

TRINITY: THE THEOLOGICAL ROOT OF THE SCHISM

The road that leads up to the schism between the Church in east and west is long, winding, and seeped in bias which often times clouds the historical fact in misleading fiction varying according to the beliefs of partisan sympathies. The schism formally and decisively occurs in the infamous year AD 1054 as a result of the dispute between the papal legate Cardinal Humbert and Patriarch Cerularius of Constantinople over such questions as whether leavened bread may be used in the Mass and whether priests may marry. Nevertheless, it is not this one incident of disagreement alone which stands as the solitary, or even primary, motive for the largest schism in Church history; rather, the theological grounds for division reach as far back as the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. In fact, an argument could be made that the schism finds its deepest causal roots in the Trinitarian development of thought by the early Fathers of the Church in the 3rd century, culminating in the controversies surrounding, and immediately following, the councils of the 4th century which provide the historical occasion for the differences to be brought to the forefront of theological debate.

The story of the schism is a complex one which develops over the course of many centuries. Often times it is over-simplified by historians in an effort to place the blame for the break on a specific facet of East-West relations, especially in regard to the socio-political differences of the day. If the story is to be simplified, however, it ought to be reduced to the realm of theological differences. To be sure, there are myriads of other factors which come in to play in the cause of the schism;¹ nevertheless, the schism is primarily and fundamentally

¹Among these factors are: disagreements regarding the order of the patriarchates, political differences between a culture wherein there is separation between church and state and a caesero-papist government, power struggles between the eastern and western government localities, differences in ritual practice, etc. Good and convincing arguments may be made for the importance of each case and the influential role it played on the road to schism; nevertheless, in the end, any and all of the above are merely secondary factors. The fundamental issue at hand when considering the schism is the Trinitarian problem which develops deep in the minds of east and west over the centuries preceding the fracture. This paper focuses on that development.

theological in nature—as opposed to political—and centers around very specific theological differences, not the least of which occurs as early as the 3rd century. Differences in culture can be compromised; variances in liturgy and rites can be respected; disagreements in doctrine, however, require the grace of understanding and a conversion of the heart and mind to the truth.

In order to gain the fullest perspective of the matter at hand, the historical context of the Trinitarian problem must be outlined. Foremost, it is vital to establish the immediate cause for the occasion of the Trinitarian dialogue, that is, the Arian issue and the need for a universal orthodox statement on the Trinity. For, it is once the Church formally pronounces what the Church believes that true Trinitarian theology may begin. Following this, it is important to investigate the respective roots of eastern and western Trinitarian thought so as to understand the remote roots for the differences in thought and language; for, much illumination can be gained from a careful analysis of the reason why each side believes what it does.² It is only after investigating the roots that the severity of the difference found in the fruit can be understood.

There is a three-step unfolding of the schism throughout the first ten centuries of Church history. The first takes place before the Council of Nicaea with the advent of linguistic differences. The second stage takes place in the time immediately following Nicaea and into the 5th century with a shift in Trinitarian methodology. The final step takes place over the following centuries leading up to the formal schism where disagreement in Trinitarian doctrine emerges as a result of the methodological differences.

Nevertheless, our first consideration is the immediate context of the Trinitarian dialogue which necessitates a definitive statement by the Church: the Arian controversy. With the advent of the Christianized Roman Empire in the early 4th century, theologians and members of the

²The following is not necessarily intended to depict events in a chronological order as the roots of the schism will be traced according to regional developments.

Church hierarchy are finally afforded the luxury of time free from persecution to develop, clarify, and define doctrine.³ Unfortunately, while those faithful to the orthodox teachings of the Church attained a deeper understanding of the faith, there are those who pollute orthodoxy with heterodox teachings. Among these sowers of dissension is the greatest of the early heretics: Arius.

