

## ***"On the Logical Problem of the Trinity"***

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Early on in his treatise on the Trinity, Augustine remarks that "in no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more rewarding." 1 Augustine is right about the difficulty of the subject; and I too think, though for reasons that would not in the first instance have been his, that the subject is one in which it is especially important to distinguish truth from falsity. Augustine's primary concern was religious: on the matter of the Trinity, the difference between true belief and false belief was all the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death. It is clear, however, that much of the laborious inquiry to which Augustine refers is philosophical. His own treatise testifies to his recognition that those who accept the doctrine of the Trinity must face fundamental and difficult problems of philosophical logic. 2 My aim here is to explain these problems. I hope to make clear how, though seemingly remote and arid, they bear directly on a matter that to many people has been of the utmost practical importance.

We shall need a preliminary account of what the doctrine of the Trinity is; I cannot assume general familiarity with it, even less can I assume its general acceptance. It is a doctrine about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit that achieved the status of dogma in the fourth century. It persists today, of course; but in seeking its definition I think we cannot do better than look to its patristic and medieval formulations. Here one naturally turns first to the creeds - especially to those that have, through continued liturgical use, become authoritative. Of these the most informative on Trinitarian matters is the Athanasian Creed, and I shall therefore take it as my point of departure.

The Athanasian Creed is of uncertain date and origin. 3 Indeed, scholars like to say that only two things are known with certainty about it: that it is not a creed, and that it was not composed by Athanasius. Throughout the Middle Ages it was attributed to Athanasius, whence its name; but the attribution is now known to have been incorrect, and perhaps the likeliest hypothesis is that it originated in southern France in the late fifth or early sixth century. Aquinas rightly observed that it is less a creed than an exposition of doctrine. 4 It is an exposition in particular of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and its Trinitarian portion reads as follows:

Now this is the Catholic faith: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor separating the substance; for one is the person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit; but the divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one, the glory equal, and the majesty coeternal. What the Father is, such is the Son and such the Holy Spirit: the Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated; the Father is immense, the Son is immense, the Holy Spirit is immense; the Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Spirit is eternal and nevertheless there are not three eternal but one eternal, just as there are not three uncreated or three that are immense, but one uncreated and one that is immense. Similarly, the Father is omnipotent, the Son is omnipotent, the Holy Spirit is omnipotent; nevertheless there are not three omnipotents but one omnipotent. So also the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; and nevertheless there are not three Lords but one Lord: because, just as we are compelled by Christian truth to confess that each person is individually both God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords. The Father is made by no one, neither created nor begotten; the Son is from the Father alone, neither made nor created but begotten; the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding. Therefore, there is one Father, not three Fathers; there is one Son, not three Sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in the Trinity there is nothing prior or posterior, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are coeternal and coequal.

So in every way, as was said above, unity must be worshiped in Trinity and Trinity in unity. He who wants to be saved must believe this about the Trinity.

The creed would evidently have us take the following seven sentences as formulating propositions belief in which is required for salvation.

(1) The Father is God

(2) The Son is God

(3) The Holy Spirit is God

(4) The Father is not the Son

(5) The Father is not the Holy Spirit

(6) The Son is not the Holy Spirit

(7) There is exactly one God

Thus we read in the text: "The Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord" and "we are compelled by Christian truth to confess that each person is individually . . . God." Hence sentences (1), (2), and (3). Sentences (4), (5), and (6) are sanctioned by the words "for one is the person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit." together with the injunction against "confusing the persons." And (7) pretty clearly gives the intent of the words "we worship one God" and "we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say that there are three Gods." Narrowly understood, the doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine formulated in sentences (1) through (7). In a somewhat wider sense. it includes as well the propositions expressed by the sentences

(8) The Father is neither made, nor created, nor begotten

(9) The Son is from the Father alone, neither made nor created, but begotten

(10) The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.

