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The Trinity[†]

MICHAEL REA

One of the central mysteries of the Christian faith concerns the tri-unity of God. According to traditional Christian doctrine, God is *three persons* who are somehow *consubstantial*—one in substance. The persons are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person possesses all of the traditional divine attributes—omnipotence, omniscience, perfect goodness, eternality, and so on. And yet (in the words of the Athanasian Creed), "they are not three eternals, but there is one eternal….there are not three almighties, but there is one almighty….there are not three Gods, but there is one God."[1] But what does all of this really mean? And how could it possibly be true?

In addressing these two very general questions, there are several more specific issues on which we might try to focus. One is interpretive: how were the central terms in the doctrine— terms like *person*, *substance*, and *consubstantial*—understood when the doctrine was first formulated, and how have they evolved throughout the history of the doctrine? Another is more straightforwardly philosophical: how could three distinct persons (in any reasonable sense of that term) be consubstantial in a way that would make them countable as *one God*? These questions are not wholly distinct from one another, and there are many others in the neighborhood that are also worth pursuing. But the one on which I will focus is the second. More exactly, I'll explore

various attempts to show that the central statements in the doctrine, under some intelligible and orthodox interpretation, do not imply a contradiction. Along the way, I'll touch a bit on the first question, but for the most part it will be set aside.[2]

The question that concerns us here is commonly referred to by philosophers as 'the logical problem of the Trinity' and by theologians as 'the threeness-oneness problem'. The goal of the first section of this essay is to explain in some detail just what the problem is supposed to be. I'll begin by stating the central theses of the doctrine of the Trinity. Then I will formulate the logical problem of the Trinity and lay out the constraints that a solution must satisfy in order to preserve an orthodox understanding of the doctrine. In the next section, I will briefly sketch a few of the most important solutions to the problem. Finally, in section 3, I'll present my own view of the Trinity and argue that it has both better historical pedigree and better prospects for solving the problem of the Trinity than the rival views presented in section 2.

1. The Problem of the Trinity

The two creeds to which contemporary Christians typically look for "official" expressions of Trinitarian doctrine are the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 380/381 and the Athanasian Creed (c. 500). The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed a great deal of philosophical reflection and controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity, and the language of these two creeds is in large part a product of that discussion.[3] The former creed is a revised and expanded version of the Creed of Nicaea, which was produced by the First Nicene Council in 325 A.D. (Nowadays the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is typically just called the "Nicene Creed". I'll follow this

usage.) Like it's predecessor, the Nicene Creed was written in Greek and subsequently translated into Latin. It includes the following words:

> We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance (*homoousion*) with the Father… And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets. (Schwartz 1914, 244 – 50; quoted in Kelly 1972, 297 – 98)

I have highlighted the Greek term '*homoousion*' ('o`moo,usion) because that term—the term we translate as 'consubstantial' or 'of the same essence' or 'of one substance'—was at the center of some of the most important fourth century debates about the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Athanasian Creed—named after, but not written by, the famous 4th Century defender of Nicene orthodoxy, Athanasius—was written in Latin, and includes the following statements:

> Now this is the catholic faith: That we worship one God in trinity, and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence. For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal. What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has. … Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God. … Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually as both God and

Lord, so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords.

(Christian Reformed Church 1988, 9.)

The Athanasian Creed is widely regarded as manifesting a bias toward "Latin" theories of the Trinity (see section 2 below).

In the two passages just quoted, we have the three central tenets of the doctrine:[4]

(T1)   There is exactly one God, the Father Almighty.[5]

(T2)   Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not identical.

(T3)   Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are consubstantial.

Each creed includes each of these tenets, if not explicitly, then by implication. The Nicene Creed affirms T1 in its first line (though the 'exactly' is only implied). It also explicitly affirms the Father-Son components of T2 and T3. The distinctness and consubstantiality of the Spirit are implicit in the remark that the Holy Spirit is "together worshipped and together glorified" with the Father and the Son. Moreover, they are explicitly affirmed in the Synodical Letter written in 382 by the same council that produced the Nicene Creed.[6] The Athanasian Creed enjoins us not to confound the persons or divide the substance, thus committing to T2 and T3. It also affirms T1: we worship *one* God, and the Father is God. To be sure, it says a lot more than this (for example, it says that the Son is God too); but the more that it says is pretty clearly just a listing of some of the logical consequences of the conjunction of T1 and T3.

The logical problem of the Trinity is just the fact that T1 – T3 appear to be mutually inconsistent. There are various ways of trying to demonstrate the inconsistency, but the one I favor focuses on the (apparent) meaning of *consubstantiality*. To say that *x* and *y* are consubstantial, or of the same substance is, it seems, just to say that *x* and *y* share a common nature—i.e., they are members of *one and the same kind*. To say that *two* divine beings are

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consubstantial, then, would be to say that the two beings in question are *identical with respect to their divinity*: neither is subordinate to the other; they are not divine in different ways; and if one is a God, then the other one is too. (Note, by the way, that 'God' functions in T1 above as a kind-term, like *man*, and not as a name, like *Fred*. Thus, though it looks a bit odd, it makes perfect sense to speak of the Father as *a* God. If 'God' were functioning as a name, then T1 would be saying something very much like 'There is exactly one YHWH,' which isn't so much a monotheistic claim as a rather strange way of asserting the existence of YHWH.)

Given all this, the logical problem of the Trinity can be expressed as follows:

(LPT1)   There is exactly one God, the Father Almighty. (From T1)

(LPT2)   The Father is a God. (From LPT1)

(LPT3)   The Son is consubstantial with but not identical to the Father. (From T2 and T3)

(LPT4)   If there are x and y such that x is a God, x is not identical to y, and y is consubstantial with x, then it is not the case that there is exactly one God. (Premise)

(LPT5)   Therefore: It is not the case that there is exactly one God. (From LPT2, LPT3, LPT4)

***Contradiction

The only way out of the contradiction is either to give up one of the tenets of the doctrine of the Trinity or to give up LPT4.

At this juncture, some will wonder why Christians don't just give up on one of the tenets of the doctrine of the Trinity. After all, the doctrine isn't *explicitly* taught in the Christian scriptures, and the precise language in which it is expressed wasn't settled until the 4th Century.[7]

So why not just abandon (say) T2 or T3? What reasons are there for accepting traditional Trinitarian doctrine?

Some have argued that the doctrine of the Trinity (or something like it) can be established via *a priori* argument.[8] But the main reason Christians take themselves to be committed to T1 – T3 is that they are seem to be implied both by Christian practice and by central claims in the Christian scriptures.[9] For example, both the Old and New Testaments make it clear that there is only one being who deserves worship and who deserves titles like 'God Almighty' or 'the one *true* God'; and Jesus refers to this being as 'our heavenly Father'.[10] Hence T1. Moreover, though Jesus says things like "I and the Father are one," it is clear that, from the point of view of the New Testament, Jesus (the Son) and the Father are distinct.[11] Jesus prays to the Father; claims to submit to the Father's will; is blessed by the Father; and so on. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and Son: the Spirit is sent by the Son and is said to intercede for us with the Father. Hence T2. And yet the New Testament advocates worshipping Jesus (the Son) and the Holy Spirit;[12] we find Jesus saying things like, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father;" and we find the apostle Peter saying (of someone who has lied to the Holy Spirit), "You have not lied to men, but to God."[13] In short, there is pressure to say that the Son and Spirit are divine—and not in some derivative, or degenerate sense, but *truly* divine, like the Father. The only clear way to say this without contradicting T1, however, is to say that the Son and the Spirit are consubstantial with the Father: the divinity of the Father, which *is* the 'substance' of the Father (more on this later), is no different from the divinity of the Son. Hence T3.[14]

Thus we return to the challenge of unpacking the notion of consubstantiality in a way that enables us to reject LPT4 without incoherence or heterodoxy. The next two sections will be

devoted to this task; but first let me say a bit about the boundaries of orthodoxy. Broadly speaking, there are three main 'errors' that the Church has condemned with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity: subordinationism, modalism, and polytheism. The task, then, is to explicate the doctrine in a way that avoids these errors. I'll discuss each in turn.

