



Analytic patristics

The logic of apophaticism, natural theology, and the metaphysics of the Trinity

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Abstract

Georges Florovsky, in 1936, called for a revival of the teaching of the Church Fathers. At the same time, Fr. Joseph Bocheński formulated the program for the renewal of Thomism by means of formal logic. In this paper, I propose to integrate these two projects. Analytic Patristics aims at expressing and developing patristic thought with the tools of analytic philosophy. The broad program of the logic of religion formulated by Bocheński included semiotics, methodology, and the formal logic of religion. I present here three examples of the integration of analytic philosophy and patristics in these three areas. I discuss first Basil Lourié's paraconsistent interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite's theory of the divine names, then Richard Swinburne's efforts to revive Orthodox natural theology, and finally Beau Branson's reconstruction of Gregory of Nyssa's metaphysics of the Trinity. These examples perfectly illustrate how analytic philosophy can contribute to the development of patristics, and how the tradition of the Church Fathers can inspire contemporary analytic philosophy of religion.

Keywords Neopatristics · Analytic theology · Analytic philosophy of religion · Georges Florovsky · Joseph Bochenski · Logic of religion · Negative theology · Natural theology · Metaphysics of the Trinity

Introduction

In 1936, at the First Congress of Orthodox Theologians in Athens, Fr. Georgy Florovsky (1893–1979) formulated his famous program for the revival of patristics. In his talk “Patristics and Modern Theology” he said:

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We have to kindle again the creative fire of the Fathers, to restore in ourselves the patristic spirit. [...] This call to “go back” to the Fathers [...] does not mean a return to the letter of old patristic documents. [...] What is really meant and required is not a blind or servile imitation and repetition, but rather a further development of this patristic teaching, but homogeneous and congenial. (Florovsky 2019a, p. 155)

Florovsky’s talk is considered the beginning of the neopatristic movement, which also included, among others, Myrrha Lot-Borodine (1882–1957), Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958), Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993), and John Zizioulas (1931–2023) (Louth 2008; Obolevitch 2022). The neopatristic movement was spectacularly successful and had an enormous impact on contemporary Orthodox theology. Moreover, the Orthodox program of a return to the Fathers coincided with the Catholic program of a return to the original sources (*ressourcement*), which led to a universal revival of interest in patristics.

That same year in Krakow, during the Third Polish Philosophical Congress, Fr. Joseph Bocheński OP (1902–1995) formulated his less-known program for the renewal of scholasticism. In his talk, “Catholic Tradition and Exactness,” he said:

Like St. Thomas in the past, we are now faced with the emergence of a new and better logic, much of which has been overtaken by our enemies. Those of us who understand the meaning of the Catholic tradition should not hesitate to act, just as St. Thomas did; they will not run away from modern logic and exactness, but will embrace it in hand in order to make our worldview more precise, deeper, and respectable even for our opponents. (Bocheński 1937, p. 34)

Bocheński’s talk was one of the most important manifestos of the Krakow Circle, a group of Catholic thinkers that also included Fr. Jan Salamucha (1903–1944), Jan Drewnowski (1896–1978) and Bolesław Sobociński (1906–1980) (Nieznański 1987; Bocheński 1988a; Woleński 2003, 2013; Pouivet 2011; Porwolik 2020). Alas, the Krakow Circle was less fortunate than the neopatristics movement, as it was quickly terminated by the Second World War. Father Salamucha was murdered in the Warsaw Uprising, Drewnowski was not allowed to practice philosophy in communist Poland, and the exiled Sobociński worked only in pure logic. Only Bocheński, who remained in Switzerland and occasionally lectured in the United States, tried to develop the program of the logic of religion. He was supposed to have a substantial impact on the philosophy at Notre Dame, where he taught in the mid-1950s (Sayre 2014, pp. 58–65). Without a doubt, the Krakow Circle anticipated by several decades the flourishing of analytic philosophy of religion and analytic theology, which took place mainly in a Protestant environment.

I think the time has come, after almost a century, to integrate Florovsky’s and Bocheński’s programs. Florovsky aimed at the revival of patristics, while Bocheński wanted to develop scholasticism through analytic philosophy. Thus, the combination of both programs results in the call for the development of patristics with the help of analytic tools, i.e., the project of analytic patristics. This idea seems a natural development for both programs, since it is simply a deepening of Florovsky’s project and an extension of Bocheński’s one. However, while Florovsky’s program was addressed primarily to Orthodox Christians, and Bocheński’s project grew out of the Catholic

tradition, analytic patristics, drawing on the experience of Protestant analytic philosophy of religion, is clearly ecumenical in nature.

The first attempts to combine Orthodox theology with modern logic were made by Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), long before Florovsky and Bocheński. In *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, published in 1914, he tried to express the antinomical nature of Christian dogmas by means of symbolic logic (Florensky 2004, pp. 106–123, 355–358); in doing so, he also anticipated the development of nonclassical logic, independently of Jan Łukasiewicz and Nikolai Vasiliev (Biriukov, Priadko 2010; Rojek 2019b). In his 1915 *The Meaning of Idealism*, he attempted to formalize two understandings of universals relevant to the interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity (Florensky 2020, pp. 23–32, 96–97). Finally, in “Onomatodoxy as a Philosophical Premise,” completed in 1922, he sought to formally express Gregory Palamas’s doctrine of essence and energies (Florenskii 2000, pp. 268–274; Rojek 2023). Florensky’s project also fell victim to history. By the time Florovsky and Bocheński published their manifestos, Florensky had long been in a Soviet labor camp. Although over the years it has become increasingly clear that Florensky was neither an expert in patristics (Pavliuchenkov 2018; Biriukov 2023) nor in logic (Rojek 2013, 2019b), he can undoubtedly be considered a forerunner of analytic patristics.

Unfortunately, for almost the next century, neopatristic and analytic philosophy developed completely independently. Orthodox theologians tended to draw on continental philosophy, especially existentialism, while analytic philosophers of religion focused on Western theology, especially medieval and modern. The only reference I found by a neopatristic thinker to analytic philosophy was Fr. John Zizioulas’ critical remarks on Peter Strawson (Zizioulas 2006, pp. 198, 211–212, 219, 326). Regrettably, they seem to be based on a misunderstanding, since Strawson’s theory of individuation was actually very close to Zizioulas’s relational ontology (Strawson 1959, pp. 15–58). Moreover, as has been pointed out, Zizioulas’s way of thinking was surprisingly close to the analytic formation (Skiriris 2021, pp. 142–143). This misunderstanding seems to me to be very symptomatic of the difficult relations between neopatristic and analytic philosophy at that time.

The book *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking*, edited by Andrew Schumann in 2013, was clear evidence of a breakthrough. Before that, some patristic scholars had occasionally referred to analytic philosophy, mostly to the philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege (La Matina 2011; Trakakis 2013) and John Searle (Kalligas 2002; Robertson 2002). Schumann’s book, however, was the first attempt to deliberately bring together Eastern patristics and modern logic. The patron of this project was, of course, Pavel Florensky, to whom Schumann referred in his introduction, as well as several other contributors (Schumann 2013; Rhodes 2013; Foltz 2013; Rojek 2013). The volume opened with Richard Swinburne’s seminal work on the natural theology of Gregory Palamas. Other authors attempted to describe the characteristic features of the logic of Orthodoxy (Rhodes 2013; Schumann 2013b) and analyzed specific theological issues (Knepper 2013; Lourié 2013a, 2013b; Bøhn 2013; Rojek 2013).

Since then, a number of texts have appeared that consciously combine patristics with analytic philosophy. In Russia, such a program has been pursued by Fr. Basil Lourié, who deals with the theory of divine names (2013b, 2014a), icons (2019a, 2020a), and the Trinity (2016, 2018, 2019b, 2020b, 2022). He is perhaps the only author in this group who refers to Bocheński (Lourié 2020b, pp. 309–310). In the United

States, Beau Branson is carrying out his original program of an analytic reading of the patristic theory of the Trinity (2014a, 2014b, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2022). References to analytic philosophy also appear in the mainstream works of Nicholas Loudovikos (2015), Christoph Schneider (2019, 2022), or Constantinos Athanasopoulos (2020a and 2020b). In 2021, David Bradshaw and Richard Swinburne edited the groundbreaking volume *Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*. Finally, in 2023, the Second Conference of the International Orthodox Theological Association, which continues the tradition of the Congress of Orthodox Theologians, hosted a panel on Analytic Approaches to the Greek Fathers. I believe that this event can be seen as evidence of the growing acceptance of such explorations.

In this paper, I would like to examine some characteristic examples of the combination of patristics and analytic philosophy. First, however, I will briefly outline Bocheński's broad program of the logic of religion. It included the theory of religious language, a part of the epistemology of religion, as well as the ontological interpretation of theological concepts. The examples I have chosen belong in turn to these three areas. First, I will discuss Basil Lourié's paraconsistent interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite's doctrine of the divine names. Secondly, I will examine recent research on natural theology in the Eastern tradition, conducted under the auspices of Richard Swinburne. Finally, I will present Beau Branson's logical interpretation of the patristic ontology of the Trinity. All these examples, I believe, show how much analytic philosophy can contribute to the development of patristics, and how much the tradition of the Church Fathers can inspire contemporary analytic philosophy of religion.

The logic of religion

The Krakow Circle was the first attempt to systematically apply analytic philosophy to religious issues. At the time, the emerging analytic philosophy was generally critical of religion. The Vienna neopositivists claimed that religious statements were unverifiable and therefore meaningless. Bocheński and Salamucha, in contrast, wanted to use analytic tools to reform and develop theology. The very name of the Krakow Circle expressed, somewhat self-ironically, the ambition to create a counterweight to the Vienna Circle.