Moreover, the sentence

(11) What the Father is, such is the Son and such the Holy Spirit

enjoys a prominent place in the creed and, as we shall see, cannot be ignored in a treatment of the logical problem of the Trinity. On the other hand, it would be pointless to include within Trinitarian doctrine propositions to the effect that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are eternal, omnipotent, and the like; for such propositions can reasonably be taken to be consequences of (1) through (11) together with orthodox doctrines about the divine attributes. And we do well to ignore such catchphrases as "unity in Trinity and Trinity in unity." Whatever content they have appears already in (1) through (7).

A virtue of sentences (1) through (7), and of (11) as well, is that in them theological jargon is kept to a minimum. The doctrine of the Trinity ought not to be confused with this or that theology of the Trinity. Even in theory, however, the line between the two is not sharp, and in practice the distinction is one that Christians have found hard to observe. In the face of what were seen as distortions of or deviations from true doctrine, church councils from time to time felt compelled to incorporate technical terminology into the formulation of doctrine.

A notable instance occurred at the First Ecumenical Council, held at Nicaea in 325. It is preserved in what is popularly, but inaccurately, known as the Nicene Creed. 5 Those who eventually prevailed at the council aimed to put down the teaching of Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who preached that the Son was "not equal to" the Father, nor "of the same substance," and that "the substances of the Father and of the Son are different and have no share in each other." His main point appears to have been that the Son is a creature, hence not truly God.<sup>6</sup> The council might therefore have responded with a firm enunciation of (2). But it chose instead to adopt Arius's own terminology—in the words of Ambrose, "to sever the head of the foul heresy with the very sword which [its advocates] had themselves unleashed."<sup>7</sup> The resulting creed read in part as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of all things both visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten born of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father; God from God, light from light, true God from true God; begotten, not created, of the same substance as the Father.

In view of the obscurities and ambiguities of the word 'substance' (ousia), to affirm that the Son is "of the same substance" (homoousion) as the Father hardly contributes to clarification of doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Our (2) is at least as clear. And (2) might also have been a better weapon with which to combat the heretic; for the language employed in the Creed of Nicaea aroused opposition even among the orthodox,<sup>10</sup> and contributed to a temporary ascendancy of Arianism, or at least of "Semi-Arianism," in the late 350s.<sup>11</sup> But for our purposes the important point is that to affirm the consubstantiality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is so far to say something that needs explanation; and the explanation had better not jeopardize (1) through (7). When it comes to orthodoxy on the matter of the Trinity, they are inviolable.

Not only the Athanasian Creed testifies to this, but also numerous conciliar pronouncements. I cite just one, issued in 1442 at Florence by the Seventeenth Ecumenical Council:

The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes, and teaches [that there is] one true God omnipotent, unchangeable, and eternal, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, one in essence, three in persons: the Father unbegotten, the Son begotten of the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit; the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son: but the Father is only the Father, the Son is only the Son, the Holy Spirit is only the Holy Spirit. The Father alone begot the Son from his substance, the Son alone was begotten from the Father alone, the Holy Spirit alone proceeds from both Father and Son. Thus these three persons are one God and not three gods: for the three are one substance, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, one eternity, and are one in all ways, where this is not impeded by the opposition of relation.<sup>12</sup>

This pronouncement suggests somewhat crisper sentences than our (8), (9), and (10); and its final clause appears to contemplate some qualification of (11), about which I shall have something to say later on. But the pronouncement leaves no doubt as to the orthodoxy of (1) through (7). Of course, metaphysical jargon intrudes, especially in the words "for the three are one substance, one nature," "one in essence." But evidently such talk is to be understood consistently with the truth of what is said in (1) through (7).

Of course, it is one thing to know that the doctrine of the Trinity is formulated in a certain set of sentences and another to know what the doctrine is. Someone might know that the first proposition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is the proposition formulated in the sentence 'Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist', and yet in a plain sense not know what the proposition is: to take the worst case, he might have no idea what the German sentence means. We are not, I think, in that position with respect to our seven Trinitarian sentences. They are not sentences of an unfamiliar language, conveying no more to us than would some string of nonsense syllables. On the other hand, mere competence in English is insufficient to ensure understanding. Obviously enough, to understand the seven sentences one must understand the theological expressions contained in them; and it is at least open to question whether mastery of English suffices for that. But another barrier to understanding is perhaps less obvious. It has to do with

what philosophers have come to call "logical form."

