anselm of Canterbury († 1109) in his treatise *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (c. 1102), stated that in God there can be a distinction only by a ‘relational opposition’, which in turn can only be grounded in a procession: and therefore, either the Spirit must proceed from the Son, or vice versa the Son from the Spirit; otherwise Son and Spirit could not be distinct persons.¹⁷⁸ Another, less speculative argument, that is rooted deeply in the Scripture, is the following: If the Son is the image of the Father, mirroring Him perfectly (as Heb 1:3 implies), and the Spirit proceeds from the Father (as is stated in John 15:26) then it must proceed also from the Son; this conclusion can be fortified by Jesus’ own words: “*All things whatsoever the Father has, are mine*” (John 16:15a), and the continuation shows that among ‘all things’ which Jesus here had in mind, was especially the Holy Spirit: “*Therefore I said, that He [the Spirit] shall receive of mine, and announce it to you*” (John 16:15b; cf. 16,14).¹⁷⁹ In addition to this very important Scripture argument, the Western side points to the fact that the Spirit is called not only ‘Spirit of the Father’ (cf. Mt 10:20),¹⁸⁰ but also ‘Spirit of the Son’ (cf. Gal 4:6)¹⁸¹ or ‘Spirit of Christ’ (Rom 8:9b,¹⁸² 1 Pet 1:11) or ‘Spirit of Jesus Christ’ (Phil 1:19) or ‘Spirit of the Lord’ (2 Cor 3:17). Moreover, it is said that the Spirit will be ‘send’ not only *by the Father* (John 14:26), but also *by the Son*, according to John 15:26a and John 16:7b, and that the Son ‘breathed’ on the Apostles transmitting the Spirit (John 20:22) and ‘poured it out’ on them at Pentecost (Apg 2,33); from these statements concerning the ‘economic’ Trinity (i.e. its appearance into the world), one can reasonably conclude that analogous structures should exist in the ‘immanent’ Trinity. Interestingly, even in the verse John 15:26, which is quoted by the eastern side for the claim that the Spirit proceeds ‘only’ from the Father, its mission from the Son is confirmed, for the whole verse reads. “*When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will testify about me.*”

DH 853, see also footnote 177), on which a representative of the Emperor in fact accepted the Creed in the Emperor’s name, which lead to a short restoration of the full Union between the Eastern Orthodox and the Catholic Church.

¹⁷⁷ At both councils a short-living Church Union of the Latin and Greek Churches was achieved. The Second Council of Lyons (1274), chaired by blessed Pope Gregory X., declared: “*With the approval of the sacred council, We condemn and reprove all who presume to deny that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son [ex Patre et Filio], or rashly to assert that the holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from two principles and not as from one.*” Here, the Filioque has been complemented and modified by the important doctrine to be discussed below, that the Father and the Son are not two separated principles (origins, sources) of the Spirit, but are combined to form only one principle (one origin, one source). These doctrines were repeated by the Council of Florence in 1439 in the union decree for the Greeks ‘*Laetentur Caeli*’, in which both doctrines have been officially dogmatized once more (‘*diffinitus*’: DH 1300). They have been also presented more detailed in 1442 in the Bull of Union with the Copts and Ethiopians ‘*Cantate Domino*’ (DH 1330–1331); in both union decrees the Filioque was explicitly mentioned (DH 1302 and 1331); and the council in 1442 anathematized “*whoever holds opposing or contrary views*” (DH 1332). – Despite of all this (and not comprehensible for me) the US Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2003 after four years of Orthodox-Catholic Consultations in North America issued a declaration *The Filioque: A Church Dividing Issue?* (see <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/orthodox/filioque-church-dividing-issue-english.cfm>) in which the bishops recommend that the Catholic Church should declare that the condemnation of the Second Council of Lyons (quoted above) “is no longer applicable”. To fortify this, the bishops referred to “a growing theological consensus” and to statements of Blessed Pope Paul VI. commemorating the 700th anniversary of the Second Council of Lyons in 1974 (*Ludgini in Urbe*, see AAS 1974, 620–625; cf. also footnote 116), from which the bishops quoted two passages. First, the pope finds it understandable, that a Church Union, that was based only on “*texts and formulae expressing an ecclesiology which had been conceived and developed in the West [...] could not be accepted completely by the Eastern Christian mind.*” Second, the pope stated that the future Catholic-Orthodox dialogue “*will take up again other controverted points which Gregory X. and the Fathers of Lyons thought were resolved.*” But this, of course, implies no reversal of the dogma; to the contrary, immediately before the second statement quoted by the American Bishops the pope says that “*such a dialogue will not [!] refer to the one question about the theology of the Holy Spirit that is stirred up [agitatur] for more than a thousand years, but with patience and mutual love it has to take up again other controverted points which Gregory X. and the Fathers of Lyons thought were resolved.*” Here, obviously, the pope does not count the declaration about the Holy Spirit among the controverted points that the Fathers of Lyons had not really resolved. Also the first quotation is not about the Filioque, as the quoted words themselves clearly show, for they refer not to the Holy Spirit but to Ecclesiology (the doctrine about the Church).

¹⁷⁸ St. Anselm of Canterbury played a crucial role at the regional council convoked by Bl. Pope Urban II. (for him, see footnote 171) in the year 1098 in Bari in South Italy, in order to discuss with the Greeks of the Byzantine Rite who lived ever since in South Italy (‘*Magna Graecia*’), to convince them to remain in union with the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Greeks were permitted to retain their rite unchanged, they finally agreed; so these Italo-Greeks never separated from the Roman Catholic Church. When the ‘filioque question’ was discussed at the council, Pope Urban called St. Anselm for assistance, who by his deep theological explanations could convince the participants, that the Filioque was an expression of the right faith: thus in Bari for the first time a full communion between Christians of the Eastern Byzantine Rite and the Western Latin Rite was declared after the Schism of 1054 (cf. Gresser, Georg, *Die Synoden und Konzilien in der Zeit des Reformpapstums in Deutschland und Italien von Leo IX. bis Calixt II.* 1049–1123, Paderborn: Schöningh 2006, 322–324).

¹⁷⁹ This argument has been stated officially by the Ecumenical Council of Florence in the *Bull of Union of the Greek and Latin Churches* ‘*Laetentur Caeli*’, June 6, 1439 as follows: “*Since the Father gave to his only-begotten Son in begetting him everything the Father has, except to be the Father, so the Son has eternally from the Father, by whom he was eternally begotten, this also, namely that the holy Spirit proceeds from the Son*” (DH 1301).

¹⁸⁰ Mt 10:20: “*It will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*”

¹⁸¹ Gal 4:6: “*God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*”

¹⁸² In Rom 8:9 the Spirit is called ‘Spirit of God’ (verse 9a) and also ‘Spirit of Christ’ (verse 9b). So, if with ‘God’ is meant God the Father, then this verse is a testimony that the Spirit belongs to the Father and to the Son as well. But it is also possible, that the term ‘Spirit of Christ’ in verse 9b is a concrete interpretation of the term ‘Spirit of God’ in verse 9a; that would mean, that by ‘God’ in verse 9a it is meant Christ, and then the verse would be an additional testimony that Christ can be called ‘God’ in the New Testament (see p. 11).

However, it is remarkable that the ‘procession’ of the Spirit is related only to the Father in John 15:26b (which is also the reason why the filioque didn't appear in the original text of the Creed, which is derived from John 15:26b); this indicates that the Father must be the *principal source* of the Spirit and the participation of the Son in the ‘spiration’ is somehow secondary; but this is naturally explained by the fact that the Son received his ‘power to spirate’ from the Father, so the Father is the ‘main’ spirator. In deeper discussions, this was admitted by the Westerners; likewise, it was admitted by the Eastern side, that also the Eastern Church Fathers had acknowledged a sort of participation of the Son, saying that the Spirit proceeds “*from the Father though the Son*”. Thus, it seemed not impossible, that one could find a synthesis of both positions.

Such a synthesis was indeed found and inserted into the Creed of the *Fourteenth Ecumenical Council* (the *Second Council of Lyons*) 1274, whose aim was to restore the unity between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which was desired also by the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII. Palaiologos and John Bekkos, who has been called the most learned theologian of his epoch, and who soon after the council served as Patriarch John XI. of Constantinople (1275–1282).¹⁸³ This ecumenical council, convoked by Blessed Pope Gregory X., attended among others by St. Bonaventura, St. Albertus Magnus, St. Jacobus Picéni and following ideas of St. Anselm of Canterbury¹⁸⁴ and St. Thomas Aquinas (who had been invited, but died in 1274 on his way to the council), was the first ecumenical council that approved a Creed that included the term ‘filioque’.¹⁸⁵ As the council explained, “*the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles, but as from one single principle, not by two spirations but by a single spiration*”; thus the idea of two separate sources of the Spirit was rejected. Instead, the source of the Spirit seems to be that, ‘what is common to the Father and the Son’ (as indicated in John 16:14–15); and since this common property is given to the Son from the Father, this common source belongs to the Father in the first line, and is common also to the Son only in the second line.¹⁸⁶ With this explanation the council dogmatized the filioque doctrine.¹⁸⁷ Sadly, the ‘Union of Lyons’ between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, promoted by Emperor Michael VIII. and Patriarch John XI. Bekkos of Constantinople out of conviction, was rejected by most of the Eastern Orthodox clergy (only two Greek Orthodox bishops had participated in the council; 44 had expressed their support for the union in a letter) and came to an end in 1285.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ The patriarch-in-office at that time, Joseph I., had reservations, but didn't want to impede the union; in case that the union would be concluded, he promised to resign, which he did in 1275, when Bekkos became the new patriarch. The Greek delegation at the Council of Lyons, at which union was concluded on July 6, 1274 (and where the delegation sung the Creed with Filioque three times: the first time at a liturgy on July 29, and the second and third time at the official conclusion of the union on July 6; see footnote 186) consisted of Georgios Akropolites (the logothete or chancellor of the Emperor, who in the Emperor's name professed the Creed), two further officials and two bishops: the former pro-unionist Patriarch Germanos III. (the predecessor of Joseph I., who had resigned in 1265) and the Metropolitan Theophanes of Nicaea. Yet, the union was not supported only by two bishops, for previously 44 bishops had endorsed it in a letter to the pope. The council was attended also by Greek-rite bishops of Calabria (where the Greeks had been united with Rome since the local Council of Bari 1089).

¹⁸⁴ See footnote 178.

¹⁸⁵ See footnote 176 (and 177).

¹⁸⁶ In view of this explanation (whose content wasn't new, it had been described already 696 in the Creed of the 16th Council of Toledo, see footnote 159) the dissent of the Latin and Greek Church Fathers seemed to be only a linguistic one: The Greek verb used for the procession of the Spirit in John 15:26 (also in the Greek text of the Nicene Creed), namely ‘ekporeuomai’, has the connotation ‘to come out from the ultimate point of departure’. Therefore, since the ultimate source of the Spirit is not the Son but the Father, ‘ekporeuomai’ cannot properly be used to name the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son. On the other hand, the Latin verb ‘procedere’ (used in the Latin translation of the Creed) means simply ‘to come out from’; so it can be used without any problem for the Spirit's procession of the ultimate source (the Father) and from the Son as well, even if the Son is only a ‘point of transit passage’ for the Spirit. The deep consistency and harmony regarding the content of faith (only differently expressed) between the Saint Fathers of East and West has been convincingly demonstrated by the great Greek unionist Cardinal Bessarion (see footnote 190) at the Council of Florence in 1439. As was recognized also on the Catholic side, it remains acceptable and even recommendable to quote the Creed in Greek without the filioque. Thus, in 1995 Pope St. John Paul II. recited the Creed in a common liturgy with Patriarch Bartholomew I. in its Original Greek form without the Filioque, and also for the so-called ‘united’ Byzantine Rite Eastern Church communities (that are in full communion with the pope) it is allowed to recite the Greek Creed without the Filioque (see footnote 168). This permission had already been given to them after the union councils of Bari 1098 (cf. footnote 178; cf. also the acceptance by Pope St. Leo IX. in footnote 171), Lyons 1274 and Florence 1439; the same permission was also given for the Creed in Church Slavonic at the conclusion of the Union of Brest-Litovsk 1595/6 and of Uzhgorod 1646 (which was the founding of the Ukrainian and Ruthenian Greek-Catholic Church, respectively). However, contrary to this rule, there also have been efforts to insist on recitation of the Filioque and ‘latinize’ the Greek Liturgy (some Eastern church communities that have been united with Rome, have done this also by their own choice). At the Council of Lyons 1274 the Greek delegation (see footnote 183) sung the Greek text of the Creed three times solemnly with the Filioque (rendered in Greek *hyiou te: uiou te*), and the popes after the death of the council's Pope St. Gregory X. († 1276) in contrast to Gregory insisted until the end of the ‘Union of Lyons’ in 1285 that even in the homelands of the Greek speaking Christians the clergy should confess the Creed with Filioque; the Byzantines tried to accomplish this by novel formulations, e.g. by using the ‘prochorein’ instead of ‘ekporeuomai’, which is a precise translation of the Latin ‘procedere’; or by using words like ‘being given’ or ‘shining forth’ (cf. Burkhard Roberg, Die Union zwischen der griechischen und der lateinischen Kirche auf dem II. Konzil von Lyon, Bonn: Röhrscheid 1964, pp. 176, 185, 187, 210). Also Pope Calixtus III. tried in 1457 to impose on the Greeks, who had been united with the Roman Church at the Union of Florence in 1439, that they should recite the Creed with Filioque. A Modern Greek Version of the Filioque had been in use also by Catholic Greeks of the Latin Rite after the Second Vatican Council (1961–1965), whose liturgy is an adaptation of the Latin Liturgy into the Modern Greek Language. – In principle, it should be understandable, that the Catholic Church (like every other church), wishes, if need be, to anchor a certain truth into its Creed. One would like to ask the Orthodox apologetics, who they are complaining about that, the following question. Suppose that a Pre-Chalcedonian Miaphysite Church would rejoin the Orthodox Church under the condition that it is allowed to retain unchanged its traditional liturgy. We may suppose that this would be granted. But: Wouldn't one have to expect, that on the Orthodox side there would soon emerge the aspiration to urge the former Miaphysites, that they alter their liturgical hymns, insofar as they follow the teaching of the Council of Ephesus and describe the natures of Christ as ‘unseparated and undivided’, by inserting the Chalcedonian additions ‘unconfused and unchanged’?

¹⁸⁷ Cf. footnote 177 (and 176).

¹⁸⁸ The first death blow to the ‘Union of Lyons’ came from the totally misguided and irresponsible decision of the French Pope Martin IV. (1281–1285) to excommunicate Emperor Michael on November 18, 1281. This action of the pope was made in order to support the plans of his compatriot, Charles of Anjou, to conquer Constantinople and restore there a Latin Empire, although Emperor Michael had remained faithful to the union, and did so even after his excommunication until his death on December 11, 1282. Also Patriarch John Bekkos continued to defend the union by his writings until his death in 1297. But Emperor Michael's son and successor, Andronicos II., renounced the union soon after his father's death in December 1282 and deposed the unionist Patriarch Bekkos on December 26, 1282. This was the union's factual end. The official end came 1285, when a council held in Constantinople in the Blachernae Palace under the new Patriarch Gregory II. of Cyprus, officially excommunicated Bekkos and repudiated the union and the Filioque. However, a small group of ‘Latinophiles’ (in Greek called ‘Latinophrones’ = the Latin-thinking) continued to exist in the Greek Church (Bekkos being an example) until a new union was achieved in 1439: the ‘Union of Florence’.

A much greater attempt to unite the churches was made again in 1439 at the so-called *Council of Florence*, in which the Catholic and Orthodox bishops really convened, and after intensive discussions proclaimed a unity, which lasted, sadly again, in full extend only until 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, and was officially dissolved by the Greek Orthodox Church in 1484.¹⁸⁹ In view of the broad participation of the Greeks¹⁹⁰ it has been claimed, that this council was indeed truly the Eighth Ecumenical Council in the first-millennium-style, representing equally Eastern and Western Christianity.¹⁹¹

- (8) The *Seventeenth Ecumenical Council (Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence-Rome, 1431–1445*; in its most important phase, 1439–1442, called the *Council of Florence*, some called it rather the *Eighth*¹⁹² *Ecumenical Council*) following ideas of St. Anselm of Canterbury,¹⁹³ Thomas Aquinas († 1274) and Cardinal Bessarion († 1472),¹⁹⁴ completed the development of the Trinity Doctrine, professing “*that the Holy Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son, and has his essence and his subsistent being from the Father together with the Son, and proceeds from both eternally as from one principle and a single spiration*” and explaining that the statement of the Eastern Fathers, that the Son proceeds ‘from the Father through the Son’

Interestingly, the ‘Council of Blachernae’ 1285, that terminated the Union of Lyons, taught that although the Paraclete (i.e. the Spirit) proceeds from the Father alone, he „shines from and is manifested eternally through the Son” (cf. <http://www.reocities.com/trvalentine/orthodox/tomos1285.html>), seemingly turning away from the radical position of Photius (see footnote 158); later the much revered Orthodox theologian Gregor Palamas, † 1359, taught the same (cf. A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s, 1996, S. 194; for Palamas, see also footnotes 199 and 131).