Subordinationism is the view that neither the Son nor the Spirit is truly and fully divine. Either they are not divine at all, or their divinity is somehow subordinate to that of the Father. They are gods of a sort, but lesser gods. Subordinationism is ruled out by language like 'true God from true God' or, more explicitly, 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God'.

Modalism is the view that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are merely different *aspects* or *manifestations* of God—different *modes of appearance* by which God makes himself known. If modalism were true, then the terms 'Father,' 'Son,' and 'Holy Spirit' would be analogous to terms like 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'. The substance called 'Superman' is strictly identical to the substance called 'Clark Kent'. But there is, nevertheless, a distinction to be drawn. The Superman-disguise is different from the Clark-Kent-disguise; and so it makes perfect sense to say that Superman and Clark Kent are *different* manifestations of Kal El (the Kryptonian who *is* both Superman and Clark Kent), or different modes in which Kal El appears. If modalism is true, then precisely the same sort of thing can be said about the terms 'God the Father', 'God the Son', and 'God the Holy Spirit'. Insofar as they are distinct, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not fall into the category of substance; rather, they fall into the category of 'aspect' or 'property'.

Polytheism is harder to characterize. According to standard dictionary definitions, 'polytheism' is the view that there are many gods, and a 'god' is any divine being. Given that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are divine, these definitions plus T2 imply polytheism. Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit are three divine beings; so they are three gods; so polytheism is true. If this is right, and if T1 and T3 are together meant to rule out polytheism, then the doctrine of the Trinity is incoherent. But, of course, it can't be a simple matter of dictionary-definition that sinks the doctrine of the Trinity. The standard definitions require nuance. But how shall we modify them? I suggest the following:

x is a god $=_{df}$ x is a divine substance

polytheism $=$ the view that there is more than one divine substance

I won't insist on these definitions here, though. For present purposes, I'll leave the terms officially undefined and to invite readers simply to consult their own intuitions about polytheism in making decisions about whether various models of the Trinity have managed to avoid it.

2. Solving the Problem

In this section, I want to lay out some of the main strategies for solving the problem of the Trinity. Since the end of the 19th Century, it has been common to divide the landscape of views into two camps: *Latin (*or *Western) Trinitarianism* (LT) and *Greek* (or *Eastern*) *Trinitarianism* (GT).[15] Those who divide the territory this way say tell roughly the following story about their classificatory scheme: The Latin tradition traces its historical roots through the Western Church. It is epitomized in the work of theologians like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas; it takes the unity of the Godhead as given and seeks to explain the plurality in God (rather than vice versa); and those in the tradition tend to gravitate toward psychological analogies. The Greek tradition, on the other hand, traces its roots through the Eastern Church; it is epitomized in the work of the Cappadocian Fathers; it takes the plurality of the divine persons

as given and seeks to explain their unity; and those in the tradition tend to favor social analogies.[16] (GT is commonly identified with "social trinitarianism," discussed below.)

In recent years, the standard way of dividing the territory has come under heavy attack, and I myself am inclined to reject it as well.[17] Moreover, as we'll see shortly, there is a lot more at stake in making a decision about the standard story than the viability of a mere heuristic device for classifying views about the Trinity. For purposes of a handbook essay, however, it seems prudent to start by presupposing the standard classificatory scheme, present some of the main views that fall under each heading, and only later subject the standard scheme to criticism. So that is how I shall proceed.

In the two main parts of this section, I'll present some of the more well-known LT and GT models of the Trinity. Though each of these models is intended to guide us toward a solution to the logical problem of the Trinity, we'll see that all of them fall short. Moreover, I'll argue that the most popular contemporary view, social trinitarianism, depends heavily for its plausibility upon one of the central claims involved in the LT – GT classificatory scheme: namely, the claim that the Greek tradition, starting with the Cappadocian Fathers, favored "social analogies" as ways of explicating the doctrine of the Trinity. This done, I'll go on in section 3 to present my own view of the Trinity—a version of the so-called 'Relative Identity' solution (which I'll also save for discussion in section 3) that transcends the alleged LT – GT divide. I'll also present alternative readings of Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers that identify both of their views as ancestors of mine. Ultimately, my conclusion will be that, of all the models considered herein, the view defended in section 3 has the best claim to being orthodox and in accord with the views of the earliest defenders of the Creed of Nicaea.

2.1. Latin Trinitarianism

In *On the Trinity*, St. Augustine provides several different analogies, or 'images' of the Trinity. According to one analogy, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are like the mind, its understanding of itself, and its love for itself.[18]   Another—his preferred analogy—compares Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with the mind's memory of itself, the mind's understanding of itself, and the act(s) of will whereby the mind obtains self-understanding from its own memory of itself and delights in and makes use of what it remembers and understands.[19]   The usual glosses on these psychological models emphasize two points (not always discussed together, or connected very clearly): (i) The Son and the Spirit in the first analogy, and, the Father as well in the second, are being compared to distinct faculties of the mind, or to distinct ways in which the mind operates. (ii) Both analogies indicate that the difference between at least two of the persons is fundamentally a *relational* difference: the persons are at least roughly analogous to different ways in which a subject might be related to itself, or different ways in which the mind relates to objects of thought in general.[20]

As noted above, psychological models of the trinity are common in the work of thinkers falling under the LT classification. So too is the idea that differences among persons are akin to differences among reflexive relations. Indeed, according to Richard Cross, the "vast consensus in the West" is that

> …the *only* distinguishing features among the persons are their relations—that, in
>
> the standard terminology, they are subsistent relations. (2002: 287).

The view that the persons are subsistent relations is a development of the Augustinian models,[21] and it is most notably associated with the name of St. Thomas Aquinas. According to Aquinas,

> Distinction in God arises only through relations of origin. … But a relation in God is not like an accident inherent in a subject, but is the divine essence itself. So it is subsistent just as the divine essence is subsistent. Just as, therefore, the Godhead is God, so the divine paternity is God the Father, who is a divine person. Therefore, 'divine person' signifies a relation as subsistent. (*Summa Theologiae* 1.29.4 c, quoted and translated in Cross 2002, 286).

What exactly it would mean for a relation to subsist, however, is open to interpretation.

The usual objection to the views of Augustine and Aquinas (based on the characterizations just offered) is that they slip into modalism. Granted, Augustine and Aquinas both succeed in drawing distinctions among the persons of the Trinity. But in doing so, they seem to locate the persons in the wrong category. On some interpretations, the Augustinian view suggests that the persons are to be identified with cognitive faculties, or mental modes of operation, both of which are clearly mere *aspects* of a mind. But even on somewhat more careful interpretations, the Augustinian view at least suggests that the persons are to be identified with relations. And the Thomistic view is explicit on that score. But relations are commonly construed as properties of a certain kind (*polyadic properties*, to be specific) rather than as substances.[22] But if neither Father, Son, nor Holy Spirit is a substance—if they are mere properties—then modalism is true.