Consider for the moment just the first six of our sentences. A natural thought is to take the theological terms contained in them as in effect proper names and to understand the verb 'is' to have the sense of 'is identical with', or 'is the very same thing as'-as when we say that Samuel Clemens is Mark Twain, that Tully is Cicero, that Venus is the Morning Star. Thus construed, the six sentences come to formulate propositions that might better be put this way:

- (1a) The Father is identical with God
- (2a) The Son is identical with God
- (3a) The Holy Spirit is identical with God
- (4a) The Father is not identical with the Son
- (5a) The Father is not identical with the Holy Spirit
- (6a) The Son is not identical with the Holy Spirit.

But obviously this will not do. No one thing can literally be the very same thing as each of two things; or, better, if something x is identical with y and with z, then y must be identical with z. If Venus is the Morning Star and Venus is the Evening Star, it follows that the Morning Star is the Evening Star.

The inconsistency is plain, and I take it to show that we have not yet discovered the logical forms of sentences (1) through (6). But of course an alternative interpretation immediately suggests itself: construe the word 'God' in (1), (2), and (3) as a common noun, or general term, and supply the indefinite article. Thus:

- (1b) The Father is a God
- (2b) The Son is a God
- (3b) The Holy Spirit is a God
- (4b) The Father is not identical with the Son
- (5b) The Father is not identical with the Holy Spirit
- (6b) The Son is not identical with the Holy Spirit.

The result is a consistent set. The Cappadocian Fathers saw this and appear to have suggested that consubstantiality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could be understood accordingly. Thus Basil wrote that when a name is sought for two or more similar objects, as, for example, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, which will indicate the sub-stance of these men, you will not apply one term to the substance of Paul, but a different one to that of Silvanus, and still another to that of Timothy; but whatever terms indicate the substance of Paul will apply to the two others as well; and those who are described with reference to their substance by the same terms are consubstantial with one another.<sup>13</sup>

It seems to have been left to Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's younger brother, to notice that, thus understood, consubstantiality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appears to license saying that there are three Gods. Gregory himself rather desperately suggested that strictly speaking there is only one man. But besides being itself heretical, the suggestion is of no help: if (1b) through (6b) are true, (7) must be false.

I have singled out the Cappadocians, and this is somewhat unfair. After all, their explanation of consubstantiality is close to the surface in a pro-nouncement of the Council of Chalcedon (451) according to which the Son is "consubstantial with the Father in respect of deity and consubstantial with us in respect of humanity" '5-a phraseology apparently lifted from the earlier Formula of Union (433).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it is quite common to be told that there are three divine Persons but only one divine substance or essence or nature. Some such is present in the Athanasian Creed and is explicit in the pronouncement of the Seventeenth Ecumenical Council quoted above. But the whole question concerns the relation of the Persons to the essence. If each Person is identical with the essence, there cannot be more than one Person. And if, on the other hand, the Persons are to be thought of as sharing

a common nature, in the manner of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, there cannot be fewer than three Gods. How, in short, can there be three divine Persons and yet only one God?

At this point I need to anticipate an objection. It will be said that a philosopher is trespassing on the territory of the theologian: the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, beyond the capacities of human reason, and hence the tools of logic are irrelevant to it. The objection is based on a misunderstanding. The doctrine of the Trinity is indeed supposed to be a mystery. That simply means, however, that assurance of its truth cannot be provided by human reason but only by divine revelation. It is to be believed "not because of the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God who reveals it." But a mystery is not supposed to be refutable by human reason, as if a truth of reason could somehow contradict a revealed truth; on the contrary, putative refutations are supposed themselves to be refutable. Nor is a mystery supposed to be unintelligible, in the sense that the words in which it is expressed simply cannot be understood. After all, we are asked to believe the propositions expressed by the words, not simply that the words express some true propositions or other, we know not which.<sup>18</sup>