Initially, the purpose of the Krakow Circle was simply to apply, as they claimed, "modern logic" to "Catholic thought," which was identified with Thomism. Their most famous achievement was Salamucha's first formalization of one of Aquinas's proofs for the existence of God. His work caused a great controversy in Poland, not among philosophers, who welcomed any application of logic, but among theologians, who saw it as a threat to traditional doctrine. Many years later, an English translation of Salamucha's paper appeared in an anthology of classic texts on Aquinas edited by Anthony Kenny (Salamucha 1969). As early as 1935, Bocheński, apparently impressed by Salamucha's study, was thinking of writing a logical commentary on the *Summa theologica* (Bocheński 2008, p. 246). He finally realized this idea shortly before his death, providing commentaries on some of the opening questions of the *Summa* (Bocheński 1991, 2000), culminating in his posthumous work *Gottes Dasein und Wesen* (Bocheński 2003).

However, Bocheński soon developed a much more general program of the logic of religion. It was no longer just a formal analysis of scholastic arguments. Bocheński began to understand logic very broadly, as a discipline that included a number of epistemological and ontological questions. In addition, he became interested not only in Thomism, but in Christianity in general, and other religions as well. He presented this program most fully in his lectures at New York University, published as *The Logic of Religion* (Bocheński 1965).

I would like to take a closer look at this broad program. Bocheński summarized it briefly in a lecture entitled “Logic and the Philosophy of Religion,” which he gave at the Dominican Monastery in Krakow in 1987, during his first visit to Poland after the Second World War. Bocheński said:

What is the logic of religion? It is not there yet. Although I once wrote a book on the subject, it was only an introduction. I think the logic of religion would have three parts, corresponding to the three parts of general logic. There would be a formal logic of religion, there would be a semiotics of religion, and there would be a methodology of religion. (Bocheński 1988b, p. 28)

Earlier, Bocheński proposed slightly different divisions of the logic of religion (1949, p. 171; 1965, pp. 1–5), while later he limited his program to the question of justification (2003, pp. 17–28). His division from the Krakow lecture seems to be the most developed and the most inspiring. I will now briefly discuss the three parts of the logic of religion and present Bocheński’s main claims.

I start with the semiotics of religion. Its purpose is to analyze religious language, and the most important task is to determine its meaningfulness. As Bocheński clarified:

Is it possible to say anything about God? [...] This is a typical question of the logic of religion [...]. This subject has been worked out best in modern philosophy, thanks to the British, who carry out exclusively linguistic analysis. [...] A proposition is meaningful if and only if there is a method of verifying it. [...] How can I verify that [for example] God is unity in the Trinity? (Bocheński 1988b, p. 29)

Bocheński himself seems to have paid little attention to these British discussions, for although he analyzed the issue of verification in his book *The Logic of Religion* (1965, pp. 96–101), in his Krakow lecture he apparently confused Antony Flew with John Hick (Bocheński 1988b, p. 29).

Bocheński distinguished no less than six main theories of the meaning of religious language (1965, pp. 28–31). The nonsense theory holds that religious language has no meaning at all. This is what Alfred Ayer, one of the early analytic critics of religion, believed. Emotionalist theory holds that religious language does have meaning, but it is only the emotions of its users. Such a view also appeared in the neopositivist critique of religion, but it was also adopted by some theologians, for example, by Friedrich Schleiermacher. There is also the theory that religious language communicates only rules of behavior. This recalls the view of the late Ludwig Wittgenstein and some of his followers. The noncommunicativist theory holds that religious language has meaning, but that it cannot be communicated. The theory of incomplete

meanings, in turn, says, as one can easily guess, that the meaning is only partial. Finally, the most traditional propositional theory of religious language holds that it communicates some claim about reality.

Among other things, Bocheński analyzed negative theology, which is considered especially important in the Eastern tradition. At first, he was very reserved about this view. As he wrote, the “fantastic way of speaking and thinking” of Dionysius the Areopagite was a “great danger” for exactness in theology (Bocheński 1937, p. 31). In *The Logic of Religion*, however, he pointed out, perhaps surprisingly, that negative theology, which claims that God has only negative properties, “does not entail any immediate inconsistency” (Bocheński 1965, p. 113). Rather, the problem with negative theology was that it is clearly at odds with religious practice. For, as he wrote, “one cannot worship an entity of which he assumes only that no positive properties can be ascribed to it” (Bocheński 1965, p. 114). The same is true of the theory of the unspeakable, which states that the object of religion is inexpressible in a given language, or even in all languages. This theory, as I have pointed out, can be seen as a version or part of negative theology (Rojek 2010). Again, this view, as far as it is formulated in metalanguage, “does not entail any obvious inconsistency” (Bocheński 1965, p. 34). It does not help much, however, because “it seems a sheer impossibility to worship, that is, to value, an entity about which one is prepared to assume only that it cannot be spoken of” (Bocheński 1965, p. 36).

Bocheński paid special attention to the theory of analogy, which is considered to be of particular importance in the Western tradition. This theory was discussed for many years in the Krakow Circle, and Bocheński summarized these discussions in his paper “On Analogy” (1948) and later in a special appendix to *The Logic of Religion* (1965, pp. 156–162). The theory of analogy attempts to show that the standard meaning of words only partially applies to God. According to Bocheński, the only common elements are the formal properties of the relations expressed in religious language. For example, to say that God is our Father means only that the formal properties of human fatherhood are the same as the formal properties of divine paternity. Analogy amounts to isomorphism. Thus, in Bocheński’s view, the analogy says very little. It is not at all clear that one can really worship something that is described only in isomorphic language.

The second part of the logic of religion is the methodology of religion. As Bocheński said, “this is the most exciting part of logic. [...] Here lies the question whether there is any justification for faith” (Bocheński 1988a, p. 29).

Bocheński distinguished no less than seven theories of the justification of basic religious claims (1965, pp. 126–128; cf. 2003, pp. 17–28). The blind-leap theory says that religion has no justification at all. This position seems to have been taken by some existentialists. Other theories accept some justification, but it may be of a very different kind. The rationalist theory claims that religious claims have a complete justification that gives them the highest certainty, as in deductive science. This extreme theory corresponds to the modern ideal of natural knowledge of God in Descartes or Leibniz. The other theories accept some justification for religious claims, but incomplete, i.e., requiring a special act of faith. Among them, Bocheński distinguished theories of direct and indirect justification. The former included the theory of supernatural insight (similar to Alvin Plantinga’s view) and the theory of trust (reminiscent

of Karl Barth's vision), while the latter included deductivist theories that infer from premises accepted on faith (as in the case of Aquinas) and reductivist theories that seek justification for given facts. Among the latter, he distinguished the theory of authority and the theory of religious hypothesis.

Bocheński himself tried to develop the latter two views (Bocheński 1974, 1994). Here, I will consider the theory of religious hypothesis. As he suggested, the basic claims of religion can be treated as a complex hypothesis explaining the totality of human experience. As he wrote:

At a certain time of his life the subject begins to think that, if he does accept the basic dogma of a certain religion, then the whole of his experience will become organized and somewhat explained. This is what writers probably intend to say when they assert that it “gives a meaning to the world and to existence.” Logically this means that the religious hypothesis plays the role of an axiom out of which the remainder is thought to be deduced (with the help of other sentences, of course). (Bocheński 1965, p. 149)

The procedure for justifying religion is thus essentially the same as in empirical science, history, or everyday life. The difference between religion and science, however, is that the religious hypothesis is supposed to be an explanation of the entire human experience, that is, not only external facts but also inner experiences, and not only facts but also aesthetic and moral values.

The third part of the logic of religion, the most fundamental, was the formal logic of religion. As Bocheński explained: “it is [...] about the analysis of certain expressions that occur in the language of religious people. In this respect, formal logic can provide the thinking religious people much insights into what they believe” (Bocheński 1988b, p. 28).

Thus, the formal logic of religion was supposed to be an analysis of the basic concepts used in religious discourse. In fact, according to Bocheński, formal logic merged with ontology. As he explained elsewhere, “formal logic is ontology, axiomatic ontology” (1988a, p. 53), and ontology is “nothing but formal logic” (1975, p. 33). The goal of the formal logic of religion so understood is not justification but explanation of the religious claims (1988b, p. 29). Explaining religious claims requires at least showing that they can be true, and this requires showing their consistency.

A good example of the formal logic of religion is the logical analysis of the problem of the Trinity. Indeed, as Bocheński pointed out in *The Logic of Religion*, trinitarian dogma is the most common case of the alleged incoherence of Christianity:

For example, it has been said that Christian religious discourse contains [...] the (molecular) sentence “The Father is God, the Son is God, but the Father is not the Son,” which is inconsistent in itself. (Bocheński 1965, p. 43)

The task of the formal logic of religion would be to provide a consistent interpretation of this dogma.

Unfortunately, Bocheński did not develop his interpretation of the problem of the Trinity. In *The Logic of Religion*, he only pointed out that “the inconsistency is present under the condition that the “is” appearing in the first two sentences is reflexive and

transitive; but must it be interpreted as such?" (1965, p. 84). In other words, he suggested that the word "is" in trinitarian formulas cannot express classical identity. For, in that case, it would follow from the claims that the Father is God and the Son is God that the Father is the Son. However, this, which Bocheński seems not to have noticed, does not solve the problem. For, if we assume that the trinitarian "is" is not the "is" of identity, but instead the "is" of predication, then, without any further qualification, we arrive *prima facie* at the conclusion that there are three gods.

