

NOT AN ANTHOLOGIST: JOHN BEKKOS AS A READER OF THE FATHERS

• Peter Gilbert •

“The activity and causality of the Son
is referred back to the unoriginate Father
as the original source whence all
divine being and activity flows.”



John Bekkos, who served as Patriarch of Constantinople during the years of the Union of Lyons (1275–1282) and who not merely accepted that union as a practical political necessity but defended it on the grounds of its theological truth, is not a popular man in much of the Christian East; many people view him as a traitor to Orthodoxy.¹ He earns this reputation by virtue of having defended the view that the Latin doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit, the teaching that the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son as from a single principle, is reconcilable and compatible with

¹This view of him is sometimes linked with the idea that he was a persecutor; but the claim that Bekkos supported the use of violence against religious dissidents has no basis in historical fact; see J. Anastasiou, “‘Ο θρυλούμενος διωγμὸς τῶν ἁγιορειτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Μιχαὴλ Η΄ Παλαιολόγου καὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου Βέκκου,” in: *Ἀθωνικὴ πολιτεία* (Thessaloniki, 1963), 207–57; see also Alexandra Riebe, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel: Patriarch Johannes XI. Bekkos als Verteidiger der Kirchenunion von Lyon (1274)* (Wiesbaden, 2005), 113.

Greek patristic tradition. He thus stands as a critic of some of the chief names of Byzantine theology: Photius,² Gregory of Cyprus,³ and (proleptically) Gregory Palamas.⁴ Bekkos not only supported the decisions of the Second Council of Lyons, but, through his writings, he had a demonstrable effect in persuading Greek prelates like Bessarion of Nicaea to accept union with Rome at the Council of Florence, a century and a half after his death.⁵ Given this history, one may wonder whether a renewed interest in his thought would help or hinder the cause of Christian unity at this time. For it is widely thought that the Union of Lyons which he defended was fatally flawed from the start, and can hardly serve as a model for any restored communion between the Churches. It was a politically motivated marriage of convenience that fell apart as soon as

²Twice Patriarch of Constantinople (858–867, 877–886), Photius was perhaps the greatest Greek scholar of Byzantine times, and his criticisms of the *Filioque* provided the template for all subsequent Eastern polemic on this subject. Bekkos (*De unione* 35, Laemmer, ed., 315; PG 141, 96B) described him as the “first discoverer and begetter of the theses that have been falsely devised against the Roman Church.” In his work *De pace ecclesiastica*, Bekkos argued, on the basis of an examination of Photius’s letters, that Photius was deeply self-interested in his ecclesiastical stance toward Rome, acknowledging its orthodoxy and primacy when it served his purposes and denying these things when his own claims to being legitimate Patriarch of Constantinople were rejected.

³George the Cypriot, who took the name Gregory II on becoming Patriarch of Constantinople (1283–1289), was one of the most active supporters of the Emperor Michael’s union program in its earlier stages; after Michael’s death, however, he became a leader of the movement to erase all traces of it from the Byzantine Church. Aristides Papadakis wrote a laudatory study of him, which is considered the standard modern treatment: *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983).

⁴Palamas wrote against Bekkos in the following century (see his *Antepigraphae*, PG 161, 244B–288A, with replies by Bessarion), and his ontological real distinction between essence and energies in God is almost certainly a development of Gregory the Cypriot’s doctrine of an eternal manifestation of the Spirit through or from the Son. The connection between Palamas’s thought and that of the Cypriot was pointed out in Palamas’s own lifetime by Gregory Akindynos; see his Second Treatise against Palamas’s *Dialogue between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite*, §50; trans. in Juan Nadal Cañellas, *La Résistance d’Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas*, vol. 1 (Leuven, 2006), 167–70.

⁵See Antonio Rigo, in *Bessarione de Nicea: Orazione Dogmatica sull’Unione dei Greci e dei Latini*, ed. and trans. G. Lusini (Naples, 2001), 32.

political factors, on both sides, dictated an end to it.⁶ Moreover, the rejection of Bekkos's views at the Second Synod of Blachernae in 1285,⁷ and the general Orthodox acceptance of that synod as authoritative, seem to imply that, whatever possibility there may have been in Bekkos's own day of persuading people of the legitimacy of his reading of the patristic evidence, that reading can no longer serve an ecumenically healing function, but only a divisive one. Since Orthodox tradition has already been fundamentally shaped by the rejection of this reading, it cannot be advanced except as a rejection of Orthodoxy. A recognition of this reality, if it is indeed a reality, seems to be behind the tendency of some modern theologians⁸ to view the thought of Bekkos's adversary, Gregory of Cyprus, as ecumenically more promising. The possibility that the thought of Gregory of Cyprus might afford some way toward a reconciliation cannot be lightly dismissed, and I can only hope that it would; nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that Gregory presented his theory, not as an opening of a door to the West, but as a closing of one; unlike Bekkos, he made no serious attempt to argue that what he taught was what both East and West had always believed.

That the thought of John Bekkos holds no enduring promise for Christian unity should not, however, be taken as a foregone conclusion. In recent decades, scholars have begun to question the extent to which John Bekkos deserves the reputation of being an arch-latinophron.⁹ In the 1950s, Halina Evert-Kappesowa, in an important series of articles on the Union of Lyons, argued that Bekkos's attitude toward Latin Christianity was essentially one of irenic tolerance, not of submission; he recognized the equal validity of the two traditions; in no way did he countenance Latin theologi-

⁶The chief of these factors were widespread popular unhappiness with the union, especially among monastic circles, in the East, and pressure from Charles of Anjou, in the West.

⁷See Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium*, passim.

⁸Jean-Miguel Garrigues, *L'Esprit qui dit «Père!»: L'Esprit-Saint dans la vie trinitaire et le problème du Filioque* (Paris, 1981), might be seen as an important Catholic attempt to interpret the patristic evidence in the light of Gregory of Cyprus's views.

⁹The word "latinophron" is still sometimes used as a technical historiographical term; but mostly it serves as a Greek term of denigration for any fellow Orthodox Christian who shows leanings toward Latin theology.

cal and liturgical usages supplanting traditional Greek ones.¹⁰ More recently, Gerhard Richter¹¹ forcefully maintained that Bekkos never considered himself anything other than a faithful Orthodox Christian, and never transferred his ecclesiastical allegiance. Similarly, Alexandra Riebe maintains that “Bekkos was an advocate not of union, but of communion of the churches”¹²; she argues that Bekkos’s explicit statements of submission to the Holy See need to be taken in context, as occurring in diplomatic writings *ad extra*, conditioned by the needs of diplomacy, and do not necessarily express his deepest personal convictions.¹³

How far John Bekkos did or did not convert to Catholicism is a legitimate question; but it is not the question I chiefly wish to ask in this paper.¹⁴ I mention it here merely to give one specimen of new thinking about John Bekkos, thinking that presents some hope that long-entrenched views about him—the automatic assumption of his estrangement from the mind and heart of Orthodoxy—might be due for reassessment. Bekkos is increasingly being recognized as an early practitioner of what is now called “ecumenism.”¹⁵ The word “ecumenism” did not exist in Bekkos’s day, and it may be doubted whether he would have looked favorably on all modern varieties of it—whatever people may say about him, John Bekkos was not a doctrinal relativist—but that Bekkos was, in some sense, a

¹⁰See H. Evert-Kappesowa, “Une page de l’histoire des relations byzantino-latines: Le clergé byzantin et l’Union de Lyon (1274–1282),” *Byzantinoslavica* 13, no. 1 (Prague, 1952): 68–92; 75: “His Catholicism drew its source, not from a conversion, but from a tolerance that was altogether exceptional at that era.”

¹¹“Johannes Bekkos und sein Verhältnis zur römischen Kirche,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990): 167–217; note, e.g., his remarks at 217: “Bekkos aber, der nie etwas anderes war als ein Orthodoxer, der unter seiner Kirche litt, aber in ihr leben wollte und von dieser Sehnsucht auch sprach, ohne daß man dieses Wort als sarkastisch abwerten darf. . . .”

¹²Riebe, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel*, 341.

¹³*Ibid.*, 200–08.

¹⁴I would simply note here that I have some reservations about Dr. Riebe’s conclusions on this subject, although I have a great respect for her scholarship.

¹⁵See, e.g., Y. Spiteris, “Giovanni Beccos: Un convinto sostenitore dell’unità tra la chiesa greca e quella latina. A sette secoli dalla sua morte (1297–1997),” *Studi Ecumenici* 16 (1998): 459–91.

thirteenth-century Orthodox ecumenist can hardly be denied.¹⁶ What is vital to note is that Bekkos consciously modeled his “ecumenism” upon the practice of the fathers of the Church. He saw the effort to move beyond verbal differences to a recognition of fundamental doctrinal agreement, where such agreement in truth existed, as an essential part of the fathers’ theological work. Christian faith is, in the final analysis, a faith not in words, but in things¹⁷—and intellectual effort is sometimes needed to get beyond mere words to the realities that words signify. The fathers were willing to engage in that intellectual effort in order to preserve the unity of the Church; Bekkos saw himself as following in their footsteps.

No doubt John Bekkos was a sincere Christian, dedicated to the unity of the Church, and he would be worth studying for that reason alone, whether or not one agrees with his theological views. But I think more could be said for him than that. I would contend that his reading of the fathers of the Church provides real insight into what the fathers, or some of them at least, were saying. To dismiss John Bekkos as an “anthologist,” a man who “juggles texts” or collects them mechanically without any genuine insight into their meaning,¹⁸ is to perpetrate a gross misrepresentation. Bekkos was a theologian;¹⁹ and his continuing ecumenical significance has to be based on the very real possibility that some of his readings of the patristic evidence are true.