In any case, we have not yet exhausted the resources of logical theory. One suggestion in particular will probably have occurred to some of you already. I do not know its origin. I think I detect it in a letter written by Anselm of Canterbury to Urban II in 1094,<sup>19</sup> and it is perhaps justifiably read into a creed adopted at the Eleventh Council of Toledo in 675.<sup>20</sup> Peter Geach attributes it to Aquinas<sup>21</sup>—presumably with approval, for the philosophical theory on which it rests is one that Geach himself has vigorously defended on a number of occasions.<sup>22</sup>

The Trinitarian sentence (7) can be taken as an answer to the question, How many God are there? Now, I have so far implicitly assumed that if that answer is correct, then, if  $x$  is a God and  $y$  is a God,  $x$  must be identical with  $y$ . The assumption is natural enough; indeed, (7) is naturally understood as saying neither more nor less than

(7b) Something is a God, and anything that is a God is identical with it.

But on Geach's view, the view he attributes to Aquinas, (7b) is at best incomplete, through presence in it of the unqualified phrase 'is identical with'. According to that view it makes no sense to say something of the form ' $x$  is identical with  $y$ ', or ' $x$  is the same as  $y$ ', unless the context makes clear that this is short for ' $x$  is the same such-and-such as  $y$ ', where 'such-and-such' stands in for a common noun of restricted applicability—'man' or 'planet', say, but not 'thing' or 'object' or 'entity'.<sup>23</sup> Thus it would be said to make no sense to ask whether what we heard at today's concert is unqualifiedly identical with what we heard at yesterday's: we may have heard the same motet, but of course we did not hear the same performance; it makes no sense to ask whether you and I are reading the very same thing: we may be reading the same novel, but no doubt different copies; it makes no sense to ask whether  $2/3$  is identical with  $4/6$ :  $2/3$  is the same rational number as  $4/6$ , but not the same ordered pair of integers. Identity is accordingly said to be "relative," in the sense that  $x$  and  $y$  may be the same such-and-such but different so-and-so's.<sup>24</sup>

How, then, is (7) to be understood? Well, think of counting the novels on a shelf. We assign the number 1 to some novel on the shelf and to whatever on the shelf is the same novel; if, after this, no novel on the shelf remains unnumbered, there is exactly one novel on the shelf. Thus, there is exactly one novel on the shelf if and only if something is a novel on the shelf and is the same novel as anything that is a novel on the shelf. Similarly with (7). On Geach's view it is equivalent to

(7c) Something is a God, and anything that is a God is the same God as it

which differs from (7b) only in that 'is identical with' has been relativized to 'is the same God as Now from (7c) together with

(1c) The Father is a God,

(2c) The Son is a God, and

(3c) The Holy Spirit is a God

it follows that the Father is the same God as the Son and the same God as the Holy Spirit, and that the Son is the same God as the Holy Spirit. But Geach contends that consistently with this the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit may be different Divine Persons. Thus (4), (5), and (6) are to be understood in the sense of, respectively,

(4c) The Father is a different Divine Person from the Son,

(5c) The Father is a different Divine Person from the Holy Spirit

(6c) The Son is a different Divine Person from the Holy Spirit.

Now, I shall want to argue that it is at least open to question whether Geach's interpretation of (1) through (7) successfully avoids tritheism. But before going into that it will be instructive to consider how his interpretation bears on (11), a sentence I promised some time back to give some attention to. I did not include that sentence within Trinitarian doctrine, narrowly understood. This was in part because of the exclusionary clause added to it at the Council of Florence. But only in part. I was concerned more with the fact that the content of (11) seems to be at odds with orthodoxy. In (11) we appear to be authorized to affirm each of an entire class of propositions—all those, namely, that can be expressed in sentences of the forms

(A) If the Father is . . . then the Son is. . .

and

(B) If the Father is . . . then the Holy Spirit is. . .

But some sentences of these forms appear to express propositions that are not only heretical but also inconsistent with Trinitarian, or near-Trinitarian, doctrine. Consider, for example, the sentence 'If the Father is unbegotten then the Son is unbegotten.' This is of form (A), but surely expresses a proposition inconsistent with the content of (B) and (9); for according to (8) the Father is unbegotten, whereas according to (9) the Son is not unbegotten. Or consider 'If the Father is one from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds then the Holy Spirit is one from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds'. This is of form (B), but the proposition it expresses presumably conflicts with the content of (9) and (10). Even worse from the point of view of Trinitarian orthodoxy, it would seem that the sentence 'If the Father is not the Son then the Son is not the Son', which is of form (A) expresses a proposition that yields a contradiction when conjoined with the proposition expressed by (4).