Arius, the presbyter from the Alexandrian patriarchate, finds belief in the multiplicity within the Godhead to be too much for a reasonable man to accept. In his theological teachings, he draws a sharp distinction between the Father and the Son, something which some of his predecessors had also done.⁴ Nevertheless, where the great theologians of the 3rd century emphasize the distinction within the Trinity while admitting of the common divinity shared by each *hypostasis*, Arius promotes such a radical diversity between Father and Son that he claims only the Father to be True God; the Son, he claims, is merely the highest of all creatures. For he says in a letter to his ally Eusebius of Nicomedia:

The Son is not unbegotten or a portion of the unbegotten in any manner or from any substratum, but that by the will and counsel of the Father he subsisted before times and ages, full of grace and truth . . . And before he was begotten or created or defined or established, he was not. For he was not unbegotten.⁵

³Of course it is true that there are many great and influential Fathers of the Church prior to the 4th century—most especially in the 3rd century. Nevertheless, assent to the writings of these men demanded only the assent to be given to an orthodox theologian; none, considered in isolation, were binding as doctrine. It is not until 325 with the first ecumenical council at Nicaea that any Christological or Trinitarian doctrines are developed and defined as dogmatic. It is for this reason that our consideration of the issue begins in the 4th century.

⁴Among the theologians who tended to emphasize a sharp distinction is Origen. Origen defended the distinction within the Trinity to the point that he labels the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *hypostases*, a term which, at this point in Trinitarian development, is understood to mean “substances” or “essences,” almost synonymous with the term *ousia*. (Cf. Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* in “Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 9,” trans. and ed. by Allen Menzies, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896), Book II, Chapter 6.

It is important to note the meanings of the various Greek terms in the early 3rd century. The subtleties of the terminological differences will prove to play a pivotal role, not only in the communication between East and West, but even the development of Trinitarian conception in each region. In the meantime, however, our present intention is simply to set the stage upon which the controversy will develop.

⁵Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia* in “The Trinitarian Controversy,” ed. and trans by William G. Rusch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 30.

Within this letter, Arius emphatically and definitively separates himself from the orthodox speculation of his time.

Arius' teachings, although clearly at odds with general belief of the faithful, quickly gains traction and, within five years of their inception, spreads throughout the Roman Empire, mainly due to the influential adherents of the heretical teaching.⁶ So great is the impact of Arianism on the stability of the Empire that emperor Constantine calls a general council to meet at Nicaea in AD 325. At the council, Arianism is quickly declared to be heretical as orthodox representatives of the entire Church declare in unison that the Father and the Son are *homoousios*—of the same substance. The council therefore succeeds in its immediate task: it declares the error of Arianism, secures unity within the Empire, and proposes positive language with which to describe the Godhead in what is known as the Nicene creed.⁷

Nevertheless, the pronouncements of Nicaea beg more questions than they provide answers. For, having stated that the Father and Son are *homoousios*, theologians begin speculating on the delicate intricacies that exist within the immanent life of the Godhead;⁸ in truth, even Arianism itself survives in the Empire for nearly sixty years before it is definitively done away with mostly on account of the lack of positive Trinitarian teaching. J.N.D. Kelly provides one possible explanation for the resurrection of Trinitarian controversy after the seeming “victory” at Nicaea: “Whatever the theology of the council was, Constantine’s own

⁶The followers/sympathizers of the Arian movement included the aforementioned Eusebius of Nicomedia, as well as eventually the Emperors of Rome.

⁷It must be noted that the Nicene creed of note differs from what is deemed to be the Nicene creed within contemporary ecclesiastical circles. The later is more truly called the “Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed.”

⁸“If negatively [the council] unequivocally outlawed Arianism, positively it was content to affirm the Son’s full divinity and equality with the Father, out of Whose being He was derived and Whose nature He consequently shared. It did not attempt to tackle the closely related problem of the divine unity, although the discussion of it was inevitably brought nearer.” (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Groups, 2011), 236.)

overriding motive was to secure the widest possible measure of agreement. For this reason he was not prepared to bar the door to anyone who was willing to append his signature to the creed.”⁹ Because Constantine’s motive is simply to bring unity to the empire, he sees no need to go any farther than condemning the troublesome Arians.