¹⁸⁹ Bishop Marc Eugenicos of Ephesus († 1444) was the only Greek Bishop who didn’t sign the union decree in Florence, who is venerated by the Eastern Orthodox Church as a Saint. With great success he organized after his return the resistance against the union (see also footnote 190): After they had returned home, several bishops are said to have ‘repented’ their signature (which may be comparable to a similar phenomenon after the Nicene Council; see footnote 118). Despite of this, the union remained strong until the conquest of Constantinople by the Muslim Ottomans on May 29, 1453. The last Emperor *Constantine XI. Palaiologos*, who died during the conquest, remained faithful to the union (on December 12, 1452 he participated at a solemn liturgy in the Hagia Sophia, where he officially proclaimed the union). Likewise *Patriarch St. Gregor III. Melissenos (Mamas) the confessor* (he is venerated in the West – albeit not officially – as a Saint and as wonder-worker) defended the union against Marc Eugenicos by his writings, and held the office of the patriarch of Constantinople until in 1450 he fled to Rome, where he died in 1459. The claim, that from 1450–1453 the office of the patriarch was held by an anti-unionist *Athanasius II.* (who after the fall fled to Mt. Athos) is disputed; in the contemporary sources of that time, Patriarch Athanasios occurs only in the acts of a council allegedly held at Constantinople on 1450 that condemned the union; these acts, however, are regarded by historians to be a forgery. That the unionist camp after 1453 considerably decreased, was not due to the alleged fact, that the Greeks hated the Latins more than the Muslims, but was rather dictated by the fact that the Muslim Sultan was strongly against the union of the Orthodox Church in his territory with the Roman Church, that could strengthen Christianity. Therefore, especially the patriarchs after 1453 have been anti-unionists. In 1472, a small Synod in Constantinople held by *Patriarch Symeon I.* seems to have officially repudiated the Florentine Council; in the same year, Grand Duke Iwan III. of Moscow married Zoe Sophia, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor; now Moscow was considered to be the new center of Orthodoxy and the ‘third Rome’, after die ‘first Rome’ was regarded to be heretical and Constantinople, the ‘second Rome’, was occupied by the Muslims. Also in the same year pro-unionist Cardinal Bessarion died, who from the Roman point of view was the last exiled uniate patriarch of Constantinople. However, the 1472 Synod has been widely ignored. Thus, Joseph Gill in his famous work “The Council of Florence” (Cambridge, 1961) judged that the “Greek Church [...] did not officially repudiate the Council of Florence till 1484” (p. 410): In 1484 a really important orthodox council was held in Constantinople (again under Patriarch Symeon I.), on which also representatives of the other classical Eastern patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) were present. This council decided that the Florentine Council was null and void, and that Catholics who want to join the Orthodox Church must renounce the Florentine Council and receive the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation (the reception of Baptism which was not imposed here; this was done much later in 1755, cf. footnote 174). Even after this final end of the union, there remained a small group of ‘latinophile’ Greeks, among them even pro-Roman patriarchs, but until today no new union has been achieved.

¹⁹⁰ The number of the Greeks who arrived in 1438 in Italy to attend the council was nearly 700. The bull of union with the Greeks, ‘*Laetantur Caeli*’ (proclaimed on July 6, 1439 – exactly 155 years to the day after the Union of Lyons had been concluded – and signed on the day before), was signed by 117 Latins (including Pope Eugenius IV.) and 33 Greeks: Emperor John VIII. Palaiologos was the first, followed by procurators of the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem; the procurator of Antiochia, *Isidore of Kiev*, although a Greek, was also Metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia (seated in Moscow) and was later made a Roman Cardinal. At the time of the signature, the office of the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople had been vacant: *Patriarch Joseph II. of Constantinople* had died in Florence some days before (on June 10, 1439) and had been a convinced supporter of the union. The same holds for his successors *Metrophanes II.* (1440–1443) and *Gregory III.*; footnote 189). Both had been present at Florence and had signed the bull. After the Fall of Constantinople (1453), the next patriarchs residing in the town have been anti-unionists; the first of these was *Gennadios II. Scholarios* who had signed the bull in Florence, later changed his mind (influenced by his former anti-unionist teacher, *Marc Eugenicos*, the only Greek bishop who hadn’t signed) and became the most influential opponent of the union (although he retained his admiration for Latin philosophers and theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas and translated some works of them into Greek; cf. his famous exclamation: “O Thomas, if only you had been a Greek!”) and was raised to the patriarchate by support of *Sultan Mehmed II.*, the Muslim conqueror of the city. From this time on, the Roman Catholic Church regarded as true patriarchs of Constantinople other dignitaries: First, the former Patriarch *Gregory III.*, who had fled to Rome in 1450, retained that title in exile until his death in 1459, followed by *Isidore of Kiev* until his death in 1463, who was finally followed by *Basilius (John) Bessarion* (see also footnotes 186 and 189), the most famous Greek supporter of the union, who had signed as Bishop of Nicaea and was a great humanist and supporter of science (this is why a bright moon crater got his name); he almost was elected Pope by the Cardinals in 1455. Like his friend Isidore he was made himself a Cardinal, and held the office of the last exiled Greek-Catholic patriarch of Constantinople until his death in 1472.

¹⁹¹ According to the usual count the Eighth Ecumenical Council was the Council of 869/70, which counts as the last Ecumenical Council of the first millennium, see footnote 157. The assessment, that the Florentine Council was the Eighth Ecumenical Council, is based on the rejection or disregard of the Council of 869/70, and on the fact that the Florentine Council was the first (and so far the only) council in which a relatively great number of western and eastern bishops participated with full and equal rights. Therefore, one can even assume that the Council of Florence (if we take into account the council’s high level of internationality and openness for Christian Churches all over the world) was ‘the most ecumenical council ever’, since (almost) all known Churches have been invited for participation and a Union was concluded with the Greeks, Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians, Syrians of Mesopotamia, Assyrian-Chaldeans and Cypriot Maronites. In contrast, the eight ‘ecumenical’ councils of the first millennium, all of which took place in the East, and the first seven of which have often been appraised as ‘perfect standard examples’ for ecumenical councils, have been strongly dominated by Eastern participants; while the reverse was true for the ‘ecumenical’ councils of the second millennium, which took place in the West and at which only a few (if any) eastern bishops have been present (if we exclude the Council of Florence). Thus, broadly speaking, the first seven councils have not been essentially ‘more ecumenical’ than the later councils of the usual list (see footnote 116). Particularly questionable Eastern councils in this respect have been the first two Councils of Constantinople in 381 and in 553 and the council of Ephesus, while the most questionably Western council was the council of Constance (see footnotes 125, 146, 136 and 116, respectively). Three of the first seven councils seem to be ‘more ecumenical’ than the others: the Councils of Nicaea (325), Chalcedon (451) and the Third Council of Constantinople (680/681); in particular, the Council of Chalcedon was to some extent similar to the Florentine Council, because the pope played a vital role, many bishops (at least 520) participated, and the result was a remarkable synthesis of different views. But also in Chalcedon only a few bishops from the West participated (the four legates of the pope and two North African Bishops) and, like the other eastern councils, it was an ‘imperial’ council only, which means that only very few bishops beyond the eastern border of the empire seem to have been present. It seems that the Nicene Council had a few more attending ‘outlanders’ than the later Eastern councils (see footnote 118). Thus, sorted according to the ‘grade of ecumenicity’ in descending order, in my opinion the first is the Council of Florence, followed by the Councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon and

meant the same as the Filioque by the Western Fathers.¹⁹⁵ So “the Father and the Son are *not two principles of the Holy Spirit, but one principle*, just as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are *not three principles of creation but one principle*.”¹⁹⁶ The council also emphasized that the “three persons are one God not three gods, because there is *one substance* of the three, *one essence, one nature, one Godhead*, one immensity, one eternity, *and all things are one where the difference of a relation does not prevent this*.”¹⁹⁷ All this was dogmatized¹⁹⁸ and the council summarized the Doctrine of Trinity in its final form, thereby emphasizing with equal strength unity and distinction.¹⁹⁹

Up to now, there is one major point left unclear in the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. According to the Fourth Ecumenical Council 451, the incarnate Son has two different natures, and according to the Sixth Ecumenical Council 680/1, He has also two different wills, connected with that natures. Now the question remains: *Does He have also two different centers of self-consciousness, or not?*

First, it is clear that He must have also a human mind with human knowledge, distinct from the Divine mind. For both minds obviously have a different range: While as God He is omniscient (knowing all things), as Man His knowledge must be limited; and indeed, according to Lk 2:52 (cf. Heb 2:10, 5:8–9) His wisdom was growing; and according to Mc 13:32 he didn't know on which day the final judgment will occur,²⁰⁰ while Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34 may indicate that He could even fall into a kind of despair.²⁰¹ But the question is whether these two minds lead also to two or only to one center of self-consciousness.

According to the Fifth Ecumenical Council 553, Christ has *only one personal core*, namely the Divine one; and with regard to this statement, it seems right to say that center of consciousness (the self-conscious ‘I’) is this unique personal core. But this is not unproblematic, for if this is true, then the different kinds of knowledge that belong to the two natures would resemble the different kinds of informations that we gather by different senses (say, the sense of touch and the sense of vision) *and they would mix up to one and the same integral knowledge of the one self-conscious ‘I’*. This in turn seems to imply that Christ had no real human subject with limited knowledge, so His human nature would hardly be really human, but would lose its limitedness, being absorbed into the Divine nature. And this is the *heresy of (Eutychian) Monophysitism*.

To avoid this, some say the one Divine ‘I’ of the Son has laid down his Divine attributes and powers (that is: the Son decided not to use his omniscience and omnipotence for the duration of his terrestrial life, so He divested Himself of His authority), when he became the personal ‘I’ of the man Jesus Christ. But this theory, the so-called *Kenoticism* proposed by the Lutheran Theologian *Gottfried Thomasius* († 1875)²⁰² is at odds with Divine immutability, and it is still a kind of Monophysitism, albeit it stands in a most extreme *opposition to the* Eutychian brand of Monophysitism (according to which Christ had virtually only the Divine nature); for the personal core of Christ, according to Kenoticism, does not reign any more over two natures, but has left Divinity, in order to be assimilated totally to humanity. In 1951, Pope Pius XII. in his Encyclical *Sempiternus Rex* (issued for the 1500 years

the Third Council of Constantinople, followed by all the others, which also differ from each other with respect to their degree of ecumenicity.

¹⁹² See footnote 191.

¹⁹³ Cf. footnote 178.

¹⁹⁴ For Bessarion, see footnotes 189 and especially 190.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Council of Florence in the *Bull of Union of the Greek and Latin Churches* ‘Laetentur Caeli’, July 6, 1439 (DH 1300–1302). What finally convinced the Greeks to accept the Filioque, was the evidence, that at least Latin Church Fathers (which they acknowledged as Saints) indeed had endorsed the Filioque. After by comparison of Codices they had assured themselves that the quotations from the Church Fathers adduced by the Latins were no forgeries, they concluded that (since according to the common conviction of the all participants of the council, the holy Fathers of East and West could not contradict each other) both traditions must agree, using only different expressions to confess one and the same truth of the common faith.

¹⁹⁶ Council of Florence, Bull of Union with the Copts and Ethiopians ‘Cantate Domino’, February 4, 1442 (DH 1331).

¹⁹⁷ Council of Florence, Bull of Union with the Copts and Ethiopians ‘Cantate Domino’, February 4, 1442 (DH 1330).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. footnote 177.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. the passage in ‘Cantate Domino’, where the council “*condemns Sabellius, who confused the persons and altogether removed their real distinction. It condemns the Arians, the Eunomians and the Macedonians who say that only the Father is true God and place the Son and the holy Spirit in the order of creatures. It also condemns any others who make degrees or inequalities in the Trinity*” (DH 1332). – The doctrine of the Metropolitan *Gregory Palamas of Thessalonica* († 1359), who is venerated as a Saint in the Orthodox Church (although his doctrine had initially had been suspected to be a kind of Polytheism, see footnote 131) was not mentioned in Florence (and was neither mentioned in any other ecumenical council), but is ad odds (or at least may be difficult to reconcile) with the council's statement about the one-ness in Gott, that ‘all in God – apart from relational distinctions – is one’. For Palamas maintained the existence of uncreated *Divine energies real distinct from each other and from the Divine essence*. According to Palamas, these energies can be seen by mystics as ‘Taboric light’ (a light that Jesus' disciples saw at the ‘transfiguration event’ on a Mount, which tradition identifies with Mount Tabor in Galilee, see Mt 17:1–9, Mc 9:2–10; Lk 9:28–36); in order to see it, the mystic should seek absolute stillness (Greek: *Hesychia*) and perform the permanent repetition of the holy Name of Jesus in the so-called ‘Jesus Prayer’. Palamas' Doctrine, also called *Hesychasm*, was defended by a series of councils in Constantinople 1341–1351, that by some Orthodox Theologians are considered to be the parts of a single council called the *Fifth Council of Constantinople*, which some reckon also to have been the *Ninth and Last Ecumenical Council* of the Orthodox Church. Palamas was, by the way, not so much opposed to the procession of the Spirit from the Son as Photius had been (see footnote 158); like the Council of Blachernae 1285, he thought that the Spirit shines form and is manifest eternally through the Son (see footnote 188), and he says even that (not according to essence or hypostasis, but according to the energy) the Spirit also ‘proceeds’ from the Son, whereby he uses the Greek word ‘*ekporeuomai*’ (Palamas, *Apodeictic Treatise* 1; in: J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, Crestwood, NY.: St. Vladimir's, 1974, 232). – For the Council of Florence, see also footnote 7.

²⁰⁰ For the interpretation of Mk 13:32 see our discussion of the 10th argument in chapter 8.3.

²⁰¹ However, this interpretation of Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34 (“my God, my God, why have you forsaken me”) may be false, because this is a quotation of Psalm 22:1, meaning that Jesus probably prayed the Psalm in the Name of all despaired people (for whom He was going to die), instead of crying out His own despair.

²⁰² We shall return to Kenoticism on p. 53; see also footnote 124.

anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon) condemned “*the Kenotic doctrine*” as “*a wicked invention [nefandum inventum], equally to be condemned with the Docetism*”²⁰³ *opposed to it.*”²⁰⁴

So in order to prevent (all kinds of) Monophysitism, it seems that one has to say, that in addition to the Divine mind bearing the Divine self-consciousness, Jesus *had* a really limited human mind *including a human self-consciousness*, different from the Divine one. This is asserted by the so-called ‘*Two-Minds-Christology*’ proposed 1986 by Thomas Morris (* 1952), according to which the Son has not only *two minds* and *two ranges of consciousness* (which is unproblematic, if we could compare the minds with two sense organs) but each mind is equipped with its own mental centers or center of self-consciousness. So Morris’ thesis should better be named *Two-mental-centers-Christology* instead of *Two-Minds-Christology*. But according to this thesis it seems that Jesus would have two personal cores, so His two natures would not be united by a personal or hypostatic union in the sense of the Fifth (and Third) Ecumenical Council, and this would lead us into the *heresy of Nestorianism*. Pope Pius XII. in his above-mentioned Encyclical (1951), after having condemned Kenoticism, goes on to complain about ‘new’ ideas, according to which the state and condition of Christ’s human nature is emphasized “*to such an extent as to make it seem something existing in its own right [subjectum quoddam sui juris], and not as subsisting in the Word itself*”, which seems to describe the problematic side of the Two-Minds Christology just mentioned, and in the Pope’s view, the council has ruled out “*the placing of two individuals in Christ, as if some man, completely autonomous in himself [integrae autonomiae compos] had been taken up and placed by the side of the Word.*”²⁰⁵

Clearly then, that the solution lies somewhere between Kenoticism and Two-mental-centers-Christology. My proposal is to compare God as Creator with a novel writer. The novel writer creates a new world in his mind, as God does by creating the real universe; the only difference is, that the persons in God’s novel are real persons with real self-consciousness. Now a novel writer can create a story in which he himself is occurring; then we can distinguish the ‘I’ of him within the story and the real ‘I’ of him outside of the story. These are not two different ‘I’s, though, provided that the writer is describing himself in the story as he really is, and has given to his counterpart into the story his own true convictions. Then we have to do with one and the same person, that disposes over and occurs in two natures, each with its own mind (an outer-novel-worldly nature and an inner-novel-worldly nature), which are united by one and the same personal core: namely the personal core of the writer in his real life. And yet the ‘occurrence’ of this one ‘I’ into the novel world may be only an imperfect copy of (a part of) the original ‘I’ outside the story. Analogously, we might say: The eternal Son of God has decided to play himself a role in the ‘novel’ of His creation, and has chosen the character of the man Jesus Christ to be His counterpart in the created world. Then the man Jesus Christ has not an own autonomous personal core different from the personal core of the eternal Son of God, yet the personal core of the eternal Son has gained an ‘occurrence’ in to our world which is only a restricted and imperfect copy of the original, having his own mind with a limited knowledge only. So the incarnate Son has *not two centers of consciousness*, but only one and the same [Divine] self-consciousness; but this intellectual center has *two occurrences*: it occurs naturally within the Divine Essence, where it is endowed with the Divine mind being omniscient, and it gained an *additional, duplicate occurrence* into the created world, an occurrence which is not equal in its intellectual powers with the original one, having a human soul with a human mind co-working with a human brain. It is *one and the same personal core or ‘I’* having *two occurrences* associated to *two minds* with unequal intellectual range.