It is thus understandable that the delegates to the Council of Florence should have felt a need to restrict the scope of (11). On pain of heterodoxy, it must be held that not all sentences of forms (A) and (B) express truths. But some do: if the Father is eternal then the Son is eternal and the Holy Spirit is eternal; if the Father is omnipotent then the Son is omnipotent and the Holy Spirit is omnipotent; and so on. Whether the Florentine formula ("where this is not impeded by the opposition of relation") successfully explains the 'and so on' is a question for another occasion. My point here is that an assertion of relative identity of the Father with the Son and with the Holy Spirit does not imply, as would the corresponding assertion of absolute identity, that all sentences of forms (A) and (B) express true propositions. If the Father is absolutely identical with the Son and with the Holy Spirit, then surely all sentences of forms (A) and (B) do express true propositions.<sup>25</sup> If, however, the Father is the same God as the Son but not the same Person as the Son, it follows at once that at least one sentence of form (A) expresses a false proposition: the Father is surely the same Person as the Father, and therefore 'If the Father is the same Person as the Father then the Son is the same Person as the Father' must express a false proposition. Similarly, if the Father is the same God as the Holy Spirit but not the same Person, then the sentence 'If

the Father is the same Person as the Father then the Holy Spirit is the same Person as the Father' must express a false proposition.

Let me turn now to the question of orthodoxy, especially to the question whether Geach's interpretation of (1) through (6) avoids tritheism, I shall argue that it does not. My argument is very simple: every Divine Person is a God; there are at least three Divine Persons; therefore, there are at least three Gods. The first premise is a trivial truth, The second follows from the conjunction of (4c), (5c), and (6c). The heretical conclusion follows, by the general principle that if every A is a B then there cannot be fewer B's than A's. This principle, I claim, is evident to the natural light of reason. Thus, if every cat is an animal, there cannot be fewer animals than cats; if every senator from Massachusetts is a Democrat, there cannot be fewer Democrats than senators from Massachusetts. Just so, if every Divine Person is a God, there cannot be fewer Gods than Divine Persons.

As you might expect, Geach contests the general principle.<sup>26</sup> He cites cases in which, allegedly, every A is a B and yet there are fewer B's than A's. A favorite, typical of the lot, requires two definitions. Let us say, first, that something, x, is the same surman as something, y, if and only if x is a man and y is a man and x and y have the same surname. John Adams is thus the same surman as Henry Adams, William James is the same surman as Henry James, etc. Second, let us say that a surman is anything that is the same surman as something. Consider, now, men in the city of Leeds. If we make the reasonable assumption that each man in Leeds has one and only one surname, then every man in Leeds is a surman: each is the same surman as something, for each has the same surname as some man in Leeds-himself, if no one else. Yet, Geach claims, there are likely to be fewer surmen in Leeds than men, For suppose we were to count the surmen in Leeds. Geach says we ought to proceed by assigning numbers, beginning with 1, to the surmen in Leeds, taking care to assign the same number to x and y if and only if x is the same surman as y. Thus, if the number n is assigned to Samuel Jones, n should be assigned as well to Howard Jones but not to Edward Smith: Howard is the same surman as Samuel, but Edward is not. If we count this way and if, as seems altogether likely, at least two men in Leeds have the same surname, we shall obtain a number smaller than the number of men in Leeds.

Applied to the Trinity, the thing goes as follows. To count the number of Divine Persons, we assign 1 to the Father and then 2 to the Son, since He is not the same Divine Person as the Father, and we assign 3 to the Holy Spirit, for He is a Divine Person different from both the Father and the Son, But to count Gods, we assign the number 1 to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit as weU, for each is the same God as the Father. Thus three Persons, one God. Trinity in unity.