On many occasions, Bocheński suggested a somewhat more developed interpretation of the Trinity based on the theory of relations. Unfortunately, his remarks were usually very vague. For example, in a lecture at the Dominican Monastery in Krakow, he said:

I was once talking to my venerable colleague who teaches dogmatic theology about the Trinity, and I mentioned the triadic relation used in logic. He asked: What is that? He had never heard of triadic relations, although mathematical logic has developed a huge treatise on the subject. I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen! Of course, you may not try to think about the Trinity, but if you do, you must know the elementary things! (Bocheński 1988b, pp. 28–29)

The conversation with this theologian must have particularly impressed him, because he mentioned it in many other places (Bocheński 1986, p. 27; 1988a, p. 13; 1993, p. 125). Perhaps Bocheński's theory of the Trinity would be similar to the proposal of his fellow Krakow Circle member Franciszek Drewnowski (1996, p. 144), according to which one entity enters into three different relations with itself. However, Bocheński considered this solution heretical (1998, 86). Perhaps then, he would rather think of three distinct entities entering into a triadic relation. Such a version of the metaphysics of the Trinity based on polyadic relations was once proposed by Eric Lionel Mascall (1986). Unfortunately, the available remarks of Bocheński are not sufficient to determine his view. In general, the formal logic of religion was the least developed part of Bocheński's program.

The three sections of the logic of religion distinguished by Bocheński coincidentally correspond to the three main periods in the development of Anglo-American analytic philosophy of religion. The first period, lasting roughly from the 1950s to the 1960s, was dominated by discussions of the meaningfulness of religious discourse. The second period, from the 1970s to the 1990s, was more concerned with the justification of religious beliefs. At that time, new theories appeared that Bocheński did not consider, such as the theory of religious experience as perception (Alston 1991) or the theory of religious beliefs as fundamental (Plantinga 2000). Finally, the third period, which began in the 2000s, focuses primarily on the coherence of specific theological issues. For example, we are now witnesses to a flowering of analytic metaphysics of the Trinity (McCall, Rea 2009; Hasker 2013).

Bocheński's program of the logic of religion may seem somewhat crude, especially in the context of the further development of both formal logic and the philosophy of religion. Bocheński adhered to a rather limited understanding of logic, in which the most perfect form of logic was the classical first-order predicate calculus developed in the first half of the twentieth century. This view is now rightfully criticized as "mathematical centrism" (Schumann 2023, pp. 11–15). He was

also deeply rooted in the intellectual Dominican tradition, which he contrasted with the widespread emotional catholicism. His strong preference for argument over experience could be seen as a reaction to what he perceived as the weakness of popular Catholicism, especially in 1930s Poland. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that his ideas in many ways anticipated later advances in the analytic philosophy of religion. The Krakow Circle in the 1930s actually formulated a program of “analytic Thomism,” which was later announced in the United Kingdom in the 1990s; moreover, Bocheński wrote as early as the 1980s about “analytic theology” (Bocheński 1998, p. 131), which eventually emerged in the Anglo-Saxon world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, neither analytic Thomists nor analytic theologians have referred to Bocheński’s work. As a result, it is now usually assumed that analytic philosophy of religion did not begin in Poland in the mid-1930s, but in Britain in the mid-1950s (Wolterstorff 2009; cf. Pouivet 2011). Despite this historical question, it simply seems that Bocheński formulated the most systematic program of analytic philosophy of religion. I will now try to show how this can be combined with the Eastern tradition.

The logic of apophaticism

Nowadays, one of the most controversial problems of the logic of religion is its attitude to contradictions. Bocheński would probably be surprised by this, because for him the question was perfectly clear. A sound logical analysis of religion could in no way allow contradictions. As he wrote in *The Logic of Religion*:

An amazing amount of astonishing things have been said both by believers and non-believers about the inconsistencies in religious discourse, among which many sorts of “dialectics” and theories of “paradoxes” (that is, doctrines according to which religious discourse is inconsistent) are the most conspicuous. However, most of what has been said is due to a nearly complete lack of understanding of the basic principles of logic. It may very well happen, as a matter of fact, that there are contradictions in a given discourse; such cases are well known in every discourse [...]. However, the normal attitude taken by men when they meet with contradictions in their discourse is to try to overcome them. [...] The reason why this attitude is assumed is that a contradiction, if admitted, results in meaninglessness of the discourse. (Bocheński 1965, pp. 82–83)

As it turns out, however, the matter is not so obvious, especially from the point of view of Eastern patristics. As I have already mentioned, Pavel Florensky suggested that religious dogmas are essentially antinomical. Today, Fr. Basil Lourié is developing a systematic interpretation of patristics based on paraconsistent logic. As he said in an interview with Andrew Schumann:

When the Fathers of Church were elaborating a logical language for explanation of the realities of their faith, they had to develop a paraconsistent logic, that is, a non-classical logic where the principle of explosion does not work. This logic not only tolerates contradictions but relies on them. [...] Only the so-called dialethical paraconsistent logic developed especially by Graham Priest [...] has

something to do with the basic logical structures of the Orthodox dogmatics. (Lourié 2013a, p. 54)

The principle that everything follows from a contradiction, which so troubled Bocheński, does not hold in paraconsistent logics. Thus, the acceptance of contradiction does not lead to the meaninglessness of discourse. Lourié consequently develops paraconsistent interpretations of the divine names (2013b, 2014a), essence and energies (2014b), icons (2019a, 2020a), and, perhaps most importantly, the Trinity (2016, 2018, 2019b, 2020b, 2022). I will focus here only on his interpretation of religious language.

Dionysius the Areopagite famously distinguished two types of theology. Cataphatic theology describes God in positive terms, while apophatic theology uses only negative terms. A proper logical interpretation of his theory should include both types of predication. As we have seen, Bocheński's own formalization concerned only the negative aspect of this double theory. Lourié believes that the combination of cataphatic and apophatic theology in Dionysius is essentially paraconsistent. As he points out, the works of the Areopagite are in fact "a patristic textbook of such logic" (Lourié 2013a, 2013b, p. 54).

More precisely, Lourié interprets Dionysius' religious language as a specific case of paraconsistent metaphorical language. As he puts it:

Insofar as they [divine names] have a *metaphor*-like nature based on similarity [...], they are descriptions pointing out some "qualities" ("properties") of God. At the same time, the *paraconsistency* of the entire system of such descriptions prevents us from understanding any single one of them as a full-fledged description similar to those that might be available for a created object. (Lourié 2014a, pp. 116–117, italics mine)

The basis for Lourié's interpretation of the metaphorical aspect of Dionysius' theory is the theory of metaphor developed by Jaakko Hintikka and Gabriel Sandu (1998), while the basis for understanding the paraconsistent aspect is the logic of Graham Priest (1995). I will now discuss these two aspects in turn.

The meaning of a term in Hintikka's possible worlds semantics is the set of individuals from all possible worlds to which the term correctly applies. For example, the meaning of the term "sapphire" is the set of all sapphires, not only actual but also possible. Hintikka called such interworldly sets of individuals "meaning lines." These lines are drawn on the basis of the properties of the objects. For instance, all sapphires share the same chemical composition, crystal system, color, and so on.

A term is used metaphorically when it applies to an object not because the object belongs to the proper extension of that term, but because it is similar in some way to objects from the extension of that term. For example, Lake Tahoe can be called "sapphire" because of its color, not because of its other properties, such as chemical composition, crystal system, and so on. As Hintikka and Sandu (1998, p. 280) say, "in this metaphoric sense, to be a sapphire is to be similar in appearance (looks) to a sapphire (in the literal sense)." In other words, in the case of metaphors, the meaning lines are drawn on the basis of partial similarity, and that similarity can be of many different kinds. It can be qualitative, functional, or even relational, as in the case of analogy.

Religious language is, of course, essentially metaphorical. For example, when it is said that “God is light” (1 John 1:5), it does not mean that God is an element of the standard extension of the term “light.” In no possible world is this term correctly applied to God. In such a formulation, of course, the point is that God is in some way like light. Thus, God belongs to the nonstandard extension of “light,” extended to cases of partial resemblance.

The case of religious discourse is even more specific. First, while only some predicates can be applied to created things, all predicates apply to God. As Dionysius said, God is called “many names” (*polyonymos*, DN 1, 6) and even “all names” (*pantos onomatos*, DN 1, 6). Lourié explains that “every specific or general term, or the negation of such a term, regardless of its direct denotation, is a sign of God” (Lourié 2014a, p. 90). The ontological basis of universal predication is the doctrine of God’s uncreated energies, which are identical with the essences of created things. As Lourié puts it, “divine energies [...] are present in each created thing as its uncreated *logos*” (2014a, p. 103). Hence, it turns out that divine energies are the intentions of every predicate. Any predicate applied to any thing indirectly means God. Ultimately, God is the meaning of every word.

Secondly, while we can speak of ordinary things both metaphorically and non-metaphorically, in the case of God we can only speak metaphorically. In a sense, then, God remains (directly) unnamed. As Dionysius said, “the Sacred Writers celebrate It by every Name while yet they call It Nameless” (DN 1, 6). For there is no word whose standard extension includes God. The term “God” itself, of course, does not express the divine nature, but only a specific divine energy; it is also metaphorical. In this way, as Lourié says, “the divine names do not indicate God as their extension. It is reasonable to affirm that God is their intension” (Lourié 2014a, p. 98). Lourié calls this phenomenon “intensional designation.” Similarly, Hintikka and Sandu (1998, pp. 283–284) claim that metaphors can be used not only for description but also for identification. Thus, in the case of God, all means of identification are ultimately metaphorical. Although God is the (partial) intension of every word, God is not the (standard) extension of any word.