¹⁶Nicholas Xexakis, in his monograph *Ἰωάννης Βέκκος καὶ αἱ θεολογικαὶ ἀντιλήψεις αὐτοῦ* (Athens, 1981), 101, accuses Bekkos of relativism. If relativism means holding all doctrines to be of equal truth, this charge cannot be laid against Bekkos: he thought Photius’s arguments against Western triadology were false; he thought the same about the theories of Gregory of Cyprus.

¹⁷See especially Bekkos, *De unione* 10 (PG 141, 28B–40D), where this point is argued at length and with a wealth of patristic documentation.

¹⁸“The boy wonder of late-Byzantine theology was, for the most part, an ‘anthologist’” (Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium*, 50); cf. Donald M. Nicol’s review of Papadakis’s book: “The Patriarch Bekkos claimed to have found a solution by juggling with prepositions; and as a result he has been hailed by Catholic historians and theologians as ‘the unionist patriarch.’ Papadakis shows him to have been little more than a clever manipulator of scriptural and patristic texts” (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 [1985]: 123). It is difficult to know where to begin in answering such charges; Bekkos claimed to do no such thing, and Papadakis did not show that that is what he was.

¹⁹Most of Alexandra Riebe’s important study of him is devoted to showing just that.

The central part of the present article attempts to substantiate the claim that Bekkos's patristic interpretation is an insightful one, that is, that he sees important aspects of the fathers' teaching that others have missed. In particular, I shall argue (a) that Bekkos rediscovers something that may be called "Old Nicene" theology, (b) that, in line with this theology, Bekkos identifies a certain "logic" to the way the fathers speak about divine substance, (c) that crucial to Bekkos's understanding of the trinitarian doctrine of the fathers is a recognition of what I would call "referential causality," and (d) that, contrary to the claims of some, the reliability of most of Bekkos's patristic citations is not in doubt, and that, for those texts whose genuineness *is* in doubt, there is reason to think that at least some of them are authentic. I must notify readers beforehand that, to anyone unfamiliar with historical patristic studies, much of the argumentation of this section may appear very dense and technical; since what is in question is Bekkos's reading of the fathers, the enquiry will necessarily devote much attention to examining particular patristic texts and concepts. I hope to limit obscurity to a minimum, but there is, indeed, no judging of a forest without inspecting at least some of its trees. Finally, (e) I hope to conclude with some consideration of the lasting theological significance of Bekkos's views. If, as I hope to show, Bekkos understands God in an "Old Nicene" way, what does this mean for Christian faith in the Holy Trinity?

First, though, for the benefit of readers who may know nothing at all about Bekkos's life, I shall present a brief historical sketch, mostly having to do with how Bekkos came to his reading of the fathers after originally having thought something very different.

1. How John Bekkos changed his mind

John Bekkos was a man of the thirteenth century, a pivotal time in Western history. His life largely overlapped that of St. Thomas Aquinas; in the year Bekkos became patriarch, Dante Alighieri was a ten-year-old boy, and Marco Polo was in China at the court of Kublai Khan. Bekkos's whole life was profoundly shaped by the events of 1204, when the city of Constantinople fell to the forces of the Fourth Crusade and, for nearly six decades thereafter, served as the capital of a petty Latin kingdom, until it was

recaptured by the forces of Emperor Michael Palaiologos in 1261. Bekkos was born among the Greek exiles from Constantinople in the Empire of Nicaea, probably around the year 1225. He studied under a teacher of rhetoric and philosophy named George Babouskomites, from whom we have an affectionate letter addressed to him when Bekkos was perhaps in his late teens and was trying to decide whether to pursue an ecclesiastical or a secular career.²⁰ Bekkos next appears a decade and a half later as a church official within the Constantinopolitan patriarchate. During the 1260s and early 1270s he served under a succession of patriarchs in the role of *chartophylax*, that is, chancellor and archivist. It was a position of great responsibility that demanded proven organizational skills and, perhaps especially, a high degree of literacy; a chartophylax had to be a church lawyer, secretary, and scholar, someone who could produce and interpret complex, precise texts on a regular basis and judge the authenticity of various kinds of documents. The Emperor Michael, at any rate, seems to have recognized Bekkos's talents; on at least two occasions, he sent him on official governmental embassies, once to Serbia and once to King Louis IX of France.

Michael Palaiologos was a classic Machiavellian prince, in both the good and bad senses of that term. He had a genuine love of his country and concern for its well-being, and he was utterly unscrupulous, violent, and cunning in his methods for procuring that good. He attained sole rule by blinding the legitimate heir to the throne, John Laskaris, a boy he had sworn to protect (Christmas Day, 1261); when the patriarch, Arsenius, excommunicated him because of this, he dismissed him and eventually found another patriarch, Joseph, who would grant him absolution on easier terms. Thus began a schism in the Greek Church between Arsenites and Josephites that lasted throughout the period of Bekkos's patriarchate and for decades afterwards, and formed an important sub-plot to the question of union with the West that focused most of Bekkos's attentions.

By the latter half of the 1260s, Michael Palaiologos was actively negotiating with the papacy in an attempt to thwart the territorial ambitions of Charles, duke of Anjou and, since 1266, king of Sicily and Naples. In 1267, Charles had formed an alliance with

²⁰Text of the letter in V. Laurent, "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès," in *Εἰς μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens, 1935), 83–100.

Baldwin II, the last Latin king of Constantinople, and agreed to seek to return him to his throne. Michael recognized that the only way to forestall Charles's designs upon Byzantium was to remove their religious pretext. He knew, better than most of his subjects, in what a precarious situation the empire stood. He decided to use his considerable prestige as the restorer of the Byzantine empire to address its chief geopolitical problem head on; he would end the crippling schism with the Western Church, over the heads of his own hierarchy if necessary. Although sincerity is not a virtue one easily associates with Michael Palaiologos, he does seem to have become genuinely convinced that the religious quarrel on which the disunion was largely based, the dispute over the procession of the Holy Spirit, had arisen out of a misunderstanding, and did not justify the disastrous consequences which it had entailed for the Byzantine state.

During the early part of the year 1273, the Emperor Michael held a series of meetings in Constantinople with the standing synod of his Church. He informed his bishops that he had entered upon negotiations with the new pope, Gregory X, to conclude an ecclesiastical union, and that he wanted them now to approve his plans. He explained that, given the empire's precarious situation, its shrunken material base, the loss of much of its former eastern territory to the Turks, and, in particular, the impending threat of an invasion from the West by the armada of Charles of Anjou, there was no other way of ensuring the survival of the Empire of New Rome than by concluding ecclesiastical peace with the Bishop of Old Rome, who alone had the effective means to restrain Charles from carrying out his invasion. The emperor, together with a small group of ecclesiastics who supported his plan, argued that the theological causes of the division were not so serious as to have prevented earlier Byzantine rulers from seeking an accommodation with Rome; e.g., some twenty years earlier an embassy, comprised of two metropolitans, had been sent by Emperor John Vatatzes to the court of Pope Innocent IV, promising to restore the pope's name to liturgical commemoration if he would cease supporting the Latin occupation of Constantinople. Evidently, that emperor and those bishops did not regard doctrinal issues as an insuperable barrier to peace; why, it was asked, should we regard them as such now?²¹

²¹Pachymeres, *De Michaelē Palaeologo V*, 10 and 12.

Most of the hierarchs of the Byzantine Church were very uneasy with the emperor's proposal. The antipathy felt toward the West by most people in Byzantium was real, and was augmented by the prevailing opinion that the Latins had corrupted the faith in numerous ways, but especially by their addition of the word *Filioque* to the Creed. The bishops' natural inclination to reject the emperor's proposal was perhaps restrained by their knowledge that Michael Palaiologos was a great genius at the art of using civil violence for achieving political ends; they were not eager to make a personal trial of this expertise. However it was, they had been placed in an awkward situation; and at one of these meetings the patriarch, Joseph I, adjured his chartophylax, John Bekkos, to reply to the emperor, on pain of excommunication. According to Pachymeres, Bekkos, caught between fear of the emperor on the one hand and fear of God on the other, decided to follow his better impulses, and answered the emperor's arguments in the following way: "For any given class of things, there exist four alternatives. Either the things are, and are said to be; or they are not, and are said not to be; or again, they are said to be, but are not; or, finally, they are said not to be, but in fact are. In this final division the Latins must be placed: they are said not to be, but in fact are, heretics."²² The emperor found this an answer to which he could render no reply; realizing that he had missed his chance to score a victory, he broke up the assembly.

In due course, Bekkos was sent to jail (on the trumped-up charge that he had acted negligently in his embassy to the king of France some years previously).²³ And while he was rotting away in a tower, guarded by Celtic guardsmen, the emperor was conceiving a new plan.

Here is Pachymeres' account of what then happened:

The emperor and his entourage having thus been set off course in their attempt, they nevertheless succeeded in subverting Bekkos, who was in prison.

For, since they faced a learned man who could be persuaded only by arguments, after first gathering together proof-texts, they presented him, while he was in jail, with arguments of the saints, such of them as appeared to support the Italians. When

²²Ibid., V, 12.

²³Ibid., V, 13.