Aquinas, at least, tries to locate the persons in the right category by calling them 'subsistent' relations. But contemporary writers typically respond to this idea with bafflement. What, really, could it mean for a relation to subsist? Not having an answer, they then proceed to object that Aquinas has simply identified the divine persons with *relations*, which brings us back to modalism.[23]

Similar problems beset contemporary psychological analogies, most of which can also be classified under the LT heading. For example, Thomas V. Morris suggests (without affirming) that the trinity might be modeled on the different personalities of a patient suffering from multiple personality disorder.[24] Trenton Merricks, on the other hand, suggests that the persons might be thought of on analogy with the distinct 'centers of consciousness' that seem to be associated with the two hemispheres of a human brain. (In experimental situations, commissurotomy patients—people who have undergone a surgical procedure that severs the bundle of nerves that allows the two hemispheres of their brain to communicate with one another—show behavior that seems to indicate that their consciousness is divided, as if there is a separate stream of thought associated with each hemisphere.) There is some pressure to classify them under the GT heading instead; for, as we'll shortly see, the standard lore about GT is that it is wedded to "social models," which, allegedly in contrast to Latin views, regard the persons of the Trinity as distinct psychological subjects. My own inclination, though, is to think that neither of these models compares the persons of the Trinity with *distinct* psychological subjects. Rather, they compare the Trinity as a whole with a *fragmented* psychological subject. The personalities of someone with multiple personalities are not substances; they are aspects of a substance. Plausibly, the same is true of the distinct 'centers of consciousness' that are elicited as a result of commissurotomy.[25]

The final version of LT that I want to consider is Brian Leftow's (2004).[26] Leftow regards his view as an instance of LT because it "begin[s] from the oneness of God" (2004: 304). On his view, the persons of the Trinity might be thought of as analogous to a time traveler who appears thrice located at a single time. He offers us the example of Jane, a Rockette who is scheduled to dance in a chorus line but, at the last minute, discovers that two of her partners have

failed to show up. Jane goes on stage and dances her part, then later enters a time machine (twice) so that she can (twice) go on stage with herself and dance the leftmost and rightmost parts as well. According to Leftow, there is a very clear sense in which this part of the chorus line contains three of something; and yet there is just one substance (Jane) in that part.

Is the view adequate? It is hard to tell, because Leftow's presentation is imprecise at a crucial juncture. Consider Jane's part of the chorus-line, and suppose we use the labels, 'L', 'M', and 'R' to refer to the occupants of the three positions in that part of the line:

| L | M | R |
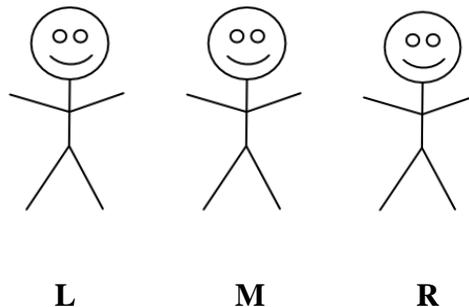
Now, let us ask what the relations are between L, M, and R. Upon reflection, we face a problem: It is not at all clear what we mean by *the occupants of the three positions*. One might think that there is just *one* occupant, Jane, multiply located in three positions. In that case, 'L', 'M', and 'R' are all just names for Jane; and the relation between L, M, and R is identity:

Case 1:   L = M = R = Jane

Alternatively, we might think that what the names 'L', 'M', and 'R' refer to are *three* distinct events in the life of Jane. In that case, there are, after all, three Rockettes, and each Rockette is an event:

Case 2:   L = the leftmost dancing event; M = the middle dancing event; R = the

rightmost dancing event; and L ≠ M ≠ R

Which case does Leftow have in mind?   Unfortunately, it looks as if he has *both* in mind. He

writes:

> If (as I believe) Jane has no temporal parts, then not just a temporal part of Jane,
>
> but Jane as a whole, appears at each point in the chorus line, and what the line
>
> contains many of are segments or episodes of Jane's life-events. This may sound
>
> odd. After all, Rockettes dance. Events do not. But what you see are many
>
> dancings of one substance. What makes the line a line is the fact that these many
>
> events go on in it, in a particular set of relations. *Each Rockette is Jane*. But in
>
> *these many events*, Jane is there many times over. (p. 308, emphasis mine)

The quoted passage says that "what there are many of" is events; and it speaks of *Rockettes* in

the plural. Thus, Case 2 looks like the correct interpretation. On the other hand, *each Rockette is*

Jane. Thus, Case 1 looks like the correct interpretation. But it is impossible for *both*

interpretations to be correct. So it is hard to know what to make of what Leftow is saying here.

Elsewhere, however, he says a bit more. (Leftow 2007) "Perhaps," he says, "the triune

Persons are event-based persons founded on a generating substance, God." (2007: 373f) An

event-based person is, roughly, a person whose existence is constituted by the occurrence of an

event: what it is for the person to exist is for that event to occur in a particular substance. (2007:

367f) In the case of Jane, then, L, M, and R are presumably supposed to be analogous to event-

based persons. Jane (the generating substance) *exists in* each of the three, as Leftow says at the

end of the quoted passage above; but she is not strictly identical to any of the three. Likewise, God exists in each of the event-based persons that together constitute the Trinity.

If we take Leftow 2007 as definitive, then we have clarity on the relation between L, M, R, and Jane: all are distinct. But it is still hard to see how the view sheds light on the trinity. Are L, M, and R consubstantial? It is hard to tell. They are events (or event-based things) involving a common substance; but that doesn't guarantee consubstantiality. Suppose I paint a wall red. We then have two events: the wall's becoming wet and the wall's becoming red. But these two events are not consubstantial, for they are not substances that share a common nature. Indeed, they're not substances at all; and even if they were, what they share isn't a *nature*. So too, apparently, in the case of L, M, and R. Of course, Leftow might have more to say on the subject; but until more *is* said, it is, again, hard to know what to make of the view.[27]

The reader will have noticed by now that, though I have offered several analogies under the heading of LT, I have *not* yet said how, exactly, any of the models solves the problem of the Trinity. The reason is simple: They don't—at least not as they have been interpreted here. The reason they don't is that, though they offer 'senses' in which God is both three and one, they do not explain how it is that *numerically distinct consubstantial* beings count as one God. Leftow's model aside, the distinct items in so-called Latin models *as they are interpreted here* are pretty clearly not consubstantial. Indeed, they are not substantial at all. And, as we have seen, Leftow's model is problematic for other reasons. This defect is not shared by GT models, which provide straightforward reasons for rejecting LPT4, grounded in a clear account of the consubstantiality of the persons (they are consubstantial by virtue of being members of a common kind) and varying analogies at explaining why we cannot conclude (as LPT4 effectively does) that distinct

consubstantial divine beings would count as more than one God. But these models have other problems, as we shall now see.