The theory of metaphor, though based on nonstandard meaning lines, still remains a cataphatic theory. This is because metaphorical predication is based on similarity, which, at least according to realism about universals, ultimately boils down to sharing common properties. Thus, God and the world share some properties. Such a theory of metaphor is much more positive than, for example, Bocheński’s theory of analogy, in which the similarity is supposed to concern only the formal properties of relations. Hence, as Lourié (2014a, p. 99) points out, “understanding the logical structure of metaphor is [merely] a necessary but not sufficient condition of understanding the logical structure of the Dionysian divine names.”

A key element of Dionysius’ theory is the specific combination of metaphors in religious language. In fact, many different terms can be used metaphorically to refer to the same object. For example, Lake Tahoe can be said to be a sapphire (because of its color), but also an eye (because of its shape), or a pearl (because of its beauty). Such combinations of metaphors are especially popular in poetry. Now, as Lourié points out: “the [...] language of Dionysius and those who follow him can be presented as the limit case of the “usual” intensional designation, where the different

designators may be not only different but also mutually exclusive from the point of view of non-paraconsistent logic” (Lourié 2014a, p. 101).

Usually, poetical metaphors form a series of oppositions. One and the same object is metaphorically called F, G, and so on. There is no contradiction in this, because one and the same object can be partially similar to many different objects. According to Lourié, however, Dionysius also allowed for series of religious metaphors that are not opposites but contradictions. One and the same object is metaphorically said to be both F and not-F, both G and not-G, and so on. Moreover, in this case, affirmation and negation are supposed to refer to exactly the same aspect of similarity. The theory of divine names would thus be a logical radicalization of poetry.

Dionysius, for example, wrote that “the divine darkness is the unapproachable light in which God is said to dwell” (Letter 5:1). Thus, he apparently believed that God could be said to be both light and darkness. According to Lourié: “these two descriptions [...] are mutually exclusive and simultaneously true in the given context. Each of these descriptions is within the limits of classical logic, but their non-classical conjunction is paraconsistent (complementary)” (Lourié 2014a, p. 116).

Moreover, not only some contradictory predicates, but all literally true predicates and all their negations can be predicated of God. Lourié denotes the set of positive predicates as $\{\alpha_i\}$ and the set of negative predicates as $\{\neg\alpha_i\}$. As he states:

The whole set $\{\alpha_i\}$ is a set of the formulae having the same truth value (“true”), as well as the whole set $\{\neg\alpha_i\}$, which is a set of the formulae having the same truth value (which is also “true”). That both of them are true simultaneously is an expression of the paraconsistency of the whole system of divine names. (Lourié 2014a, p. 109)

Dionysius’ theory of religious language thus combines its metaphorical nature, on the one hand, and its paraconsistency on the other. Religious language is not only essentially metaphorical, but also irreducibly paraconsistent.

I will not discuss here whether the logic of religion should allow for contradictions. Recently, there have been an increasing number of such voices (Rhodes 2013; Heller 2019; Da Costa & Béziau 2020; Beall 2021; Beall, DeVito 2023). I will only point out that there are serious philosophical and theological reasons for rejecting such a possibility (Van Inwagen 2003; Drozdek 2008; Dadaczyński 2013; Vasilyev 2021; Moore 2023). In the context of the program of analytic patristics, the key question is whether such a logic was indeed, as Lourié suggests, implicitly adopted by the Church Fathers.

Notably, Florovsky himself was initially inclined to reject the principle of non-contradiction. This is evidenced by his early text “On the substantiation of logical relativism” from 1924, in which he argued for the relativity not only of scientific knowledge, but also of logical principles:

Before us lies the world as an eternal enigma. We may “unbiasedly” contemplate it in all of its beauty; we may subject it to an intuitive aesthetic evaluation—all of this lies outside the realm of logical thought, outside the category of the cognitive Logos, outside of “yes” and “no.” A “coinciding of contradictions” is therefore possible. (Florovsky 1989a, p. 168)

As Florovsky further pointed out, the laws of logic, including the law of noncontradiction, apply only in the realm of the intellect. It seems clear that since Florovsky accepted the ultimate inconsistency of reality, he would also accept the inconsistency of God.

However, as Harry Moore (2023) has recently shown, the logical relativism of early Florovsky not only leads to serious philosophical and theological difficulties, but, above all, is at odds with the actual views of the Church Fathers. For, although the Fathers criticized the excessive claims of science, they never questioned the universality of the laws of logic, especially the law of noncontradiction. After all, their aim was precisely to develop a consistent interpretation of religion. Dogmas could be paradoxical, that is, contrary to intellectual expectations, but they could not be paraconsistent, that is, contrary to the laws of logic. Moore recalls, for example, a passage from John Damascene's *Philosophical Chapters* (Chap. 63) that clearly reveals the classical logical intuitions of the Church Fathers: "Since a negation is opposed to every affirmation and an affirmation to every negation, the negation opposed to the affirmation and the affirmation opposed to the negation are called contradictions. One of these, moreover, must necessarily be false and one true" (John of Damascus 1958, p. 97).

Clearly, there is no room for paraconsistency here. As Moore rightly concludes, "an application of dialetheism to the Church Fathers would be a blatant anachronism" (Moore 2023, p. 13). One can, of course, speculate that if John of Damascus had been familiar with paraconsistent logic, he might have adopted it. However, there is, I think, no reason to assume this.

Where, then, did modern Orthodox dialetheism come from? All the evidence points to its direct source in the work of Paul Florensky, who even attempted to create a formal logic of antinomy (Rojek 2019b). His idea of religious antinomies was taken up not only by his fellow religious philosophers such as Bulgakov and Losev, but also by theologians who criticized them, such as Lossky and the young Florovsky. A deeper source of theological dialetheism, as Moore points out, was primarily German Romanticism, which strongly influenced Russian religious philosophy and Florensky in particular (Moore 2021).

However, it seems that in his later years Florovsky moved away from such a radical view of logic. I suspect that the main reason for this change may have been his own studies of the Church Fathers. In his lectures on patristics, published in 1933, he dealt with the *Corpus Areopagiticus*. Like Lourié, Florovsky drew attention to the metaphorical nature of predications about God:

To a certain extent, everything participates in God. Therefore, everything can be predicated of God, because He is the principle and goal of everything [...]. But nothing, neither temporal nor immutable, reflects God completely. God is higher than everything. And that is why all names [...] are said about Him only metaphorically. (Florovsky 1933, p. 107)

Florovsky, however, unlike Lourié, did not accept the formal inconsistency of divine names. For him, the negation adopted in apophatic theology was not a classical logical negation:

The apophatic "no" should not be interpreted and determined cataphatically, the apophatic "no" is equivalent to "above" (or "beyond," "besides")—it does

not mean limitation or exclusion, but exaltation and priority [...]. It is an absolutely specific symbolic “no,” a “no” of incommensurability, not of limitation. (Florovsky 1933, p. 101)

In this way, Florovsky apparently wanted to save the logical consistency of Dionysius’ theory. Indeed, from a logical point of view, a cataphatic assertion and its apophatic, i.e., not classical, negation need not be contradictory.

Moreover, Florovsky later often criticized excessive apophaticism, both in Russian religious philosophy and Orthodox theology (Louth 2008, p. 195; Barker 2010, pp. 98, 102, 106; Gavriilyuk 2013, pp. 238–239; Obolovitch 2021a, pp. 99–101; Obolovitch 2022, pp. 58–63). In a letter to Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) he emphatically wrote: “For the divine Logos there are no antinomies, and this does not diminish at all the ‘logicality’; rather, here is the full measure of the Logos. Therefore, antinomianism in theology (first announced in Russian theology by Father Paul Florensky) has always perturbed me, even in Lossky” (Florovsky 2020, pp. 76–77).

Finally, in a review of Lossky’s book *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Florovsky even suggested combining negative theology with the theory of analogy, as is common in the Thomistic tradition (Florovsky 1958).

The question remains, however, whether it is possible to formulate an exhaustive logical interpretation of Dionysius’ theory of religious language that would be free of contradictions. As I have already pointed out, the formalization proposed by Bocheński is certainly not sufficient, since he took into account only the apophatic aspect of this theory. However, in my paper “Towards a Logic of Negative Theology” I tried to develop his interpretation (Rojek 2010; see discussions in Dvořák et al. 2012; Urbańczyk 2018, 2022). In line with Florovsky, I have tried to show that the negation used by Dionysius was not an ordinary negation. In fact, Dionysius himself admitted that “we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations” (*Mystical Theology*, 1, 2), which clearly suggests his nonclassical understanding of negation. I proposed that apophatic negation should be understood as a special functor, indicating excess rather than lack. Such negation not only does not contradict the affirmation, but actually entails it. As a result, under such an interpretation, Dionysius’ theory of divine names, as suggested by Florovsky, turned out to be unexpectedly close to the traditional theory of analogy (though not in Bocheński’s interpretation). Moreover, there are many other attempts at a coherent logical interpretation of Dionysius’ theory (Knepper 2008, 2013; Jacobs 2015; Urbańczyk 2018, 2022; Gäb 2020; Fakhri 2021). It seems, therefore, that we are not forced to accept paraconsistency for this case.

Natural theology

One of the fundamental dilemmas in the epistemology of religion is whether religious beliefs are justified by arguments or by experience. This dilemma is often associated with the divisions within Christianity. It is usually assumed that the Western tradition has emphasized rational justifications; it was Western philosophers who formulated various arguments for the existence of God. The Eastern tradition, on the contrary,

is said to be based primarily on experience; it was Eastern monks who developed ascetic techniques to help one experience God.

