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Early Christian Creeds and Controversies in the Light of the Orality–Literacy Hypothesis

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The orality-literacy hypothesis developed in the largely complementary works of Walter J. Ong, S.J., and Eric A. Havelock grows out of the field research of Milman Parry (1971). Better than half a century ago, Parry initiated the investigation into the composing practices of completely non-literate Yugoslav singers of stories that culminated in the landmark publication of *The Singer of Tales* by Albert B. Lord (1960).[1] One of the central claims Ong and Havelock make in their formulation of the orality-literacy hypothesis is that the primary oral mentality is characterized by concrete thinking, while the literate mentality is characterized by abstract thinking. Coincidentally, the field research conducted by A. R. Luria (1976) better than half a century ago concerning the cognitive development of completely non-literate peasants and peasants who had participated in a literacy program corroborates this claim of the orality-literacy hypothesis.[2] In Ong's formulation of the orality-literacy hypothesis, he also notes that the primary oral mentality, and even the residually oral mentality of people who have acquired but who have not yet fully interiorized literacy and literate modes of thought, are characterized by formulary expressions.

Now these two major tenets of the orality-literacy hypothesis enable us to understand more fully than ever before the nature of the formulary and concrete expressions employed in the early Christian creeds and the nature of the Arian and the Pneumatomachian controversies over the abstract term *homoousios* in the Nicene Creed of 325 and in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, respectively. The former controversy involved the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, the latter the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. Both controversies involved a clash between the primary oral mentality and the literate mentality, but, as I hope to show, these clashes arose within the context of composing credal statements in accord with the dictates of the primary oral mentality. This essay proceeds through six points: (1) a discussion of key characteristics of primary orality and vowelized literacy, (2) a summary of J. N. D. Kelly's standard history of *Early Christian Creeds* (1972), (3) a close analysis of the largely oral character of the Greek text of the Creed of 325, (4) an analysis of the Arian controversy surrounding the Creed of 325, (5) an analysis of the Pneumatomachian controversy over the amendments added to the Creed of 381, and (6) some closing reflections about these investigations.

From the basic insights of Parry and Lord about the use of formulas, formulaic elements, and themes in oral poetry, Ong moves to the large claim that all verbal discourse in primary oral cultures and in residual forms of primary oral culture is largely formulary in nature. He implies that the formulary expressions which E. R. Curtius discussed in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1953) should be considered as oral residue in the sense of carryovers into writing of ways of thinking or expressing thought formulated before writing was invented and then perpetuated by writing itself until around the latter part of the eighteenth century (1971:255-83). He notes that the commonplaces of rhetoric—the kind of sayings Erasmus collected in his *Adages*—are formulary in nature.[3] Ong infers that thought had to be formulary in order to be remembered by highly oral people—not just the auditors, but also the composers themselves. For if the thought were not expressed in a formulary manner, it just simply would not be retained. This is an extremely important point to bear in mind with respect to the formulation of the early Christian creeds.

Havelock makes a second important point about the primary oral mentality that needs to be borne in mind. Oral discourse was attentive to the sensory (the concrete) and was more disposed to describing actions than to creating abstractions because people hearing what was said or sung could feel and follow concrete actions. Havelock repeatedly says that primary oral language is imagistic; Northrop Frye in effect says that primary oral language is metaphorical; and Ong says in *Orality and Literacy* (1982) that primary oral language involves concrete operational thinking; these three phenomenological accounts of the primary oral mentality are complementary, not competitive; therefore, their various descriptions can be used interchangeably. Primary oral people, Havelock points out, could not see or hear or taste categories, classes, relationships, principles, or axioms, and A. R. Luria's (1976) field research bears him out on these points. Oral tradition, according to Havelock, did not analyze history in terms of cause and effect, factors and forces, objectives and influences, and the like because these analytical processes were not amenable to the psychodymamics of memory upon which primary oral thought and expression are based.