This is the context of Church history within which the germ of the schism is planted. Trinitarian discussion is at the forefront of theological debate. The common enemy is Arius, a man who is most clearly seen by both the eastern and western halves of the Church to be heterodox. Nevertheless, as each region within the Catholic Church attempts to construct its own apology for the simultaneous consubstantiality and diversity of the Trinity, greater and greater differences present themselves. At first these differences are attributed simply to the natural language barrier between Latin and Greek; however, as the two sides come to the realization of the understood meaning behind the terms, a deeper and more dangerous distinction in fundamental Trinitarian thought is made evident.

Having established the context immediately surrounding the historical occasion for the Trinitarian discussion as whole in the 4th century, we now go on to investigate the roots of both eastern and western Trinitarian thought, as each has its own unique development leading up to the council of Nicaea. The difference of the philosophical and theological environment within each geographical region of the Church ultimately shapes the varying intellectual dispositions wherewith the doctrine of the Trinity is considered; a distinction in disposition which evidently proves to be irreconcilable.

The foundation of the Trinitarian debate finds its origin in the 2nd century within the works of two men: Tertullian in the west and Origen in the east. Beginning in the west, Tertullian writes his work in response to the Sabellian modalism that was undermining

⁹J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 237.

orthodoxy at the time. The modalists fail to see a distinction between Father and Son, emphasizing the divine nature so strongly that the persons were not a real distinction; rather, modalists hold that “Father” and “Son” are simply apparent distinctions in the Godhead. In fact, the modalists go so far as to accuse the orthodox faithful of tritheism due to their adherence to a true distinction in the Godhead.

In response to this accusation, Tertullian writes:

Since they contend that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are the selfsame Person, thus extolling the monarchy at the expense of the *oikonomia*, that the Son is other than the Father not by diversity but by distribution. He is not other by division but by distinction; for the Father is not the same as the Son.¹⁰

Nevertheless, so as not to lead one to believe that the Father and Son are radically distinct,

Tertullian continues:

We do indeed believe that there is only one God; but we believe that under this dispensation, or, as we say, *oikonomia*, there is also a Son of this one only God . . . And at the same time the mystery of the *oikonomia* is safeguarded, for the Unity is distributed in a Trinity . . . of one substance.¹¹

Therefore, in an effort to clarify the orthodox understanding of the Trinity against the opposing errors of modalism and subordinationism, Tertullian simultaneously affirms the plurality of the Godhead according to person, while maintaining the unity of substance.¹²

Nevertheless, for our present purposes, more important than his apologetical work is the fact that he introduces the first technical language used to describe the Trinity. In the above

¹⁰Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, in “The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume One,” trans. by W.A. Jurgens (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970), 376.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 371.

¹²Nevertheless, even though Tertullian makes efforts to maintain the unity of substance, he does not use language so strong as to suggest that there is no gradation or hierarchy among the persons. To this, one theologian writes: “It is true [Tertullian] vehemently maintains that the Son and the Spirit share in the Father’s substance . . . and this makes them quite different from creatures. But his idea of the divine substance was such that it admitted of extension, and of gradation within it, differences of degree though not of kind.” (Edmund Hill, “Introduction” in *The Trinity*, ed. by John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1991), 42.

passages are used the terms *trinity*, *economy*, and *person*. Prior to the time of his writing, such terms are largely unknown, yet they gain popularity of usage in the centuries following Tertullian's work. The importance of the introduction of these terms into common Trinitarian parlance in the west cannot be understated; for it is precisely the use of these Latin terms which confuses the east. The original meaning of the term *person* is most troublesome. Coming from the Latin *persona*, the meaning initially takes on a modalistic tone as it is commonly understood to mean *mask*. Tertullian avoids this meaning by describing the persons of the Trinity as distinguished according to "distribution." Nevertheless, the stigma of superficiality in the west on account of this term quickly establishes itself in the minds of the eastern theologians, one which will not subside with any small effort.