A large part of modern Orthodox thinkers were highly critical of natural theology. A good example of this attitude is Florovsky himself. In an early paper “Philosophy and Religion” he wrote:

The cosmological and teleological [...] arguments for the existence of God, insofar as they aspire to a systematic and not merely didactic role, start from a “pantheistic” premise and justify that the absolute Being “belongs” to the world of things [...]. That is why religious consciousness rejects them. [...] The “rational” justification of faith is its destruction; faith justifies itself. (Florovsky 2013, p. 101, cf. Rojek 2016)

Such an attitude dominated Russian theology and religious philosophy for many decades (Gavrilyuk 2021, pp. 110–119; Dumsday 2021; Astapov 2023). Florovsky rejected natural theology because it allegedly violated God’s transcendence. Nikolai Berdyaev believed that arguments for the existence of God limit human freedom. Sergei Bulgakov, for his part, thought they violate God’s freedom. Even Semen Frank, while formulating his own ontological argument, interpreted it as a simple insight rather than a complex argument (Rojek 2019a; Obolevitch 2021b; Gavrilyuk 2021). Greek theologians criticized natural theology in a very similar way (Skloris 2021; Dumsday 2021). Christos Yannaras believed that it makes faith superfluous, and John Zizioulas suggested that it even leads to atheism. As a result, Orthodox theologians, in general, were not interested in the spectacular revival of natural theology that took place in the 1970s in the analytic philosophy of religion. This project seemed to them useless and even dangerous.

Ironically, the most distinguished contemporary natural theologian is a member of the Orthodox Church. Although Richard Swinburne was raised an Anglican, at some point he concluded that his Church was going in the wrong direction and turned to the Orthodox Church in 1995. As he explained to Karol Kleczka in an interview: “I wouldn’t call it a conversion, but rather a move to the Orthodox Church. Conversion involves a change of beliefs, and I did not really change my views” (Swinburne 2012a, p. 206).

Swinburne’s decision deeply surprised his philosophical and theological friends. As he recalled: “This was because they found in Orthodox theological writings an emphasis on the mystery and incomprehensibility of God attainable through worship, which they felt did not fit well with my careful and rigorous arguments from public evidences” (Swinburne 2012b, p. 76).

Swinburne, however, strongly believed that there is a place for natural theology in the Eastern Orthodox tradition:

There has indeed been a suspicion of natural theology in the Orthodox thinking of recent centuries (arising not only from internal sources from the influence of modern secular Continental philosophy in Orthodox countries). But Orthodoxy has older roots; and many of the fathers [...] believed strongly in the availability of cogent arguments for the existence of God. (Swinburne 2012b, p. 76)

Apparently, Swinburne saw the restoration of this tradition as his special calling. First, for many years he simply continued his earlier work on natural theology, then

he began to write on natural theology in the Eastern Fathers, and finally, together with David Bradshaw, he edited a ground-breaking work on natural theology in the Orthodox tradition. It seems that his personal need to put down roots in a new community has developed into a major intellectual project that may change the image of Orthodoxy.

Swinburne's first paper dealing directly with the Eastern tradition was his chapter on natural theology in Palamas, published in the mentioned volume edited by Andrew Schumann (Swinburne 2013). This text can be seen as the beginning of the entire research program. Swinburne wrote:

Since Gregory was writing almost entirely for those who already believed Christian doctrines, he did not have much to say about our access to God by natural reason, and for that reason he has been viewed as denying the existence or importance of such access. That view of Gregory, I shall now argue, is mistaken. (Swinburne 2013, p. 19)

Obviously, Gregory Palamas was treated here as a representative of Eastern Christian thought. In fact, Swinburne's idea was to rediscover the entire lost Eastern tradition of natural theology. The program he outlined was then spectacularly developed by an international group of scholars in the book *Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (2021), edited by Swinburne and Bradshaw. This book proves that the Eastern tradition had its own natural theology, which was lost only in the twentieth century. Thus, natural theology can no longer be seen as merely the result of Western influence on Orthodoxy.

First, Swinburne points out that, contrary to popular belief, many Eastern Church Fathers formulated various arguments for the existence of God. Swinburne (2013) refers to the arguments of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and Gregory Palamas. Later, Alexey Fokin (2021) identified no less than 40 patristic arguments for the existence of God and categorized them into 7 types. They include arguments from the *sensus divinitatis*, historical, from design, cosmological, from ideal or formal cause, from degrees of perfection, and moral ones. In general, the Eastern Fathers most often used teleological arguments (Obolevitch 2015; Bradshaw 2021a, 2021b; Mical 2021).

As recent research shows, natural theology was an integral part of Orthodox thought. Adam Drozdek (2021) recalls forgotten Russian theologians of the eighteenth century who eagerly engaged in arguments for the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. Paul Gavrilyuk (2021) argues that natural theology flourished in Russia in the nineteenth century in the milieu of theological academies. While eighteenth-century Russian theology was still heavily influenced by the West, nineteenth-century theologians were already closer to patristic sources (Florovsky 2019b). In view of this, as Gavriyliuk (2021, p. 122) concluded, "this tradition cannot be dismissed as a quaint remnant of Western scholasticism." The tradition of Orthodox natural theology in Russia was broken, on the one hand, by the destruction of the spiritual academies after the communist revolution, and on the other hand by the overwhelming influence of Russian religious philosophy, which rejected the possibility of evidence for the existence of God.

Swinburne notes that patristic arguments differed from scholastic ones. The Fathers formulated almost exclusively inductive arguments, whereas the ideal of the

Scholastics was deduction. Four of Aquinas's five ways were deductive. As Swinburne explains, deduction is roughly the inference from cause to effect, while induction is the inference from effect to cause. Thus, the scholastic method of reasoning was similar to the geometrical way of thought, while the patristic method was closer to empirical, historical, or notably detective practice. Inductive arguments, however, do not provide certainty, but only probability. This is because, unlike deduction, the acceptance of the premises does not contradict the rejection of the conclusion. Swinburne, however, does not see this as a flaw. In fact, he does not believe in the possibility of a deductive justification of God's existence. Paradoxically, therefore, he finds these weaker patristic arguments particularly attractive.

Thus, it seems that patristic natural theology can be classified as a special case of the theory of religious hypothesis described by Bocheński. As Swinburne explicitly states: "Theism, the claim that there is a God, is an explanatory hypothesis, one which purports to explain why certain observed phenomena (that is, data or evidence) are as they are" (Swinburne 2021, p. 179).

What the patristic religious hypothesis seeks to explain is primarily the order of the world. The vast majority of patristic arguments were teleological. The Fathers usually used abductive or, as Bocheński called it, reductive reasoning. Their arguments were basically complex inferences to the best explanation. Furthermore, as Swinburne showed, the Fathers adopted a fairly plausible understanding of explanation and its simplicity.

Now, this specific nature of the patristic arguments for the existence of God helps to avoid many of the charges leveled against them by various Orthodox thinkers. When critics spoke of proofs, they usually meant deductive reasoning that would provide certainty of God's existence. Such proofs could indeed make faith superfluous. However, the real patristic arguments, whether inductive, reductive, or abductive, do not provide certainty and still require an act of faith (Bocheński 1965, p. 128). Thus, as Skliris rightly observed, "Swinburne's possibilism leaves plenty of room for faith, since human reason offers only probable arguments for the existence of God and not necessary ones" (Skliris 2021, p. 148).

In the end, it turns out that the kind of arguments for the existence of God that dominate in patristics are exactly the kind of arguments that Swinburne developed over the years. As he writes, apparently with some satisfaction: "My basic point is the same as that of the Fathers, expressed in terms of modern physics, and articulated in a much more sophisticated and rigorous way than theirs" (Swinburne 2021, p. 194).

In this way, Swinburne not only rediscovered the tradition of Eastern natural theology, but also justified his own presence in Orthodoxy as a natural theologian. Also, it seems that his ambitious historical and identity projects were indeed successful. For, as a Greek theologian recently concluded, although "one could claim that Swinburne's conversion to Orthodoxy has not entailed a change of his beliefs" (Skliris 2021, p. 147), nevertheless "Swinburne's natural theology is indeed Orthodox natural theology of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries" (p. 148).

However, there is no doubt that the primary justification for faith in the Eastern tradition was religious experience. This was the inner source of the Orthodox suspicions about natural theology that Swinburne wrote about. Hence, while there were indeed arguments for the existence of God in the patristic tradition, the Church Fathers never formulated a broader program of rational justification of faith.

Again, a clear affirmation of the primacy of experience in the Orthodox tradition can be found in Florovsky. At the very beginning of the already quoted essay “Philosophy and Religion,” he wrote: “Religion is an experience, a revelation. God manifests and reveals himself to the believer in religious perception. The believer perceives the Transcendence that rises above the world and all finitude, perceives it directly, with certainty and obviousness” (Florovsky 2013, p. 100).

Religious experience is similar to sense experience, and they differ only in their objects. As Florovsky pointed out, religious beliefs can thus be compared to beliefs in the existence of the external world or other minds.

Bocheński, on the contrary, was highly skeptical of religious experience. In a conversation with Jan Parys he confessed: “The great Christian mystics had such experiences. But others, ordinary believers? That’s a joke! We have no direct experience of God. We live in the ‘darkness of faith.’ We believe in God, but we do not experience God directly” (Bocheński 1998, p. 143).

According to Bocheński, religious experiences are not only rare, but also inconclusive. This is because experiences require interpretation, that is, an abductive explanation. For this reason, such experiences alone cannot provide a basis for faith.