Bekkos had received these texts and went through them, little by little he inclined toward peace. And in fact, being a simple man and a lover of truth in all things, he was won over to these writings in their simple sense, suffering, in this, the same thing that happens to men in hard financial straits, who, if they unexpectedly come into only slightly better fortunes, count themselves as owning the whole world; while again, in his love of truth, he did not hesitate to acknowledge that he had not known or encountered these things before. The reason, he said, was that, given his previous concentration in the classics, he had not had the opportunity to be exercised in sacred literature. He moreover indicated his desire both to see the books and to give them a close reading, so that he might consider their sense, and, in this way, either be able to take courage from them, if he were persuaded, and stand more securely in that opinion toward which he was inclining, or else, if he were not persuaded, he would be able to present clear reasons *why* he was not persuaded. These were the things he said, and the emperor gave his permission and, letting him out of prison, supplied him with books to read at his leisure²⁴

What were these “arguments of the saints” that were sent to Bekkos while he was in jail? It is unclear exactly what he initially read; perhaps a simple patristic florilegium, perhaps one or more Byzantine work presenting arguments favorable to the Latin view, like the *Dialogues* of the twelfth-century Niketas of Maroneia²⁵ or the two more recent dogmatic letters of Nikephoros Blemmydes on the procession of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ Either way, we are told that, after his release from prison, Bekkos undertook an intense study of the fathers; he wanted to see if the patristic citations that had been brought to his attention still weighed in favor of union if viewed in their original contexts. Among the citations Bekkos saw as most significant, Pachymeres²⁷ mentions a text of St. Cyril which speaks

²⁴Ibid., V, 15.

²⁵Of the six dialogues, *Dialogue I* is printed in Migne, PG 139, 169A–201A; *Dialogues II–IV* were published in a series of issues of the journal *Bessarione* from the years 1912–1915; *Dialogues V–VI* were published in a dissertation by C. Giorgetti in Rome in 1965.

²⁶One way or another, it is certain that Bekkos eventually read both of these authors carefully. For bibliographical information on Blemmydes’ two letters, see below, note 37.

²⁷Pachymeres, *De Michaele Palaeologo* V, 16.

of the Holy Spirit being “shed forth substantially from both, that is, from the Father through the Son”²⁸—a text which both asserts that “from both” pertains to the Spirit’s divine substance (and therefore, not merely to activities or spiritual gifts), and also equates being “from both” with being “from the Father through the Son.”

Through reading this and other texts, John Bekkos changed his mind about the causes of the schism, and about its legitimacy. After openly denouncing Latin Christians as heretics, he came to see them as sharing with the Greeks the one, orthodox faith, albeit expressed in a different idiom. This change of mind was genuine,²⁹ it cannot be ascribed merely to self-interest or political considerations, and it determined the subsequent course of John Bekkos’s career.

The remaining years of Bekkos’s life fall roughly into two periods: the years of his patriarchate, and afterwards. For present purposes, suffice it to say that John Bekkos served as Patriarch of Constantinople for about eight years (1275–1282), disagreeing with the Emperor Michael on many things, and writing many books. When the Emperor Michael died in December 1282, his successor Andronikos II abandoned his father’s union policy,³⁰ and Bekkos was obliged to step down (26 December 1282). In the ensuing weeks, John Bekkos bore the full brunt of popular outrage against the late emperor’s policy; at one of the popular show-trials, orchestrated by monks, held against him in January 1283, he was induced to sign a statement renouncing his unionist views and to ask Patriarch Joseph, who lay there unconscious, for pardon. (When Joseph later found out about this, he condemned the whole proceeding.) Probably if Bekkos had not done this he would have been lynched. After this, he was sent to Prusa and confined to a monastery. When he learned that the new patriarch, Gregory, the former George of Cyprus, was

²⁸Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione*, I, 9, PG 68, 148A.

²⁹It is remarkable how often Pachymeres, who disagreed with Bekkos on matters of theology, credits him with being a “lover of truth”; not only here, but also at his first appearance in the *History* (II, 19); elsewhere (VI, 10) he compares him with the ancient Greeks Peleus and Aristides, famous for purity and rectitude.

³⁰The uprising of the Sicilian Vespers in March 1282 had, in any case, removed the immediate threat to the Byzantine state posed by Charles of Anjou. This uprising had been fostered by Michael’s diplomacy, and he saw it as vindicating his religious policy. But when he died, the Greek nation did not thank him, and he was refused Christian burial.

portraying him as a heretic, Bekkos began writing in self-defense and against George/Gregory's new theory about the Spirit's procession. Eventually Bekkos succeeded in having a new, formal trial called to hear his case; it took place at the Blachernae Palace in Constantinople in the year 1285. Bekkos and his two archdeacons, Constantine Meliteniotes and George Metochites, defended the orthodoxy of their views, arguing that, while the Father is cause, it is *through* the Son that he exercises his causality. Discussion centered upon a text of St. John of Damascus, which speaks of the Father as "the producer, through the Word, of the illuminating Spirit."³¹ As no satisfactory answer was found to the unionists' reading of this text, the synod was suspended, and Patriarch Gregory was given the task of writing an official response, which he did in a *Tome*, which asserted the Spirit's eternal *manifestation* through the Son, as distinct from his hypostatic *existence*, and excommunicated John Bekkos and his two friends. This *Tome* was subsequently signed by most members of the Byzantine hierarchy and by the emperor. Bekkos and his two archdeacons were transported by night to a fortress on the southern coast of the Gulf of Nicomedia, where they were kept under harsh conditions. Somehow, Bekkos managed to stay informed about the situation in Constantinople, and continued to write. His writings may have had some effect; a reaction occurred against Gregory of Cyprus, led by George Moschabar and others, and Gregory was forced to step down (1289). The unionists' conditions were then alleviated somewhat; for health reasons, George Metochites was allowed to return to Constantinople, although he eventually returned to share imprisonment with the other two. But the Emperor Andronikos's attempts to reconcile the three unionists with the rest of the Greek clergy proved unavailing; they chose to remain incarcerated, rather than deny their convictions. In his *Testament*,³² Bekkos sums up these convictions in the following way: he had endured exile and imprisonment, he says, "for the sake of the truth of the doctrine of the fathers, that is, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father through the Son." He died in March 1297.

³¹ . . . καὶ διὰ Λόγου προβολεὺς ἐκφαντορικοῦ Πνεύματος, John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* I, PG 94, 848D; cited by Bekkos, *Epigraphae* I, PG 141, 625C.

³²PG 141, 1032B.

2. *Bekkos and modern patristic studies*

My aim is to examine John Bekkos's interpretation of the fathers of the Church, but it is also, first and foremost, to raise a question. Whether or not one calls John Bekkos's change of mind regarding the orthodoxy of the Latin Church a "conversion," it seems undeniable that John Bekkos did, in fact, change his mind about the orthodoxy of the Latin Church as a result of the things he read while in prison in 1273 and immediately after his release from jail—basically, as a result of an intense study of the Greek Church fathers and of the interpretations of the fathers given by men like Niketas of Maroneia and Nikephoros Blemmydes. After publicly stating that the Latins were heretics, he came to see them as orthodox Christians, differing from Christians of the Greek Church, not in the essentials of their belief, but in the manner in which the one, common faith was expressed.

My question is perhaps best asked simply: Was Bekkos right about this? Or (because his recognition of the orthodoxy of the Latin-speaking Church, the Church of Old Rome, was based almost entirely on an understanding he had come to of the texts of the Greek-speaking fathers of the Church) one could ask the question in this way: Was John Bekkos justified in reading the fathers in the way he did? And before what tribunal is this question of justification to be tried? For some people, the Synod of Blachernae of 1285 is a sufficient condemnation, for others, Lyons and Florence suffice to validate the interpretation for all time. And, between these extremes, can there be any possible mediation? Perhaps a mediation might be sought by looking toward a more mundane tribunal, that of contemporary patristics scholarship, bearing in mind that the very fact of its contemporaneity suggests that it lacks any final, irrevocable authority. How does John Bekkos's patristic interpretation fare in the light of contemporary readings of the fathers?

An initial assessment might suggest, Not very well. Lewis Ayres' cautionary remark might well be taken to express a common judgment: If one's analysis of fourth-century pneumatology turns upon the question of whether or not the *Filioque* is implied by a given author's statements, it shows how far one is from understand-

ing those fourth-century debates on their own terms.³³ One might think that this brush would tar equally Bekkos and his thirteenth-century opponents; but it does not seem too far wrong to read Ayres' restricting of attention to the question of the persons' *activity* as implicitly supporting the view of Gregory of Cyprus, that, when the Greek fathers speak of the Holy Spirit being through or from the Son, they are speaking about the Spirit's manifestation, i.e., his activity, whether in time or eternity, not about the Spirit's hypostatic existence, which is understood to be from the Father alone. A similar judgment was rendered by the eminent Belgian patrologist André de Halleux in his 1989 article "'Manifesté par le Fils.' Aux origines d'une formule pneumatologique."³⁴ He likewise thinks that the texts of Gregory of Nyssa support a mediation of the Spirit by the Son only on the level of manifestation, not that of hypostatic existence. Again: the byzantinist Alexander Alexakis, in an article published in 2000, takes up a theory put forward some thirty years earlier by Michel van Parys³⁵ in explanation of the origins of a textual reading of St. Basil's *Adversus Eunomium*, book three, that was the subject of long debates at the Council of Florence between Mark of Ephesus and John of Montenero. In this article, Alexakis asserts (without further proof) that "the quality of most quotations included in the Pro-Union collection of about three hundred *testimonia* called *Epigra-*

³³"It is vitally important to note that the later question of the *filioque* is not an issue. The question of the respective roles of Father and Son is used as an occasion by virtually all pro-Nicenes to argue that the unity of the Godhead means that we should not separate the Son's activity from the Father's. Progress will only be made with the study of fourth-century pneumatology when scholars stop summarizing the period by making the question of attitudes toward the *filioque* an important point of departure (as Hanson still does). Indeed, noting the prevalence with which this occurs should also make us note just how thin are our current narratives about the early development of pneumatology" (Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford, 2004], 217f.).