²⁰³ Cf. footnote 124.

²⁰⁴ Pius XII., *Sempiternus Rex* No. 29 (this passage is omitted in DH 3905!). Cf. also the Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675, see p. 40), where it is stated (DH 540), that Christ as Man after his ascension into the heavens returned to his throne, “that He had never left according to His Divinity”. This rejects the theory of ‘Throne Vacancy’ held by radical Kenoticists (see p. 53).

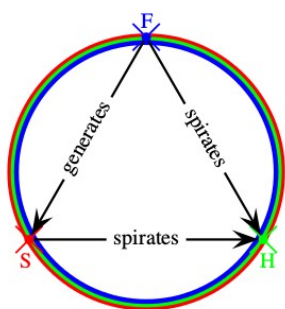
²⁰⁵ Pius XII., *Sempiternus Rex* No. 30–31 (DH 3905).

7. Summary and Graphic Presentation of the Concepts of Trinity and Incarnation

The concept of the Trinity Doctrine: three persons – one essence (or nature). According to the Trinity Doctrine there are *three Divine Persons* (or *Hypostases*; in modern diction also called *Subjects* or '*Is*'), which are named *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Spirit*, really distinct to each other. In spite of this, there is *only one God*, because the Persons 'possess' *numerically one and the same Divine Essence* (also called *Nature* or *Substance* or the *Divinity*). Each Person possesses and fills out *the whole* Essence, which is why we say not only that each Person 'is in' but also that each Person simply 'is' the one Divine Essence (which, however, does not have the meaning 'is nothing other than'). So, each of the three Persons possesses all Divine Properties connected to the Divine Essence: Eternity, Omnipotence, Omniscience and so on. Also all operations of God 'ad extra', i.e. his outward activities (namely the creation of the world and all subsequent Divine Activities that affect the creating world), must be ascribed equally to each of the Divine Persons, because this activity is performed using the powers of the common Divine Nature.²⁰⁶

The distinctions between the three Persons are constituted by operations 'ad intra', i.e. by inward activities of God remaining effectively within the Divine Essence, which are opposed to his 'ad extra' operations: namely by the two processions called generation and spiration. The Father 'generates' the Son, while the Son 'is generated' by the Father; the Father and the Son 'spirate' the Holy Spirit, while the Holy Spirit 'is spirated' by a common action of the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Father and from the Son.²⁰⁷ These processions occur within God in timeless eternity without any change or motion: they are rather static relations, specifying an order, according to which one Person owes its essence and existence permanently to another.

Now, if we represent the Divine Essence by a circle, we can represent the *core of each person*, i.e. its *subsistence* (or better *subsistence mode*) or its *personal center point*, from which all acts of the person originate and which is also the ultimate destination point of all actions directed to the person from outside (as for example our prayers), by a colored dot on the circumference of the circle. So we get one circle with three colored dots, which, strictly speaking, do not symbolize directly the Persons, but the 'core', 'center' or 'subsistence mode' of each Person, while each Person is represented by the whole circle *plus* one of the crosses:



The Father is represented by the blue parts of the picture: that is by the blue dot F above (= the personal core of the Father) and the whole circle (= the Divine Nature);²⁰⁸ the Son is all that is red: the red dot S to the left (= the personal core of the Son) and the circle,²⁰⁹ and the Holy Spirit is all that is green: the green dot H to the right (the personal core of the Holy Spirit) and the circle again.²¹⁰ One can see now, that the persons have and 'are' one and the same essence. The picture illustrates also what the Greeks called the mutual 'perichoresis' of the persons (that one person is 'in' the other) and we see how it can be nevertheless true, that the persons remain distinct (because of their distinct personal cores).

We can also represent the two 'ad intra' processions (generation and spiration) by inserting arrows, that point from the personal core of the originator to the personal core of the proceeding person. The arrows illustrate that the Father generates the Son, and Father and Son spirate the Holy Spirit, and that this processes have a unique direction that cannot be reversed.

The picture shows, finally, that the Father has no source but is the source for the two other persons, the Son proceeds from the Father and is the source for the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the two other persons and is not the source for another person. So the Father is active (or: giving) only, the Son is active and passive (or: receiving), and the Spirit only passive (or receiving). With regard to this order of origin, we call the Father the First Divine Person, the Son the Second Divine Person, and the Holy Spirit the Third Divine Person, whereby the ordinals 'first', 'second' and 'third' have no temporal meaning.

Within the course of time of the created world, the eternal processions in God obtained 'extensions' into the world outside of God; these extensions of the processions are called 'missions' or 'sendings'. The Father 'has sent' his Son into the world, and Father and Son 'have sent' the Holy Spirit into the world: These sendings/missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit extended the eternal generation of the Son or the eternal spiration of the Holy Spirit, respectively. The Son came into the world *by His co-called 'incarnation'*, i.e. the 'hypostatic unification with' the man *Jesus Christ*, while the Holy Spirit came into our world by *His effects*:

- (1) The mission of the Son is described by the concept of **the concept of Incarnation Doctrine: one Person – two natures**. The Son incarnated by adopting an additional nature, the human nature of Jesus Christ. Both natures have been united in the Son, being *unseparated* and *undivided*, as the Council of Ephesus taught in 431, but remained both in full integrity, *unconfused* and *unchanged*, as the Council of Chalcedon added in 451. So Christ was (and is) truly God and man at the same time.
- (2) The mission of the Spirit is not based on incarnation, but the Spirit somehow mysteriously 'fills up' the world and dwells in the souls, being visible predominantly through His special positive effects: edification of the Church, sanctification, enlightenment, strengthening, consolation, peace and so on.

²⁰⁶ However, it is possible that a specific effect in the world, although *produced* by all three persons, *refers* to one of the persons only. For example, the incarnation has been caused by a common act of the three persons, but its effect was the union of the human nature with one of the three persons only – the Son.

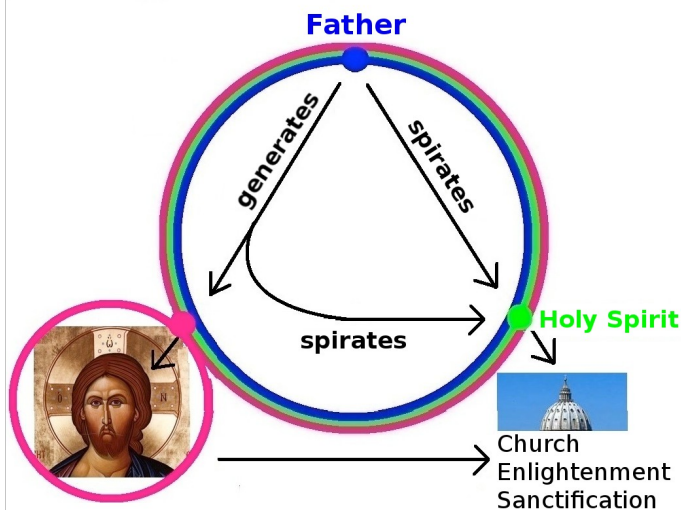
²⁰⁷ The clause 'and from the Son' (Latin: 'filioque') is rejected by the non-catholic Eastern Orthodox Churches, according to which the Father spirates 'alone'. The Filioque, however, has been confirmed by the Council of Florence in the Decree of Union with the Greeks *Laetentur Caeli* (1439): see the end of chapter 6.

²⁰⁸ The choice of the blue color is motivated by the Lord's Prayer 'Our Father in the heaven(s)' (Mt 6:9), indicating that the blue sky symbolizes the Father. And since according to Eph 4:6 the Father is 'above all', the position of the Father's cross should be the highest point of the circle.

²⁰⁹ The red color symbolizes the Son's salutary blood (cf. John 19:34, Rom 3:25, Eph 4:7), and since the Son sits symbolically to the right hand of God the Father (cf. Ps 110:1, Mk 16:19, Lk 22:69, Acts 2:33, 7:55–56), looking down to us, from our point of view His cross should be placed to the left of the Father's.

²¹⁰ The green 'color of life' seems appropriate for the Holy Spirit, characterized as 'giver of life' in the Creed (see footnote 127) as well as in the Bible (cf. Ezek 37:19, Mt 1:18, Lk 1:35, John 6:63, Rom 8:11, 2 Cor 3:6 (according to John 6:63, 1 Cor 15:45, Jas 2:26, 1 Pet 3:18 also the human spirit is a life-giver for the body; cf. also footnote 102 and the Scripture listed there; for the concept of appropriations see p. 11 with footnote 40). Because green is the 'color of life', and evolving life is an object of hope, green is also the 'color of hope'. Fittingly, hope is also connected to the Spirit in the Scripture (cf. Rom 8:23–25, 15:13).

Thus the eternal *immanent Trinity* has been extended to the *economical Trinity*, in which God manifests Himself in the world. In order to illustrate the missions, one can extend the picture described above as follows. The arrows are extended by two dashed arrows that point outside the circle representing God, one of them pointing to the lower left to Jesus Christ's human image and at the other pointing to the lower right to an image of a Church, representing the location, where the Holy Spirit is mainly present through his effects (who edifies the Church, but acts also outside the Church everywhere in the world). To illustrate that after the incarnation the personal core of the Son (i.e. the red dot) possesses two natures (the humanity of Jesus Christ and the Divine Nature), a red circle symbolizing Christ's human nature in added to the picture, that touches the circle of the Divine Nature in exactly one point, namely in the red dot. So the Son after the incarnation has been extended into the world. The incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit, acting into the world, resemble in the picture two 'arms' of God the Father; and this is a fitting image, for the Father performs His most important works in the world by means of the Son and the Spirit, acting in a special manner as His messengers.



That the circles intersect in one point only, excludes the doctrine of Nestorianism (condemned 431 by the Council of Ephesus and ascribed to Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople), according to which the natures were separated and divided from each other; to illustrate the Nestorian view, one would have to draw the circle of Christ's human nature separated from and entirely outside the circle of the Divine Nature, moreover, one would have to add a second red cross on the circle of the human nature, symbolizing an additional personal core (subsistence) for the human nature.

The picture also excludes *Monophysitism* (from Greek 'monos' = alone and physis = nature, condemned 451 by the Council of Chalcedon), ascribed to the priest and archimandrite Eutyches of Constantinople, according to which both natures merged into one nature, because the human nature was absorbed by the dominating Divine Nature. To illustrate this, both circles should either overlap or the smaller human circle should be drawn entirely inside the greater Divine one.

In order to show that the Son is not (in addition to the Father) 'a second independent source' of the Holy Spirit, but rather Father and Son are together 'one single complex source' of the Spirit (see the discussion about the 'filioque' at the end of chapter 6) the arrow that goes out from the personal core of the Son and points to the personal core of the Spirit can be replaced (as it is done here) by a curved arrow that comes out from the Father, proceeds towards the Son, then turns off and finally points to the personal core of the Spirit. This arrow symbolizes that the Son takes part in the process of spiration, without becoming a second source of the Spirit. It would make sense to delete the arrow going out from the personal core of the Father and pointing immediately to the personal core of the Spirit, in order to show that there is only 'one single spiration' that produces the Spirit. But it makes also sense to retain this arrow (as it is done here) in order so show that there are 'two spirators', combined to carry out the 'one spiration'.

Finally, the following Scripture passages are the main ones that support the core statements about Trinity and Incarnation:

1. There is one (true) God. Cf. in the Old Testament Isa 44:6 ("Thus said Yahweh: ... Beside me there is no God"), Isa 42:8, 43:10–11, 45:5, Ex 20:3, Deut 4:35, 5, 6:4, and in the New Testament Mk 12:32, John 17:3, 1 Cor 8:6 and 1 Tim 1:17.
2. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons distinct from each other. Cf. "I [the Son] will beg the Father, and he will give you another advocate: ... the Spirit" (John 14:16–17).
3. For the true Godhead of Christ and his essential unity with the Father one can refer (for example) to Christ's statements: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30) and "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; cf. 12:45). The equality of Christ with the true God is mentioned in Phil 2:6 where it is said that Christ, before his incarnation, "being in God's form" did not esteem it a robbery [that means: he did not esteem it to be an inadequate arrogation] "to be equal with God", and the true Godhead of Christ is confessed clearly in John 20:28 by St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God" and finally, especially impressive, in 1 John 5:20: "[...] Jesus Christ: This is the true God."
4. For the *true human nature of Christ* see Phil 2:5–7, where the Apostle Paul teaches, that Christ, although equal to God, left us an example of humility: He "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." This humiliation may be also the background for Jesus' statement: Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).
5. The *personality of the Holy Spirit* can be inferred from many passages, which ascribe to the Holy Spirit several personal attributes: For example, the Spirit talks (Acts 8:29), teaches (John 14:26), has cognition (1 Cor 2:11) and will (1 Cor 12:11; cf. John 3:8, Rom 8:27), sets ecclesiastical officials into their office (Acts 20:28), can be grieved (Eph 4:30; Isa 63:10) and a man has lied to him (Acts 5:3–4); and He is called Paraclete (John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16,7).
6. The *Godhead of the Holy Spirit* is also revealed by several passages, for example Paul calls the body of the Christians a "Temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19), blasphemy against the Spirit (meaning, according to St. Augustine, the final rejection of salvation at the end of life) is called the only sin that will not be forgiven (Mt 12:31), and a statement spoken by God (Yahweh) in the Old Testament is ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (Isa 6:8; Acts 28:25–27).
7. The whole Trinity and the 'unity in essence' of all three persons is expressed clearly in the command of Christ to baptize all the nations "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). Because in Biblical language 'name' means essence, the singular form 'name' argues in favor of the 'unity in essence' between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

8. Discussion: Is the Son subordinated to the Father?

Remark: This chapter is a revised version of an originally separate treatise with the title *Is the Son subordinated to the Father?* written in 1986 in Seelze for discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses (see footnote 119). The foregoing part of the present treatise was a thoroughly revised version of another originally separate discussion paper for discussions with the same group, with the title *Trinity Doctrine*, written in 1990 in Hannover.

8.1 Arguments of the Opponents

The Church teaches that since incarnation Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the owner of two natures, a human and a Divine (called His Divinity and his humanity), and therefore can be called 'God and Man at the same time'. As God he is an owner of the Divine Nature or Essence like the Father and the Holy Spirit; as Man he is a creature and subordinated to the Father. By contrast, however, some opponents of this Church Doctrine believe that Christ, the Son of God, is inferior and subordinated to the Father with respect to His nature and essence. They argue as follows.

It seems, that the Son is subordinated to the Father.