2.2. Greek Trinitarianism

In the contemporary literature on the doctrine of the Trinity, there is a family of views that fall under the label 'social trinitarianism' (ST).[28] Taking the LT-GT classification scheme for granted, ST is normally regarded as co-extensive with GT. What set the Cappadocian Fathers apart from the LT tradition, according to the common lore, was precisely their endorsement of ST; and contemporary versions of ST are basically just contemporary developments in the GT tradition. Owing in large part to misunderstandings that lead people to think of LT models as modalistic, ST models of the Trinity tend to be more popular in the contemporary literature. Critics, however, charge ST with polytheism (for reasons I shall explain shortly). This brings to light the fundamental import of the LT-GT classification scheme, and of recent criticisms of it. The Cappadocian Fathers are universally acknowledged to have played a vital role in the earliest defenses and interpretations the creed of Nicaea. They are among those who helped to *define* orthodoxy; so it would be surprising, to say the least, if whatever view they held turned out to be heretical. In short, saying 'The Cappadocian Fathers endorsed model M' is, if true, nearly decisive as a response to charges that model M is polytheistic or otherwise heretical. Hence the importance of the contemporary claim that there is such a thing as GT which (i) is found in the work of the Cappadocian Fathers and other key Eastern theologians, and (ii) differs from LT by taking plurality rather than unity as its starting point, as evidenced by their endorsement of ST models. Historical challenges to the viability of the LT-GT classification scheme take issue with each of these points. They deny that the Cappadocians

endorsed ST; they deny that there is reason to think that the Cappadocians took different 'starting points' from key Latin theologians like St. Augustine; and they deny that there is any such thing as GT or LT as they are commonly conceived.[29] If the challenges are right, then contemporary criticisms of ST are suddenly *much* more forceful; for not only does ST *lose* the backing of the Cappadocians that is so vital to warding off those criticisms, but some other view—whatever view the Cappadocians *actually* endorsed—acquires their backing.

In the next section, I will present a view that I take to be a contemporary development of what was *held in common* by (at least) Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers. But for now, I want to focus on explaining what ST is and why it is inadequate as a way of understanding the Trinity.

Contemporary social trinitarians have not been especially clear about what the central tenets of their view are supposed to be. Neither have their critics. First and foremost, ST theories are identified by their reliance on analogies that compare the persons of the trinity to things that are numerically distinct but share a common nature—usually rational creatures of some sort, like human beings. These are called 'social analogies' because many of them (though not all) at least imply, if not explicitly state, that the unity among the divine persons is some sort of social unity: God is like a family, or a perfectly unified community of rulers, or whatever. This suggests that ST might fruitfully be characterized as committed to the following central tenets:

1. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not numerically the same substance. Rather, the persons of the Trinity are consubstantial only in the sense that they share a common nature; and the sharing is to be understood straightforwardly on analogy with the way in which three human beings share a common nature.

2. Monotheism does not imply that there is exactly one divine substance. Rather, it implies at most only that *all divine substances*—all gods, in the ordinary sense of the term 'god'—stand in some particular relation R to one another, a relation other than *being the same divine substance*.

3. The persons of the Trinity stand to one another in the relation R that is required for monotheism to be true.

Different versions of ST might then be distinguished in accord with differences over what relation R amounts to.

There are many candidates in the literature for being monotheism-securing relations, but the most popular are the following:

   a) Being parts of a whole that is itself divine.

   b) Being the only members of the only divine kind.

   c) Being the only members of the community that rules the cosmos.

   d) Being the only members of a divine family.

   e) Being necessarily mutually interdependent, so that none can exist without the others.

   f) Enjoying perfect love and harmony of will with one another, unlike the members of pagan pantheons.

Most social trinitarians in fact opt for a combination of these, and most (but not all) of the combinations include at least (a), (b), and (c). So, for example, Richard Swinburne (1994) focuses on the fact that YHWH is a composite individual or society whose parts or members stand in the relations identified in (e) and (f).[30] But, of course, he wouldn't deny that they stand in (b) and (c) as well. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (2003) focus primarily on (a). On

their view, YHWH is composed of the Persons in a sense analogous to the way in which the three-headed dog Cerberus, guardian of the underworld in Greek mythology, might be thought to be composed of three "centers of consciousness." (2003: 593) On their view, the three conscious parts of Cerberus are not *dogs*; there is only one full-fledged dog—Cerberus. But the centers of consciousness are canine, just as any other part of Cerberus is (derivatively) canine. One dog, then; three derivatively canine individuals. Likewise in the Trinity: one full-fledged God; three derivatively divine individuals. Monotheism is thus secured by the fact that the Persons are parts of a single fully divine being. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., on the other hand, argues that social Trinitarians may "cling to respectability as monotheists" simply by affirming that the persons are related in the ways described by (b), (c), and (d). (1989: 31) His idea seems to be that monotheism is true, no matter how many gods there are, so long as all gods derive their divinity from one source, or share a single divine nature (as we humans share a single human nature), or are joined together as a divine family, monarchy, or community. There are other suggestions in the literature; but they tend to run along very similar lines.

A standard criticism of social trinitarianism is that these (re-)characterizations of monotheism are implausible. Those lodging the criticism typically do so in one of two ways. Some try to argue that statements in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds that are commonly taken to rule out polytheism also speak against social trinitarianism.[31] But from the point of view of those who accept the standard LT-GT distinction, there are two strikes against this objection. First, the Athanasian Creed was written in Latin and incorporates language from Augustine. So it can be dismissed as an LT treatise—one which we would antecedently expect to reflect an anti-ST bias. Second, the chief *defenders* of the creed of Nicaea were themselves social trinitarians (according to the common lore); so the claim that ST violates *that* creed is simply not

credible. So, at this stage anyway, the creedal objection is indecisive. Others object to ST on the grounds that it is not plausible to think that (say) Greek polytheism would become monotheistic if only we added that Zeus and the other gods enjoyed perfect love, harmony, and mutual interdependence with one another; nor would it seem to help if we were to pare the pantheon down to a single divine family that rules the cosmos.[32] I think that this objection *is* intuitively decisive against the suggestion that the relations described in (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f), singly or in combination, could possibly secure monotheism. But it has no implications for the more popular suggestion that Christianity is monotheistic because (a) the persons are *parts* of the one and only fully divine being. Moreover, it has the awkward implication that, if the Cappadocians really were social trinitarians, then they were polytheists after all. To close the case against ST, then, two tasks must be accomplished: (i) part-whole models must be shown to be problematic; (ii) one must either explain how the Cappadocians managed inadvertently to fall into one of the very errors they were most concerned to avoid, or one must show that the Cappadocians really were not social trinitarians.[33]

Various objections against part-whole trinitarianism are already present in the literature.[34] Rather than summarize those, however, I want here to present a new one.[35] I will take as my target the version of part-whole trinitarianism developed by J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig (2003). I do this because theirs is the most developed version of part-whole trinitarianism currently available, but I think that substantially the same objection could be raised against any version.

As I have already noted, Moreland and Craig compare God to the mythical dog Cerberus and the persons to Cerberus's three heads (or, better, the souls that might be embodied in those heads). So, on their view, the divine persons—all of them—are parts of God. For obvious

reasons, however, Moreland and Craig want to preserve the view that God is divine while denying that that God is a *fourth* divine thing on a par with the persons. Thus, they distinguish two kinds of divinity: the *full* divine nature, which is possessed by God and implies tri-unity; and a *deriviative* divine nature, possessed by each person. The distinction is analogous to the (allegedly) two ways in which something might be said to be feline: something can be feline by being a cat; or something can be feline in a derivative way by being part of a cat. Moreover, the making of this sort of distinction is implicit in every version of part-whole trinitarianism of which I am aware. Nobody wants to be pressed into affirming a quaternity in God; thus the composite is always treated, at least implicitly, as a different kind of thing from the parts—a non-person composed of persons, or a group-mind composed of single minds, etc. So much for the view itself.