So Geach would have it. But let us look again at the matter of surmen in Leeds. Are there really fewer surmen in Leeds than men? I think it can be shown that there are not. What, after all, is a surman? According to the second of Geach's definitions, a surman is anything that is the same surman as something; hence, going by the first definition, a surman is a man who has the same surname as some man. Briefly, a sunnan is a man who has a surnam that is, a surnamed man. So to ask how many surmen there are in Leeds is to ask how many surnamed men there are in Leeds. But then, on the assumption that every man in Leeds has a surname, the number of surmen in Leeds is evidently the same as the number of men in Leeds. The correct way to count the number of surmen in Leeds is to count the men.

Geach's definitions invite confusion. One naturally expects that in the phrase 'is the same surman as' the word 'surman' will have the sense given it in Geach's second definition. But it does not-it does not, at any rate, if one goes by his first definition. We have just seen that the word 'surman' means surnamed man. But 'is the same surman as' does not, according to Geach's first definition, mean is the same surnamed man as. Samuel Jones is the same surman as Howard Jones, by the first definition; but Samuel is not the same surnamed man as Howard, for he is not the same man. Geach's definitions in fact generate two senses for the phrase 'is the same surman as'. One is that given in his first definition, the sense in which 'is the same surman as' amounts to 'has the same surname as'; the other is the sense derived from his second definition, the sense in which 'is the same surman as' amounts to 'is the same surnamed man as'. Failure to notice the ambiguity leads one to the false conclusion that although every man in Leeds is a surman, in Leeds men outnumber surmen.

Using Geach's definitions as models, one might say: Something, x, is the same God as something, y, if and only if x is a Person and y is a Person and x has the same Divine Nature as y; and x is a God if and only if x is the same God as something. Would (7c) then serve as an interpretation of (7)? Surely not. What is a God? By the second definition, a God is anything that is the same God as something; and by the first definition, this means that a God is a Person that has the same Divine Nature as something—that is, a Divine Person. If the word 'God' is thus understood and if the phrase 'is the same God as' is taken in the sense of the first definition, (7c) ensures only that there is at least one Divine Person and that any two Divine Persons have a common nature. Now, of course, our definitions generate an additional sense for the phrase 'is the same God as', just as Geach's definitions generated an additional sense for the phrase 'is the same surman as'. In this sense, 'is the same God as' means 'is the same Divine Person as.' But if the phrase is thus understood and if we continue to use the word 'God' in the sense of the second definition, (7c) comes to formulate the proposition that there is exactly one Divine Person, a heretical proposition inconsistent with the propositions expressed by (4c) through (6c).

We have come no farther than the Cappadocian Fathers. Either we divide the substance, or we confound the Persons. But then, we have only scratched the surface of the logical problem of the Trinity. The verb 'to be' is remarkably versatile. We say such things as: 'that speck on the horizon is a destroyer'; 'the sound you hear is a jet'; 'that's burley'; 'the desk is walnut'; 'Gielgud is Hamlet'; 'the Apostles are twelve'; 'the population of Boston is decreasing'; 'that is Descartes' (pointing to a picture); 'that is the Sonesta Hotel' (pointing to a reflection in the water); 'that is the Fuller Brush man' (pointing to a foot in the doorway). Each of these suggests a possible construal of our Trinitarian sentences, and a full treatment would take account of them all. But perhaps I have said enough to convince you of the difficulty of the subject; and, if I have not exhibited the rewards of truth, I hope I have demonstrated the dangers of error.

## Notes

*This is a slightly revised version of a lecture delivered at North Carolina State University at Raleigh in 1978 to an audience consisting largely of nonphilosophers. I have not altered its lecture style.*

1. De Trinitate, bk. 1, chap. 3.
2. See especially bks. 5-7.
3. For a thorough discussion, see I. N. D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), on which I have relied in the brief remarks that follow.
4. *Summae theologiae*. II-II, q. 1, a. 10, ad 3.
5. The origin of what is popularly referred to as the Nicene Creed is a matter of scholarly controversy. For a discussion of the issues, see I. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3d ed. (New York: David McKay, 1972).
6. The quotations are from Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds*, p.236. For fuller accounts of Arian theology, see, e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 226-231, and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 191-200.
7. I take the quotation from Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p.253.
8. For the Greek text, see H. Denzinger and A. Schoenmetzer, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum*, editio 35 emendata (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), 125.
9. And the apparent equation of ousia with hypostasis, which occurs in the anathemas appended to the creed, only serves to cloud matters further.