Now Karl Barth says in *Dogmatics in Outline* that "the Bible is not a philosophical book, but. . . the book of God's mighty acts . . ." (1959:38). Barth here is not making so much a theological point, as he thinks he is, as a literary-anthropological one with considerable theological consequences. For he is in effect saying that the Bible comes out of a primary oral tradition. Even though the material in the Bible obviously was written down, the writing, I have suggested (Farrell 1986), largely transcribed primary oral patterns of thought and expression, and rightly so, for what was written was obviously intended to be read aloud later. Frye makes virtually the same points as Barth in *The Great Code* (1981:27):

> There are no true rational arguments in the Bible, not even in the New Testament, which despite its late date keeps very close to the Old Testament in its attitude towards language. What may look like rational argument, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews, turns out on closer analysis to be a disguised form of exhortation. Nor is there much functional use of abstraction. Biblical Hebrew is an almost obsessively concrete language, and while there are a few abstract terms like "nature" in the New Testament, they hardly affect what is still a metaphorical structure.

According to Havelock, the rational argumentation of philosophy, which Barth and Frye allude to, comes out of the development of vowelized phonetic alphabetic writing. Of course, the primary oral data of the Bible can be subjected to the reflection and abstract analysis of literate thought. If this were done, it would involve expressing in explicit abstract language what is implicit in the imagistic language of the Bible. If this were done, for example, with the threefold naming in the baptismal formula treated later in this essay, then one might use the concrete term *prosopon* or “person” to refer to each of the three distinct parties named therein.[4] Or one might use the rather abstract philosophic term *homoousios* or “consubstantial” to refer to the oneness of the three parties named in the baptismal formula. But the important points to note for the present are that early writing is largely a transcription of primary oral thought and expression and that truly literate thought develops gradually with the development of philosophy in ancient Greece.

The gradualness of this development comes home most clearly in Havelock’s magisterial account of *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* (1978), which happens to illustrate nicely the above-mentioned point about making explicit in abstract language what is implicit in imagistic language; for Plato’s concept of justice makes explicit the concept of justice that is implicit in Homer. As a matter of fact, a review of the etymologies of many abstract terms reveals that they began as rather concrete terms and then gradually took on more abstract meaning, and I would attribute this transformation to what Ong describes as the interiorization of literacy and literate thought. Because this point is important for my later analysis of Arianism, I would mention here that Lev S. Vygotsky (1962) claims that the word meanings in the thinking of children in the literate culture he was studying change just as they had changed historically, from relatively concrete referents to gradually more abstract terms (73, 124). The point is that literacy and the development of literate thought proceed by degrees, so to speak. That is, becoming literate involves more that just acquiring the basic rudiments of reading and writing a vowelized form of phonetic alphabetic literacy. While abstract literate thought did not develop with all-consonant Semitic alphabet, as Havelock points out in *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (1982), the Yahwist quality in the Bible that Herbert N. Schneidau variously calls self-criticism, demythologizing, and distanciation probably emerged with the development of the all-consonant Semitic alphabet, because this quality is not common in primary oral culture without some form of phonetic alphabetic writing (cf. Farrell 1987). Of course, it is true, as Havelock and Vygotsky indicate, that terms which come out of the concrete thinking of primary orality found in the Yahwist or in the early Christian tradition can take on abstract meaning over the centuries as they are appropriated for literary use, as has happened with the concept of person (cf. Rahner 1970:301-2).

Before we turn to considering the formulation of the early Christian creeds as such, let us briefly consider that part of the Bible on which they are based in the light of the two points we just noted about orality. The sayings of Jesus Christ are obviously formulary expressions, and his parables probably should be considered to be formulary in a certain way, as Kelber (1983) suggests, although I am not going to try to develop this point here. His acts of healing, exorcizing, teaching, and debating are obviously action-oriented deeds, and his birth, active life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension all clearly involve acts or events. In other words, the features of his life recorded in the accounts we have are in harmony with the orientation of the primary oral mentality, whereas accounts of his subjective state of consciousness or his thoughts would not be. Now, one of these accounts ends with the well-known rhetorical figure of speech that the account is not exhaustive in its treatment of the things Jesus Christ did (Jn. 21.25). No other account is exhaustive either, nor are all the accounts considered together exhaustive. Each account is selective, and each account selects presumably important things about Jesus Christ to pass on. (This selecting process involves a kind of abstracting, but so does all narrative; consequently, literacy may not be in play here. The product in the case of the four gospels is still not abstract philosophic statement, and this is still essentially the case with the other New Testament writings.) But even if we grant the importance of the things recorded in the New Testament writings, we would have to grant that there is a lot of material there to be remembered in, say, the living human memory of prospective converts. Consequently, just as the composers of the New Testament writings had to select salient points from the life of Jesus Christ, so too the followers of Jesus Christ needed to select salient points-to-repeat, in order first to attract and then to instruct prospective converts to the new faith. Moreover, they had to formulate these salient points in formulary expressions and in action-oriented language. Of course, the new members of the faith might later expand their knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ, but it probably was best for them to begin with the most prominent points first and then pick up the details later. It is important to recall that many of the prospective converts were not literate and that even those who were literate to some degree were still highly oral in their thinking.