Trinitarian doctrine in the east is linguistically confusing start in the beginning as well. The father of the orient is commonly considered to be Origen. From the city of Alexandria and writing in Greek, Origen sets himself the task of reconciling Platonic philosophy with the Church's teachings.¹³ Perhaps the area where this is found most evidently is in his work on the Trinity in response to the pagan Celsus: "Therefore do we worship the Father of Truth, and the Son who is Truth, who exist as two persons, while they are one in unity of mind, in harmony, and in identity of will. Thus, whoever sees the Son . . . will see God in Him."¹⁴ Therefore, Origen professes the existence of two persons who are, at the same time, one.

In English, the passage presents no issues worthy of note. Nevertheless, when the original Greek is considered, the use of the term *hypostasis*—translated as *person* above—the overall understanding of the passage immediately becomes unclear for contemporary thinkers. At the time of Origen's writings—the early 3rd century—the term *hypostasis* had the connotation of

¹³William G. Rusch, "Introduction" in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 13.

¹⁴Origen, *Contra Celsum*, in "The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume One," 536.

“real existence or essence.”¹⁵ Therefore, a contemporary of Origen—especially one unfamiliar with the subtleties of the Greek language—perhaps would understand Origen to be holding a polytheistic opinion of the Godhead. What else could each person being a separate “essence” mean? Fortunately for Origen, context provides the answer: just as he acknowledges a distinction in essence, he affirms an identity of mind and will. Nevertheless, the groundwork has been laid for a misunderstanding between the Greek and Latin speakers; even if there is a conceptual and doctrinal agreement between the two sides on the issue of the Trinity, neither party’s linguistic choice is simplifying the already difficult communication process between one another.

What begins as a misunderstanding regarding technical terms, soon becomes cemented as a distinction of methodology, a theological shift which has ramifications even up to the present day. This second step in the road to schism concretizes the implied differences between east and west and standardizes them into two separate “schools” of Trinitarian thought. Prior to this point, a patient and understanding western mind could discern what the eastern theologian intended in his writings and vice versa. We see, however, that with the writings of Augustine in the west and the Cappadocian Fathers in the east, the focus of Trinitarian theology probes deeper than a simple linguistic distinction. Rather than simply being an issue of whether a specific technical term aptly describes the reality of the Trinity, this second class of theologians emphasizes and elaborates on the method of investigation itself—a task which has its own significant consequences, taking their respective forbearers—Tertullian and Origen—as the theological and linguistic starting point.

Augustine, the great father of western Trinitarian thought, has the distinct advantage of writing in post-Constantinopolitan (AD 381) Christendom wherein the heresy of Arianism has all but disappeared among serious Catholic thinkers. Nicaea, and later Constantinople, definitively

¹⁵William G. Rusch, “Introduction” in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 14.

affirms that Christ is not a creature but is consubstantial with the Father. Nevertheless, the question arises: if the substance of the persons in the Trinity is numerically one, in what sense are they three?¹⁶ It is in response to this question that Augustine posits that the distinction in persons follows according to the eternal relations of the persons.¹⁷ His contribution, therefore, is a specific focus on the inner-life of the Trinity.

He emphasizes, unlike his predecessors in the west, the economy of procession among the persons of the Trinity. Heretofore, theologians like Tertullian and Novatian portray the distinction of persons to be found in the divine missions as found in sacred scripture. The danger of this theological procedure, is to draw too great of a distinction among persons, inevitably holding that what the Son does is not what the Father does. Augustine, on the other hand, takes special care to retain the belief of the inseparability of divine action on account of the unity of substance: “But if it is all things through the Father and all through the Son, then it is the same things through the Father as through the Son. So the Son is equal to the Father, and the work of Father and Son is inseparable.”¹⁸ By using the inseparability of the inner Godhead as his starting point, Augustine is then able to investigate how the persons might be related in such a way so that there is real distinction. Jesuit theologian Bertrand de Margerie summarizes:

Augustine’s profound reflections on substance and relation in the divine mystery allowed him to deduce three principle rules of Trinitarian language: ‘in this superminent and divine sublimity:’ 1) Every absolute term designates the substance; 2) every relative term concerns, not the substance, but a relation; 3) Every absolute term attributed to one of the

¹⁶Edmund Hill, “Introduction” in *The Trinity*, 44.