³⁴Originally published in the journal *Revue théologique de Louvain* 20 (1989): 3–31; reprinted in his *Patrologie et Œcuménisme: recueil d'études* (Louvain, 1990), 338–66.

³⁵M. van Parys, "Quelques remarques à propos d'un texte controversé de Saint Basile au concile de Florence," *Irénikon* 40 (1967): 6–14. Van Parys held that the reading of Basil favored by the Latins (the so-called "*Filioque*" text) actually contained Eunomian material that was inserted, accidentally or intentionally, into the text by another, later scribe; Alexakis extends this theory and endeavors to show the exact origin of the addition in the milieu of Greek-speaking exiles present at Rome in the mid-seventh century.

phai of John Vekkos (patriarch of Constantinople between 1276–1282) is very poor.”³⁶ Again, one might cite the new *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of the theological writings of Nikephoros Blemmydes, done by Professor Michel Stavrou of the Institut Saint-Serge in Paris; Stavrou argues that not only did John Bekkos misread the ancient Church fathers, but he also misread his near-contemporary, Blemmydes, whose two dogmatic letters on the procession of the Holy Spirit were instrumental in turning him to the unionist persuasion; Stavrou maintains that the true interpretation of Blemmydes’ two letters was given by, once again, Gregory of Cyprus.³⁷

From this brief and admittedly limited survey of the evidence, it would seem that the tribunal of current-day patristics scholarship is decidedly stacked against John Bekkos. On the other hand, there are other scholars, some of whom perhaps do not belong to the professional patristics guild, but whose testimony nevertheless ought to be heard. One of them is Dr. Alexandra Riebe, already mentioned; her monograph on John Bekkos, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel*, is probably the most important theological study of Bekkos that has yet been written. Riebe dismisses both the common notion that Bekkos was a “latinophron” and characterizations of him as an “anthologist” or worse. After a detailed theological comparison between John Bekkos and Gregory of Cyprus, she comes to the conclusion that, of the two, Bekkos is the “clearer, more consistent theologian.”³⁸ Other recent positive evaluations might be listed: Henry Chadwick,³⁹ J. M. Hussey,⁴⁰ Gerhard Richter,⁴¹ Joseph Gill,⁴²

³⁶A. Alexakis, “The Greek Patristic *Testimonia* Presented at the Council of Florence (1439) in Support of the *Filioque* Reconsidered,” *Revue des Études Byzantines* 58 (2000): 149–65; cited at 154.

³⁷Michel Stavrou, ed., *Nicéphore Blemmydès: Œuvres Théologiques, Tome I* [= SC 517] (Paris, 2007); see also his “Le premier traité sur la procession du Saint-Esprit de Nicéphore Blemmydès,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 67 (2001): 39–141.

³⁸Riebe, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel*, 269.

³⁹See his *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church* (Oxford, 2003), 250–53, esp. 250: “Except in the writings of Bekkos, Greek scrutiny of theological issues was almost trivial.”

⁴⁰*The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986), 236: “Beccus was an individualist and a forceful character, a strong and intelligent upholder of his convictions, as his subsequent and often unhappy career showed. He was not a man who could change from side to side as a matter of *oeconomia* or expediency. He

Yiannis Spiteris,⁴³ Benedykt Huculak,⁴⁴ Jean Darrouzès,⁴⁵ M.-J. le Guillou,⁴⁶ Vitalien Laurent.⁴⁷ Moreover, I would note the following comment from Fr. Sergius Bulgakov's book *The Comforter*, recently translated into English although first published in 1936. One would not suspect Bulgakov, an Orthodox priest, of being prejudiced in Bekkos's favor:

Strictly speaking, it is Beccus who definitively establishes the fact of the patristic *dia*, although his own interpretation of this *dia* is excessively dependent on his adherence to the Latin theology. If one were to compare Beccus' patristic argumentation with that of the Latin polemicists, his superiority is incontestable, although he employs the one-sided scholastic method that was dominant in this domain: he collects the patristic texts that support his tendency without reference to the context of the given Father's doctrine, i.e., he suffers from the patristic talmudism which leads the partisans of the Filioque to boast of having found six hundred passages in the Fathers that supported them (to be fair, the opponents of the Filioque do not lag far behind them). As a way

came to accept the major Roman claims but he maintained that on patristic evidence the Greek and Latin views on the filioque could be reconciled To call him 'Latinophron,' pro-Latin, would be a misnomer. He was in fact passionately attached to the Byzantine way of life."

⁴¹Richter, "Johannes Bekkos und sein Verhältnis zur römischen Kirche."

⁴²Gill's article, "John Beccus, Patriarch of Constantinople, 1275–1282," *Byzantina* 7 (1975): 251–66, is still the best introductory biography of Bekkos in English; see also his *Byzantium and the Papacy 1198–1400* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1979).

⁴³Y. Spiteris, "Giovanni Beccos: Un convinto sostenitore dell'unità tra la chiesa greca e quella latina."

⁴⁴B. Huculak, *Graeca indoles doctrinae Constantini Meliteniotae de processione Spiritus Sancti ex Patre Filioque*, doctoral dissertation (Rome, 1989).

⁴⁵Jean Darrouzès edited, and posthumously published, some of V. Laurent's editions of writings relating to the Council of Lyons, in *Dossier Grec de l'Union de Lyon*, ed. V. Laurent and J. Darrouzès (Paris, 1976).

⁴⁶M.-J. le Guillou, "Réflexions sur la théologie des Pères grecs en rapport avec le *Filioque*," in Académie Internationale des Sciences Religieuses, *L'Esprit Saint et l'Église* (Paris, 1969), 194–219; see esp. 212ff., where he maintains that the bishop of Nyssa's language concerning a mediation by the Son *does* pertain to the being of the Spirit.

⁴⁷Not exactly recent, but still important: V. Laurent, "Le cas de Photius dans l'apologétique du patriarche Jean XI Beccos (1275–1282) au lendemain du deuxième concile de Lyon," *Échos d'Orient* 33 (1930): 396–415.

to familiarize the reader with the existing state of affairs, however, such compendia had their significance; and one can say that Beccus reveals to his contemporaries, and of course not to them alone, the true status of the question of the Holy Spirit in the patristic literature.⁴⁸

Bulgakov's last sentence should be weighed carefully. It stands in opposition to most Orthodox assessments of John Bekkos, as well as to much of the current scholarly literature. In spite of the preponderant tendency of recent scholarship to discount Bekkos's reading of the patristic evidence, there are compelling voices that suggest that he got some important things right. In any case, the verdict is not unanimous, and it cannot take away from readers the right and responsibility to form their own judgments, based on an examination of the evidence. Bekkos himself asks that we not judge him before we actually read him and see what he is saying.⁴⁹ I think that we should honor that request.

I stated earlier that Bekkos is a theologian, not just an anthologist. At this point I would like to define more particularly what kind of a theologian he is. His theology is based on a reading of the Greek fathers that, I think, brings out some of the earlier insights of Nicene teaching about the Father's self-giving out of his own being. This self-giving did not logically exclude, Bekkos claimed, a giving *through the Son*. In fact, he said, that is precisely how the fathers spoke about it.

3. John Bekkos and Old Nicene theology

John Bekkos, who was born nine hundred years after the Council of Nicaea, was an Old Nicene theologian. This statement requires both clarification and qualification. In speaking thus of Old Nicene theology, I allude to a theory, first adumbrated by Theodor Zahn in a study of Marcellus of Ancyra published in 1867,⁵⁰ and

⁴⁸Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 103–04.

⁴⁹“I ask this favor of those who shall come across these writings, in no way to misrepresent anything we have written, with the aim of stirring up strife” (John Bekkos, *De unione ecclesiarum* 6, PG 141, 21C–D).

⁵⁰*Marcellus von Ancyra. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie* (Gotha, 1867).

subsequently developed by other church historians, of whom probably the best known is Adolf von Harnack,⁵¹ according to which the meaning of the Nicene *homoousion* was originally, or in the minds of its chief defenders, such as to assert a “numerical unity” of being between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and which further maintained that the eventual acceptance of the Nicene faith by former Homoiousians in the latter decades of the fourth century entailed a subtle change in the meaning of *homoousios*, its acceptance in the sense of a “generic unity” of being. Among the former Homoiousians who accepted the word in this “New Nicene” sense, Harnack and the others meant, in the first place, St. Basil the Great and the other Cappadocian fathers; the claim was that it was this revised, mitigated sense of divine unity that became embodied in the creed that replaced the Nicene one, the Creed of Constantinople of 381.