10. "The victory over Arianism achieved at the Council was really a victory snatched by the superior energy and decision of a small minority with the aid of half-hearted allies. The majority did not like the business at all, and strongly disapproved of the introduction into the Creed . . . of new and untraditional and unscriptural terms." (J. F. Bethune-Baker. *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*. 8th ed. (London: Methuen, 1949. p.171.)
11. The culmination took place on the last day of 359. when the delegates to a council at Seleucia explicitly condemned the homoousion formula and adopted 'like the Father' (homoion to patri) in its stead. "The whole world groaned and wondered to find itself Arian," Jerome wrote. (Quoted from Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds*, p.293. The preceding ten pages contain a detailed account of the events that occasioned Jerome's remark.)
12. Denzinger and Schoenmetzer. *Enchiridion symbolorum*. 1330. The final clause appears to originate with Anselm. See his *De processione Spiritus Sancti*. in F. S. Schmitt. ed.. *S. Anselmi opera omnia* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1968). vol.2, pp.177-219. An English translation is contained in J. Hopkins and H. Richardson, eds. and trans., *Anselm of Canterbury: Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).
13. Epistle 38. See also epistle 236. The translation is that of Roy J. Deferrari in *St. Basil: The Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1926).
14. See Bethune-Baker, *Early History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 220; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p.267; Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, p.221.
15. Denzinger and Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 301.
16. Denzinger and Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 272.
17. First Vatican Council. Denzinger and Schoenmetzer, *Enichiridion symbolorum*, 3008.
18. It may therefore be a little troubling to find Aquinas saying that the mysteries "are so revealed to man as not to be understood (intelligantur). but only to be believed as heard." (*Summa contra gentiles*, 4.1.) But the intended contrast, as Aquinas proceeds to explain. is not that between sense and nonsense, but that between something seen to be true (*demonstrata ad videndum*) and something put in words to be believed (*sermone prolata ad credendum*).
19. *Epistola de incarnatione verbi*, in Schmitt, ed.. *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, pp.3-41. English translation in Hopkins and Richardson, eds. *Anselm of Canterbury*, pp.5-36.
20. Denzinger and Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*. 525-532.
21. In G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach. *Three Philosophers* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961). See p.118.
22. The theory is stated, briefly, in *Mental Acts* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p.69. Fuller exposition and defense are to be found in "Identity," *Review of Metaphysics* 21 (1967): 3-12, which is reprinted as pp. 238-247 of Geach's *Logic Matters* (Berkeley:University of California Press. 1972), and in "Ontological Relativity and Relative Identity," in Milton K. Munitz, ed., *Logic and Ontology* (New York: New York University Press. 1973), pp.287-302.
23. I write with deliberate vagueness here, through uncertainty as to what precisely Geach's view is. In "Identity" he requires that 'such-and-such' be replaced by a "count noun"; in "Identity: A Reply" (*Review of Metaphysics*, 22 [1968]: 556-559; *Logic Matters*, pp.247-249) the implied exclusion of "mass nouns" is said to have been a slip; in "Ontological Relativity arid Relative Identity" mass nouns once more appear to be excluded. Perhaps of greater importance is the fact that 'restricted applicability' invites questions which, I think, Geach has never satisfactorily addressed. Still, I think the vagueness is

of no consequence to what follows.

24. 'Maybe' is apparently much too weak. In "Identity-A reply" (Logic Matters, p. 249) Geach says that "any equivalence relation...can be used to specify a criterion of relative identity," This has the consequence that, if 'A' is a count noun (of limited applicability) that applies to both a and b, there is a criterion of relative identity on which a is the same as b. For the relation that x bears to y if and only if both x and y are A's is an equivalence relation.

25. For a defense of the general point involved, see "Indiscernibility Principles", in this volume.

26. See "Ontological Relativity and Relative Identity," pp. 293-295.