¹⁷“Although being Father is different from being Son, there is no difference of substance, because they are not called these things substance-wise but relationship-wise; and yet this relationship is not a modification, because it is not changeable.” (Augustine, *The Trinity*, 192.)

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 72.

Three will also be attributed to the Three taken together in the singular and not in the plural.¹⁹

As a result, by focusing on the relations within the divine nature, Augustine is able to more readily see the distinction of persons within the interior life of the Trinity as opposed to the external economy through the missions of the persons.²⁰ Therefore, for Augustine, it is in understanding the eternal processions of the relations within the Trinity, and using this as a starting point, which makes sense of the nature of the Godhead and the divine missions of the persons within the framework of human history.

Surveying the west's theological development in the second stage on the road to schism, we now turn our attention to the east. What Augustine is to Trinitarian thought in the west, the Cappadocian Fathers is to the east. The teachings of the Fathers are encapsulated in the works of three men: Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil the Great. The latter, St. Basil, is responsible for the clarification of the linguistically confusing statement: *treis hypostaseis en mia ousia*. While it is understood throughout the east that *hypostasis* and *ousia* have different meanings, to the west they mean the same thing: "substance." Nevertheless, Basil defines the technical term *hypostasis* to mean "the conception which by means of the expressed peculiarities gives *standing* and circumscription to the general and uncircumscribed."²¹ This clarification does its part on a linguistic level to facilitate understanding between east and west; however at this

¹⁹Bertrand de Margerie S.J., *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. by Edmund J. Fortman (Still River, Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 137.

²⁰In summarizing Augustine's approach, Edmund Hill says, "You cannot distinguish the persons from each other in terms of function, as the 'economic' theologians had done. Nor will it do to distinguish them in terms of divine attributes, as some of the anti-Arian fourth century theologians tried to do, because this introduces composition into the divine substance. Augustine's distinction of them in terms of relationship is the only consistent logical or linguistic key to the problem." (Edmund Hill, "Introduction" in *The Trinity*, 51)

²¹St. Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 38* in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume VIII," trans. by Blomfield Jackson, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), 2.

point in the development of Trinitarian doctrine, the point of departure is already becoming more methodological than linguistic.

While Augustine looks to the inner life of the divine nature for an explanation of the Trinitarian model, the Cappadocian Fathers look to the manifestation of the Trinity through sacred scripture. Both Augustine and the Fathers agree with the principle that the divine act is inseparable among the persons of the Trinity.²² Furthermore, both parties begin by looking at scripture as the foundation of their opinions. Where they diverge, however, is which aspect of the divine life of God they focus on. Unlike Augustine, the Cappadocians begin their investigation with the truths told in scripture and end their discussion there. Their Trinitarian model is primarily one of transcendent soteriology. While their theology may be considered speculative, especially in regard to their subject matter, it is grounded in revelation given to man and therefore, in a sense, practical. Rather than concern themselves with who proceeds from whom in the abstract sense, they focus on the concrete question of “how does the Trinity act?” Gregory of Nyssa even goes so far as to claim: “The holy Trinity works every activity . . . not divided according to the number of the *hypostases*, but one certain motion and disposition of goodwill occurs, proceeding from the Father through the Son to the Spirit.”²³ Therefore, according to the Cappadocians, what we know about the Trinity is what is revealed, and what is revealed is the transcendent activity of God which proceeds to man through the Trinitarian act.