This theory had a profound effect upon the writing of the history of doctrine, both by way of acceptance and by way of rejection, and it must be said that, if accepted at all nowadays, it is accepted only with a great deal of qualification by most students of church history. The view of J. N. D. Kelly perhaps sums up the general opinion: the idea that the creed approved at the Council of Nicaea expressed an original understanding of the nature of divine unity, which later became corrupted by revisers, is not historically defensible. What the fathers at Nicaea were concerned about was not to define a notion of divine *unity*, as such, but to defend the *same meaning of being* in the case of the Father and the Son:

We have seen that, whatever the deeper implications of ὁμοούσιος, the original Nicene teaching was, not that Father and Son are numerically one in substance, but that They share the same divine nature. There is, further, no real antithesis between generic and numerical oneness so long as the Son’s essential deity is acknowledged, for Godhead (as these fathers were never tired of pointing out) is *ex hypothesi* simple and indivisible.⁵²

⁵¹See esp. A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. IV, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York, 1961), 80–107.

⁵²J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London, 1977), 254. Compare R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988), 170: “Recent studies on the word *homoousios* have tended to show, not that it can be reduced to two meanings, one identifying two *ousiai* as one, and the other conveying a ‘generic’ sense of ‘God-stuff’ (Loofs), but that it was of a much looser,

Nevertheless, whatever their original referents, the terms “Old Nicene” and “New Nicene” are, in English usage, somewhat flexible, and I intend to use them in a wide sense. (And, to prevent any confusion, I should stress that I am *not* using “New Nicene” in the sense of crypto-homoiousian. I would recognize both Old Nicene and New Nicene Christians as varieties of what scholars like Lewis Ayres and Michel René Barnes speak of as “Pro-Nicenes”—Christians who, in various, sometimes mutually unintelligible ways, all intended to affirm the theology of Nicaea.)⁵³

These terms, Old and New Nicene, are still commonly in use, perhaps especially as a way of describing the theological differences between those who, in the late fourth century, understood the divine unity in terms of a single *hypostasis* and those who spoke of three *hypostases* and preferred to designate the divine unity by the term *ousia*. Those theological differences were part of what separated the strict Nicene party, led by Athanasius, and the Homoiousians, led by Basil of Ancyra, in the late 350s and early 360s, and they especially characterized the opposed parties in the late fourth-century Schism of Antioch, between the partisans of Paulinus (supported by Alexandria and the West) and the partisans of Meletius (supported by Basil of Caesarea and the majority of Eastern bishops). That schism occasioned the earnest attentions of St. Gregory Nazianzen, who was convinced that the whole thing was a squabble over mere words. “We use in an orthodox sense,” he said, “the terms one substance (*ousia*) and three hypostases, the one to denote the nature of the Godhead, the other the properties of the Three; the Italians mean the same, but, owing to the scantiness of their vocabulary, and its poverty of terms, they are unable to distinguish between substance and hypostasis, and therefore introduce the term Persons, to avoid being understood to assert three substances.”⁵⁴

Nazianzen saw the action of St. Athanasius at the Synod of Alexandria (362) as a model for how the Antiochene Schism, and divisions like it, should be dealt with; by recognizing the essentially

more flexible, indeed less specific and therefore less controversial significance.”

⁵³See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 6, where he defines his use of the term, and Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, D.C., 2001).

⁵⁴Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 21.35; PG 35, 1124C–1125A. Cited by Bekkos, *De unione* 10, PG 141, 32C–D.

orthodox intentions of the party of Basil of Ancyra, Athanasius refused to leave the Arians with the upper hand in the complex theologico-political struggles of the Late Roman Empire, and he laid the foundation for the eventual triumph of Nicene orthodoxy in the East. The comments of both Nazianzen and Athanasius on this fourth-century division are cited at length by John Bekkos in his work *On the Union and Peace of the Churches of Old and New Rome*.⁵⁵ Bekkos, from the vantage point of thirteenth-century Constantinople, with two centuries of schism and the Fourth Crusade already behind him, looks back at these early fathers, with their ability to differentiate between the essence of a doctrine and its variable linguistic expression, and sees such theological discernment as still needed in the issues dividing East and West. He notes:

Most remarkably, these peoples and Churches are none other than the ones we are dealing with in the present discourse. For the Italians' speaking of "one hypostasis" in the Trinity, and our preaching "three hypostases," appeared to be an absolute dogmatic difference. There was suspicion of Sabellianism, on the one hand, and of Arianism, on the other. But this worthy steward of souls,⁵⁶ directing his mind not toward the terms but toward their meaning, said and wrote such things as have already been recounted.⁵⁷

Bekkos's comment on the identity of the factions in the fourth-century conflict with those factions that opposed each other in his own day leads me to think he may have sensed there was some aetiological link between these two situations, that the roots of the present conflict with the West lay in the earlier one. If he did have such an intuition, I think his intuition was correct.

When I speak of John Bekkos as an "Old Nicene," I do not mean that he went around preaching one divine hypostasis. I mean that Bekkos, in his debates with his contemporaries, reopens questions that were already being asked in the fourth and fifth centuries, questions about the relation between *ousia* and hypostasis, and about whether the Father generates the Son from his substance

⁵⁵PG 141, 15–158. Mostly referred to here by its abbreviated Latin title, *De unione ecclesiarum*, or simply *De unione*.

⁵⁶I.e., St. Athanasius.

⁵⁷John Bekkos, *De unione* 11, PG 141, 41AB.

or from a personhood separated from his substance. Bekkos thought that, while the Creed of Constantinople is a definitive statement of the Church's faith, it does not abrogate what was said in the Creed of Nicaea of 325; in particular, it does not annul the language of that document, which states that the Son is ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς, from the essence, or substance, of the Father. Bekkos sees this language to be essential for understanding, in Greek terms, what it is that the Latin Church actually believes about the Holy Spirit's procession. Near the beginning of the book *On the Union and Peace of the Churches of Old and New Rome*, Bekkos speaks of his intention to "set forth methodically all the written statements in which ancient writers on the doctrine of the Trinity clearly express the view that the Holy Spirit exists *from the substance of the Father and the Son*, which is what the Church of the Romans acknowledges when it asserts that he proceeds from both."⁵⁸ Now, this way of speaking about a divine person—the person being *from the substance*—is not often encountered in the Cappadocian fathers and, indeed, in most Greek theological writing after them,⁵⁹ just as it does not appear in the Creed of Constantinople of 381, although it was frequent in St. Athanasius,⁶⁰ is found in Apollinarius,⁶¹ was kept in use within the party of Paulinus of Antioch, and occurs regularly in the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Indeed, St. Cyril frequently uses the expression "from the substance of the Son" to describe the Holy

⁵⁸*De unione* 2, PG 141, 17C.

⁵⁹Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh, 1995), 243, notes that even Didymus the Blind, "basically Athanasian though he was . . . tended to replace the Nicene formula 'from the being of the Father' (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς) with 'from the Person of the Father' (ἐκ τῆς ὑποστάσεως τοῦ Πατρὸς)."

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 236: "Hence Athanasius' application of ὁμοούσιος to the Holy Spirit had the effect, not only of asserting that the Spirit is also one being with the Father, but of implying that the procession of the Spirit is from the *being* of the Father (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς), and not from what came to be spoken of as the ὑπόστασις of the Father in distinction from, though inseparable from, his οὐσία as God." Torrance here enunciates a point Bekkos made seven centuries earlier.

⁶¹Cf. Apollinarius, *fid. sec. pt.* 27 (Lietzmann, 176f.; PG 10, 1116): "We believe therefore in one true God, one source, and one Son, true God from true God, naturally possessing the paternal Godhead, that is, consubstantial with the Father, and one Holy Spirit, by nature and in truth the sanctifier and deifier of all, existing from the substance of God (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχον)."

Spirit, as Bekkos does not hesitate to point out; e.g., at *Thesaurus* 33, Cyril says:

It is necessary . . . to confess the Spirit to exist from the substance that is God the Son's, possessing the entirety of his power and operation.⁶²

It is not simply that Bekkos is able to cite fathers of the Church who use the expression “from the substance,” however, that constitutes him as what I would call an Old Nicene theologian. It is, rather, his realization that the way these texts were being expounded in his day by those writers who carried on the Photian critique of the Latin *Filioque* doctrine missed something essential to the meaning of this formulation, that in serving for them simply as synonymous with “consubstantial,” it had become vestigial and had lost something of its original dogmatic function—and furthermore, it is his rediscovery of that function, his recognition and restatement of an inner logic to the formulation ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας. This, I would submit, is what chiefly justifies one's calling John Bekkos an Old Nicene theologian.

To get a clearer picture of how the formulation ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας operates in John Bekkos's thought, we should situate it in the wider context of his theology. Most of Bekkos's writing is of an antirrhetic or refutative nature, and it falls into two distinct periods: in the years of his patriarchate (1275–1282), his refutations were directed against those who opposed the Union, who, for various reasons but especially because of the *Filioque*, claimed that the Latins were heretics, and who based most of their arguments on those which Photius had written in the ninth century; in the years after he was deposed (1283–1297), Bekkos wrote mostly in self-defense and against the new theory of Gregory of Cyprus about the Holy Spirit's eternal (non-hypostatic, non-causal) manifestation through the Son. Nevertheless, although his writing can be divided in this way, the basic lines of Bekkos's argumentation seem fairly consistent in the two periods; in writing against Gregory of Cyprus and his theories about an eternal manifestation and the like, Bekkos was largely

⁶²*Thesaurus* 33, PG 75, 573C; cited by Bekkos, *De unione* 28, Laemmer, ed., 296; PG 141, 84B. Again, *Thesaurus* 34, PG 75, 609A–B: “The Spirit is entirely proper to the substance of the Son, and does not exist from outside this.” For other statements from Cyril to the same effect, see Bekkos, *Epigraphae* I, PG 141, 620 A–B.

adapting those argumentative principles that he had earlier worked out in his debate with the Photians.