1. First of all, the Son testifies himself: "*The Father is greater than I*" (John 14:28). And he called himself a '*man*' (John 8:40).
2. Moreover, the Apostle Paul says in Phil 2:11: "*Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father*", and in Eph 5:20: "*Give thanks for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God the Father.*" So it seems, that ultimately it is always the Father, who gets all glory and deserves all our thanks. He even deserves our thanks for the fact that Christ is the Lord, and he is also receiving thanks '*in the name of Jesus*'. So Jesus Christ seems to be subordinated to the Father.
3. Moreover, in 1 Cor 15:24–28 it is indicated that at the end of human history, the Father will have subdued everything to the Son. Being active in this respect, the Father seems to be more powerful than the Son and thus superior to him. On top of this, it is stated in the same passage, that at the end, the Son will deliver the kingdom to the Father, and finally the Son will subject himself to God (the Father). So the Son is subordinated to the Father.
4. Moreover, "*God is the head of Christ*" (1 Cor 11:3) and "*Christ belongs to God*" (1 Cor 3:23), and Christ calls the Father his God: "*I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.*" (John 20:17). So Christ is subject to the Father, who is his head, possessor, and God.
5. Moreover: Who prays, prays to a superior person. But Christ prayed to the Father, and He does so even in the heavens (cf. Rom 8:34 and Heb 7:25). He also offered his life to Him as a sacrifice (cf. Eph 5:2). So Christ is inferior to the Father.
6. Moreover, a person that sends another is superior to the person sent; and a person that exalts or glorifies another must be superior to the person exalted or glorified. But the Father sends the Son (John 8:42) and the Father exalts the Son (Phil 2:9) and glorifies him (John 17:5). Thus, the Son is subordinated to the Father.
7. Moreover Christ declares in a prayer to his Father: "This is the eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). So only the Father is the true God, not the Son Jesus Christ.
8. Moreover, Jesus said to a man, who had called him a 'good master': "Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, [namely] the God" (Mk 18:10; Lk 18,19). Hence, first of all, Christ is not the one God. And second, Christ, in comparison with God, should not be called 'good'. Both strongly suggests, that Christ is inferior to God, that is: inferior to the Father.
9. Moreover, Jesus prayed to the Father: "not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42; cf. Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36, John 5:30, 6:38), so he subordinated his will to the will of the Father, revealing that he is subordinated to him.
10. Moreover it is written: "But of that day or of that hour [of the last judgment to come] no one knows, neither the Angels ...nor the Son, except the Father" (Mc 13:32). Thus, the Son knows less than the Father, and therefore, he is inferior to the Father.
11. Moreover Jesus says: "To sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give, but [this place is destined] to them for whom it is prepared by my Father" (Mt 20:23). So the Father is superior to the Son, having more competence. The same follows from John 5:19: "The Son can do nothing of himself save whatever he sees the Father doing", and from John 5:30: "I cannot do anything of myself; as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my will, but the will of him that has sent me."
12. Moreover, in Prov 8:22a the 'Wisdom' (cf. Prov 8:12) declares: "Yahweh created me in the beginning of his way" (cf. also Mic 5:1–2). So the Son (who is meant here by 'the Wisdom') is a creature (cf. also Sir 1:4–8, 24:9 and Wis 6:22).
13. Moreover, also in Isaiah God says to his 'Servant' (Isa 42:1), who seems to be the Son: "I created you" (Isa 42:6). So, first of all, the Son is as 'Servant' and as such inferior to God, his Master. Secondly, again he is 'created'.
14. Moreover, in Heb 1:6, the Son is called 'the firstborn'; in Col 1:15, 'firstborn of all creation', in Col 1:18, 'the beginning' and in Rev 3:14, 'the beginning of the creation of God'. So it seems He was the first creature created by the Father.

Thus, in view of so many testimonies, the Son seems to be subordinated to the Father. However, we shall see in chapter 8.3, how this arguments can be refuted.

8.2 Foundations of the Biblical Two-Natures Doctrine

All statements of the Holy Scriptures about the relation between Father and Son can be placed into three groups.

First group: Coordination: Father and Son are coordinated and the sense of being put on an equal footing. Examples are Mt 11:27: “no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son”; John 10:30: “I and the Father are one”; John 14:11 (cf. 10:38, 17:21): “I am in the Father and the Father is in me”; John 14:9 (cf. 12:45): “Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father”; John 5:19–21: “Whatever he [the Father] does, the Son likewise does. [...] For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it”; John 5:23: “all may honor the Son, as they honor the Father”; John 5:26: “as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself”; John 17:10: the Son prays to the Father: “all I have is yours, and all you have is mine” (cf. John 3:35; 13:3; 16:15; Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22). These verses have been important for our first argument for the ‘unity in essence’ between Father and Son in chapter 2.

Second group: pure relational ordination: The Son is simply related to the Father, whereby it is left open whether this implies an essential coordination or subordination. For example, it is said that the Son has come from (or has come from, has been generated by, or has received all that he has from) the Father, for example: “I came out from the Father” (John 16:28).

These statements express the natural relational order of the Son to the Father. The Father fathers the Son and not vice versa. As we already have discussed in the exposition of the first argument for the ‘unity in essence’, this is *not connected with an essential subordination* (like the essential subordination of a pet to the animal keeper), although it naturally implies a certain *ranking in honor*. Even an earthly father generates a son who is *essentially equal to himself*, and a grown-up son often exceeds his father in many respects, for example the son of a beggar may become king. So David was greater than his father Jesse with respect to power, and John the Baptist was greater than his father Zechariah with respect to holiness. Thus, that the Son received his life from the Father (John 5:26) – and thereby He has received *all that he has from the Father* – is no surprise and no argument for essential subordination; whereas the statement Mt 11:27 (cf. Lk 10:22, John 3:35, 13:3, 16:15), that He received *all that the Father has*, is a great surprise and a strong confirmation for essential equality and coordination, so this belongs to group 1.

Third group: Subordination: The Son is subordinated to the Father. The standard example is John 14:28 “The Father is greater than I.” Such sentences need to be taken seriously, so the Son is indeed subordinated to the Father in a certain respect.

But how can the subordination be reconciled with the coordination? Classical Christian Theology has solved this problem with the Two-Natures Doctrine, which seems to be the best explanation if one wants to retain all scriptural statements about Christ in their straightforward sense. Hence, these scriptural testimonies form the base for a **first argument** for the Two-Natures Doctrine (which formally is an abductive logical argument).²¹¹ According to this doctrine, the eternal Son since his incarnation is the owner of two natures, a Divine one and a human one. The solution, then, is that the subordination of the Son to the Father holds for Christ *as Man* (i.e. *with respect to his human nature*), while the coordination and equality between the Son and the Father holds for Christ *as God* (i.e. *with respect to the Divine Nature*), and the relational ordination can hold with respect to both natures.

As for the relation of the two natures with respect to each other, the Church teaches on the one hand, that they are *unseparated* (or, rendered positively, somehow *united*) such that Christ is *not divided* into two independent persons, but has only one personal ‘I’ to which all statements about Christ in each of his natures are ultimately referred to.²¹² This can be judged to be a Biblical doctrine: For an impressive proof it suffices to point to the Scripture passages quoted in chapter 6 within the remarks to the Council of Ephesus, that demonstrate the so-called ‘communication ideomatum’: the coming together of Divine and human properties in Christ; this passages alone form also a separate **second argument** for the Two-Natures Doctrine.

On the other hand, the Church teaches that the natures are *unconfused* (or, rendered positively, each retains its *integrity*) such that we have to attribute unimpaired *true human* and *true Divine* Properties and Operations to Christ. This, also, can be judged to be a scriptural doctrine, because it is explicitly stated that Christ is ‘the *true God*’ (1 John 5:20) and that it has to be confessed that he came ‘in the flesh’, the denial of which is judged to be an ‘Anti-Christian’ error (1 John 4:2–3; 2 John 1,7).²¹³ Accordingly, the one ‘I’ of Christ possesses all essential human and Divine Properties in full integrity. But then it follows that when Jesus utters the word ‘I’, or if something is said about ‘Him’, this can be meant *either* with respect to his Divine Nature only, *or* with respect to his human nature only *or*, occasionally, also with respect to both natures.²¹⁴ Likewise, all scriptural statements about Jesus Christ can be grouped into the same categories, and we have to ask in each case: does this hold for Christ *as God* or *as Man*? For example:

As *Man* He could say: “the Father is greater than I” (John 10:30).

As *God* He says: “I and the Father are one” (John 14:28).

As *Man* “He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men.” (Lk 2:52).

As *God* He is eternal and doesn't change: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8: cf. 1:11).

As *Man* He says: “the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” (Mt 8:20).

²¹¹ An argument is called *abductive*, if one infers from a given proposition A that one assumes to be true, that another proposition B is also probably true, justifying this by pointing out that the truth of the latter (of B) is the best or simplest (and thus most likely) explanation for the truth of the former (of A).

²¹² This doctrine was already promoted in by St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107) and Tertullian (c. 215); see footnotes 215 and 6, respectively.

²¹³ See also other Scripture verses and arguments for Christ's real humanity on p. 29, and the arguments for the Subordination of Christ under God exposed and discussed in chapter 8, most of which are rather testimonies for his true humanity.

²¹⁴ These three categories are listed in the famous ‘formula of agreement’ between Patriarch St. Cyrill of Alexandria and the Bishops of the Church of Antioch, written in 433 and endorsed (though not formally approved) by Pope St. Sixtus III. (see DH 273).

As *God* He says: “all things that the Father has are mine” (John 16:15; cf. 3:35; 5:26; 13:3; 17:10; Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22).

As *Man* He suffered and had during his suffering “no form nor beauty” (Isa 53:2).

As *God* even at the cross He was “Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8).²¹⁵

His veiled Godhead resurfaced from time to time even in earthly life: He “*manifested this glory, and his disciples believed in him*” (John 2:11). For as *God* he is the “*effulgence of the glory*” of God the Father (Heb 1:3a), and the “*exact expression of his hypostasis*” (Heb 1:3b), who, “*being in the form of God, did not esteem it a robbery to be equal with God*” (Phil 2,6).

A **third argument** is based on the different promises in the Old Testament of the Savior to come (see footnote 38); these included statements that God himself will come, and others, according to which a suffering and even dying Savior was to be expected. Thus, if all this promises have been fulfilled in one and the same Savior (as the New Testament suggests). then this must have been no doubt a God-Man, a bearer of two natures.

But the Two-Natures Doctrine can be also more directly inferred from Scripture, most notably from the so-called Philippian Hymn written by the Apostle Paul (Phil 2,5–7), which is a **fourth argument**, probably the most concise one.

A carefully worked out literal translation of the difficult Greek text is the following:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

who, subsisting in God's form did not esteem it a robbery [i.e. an arrogant presumption]²¹⁶ to be equal to God,²¹⁷

but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made²¹⁸ in the likeness of men.²¹⁹”

Paul speaks here about two ‘forms’ of Christ: ‘God's form’ and ‘form of a servant’. But what is meant with ‘form’? Only the *outer visible shape*, such that Christ had only the *appearance* of God or a human, respectively? Or is “form” meant to be a *nature*, such that Christ was *really* God and Man? It is easy to see, that the second alternative is true. We have to deal with real natures, because

- as for Christ's ‘subsisting in God's form’, Paul combines this expression with the statement, that Christ *did not esteem it an arrogant presumption* to be equal to God; but then he must *really* be (or at least have been) equal to God; and this implies, that Christ had not only the *appearance* of God, but is (or was) God *by nature*;
- and as for the ‘form of a servant’, Paul combines this with the statement that Christ has been ‘made in the likeness of men’ alluding to the creation account Gen 1:26, according to which man is made in the ‘likeness’ of God, where ‘likeness’ does not describe an outer similarity of appearance,²²⁰ but a similarity with respect to God's inner nature.

So the two ‘forms’ named here by Paul obviously describe the two natures of Christ.

A further argument (**fifth argument**) for the two true natures points to the fact that Christ is called ‘Son of God’²²¹ and ‘God’²²² and even ‘true God’²²³; and on the other hand, he is called also the ‘Son of Man’²²⁴ or ‘Son of David’²²⁵ and a ‘Man’.²²⁶

²¹⁵ The basics of the Two-Natures Doctrine, allowing such paradoxical statements, must have been known already by the famous martyr bishop St. Ignatius of Antioch († c. 108), one of the earliest Apostolic Fathers. In his seven Letters (Eph, Magn, Trall, Phil, Rom, Phil, Smyr, Poly), written c. 107 shortly after the death of John the Apostle (whose disciple Ignatius had been), Ignatius confesses clearly the true Godhead of Christ, calling him ‘God’ at least fifteen times (Eph inscr, 1:1, 7:2, 15:3, 18:2, 19:3, Trall 7:1, Rom inscr [twice], 3:3, 6:3, 9:1, Smyr 1:1, 10:1, Pol 8:3), and maintaining that he is ‘timeless’ (Poly 3:2; in Greek: ‘achronos’); against a subordinant interpretation of the Trinity see the coordinating formulas in Magn 13. But with equal strength, Ignatius emphasizes Christ's true humanity, maintaining against gnostic ‘Docetists’ [see footnote 124] the reality of Jesus' human flesh, suffering and death (Smyr 1; Trall 9). Finally, combining this two truths about Christ, Ignatius calls Christ ‘Son of Man and Son of God’ (Eph 20:2), and listens some tantalizing paradoxes in Poly 3:2, where he calls Christ “*Him who is above all time, the Timeless, the Invisible, who became visible for our sake, the Impalpable, the Impassible, who became capable of suffering for our sake.*” Again in Eph 7:2 he writes: “*There is one Physician [...], both generate and ingenerate, God made in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Ignatius presents also examples of ‘communication of idioms’ (see p. 35), he speaks of ‘God's blood’ (Eph 1:1) and ‘the passion of my God’ (Rom 6:3, cf. Eph 7:2, Pol 3:2), and states: “*Our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary*” (Eph 18:2, cf. Eph 7:2).

²¹⁶ οὐκ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, whereby ἀρπαγμός means literally *robbery*, here of course can be taken only in the figurative sense of an arrogant and blasphemous presumption, to be equal to God. If Christ's esteem was *not* such a robbery, then his esteem was legitimate and right, so He *indeed* is (or at least was) equal to God.

²¹⁷ τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ.

²¹⁸ γενόμενος is derived from γίγνομαι = *to become, to come into being*, which is used also to express procreation and birth.

²¹⁹ ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων. This expression (in the likeness of men) is slight variation of the expression κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν (after our image and likeness) used in the ancient Greek version of the creation account Gen 1:26 “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”

²²⁰ For God has no outer shape: He is invisible (Col 1:15, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16), and is an incorporeal spirit (cf. John 4:24 with Lk 24:39).

²²¹ For the vast number of Bible verses where Christ is named ‘Son of God’, see footnote 4, important examples are John 10:36, John 20:31 and 1 John 5:5.

²²² John 1:1, John 1:18, John 20:28, Rom 9:5, 2 Thess 1:12, Tit 2:13, Heb 1:9, Heb 1:10, 2 Pet 1:1, 1 John 5:20 (see the second argument in chapter 2.).

²²³ 1 John 5:20.

²²⁴ In the New Testament, Christ is called ‘Son of Man’ in Mt 8:20, 9:6, 10:23, 11:19, 12:8, 12:32, 12:40, 13:37, 13:41, 16:13, 16:27–28, 17:9–12, 17:22, 18:11, 19:28, 20:18, 20:28, 24:27, 24:39, 24:44, 25:31, 26:2, 26:24, 26:45, 26:64, Mk 2:10, 2:28, 8:31, 8:38, 9:9–12, 9:31, 10:33, 10:45, 13:26, 14:21, 14:41, 14:62, Lk 5:24, 6:5, 6:22, 7:34, 9:22, 9:26, 9:44, 9:56b, 9:58, 11:20, 12:8, 12:10, 12:40, 17:22–30, 18:8, 18:31, 19:10, 21:27, 21:36, 22:22, 22:48, 22:69, 24:7, John 1:51, 3:13–14, 5:27, 6:27, 6:53, 6:62, 8:28, 9:35, 12:34, 12:23, 12:34, 13:31, Acts 7:56, Heb 2:6. Cf. especially the juxtaposition of the terms ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Son of God’ in Lk 22:69–70. The title ‘Son of Man’ appears also in the Old Testament. Firstly, it was a mysterious title used constantly (87 times) for the Prophet Ezekiel by God, probably in order to characterize him as a representative of all mankind, such as also Jesus would be during his mission on earth (Ezek 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 16, 5:1, 6:2, 7:2, 11:15, 12:2, 18, 23, 27, 13:1, 14:3, 13, 15:2, 16:2, 17:2, 20:3, 27, 21:2, 27, 24, 33, 22:2, 18, 24, 23:2, 24:2, 16, 25, 25:2, 26:2, 27:2, 28:2, 21, 29:2, 18, 30:2, 21, 31:2, 32:2, 18, 33:2, 7, 10, 12, 24, 30, 34:2, 35:2, 36:1, 17, 37:3, 11, 16, 38:2, 14, 39:1, 17, 40:4, 43:7, 10, 18, 44:5). Secondly, in Daniel's vision Dan 7:13–14, a figure like a ‘Son of Man’ came ‘with the clouds of the heaven’, reached the ‘Ancient of Days’ (God Father) and received an eternal kingdom over all nations. This seems to refer to the exaltation of the human nature of the Messiah after the end of this-worldly history at the final judgment. Finally, in Ps 8:4–6 appear the expressions ‘man’ and ‘Son of Man’ in a rhetoric parallelism: “*What is man, that you art mindful of him? and the son of man, that you take care of him?*” This is attributed to Jesus in Heb 2:6–9, thereby confirming that Jesus is a ‘man’ and a ‘Son of Man’.

²²⁵ Cf. Mt 1:1, 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30–31, 21:9, Mk 10:47–48, Lk 1:32, 69, 3:23–31, 18:38–39, Rom 1:3; Rev 5:5, 22:16; cf. also Mt 1:20, Acts 13:22–23, Rom 15:12, Heb 7:14, Rev 5:5. Jesus insisted that the Messiah is not be ‘only’ Son of David, but his *Lord*, too (cf. Mt 22:41–45, Mk 12:35–37, Lk 20:41–44).