With these considerations in mind, let us now turn to Kelly's careful account of the diverse background activities that contributed to the formulation of the Nicene Creed in 325. We begin with a brief review of the creeds and then move to some background information. Kelly (1972:296) points out that the creed now known to ordinary Christians as the Nicene Creed is misnamed. For the Nicene Creed of 325 (as it is designated in this essay) was not only reaffirmed, but also amended and expanded at the Council of Constantinople in 381. This amended creed has been considered authoritative in Christianity in the East and the West alike from the time of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Kelly says that the Apostles' Creed of the fifth century is "purely Western" (296) and "has no place in the liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox churches" (368), and he further notes that it is a rather elaborate variant of the Old Roman Creed which precedes the Nicene Creed of 325. The Old Roman Creed itself emerged gradually from the catechetical setting in which people were instructed in the faith preceding baptism. Declaratory creeds were ". . .pronounced before the candidate actually entered the baptistry and came to the water" (40), whereas interrogatory creeds, which proceeded by question and answer, were part of the baptismal rite as such. Here is how Kelly explains this complex situation (49):

> The double recital of creeds, one declaratory and one interrogatory, has always been something of an anomaly. The explanation is that the declaratory creed was really bound up with the ritual of the tradition and rendition of the creed, and this logically cohered with the catechumenate, not with the baptism itself. The only creed properly belonging to the baptism as such was the interrogatory one.

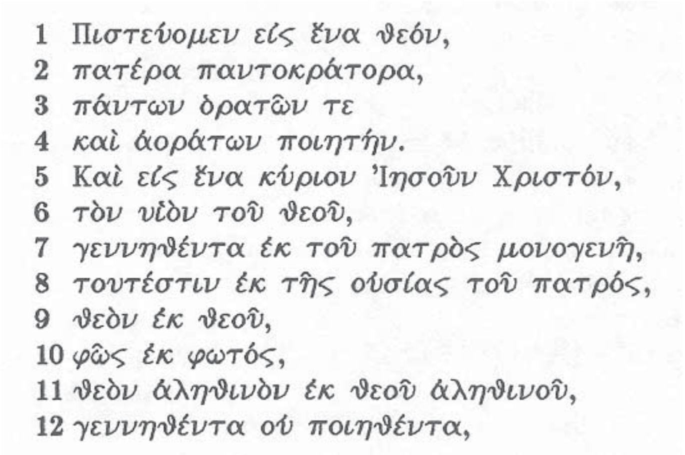
He goes on to note that the declaratory creed belongs ". . . to the second generation of the third century at the earliest" (49) and that the declaratory creeds borrowed in large measure from the baptismal interrogations; he points out that there is no trace of declaratory creeds in the early liturgies, although they eventually became a standard part of Christian liturgies.

Given this brief overview of the history, let us now consider these expressions of the faith with respect to the psychodynamics of primary orality. The language Kelly uses to describe the catechetical instruction repeatedly accentuates the formulary nature of the credal expressions of the faith: "It is obvious that teachers must always have felt the need for concise summaries, approximating as closely as possible to formulae. . ." (50). It would be tedious to list all the times that Kelly uses the terms "formula(e)," "formulary," "stereotyped," and the like, but we may note that he uses such terms on the average of about once a page without saying anything explicit about the primary oral mentality. Unlike Kelly, we can now understand the psychodynamics involved in instructing highly oral people: if the expressions of the faith were not formulary, they simply would not have been remembered by the catechumens, who, for the most part, were from a residual form of primary oral culture. (For that matter, so were the educated converts, although by virtue of their education they probably were literate to some degree.) It is also worth pointing out that as the expressions of the faith lengthened, they followed a narrative (that is, action-oriented) pattern and generally used straightforward paratactic or additive linguistic structures rather than elaborate structures of subordination. As noted above, the narrative approach, as distinct from the approach of what Frye calls rational argumentation, would be in tune with the orientation of the primary oral mentality, and Ong notes in *Orality and Literacy* (1982:37-38) that primarily oral discourse is additive rather than subordinative in its use of grammatical structures. On these bases, one may generalize from James A. Notopoulos' study of "Parataxis in Homer" (1949) and say that parataxis characterizes the primary oral mentality. This pervasive quality is manifested in paratactic grammatical structures, additive rhetorical structures, and episodic narrative structures.