But now we face two problems, both apparently devastating: First, Moreland and Craig cannot affirm the opening line of the Nicene creed: "We believe in one God, the Father, almighty." For, on their view, God is a fundamentally different thing from the Father.[36] Moreover, they cannot affirm the crucial *homoousion* clause in the same creed unless they reject the idea that there is exactly one divine nature—an idea which the Cappadocians and (so far as I am aware) every other major interpreter and defender of the creed of Nicaea in the 4th and 5th centuries were in agreement about. Here is why: The only viable interpretations of the creedal claim that the Son is *homoousion* with the Father have it that the Son is either numerically the same substance as the Father or of the same nature as the Father. (Natures were also referred to as 'substances'; hence, being consubstantial with something might just mean having the same nature.) The former, of course, they reject. The latter they accept; but in accepting it, they posit, effectively, two divine natures—one 'full-fledged', possessed only by God; the other derivative,

but still divine, possessed by the two persons. Of course, they could deny that the derivative nature is a divine nature. But in so doing, they seem to strip the persons of their divinity, which would conflict with other parts of the Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds. If all of this is right, then, part-whole trinitarianism is in serious trouble, at least if its proponents intend (as Moreland and Craig do) to be offering a view that respects Nicene orthodoxy.

But now what of the Cappadocian Fathers? The initial justification for treating the Cappadocian Fathers as social trinitarians comes primarily from their own apparent employment of social analogies.[37] Under the usual interpretation, the Cappadocian view was that, "…just as Peter, Paul, and Barnabas are each man, so the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God." (Plantinga 1986: 329 – 30) In short: the persons of the Trinity are "of the same substance" only in the sense that they share a common nature; and the sharing is to be understood straightforwardly on analogy with the way in which three men share a common nature.

As I have already indicated, however, this way of interpreting the Cappadocian Fathers has, of late, come under heavy criticism. Space will not permit me to present the exegetical case against the standard interpretation; but in the next section, after laying out the view that I call Constitution Trinitarianism, I will present reasons for thinking that the Cappadocians were actually gesturing toward that view rather than toward ST. If this is right, then one of the most important reasons for accepting ST is undermined.

3. The Constitution Model

I turn now to the model that I prefer.[38]

Let me begin here by identifying a general strategy for solving the problem of the Trinity that I have so far omitted from our discussion: the Relative Identity strategy.[39] The problem, as I have characterized it, is generated by the conjunction of the following premise (from section 1 above) with the central tenets of trinitarian doctrine:

(LPT4)   If there are x and y such that x is a God, x is not identical to y, and y is consubstantial with x, then it is not the case that there is exactly one God. (Premise)

But (LPT4) is true only if the following principle is also true:

(P1)   Necessarily, if x and y are not identical, then x and y are not numerically the same substance.

If P1 is false, then LPT4 simply ignores the possibility that x and y are distinct but (perhaps by virtue of their consubstantiality) *one and the same* God.   In other words, LPT4 presupposes that it is impossible for an object a and an object b to be numerically the same F without being absolutely identical. Give up that presupposition, and the argument that depends on LPT4 fails.

But how can we reject P1? The way to do it is to endorse the doctrine of *relative identity*. There is a weak version of this doctrine, and a strong version. The weak version says:

(RI1)   States of affairs of the following sort are possible: x is an F, y is an F, x is a G, y is a G, x is the same F as y, but x is not the same G as y.

The strong version is just the weak version plus (RI2):

(RI2)   Either absolute (classical) identity does not exist, or statements of the form '$x = y$' are to be analyzed in terms of statements of the form 'x is the same F as y' rather than the other way around.

RI2 is not needed for solving the problem of the Trinity; but some philosophers—notably, Peter Geach—endorse it for other reasons, and it serves as independent motivation for RI1.[40]

Defenders of the relative identity solution have mostly occupied themselves with working out the *logic* of relative identity in an effort to show that the doctrine of relative identity itself is coherent, and to show that the doctrine of the Trinity can be stated in a way that is *provably* consistent given the assumption of relative identity.[41] (What I have done here falls short of the latter goal. I have shown how accepting RI1 enables one to rebut a single argument for the *inconsistency* of the doctrine of the Trinity; but I have not shown that *every* argument against the consistency of the doctrine as I have stated it must fail.)

Despite the efforts of its defenders, however, the relative identity solution has remained rather unpopular. RI2 in particular is widely rejected as implausible; and I have argued elsewhere that invoking it in a solution to the problem of the Trinity implies that the difference between the persons is theory-dependent, and so merely conceptual. (Rea 2003) But without RI2, RI1 is (at first glance, anyway) unintelligible. The reason is simple: sameness statements are naturally interpreted as identity statements. So, the claim that '*x* and *y* are the same F' seems logically equivalent to the claim that '*x* is an F, *y* is an F, and *x* = *y*'. RI1 is inconsistent with this analysis of sameness statements. But on its own, it doesn't supply any *replacement* for that analysis. Thus, it renders sameness claims utterly mysterious. Appealing to RI1 without a supplemental story as a way of solving the problem of the Trinity, then, simply replaces one mystery with another. That is hardly progress.

The constitution view supplies the relevant supplemental story. The story begins with an example: An artistic building contractor fashions a marble statue that is to be used as a pillar in the building he is constructing. So he has made a statue; he also has made a pillar. It would be

strange to say that he has made *two* material objects that are simply located in exactly the same spot at the same time (though many philosophers do *in fact* say such a thing). What we are inclined to say is that the statue and the pillar are one and the same material object, not two. And yet they are *distinct*. Surface erosion will destroy the statue without destroying the pillar. Internal corruption that preserves the surface but undermines the statue's capacity to support the weight of a building will destroy the pillar but (if the statue is removed from its position as a load-bearing structure) will not destroy the statue. Thus, what we want to say is that the statue and the pillar are the *same material object*, even though they are *not identical*. If we do say this, we commit ourselves to RI1. But we can make RI1 intelligible by adding that all it means to say that two things are the same material object is that those two things share all of the same physical matter.

Let us flesh out the story just a bit further. Aristotle maintained that every material object is a compound of *matter* and *form*. The form might be thought of as a complex organizational property—not a mere shape, as the term suggests in English, but something much richer. For Aristotle, the form of a thing was its *nature*; and forms, like concrete things (though not in exactly the same sense), count as substances. Thus, on his view, St. Peter would be a compound whose constituents were some matter and the form, *humanity*, or *human nature*. St. Paul would be a compound whose constituents were that *same* form, but *different* matter.[42] Peter and Paul would thus be 'of one substance' on the Aristotelian view; though (unlike Gregory of Nyssa) Aristotle would not have spoken of Peter and Paul as being numerically the same man, nor would he have regarded them as numerically the same substance. With some minor modifications (plus the non-Aristotelian assumption that statues and pillars are substances, just like men are) Aristotle's view *would* permit us to say that the statue and the pillar are

numerically the same substance, even though they would not be 'of the same substance' since they would not share the same form, or nature. They would be numerically the same substance, one material object, but distinct matter-form compounds. They would be the same without being identical.