²²⁶ Mk 15:39, Lk 23:47, John 8:40, Rom 5:15, 1 Cor 15:21–22, 1 Tim 2:5. See also other Scripture verses and arguments for Christ's real humanity on p. 29.

Moreover, the full humanity of Jesus is clearly emphasized in the New Testament letter to the Hebrews (as we saw in footnote 110), and in the same letter also his Godhead is made very clear (as we saw in the discussion of the first argument in chapter 2); therefore, the whole letter Heb can be seen as a testimony for the Two-Natures Doctrine, and this testimony is our **sixth argument**. This may be no coincidence, for Heb stresses also the doctrine that Christ made the atonement for our sins, and, as St. Athanasius and later St. Anselm have profoundly argued, atonement could only work, if Christi was Divine and human in the full sense and at the same time: Human, because humanity had to be restored, Divine, because only the infinitely good God could really restore the lost mankind to the full satisfaction of God. So this amounts to a **seventh argument** which points to the connection between soteriology and Two-Natures Doctrine, which in turn is connected inseparably to Trinity Doctrine, all this being an impressive systematic structural unity of Christian Theology build on deep mystical meditation as well as logical speculation on the Divine Revelation as a whole, as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and handed down by apostolic tradition. So no doubt Christ has been associated with a true Divine Nature and a true human nature by direct and indirect Scripture testimony as well as according to the logical consequences of core tenets of Biblical theology.

The next question is, whether Christ possessed these natures *sequentially in time* (i.e. one after the other), or *simultaneously*:

- A. The first view (or rather a view similar to the first view) is held by *Jehovah's Witnesses*.²²⁷ According to them, Christ was before his earthly life an Angel (also called 'a' god, but not 'the' God),²²⁸ during his earthly life he was a mere man, and after his earthly life he again became an Angel (that is: 'a' god). So he changed his nature two times, and at every instant of time, he had only *one* nature. That Christ during his earthly life was equal to a mere human being (at least in his powers and abilities), is also held by theologians and Christian philosophers who endorse so-called *Kenoticism* (the word alludes to the Greek expression '*ekenosen seauton*' = 'he emptied himself' in the Philippian Hymn Phil 2:7): the doctrine that Christ at his incarnation voluntarily did away with his Divine properties and powers, and in this way became a human;²²⁹ additionally to Phil 2:7 one quotes also the verses John 17:5 and 2 Cor 8:9 in support of this theory, according to which Christ through his incarnation has lost Divine glory and richness. In the most radical forms of Kenoticism it is asserted that during his terrestrial life, the Son of God ceased to be present in the heavens. This radical form of Kenoticism is called the *Theory of Throne Vacancy*, supporters of which are, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses according to their above-mentioned concept.
- B. The second view is the classical catholic interpretation of the Two-Natures Doctrine, held also by most orthodox and protestant theologians. According to this view, the Son of God before his incarnation had only one nature (the Divine Essence), and He acquired through the incarnation, without losing the Divine Nature, additionally a human nature (the human nature of Jesus Christ). Thereafter, he lived as God and Man at the same time, being present in the heavens as God with the Father, and simultaneously on earth as a man; after his resurrection, he continued to possess both natures simultaneously, and will possess them both in all eternity. Hence, according to this concept, the incarnated Son retained his Divine Nature and remained God; he never *changed* his nature, replacing one with another, but only *assumed* and *added* a second nature to his first one.

The second view (B) seems right, which can be shown for example by the following Scripture arguments, that refute Kenoticism:

1. According to the Philippian Hymn Phil 2:5–7 Christ '*took*' or '*assumed*' the form of a servant (i.e. a human nature), whereby the Church Fathers (e.g. St. Augustine), commenting the passage of the Hymn "*He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant*", add '*without giving up or losing the form of God*'.²³⁰ Evangelical Critics might object, that one should not add to the Scripture anything (1 Cor 4:6; Rev 21:18). But it should be noted that everyone who teaches, that the Son, as he *took the form of a servant* 'gave up the form of God' (as Kenoticism holds), *also* adds something to the text. The Philippian Hymn, in fact, implies by no means that the 'form of God' was lost. Admittedly, it is said that Christ 'emptied' himself (in Greek: '*ekenosen seauton*', which is the starting point of Kenoticism), but this 'emptying' is not described as having been accomplished by *throwing away the Divine Nature* (or by throwing away anything else), but on the contrary, *by taking something*, namely the form of a servant. Thus, paradoxically, the Son becomes 'naked' (i.e. 'empty', divested of his Divine Glory), not by means of 'undressing' himself, but by means of 'putting on' an additional garment. One can compare Christ with a king, who loses his glory and richness (cf. John 17:5 and 2 Cor 8:9) not by taking off his royal garment, but by putting on an additional garment of a servant, thereby veiling his royal dress.²³¹

²²⁷ See footnote 119.

²²⁸ That is, He was a god in a figurative and analogous sense only, namely the highest creature of God, created before all other creatures; Christ is identified, more concretely, with the Archangel Michael (cf. Dan 10:13–21, 12:1, Jude 1:9, Rev 12:7–9). Already the Arians (followers of Arius) in the 4th century had identified the Son with the highest (and first created) Angel. Against this 'Angel theory' one can point to Heb 1, where the Son clearly is placed over all Angels (see in chapter 2 the first argument for the 'unity in essence' between Father and Son).

²²⁹ For Kenoticism see also p. 46 and footnote 124.

²³⁰ Cf. Augustine, *Sermons on the NT*, Sermon 42(92), 2: "How did He empty Himself? By taking that which He was not, not by losing that which He was." Also in the Eastern Liturgy, the famous *Justinian Incarnation Hymn* (see above, p. 37 with footnote 149) praises the Son of God saying: "Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, immortal as You are, [yet] You condescended for our salvation to be incarnate of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, *without undergoing change You became man*, and you were crucified o Christ God and you trampled death by Your death: You who are one of the Holy Trinity, equal in glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!" Further, in the *Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo* (675, see p. 40) it is stated that Word *did not become flesh in such a way that he ceased to be God* (DH 534). Finally, cf. the *Creed of the Synod of Cividale in Friaul* in Upper Italy under Patriarch St. Paulius II. of Aquileia in 796, where it is said about Christ: "He became true Man out of the ever virgin Mary, *and remained true God*" (DH 619).

²³¹ This seems to be the idea behind the symbolic icons of Christ in eastern orthodox iconography, where Christ is depicted always with a blue mantle as outer garment (symbolizing the human nature) that He is wearing over a red or red-golden tunic as inner garment (symbolizing the Divine Nature), which is seen only partially, veiled and covered for the most part by the blue mantle. The comparison of the natures with clothes is a reasonable one, as long as one keeps away the 'nihilianistic' interpretation, according to which the human nature is only outwardly connected with the Christ's Person and Divine Nature (see footnote 149).

2. God is *immortal* (1 Tim 6:16), and what is much more: He is *immutable* (Jas 1,17; Ps 102,26–28; Mal 3,6). So Christ in his Divine Nature (i.e. as God) could neither die nor change, and so he could not lose His Divine Nature. This is confirmed by Heb 13:8: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*”
3. In Col 1:17 it is stated about Christ: “*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*” And according to Heb 1:3, the Son is “*sustaining all things by his powerful word.*” So the Son cannot leave his throne vacant: In His Divine Nature He is the sustainer of the universe. But this is a function that needs to be performed at every time. Therefore, Christ could not give up His Divine Nature, or, brought to expression symbolically: He could not leave his heavenly throne.
4. During his ministry on earth, Jesus stated: “*And no one has gone up into heaven, save he who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.*” (John 3:13).²³² What Jesus wanted to say, seems to be that He came down to us by His incarnation, but at the same time *as God* remained in heaven (contrary to the Theory of Throne Vacancy!).²³³
5. There are many statements in the Scriptures about Jesus Christ, that would be contradictory to each other, if one refuses to distribute them to different natures of Christ, *existing at the same time*. Several convincing examples have been already presented above.²³⁴ Here comes a very interesting further example: In John 12:44 Jesus said something very mysterious: “*He that believes in me, believes not in me*”, and He continues, “*but in him who sent me.*”²³⁵ By application of the Two-Natures Doctrine this mysterious statement becomes very clear: *He that believes in me* (as God), *believes not in me* (as Man) – i.e. is not putting his hopes in my visible human nature, but in my invisible Divine Nature²³⁶ – and since he believes in me (as God), he *believes also in my Father, who sent me* (cf. 1 John 2:23 and 2 John 9), for I (as God) and the Father are one (John 10:30), and therefore inseparable.

All these Scripture passages point to the mystery of Jesus Christ, in whom ‘two natures’ had been realized simultaneously.

One detail remains yet to be proven: that the connection between these natures was not dissolved after Christs' death and resurrection, i.e. that Christ was raised as Man (i.e. in His human nature) and that He retained his human nature even after His resurrection, in order to live ‘in two natures’ forever. For prove, the following five points should suffice:

1. In Mk 9:9 Jesus announces, that he *as ‘Son of Man’* will rise from the dead; and after his resurrection St. Stephen saw Jesus in a vision as he stood *as ‘Son of Man’* at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56; cf. Acts 17:3).
2. A long time after Christ's resurrection, the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind: the *Man* Christ Jesus.” So Christ is still now mediating between God and Men (cf. also Rom 8:34 and Heb 9:24 where this is stated very clearly), and he does so as Man.
3. According to 2 John 1:7 many deceivers do not confess ‘Jesus Christ coming in the flesh’. So, we should not only confess, that Christ ‘has come’ in the flesh (as 1 John 4:2 demanded), but also, that he will *return* in the flesh.
4. In a prophetic vision of the final judgment, Daniel saw ‘somebody like a Son of Man’, receiving from God an eternal kingdom (Dan 7:13–14; cf. footnote 224), so Christ will retain his human nature even after the final judgment in all eternity.
5. Christ had to be resurrected *as Man*, not *as God*. For only what had died, could be brought into life again. But only Christ's human nature had died (his Divine Nature being immortal).²³⁷ Thus, only Christ in his human nature (that is: Christ *as Man*) could be resurrected. Moreover, the real corporeality of the resurrected body of Christ is emphasized strongly in the resurrection accounts (see footnote 238). And when it is said, that Christ, after his earthly life, “*has been made perfect*” (Heb 5:9), this cannot apply to his Divine Nature (being immutable and perfect the whole time) but only to his humanity.

²³² The final expression ‘*who is in heaven*’ is missing in some manuscripts, but is probably genuine, because it is in accordance with the statement that follows a few verses John 3,31: “*He who comes from heaven is above all.*” An explanation for the text versions without the expression ‘*who is in heaven*’ might be that a copyist thought that this expression, which makes it rather difficult to understand the text, had come erroneously into the text, and therefore deleted it.

²³³ Thus, that He *remained in heaven* refers to His Divine Nature, and that he *came down* refers to the union of the celestial Divine Nature with a human nature on earth at the incarnation. The statement, that he *has gone up into heaven* remains somewhat mysterious: It must refer to an event before His final ascension into heaven, which finished His life on earth (cf. vgl. Mk 16:19, Lk 24:50–52, Acts 1:9–11, Heb 4:14, 9:24, 1 Pet 3:22). Certainly it refers to his human nature only, and may be explained as a process by which the human consciousness of Jesus had gradually recognized its unity or connection with the eternal Divine consciousness in heaven, and by this process (finished probably some time before his public ministry) the Son of man had ‘gone into heaven’ by his awareness.

²³⁴ Cf. the examples shown on p. 51, namely *I and he Father are one* versus *the Father is greater than I*, or *Christ advanced in wisdom* versus Christ is *immutable*, or *Christ owns nothing* versus *he owns all that the Father has*, or *Christ suffered and died* versus *he was die Lord of glory even while hanging on the cross*. The most basic example for conflicting statements of this kind is the fact that Christ is called *Son of Man* and *Son of God* as well (cf. Lk 22:69–70; John 9:35; 10:36; cf. also the lists of verses in footnotes 4 and 224). Further examples will be seen in the refutations of the 9th, 10th and 11th arguments in chapter 8.3. See also footnote 38.

²³⁵ Many modern Bible translations have eliminated the apparent contradiction of this sentence by inserting the words ‘only/alone’ and ‘also’. For example, John 12:44 in the 1984 edition of the *New World Translation* of Jehovah's Witnesses (see footnote 119) reads “He that puts faith in me puts faith, not in me [only], but in him [also] that sent me.” Here, thankfully, the insertions have been put into brackets. The *International Standard Version* (2011) has the same insertions without brackets: “The one who believes in me does not believe in me only, but also in the one who sent me”, and informs the reader in the footnotes only about the second insertion. Such smoothing and defusing of scriptural texts should be avoided, for the original difficult formulations might be written on purpose, in order to express a mystery or to challenge our thinking; reformulations might therefore change and distort the original meaning. Instructive Examples for misguided reformulations of this sort are in my opinion the renderings of John 8:58, Phil 2:6 and 1 John 5:20 in the *New World Translation*, of John 8:58 also in the German *Bibel im heutigen Deutsch* (1982), of 1 John 5:20 also in the Catholic *Riebler-Storr-Bibel* (1934); and of Phil 2,6 also in the Catholic *Einheitsübersetzung* (1980).

²³⁶ Admittedly, Christ's human nature is very important to us, too: It served not only to reveal and (so to speak) to “make visible” God, but was also necessary for soteriological reasons, for Christ as God-Man should be the final sacrifice to remove the sins of the world (see our sixth argument for the Two-Natures Doctrine above). But in spite of this, the main anchor of our hope and faith should be Christ's Divine Nature. For only because Christ is “one with the Father” (John 10:30) we are safe, such that nobody can snatch us out of his hand (cf. the first argument for the ‘unity in essence’ between Father and Son in chapter 2.).

²³⁷ If the Christians confess ‘God died for us at the Cross’, they don't want to say that the God's immortal nature ‘died’ or was destroyed (which is impossible). This sentence expresses rather, that Christ's human nature (in which He died), was united so close to God in Christ, that God reckons all suffering of this human nature to be His own sufferings. This confession is an example for the ‘communication of idioms’ (see p. 35).

The last sentence of the last argument (No. 5) indicates, that Christ's human nature after his resurrection has been somehow perfected; thereby, his body seems to have been reconstructed into a 'spiritual body' (cf. 1 Cor 15:44). But as the preceding arguments show, the perfecting reconstruction and spiritualization of Christ's human nature was *definitely not a metamorphosis into the Divine Nature*. After all, a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor 15:44) is still a 'body' (and therefore is still corporal in a basic sense; as a clear evidence for this one can point to the fact the Christ still was able to eat with his disciples),²³⁸ although it is 'spiritual' insofar as it has lost the restricting material properties of usual corporal bodies (such as fragility, inertance and ponderosity).²³⁹

Remark. Analogous to the perfection of Christ, there will be also a perfection of the resurrected Saints and their bodies at the universal judgment at the end of human history (cf. 1 Cor 15:52–53); but neither his perfection will be a deification in the sense of a metamorphosis of their nature into the Divine Nature. The mortal bodies of the Saints will "put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:53–54; cf. Lk 20:36), but this is obviously not the same as Divine 'immortality' (cf. 1 Tim 6:16: God, "who alone has immortality"). The difference seems to be, that the immortality of the Saint's bodies will be *a gift externally donated to them* by God (it is 'put on them' like a dress), while God alone has "life in himself" (which applies, as John 5:26 asserts, to God the Father as well as to the Son, the latter having received from the Father not only life, but even the property of having life in himself).

In spite of this, however, there are two scripture verses, that *do* state a sort of 'deification' of the Saints, but this deification does not amount to a metamorphosis of the nature, but is a kind of supernatural elevation by God's grace:

- In 2 Pet 1:4 the Apostle Peter talks about the "most great promises", namely that we "may be made partakers of the Divine Nature". This, however, does not mean, that he can become gods. We can become partakers of the Divine Nature (or Essence) by 'seeing' God unveiled face-to-face as he is (cf. 1 John 3:2). For this will be, according to other bible verses, our sharing of God, the greatest joy and blessedness: "This is eternal life: to [come to] know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent: Jesus Christ." This leads us to the second verse:
- In 1 John 3:2 the Apostle John describes the eternal afterlife of the Saints ('children of God'): "*Because we shall see him [God] as he is*", he says, "*we shall be like [homoios] him*." In which sense does this imply an equality between the Saints and God? John says that we will be like God 'because' we will see God (not vice versa). So, our 'seeing of God' will be the reason or the cause for our 'being as he is' i.e. the vision of God leads to a kind of equality with God. How could this work? Presumably as follows: When we will see God (i.e. realize/recognize/encounter God with the inner eye of our mind and – as is indicated in 2 Cor 3:18 – penetrate more and more into the unfathomable depths of the Divine Essence under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leading us "from glory to glory"), then this will lead us to love God over all. Thus, the knowledge of God will lead us to the love of God, and love leads by its nature to unity: For loving people are or become, as is well known, "one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32), and thus, who is joined to the Lord, is "one Spirit" with him (1 Cor 6:17). In this manner, the Saints will be one with God: one Spirit, not one Essence; there will be the one-ness of love, not of nature. And so, they will partake of the Divine Nature by the beatific vision of God, not by a metamorphosis of nature. Thus, the natural difference between the Creator and his creatures can and will be bridged by love, but the natures thereby remain different, the Creator remaining infinitely superior by nature; and we must carefully avoid blurring the difference between God and his creatures (cf. Rom 1:23 and 1:25).