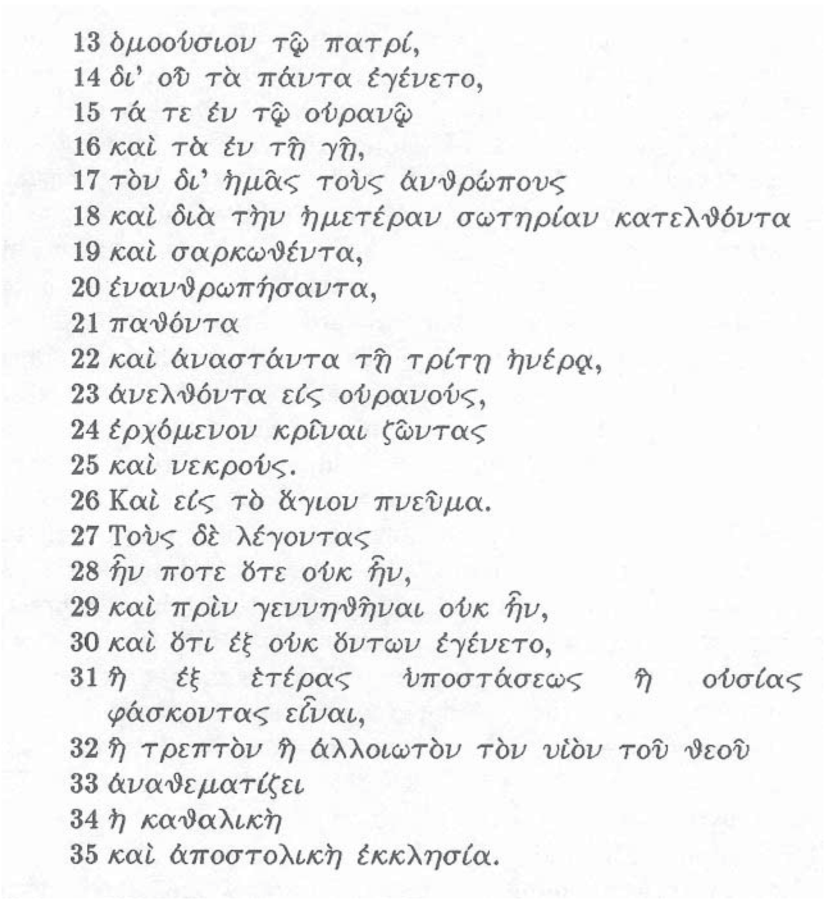
Readers who are familiar with the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, which is used by contemporary Christians, can readily see how the heritage of the narrative and paratactic oral features of thought and expression carried over into this expression of the faith, and these readers will see the survival of this oral heritage in the Nicene Creed of 325 when I quote it and analyze it later in this essay. Of course, the Creed is a fixed formulary expression, whereas truly oral (unwritten) formulary expressions are not fixed, but fluid or variable in the sense of being multiform in passing on "uniform" thought.

Let us now turn to the Council of Nicea. Of course, there were both political and theological concerns that contributed to the formulation of the Nicene Creed of 325. The emperor Constantine the Great had made Christianity the favored faith of the empire. The doctrines of Arius had divided Christians, and Constantine saw this division as a threat to the stability and well-being of the empire. His attitude bespeaks a highly oral mentality: the primary oral mentality is essentially tribal in orientation, and tribalism is predicated on outward manifestations of unity and loyalty. This attribute of orality explains why the Christians as well as the Jews were earlier readily considered suspect and easy prey to persecution and why in the early fourth century division among Christians could be considered a threat to the outward unity of the empire by Constantine. The Nicene Creed of 325 was designed to squelch the Arians and restore unity, but the Arians later managed to interpret a key term in this creed (a seemingly unambiguous, very abstract philosophic term) in a *concrete* manner consistent with their own contentions so that the controversy over Arianism eventually raged on. This suggests that aside from the substance of the debated matter—the term *homoousios*, consubstantial—the Arians might be considered to be manifesting a primary oral mentality. With this possibility in mind, let us look at the text of the Nicene Creed of 325.