In the case of our statue, then, we have *two* complex properties—*being a statue* and *being a pillar*—both had by the same underlying subject, some undifferentiated matter.[43] This gives us two compounds, a statue and a pillar. Each is *a* substance. Thus, the statue and the pillar are emphatically *not* mere aspects of a common substance. They are not properties or relations or anything of the sort. Furthermore, each is distinct from the other. But they are, nevertheless, the *same* substance. Note too that the underlying matter is *not* a substance, since it is not a matter-form compound. But even if it were, it would not be a *fourth* substance—it would be the *same* substance as the statue and the pillar (by virtue of sharing all of its matter in common with them). Nor (obviously) would it be a third compound. Hence, there is just one substance and two compounds.

You might think that if there is just one substance, then we ought to be able to ask whether *it*—the one substance—is essentially a mere statue or essentially a mere pillar (or perhaps essentially a statue-pillar). But this thought is incorrect. On the present view, terms like 'it' and 'the one substance' are ambiguous: they might refer to the statue, or they might refer to the pillar. For, again, statue and pillar are distinct, though not distinct *substances*.

You might think that if there are three matter-form compounds, then there are three "primary substances" but only one "secondary substance" (where a primary substance is a concrete particular, like a human being, and a secondary substance is a nature, or form). But this is also incorrect. On the view I am defending, if *x* and *y* share the same matter in common, and I

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x is a primary substance and *y* is a primary substance, then *x* and *y* are the *same* primary substance, despite being different matter-form compounds.[44]

By now the relevance of all of this to the trinity should be clear: Almost everything that I just said about the statue and pillar could likewise be said about the divine persons. In the case of the divine persons, we have three properties—*being the Father, being the Son,* and *being the Spirit;* or, perhaps, *being Unbegotten, being Begotten* and *Proceeding*—all had by something that plays the role of matter. (It can't *really* be matter, since God is immaterial. Suppose, then, that it is *the divine substance*, whatever that is, that plays the role of matter.)[45] Each divine person is *a* substance; thus, they are not mere aspects of a common substance. Furthermore, each is distinct from the other. (So modalism is avoided and T2 is preserved.) But they are nevertheless the *same* substance. (Hence T3.) Thus, there is just one divine substance, and so the view allows us to say, along with the creed, "We believe in one God, the Father almighty…and in one Lord Jesus Christ…begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father…". Since Father, Son, and Holy Spirit count, on this view, as numerically the same substance *despite their distinctness*, LPT4 is false, and the problem of the Trinity is solved.

So far so good; but there is one loose end that remains to be tied. What is it that plays the role of matter in the Trinity? And is it a substance itself? Here I want to offer only a *partial* view that might be developed in a variety of different ways. What plays the role of matter in the Trinity is *the divine nature*; and the divine nature *is* a substance. It is not a fourth substance, for reasons already discussed; nor is it a fourth person (since it is not a compound of 'matter' plus a person-defining-property). But it is a substance, since (again, taking cues from Aristotle) *natures* are substances. What I don't want to take a position on here is the question of what, exactly, a nature is. Is it concrete or abstract? Is it particular or universal? Is it a property or something

else? These questions I will not answer. I think that they must be answered in a way that allows the divine persons to be concrete particular non-properties; but I think that there are various ways of answering these questions that are compatible with that view.

This completes my presentation of the constitution view. We are now in a position to see how the view connects with the views of fourth- and fifth-century defenders of Nicaea. At the heart of the constitution view is the idea that the divine persons are compounds whose constituents are a shared divine nature, which plays the role of Aristotelian matter, and a person-defining property (like *being the Son*, or *being Begotten*) that plays the role of form. But this is almost *exactly* the view that Richard Cross identifies as the fundamental point of agreement between Eastern and Western views of the Trinity. According to Cross, East and West agreed that (a) the divine nature is a property, and (b) that one and the same divine nature is a constituent of each of the divine persons—i.e., it is the point at which they *overlap*.[46]

So far so good; but mere overlap is not sufficient to suggest the constitution model. For if nature-sharing is a kind of overlap (as it seems to be for the Cappadocians, at least),[47] then two men overlap on a constituent as well. But, of course, they don't constitute one another. In order to attribute something like a constitution model to Augustine and the Cappadocians, we would have to show that their view posited not only overlap among the persons but a kind of overlap that guaranteed the sort of *absence of separation* that we find in objects (like the statue and the pillar) that constitute one another. Encouragingly, Michel Barnes insists that this idea was as crucial to both East and West as Cross thinks the idea of overlap was. Thus, he writes (speaking of both Augustine and the Cappadocians):

> …the most fundamental conception and articulation in 'Nicene' Trinitarian theology of
> the 380s of the unity among the Three is the understanding that *any action of any member*

of the Trinity is an action of the three inseparably. (Barnes in Davis et al, p. 156, emphasis in original) [48]

Moreover, as we'll see, both Augustine and the Cappadocians endorsed models that reinforce this reading and the Cappadocians, at least, rejected models that conflict with it.

Let us return again (for starters) to Augustine's favored analogy: self-memory, self-understanding, and self-directed willing. At the end of Book 10 of *On the Trinity*, after introducing the favored analogy, Augustine raises some concerns and then says that the "discussion demands a new beginning." In Book 11, he opens with two new analogies, the first of which compares the divine persons with an *external body*, *vision of the body*, and the *attention of mind* that joins these two. If Augustine's goal really were to model the Trinity on different faculties or modes of operation for the human mind, returning to an analogy like this would be bizarre. For, after all, an external body has nothing essentially to do with the mind of one who beholds it. But, of course, this isn't really Augustine's goal at all. The key to understanding this is to attend carefully to the theory of vision that gets presented along with the analogy. For Augustine, vision involves a kind of reproduction in the viewer of the nature or form of the thing viewed.[49] So when an external body is seen, the form of that body is present both in the body and in the visual faculty of the viewer. Moreover, he seems to think that, in *directing* vision toward the external body and *retaining* the image of it in the visual faculty, the will takes on the same nature as well—just as 'the little body of a chameleon [varies] with ready change, according to the colors which it sees.'[50] Once we see this, however, the point of the new analogy becomes clear. The case at hand is one in which three *very* different items are unified by virtue of a kind of overlap: they have (in a way) the very same nature present in them.

Of course, the analogy is imperfect; for, among other things, the external body's nature is present in it in a way different from the way in which it is present in the viewer's visual faculty or will. Augustine therefore offers another analogy to correct this defect; but, in the end, the best analogy is the one that I have called 'the favored analogy'. It is the best because, in that analogy, *one and the same substance* is present in three distinct things which are distinguished from one another only by their relations to that one substance. The things in question are not faculties or modes of operation. They are, rather, concrete events, each of which is, in effect, a complex whose constituents are a substance and a reflexive relation: *the mind remembering itself*, *the mind understanding itself*, and *the mind willing itself*. These events are not identical; and, as events, they are at least closer to the category of substance than to the category of property or aspect. Moreover, since it is the mind itself that is the common constituent in each complex, and since it is the mind that is *doing* the self-remembering, self-understanding, the view strongly suggests the sort of absence of separation that one finds in the constitution view; and it even suggests shared agency among the persons.