The foregoing considerations of this chapter can be summarized as follows. We started with the observation, that the Holy Scriptures testify a kind of coordination on equal footing as well as a kind of subordination between the Son and the Father. We then recognized, that the Two-Natures Doctrine is an extremely difficult but well-working hypothesis to reconcile both statements. As the further discussion showed, this doctrine is not only a mere speculation, but, as regards content, also a Biblical Doctrine, in much the same way as the Trinity Doctrine can be called Biblical. Moreover, it seems to one of the most fundamental Biblical Truths, because without it a proper understanding of the Person of Jesus seems to be impossible.

Finally we saw, then he incarnation of the Son doesn't entail a loss of his Divinity, and that, vice versa, the perfection he acquired after his resurrection doesn't entail a loss of his humanity (as also the perfection promised to the Saints will be no deification in the sense of a replacement of their nature). – The consequence is then, that *Christ* since his incarnation is and remains the true God and a true Man at the same time.

²³⁸ In a most impressive way, Lk 24:36–43 emphasizes Jesus' full corporeality after his resurrection: During his first appearance before the Apostles, where the Apostles in the very first moment thought that they saw a ghost or spirit (Greek: 'pneuma'), Jesus dispelled their doubts and explained "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost/spirit (pneuma) does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Lk 24:39), and then, as to confirm further the reality of his resurrected corporal body, He ate a piece of broiled fish before their eyes (Lk 24:41–43). Consider also the persistence of touchable nail marks and of the mark of the wound in Christ's side on His the resurrected body, testified in John 20:24–29. This, I think, is a very strong evidence against the theory that Christ was resurrected not as a human, but as a pure spiritual being only (that is nevertheless held, for example, by Jehovah's Witnesses; see footnote 119).

²³⁹ Paul in 1 Cor 15:44 opposes the 'spiritual body' to the 'psychic body' (which is translated often as 'natural body'; a better translation would be 'animal body'), whereby the 'psychic/animal' body is our well-known this-worldly body, that will be transformed via resurrection into the 'spiritual' one. The name 'psychic/animal body' for the body in its current state derives from the fact that it is governed by *the soul in its normal this-worldly condition*, and the soul (in this condition) is called 'psyche' in Greek or 'anima' in Latin. Now Paul hints to some concrete negative features of the this-worldly psychic body, which the spiritual body of the resurrected humans will not have any longer: namely 'from earth' and 'dusty' (cf. 1 Cor 15:47–49) and consisting of weak sort of 'flesh and blood' that is subjected to 'decay' (cf. 1 Cor 15:50). In 1 Cor 15:42b–44a He hints also to four supernatural gifts given to spiritual body, that have been highlighted later by the scholastics: (1) *impassibility* (including *incorruptibility* and *immortality*, opposed to fragility, cf. 1 Cor 15:42b and 1 Cor 15:52–54), (2) *clarity* or *glory* (i.e. *brightness*, *beauty* and *honor* in different degrees, cf. 1 Cor 15:43a and 1 Cor 15:41), (3) *agility* (or *power*, as opposed to weakness and inertance, cf. 1 Cor 15:43b; including the ability to disappear by moving quickly to another place, cf. Lk 24:31) and (4) *subtlety* (or *spirituality* in the most proper sense, as opposed to corporeal ponderosity, clumsiness and impenetrability or ordinary matter, cf 1 Cor 15:44a, including the ability to move through material objects, e.g. closed doors, cf. John 20:19,26),

And this was also very reasonable and highly appropriate with regard to the purpose of his incarnation: that He, before He fulfilled His mission to reconcile mankind with God, previously and first of all united God and Man in his own Person.

After these considerations we can state: The answer to our question – whether the Son is or is not subordinated to the Father – is a twofold one:

As Man: Jes. – *As God:* No.

8.3 Answer to the Arguments of the Opponents

In the light of the results of chapter 8.2 we can give the following answers to the Arguments of the Opponents in chapter 8.1:

Answer to argument 1 (John 14:28: Jesus' statement "the Father is greater than I"; and John 8:40: his self-designation as 'man').

By assuming the 'form of a servant' (Phil 2:6b) the Son became indeed a man, and as *Man* became smaller than the Father, and, by the way, also smaller than the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 12:32). Finally, he even became smaller than himself *ad God*, which is indicated in Phil 2:7: "*He emptied himself*".

Thus, as *God*, he remains 'equal' to the Father (Phil 2:6a) as well as 'one' with the Father (John 10:30).²⁴⁰

Answer to argument 2 (The Father as last destination point of all honor and thankfulness).

The Father, being the 'First Person' within the Trinity (not having himself an origin but being the origin of the other Persons) has naturally a *priority of honor*, in this sense He has a 'precedence' over the other Divine Persons, who proceed from him and are sent by him. They owe to Him their being and therefore have to honor and thank Him. Similarly every earthly son has to honor his father and give thanks to him during his whole life, although he could be equal to his father (or even could be greater than he) with respect to power, richness and intellect (for example). So the natural relation of a son to his father must not include an essential subordination or a subordination with respect to nature. To the contrary, the nature of father and the nature of the son usually are on an equal footing.²⁴¹

Answer to argument 3 (1 Cor 15:24–28: the Father subdues all to the Son, and at the end the Son subjects himself to the Father).

That the Father subdues all to the Son, doesn't mean, that he has more power than the Son. For we read in Phil 3,21 that the Son "*is able to subdue all things to himself*." And when the Son, after the this-worldly history has ended, *subjects himself to the Father*, the sense seems to be as follows. As *Man* Jesus will subject himself to the Father, i.e. he will cease to act as mediator between God the Father and men (1 Tim 2:5), because we will have immediate access to the Father (cf. John 16:23–27). And as for the verse 1 Cor 15:24, stating that *the Son will deliver the kingdom (or government) to the Father*, we must add: *without ceasing to reign himself*. For it is written in Lk 1:33: "*his [Christ's] kingdom will never end*".²⁴²

Answer to argument 4 (1 Cor 11:3: God is Christ's head; 1 Cor 3:23: he belongs to God; John 19:17: the Father is Christ's God).

If the word 'God' in the first two statements is used to denote the Father (by appropriation),²⁴³ then all three statements are valid with respect to both natures of Christ, but for different reasons. As *Man* Christ belongs to God the Father (and is the Father his head and his God),²⁴⁴ because he is a creature, and every creature naturally is subordinated to God the Creator. As *God* the Son likewise belongs to the Divine Father (and is the Divine Father likewise his head and his God), because He is the eternal Son of the Father and owes him his origin. This implies no essential subordination, but only a relation respecting the rank of honor.²⁴⁵

It seems possible also, that the word 'God' in the first two statements does not specifically denote the Father. Then the statement that "*God is the head of Christ*" may be explained within the framework of the Two-Natures Doctrine as follows: *The Divine Nature of Christ is the head of his human nature*. In other words: Christ's Divine Nature is related to his human nature as the head to the body. Likewise, the statement "*Christ belongs to God*" can mean that Christ as *Man* is the occurrence and most authentic representation of the transcendental God within this world; in this sense, Christ belongs entirely to God.²⁴⁶

Answer to argument 5 (the Son prays to the Father and sacrificed his life to him).

As *Man* he prays to the Father (1 Tim 2:5), but as *God* he answers the prayers with the Father (cf. John 15:16 with John 14:13). Also, of course, the sacrifice of his terrestrial life (Eph 5,2) is offered by Him as *Man*.

²⁴⁰ This sort of explanation of John 14:28 has been already given by Pope St. Leo I. in his famous *letter to Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople* written 449 ("Tome of I Leonis", DH 295), and can be found also in the *Athanasian Creed* (c. 434, see footnote 160), confessing that the Son is equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood ("*aequalis Patri secundum divinitatem, minor Patri secundum humanitatem*"). The same explanation is also given in the Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675, cf. p. 40) in DH 536. But other explanations are also possible even for catholic theologians (since Pope Leo's letter, the regional Council of Toledo and the Athanasian Creed – a high esteemed but private work of an unknown theologian – include no 'ex cathedra' decisions). For an alternative Catholic explanation of John 14:28 see footnote 250.

²⁴¹ We have discussed this already on p. 51.

²⁴² Cf. also Dan 7:13–14; see footnote 224.

²⁴³ For the concept of appropriations, see p. 11 with footnote 40.

²⁴⁴ That the Father is God of God the Son (whence we may speak of God's God) may seem strange, but can be confirmed by Heb 1:9 (quotation of the messianic Psalm 45:7): "Therefore [o] God, your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." See also Mt 22:24 (cf. Mk 12:36, Lk 20:43, Ps 110:1): "The Lord said to my Lord". And, according to John 1:1, the Word was *with* God, and the Word was *itself* God; hence, "God was with God".

²⁴⁵ We have discussed this already on p. 51.

²⁴⁶ Cf. also the well-known description of the economical Trinity, according to which the Son and the Holy Spirit are the two 'arms' of God the Father (p. 49).

And although it sounds paradoxical, it is a logically consistent consequence of the Two-Natures Doctrine, that He is simultaneously the giver and the gift (as Man)²⁴⁷ and also the receiver of the sacrifice (as God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit).

Answer to argument 6 (the Father sends, exalts and glorifies the Son).

That *the Father sends the Son* and not vice versa, is a consequence of the natural relation between Father and Son that does not imply an essential subordination, as was already explained.²⁴⁸

That the Father exalts (Phil 2:9) and glorifies Christ (John 17:5) need to mean that Christ's *inner* glory, power or dignity was increased, but can mean instead, that Christ's glory, power and dignity has only increasingly become known and acknowledged in the world. Only in this sense it can also be said that, vice versa, Christ glorifies the Father (John 17:1 and 17:4).

Besides, we can concede that Christ's glory, power and dignity increased also as such, if we apply this to his human nature, that was perfected after the resurrection, as we saw at the end of chapter 8.2,

In Phil 2:9 it seems that both kinds of glorification are alluded to. It is said that God "exalted him over all" (literally: 'over-exalted' him), and this means in context, that God after the resurrection exalted Christ (with respect to his human nature) over every creature including all Angels (cf. Heb 1:6; Rom 1:4). But when it is added that God "granted him the name, which is above every name" (i.e. the God's own name), we must refer this to Christ's Divine Nature. For the granting of this name (which stands for the Divine Essence) to the Son goes back to eternity, but was revealed and broadly acknowledged in the world only after the resurrection. such that "in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ..., and every tongue should confess: Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:10–11), i.e. everyone should adore him. This, of course, can refer to Christ only with respect to his Divine Nature.

Answer to Argument 7 (John 17:3: "This is the eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God").

The Father is called here by Christ '*the only true God*', and this might create the appearance that neither Christ himself nor the Holy Spirit is the true God, but only the Father deserves this title. However, a careful consideration shows, that there is an important difference between the two following statements. The statement '*only the Father is the true God*' would mean, that the Father is the only person, that is the true God, i.e. it would mean that the Father is the only owner of the Divine Essence, and that would contradict the Trinity Doctrine. On the other hand, the sentence '*the Father is the only true God*' (which is the statement we are dealing with here) is compatible with Trinity Doctrine, for it means that the Father is a person that is an owner of the unique Divine Essence, which does not exclude that also other persons are likewise owners of the same essence, such that each of them could likewise say, that he is the only true God. The difference is this: In the first statement the word 'only' refers to the person (which is stated to be God), but in the second statement it refers to God's essence (which is stated to be unique). So John 17:3 doesn't exclude the true Godhead of the Son and the Holy Spirit, which can be confirmed most easily by the Scripture verses asserting that in fact the Son and also the Holy Spirit likewise *are* 'the true God'. First, in 1 John 5:20 the Son is called directly 'the true God'. And that also the Holy Spirit deserves this title may be inferred as follows: According to 1 Cor 6:19 (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17) the body of the faithful is a "*temple of the Holy Spirit*"; and in 2 Cor 6:16 the faithful are called a "*temple of the living God*." Hence, this suggests that the Holy Spirit is 'the living God', which can be viewed as a synonym for 'the true God'.

So the Divine Persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all three 'the only true God', being probably, as already explained, three distinct modes of God's personal self-ownership. Likewise we saw that although each person possesses the whole divinity, there are many so-called *appropriations* (titles and attributes, that harmonize better to the peculiarities of particular Divine Person and so are preferentially attributed to this person).²⁴⁹ Now one of the appropriations of the Father is the title 'God' (because the Father is the only person that owns the Divine Essence out of his own authority, without having received this ownership from another person, such that he has takes the first place in the order of honor within the Trinity), and this seems to be the reason why the Father (and not the Son or the Holy Spirit) in John 17:3 receives the title "the only true God".

As we already saw, we encounter the Father's 'precedence of honor' frequently in the Scriptures. For example, the Son lives "*because of the Father*" (John 6:57), the Father "*is doing his work*" in the Son (John 14:10), the Father is the lawgiver whose commandments the Son obeys (John 15:10), the Father is also the supreme judge (cf. John 5:45) who has, nevertheless, "*entrusted all judgment to the Son*" (John 5:22), the confession '*Jesus is the Lord*' is referred "*to the glory of the God the Father*" (Phil 2:11), and the Son at the end of times will deliver to the Father the kingdom and subject himself to him (1 Cor 15:24–28).²⁵⁰

Addition: What has been up to now, presupposes that the usual understanding of the text is right. But it should be noted that the Greek text of John 17:3 is mysteriously ambiguous. The sequence of words ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸ μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεὸν may mean "that they should know you, the only true God" (as it is rendered usually) or "that they should know you *as being* the only true God". Therefore, John 17:3 can be rendered also: "*This is the eternal life: that they should know you [the Father] as being the only true God and [likewise] Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*". Or, to put it clearer: "that they know that you and Jesus Christ ... are the only true God." Thus, according to this understanding of the text, in the eternal life we shall come to know that *both*, the Father and Jesus Christ, are the only true God.

²⁴⁷ Cf. in the Catholic Liturgy the 'Preface of Easter V', praising Christ to have been "*himself the Priest, the Altar, and the Lamb of sacrifice*".

²⁴⁸ We have discussed this already on p. 51.

²⁴⁹ For appropriations see also p. 11 with footnote 40.

²⁵⁰ Some catholic exegetes (as already the Church Father *St. Hilarius*, † 367) referred also Jesus statement "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:22) to the order of honor in the realm of the Divine Persons (see pp. p. 8 and 25), whereas we referred it to his human nature in our discussion of argument 1.

Now, certainly, the possibility of this non-standard interpretation is only detectable at second glance, which is why the standard interpretation (that seem to be equally acceptable from the Trinitarian point of view) is usually assume to be the right one without any discussion. But maybe both interpretations are right. For St. John (or rather Jesus Christ, whom St. John quotes) might have admitted the ambiguity on purpose, in order to allude once more cryptically to the Divinity of Christ, that St. John has emphasized very strongly and repeatedly throughout his Gospel (John 1:1, 1:18, 3:31, 5:18, 5:23, 8:57, 10:30–38, 12:45, 14:9–11, 17:21, 20:28).

Answer to Argument 8 (Christ's reply in Mk 10:18: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, the God.").

The rich man, who called Jesus "good master", was right, for Jesus did not sin (Heb 4:15) and he was (also as Man) holy (Lk 1:35) and spotless (Heb 9:14). It is certain that he *as Man* had more goodness than any other human or Angel. However Jesus *as Man* was not infinitely good. For no creature can be a bearer of something that is infinite. As *God*, of course, he was even infinitely good. Christ's reply, then, cannot mean that Christ is a sinner and *not* a 'good master'. The right understanding seems to be, instead, that Christ wanted to indicate *why* he is indeed a good master. Therefore when he asked "*why do you call me good*", He didn't want to say: "stop calling me good, for I am not a really good." But rather: "Do you understand what it means if I am really the good master? *No one is good but one, the God*. For In comparison with the infinite goodness of God, the goodness of even the most holy creature is completely overshadowed and fades down to nothing. Think about that." Jesus could have added also the expected conclusion: "*Therefore, if you have the impression that I am really good, then it must be the one God who is just talking to you.*" So this passage may be seen as a confirmation for Christ's Godhead, instead of being a conclusive refutation thereof.