Kelly (1972:215-16) gives both the original Greek and an English translation of this creed. Here is the Greek text he gives with what I consider to be its formulary expressions arranged paratactically to illustrate one point mentioned above about primary oral composing practices:



1 Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα ϑεόν,
2 πατέρα παντοκράτορα,
3 πάντων ὁρατῶν τε
4 καὶ ἀοράτων ποιητήν.
5 Καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν,
6 τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ϑεοῦ,
7 γεννηϑέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ,
8 τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός,
9 ϑεὸν ἐκ ϑεοῦ,
10 φῶς ἐκ φωτός,
11 ϑεὸν ἀληϑινὸν ἐκ ϑεοῦ ἀληϑινοῦ,
12 γεννηϑέντα οὐ ποιηϑέντα,



13 ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί,
14 δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο,
15 τά τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ
16 καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ,
17 τὸν δι᾽ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους
18 καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα
19 καὶ σαρκωθέντα,
20 ἐνανθρωπήσαντα,
21 παθόντα
22 καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτη ἡνέρᾳ,
23 ἀνελθόντα εἰς οὐρανούς,
24 ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας
25 καὶ νεκρούς.
26 Καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα.
27 Τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας
28 ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν,
29 καὶ πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν,
30 καὶ ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο,
31 ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι,
32 ἢ τρεπτὸν ἢ ἀλλοιωτὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ
33 ἀναθεματίζει
34 ἡ καθαλικὴ
35 καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

Of course, line divisions could be somewhat different for the English translation because English syntax is different from Greek syntax,[5] but the point is that formulary elements are obviously being used to compose this credal statement. The additive structures of primary orality are manifest in the translation as well as in the Greek original. Likewise, imagistic terms characteristic of primary orality abound in this credal statement (e.g., "Father" in line 2, "Son" in line 5, "Holy Spirit" in line 26, "almighty" in line 2, "begotten" in line 7, "light" in line 10), while the more abstract literate thought occurs in line 8 and 13. But the abstract terms are situated within a narrative structure which presumably would aid the memory of highly oral persons. Of course, the entire creed is structured around the formula used in baptizing in the name of the Father (lines 1-3) and of the Son (lines 4-26) and of the Holy Spirit (line 27). Except for lines 8 and 13, the formulary elements affirmed in this creed are undoubtedly by-products of the oral tradition of Christianity. Some of the affirmations about the Son are simply traditional Christian formulary expressions that were put in to flatly contradict equally formulary expressions of Arius about the Son, and the anathema (lines 27-35) unequivocally rejects the formulaic expressions of the Arians (e.g., lines 29, 30).

With the advantage of hindsight, a Christian today could readily argue that the teachings of the Arians were not consonant with the threefold naming in the baptismal formula. Why name three in the baptismal formula if they are not distinct and yet also equal and at the same time one? But the Arian mind boggled at the idea of two (Father and Son) without one being subordinate to the other. Is it possible that the idea of equality of being implied between the Father and the Son (and the Holy Spirit) was somehow impossible for the highly oral mind to grasp? In other words, must one acquire literate thought to a certain degree in order to grasp the idea of equality implied here—allowing the possibility that grasping the idea implied here is tantamount to acquiring literate thought to a certain degree? This matter of degree needs to be carefully considered. We today speak in honorific terms of a person who is "highly literate" to praise someone who is well read to a superlative degree, and so there is a basis in our usage for speaking of the degree of literacy in persons. Moreover, I have regularly used the term "basically literate" in my articles to describe inner-city black open admissions students who have mastered the rudiments of reading and writing but who nevertheless come from a residual form of primary oral culture.[6] Given my usage, I would say that Arius himself could have been basically literate but still highly oral in his thinking and therefore limited in his ability to understand abstract literate thought and perhaps thereby also limited in his potential ability to understand the relationship of equality between the Father and Son (and the Holy Spirit) implied in the threefold naming in the baptismal formula. Someone may argue against this interpretation by noting that Arius was educated and therefore literate beyond the rudimentary level. He was indeed educated in rhetoric, which is what education meant in his day (cf. Riché 1976, Kennedy 1980). Most likely, that education included some philosophy (or literate thought properly so called). But it undoubtedly also included training in the effective use of sound effects, rhythm, repetition, and other oral-acoustical dimensions of rhetoric. Since Arius became famous for teaching with clever ditties (that is, good-sounding formulary expressions), he obviously employed the oral-acoustical dimensions of his education in rhetoric more conspicuously than the presumed philosophic (or properly literate) dimension.