Swinburne seems to adopt an intermediate view. On the one hand, unlike Bocheński, he included religious experience in his project of natural theology. As he pointed out: “It was the experience through prayer of the Church, and especially of the monastic community, which provides full justification of Christian belief” (Swinburne 2013, p. 31).

On the other hand, unlike Florovsky, he did not treat experience as the only evidence for religious beliefs. This is because experiences can be undermined by beliefs about the circumstances of their acquisition or the state of the experiencing subject.

Swinburne claims that, in principle, religious experience—like all other kinds of experience—can be treated as credible. He adopts the general “principle of credulity,” which states that “it is rational to believe that things are as they seem to us to be—in the absence of counter-evidence” (Swinburne 2013, p. 33). This principle, he argues, is necessary to reject various forms of skepticism.

However, both the certainty of experience and the strength of counter-evidences are matters of degree. Even a vague experience can be accepted as long as there is no evidence against it. Similarly, an intense experience may outweigh even strong counter-evidences. Religious experience, as Swinburne suggested, sometimes has a highly compelling character: “If you yourself are having overwhelming experiences apparently of God of the kind which Palamas describes, it is rational to believe that your experiences are veridical, whatever the counter-evidence, whatever the doubts expressed by others” (Swinburne 2013, p. 34).

Such experiences, however, are very rare. As Swinburne pointed out, even Palamas, while sometimes suggesting that they were quite common (*Triads* II, 3, 66), ultimately admitted that his own knowledge of them was rather second-hand (*Triads* II, 3, 68). For most believers, then, such overwhelming experiences are mediated by the testimony of others. Besides such intense experiences, however, there are much more common, less spectacular, everyday experiences, such as feeling grace, seeing the action of God in one’s life, and so on. Such experiences also have a relative justification value.

For Swinburne, however, unlike in the patristic tradition, religious experience was not the only or even the primary source of justification for religious belief. In his seminal book *The Existence of God* (1979), the chapter on religious experience followed a long and detailed presentation of the cumulative argument for the existence of God. In the end, the experience was also explained by the religious hypothesis, so that it lost its specific perceptual character. It seems, then, that the proportion of experiential and rational grounds for faith in Swinburne is exactly the opposite of that in Eastern patristics.

Nevertheless, Swinburne's sympathetic analysis of religious experience influenced the further development of the epistemology of religion. For it became one of the inspirations for the contemporary theory of the spiritual senses, according to which the basis of theological claims is precisely the perception of the divine (Abraham 2012, pp. 279–280). This theory, formulated primarily by William Alston, who notably referred to Swinburne (Alston 1991, p. 195), is now being developed in a broad interdisciplinary research program carried out for years by Paul Gavrilyuk and his collaborators (Gavrilyuk, Coakley 2012; Aquino, Gavrilyuk 2022). Remarkably, the first volume of their research was devoted to the perception of God in Western Christianity. The forthcoming one will focus on the Eastern tradition. The theory of the spiritual senses, however, emphasizes the perceptual rather than the inferential character of religious experience. The divine is the object of perception, not merely the hypothesis arrived at by inference to the best explanation. Perception, however, involves concepts and can be invalidated in appropriate circumstances. Religious experience understood in this way seems to go beyond the options discussed by Bocheński.

David Bradshaw (2021a and 2021b) offers an interesting reinterpretation of some patristic arguments in terms of the theory of spiritual perception. As he points out, Athanasius's teleological argument, for example, which was very popular among the Fathers, was actually a description of experience rather than a presentation of inference:

Much of the argument is framed not as an inference but as a description on what can be immediately perceived by one who is attentive. Just as someone hearing a lyre without seeing the player can perceive that there is a musician playing, so we can perceive from the harmony of the world that it has a single Ruler and King. (Bradshaw 2021a, p. 9)

Bradshaw's interpretation clearly departs from Swinburne's, in which Athanasius's argument is a straightforward inference (Swinburne 2021, pp. 190–192). In a similar way, Bradshaw also interprets Palamas's argument from the *First Letter to Akindynos* (Bradshaw 2021a, pp. 54–55).

It seems that such perceptual interpretation might help to defend these arguments from various criticisms. After all, if they are only reports of experiences, one should not expect their full logical precision. Moreover, as Bradshaw points out, this character of the arguments for the existence of God allows us to better understand their function in patristics. The arguments were not meant to be persuasive, but rather propaedeutic. Their ultimate purpose was not the conversion of nonbelievers, but rather the preparation of believers to contemplate God's presence in the world (Bradshaw 2021b, pp. 58, 63). However, this appealing interpretation comes at a price.

Obviously, the more these arguments are treated as perceptions, the less persuasive they are to nonbelievers, as nonbelievers simply do not see what believers seem to see.

In any case, it seems that, for both historical and systematic reasons, natural theology and religious experience should not be set too much against each other. The two paths are not only compatible, but mutually reinforcing. As Travis Dumsday has neatly summarized:

this experiential path can still benefit from the enterprise of natural theology—the two are partners, not competitors. And because of this, the experiential objection against natural theology fails. The experiential path to knowledge need not (and perhaps for some cannot) be pursued to the exclusion of the philosophical path. (Dumsday 2021, p. 170)

However, their connection goes even deeper. It can be seen by comparing Bulgakov's and Bradshaw's remarks. On the one hand, Bulgakov pointed out that "only an immediate sense of God grants one to [...] come to know the world as a revelation of God" (Bulgakov 2012, pp. 23–24). Thus, the experience of God is a condition for accepting the arguments for God's existence. On the other hand, however, as Bradshaw noted, "having concluded that there is indeed no better explanation for cosmic harmony than an immensely powerful and intelligent Designer, it is far more plausible to see earthly events as governed by such an Intelligence (Bradshaw 2021b, p. 58). Arguments for the existence of God are thus a condition for spiritual perception. This connection seems to be a result of the close relationship between concepts and experience in general as described by contemporary philosophy of science.

Moreover, there are practical reasons for not discarding any of these strategies. For, as Swinburne pointed out, different people at different times in different places may have different needs. As he wrote in his first text on Palamas: "Gregory rightly did not think that there was a great need [...] for natural theology [...] among the fourteenth century Greeks to whom he ministered. [...] We however in twenty first century Europe are surrounded by people who need these things" (Swinburne 2013, p. 34).

At the same time, however, Swinburne recognized that even in our time believers may need analyses of religious experience: "But Gregory did of course think that there was a great need in the fourteenth century for the direct awareness of God which comes through prayer; and who could doubt that the same applies today?" (Swinburne 2013, pp. 34–35).

I think that in this perspective we can see anew the importance of Swinburne's and Gavryliuk's projects. Swinburne revives the tradition of natural theology, forgotten in the East but developed in the West, while Gavryliuk recalls the doctrine of spiritual perception, developed in the East but less present in the West. Thus, these two programs, carried out simultaneously by two prominent modern Orthodox thinkers, turn out to be surprisingly complementary.

The metaphysics of the Trinity

The problem of the Trinity is how to accept the following three propositions:

- (1) The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God,
- (2) The Father is not the Son, the Father is not the Spirit, the Son is not the Spirit, but nevertheless
- (3) There is only one God.

If we assume that the word “is” in these propositions means identity, then, as Bocheński has already pointed out, propositions (1) and (2) will plainly turn out to be contradictory. For, although we will have one God, we will not have three distinct persons. However, if we assume, as Bocheński hastily suggested, that the word “is” has a predicative sense, then propositions (1) and (2) would contradict (3). For, while we will have three distinct persons, we will no longer have one God. It is clear, then, that we need a more subtle interpretation of these propositions that preserves both the plurality of divine persons and the unity of God.

The formulation of a coherent interpretation of the Trinity is one of the tasks of the formal logic of religion. As I have pointed out, although Bocheński seemed to have some ideas about this problem, he did not ultimately propose a solution. In recent decades, however, we have witnessed an incredible growth of analytical theories of the Trinity. We have Peter Geach’s theory of relative identity, Richard Swinburne’s social trinitarianism, Brian Leftow’s Latin trinitarianism, Michael Rea and Jeffrey Brouwer’s constitutional theory, and many others (McCall, Rea 2009; Hasker 2013; Branson 2019). Each of these theories proposes some coherent solution to the problem of the Trinity. As if this were not enough, there is also James Andreson’s mysterianism, which claims that it is enough to believe that such a solution exists, and Basil Lourié’s paraconsistent option, according to which we should simply accept the contradiction of the Trinity.

However, as Beau Branson (2014, 2018) has pointed out, the problem with many, if not most, of these analytic theories of the Trinity is their fundamental ahistoricity. Analytic philosophers usually come up with some sophisticated models for interpreting the trinitarian formulas, but they rarely bother to relate them to the doctrines behind them. Thus, instead of defending traditional doctrine, they sometimes seem to invent their own. One analytic philosopher of religion, Dale Tuggy (2003, p. 165), has even suggested avoiding Greek and Latin terminology altogether. Analytic discussions of the Trinity are increasingly filled with weird examples of lumps of clay, time-traveling dancers, or three-headed dogs. Unfortunately, many of these abstract solutions are of no value to theologians since they ignore the proper context of the Christian doctrine. The analytic metaphysics of the Trinity thus begins to turn into, as Branson put it, “a large body of invalid arguments” (Branson 2014, p. 61).

In the face of this, Branson urged that contemporary analytic theology pay more attention to the context of dogmas. As he wrote, we need works that are “at once philosophically rigorous and historically sensitive” (Branson 2014, p. 4). In the case of the problem of the Trinity, this means that we should consider not only the abbreviated catechetical formulas, but also the underlying theological and philosophical discussions, and not formulate yet another abstract model, but rather analyze the writings of the authors who contributed to the formulation of the dogma. In short, analytic theologians should go back to the Fathers.