The objection, that the man presumably couldn't understand Jesus' words in this sense without further explanation, is not convincing. Maybe Jesus has in fact explained his words further to the man, but St. Mark had no interest to make a complicated report about this in his Gospel. Mark's main concern was that *we* may understand, so he composed his Gospel in such a way that Jesus' word quoted therein could straightforwardly make sense *to us*, and no doubt we *can* (und seemingly *must*) understand the quoted words in the manner set out above.

Answer to argument 9 (Lk 22:42: Christ prayed to the Father: "not my will, but yours be done").

Because of the 'unity in essence' between Christ as God and God the Father (John 10:30), Christ *as God* and the Father have one and the same Divine Will (cf. also Heb 10,7-9, John 4:34, 14:31, 15:10). But additionally, Christ *as Man* has also a human will. Christ had to bring his human will into accordance with the Divine will of the Father (and of himself) in an exhausting struggle, especially when at the Mount of Olives he was assailed by *fear* of the impending cruel end of his mission, and this has been expressed the quoted prayer Lk 22,42 (cf. Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36). Christ's autonomous human will is also mentioned in John 6:38 ("I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me") and again in John 5:30 ("I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me"). The 'two wills' of the Son, belonging to his Divine and human nature, respectively, are again a strong confirmation of (and a further argument for) the Two-Natures Doctrine.

Answer to argument 10 (Mk 13:32: even the Son didn't know the time of the final judgment, only the Father did).

As *God* the Son must have known the time of the final judgment, because as God, he was omniscient. This is confirmed by Heb 4:13: "*Neither is there any creature invisible in his sight: but all things are naked and open to his eyes*", which refers to the "Word of God",²⁵¹ which in turn can be identified with Christ, the Son of God (cf. John 1:1–18). More straightforwardly, Peter said to Jesus: "*you know all things*" (John 21:17), and the disciples declared at the Last Supper: "*Now we know that thou know all things*" (John 16:30). Finally, Paul teaches in Col 2:3, that in Christ "*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.*"²⁵² Therefore, concerning the proposition in Mk 13:32 we can state the following two remarks:

For one, we can ask what the proposition that "*no one knows*" the day of the final judgment "*except the Father*" could mean, when we take it to *the Divine level*. Here, obviously, this proposition has to be understood just as the parallel proposition "*No one knows the Son except the Father*" in Mt 11:27. That is: No one knows the Son (and the judgment day, and everything else) *in the same direct and outstanding manner as the Father does*, who is the ultimate origin of all and therefore 'knows' everything by having produced it or by sustaining it actively. But in another, *receptive manner*, also others can participate in the Father's knowledge (and before all others his applies to the Son *as God*). So despite Mt 11:27 the Son *as God* in a certain manner 'knows' also himself, and likewise despite Mt 13:23 we must confess that the Son *as God*, of course, in a certain manner knew also the day of the judgment, namely by having received his essence and thereby his knowledge from the Father.

But secondly, Jesus' remark Mt 13:32, that "no one knows, neither the Angels ... *nor the Son*, except the Father" seems *not* to refer to the Divine level at all, for 'the Son' is placed here on the hierarchical ladder leading from the Angels to the Father, where he holds a middle place only *after the incarnation as mediator of the Divine revelation* (and thus *as Man*). But for this level we can obviously say the following: God the Father (of course in accordance with the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity) decided not to reveal the information about the time of the final judgment in advance, and so the Son didn't let this information come through

²⁵¹ For the previous verse Heb 4:12 reads: "„The word of God is living [...] and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

²⁵² The text tradition of Col 2:2 is not unanimous: In several manuscripts 'Christ' appears at the end of the verse, but in other manuscripts it is 'God' or 'the Father' instead. So, correspondingly, the statement Col 2:3 refers either to Christ or to the Father. But it seems that the statement originally referred to Christ, not only because of the stronger text tradition for this alternative, but also, because Christ is called in 1 Cor 1:24 'God's wisdom' (cf. also 1 Cor 1:30 and the Ethiopian Book of Henoch, where (in Hen 46:3) it is said that the 'Son of Man' reveals "all hidden treasures").

into his human mind. Thus, in his human mind, he truly could say that he didn't know the day, for he *did not want to know it*. In a similar way, Paul said in 1 Cor 2:2 that he had determined to be “utterly ignorant of everything” among the Corinthians, “except of Jesus Christ, and of Him as having been crucified.” Likewise in a similar manner, Jesus at judgment day will say to the evil ones: “I don't know you” (Mt 25:12; cf. Mt 7,23), that is: He pushes them out of his mind and tries to forget them (so to speak). So the Son's ignorance about the day of the final judgment *as Man* was a voluntary ignorance, a conscious exclusion of knowledge by the Divine Son of God, who decided not to take this knowledge with him on his earthly mission.

Hence, what he knew as God, he didn't know as Man.²⁵³ This is a strong confirmation for the Two-Natures Doctrine.

Answer to argument 11 (Mt 20:23: “To sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give” said Jesus; in John 5:19,30 he said also, that he can do nothing save whatever he sees the Father doing, and that judges only as he hears from the Father).

As *Man* Jesus is subordinated to the Father and leaves everything up to him: “Your will be done!” (cf. Mt 26:39). Therefore, he says here, that the distribution of the heavenly thrones is not his task, it's the Father's.

As *God*, though, he is responsible for the places to distribute in the heavens. For in John 14:1-3 he ensures his disciples: “Let not your heart be troubled. ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself; that where I am, you also may be.” Hence, on the one hand, he doesn't prepare places in heaven, on the other hand, he does so. Again, this is a good argument for the Two-Natures Doctrine.

As regards John 5:19 and 5:30 (the impossibility of the Son to act contrary to the Father), this seems to apply in the first place to the Divine Nature of the Son, and is of course a natural consequence of the ‘union in essence’, whereby the Father, being the origin of the Son, is the decisive authority and the ‘role model’ for the Son, since the Son is the ‘exact expression’ of the Father's essence (cf. Heb 1:3). It is noteworthy, though, that the Son is no non-autonomous puppet of the Father, following him as a dead mirror image; for as a perfect image of the Father he has also the Father's liveliness, freedom and autonomy in the highest possible degree. This is testified in John 5:26: “as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself.”

Answer to argument 12 (Jes 42,6: „I created you“, said Yahweh to the ‘Servant of God’ who seems to be Christ).

It is not sure, whether the Hebrew word ‘*waezzareka*’ in Isa 42:6 means indeed ‘and I created you’ (other proposals are: ‘I formed you’ ‘I let you spring up’, ‘I watched over you’). However, the translation ‘I created you’ is no problem here, because the text deals with the ‘Servant of God’ (cf. Isa 42:1), who ultimately will die for the sins of his people (Isa 53:8), which is a clear prophetic image for Jesus Christ *as Man*. So ‘I created you’ could mean: I created you, *the man Jesus Christ*, or: I created *for* you, my eternal Son, *a human nature*: the ‘form of a servant’ (Phil 2:7). God speaks here, centuries before Christ, as if he had already accomplished his plan to create the ‘Servant of God’, thereby emphasizing that his plan to do so is already fixed, just as something that has already happened. Such a mode of speech is not unusual for God in the Bible; for example, in Judges 7:9 God said to Gideon “Get up and go down to the camp; for I have given it into your hands”, meaning: my plan is fixed to give you the victory over the camp of your enemies.

Answer to argument 13 (Prov 8:22a: “Yahweh created me in the beginning of his way”, says ‘the Wisdom’ which is presumably the Son, cf. also Mic 5:1–2, Sir 1:4–8, 24:9 and Wis 6:22).

The unambiguous Hebrew word for God's creation work, *bara*, does not occur in Prov 8:22. Instead the word *qana* is used, which has the usual meaning ‘to acquire’ or ‘to buy’, but there have been proposed also the meanings ‘to generate’ or ‘to give birth to’ or ‘to bring about’, and it can perhaps mean also mean ‘to create’, although there is some debate about this (cf. Ernst Jenni's Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament, vol. 2, Munich 1976, pp. 650–659, see p. 651–652). So we may well translate “Yahweh has acquired me [or: has generated me] in the beginning of his way”. In this rendering, the verse can be taken to be a testimony for the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, that took (or rather takes) place in the eternal present or the day of eternity, which, according to the Church Fathers, is also the sense of Psalm 2:7: “You are my Son, today [or: this day] I have begotten you.” The dating ‘in the beginning of his way’ is not a convincing objection to this thesis; it rather confirms it. For the ‘way’ seems to mean ‘the path of life’ here (as in 2 Pet 2:15), and ‘the way of God’ in this sense has no beginning in the temporal sense, since God's life has no temporal beginning: He lived since ever, cf. Ps 90:2 and 93:2: “from everlasting [in Hebrew: *Olam*]”. Therefore, the ‘beginning’ meant here seems to be the timeless moment ‘before’ creation, i.e. the beginning-less eternity. Thus, ‘in the beginning of his way’ probably has the meaning ‘before all time, since all eternity, ever since’ here. Indeed, the continuation of Prov 8,22a seems to confirm this. The whole verse Prov 8,22 reads: “Yahweh created me in the beginning of his way, before his works since then.” Thus, the wisdom was already there before the most ancient works of God (and therefore before anything was created, i.e. before the beginning of time). Then it follows immediately in Prov 8,23: “I was set up from eternity, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.” These are three datings that refer to the past in decreasing order:

- (1) ‘from eternity [in Hebrew: *Olam*]’ seems to mean ‘from the infinitely remote past, ever since’;²⁵⁴
- (2) ‘from the beginning [in Hebrew: *Rosh*]’ means ‘from the beginning of the universe including heavens and earth’,
- (3) ‘from the ancient outset [in Hebrew: *Qedem*] of the earth’ means ‘from the beginning of the earth, the homeland of men’.

²⁵³ As to the problem, how Christ, being *one* Person, can have different ranges of knowledge as God and as Man, see our discussion at the end of chapter 6.

²⁵⁴ ‘*Olam*’ does not always mean eternity in the strict sense (see footnote 261), but here (with respect to the decreasing order) it seems that it *has* this meaning.

This complex statement seems to indicate that God's Wisdom was set up from all eternity, and was continuously set up again at every stage of creation process. The eternal generation of the Son is outspoken also more or less 'parabolically' in Ps 2:7; 110:3 and, very clearly in Mic 5:1–2, where the description of the Messiah reads: "*his origins are from the ancient outset [Qedem], from the days of eternity [Olam]*". Again, these various specifications of time show that "since X" does not mean "only since and not before X" but "*already since X*". This provides us the insight, that God's Wisdom originated and originates from God ever since, and at each time. One may add with the Pre-Nicene Church Fathers, that God's Wisdom at the beginning of the Creation came forth and maybe also during other stages of the Creation process, came forth in a special way, manifesting itself in the outside world.²⁵⁵

In the ancient Greek translation of Prov 8:22, however, the word *qana* is translated by the Greek word *ktizo*, which is used also in Gen 1:1 for the Hebrew *bara* and thus it means in Gen 1:1 'to create' in the strict sense. But *ktizo* is, contrary to *bara*, *ambiguous*, for it has also the mean 'to bring forth' in a broader sense, and so can be used also for procreation and generation.

Also in the Greek book of Sirach (Sir 1:4; 1:8; 24:9) the wisdom is called 'created / brought forth' by God (where again the word *ktizo* is used), but here (in Sir 1:4) this is explained as follows: "*Before all things wisdom is created / brought forth, and understanding of prudence is from eternity.*" So, one can refer this to the eternal generation. The Greek book of Wisdom, finally talks about the *Becoming/Coming up (gignomai)* of Wisdom: "*As for wisdom, what she is, and how she came up [gignomai], I will tell you.*" (Wis 6:22). *Gignomai* is also an ambiguous term and could also be referred to the eternal generation.

But in view of this, the questions arise: Why did the inspired author of Prov 8:22 use the ambiguous word *qana*, instead of, say, the word *jalad*, which would unambiguously denote generation? And why is the ambiguous word *ktizo* used in the Greek version of Prov 8:22 as well as in the book of Sirach, such that Arius, who believed that the Son was only a created being, could point to these formulations as an argument against the Nicene Creed, according to which the Son "*is generated, not created*"? And why, finally, is *gignomai* used in Wis 6:22, causing again a certain ambiguity?

Perhaps the inspired authors, by using those expressions that can mean *to create* (= *bara*) and *to beget / to generate* (= *jalad*) as well, wanted to *emphasize a certain commonality of the Divine Wisdom* (later called the Son of God) *with the creatures*. This commonality is emphasized also in the New Testament, especially in Heb 2:11: "Both he that sanctifies [= the Son] and they that are sanctified [= the human creatures] are all of one [of the same Father]." Thus, the Son and the creatures have their common origin in the 'God and Father of all' (Eph 4:6; cf. 1 Cor 8:6), albeit in different ways: the Son proceeding from the Father by eternal generation, the creatures proceeding out of nothing by temporal creation. Further reasons to associate the Wisdom / the Son with the creatures are, that the Wisdom has been poured out over all creation (Prov 8:31, Sir 1:9) and that the Son was destined by the Father to become later a man and thus to be a creature among the creatures.²⁵⁶

Pope St. Dionysius in his famous letter²⁵⁷ written in 262 deals also with Prov 8:22 and refutes it as argument for the creation of the Son. Besides exegetical arguments, he adds the following remarkable argument, based on the fact that Christ according to John 1:14 and 1 Cor 1:24,30 is *the Logos* [Word or Reason], *Wisdom and the Power of God*: "Now, if the Son has been made, then there was a time when these things [God's Reason, Wisdom, and Power] have not been. So there was a time, when God was without these [i.e. without Reason, Wisdom and Power], *which is complete nonsense.*"

Answer to argument 14 (in Heb 1:6, the Son is called 'the firstborn'; in Col 1:15, 'firstborn of all creation'; in Col 1:18 ('the beginning', and in Rev 3:14 'the beginning of the creation of God').

The view according to which the Son of God was created as God's first creature at the beginning of time has been backed up mainly by the Scripture verses quoted in this argument, to which one can add the verses of the preceding argument (Prov 8:22 etc.)

²⁵⁵ Cf. Athenagoras of Athens (venerated as a Saint in the Orthodox Church; in the Catholic Church also highly esteemed as a Christian philosopher, but not venerated as a Saint, probably because of his rigorous views on marriage – cf. chapter 32 of his *Apology* –, that may indicate that he was a sympathizer of 'Montanists'; cf. footnotes 3 and 99), who wrote his *Apology or Plea for the Christians* to Emperor Marc Aurel (c. 177) to defend the Christians against the charge that they were 'Atheists'. In chapter 8 he proves that there can be only one God, but in chapter 10 (cf. also footnote 99) he goes on to argue that Christians "know also a Son of God", and explains: "Nor let anyone think it ridiculous that God should have a Son. [...] The Son of God is the reason [Logos] of the Father, in idea and operating power [Energeia]; for after the pattern of Him and by Him were all things made, *the Father and the Son being one*. And, since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit: the Son of God is the thinking power [Nous] and the reason [Logos] of the Father. [...] He is *the first product of the Father, not as having come into existence* [at a certain moment in time]: For from the beginning, God, who is the eternal mind, had the Logos in Himself, being from eternity rational [λογικός]. But inasmuch as He came forth to be the idea and operating power to bring about all material things [...] the prophetic Spirit also agrees with our statements. *The Lord, it says, made me, the beginning of His ways to His works* [Prov 8:22]." This is a wonderful Pre-Nicene statement in full accordance to the Nicene Creed, as it confesses the non-created, eternal existence of the Son, in spite of Prov 8:22, which according to Athenagoras refers only to a 'coming out' of the already eternally existing Logos at the beginning of time, in order to 'go to work'. The Christians, Athenagoras goes on, "adduce *God Father, and God Son, and the Holy Spirit*" and "*declare both their power in union and their distinction in order*" (chapter 10); in chapter 12, he proudly adds to this the claims, that the Christians "*know God and His Logos, what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, what the communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these, the Spirit, the Son, the Father, and their distinction in unity.*" Again, this is a very precise expression of the Trinitarian faith. Finally, at the end of chapter 10, Athenagoras adds: "Nor is the theological part of our teaching confined to these points; but we also speak of a multitude of angels and ministers, whom God the Maker and Framer of the world distributed and appointed [to their several posts] by His Logos." Here the Logos, i.e. the Son, is clearly distinguished from the Angels.

²⁵⁶ Additionally, it should be noted, that the identification of the 'Wisdom' in Prov 8 with the Son is not a straightforwardly and unambiguously stated in the Bible (although it has great plausibility, see footnote 88). So it may be that 'Wisdom' in Prov 8 and other passages of the Old Testament is not (or not only) God's Son, but it may be (or include) something really created. An interesting mystical interpretation holds, for example, that the 'Wisdom' is (or includes besides Christ also) *Virgin St. Mary* (Christ's Mother, venerated also as *God's Mother, Bride and Daughter* and as the 'Seat of Wisdom': *sedes sapientiae*) who is supposed to have preexisted as idea in the mind of God, which assisted him in his creation work by serving as the 'archetype' for the whole creation. In favor of such an interpretation, it has been pointed out that the word 'wisdom' in Hebrew, Greek and Latin has female gender, and seen from this point of view, if Wisdom is characterized as a playing child of God in Proverbs (see footnote 88) one could imagine Wisdom as a daughter of God.