However that may be, the Nicene Creed of 325 clearly employs abstract literate thought in lines 8 and 13 where the philosophic term "substance" is employed, and it is revealing that the Arians subsequently managed to interpret even this term in a very concrete way, even though St. Athanasius says that the formulators of the clauses thought that the clauses were unambiguous (Kelly 1972:213). It is also instructive to note that diehard Arian missionaries were later quite active in converting the barbarians to their kind of Christianity, for the barbarians were still by and large primary oral people. Since this is a very benign interpretation of the origins and the appeal of Arianism, it is important to recall that Arianism made Jesus Christ neither God nor man but a demigod, like a Homeric demigod, whereas orthodox Christianity eventually came to hold that Jesus Christ was both God and man. These insights about the divine and the human natures of Jesus Christ are undeniably important. Consequently, their denial in Arianism was rightly opposed.

If this analysis of Arianism as a manifestation of a residual form of the primary oral mentality resisting a formulation of the literate mentality can be accepted, then a similar analysis might be proposed to account for the similar resistance in the Pneumatomachian controversy to the proposed application of the abstract (or literate) term *homoousios* to the Holy Spirit. As a result of this controversy, the Creed of 325 was amended at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It is important to note that the formulary expressions added to the Creed about the Holy Spirit are all concrete terms. Kelly (341) notes that most of these expressions have scriptural flavor: "the Lord" (2 Cor 3.17), "the giver of life" (Jn. 6.63), "he proceeds from the Father" (Jn. 15.26), and "he spoke through the prophets" (2 Pet. 1.21). While "The Tome of Damasus," which was probably composed around 377-78 and which was confirmed by the General Council in Rome in 382, and "The Synodical Letter of the Council of Constantinople," which was issued in 382 by the second council held in Constantinople,[7] employed abstract terms to characterize the Holy Spirit (e.g., "equal," "one divinity," "only one true divinity," and "of the divine substance" from the former document, and "the uncreated and consubstantial and coeternal Trinity" from the latter), Kelly notes that the Creed of 381 employed the language of St. Athanasius and St. Basil in the expression "who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified." He rightly points out that this language was less offensive than other language already being used to characterize the Holy Spirit. The orality-literacy hypothesis now enables us to see that the language added to the Creed of 381 is concrete action-oriented language attuned to the primary oral mentality and that the other language in use at the time is abstract language of the kind fostered by vowelized literacy. Moreover, this hypothesis suggests that the abstract (or literate) language was offensive to certain people precisely because they were still deeply attuned to the primary oral mentality.

Someone might object that even a highly literate person could reject either the claim that Jesus Christ was of one substance with the Father or the claim that the Holy Spirit was of one substance with the Father and the Son, or both claims. Indeed, John Milton, whom Ong (1977b:189-212) considers to have interiorized literacy extremely deeply, is known for his Arianism. Of course, being highly literate does not necessarily mean that the Christian believer will grasp and assent to the doctrine that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of one divine substance and equal. But that is not the question raised in this essay. In other words, I do not treat the question of being literate as a sufficient condition for grasping abstract thought. Rather, the essay suggests that being literate is a necessary but not sufficient condition for grasping abstract thought. Now someone else might ask if this means that a person must be literate in order to be a Christian. Since one becomes a Christian by being baptized, the above summary of Kelly's account of the history of baptism should indicate that one does not need to be literate in order to be baptized and thereby become a Christian. Moreover, one does not need to be literate to remember and recite the Creed of 381, and one does not necessarily need to grasp the meaning of *homoousios* in the Creed of 381 in order to be a faithful Christian. But it may deepen one's faith if one does come to understand the meaning of *homoousios* as well as a number of other abstract concepts which developed over the centuries, and to the extent that one does understand them one may be said to be literate.[8]