Since so much of Bekkos's argumentation is designed to oppose that of Photius, we may start our analysis of Bekkos's theology by citing his statements of what he sees as the underlying principles of Photius's position. He states these principles more than once. In the introduction to his work *Against Andronikos Kamateros*, Bekkos lists five logical premises to Photius's doctrine, premises which, he says, are simply assumed by Photius without proof and which find no confirmation in the actual writings of the fathers:

The invented principles of these doctrines would be, first, the proposition which says: "It is the property of the Father (ἴδιον τοῦ Πατρὸς) to produce the Spirit." Another says: "Everything said about the Trinity is said either of one, or of the three." A third one says: "All that which is said about the divine hypostases is either hypostatic or natural." A fourth one states: "The Father is cause of those who are from him by reason of his hypostasis, not by reason of the nature." Again, a fifth one says: "The Spirit is directly and immediately from the Father." None of these postulates would anyone ever find in the writings of the holy fathers, not even if he should search through them a thousand times. The promoters of schism made them all up.⁶³

In his second oration *On his deposition* §24,⁶⁴ Bekkos gives a shorter list: first the principle, "All that is predicated of the Trinity is said either of one person or of all three"; secondly, "Everything predicated of the divine hypostases is either hypostatic or natural"; and third, "The production of the Holy Spirit is the hypostatic characteristic of the Father." Essentially it is the same list, minus the first list's two final propositions, which perhaps Bekkos saw as implied in the earlier three.

Now, it would not be hard to show that these principles do actually underlie Photius's argumentation, such as we find it in the *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* and elsewhere. Some of them are stated by Photius himself in express terms, e.g., at *Mystagogy* 36:

With reference to what has been said, all that is not common to the whole, omnipotent, consubstantial, and supranatural Trinity

⁶³Bekkos, *In Camateri animadversiones*, PG 141, 400BC.

⁶⁴*De depositione sua oratio ii*, PG 141, 1001D–1005A.

must appertain to only one of the three; since the spiration of the Spirit is not common to the three, then it belongs to only one of the three.⁶⁵

Or, again, *Mystagogy* 10:

Not even the begetting of the Son, which is now considered and suggested in order to avoid the wicked absurdity, will make tolerable that outrage of the Father's property, I mean the property of being the cause of procession.⁶⁶

What would perhaps be harder to show is that these principles have *no* support in patristic literature; for, although John Bekkos was a very industrious man, I doubt that he had read through all the writings of the fathers a thousand times. But Bekkos was enough of a logician to know that a universal statement is disproved by a particular one; e.g., if someone tells me that all apples are red, all I have to do is produce a single green apple to show this person his or her error; I do not have to go searching through the entire universe of apples, once I have found this green one. So, similarly, when Bekkos hears Photius propounding, as an unbreakable theological maxim, the claim that "Everything said about the Trinity is said either of one, or of the three," he does not need to do anything more than find counterexamples to show that the maxim, as a universal claim, is false. His job of finding counterexamples is made much easier by virtue of the fact that Nikephoros Blemmydes already did some of the work for him. In his dogmatic letter on the procession of the Holy Spirit, addressed to his former pupil the Emperor Theodore II Laskaris, Blemmydes writes:

Again they take up a yet more valiant posture, putting forth the following: "Everything which is said concerning God is either common to the whole Trinity or proper to one hypostasis. Thus, spiration belongs either to the three hypostases or to one of them: for we do not recognize any mean term between a natural and a hypostatic property. But, since the Spirit is recognized by all to proceed from the Father, and cannot proceed from himself,

⁶⁵*On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Brookline, Mass.: Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983), 85. Greek text in PG 102, 316 A.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 73; Greek text, PG 102, 289B–292A.

neither then does he proceed from the Son; and the property of spiration, or causing procession, will be restricted to the paternal hypostasis”

What then are we to say in reply to these things? First, that we do not teach the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is from the Son as from the first cause, but from the Father through the Son. Next, just as he can in no way proceed from himself, so also he cannot be sent from himself, lest the same thing be, in the same respect, both sender and sent. But since he is both sent from the Father and sent from the Son, as the Son of the Father has himself taught in the Gospel (Jn 15:26; 16:17): behold! we have acknowledged the sending of the Spirit as a mean term between a natural and a hypostatic property. From this, the foundation of their position has been shaken and rendered rotten. And what would they say, again, when, even from the very name “Spirit” itself, their unknown middle term is known? For the Holy Spirit both is and is called the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son, but he neither is nor is called the Spirit of himself—just as neither is the Father his own Father, nor the Son his own Son.⁶⁷

This refutation by Blemmydes of a basic Photian axiom is taken on by Bekkos as one of the foundations of his own argumentation. He uses the same argument, with the same example of the Spirit’s being Spirit of the Father and Spirit of the Son but not Spirit “of himself,” at *De unione ecclesiarum* §42:⁶⁸

You say: If the individuating character of the person [of the Spirit] is common to the Father and the Son, how does something common individuate? And perhaps you think this argument is powerful and unassailable. But I say in reply: why do you find it totally absurd for there to be something common to the Father and the Son, something, I mean, peculiar to them and not common also to the Spirit? . . . For in these two persons is observed the common attribute of possessing one, undivided Spirit, because the Spirit is said to be Spirit of the Father and of the Son. But since the Spirit is not also the Spirit of the Spirit, the Father and the Son’s possessing one, undivided Spirit is, to them, an individuating characteristic; and the Father and the

⁶⁷Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Dogmatic letter to Theodore Laskaris on the Procession of the Holy Spirit* §8 (§§ 10–11 in Laemmer, ed. and Migne). In M. Stavrou, ed. *Nicéphore Blemmydès: Œuvres Théologiques*, tome I [=SC 517] (Paris, 2007), 332–34; Laemmer, ed., 174–77; PG 142, 577A–D.

⁶⁸Laemmer, ed., 329f.; PG 141, 104AB.

Son's sharing in this characteristic, which is eternally observed in two persons only, dispenses with the conundrum you proposed when you said, How can something common be what individuates?

And, in support of this claim, he cites Gregory of Nyssa's third Sermon *On the Lord's Prayer*:

For both the Son "came forth from the Father," as the Scripture says, and the Spirit proceeds "from God" and "from the Father." But just as being without cause pertains to the Father alone, and cannot be made to agree with the Son and the Spirit, so also, conversely, being from a cause, which is something proper to the Son and the Spirit, is not of such a nature as to be contemplated in the Father. Now, as it is common to the Son and the Spirit to exist in a not-ungenerated way, in order that no confusion arise as to the underlying subject, one must again seek out the unconfused difference in their properties.⁶⁹

One might well ask what is the historical background of this Photian "three-or-one" principle, and whether any light may be shed on its origins by considering the question about Old Nicene vs. New Nicene theology. It seems, on the face of it, a kind of extreme and militant statement of the Cappadocian "three hypostases, one *ousia*" doctrine, a statement of it that, as Bekkos points out, doesn't really correspond to the way the Cappadocians themselves used these terms. And, although I acknowledge that it would be wrong to charge the Cappadocians with crypto-homoiousianism—in part because they recognized that their "three man" analogies were just that: analogies, that need not be seen as logically excluding other ways of looking at the problem—one wonders if the same could be said about St. Photius the Great. Most of the Photian principles could be seen as a systematic denial of an Old Nicene understanding of God, a denial that a person can be ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας. Not only Bekkos saw this, but certain Greek writers before him saw it, too, and it troubled them.

Much of Photius's argumentation seems to rest upon a certain fundamental dilemma. If you say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from

⁶⁹Gregory of Nyssa, *De oratione dominica*, sermo 3; in Callahan, ed., *Gregorii Nysseni De oratione dominica; De beatitudinibus* (Leiden, 1992), 42, lines 15–24. Cited by Bekkos, *De unione ecclesiarum* 42; Laemmer, ed., 330f.; PG 141, 104CD.

both the Father and the Son, you in effect do one of two things: either you divide the natures, which is Arianism, or you confuse the persons, which is Sabellianism. That is to say, either you posit two sources for the Holy Spirit, so that, being from two sources, he will be of a compound nature, less than fully divine;⁷⁰ or you meld Father and Son together into a single, quasi-personal source, destroying their particularities and turning personal causation in God into a function of divine nature itself—and if so, then the Spirit, to be divine, must himself cause another divine person, and so on *ad infinitum*. Most of the Photian dialectic, as one might call it, consists of variations upon this fundamental theme.

At the start of his theological argumentation in the book *De unione ecclesiarum*, John Bekkos goes directly to this problem. He attacks Photius's dilemma with what I might call the idea of referential causality, an idea that he derives from St. Basil but that I think was perhaps a general, Pro-Nicene commonplace. He writes:

But taking its stand upon the doctrines of the great saints, and following their conceptions, [the Church of the Romans] proclaims the Son to be from the Father alone, while it says that the Holy Spirit is also from the Son. Nevertheless it truly knows and confesses one principle in the Holy Trinity, because, from the teaching of the fathers, it knows how to refer all that belongs to the Son back to the Father, the first cause. For the ability both to say that the Spirit is from the Father and the Son and, at the same time, not to honor two causes of the Spirit arises from this consideration and this alone, that everything, as was said, that belongs to the Son is to be referred back to the Father, the first cause.⁷¹

Then Bekkos brings in the text from Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* II, 34, first noting that Basil is replying to Eunomius who had maintained that the Holy Spirit is from the Son alone. Basil says:

But to whom of all people is it not apparent, that no activity of the Son is separated from the Father, nor does there exist anything among the things in the Son that is alien from the Father? For, he says, "all that are mine are thine, and thine are mine" (Jn 17:10). Why then does Eunomius ascribe the cause of the Spirit to the Son alone, and take the making of him as a

⁷⁰Cf. Photius, *Mystagogy* 4; PG 102, 284A.

