Begotten, Not Created

Rev. Fr. Anthony Cook

We talked last time about the buttressing synonyms of God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, in the Creed, all of which confirm and define each other to emphasize both the full co-equality of the Father and the Son, and the distinct identity of each.

We continue with the conclusion of that crescendo, the capstone of those three terms in the Creed in its final form: Light of Light, True God of True God, and finally, to perfectly and emphatically define those prior synonyms, Begotten, Not Created.

Now, we have seen this term “Begotten,” before, in the Creed - twice, in fact. The Son of God is the Only-Begotten Son of God, He is Begotten of the Father before all ages. This third and final appearance of the term is intended, then, not simply to repeat, but to better define the term as already used, to remove a potential interpretation of Begotten-ness that had been used and abused by the Arians in the course of the controversy.

The problem is that begotten-ness implies a time in which the begetting happens. It implies that one person, the begetter, acts, and a new person, the begotten, then comes into being - and thus, the begetter has made something new, has created someone. It is because of these implications that the Arians affirmed that God the Father, in begetting the Son, had created Him, making the Son part of Creation, and not truly God. But Christians had always affirmed Jesus Christ to be truly and fully God – hence the problem.

In this clause of the Creed, then, the Fathers of the Church simply redefine the word “begotten” for theological usage by saying that, when we Christians say the Son of God is begotten, we absolutely and emphatically do not mean by that that He was “created.” Whatever part of the word Begotten normally implies creation, or beginning, or that the one begotten is less than the one begetting, all those shades of meaning are cut out, are excised from the word and its meaning in a Christian context. That the Son of God is begotten of the Father means simply that the relationship between them is that of Father and of Son, that the Father is the Father, the Eternal God, and the Son is the Son, the exact image of the Father, Co-Eternal with Him.

We could go into more detail about this, but really, in the end, this is...
sufficient. All of these phrases in the Creed are themselves another instance of “buttressing synonyms” as we discussed last time. We are repeating, in different ways, with different words, the same basic point, in order to absolutely and perfectly affirm the Full and Perfect Divinity of the Son of God.

Before we conclude this episode, and move on to the next phrase in the Creed, the phrase which finally resolved the Arian Controversy, I want to spend the rest of our time today stepping away from the intensity of deep historical theology, lest we miss the forest for the trees, as it were. The primary point here is not the details of theological language, of careful definition, philosophical argument, and logical distinctions. The primary point here is that Jesus Christ is real, and we are called into relationship with Him. The theology we have been discussing, this insistence on the full divinity of Jesus Christ, matters for the relationship that we have with God. There are true things that can be believed about God, and there are false things that can be believed, and as we are embarking daily, each of us individually, and all of us within the Church as a community, on a journey of growth in communion with God, it is critically important that we believe the right things about God. Otherwise, we may easily be led astray, we may pursue the wrong kind of relationship with God, and all of this theological detail is in service of that fundamental point.

We will be moving on to the next portion of the Creed very soon, in which we discuss not only the Perfect Divinity of Jesus Christ, but the unutterable wonder that this Uncreated, Perfect, Infinite God, Who is so distant from us that we could never hope to raise ourselves up to even begin to encounter Him, has Himself lowered Himself and come into our midst, and called us to communion with Him, to relationship with Him, to growth in His image and likeness, to become like Him, to become part of Him, to become one with Him.

This is why it matters that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Light of Light, True God of True God, Begotten, not Created, of One Being with the Father, because this is the God Who has taken on our flesh and dwelt among us, this is the God that we encounter in the life of the Church. This is the God that we worship, this is the God that we love, in our broken and imperfect way.

So next time, we will set the seal on the Christological theology of the Church, and affirm that the Son of God is Of One Essence with the Father.

The above is the sixteenth installment of our new Adult Education Program, updated weekly at http://theruleoffaith.typepad.com. Comments/questions are welcome, by email or via a comment on the website.
Saint George Greek Orthodox Church, Southgate

**Presanctified Liturgies**

**AND**

**Lenten Potluck Meals**

Please come with your families to the Lenten Potluck dinners immediately following the
Presanctified Liturgies on the following dates:

Please bring the following Lenten food item according to the beginning letter of your
last name on the date of the Potluck Meal you are attending:

---

**FEBRUARY 21 (Wednesday) 6:00 PM**

A-G: Main Entrée
(examples: lentil bean soup, shrimp & rice, spaghetti)

H-N: Dessert
(examples: halva, Lenten cake, Lenten cookies, fruit)

O-Z: Side dish or salad
(examples: hummus, tabbouli, three-bean salad)

---

**MARCH 7 (Wednesday) 6:00 PM**

A-G: Side dish or salad
(examples: hummus, tabbouli, three-bean salad)

H-N: Main Entrée
(examples: lentil bean soup, shrimp & rice, spaghetti)

O-Z: Dessert
(examples: halva, Lenten cake, Lenten cookies, fruit)

---

**MARCH 21 (Wednesday) 6:00 PM**

A-G: Dessert
(examples: halva, Lenten cake, Lenten cookies, fruit)

H-N: Side dish or salad
(examples: hummus, tabbouli, three-bean salad)

O-Z: Main Entrée
(examples: lentil bean soup, shrimp & rice, spaghetti)
George Greek Orthodox Church
Southgate, Michigan

Ladies Philoptochos

PALM SUNDAY

FISH DINNER

April 1, 2018
Immediately Following Divine Liturgy

Donation
Adults: $15.00
Children 11 yrs. and under free

Please reserve your seat and pay in advance at the Reservation table, Church office, OR on our website (www.stgeorgesouthgate.org) no later than Wednesday, March 28.
EASTER SUNDAY MORNING
April 8, 2018
Approx. 1:45 am

"MAGIRITSA"
MEAL
(following Divine Liturgy)

Menu:
Magiritsa
Lamb
Greek Style Potatoes
Easter Bread
Greek Salad
Eggs

Donation: Adults $15.00
Children 11 years and under Free

Reservations online (www.stgeorgesouthgate.org) OR through the Church office (734.283.8820) no later than Wednesday, April 4.

***NO TABLE ASSIGNMENTS***