In *The Presence of the Word* (1967), Ong raises the question of why divine providence chose the time it did to enter human history. I might close with a bit of speculation about this point based on the foregoing analyses: the primary oral mentality probably still had to be strong for people to believe in Jesus Christ, and yet the literate mentality probably had to be developed and waiting in the wings, so to speak, in order to eventually help make as understandable as a mystery can be, how the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one and yet distinct, as the threefold naming in the baptismal formula implies.

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Notes

[1] Of course, Lord's book stimulated considerable subsequent research. For example, Berkley Peabody (1975) has provided a detailed study of orality in Hesiod, while Michael N. Nagler (1974) has produced an insightful generative theory of Homeric oral composition which may be helpful in understanding oral composition in other languages. In addition, John Miles Foley annotates some 1800 items in more than 90 language areas in his bibliography of *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research* (1985). Moreover, Parry's attention to oral tradition as such deeply influenced the phenomenological studies of primary orality and literacy offered by Ong (1967, 1971, 1977, 1982), Havelock (1963, 1978, 1982, 1983a, 1983b), and Marshall McLuhan (1962). Their works in turn have influenced to one degree or another the analyses of historical phenomena presented by Frans Josef van Beeck, S.J. (1979), Werner H. Kelber (1983), Pheme Perkins (1980), M. T. Clanchy (1979), Brian Stock (1983) Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979), and Kevin B. Maxwell, S.J. (1983).

[2] For an extensive discussion of the nuances of this claim, see Farrell 1986.

[3] I would suggest that literary studies such as *Chaucer's Use of Proverbs* (Whiting 1934), *Proverbs in Earlier English Drama* (Whiting 1938), *Elizabethan Proverb Lore in Lyly's* Euphues *and in Fettle's* Petite Pallace (Tilley 1926), *Spenser's Proverb Lore* (Smith 1970), and *Shakespeare's Proverbial Language* (Dent 1981) need to be considered in the light of Ong's insight about the attraction of formulary expressions for highly oral people. Of course, not only primary oral people generated formulary expressions. Essentially literate but still highly oral people produced learned formulary expressions such as *sententiae* (e.g., Smith 1970). Moreover, if one considers Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (cf. Ong 1958:57) to be learned formulary expressions writ large, so to speak, then one might wonder if Erasmus' antipathy to the schoolboy scholasticism of his day was due in part to the formulary nature of the teachings.

[4] Concerning the concreteness of this term, see Grillmeier 1975:126 and

elsewhere.

[5] To illustrate the point, here is a comparable division of the English translation provided by Kelly:

1 We believe in one God
2 the Father almighty
3 maker of all things visible and invisible;
4 And in our Lord Jesus Christ,
5 the Son of God,
6 begotten from the Father,
7 only-begotten,
8 that is, from the substance of the Father,
9 God from God,
10 light from light,
11 true God from true God,
12 begotten not made,
13 of one substance with the Father,
14 through Whom all things came into being,
15 things in heaven
16 and things on earth,
17 Who because of us men
18 and because of our salvation
19 came down
20 and became incarnate,
21 becoming man,
22 suffered
23 and rose again on the third day,
24 ascended to the heavens,
25 will come to judge
26 the living
27 and the dead;
28 And in the Holy Spirit.
29 But as for those who say,
30 There was when he was not,
31 and, Before being born He was not,
32 and that He came into existence out of nothing,
33 or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance,
34 or is subject to alteration or change—
35 these the Catholic
36 and apostolic Church
37 anathemizes.

[6] See Farrell 1972, 1974, 1976-77, 1978, 1979, 1983.

[7] Cf. Burns and Fagin 1984:150ff. for these texts in English.

[8] The author wishes to thank Frans Jozef van Beeck, S.J., Mary T. Malone, and John P. Egan, S.J., for their helpful comments on this essay.

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