What of the Cappadocians? The Cappadocians clearly thought of consubstantiality as the *sharing of a nature*—on this I think there is no substantive disagreement. Moreover, it seems clear that they thought of nature-sharing as the sharing of a common constituent. Gregory of Nyssa claims (in *On Not Three Gods: To Ablabius*) that "the man in [a group of men] is one." (Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 5, 332) Likewise, in his *Fifth Theological Oration*, Gregory Nazianzen says that "the Godhead [or divine nature] is One", and he speaks of the Persons as those "in Whom the Godhead dwells", which suggests that the Godhead—i.e., the divine nature—is a common constituent of the three. (Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 7, 322)

Moreover, in the following passage he seems to indicate outright that the relation between the persons involves overlap on a common nature and differentiation by three properties:

> …the very fact of being Unbegotten or Begotten, or Proceeding has given the name of Father to the First, of the Son to the Second, and [to] the Third…of the Holy Ghost, that the distinction of the Three Persons may be preserved in the one nature and dignity of the Godhead. … The Three are One in Godhead, and the One three in properties… (*Fifth Theological Oration: On the Holy Spirit* ix, Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 7, 320)

But what of inseparability? I said earlier that not only do the Cappadocians affirm models that posit the inseparability of the persons, but they reject models that conflict with it. Thus, though Gregory Nazianzen acknowledges that Adam, Eve, and Seth are consubstantial, he goes on to make it very explicit that his point in saying that they are is *only* to show that distinct things can be consubstantial, *not* to embrace what would now be called a social analogy:

> …were not [Adam, Eve, and Seth] consubstantial? Of course they were. Well then, here it is an acknowledged fact that different persons may have the same substance. I say this, not that I would attribute creation or fraction or any property of body to the Godhead…but that I may contemplate in these, as on a stage, things which are objects of thought alone. For it is not possible to trace out any image exactly to the whole extent of the truth. (*Fifth Theological Oration* xi, Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 7, 321)

Elsewhere, he is even clearer about the importance of inseparability, and the inadequacy of the analogy with three human beings:

> To us there is One God, for the Godhead is One… For one [Person] is not more and another less God; nor is One before and another after; nor are They divided in will or

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parted in power; nor can you find here any of the qualities of divisible things; but the Godhead is, to speak concisely, undivided in separate Persons. … [D]o not the Greeks also believe in one Godhead, as their more advanced philosophers declare? And with us, Humanity is one, namely the entire race; but yet they have many gods, not One, just as there are many men. But in this case the common nature has a unity which is only conceivable in thought; and the individuals are parted from one another very far indeed, both by time and by dispositions and by power. For we are not only compound beings, but contrasted beings, both with one another and with ourselves; nor do we remain entirely the same [over time]. (*Fifth Theological Oration* xiv, xv, Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 7, 322)

As I see it, the upshot of these passages is that the analogy with three humans breaks down at *precisely* the point where the Social model and the constitution model differ. Three humans are *separated* in matter, time, space, and agency; the three Persons are not.

There are other indications in both Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzus that their view of the Trinity was along the lines of the constitution model.[51] I want to close, however, by dismissing an argument for the claim that they *rejected* the constitution model. In *Epistle 52*, Basil of Caesarea writes:

For they maintained that the homoousion set forth the idea both of essence and of what is derived from it, so that the essence, when divided, confers the title of co-essential on the parts into which it is divided. This explanation has some reason in the case of bronze and coins made therefrom, but in the case of God the Father and God the Son there is no question of substance anterior or even underlying

both; the mere thought and utterance of such a thing is the last extravagance of impiety. (Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 8, 155)

Commenting on this passage, William Lane Craig (2005: 80) takes Basil to be "vehemently" rejecting constitution models outright. But this seems to me to be exactly the wrong interpretation. Though constitution theorists would certainly want to say of each coin that it is constituted by a piece of bronze, *Basil is not here considering a case in which multiple bronze items constitute one another.* Indeed, what Craig does not recognize is that the coins in this example are consubstantial (if at all) in the way that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would be on the *social trinitarian* view. So, if any contemporary model is being rejected, it is that one (the one Craig himself favors) and not the constitution view. Moreover, what is at issue for Basil here is *just* the question whether there is an anterior substance underlying the Persons. But the constitution model is not committed to an anterior substance. An anterior substance would be one that is *prior to* and *not the same substance as* the persons. But, on the constitution view, the divine nature is neither.

If the foregoing is right, then, the Cappadocians did not in fact favor anything like social trinitarianism; rather, their view was much more in line with constitution trinitarianism. Likewise, Augustine did not favor the modalistic-sounding view that was attributed to him in section 2.1; rather, he too was defending a view in line with the constitution view. This is substantial support; and, to my mind, the constitution view wins out on purely intuitive grounds as well.

NOTES

1 *Quicumque vult* (The Athanasian Creed); translation by Jeffrey Brower, quoted from Brower & Rea 2005, p. 488.

2 The most important and illuminating contemporary literature aimed at sorting out these difficulties has been written by theologians working in the field of Patristic studies. For a start into this literature, the following sources are especially useful: Ayres 2004, Barnes 1998, Coakley 1999, Coakley (ed.) 2003, Stead 1977, Turcescu 2005, and Wolfson 1964.

3 For details on the relevant controversies, see especially Ayres 2004.

4 It is more common nowadays to claim that the central tenets of the doctrine are these three: (i) there is exactly one God; (ii) the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Father is not the Spirit; and (iii) the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. This way of characterizing the doctrine more closely follows the Athanasian Creed. But the language of (iii) is less clear than the language of T3 above (due the fact that the predicate 'is God' can be, and has been, assigned a variety of different meanings). Just as importantly, this formulation obscures the centrality of the notion of *consubstantiality* in the doctrine—the very notion that lay at the center of some of the most important controversies surrounding the First Nicene Council. My own formulation of the doctrine is more in accord with formulations found, for example, in the systematic theologies of Berkhof (1938/1996) and Hodge (1873).

5 I take this straight from the first line of the Nicene Creed. The first line can be translated in ways different from what I have reproduced here; but every credible way of translating it strongly suggests that the Father is somehow the *same* as God.

[6] Kelly 1972, 340 – 341; Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 14, 189.

[7] The common story is that it was settled in 325 and then challenged by Arian rebels. Lewis Ayres (2004) and Michel Barnes (1998) tell a different story, however—one according to which the language wasn't entirely settled in 325, but rather later in 380/81.

[8] The most well-known argument along these lines is one that is at least latent in the thought of a variety of medieval theologians, explicit in the work of Richard of St. Victor, and developed in detail most recently by Richard Swinburne (1994, Ch. 8)

[9] As the 4th century defenders of Nicaea were at pains to show. See, for starters, Athanasius's 'Defence of the Nicene Council' in Schaff & Wace 1900/1999, vol. 4.

[10] See, e.g., Exodus 20:3 – 5, Isaiah 42:8, Matthew 5:9 – 13 and 7:21, and John 2:16.

[11] Compare John 10:30, Matthew 24:36, Luke 22:42, and John 1:14, 18.

[12] E.g., Philippians 2:10 – 11.

[13] John 14:9; Acts 5: 3- 4. (NIV translations).

[14] Obviously the discussion here is highly compressed. For a fuller discussion of the Biblical case for the doctrine, see (for example) O'Collins 1999, Chs. 1 – 4.

[15] According to Michel Barnes, what I am calling the "standard" classificatory scheme takes its cues from the work of the 19th Century theologian, Theodore de Régnon. (1892/1898). (Though Ayres notes that de Régnon's own classificatory scheme wasn't so much a division between Greek and Latin models as between patristic and scholastic models. See Ayres 2004, 302ff.) Barnes subjects de Regnon's scheme and its relatives to trenchant criticism in Barnes 1995a and 1995b.

[16] Cf., e.g., Brown 1985; Cary 1995; Cross 2002; LaCugna 1986 and 1991; and Placher 1983, 79.