⁷¹Bekkos, *De unione* 9; Laemmer, ed., 212f; PG 141, 25BC.

reproach against his nature? If then, in saying these things, he sets two causes in opposition to each other, he will be the comrade of Mani and Marcion; but if the statement that “all things came to be through” the Son connects existing things to a single cause, it implies a reference back to the first cause. So that, even though we believe that all things were brought into being through the Word of God, nevertheless we do not deprive the God of the universe of being the cause of all things.⁷²

This is the first patristic citation in what is arguably John Bekkos’s most important book. It is sometimes claimed that Bekkos’s whole theological argument boils down to a simple, mechanical identification of “through” and “from.”⁷³ There is an identification of “through” and “from” in Bekkos’s argument, but it is neither simple nor mechanical. Rather, it is one aspect of a body of very serious argumentation about the meaning of the Greek Church’s patristic inheritance, an argument essentially over the question, Did the Greek and Latin Churches in the first Christian millennium share fundamentally the same faith in the Holy Trinity, or did they not? Bekkos is not blind to the differences in the two traditions; his claim is not that they are identical, but that they are compatible. And this present text from St. Basil is presented by Bekkos as testifying to *how* they are compatible. When authoritative texts of the Church, whether Holy Scripture or the holy fathers, ascribe some form of causality to the Son, whether in his creative, providential, and redemptive work *ad extra* or in his eternal, divine relationships *ad intra*, whether in *economia* or in *theologia*, the ascription of a causal role to the Son does not set up the Son as a second, separate cause in opposition to the Father; it does not result in a Manichaean dualism; nor, again, does it imply that the persons of Father and Son have become indistinctly merged in a blurry, Sabellian haze. It means that the activity and causality of the Son is referred back to the unoriginate Father as the original source whence all divine being and activity flows. It is a simple statement of the ancient doctrine of divine Monarchy, which meant, not that the Father is the only cause, but that he is the originating root cause of all things, and that the Son

⁷²Basil of Caesarea, *Adv. Eunomium*, II, 34; PG 29, 652A–B; Sesbouïé and de Durand, eds., *Basile de Césarée: Contre Eunome*, tome 1 [=SC 299] (Paris, 1982), 140–42.

⁷³Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium*, 50.

is the bearer of the Father's causality, the one through whom it operates, the perfect Image of the Father, who shares in all that the Father has except in the fact of being Father. This, Bekkos claims, is what the fathers meant by "through the Son"; and he cites this passage from St. Basil to show that this understanding of "through the Son" applies also to the question of the origination of the Holy Spirit. He sees, in other words, this passage as directly contradicting and undermining the Photian dilemma previously stated.

4. Excursus: reading Basil's text

An objection was raised against this reading of the passage. Basil here is arguing against Eunomius the heretic; and, in order to refute him, he adopts some of his language. One can see this in the way he speaks here of the "making" of the Spirit, of his "coming-to-be" through the Son. Bekkos takes note of this criticism: he thinks it does not stand up to scrutiny. First, it is quite clear that what Basil takes issue with is not the claim that the Spirit owes his origin to the Son, but Eunomius's ascribing the cause of the Spirit to the Son *alone*. Bekkos points out that Basil could have asked, "How on earth, Eunomius, do you dare say that the Holy Spirit, who exists from the Father alone, is from the Son?"⁷⁴ He does not ask this. Instead, Bekkos says, Basil accepts the notion of the Son's causality, but he maintains that it is not opposed to the causality of the Father; rather, it refers back to it. The other objection, that Basil cannot really be talking here about the hypostasis of the Spirit because of his language of "making" and "coming-to-be," is rejected by Bekkos: it is clear, he says, that "the passage as a whole treats of nothing else than the Spirit's very hypostasis."⁷⁵

If Bekkos had read Basil's treatise a little more closely, he might have found a confirmation of his interpretation a little earlier in the second book. At *Adversus Eunomium* II, 32, one finds the following exchange. Basil first quotes Eunomius:

If, starting by observing the things that have been created, one is led, from them, back up to the substances, and, having found, on

⁷⁴*De unione* 11, PG 141, 45BC.

⁷⁵*De unione* 12, PG 141, 45D.

the one hand, that the Son is the product of the Ingenerate, and, on the other hand, that the Paraclete is the product of the Only-begotten, one then becomes convinced, from the superiority of the Only-begotten, that their activities differ, and one will take this as an incontestable proof that they differ also with respect to substance.

Basil replies:

To start with, how is it possible to reason about such substances by analogy with created things? For my part, I don't see it. Things produced indicate power and wisdom and art, but not the substance itself [of the producer]. And they do not necessarily present all the maker's power, given that, at times, an artisan does not exert all his strength in his activities, but, frequently, he employs a more relaxed, less intense *modus operandi* on the works of his art. But even if he should stir up all his power toward the job and, in this way, his strength might be measured by his works, one would still be unable to comprehend what in fact his substance is. But supposing that, because of the simplicity and incomposite character of the divine nature, substance there coincides with power, and, by reason of the goodness that is God's by right, all of the Father's power is moved, one might say, for the purpose of begetting the Son, and, again, all the Only-begotten's [is moved] for the sake of the subsistence (hypostasis) of the Holy Spirit, such that, from the Spirit, one might contemplate both the power of the Only-begotten and, simultaneously, his substance, and again, from the Only-begotten one might understand both the power and the substance of the Father—what then follows? For, from those very things by which he sought to establish their unlikeness of substance, he is found to be in the process of showing their likeness. For if the power has nothing in common with the substance, how is he led toward comprehending the substance from the works, which are power's effects? But if substance and power are identical, then that which characterizes power will by all means characterize also substance, such that the works (as you call them) lead, not toward unlikeness of substance, but rather toward exactitude of likeness. Once again, this attempt supports our own position rather than his.⁷⁶

Again, someone might say that, here, too, Basil is adopting Eunomius's presuppositions simply to overthrow them. I do not see that. Neither at *Adversus Eunomium* II, 34 nor here at *Adversus Eunomium* II, 32 does Basil utter any word that would make one

⁷⁶PG 29, 648A–C; SC 305, 132–34.

think that he disagrees with Eunomius about the fact of the Son's having a causal role in the origination of the Spirit. What he disagrees with Eunomius about is Eunomius's inferring from the causal order of the hypostases an unlikeness of substance between them. In reading the sentence that begins, "But supposing that, because of the simplicity and incomposite character of the divine nature," it is hard, or rather, absurd, to see Basil as adopting the hypothesis that God is simple and incomposite simply for the sake of hypothesis, and not, rather, because he himself accepted this to be true. Likewise, then, it is also hard to see Basil as uttering something merely for hypothesis' sake when he speaks of all the Father's power being moved for the begetting of the Son, and all the Only-begotten's [power being moved] for the sake of the subsistence, i.e., the hypostasis, of the Holy Spirit.

These two passages suggest that, at the time St. Basil wrote the *Adversus Eunomium*, probably a little before the Synod of Lampsacus (364),⁷⁷ his outlook in pneumatology, as in much else, was still recognizably Origenist, like indeed that of most of the Homoiousians in whose company he still freely moved.⁷⁸ Origen, in the *Commentary on John II*, 6, had asked the question whether the Spirit ought to be included among the things "made through" the Son (Jn 1:3), and had answered yes. Although Basil did not consider the Spirit a creature,⁷⁹ he nevertheless had shown a commitment to preserving as much of Origen as he could for orthodoxy. Recall that the first book Basil wrote, along with his friend Gregory Nazianzen, was an anthology of selected passages from Origen, the *Philocalia Origenis*.⁸⁰ It seems to me that, instead of assuming that the early Basil could have shared no presuppositions with Eunomius, one should see their debate rather as a dispute over ownership of a common

⁷⁷It was almost certainly this work which, according to Basil's testimony (*Ep.* 223.5), he dictated to Eustathius of Sebaste's stenographers; it was evidently meant to serve as a briefing against Anomoianism for the Homoiousian bishops assembling at Lampsacus.

⁷⁸On the early Basil and Homoiousianism, see now especially Volker Henning Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homoisianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen, 1996).

⁷⁹Basil supported Athanasius and accepted the ruling of the Synod of Alexandria of 362, which had refused communion to all who spoke of the Spirit as a creature.

⁸⁰*The Philocalia of Origen*, ed. J. Armitage Robinson (Cambridge, 1893).

Origenist inheritance: Eunomius infers from that inherited teaching the substantial unlikeness of the hypostases; Basil reads the evidence the opposite way. Given this historical background, the Origenist frame of reference that Basil and much of his audience shared, there is good reason to think that, *at least as a reading of the early Basil*, Bekkos's interpretation of the texts as pointing to an ontological dependence of the Spirit on the Son is quite justified.⁸¹

5. Conclusion

I mentioned earlier that Bekkos rediscovers a kind of Old Nicene logic in connection with the expression "from the substance." Let me try to state what I mean.