Branson not only formulated these postulates, but also sought to apply them in his own research. In his brilliant dissertation, *The Logical Problem of the Trinity*, he

carefully analyzed Gregory of Nyssa's ontology of the Trinity (Branson 2014; see also 2022). On the one hand, he engaged in careful historical research, and on the other, he applied advanced methods of formal reconstruction. His work thus seems to be a perfect example of analytic patristics.

Gregory of Nyssa, in his classic text *Ad Ablabium*, aimed to give a direct answer to the problem of the Trinity. He formulated it as follows:

Peter, James, and John, being in one human nature, are called three men [...]. How is it that in the case of our statements of the mysteries of the Faith, though confessing the Three Persons, and acknowledging no difference of nature between them, we [...] forbid men to say "there are three Gods"? (Gregory of Nyssa 1994, p. 331)

It seems natural, then, that his position should be the starting point for contemporary discussions. After all, "if Gregory's view does not count as a version of the Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, then we would not any longer know what the doctrine of the Trinity was" (Branson 2014, p. 268). Regrettably, as Branson shows, this position is not only neglected in systematic discussions, but not even well understood in historical works.

Florovsky was surprisingly little concerned with the Trinity. He believed that the proper starting point of theology was Christology, and that to begin with the mysteries of the Trinity threatens, as he wrote in a letter to Archimandrite Sophrony, "to fall into metaphysics and never reach theology at all" (Florovsky 2020, p. 78). Florovsky obviously had in mind the *a priori* speculations of Russian religious philosophy. However, in his lectures on the Church Fathers, he briefly dealt with the ontology of the Trinity in Gregory of Nyssa. Florovsky pointed out that the concept of consubstantiality appearing in the Creed was not at all intended to explain the unity of the Trinity. Rather, it was a general concept that applied, for example, to human beings who share a common nature. As he wrote: "For Gregory, as for all the Cappadocians, the distinction between the universal and the particular was only an auxiliary logical tool. Fundamental to his vision was the mysterious Trinitarian unity [...], the 'Trinitarian simplicity,' the living unity of being, the unity [*edinaia*] of life" (Florovsky 1931, p. 151).

The basis of the unity of the Trinity, then, should be the unity of life, or, as he further explained, first of all, the unity of action. For all the actions of the divine persons are common. Also, the unique unity of action was for him apparently closer than the familiar unity of nature: "The indivisible action of the Holy Trinity is one, and it belongs to all three persons. This [...] action (*energeia*) is one—it is not only common [*obshchaia*], but precisely one [*edinaia*], one and the same. [...] St. Gregory [...] in this way clearly goes beyond the universality of nature" (Florovsky 1931, p. 146).

It is this special unity of action that is supposed to distinguish the human and the divine persons. The three human persons have a common nature, but their actions are distinct. The three divine persons also have a common nature, but their actions are identical. Thus, the explanation of the unity of the Holy Trinity is not consubstantiality, *homoousia*, but rather cooperation, *synergeia*.

Branson, though unfortunately not referring to Florovsky, developed his analytic interpretation of Gregory in exactly the same direction. In his dissertation, he pro-

vided a detailed analysis of the three arguments from the *Ad Ablabium* in which Gregory sought to show why the Trinity does not consist of three gods. Branson noted that each argument was addressed to a different audience and therefore relied on different premises. One argument was directed at pagans, while two others were addressed to Christians. I omit here the argument to “straightforward people” (Gregory Gregory of Nyssa 1994, p. 331), which simply emphasizes the difference between Christian monotheism and pagan polytheism. The other two main arguments take up the key concepts of common nature and common action. Their analysis allows us to understand how Gregory ultimately interpreted the unity of the Trinity.

The first argument is based on the concept of a common nature. It says that since the name “God” refers to nature, and since three divine persons have a common nature, they can and should be called one God. However, since the name “man” also refers to a common nature, and since many human persons have a common nature, they can and should also be called one man. This seems absurd. Yet, surprisingly, Gregory insists that we should say so. For, as he points out: “the practice of calling those who are not divided in nature by the very name of their common nature in the plural, and saying they are ‘many men,’ is a customary abuse of language, and that it would be much the same thing to say they are ‘many human natures’” (Gregory Gregory of Nyssa 1994, p. 332).

Therefore, if one recognizes common natures, one should use the names of the natures in the singular. Thus, just as the Father, Son, and Spirit are one God, so Peter, James, and John are one man.

This argument seems rather desperate. For the solution to the philosophical problem here seems to be simply an arbitrary change in the way we speak. Gregory, in order to prove that one cannot speak of three gods, declared that one cannot speak of many people. Branson, however, argues that this startling conclusion was a natural consequence of combining the dominant theory of names of the time with the new Cappadocian concept of common nature. As he notes: “Gregory simply drawing out the obvious logical consequences of accepting what he takes to be a superior metaphysical theory of universal natures, while leaving the typical semantic assumptions of his interlocutors unchanged” (Branson 2014, p. 133).

The Cappadocian Fathers, to express the intuitions behind the concept of consubstantiality, assumed that natures exist in many things but remain numerically one (Cross 2002). Until now, it has usually been accepted that either, as in Neoplatonism, natures exist in things but are numerically distinct and form only one whole, or, as in Platonism, that natures are numerically one but exist outside of things. Gregory, along with his Cappadocian relatives and friends, accepted both immanence and identity. It is quite possible that the Cappadocian Fathers were, in fact, the first true immanent realists. In turn, the dominant theory of names at the time held that general names in principle referred to natures (Branson 2014, pp. 129–133). Now, when natures were considered as aggregates composed of their individual instances, it was possible to use general names in the plural. Each person, for example, had his own individual humanity, so there were many people. In turn, once natures were considered to be numerically one, general names in the plural could no longer be used. Since each person has the same human nature, there is really only one man.

Branson insists, however, that this was not Gregory’s preferred argument. For Gregory here made an assumption for the purposes of discussion with pagan philosophers

that he in fact did not accept. This assumption was the semantics of the word “God,” according to which this term refers to the divine nature understood in one way or another. According to Gregory, however, the term “God” does not refer to divine nature, but to divine acts. As he explicitly wrote, “the word ‘Godhead’ is not significant of nature but of operation” (Gregory Gregory of Nyssa 1994, p. 334). The term “God” was therefore, according to him, not a natural kind term, but rather an agent noun. Such an understanding was in line with the long tradition that already existed at the time, going back to Justin Martyr, Origen, or Ambrose (Bradshaw 2004, pp. 162–163). This tradition also had strong support in Scripture, especially in the Gospel of John (John 10:21–38; John 14:11). The argument from the unity of nature cannot therefore be seen as a presentation of Gregory’s own position.

The second argument is based on the concept of common action. It says that since the name “God” refers to actions, and since three divine persons have common actions, they can and should be called one God. There is no analogy here, as in the argument from the unity of nature, between divine and human persons, since the actions of different humans are never identical. This is why different people cannot be called one man. As Gregory wrote:

since among men the action of each in the same pursuits is discriminated, they are properly called many, since each of them is separated from the others [...]. Since then the Holy Trinity fulfils every operation [...] not by separate action [...] neither can we call those who exercise this Divine [...] operation [...], conjointly and inseparably, by their mutual action, three Gods. (Gregory Gregory of Nyssa 1994, p. 334)

Human persons have the same nature, but their actions are distinct. Human actions can at most be of the same type, but they can never be the same token. In the case of creatures, if many do the same thing, it is not really the same thing. However, the situation is different with divine persons. They also have the same nature, but their actions are exactly the same. For, according to the traditional doctrine, every operation of the Trinity “has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit” (Gregory Gregory of Nyssa 1994, p. 334). Hence, what we have here is not three distinct actions, but one action of three distinct persons. It is one token, not just one type of action. Hence, in the case of God, when many do the same thing, it is really the same thing. This, among other things, is the difference between human and divine persons.

Now, a theological doubt arises. It seems that certain actions were traditionally attributed specifically to certain divine persons. The doctrine of so-called appropriations says that while all actions of the Trinity are common, some of them are proper to certain persons. For example, creation is somehow proper to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Spirit. Agnieszka Czepielik (née Barszcz) tried to develop Branson’s analysis to find a space for appropriation and distinguished several senses of shared single action (Barszcz 2021, pp. 32–33). Branson only wrote about shared simple actions, but it seems also possible to share complex actions where each person has its own unique contribution. This is probably the case with appropriations. Moreover, there can be shared simple effects, as in the case of one billiard ball being pushed by another, and shared complex effects, as in the case of a relay race.

Therefore, according to Czepielik, the claim that all individual actions of the divine persons are common should be understood in such a way that “a given action is either not composite and belongs to all Three, or it consists of the actions of the Three, or it is a contribution to the common action of the Three” (Barszcz 2021, p. 35). In each of these cases, however, the action is something shared yet individual.

The unity of action, as Florovsky insisted, is clearly stronger than the unity of essence. For essences are something general, i.e., universals, whereas actions seem to be rather particular, i.e., tropes. As Branson wrote: “the metaphysical point about natures being indivisible monads above, does not have any parallel in the case of *energeiai*. [...] Rather, it would appear that, for Gregory, *energeiai* just form something like the Neo-Platonic collective universals he has denied in the case of hypostases and *ousiai* after all” (Branson 2014, p. 178).

Gregory thus adopted his new theory of immanent realism only for natures, while for actions he stuck with the traditional, at that time, view of trope mereological nominalism. Thus, the types of actions were not the universal natures present in many individual actions, but rather aggregates composed of many individual instances.