To this point in the discussion, neither the eastern nor western theologians have posited anything with which the other side would disagree. All that has taken place thus far is a difference of emphasis placed in Trinitarian investigation. This variance in emphasis is not something harmful to theological discussion, but, in fact, is something which can actually play a

²²Gregory of Nyssa, *Gregory of Nyssa to Ablabius* in “The Trinitarian Controversy,” 155.

²³*Ibid.*

complementary role in the united search for truth. Unfortunately, the difference in emphasis does not end in the methodological realm, but rather results in a doctrinal disagreement: the

Filioque.²⁴

With the methodological groundwork having been established, it is not a long journey to the explicit manifestation of disagreement that takes place in the 8th and 9th century over the *Filioque* issue. On the side of the west, because of the emphasis on the inner life of the Godhead and the Augustinian use of the relation as the primary determinant for the diversity of persons, it becomes necessary for western theologians to hold that the Holy Spirit proceeds *a Patre et Filioque*. The issue being primarily one of relation, if the Holy Spirit merely proceeds from the Father through the Son, then there would be two persons related to the Father in the same way, but not diametrically opposed by any sort of relation to each other.²⁵ As a result, the creed would be reduced to a kind of modalist distinction of name between the Son and the Holy Spirit, but nothing more.

In the eastern camp, the doctrine which grows out of the Cappadocian tradition is one of a more neoplatonic bent. Since their view is one of a distinction of persons on the cosmological scale of transcendent divine activity, there is no reason to posit an opposition according to relation because there is no explicit scriptural precedent for it.²⁶ What is clear, to the Greeks, is

²⁴The history of the gradual acceptance of the *Filioque* in the west is one which is as long as the road to the schism and cannot be dealt with in its entirety in the present discussion. Suffice it to say that the notion itself finds its origin as early as Augustine and is first used publicly by a local church in Toledo in 589. From that point until the reign of Charlemagne, the term became more widely used until it was eventually ratified by the Universal Church in 1439 at the Council of Florence.

²⁵St. Thomas Aquinas reiterates the western tradition in his treatment on the Holy Spirit: "If [the Holy Ghost] were not from [the Son], He could in no wise be personally distinguished from Him . . . Therefore the Son and the Holy Ghost must be related to each other by opposite relations." (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948), I, q. 36, a. 2, c.)

Aquinas' emphasis on the issue of relation manifests how deeply Augustine's methodology had taken root in the western mind by the 13th century.

that because of the unity of the divine *ousia* in the Trinity, every act proceeds from the Father through the Son and is completed by the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Therefore, they maintain a hierarchical distinction of persons according to divine action while affirming the unity of substance.

As a result of the two methodological approaches, two very different concepts of the Trinity are born. Fundamentally, the eastern and western churches believe the same major tenets,²⁸ and for this reason, neither side has considered the other to be heretical.²⁹ Nevertheless, there are strong feelings on either side regarding the issue of *Filioque*³⁰ and it is for this reason that the formal split between the churches is nearing its 1000th anniversary. In fact, disagreement breeds contempt and each party holds extreme opinions of the other at times. On the one hand, the eastern church accuses the west of modalism and philosophizing religion; on the other hand, the west sees a kind of tritheism in the teachings of the east. Each side offers a unique perspective to the life of the Trinity, both the interior processions and the exterior actions, so that dialogue between the two traditions could provide fruitful reflection on the mysteries of the faith. Nevertheless, so long as there remains stubborn pride, the divisions will only grow to be greater over time.

²⁶This is not to say that the Greek theologians are *sola scriptura* by any means. The point to be emphasized is that the eastern fathers take their beliefs regarding the Trinity primarily from the divine actions made evident to mankind by being played out through history, most especially as seen in the scriptures.

²⁷The manner in which the Greek Trinitarian model is neoplatonic is seen in the procession of action. It nearly mirrors the emanation process of the One, through the *Nous*, by the Demiurge conjectured by Platonist philosophers. Of course, the eastern theologians do not believe the free creation of the world by the Triune God to be the same as the neoplatonist emanation; nevertheless, the influence undoubtedly remains.