²⁵⁷ For this letter, see footnote 129.

They led Arius to his famous proposition “*there was [a time] when He [the Son] was not [yet existing]*,”²⁵⁸ that was rejected as erroneous and heretical by the Nicaean Council.

First of all, Arius' view can be challenged by the following arguments based on Scripture passages that confirm that the Son is not created, that he existed ‘before’ the world, and that he had no beginning.

As a **first argument**, we can point to statements announcing that Christ has created *all* things or the whole universe (cf. John 1:3,10, 1 Cor 8:6b, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2,10). Especially interesting is Heb 1:2, where it is said that He made the ‘ages’ (Greek: ‘aiones’), i.e. he created cosmical time; which in turn indicates that He Himself should have existed already before and outside cosmic time. And if it is true, and He really created ‘every’ creature, he cannot be himself created; otherwise he must have created himself, which to assume is a blunt contradiction; for in order to create, one must previously exist.²⁵⁹ One might object to this, that the word ‘all’, used in biblical statements to describe the universality of Christ's creation work, must not necessarily be interpreted in the strict sense, i.e. it must not mean ‘all without any exception’, and so the Biblical statements might be satisfied already if Christ created only all *other* things *except himself*. We may concede, that in principle a less rigid interpretation of the word ‘all’ is possible, but in our case such an interpretation is explicitly ruled out in John 1:3, where the Apostle John, affirming the creation of all things by Jesus (whom he calls ‘the Logos’ or God's Word) does not say only that “*through him all things were made*” (John 1:3a), but adds immediately, in order to exclude a less strict interpretation, “*without him was made nothing that was made*” (John 1:3b). So John 1:3 at least is a clear and valid argument that the Son is *not* being created.

This point has been emphasized strongly by St. Augustine, who leads us also to our **second argument**. In his argumentation that according to the Prologue of St. John's Gospel Christ is no creature, he observes also that John 1:1 reads “in the beginning was the Word” and not “in the beginning the Word was created” or “*came into being*”. Thus, the Son of God, God's Word, *was already there* before the created universe came into being, and so He must have been himself without beginning, i.e. he must have been there from all eternity. This is confirmed by Christ himself, who in a prayer explicitly stated in John 17:5 His own preexistence: “Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence, with *the glory which I had with You before the world was*”; cf. also John 17:24, where He adds that the Father had given to him the glory because the Father had loved him “*before the foundation of the world*.” Again we read in Col 1:17 about the Son: “*He is before all things, and by him all things are held together*” (cf. also John 1,1–18; 6:38,42, 8:58, 16:28, Ps 110:3, Prov 8:23–27, 30:4, Mic 5:1–5). These clear statements about the Son's *preexistence* ‘before the world’ provide indeed an argument against the theses of Arius: Since the existence of the world began with the creation of the first creatures, whosoever exists ‘before’ the beginning of the world cannot belong to the creatures, and, since time is a feature of this world, existing ‘before’ the world means existing in timeless eternity, without any beginning (or end).

A **third argument** is a direct argument for the existence of the Son without beginning. Already in our answer to the 13th argument we have seen that His existence “from eternity” has been stated in Prov 8:23 and Mic 5:1–2. Furthermore, Col 1:17 states, that the Son is “*before all [things]*”²⁶⁰ But even clearer is Heb 6:20–7:4, where the mysterious priest named ‘Melchizedek’ in the Old Testament (cf. Gen 14,18–20) is introduced as a symbol of Christ: Melchizedek, we are told, had “*neither beginning of days nor end of life, resembling the Son of God* (Heb 7:3).²⁶¹

But then, what do the attributes of the Son quoted by the Arians, namely Heb 1:6 (‘the firstborn’), Col 1:15 (‘the firstborn of all creation’), Col 1:18 (‘the beginning’) and Rev 3:14 (‘the beginning of the creation of God’) really mean?

To begin with ‘the firstborn’ (Heb 1:6): The firstborn son of a family in Old Testament Israel was Yahweh's special property and had special rights distinguishing him from his brothers (Ex 13:1 / Gen 27:36). Correspondingly, Christ is the ‘Son of God’ in a unique sense (as we saw in the first argument for the ‘unity of essence’ between Son and Father in chapter 2), and therefore in a much deeper sense than the faithful, who are called children of God and brothers of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29).²⁶² So in this sense, Christ merits the title of God's ‘firstborn’ Son, and in view of this the title, in principle, *need not have a temporal meaning at all*. In this sense, for example, King David has been called God's ‘firstborn’ king of earth in Ps 89,27 which seems to be false in a temporal sense, for the previous King Saul had also been ‘God's King’ (cf. 1 Sam 24:10–11). As we saw in our discussion of Heb 1 (in the explanation of the first argument of chapter 2), where the Son's full Godhead is stressed in contradistinction to the creaturehood of the Angels, this *majestic sense* of ‘firstborn’ would fit there very well in to the context.

But *if* the term ‘the firstborn’ *does* have *also* a temporal sense in Heb 1:6 (which seems of course possible), then it cannot mean, that the Son is born at a certain a moment of cosmical time before all other sons, but has to be referred to the Son's *eternal* generation in virtue of which Christ existed, exists and will exist at (*and before*) every moment of time, as we have already firmly established above and also in our answer to the 13th argument. Because of his unique eternal procession in God he can also be

²⁵⁸ See footnote 169.

²⁵⁹ A similar argument could be based on the statement that Christ (‘the Lamb’) is adored by ‘every’ creature (Rev 5:13); then Christ could not be a creature himself, unless He adores himself (which to assume does not imply a contradiction, but would be certainly indecent).

²⁶⁰ For the interpretation of this verse see the considerations in footnote 264.

²⁶¹ This remarkable sentence Heb 7,3 obviously means: Since about Melchizedek in Gen 14,18–20 there is not mentioned anything concerning the beginning or end of his life, he is a symbol for the Son, who *indeed has neither beginning nor end*. As a matter of fact, this is the most clear statement in the Bible about God's beginning-less existence. The well-known statement that God is “from eternity [Olam]” (Ps 90,2 and 93,2) has the disadvantage that the word used for ‘eternity’ in the Biblical languages (Hebrew: *Olam*, Greek: *Aion*, cf. Latin *Saeculum*) does not always denote eternity in the strict sense, but denotes also an immensely long (but finite) age of time, as for example the plural form suggests (cf. 1 Kings 8:13). Now while the endless existence of God is clearly expressed in Ps 102:28 by “*your years will have no end*” (which, by the way, is also a statement referred to *God the Son*; see Heb 1:12, with its context commented on p. 10), there is no similar verse testifying God's beginning-less existence in the Bible, aside from Heb 7,3.

²⁶² See also footnote 29.

called ‘*only-generated* [or: *only-begotten*] Son’ (John 3:16) and ‘*only-generated* [or *only-begotten*] God’ (John 1:18). And in virtue of this eternal generation, certainly the Son is prior in time to every other son of God; so he can be called ‘*the firstborn*’ also in the temporal sense without any problems.

But what about Col 1:15 (‘*the firstborn of all creation*’): Doesn’t this mean that Christ is also ‘*the firstborn of all creatures*’, being himself one of them? Especially when Christ a few verses further on is called ‘the beginning’ (Col 1:18)? To answer these questions let us start with the latter verse. The Greek word *arche* used here is translated sometimes by ‘*beginning*’, but means actually ‘*origin/principle*’, meaning in turn either the *temporally first* cause or source, or the *hierarchically topmost* cause or source or authority²⁶³ (or both, for the first cause is often also the topmost authority). But neither the origin in the hierarchical sense nor the origin in the temporal sense must necessarily be ‘the beginning’ of that what has been originated, because the origin could exist already ‘before’ the beginning and could even exist without beginning. Whenever it is not clear that the beginning is meant, (which is clear, for example, if the word is preceded by the preposition ‘in’, as in John 1:1 or in the Greek version of Gen 1:1, where we have to translate ‘in/at the beginning’), one should translate *arche* as ‘origin’, a word which is open to all possible interpretations.

Now, just a verse before Col 1:18 a temporal beginning of the Son is clearly excluded, for it is stated in Col 1:17: “He is before all things”.²⁶⁴ In view of this, there remain only the following possibilities for the interpretation of *arche* in Col 1:18:

- (1) Either one adopts the hierarchical meaning of *arche* and refers *arche* to the universe; then Christ, being before all things, is said to be the universal *arche* in the sense of the *originator of the universe*, i.e. He is praised as the *creator* of the universe rather than as the *first creature* in the universe.
 - (2) Or one sticks to the temporal meaning of *arche*, but refers *arche* to the Church rather than to the universe (for the Church is mentioned very closely to the word *arche* in verse 18); then Christ is said to be the *origin and beginning of his Church*.
 - (3) Or one adopts the hierarchical meaning again, but refers *arche* to the Church: then Christ is praised as *head of His Church*.
- Of course, these possibilities can be combined, for the word can have also two of this meanings, or even all three. I would indeed prefer the synthesis of all. For an either/or choice does not do justice to the context, where Christ, as we shall see, is praised to have the priority *in every respect*, be it with regard to creation or with regard to the Church, both in the hierarchical and in the temporal sense; only that the focus of temporal priority clearly lies on His ‘*being before all*’ (cf. verse 17!) and not on ‘*having come into existence at the beginning of the universe, i.e. at temporal moment, before which He didn’t exist*’; for the latter would restrict and relativize the priority of the Son and would therefore be out of context. But we should take a look now on the whole passage Col 1:15–18, where both terms ‘firstborn’ and ‘arche’ are used, in order to ascertain ourselves about the real meaning.

- [15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,
 [16] because by Him were created all [things], [the things] in the heavens and [the things] upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all [things] have been created by Him and for Him.
 [17] And He is before all [things], and in Him all [things] hold together
 [18] And He is the head of the body, the church.
 He is the arche [= the origin],
 the firstborn from among the dead,
 that He might get the first place among all [things].”

Evidently, the ‘firstborn of all creation’ in verse 15 cannot mean that the Son was ‘the first creature in time’, for this would contradict the following verse 16, according to which the reason for calling Him ‘firstborn of all creation’ is that he ‘created all things’; and it would also contradict verse 17, according to which He was ‘before all things’. The explanation given in verse 16 suggests that the title ‘firstborn’ in verse 15 implies in the first place a *priority in hierarchic rank* rather than a *temporal priority* (for to be a creator implies first and foremost for the Son, that He is *over* all creation rather than *before* it),²⁶⁵ although in the light of verse 17 the title might incidentally adopt also a temporal connotation (of course not in the ‘Arian’ sense, but alluding to the existence of the Son before all creation from all eternity).

²⁶³ Cf. the English prefix *arch-* which is derived from *arche* in this second, hierarchical sense. Therefore, for example ‘archangel’, ‘archbishop’ and ‘archduke’ mean a ‘topmost’ or ‘leading’ angel, bishop or duke, respectively.

²⁶⁴ If the Son had a beginning in time, then there must have been a moment X before the existence of the Son, at which He “was not [yet existent]”, as the Arians consistently believed. But then the Son would not have been “before all [things]”, as Col 1:17 claims, but, to the contrary, the moment X would have been before the Son. To say that a ‘moment’ oder ‘point in time’ doesn’t count as a ‘thing’ is no way out here. For the word ‘thing’ is only inserted due to the English grammar, and therefore does not indicate any ontological restriction. In the Greek original we read simply, that the Son is „before all“, which means before *all and everything, whatever it may be*. So there is *absolutely nothing* before Him, not even a moment of time preceding His existence (and above all no such a moment).

²⁶⁵ There is also another reason for Christ’s priority over all creation (in addition to the reason that he is co-creator). According to Gen 1, mankind is the crown and climax of creation at least with respect to the *visible* creation, over which he shall rule (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:5–9). If we take into account the *invisible* (angelic) creation (cf. Ps 148:1–5, Col 1:16, Heb 1:7), however, then in some respects the angels are superior to man (cf. Heb 2:7–9), for example with respect to their power (2 Pet 2:11; cf. Ps 103:20, 2 Thess 1:7), intellect (cf. 2 Sam 14:20, Mt 18:10) and natural immortality (cf. Lk 20:36). But, as Thomas Aquinas has pointed out, every man being is “a little world” (Summa Theologiae I q. 91 a. 1; cf. Democritus, fragment 34), consisting of an immortal soul and a material body, thus including and integrating a spiritual component (that connects him to the invisible world of the angels) and a corporal component (that connects him to the material world of animals, plants and minerals); therefore in a certain sense man’s nature has a greater richness and is superior to that of all other creatures. So mankind can be seen indeed as ‘crown of God’s creation’, or, as it is put in Jas 1:18, the “*aparche* [first-fruit] of his creatures”. But with respect to ‘inclusion’ and ‘integration’, the incarnate Son of God is still greater than pure humans, because He unites humanity (and thereby body and soul) even with Divinity, and in this sense he is the real climax of creation, and this could be expressed aptly by calling Him ‘firstborn of all creation’ (Col 1:15), ‘the arche’ (Col 1:18) and ‘the arche of all creation’ (Rev 3:14).

Interestingly, in verse 18, the expression 'firstborn' occurs again, but this time in a quite different sense: The title '*firstborn from among the dead*' refers to the fact that Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead; the same title occurs also in Rev 1:5 (cf. Rev 1:18). Yet in another sense Christ is called 'firstborn' in Rom 8:29, where '*firstborn among many brethren*' expresses Christ's priority within the *order of salvation* rather than within the order of creation.²⁶⁶

Now the statement in Verse 18 that the Son is the '*arche*' is inserted between two statements that refer to the Church: It is preceded by the statement that He is the '*head*' of His Church, and it follows the statement that He is the '*firstborn from among the dead*', referring to His resurrection which is the basic dogma of the Church. Thus, in this closest context, we must refer *arche* to the Church: Christ is the *arche (founder and head) of His Church*. Yet, in the wider context, *arche* should not only refer to Christ's priority in the Church, but also to His pre-eminence in and over the whole created universe, which had been the focus of the preceding verses. Thus, Christ is also the *arche (creator and lord)* of the whole universe, in which His Church is a prominent part; therefore Christ, as the concluding statement of the whole passage asserts, should have '*the first place in all things*'. Would the Son have been created himself, which was what the Arians tried to prove with reference to this passage, than this brilliant climax of the whole passage would be thwarted. For no mere creature, obviously, should have the first place in all things.

Likewise in Rev 3:14 (cf. also John 8:25, see fifth argument for the 'unity in essence' between Father and Son in chapter 2) Christ is '*the origin [arche] of the creation of God*' not in the sense of '*the beginning and first product of the Father's creation work*' but in the sense of '*the Originator of God's Creation*', i.e. the Co-Creator with the Father. In an analogous manner one has to interpret the statements given in Rev 21:6 and 22:13, according to which Christ was '*the beginning and the end*'.²⁶⁷ Obviously, this does not mean, that Christ's existence had a beginning and will come to an end, but that conjointly with the Father and the Holy Spirit He is the starting point as well as target point of the whole creation: Jesus Christ, "*who is over all God, praised forever*" (Rom 9:5).

²⁶⁶ For the sake of completeness we have to look also at Lk 2:7, where St. Luke reports the birth of Christ from the point of view of his mother St. Mary, stating "*And she gave birth to her Son, the firstborn.*" But here, 'the firstborn' refers to Christ *as Man*, in view of to the fact that Mary, being a virgin (as Luke had emphasized previously in 1:27 and 1:34) had not given birth to other children before Christ. By the way, this is not an indication that she would give birth to other children afterwards, for also the *only son of a wife* is counted as 'firstborn son' by Jewish law (according to Ex 13:2 the firstborn is the son who 'opens' the womb). As is known by tradition, the so-called 'brothers' and 'sisters' of Jesus were no children of Mary but relatives of Jesus in the broader sense; this can be shown also using only the Holy Scriptures (for this, see my treatise *The Brothers of Jesus: Did Mary have several children or did she live in permanent virginity?*). For sure, Luke in Lk 2,7 calls Jesus 'the firstborn' *not* in order to indicate the existence of later sons of Mary, but because he was going to report about the 'firstborn consecration' in the Temple, that took place, when Jesus was 40 days old (cf. Lk 2:22–23).

²⁶⁷ So it is translated usually. In the Greek original, Christ is called *arche* and *telos* here. While both words can have a mere temporal meaning (*arche* = the beginning, *telos* = the end), the proper meaning of *arche* is 'origin' and that of *telos* 'perfection' (which we aim to achieve).