[17] See, e.g., Ayres 2004; Barnes 1995a, 1995b, and 1998; Cary 1995; Coakley 1999; and Cross 2002. The idea isn't that there is no difference whatsoever between Eastern and Western, or Latin and Greek, conceptions of the Trinity, but that the differences aren't nearly as sharp as they are commonly construed, that they aren't aptly characterized as differences over "starting points" or as a fundamental difference in attitudes toward "social" and "psychological" analogies.

[18] *On the Trinity*, Bk. 9, Ch. 3ff; Schaff & Wace 1887/1999, 127ff.

[19] *On the Trinity*, Bk. 10, Chs. 10 – 12, and Bk. 15, Ch. 3; Schaff & Wace 1887/1999, vol. 3, 140 – 43; 200 – 202. He characterizes the latter analogy as a 'more subtle' treatment of the matter than the former.

[20] Cf. Brown 1985, Ch. 7; LaCugna 1991, Ch. 3; O'Collins 1999, Ch. 7; Richardson 1955.

[21] Moreland and Craig say that Aquinas "pushes the Augustinian analogy to its apparent limit." (2003: 585) But this makes it sound as if the 'subsistent relations view' isn't present in Augustine. I myself don't mean to suggest that, however. All I mean to suggest is that it is not explicit in Augustine.

[22] A *polyadic* property is one that applies to several things together. A property like *being loved* is monadic: it applies to a single subject (even if there are many subjects to which it applies). Relations like ___ *loves* ___, or ___ *thinks that* ____ *is* ___, are polyadic. The former applies to a pair, the latter to a triad. Note, however, that, though it is nowadays common to treat relations as polyadic properties (as, e.g., in van Inwagen 2004), Jeff Brower argues that medieval philosophers did not treat them as such. See Brower 2001 and 2005.

[23] I think that the objection can be met, and that the way to do it is to develop Aquinas's view along the lines of the view described in section 3. But I won't attempt to do that here.

[24] Morris 1991, Ch. 9.

[25] Admittedly, though, one might think of them as distinct (subsistent) minds or souls, embodied in or emergent upon the same material substance. If we think of them this way, then, as Jeff Brower and I note elsewhere (Brower & Rea 2006) polytheism looms, rather than modalism. Whether the view actually falls into polytheism, however, depends entirely upon whether the relevant 'centers of consciousness' are in any sense *the same substance*. On this question, Merricks is silent. [Clarification: This is not to say that Merricks simply ignores the 'same substance' issue. Indeed, he spends pages 319 – 322 discussing it; he says that he can 'do justice' to the claim that the Father is the same substance as the Son (320); and he says explicitly that 'each divine person is a substance in a less-than-most-straightforward sense.' (322) But, for all this, he does not, so far as I can tell, say one way or another whether there is any sense of 'same substance' in which it is straightforwardly true (in that sense) that the Father is the same substance as the Son. It is in this respect that he is 'silent' on the question at issue here.]

[26] See also Leftow 2007.

[27] Thanks to Brian Leftow for helpful correspondence about his view. Naturally, if I have him wrong here, that is my fault and not his. My own view is that Leftow's view can be made workable by developing it in the direction of the constitution view, described in section 3. But I won't attempt that here.

[28] Proponents of the ST strategy include Timothy Bartel (1993 and 1994), David Brown (1985 and 1989), Peter Forrest (1998), C. Stephen Layman (1988), J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig (2003), Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. (1986, 1988, and 1989), Richard Swinburne (1994), Edward Wierenga (2004), and C. J. F. Williams (1994). Hasker (1970) *claims* to endorse ST; but some of what he says seems more in line with the constitution view. (See esp. pp. 27 – 30.)

According to Richard Swinburne, the "most influential modern statement of social Trinitarianism" is Moltmann 1981.

[29] See note 17 for references.

[30] Cf. Swinburne 1994: 181.

[31] See especially Brower 2004a, Clark 1996, Feser 1997, and Leftow 1999.

[32] See, especially, Leftow 1999 and Merricks 2005.

[33] Or one might just try to sink it with the weight of other objections. And there *are* other objections in the literature—see, for example, Tuggy 2003 and 2004. My own view, though, is that even after these further objections have been piled on the cumulative case is not dialectically strong enough apart from the two further tasks just mentioned.

[34] See, e.g., Leftow 1999, Howard-Snyder 2003, Tuggy 2003, and Rea 2006.

[35] My objection bears some similarity to objections based on the Athanasian Creed raised by Jeffrey Brower (2004a) against Wierenga's (2004) social trinitarian view.

[36] Dale Tuggy (2003 and especially 2004) presses roughly this point against all versions of ST. Part-whole trintiarians *could* respond by saying that the Son and Spirit are parts of the Father (who is also a person). But in that event, their doctrine of two kinds of divinity (full and derivative) would commit them to denying that the Son and the Spirit (who would still be derivatively divine) have the same nature as the Father (who alone would have the full divine nature. Thus, they would run into direct conflict with the requirement that the Son be *of the same substance* with the Father.

[37] Plantinga 1986, 1988, and 1989 provide representative examples.

[38] See Brower and Rea 2005. See also Brower 2004b.

[39] Proponents of this strategy include James Cain (1989), G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach (1963, esp. pp. 118 – 20), A. P. Martinich (1978 and 1979), and Peter van Inwagen (1988 and 2003). I count myself as both a critic and a proponent, since I reject one way of deploying the strategy but endorse another. (See Rea 2003 and Brower and Rea 2005a and 2005b). For other criticism, see Cartwright 1987, Merricks 2006, and Tuggy 2003.

[40] See, e.g., Geach 1969 and 1980, secs. 30, 34, and 110.

[41] See, especially, van Inwagen 1988 and 2003.

[42] There's controversy in the literature on Aristotle over whether distinct human beings really share *numerically the same* form or not. Here I assume that they do; but since I feel no special burden to follow Aristotle on that point, nothing really depends on the assumption.

[43] Or, if you like, a *lump* of matter. See Brower and Rea 2005: 75, n. 10 for discussion.

[44] Cf. Cary 1992: 381.

[45] One might want to say that it is the Father who plays the role of underlier, that the Son is a compound of the Father and the property *being Begotten*, and that the Spirit is a compound of the Father (or the Son) and the property of *Proceeding*. This view is suggested by passages in Augustine, and was first brought to my attention by Anne Peterson. I take it as a variation on the present theme, rather than a genuine rival to the view I am defending.

[46] Cross 2002a, p. 284. See also Cary 1992.

[47] On Gregory of Nyssa's view of universals, see Cross 2002b.

[48] I want to avoid views that rule out shared agency; but I don't myself want to commit to it. For, of course, it raises serious questions. The Son prays to the Father. Does the Father do so as well? Proponents of shared agency will say 'yes, but not in the same way.' (See, e.g., Hasker 1970, p. 29.) Trying to make good sense of this response, however, would require another paper.

[49] *On the Trinity* Bk. 11, Ch. 2; in Schaff and Wace 1887/1999, vol. 3, 145 – 6.

[50] *On the Trinity* Bk. 11, Ch. 5; in Schaff and Wace 1887/1999, vol. 3, 146 – 7.

[51] See, e.g., Gregory Nazianzen's analogy of three suns in the fourteenth chapter of his *Fifth Theological Oration*, and the rainbow analogy in Basil of Caesarea's *Epistle 38* (generally regarded as having been written by Gregory of Nyssa rather than by Basil).

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