One of Photius's criticisms of Latin pneumatology, a kind of corollary of his three-or-one principle, says that, by transferring the characteristic of being source of the Holy Spirit from one person (the Father) to two (the Father and the Son), the Latin doctrine implies that "being source of a divine person" now characterizes the divine nature as such, such that, if the Holy Spirit is truly to share that nature, he must himself be source of another divine person, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁸² In the *De unione ecclesiarum*, §51, Bekkos cites this argument in the form given to it by the twelfth-century author John Phurnes.⁸³ Phurnes says:

⁸¹I also think that this Origenist frame of reference has an important bearing on the question of the authenticity of the text of Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* III, 1 (PG 29B, 653B–655A; SC 305, 144–48) that became a focal point of contention at the Council of Florence between John of Montenero and Mark of Ephesus, the text, namely, in which Basil is found to say that the Holy Spirit is third "in dignity and in order," although not in nature. In brief, I think that that version of the text, cited by Bekkos as authentic, is indeed what Basil originally wrote, but I also think that this text was revised at an early stage, either by Basil himself or, as I think very possible, by Gregory Nazianzen. I do not think the theory of Michel van Parys and Alexander Alexakis, which holds that the text accepted by Bekkos and John of Montenero was concocted in the seventh century, is conclusive or, finally, persuasive. I hope to argue this point in a subsequent article.

⁸²Cf. Photius, *Mystagogy* 37; PG 102, 317AB.

⁸³John Phurnes was an archimandrite who engaged Archbishop Peter Grossolano of Milan in a public theological debate in the year 1112, when Grossolano was passing through Constantinople on his way back to Italy. The text of his *Apology* is found in A. K. Demetrakopoulos, ed., *Bibliotheca Ecclesiastica*, vol. 1 (Leipzig

If everything that the Father has, and the Son has, the Holy Spirit also has because of their oneness of nature and of divinity, then it will necessarily follow that some other thing must proceed also from the Spirit.⁸⁴

Bekkos's answer to this can be expressed in this way: If in fact it were true that it is on account of the Father and the Son's oneness of nature and of divinity that the doctrine has been affirmed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from them, then, indeed, it would follow that some other thing should proceed from the Spirit—and not only that, but the Son would also be from the Spirit, or rather, all of them would be from each other. Consubstantiality, as such, is not a sufficient ground for stating who is from whom.

For if someone (e.g., the Son) is from the Father, this same one is also consubstantial with the Father, because he is from the substance of the Father (διὰ τὸ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς); but it is not the case that, if someone is consubstantial with someone else, this one is, in relation to that other, as though from a consubstantial Father. And, indeed, the Spirit is consubstantial with the Son, but this is because he is from the substance of the Son (ὅτι ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Υἱοῦ); it is not the case that, *vice versa*, because he is consubstantial with the Son, therefore he is also from the Son.⁸⁵

To put it briefly, being from the substance is the grounds of consubstantiality, not the other way around. The Photian critique of Western theology rests upon a denial of the function of substantial derivation in Old Nicene logic; John Bekkos's defense of that theology, or rather, his defense of its compatibility with the thought of the Greek fathers, turns upon an articulation of this logical principle.⁸⁶

1866; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), 36–47.

⁸⁴Demetrakopoulos, ed., 38.

⁸⁵Bekkos, *De unione* 51, PG 141, 121D–124A.

⁸⁶Bekkos's statement of this principle combines insights from at least two patristic sources. There is, first, the general tendency of some fathers, like Athanasius and Cyril, to keep to the Nicene usage which speaks of one divine person being "from the substance" of another. Secondly, there is a text of Basil's that Bekkos sometimes refers to, his *Letter* 52, in which Basil curiously maintains that things that stand in a relation of brotherhood to one another are not consubstantial: consubstantiality,

Someone well may ask: Why is any of this important for Christian faith?

I have tried to show that John Bekkos was not a juggler of texts or an anthologist, but a man who was concerned to state the logical coherence of traditional Christian belief in the Trinity, and to state it in such a way as to show that the insights of the Latin and Greek Christian traditions are ultimately harmonious. He saw, and I think saw correctly, that the *Filioque* debate had deep historical roots; this debate arose out of earlier misunderstandings concerning person and substance in God. Bekkos sees Photius and Gregory of Cyprus as teaching, not Cappadocian theology pure and simple, but a kind of neo-Cappadocianism that, by radicalizing the person/substance distinction through logical premises which the Cappadocians themselves do not state, draws from this distinction consequences which the Cappadocians themselves do not draw. They *could* not have drawn these consequences, because to do so would have disallowed much of their own stated thought; they *would* not have done so, because they recognized that those who spoke differently than they did nevertheless shared with them one faith. The Cappadocians practiced a kind of ecumenism; John Bekkos, in his role as bishop and teacher, thinks that he is authorized and obliged to do the same in the circumstances of his own time. The Cappadocians, in their day, articulated the mystery of the Trinity in

as such, is a derived or genetic relationship, not a lateral, commutative one. At the same time, Bekkos is aware that the fathers do not always talk in quite this way about consubstantiality; e.g., St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of Peter, James, and John as consubstantial, and in fact uses this as a trinitarian illustration (*To Ablabius: On not three Gods*). In a letter written to a former deacon of his named Agallianos, Bekkos addresses the issue of these different meanings of consubstantiality. He differentiates between being ὁμοούσιον in the strict sense, and being ὁμοειδές, “of the same form” or “species.” When we speak of Peter and Paul as being consubstantial, he says, what we effectively mean by this is that they share the same form of being human; we are not saying that Peter is Paul’s father, or *vice versa*. Being “of one substance,” in this sense, is a commutative relationship. But if someone informs us that Paul is *from the substance* of Peter, at that point we can no longer switch things around; we must then understand that Paul is derived from Peter, that Peter is his father. So, Bekkos says, it is quite legitimate to say that the Father is consubstantial with the Son and the Son is consubstantial with the Father in the generic sense of consubstantiality; but, if we are told that the Son is ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς, “from the substance of the Father,” this is no longer a generic relationship, and we cannot reverse the statement, any more than we can cause the sun to rise in the west (*Epist. ad Agallianum* 3, PG 141, 280A).

a way that differed, in some significant respects, from the way St. Athanasius or St. Epiphanius or Pope St. Damasus articulated it; yet the Cappadocians strove to maintain communion with St. Athanasius and St. Epiphanius and Pope St. Damasus. Similarly, St. Maximus, in his day, recognized that the Latin-speaking Church articulated the mystery of the Holy Spirit's procession in a way that differed from the way most Greek-speaking Christians did; yet he strove to maintain the bonds of communion, and said that he had never known the fathers to disagree with each other in thought, even though, very often, they disagree with one another verbally.⁸⁷ John Bekkos thinks that reasons of Christian truth and love oblige him to imitate these holy men.

Questions of "Old Nicene logic" and the like are important because the question of the Spirit's procession relates to the way one sees the unity of God. If one sees God's unity simply as a kind of genus, over against three particulars, there is no special reason why these three particulars should have any definite causal relationships with each other, any more than Peter, James, and John have. Christian thought has never been entirely satisfied with such an explanation, partly because the very name "Father" implies that the Father has toward the Son a unity that is more than just generic: the Son is one in being with the Father in no other way than by receiving from the Father the totality of divine being. The Holy Spirit also receives from the Father the totality of divine being, not, though, as another Son, but in a way peculiar to his being Spirit, a way one may call "procession" (although, Bekkos argues, the fathers also use other words to indicate this). Some fathers, like St. Gregory of Nyssa, speak of this other way of being from the Father, this "procession," as a way of being that is *mediated*; Nyssen speaks, e.g., of a third torch that is lit by the flame of a first torch, a flame which is passed down to the third through a second one.⁸⁸ Although there are three torches, there is one flame, and one *movement* of the flame. This is a way of seeing the being of the third that specifically relates it, not only to the first, but to the second as well, without any diminishment implied on account of the mediation.

⁸⁷Maximus, *ep. 19 Ad Pyrrhum*, PG 91, 596BC; cited by Bekkos, *De unione* 10, PG 141, 36D.

⁸⁸Gregory of Nyssa, *Adv. Macedonios* 6, PG 45, 1308B; cited by Bekkos, *Epigraphae* I, PG 141, 628B.

Trinitarian language becomes meaningless if it loses its concrete moorings in the revelation of God in Christ. John Bekkos understood that, as there is no approaching the Father except through the Son, so there is no knowing the Holy Spirit's eternal relation to the Father except, implicitly or explicitly, through the Son. The Spirit does not lead *to* the Father except through the Son, nor does the Spirit come forth *from* the Father to us except through the Son. When theologians deny a mediation of divine being, when they confidently assert an ontology that makes the Son's mediation of the Spirit's οὐσία impossible, one must ask how they have acquired this mystical knowledge of the Father that shunts the Son off to the side.

John Bekkos did not shunt off the Son. He worshiped God the Logos, and logic played a role in how he worshiped him. He had no use for a "spirituality" that was not true rationality, just as he had no use for any new Spirit who is not through the Son. He was a diligent, painstaking researcher who cared about fact, because he cared about truth; but he did not worship the status quo. Pachymeres⁸⁹ and others testify to Bekkos's faith that, even if his own generation failed to appreciate what he had tried to do, future generations would understand. Time may yet prove him right. □

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⁸⁹*De Andronico Palaeologo* I, 9.