Nevertheless, such individual actions can be shared by many persons. Branson calls such a situation synergy, or cooperation. Actions, however, are not shared like common natures. Sharing the same actions by distinct people is more like sharing the same trope by different things. This is the case, for example, when one thing is part of another, or when one thing constitutes another. Thus, the sharing of the same individual operation indicates a very close union between persons, closer than in the case of having a common nature, but less close than in the case of numerical identity. Such unity, however, according to Gregory, is sufficient to prevent us from speaking of three gods.

Obviously, if many things are to have the same individual action, actions cannot be individualized by their things. As Branson observes: “What individuates the token *energeiai* [...] is not simply that they belong to distinct *hypostases*. Rather, [...] that what individuate the token acts [...] are qualities intrinsic to the particular acts themselves” (Branson 2014, p. 180).

Branson notes that a similar thesis about the prior individuality of events was advanced by Donald Davidson. Although Davidson never considered the possibility of two distinct persons performing exactly the same action, he accepted the possibility of the same action being performed by a distinct person in another possible world. This seems to loosen the ties between agent and action enough to allow for the possibility of synergy.

Now, if we combine Gregory’s metaphysics of divine energies with his semantics of divine names, we obtain a simple solution to the Trinity problem. As Branson puts it: “There is one God because there is only one token power and there is only one token action (*energeia*) shared among the Triad” (Branson 2014, p. 184),

The three divine persons do not have distinct actions, but share a single numerical action. The term “God” does not refer to nature, but to action. Therefore, since the action of the divine persons is one, it can and should be said that God is one. In short, the action of the three Persons is one, the term “God” indicates the action, and so there is one God. To say that there is one God refers to the unity of action, not to the unity of hypostases or the unity of nature. This solves the problem posed at the beginning of the *Ad Ablabium*, namely, why we do not say that there are three gods.

Is this a good solution? Certainly, it seems much more plausible than the earlier odd unity of nature argument. Ultimately, however, evaluating the unity of action argument is not easy because, as Branson points out, apart from the Trinity we know of no other examples in which many hypostases share a single action, and thus we have no developed intuitions about how to count them (Branson 2014, p. 275). Branson, however, suggests an illuminating analogy. Imagine a renovation crew consisting of three room painters who, like divine persons, share all their actions:

Now if one has a Trinitarian painting crew, and one is asked “how many painters” one can send, [...] then one’s options are simply to say “one painter” or “three painters.” Gregory clearly thinks that, strictly speaking, it really is the case that there is only one painter here. But even if he is wrong about that, it clearly is more misleading to say that there are three painters and less misleading to say there is only one painter. (Branson 2014, p. 193)

It is less misleading to say that there is only one painter since, for instance, the work of such a strange team takes as much time as the work of one person. Ironically, in this way, the analytical trinitarian imaginary has been enriched with yet another bizarre thought experiment. This time, however, at least it was invented to help understand the classical position.

Branson was primarily concerned with reconstructing Gregory’s theory, but he also pointed out that for centuries this had been the standard patristic explanation of the unity of the divine persons. The doctrine of common action was present in Athanasius, Ambrose, Leo the Great, and even Augustine. Moreover, the metaphysics of synergy is very well grounded in the New Testament (John 5:17; 10:24; 14:8). The contrast between the historical significance of this concept and its almost complete absence in contemporary discussions is striking.

It seems that Branson’s detailed analysis unexpectedly confirms Florovsky’s interpretation sketched in his lectures on the Church Fathers. Indeed, it turns out that consubstantiality plays only an auxiliary role in the theory of the Trinity. As Branson puts it: “surprising as it may be, the *homoousion* is not, in fact, essential to Gregory’s solution to the logical problem of the Trinity specifically, nor indeed even directly to his understanding of P [i.e., roughly, propositions (1)–(3)]” (Branson 2014, p. 290).

The common nature only indicates the equality of persons, and only their common action reveals their proper unity.

Branson hoped that a greater engagement of analytic philosophy in historical studies would benefit both analytic theology and patristic studies:

The dividends of such engagement will far outweigh the effort, both by saving the arguments of analytic theology from logical invalidity and by demanding greater clarity in the historical study of Christian thought. Analytic theology and historical theology have both much to gain from, and much to offer to, one another. We may hope to see these two fields develop a more robust conversation in the future. (Branson 2018, pp. 223–224)

I think his own work is a good example of such mutual benefit. In my opinion, it is one of the most interesting and important examples of analytic patristics to date.

Conclusions

In this paper, I wanted to point out the possibility of combining neopatristics and analytic philosophy of religion, which together yield the program of analytic patristics. As I suggested, analytic patristics could and should develop the systematic program of the logic of religion outlined by Bocheński, which includes the theory of language, methodology, and ontology of religion. As it turned out, however, such a program has in fact been carried out independently by many different scholars. I have focused here on three sample proposals from the theory of apophatic language, Orthodox natural theology, and patristic metaphysics of the Trinity. Finally, I would like to assess to what extent the existing fragments of analytic patristics continue and to what extent revise Bocheński's traditional views.

Bocheński's logic of religion was to be essentially a classical logic. Although he sometimes speculated that theology might need many-valued logics (Bocheński 1965, p. 57, 78; 1998, pp. 58–59, 128), he would probably never accept paraconsistent logics. As it turns out, however, some commentators believe now that it is the paraconsistent logics that best correspond to the intuitions of the Eastern Fathers. In particular, as we have seen, Basil Lourié has argued that a patristic theory of religious language requires the acceptance of contradictory propositions. However, dialetheism is not, I think, a necessary element of analytic patristics. It seems, for example, that neither Richard Swinburne nor Beau Branson would be willing to reject the principle of noncontradiction.

Bocheński, as I have indicated, took a rather limited view of the justification of religious beliefs. According to him, they were basically broad hypotheses explaining the existence and nature of the world. Bocheński did not attach much importance to religious experience, which plays such a large role in the patristic tradition. However, it turns out that, contrary to popular belief, there is also a tradition of patristic natural theology. Swinburne's Orthodox epistemology of religion is not so far from Bocheński's position, although it certainly allows more room for religious experience. However, this is not the only possible elaboration of patristic epistemology. As I indicated, David Bradshaw, for example, tends to emphasize spiritual perception over abstract reasoning. Lourié, on the other hand, may be even more skeptical of natural theology (Lourié 2020c).

It seems that Bocheński would have been most satisfied with the analysis of the problem of the Trinity proposed by Branson. After all, Branson wrote his doctorate at Notre Dame University, which was supposedly influenced by Bocheński. Branson not only reconstructed the patristic theory in classical logic, but also formalized it in predicate calculus and provided the proof of its consistency. However, here too there is room for discussion. For example, in his account of the Trinity, Swinburne understood the cooperation of the divine persons in a very different way and did not treat it as an explanation of the problem of unity (Swinburne 1994, pp. 170–191). Lourié, on the other hand, believes that a truly patristic doctrine of the Trinity must accept its irreducible inconsistency (Lourié 2016, 2018, 2019b, 2020b, 2022), which obviously undermines any effort to provide a consistent interpretation of the Trinity.

As we can see, analytic patristics is by no means a unified position. Lourié, Swinburne, and Branson differ significantly in their logic, epistemology, and ontology.

What they have in common, however, is the use of the tools of analytic philosophy for patristics. This, in my opinion, is enough to speak to a philosophical program. Moreover, I doubt that there is a universal patristic doctrine that only need to be discovered, clarified, and then propagated. Rather, I think one should expect a number of specific and competing positions of different Fathers on various issues. However, if these positions could be expressed in analytic terms and introduced into contemporary debates, it would be of great benefit not only to patristics but also to analytic philosophy.

The program of returning to the Fathers was first formulated by Florovsky, and the postulate of applying modern logical tools to religion by Bocheński. However, I am not sure that they would like the program of analytic patristics. On the one hand, Florovsky remained suspicious of all attempts at a rational analysis of faith. For, as he wrote, “striving for a logical exhaustion of faith, as if striving for a substitution of the living communication with God by religious and philosophical speculations about the Divine” is characteristic for the “erring Christian consciousness” (Florovsky 1989b, p. 75). On the other hand, Bocheński seemed to disregard the Eastern Christian tradition. When he was studying in Rome, he wrote in a letter to his father: “This year we have a course in Orthodox dogmatics. Papa, you have no idea what nonsense this is!” (Bocheński 2008, p. 29).

Thus, it seems that neither Florovsky nor Bocheński were free of clichés about logic, on the one hand, and Eastern patristics on the other. I think, however, that the analytic approach is not as alien to the Eastern tradition as both its defenders and its critics usually think. Basil of Caesarea, in his treatise on the Holy Spirit, which is one of the most important works of Eastern patristics, carefully analyzed the nature of prepositions in liturgical texts. Indeed, it was a work strikingly reminiscent of contemporary analytic philosophy of language. As he wrote (I, 2): “If any one laughs when he sees our subtilty, to use the Psalmist’s words [Ps 119:85], about syllables, let him know that he reaps laughter’s fruitless fruit; and let us, neither giving in to men’s reproaches, nor yet vanquished by their disparagement, continue our investigation” (Basil the Great 1994, pp. 2–3).

This detailed linguistic analysis led Basil to formulate the thesis of equal worship of the Son and the Holy Spirit, which in turn directly implied the thesis of the divinity of the Spirit. After Basil’s death, his formulations were directly incorporated into the final version of the Creed. In a sense, then, we owe our dogmas to the study of syllables. This, I think, is perhaps the best justification for the project of analytic patristics.

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Declarations

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