²⁸Pope Leo III regarded the issue of the *Filioque* as a “secondary truth” as the appropriate justification so as to not formally alienate the eastern church in the 9th century. (Cf. Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church: From Apostolic Times to the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 91.)

²⁹Notwithstanding the excommunications posted by Cerularius and Humbert which were more for issues concerning jurisdiction rather than pastoral teaching. These were mutually lifted in 1965 by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras.

³⁰As recently as 1991, progress has been made regarding the *Filioque* clause.

The culmination of this long and winding road finds its fulfillment in the schism of AD 1054. The animosity fostered over the centuries due to a disagreement over the Trinity instigated disagreements in other, lesser areas, blowing them out of proportion. The prime and definitive example of this happens in the events immediately leading up to the schism. The issues which were prominent at the time regard the Eucharistic bread and the celibacy of clergy. In the east, leavened bread and marriage among clerics are permitted; in the west, only unleavened bread may be used for the Eucharistic celebration and clerics submit to the discipline of chastity. The fact is, neither of these issues alone constitute enough force for a disagreement to lead to schism. Each side holds an opinion as to the fittingness of leavened/unleavened bread or celibacy/marriage of clergy, supporting their opinions on theological grounds.³¹ Because each issue deals with a discipline or a rite, neither issue should ever reach the point of schism.

What prompts the two sides—represented by the papal legate Cardinal Humbert on the side of the west and patriarch Michael Cerularius on the side of the east—to escalate the issue is the long-standing of fundamental theological disagreement. Again, the matter cannot be oversimplified at risk of a genuine misunderstanding of the history; east-west relations became embittered over the centuries for numerous reasons, some theological, some political, and some liturgical. Nevertheless, no single event had the force of gravitas to escalate any of these individual, or even collective factors, into a schism of the unified Church as did the fundamental disagreement on the matter of the Trinity. It is human nature that if two groups hold only slightly different opinions, if they adhere strongly enough to them, they will become myopic, close-minded, and uncharitable. This is exactly what happens in the relations between east and west.

The schism between east and west is a tragic play unfolding over the course of three acts. It begins in the infancy days of the Church in the 3rd century as the greatest minds of the time are

³¹Henry Chadwick, *East and West: the Making of a Rift in the Church*, 207.

doing their best to defend the doctrine of the Trinity against the sophistries of modalism and Sabellianism. The result of this period is the brilliant Trinitarian works of Tertullian in the west and Origen in the east. Nevertheless, there remains a language barrier between the two and the technical terms employed to describe their beliefs proves to provide subsequent theologians with obstacles. The second act on the road to schism is summarized in the works of Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers. It is at this time period that the linguistic confusions are all but cleared up, but when the dust settles more serious differences are made manifest. Rather than being left with superficial linguistic variances, a difference in approach occurs between west and east. In the west, Augustine focuses on the interior life of the Trinity as known through speculation regarding the relations of the persons. In the east, the Fathers draw their Trinitarian beliefs from the transcendent actions of the persons as seen through revelation. Finally, the closing act of the drama occurs in the subsequent centuries, culminating in the war over the *Filioque*. The two methodologies of east and west take root in their respective regions and become the rubrics for Trinitarian investigation. The end result of this is a doctrinal disagreement on the role of the Son in the procession of the Holy Spirit.

This point proves to be the central issue in the schism between east and west. The different opinions on the matter had been basting for at least seven centuries before the formal split, infecting the very mindsets of those in the east and west so that to compromise on the issue would be to change one's fundamental notion of who God is in His Trinitarian life. It is for this reason that the issue has not been resolved for nearly a thousand years. And it is for this reason that nothing short of true conversion of heart will bring the two sides together. Only the most serious of disagreements could separate the Church of Christ and so it is not surprising that the

primary reason for the east-west schism is the most fundamental issue of the Catholic faith: the Trinity.