

## UNIT 2C: TRADITION

### 57: The 7th Ecumenical Council & East-West Tensions

This lecture considers seven related topics: (1) The theology of icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council; (2) The decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council; (3) The underlying theology of the Seventh Ecumenical Council; (4) Toward an integrated Orthodox Christian life; (5) Two 9th century theologians of note: St Photios the Great and St Symeon, the New Theologians; (6) Conclusion: The East and the West; and (7) An appendix on the Filioque. The focus is on understanding the place of icons in the Orthodox Church, as well as on the growing tensions between the East and the West.

#### The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council

The art historian, Robin Cormack has posed the question: What are “the allowable functions of religious art”?<sup>1</sup> In a sense, this was the question with which the Church struggled from the end of the seventh century until the end of the ninth century, seeking to understand the relationship of beauty to worship. The broad scope of the question is justified by the fact that during the Byzantine period, icons (from the Greek word, *eikon*, meaning image) meant not only frescos or paintings on wooden panels (as today), but many other forms of art, including “mosaics, carved ivory, illustrated manuscripts and even statues.”<sup>2,3</sup> Certainly, Professor Cormack is correct that the Quinisext Council in 692 placed art “firmly on the

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<sup>1</sup>Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 86. Robin Cormack was formerly Professor of History of Art at the University of London, Deputy Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art and Co-curator of the 25 October 2008-22 March 2009 Royal Academy of Arts Exhibition, *Byzantium 330-1453*.

<sup>2</sup> Statues are generally absent from Orthodox temples because three dimensional media cannot articulate theology without impressionism, naturalism or sentiment - theology in canonical two dimensional media being one of the main functions of an icon. Carvings in relief are allowable but not very commonly used.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Louth. “Iconoclasm” and “Iconography,” pp. 318-319 in Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason & Hugh Pyper (Eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 319.

theological agenda.”<sup>4</sup> However, Cormack’s aesthetic focus (supported by an insightful analysis of Byzantine politics) is misleading as well as illuminating. Art was a pawn on the chessboard of Christological controversy—one aspect of the struggle to define the nature of Christ, how He should be worshipped, and the meaning of the Incarnation. The icon is primarily “a sign of the presence of God,” a place where each believer can stand and pray and affirm, “Behold my faith.”<sup>5</sup>

The theological controversy continued through the Quinisext Council, the local council in the palace of Hieria at Chalcedon in 754, the Seventh Council at Nicea in 787, the local council in St Sophia in 815, and the Synod in Constantinople in 843 at which the Triumph of Orthodoxy and the affirmation of the holy icons was confirmed. Each of these five gatherings made significant and often conflicting contributions to the theology of the holy icons, but it was the Seventh Council in 787 that defined the theology of the holy icons that the Orthodox Church eventually adopted. Thus it is important to understand the decree of the Seventh Council and its underlying theology.

### **The Decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council**

The eight short paragraphs of the decree of this council (leaving aside the opening and closing salutations) were written after eight sessions and the promulgation of 52 canons. There was also a subsequent letter to the six-year-old Emperor Constantine VI and his mother, the Empress Irene, who was Regent and a firm supporter of icons. The council had opened in 786, but then been dissolved at the first session when the imperial guard, who supported the destruction of icons,

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<sup>4</sup> Cormack, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Alfredo Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*. Trans. by Stephen Sartarelli from the Italian, *Icone e santi d’Oriente* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004/2006), p. 6

had revolted.<sup>6</sup> However, with an astute military campaign, Irene had disarmed the mutineers, and then reassembled the council in the more secure area of Nicea. Everyone present would have been well aware that “the politicisation of religious art impinged upon every area of thought and action,”<sup>7</sup> but their concerns were primarily theological and pastoral. The decree expressed the hope that the Church “may receive stability by our common decree.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the decree and supporting canons were unanimously agreed by the more than 300 bishops, monks and legates—the last of the councils to be accepted by the universal church.<sup>9</sup>

The primary means of achieving stability, as expressed in the first full paragraph of the decree, was to affirm that Christ had “bestowed upon us the light of the knowledge of Himself” and “redeemed us from the darkness of idolatrous madness.” The second paragraph of the Decree stressed the distinction between “holy and profane,” between “the images of our Lord and of his Saints [and] the statues of diabolical idols.” **[1]**<sup>10</sup> The third paragraph reiterated the Nicene Creed; and the fourth paragraph affirmed the formulation of the Council of Ephesus of 431 of Christ’s two natures, “recognizing him as perfect God and perfect man.”<sup>11</sup> The fifth paragraph kept unchanged

all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, agreeable to the history of the preaching of the Gospel, a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that so the incarnation

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<sup>6</sup> Egon Sendler, *The icon: Image of the invisible: Elements of Theology, Aesthetics and Technique*. Trans. By Father Steven Bigham from the French, *L’icone: Image de l’invisible* (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1981/1986), pp. 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> Cormack, p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Schaff & Rev. Henry Wallace (Eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second series, Vol. XIV (Cosimo, NY: Cosimo Classics, 1900/2007), p. 549.

<sup>9</sup> There are up to four post-Schism Councils that may as yet be formally recognised as Ecumenical.

<sup>10</sup> The numbers in bold link with the theology of the next section of this essay.

<sup>11</sup> Schaff & Wallace, p. 549.

of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely phantastic [i.e. fantastic]....[2]

Thus the first five paragraphs set the scene for the detailed affirmation of iconography that was to follow.

The key sixth paragraph drew out the practical implications of icons for the Church and its members:

We . . . define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting an mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honourable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them;[3] and to these should be given due salutation and honourable reverence [proskynesis schetike], not indeed that true worship of faith [latria] which pertains alone to the divine nature;[4] but to these, as to the figure of the precious life-giving Cross and to the Book of the Gospels and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. For the honour which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the seventh paragraph confirmed that the Book of Gospels, the image of the cross, the pictorial icons and the relics of martyrs were not to be rejected, while the eighth paragraph “cried out”:

So we all believe, we all are so minded, we all give our consent and have signed. This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the orthodox, [5] this is the faith which hath made firm the whole world. Believing in one God, to be celebrated in Trinity, we salute the honourable images! . . . We place under anathema those . . . who presume to apply to the venerable images the things said in Holy Scriptures about idols....<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Schaff & Wallace p. 550.

<sup>13</sup> Schaff & Wallace, p. 550-551.

Although the decree's firm support for iconography is clear, the underlying theology requires further analysis.

### The Underlying Theology of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

A close reading of the decree suggests five important aspects of a theology of the holy icons, linked with the bold numbers in the text above. First, **respect for the images of Christ, the Theotokos and the saints is not idolatry**. The iconoclasts who sought to destroy all icons had interpreted the second commandment literally ("You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth." Exodus 20.4). God himself has no form (Deuteronomy 4.12); however, certain forms such as the gold cherubims at the two ends of the mercy seat on top of the ark (Deuteronomy 25.18) and the healing serpent on the signal pole (Numbers 21.8) are clearly welcomed in the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> There was a danger, especially before the incarnation, that a likeness could become an idol, but there was a strong tradition of Christian representational art, especially in the context of funerals and burials.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the major "intellectual architect" of the theology of this council, St John of Damascus (650/5-750), had already clearly distinguished between icons and idols, citing the Old Testament references above.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Father Stephen Maxfield, "Christology: The Icon and Iconoclasm," Lecture 8, Doctrine II, (Walsall, West Midlands, UK: Midlands Orthodox Study Centre of St Theodore of Canterbury, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Sister M. C. Murray, "Art and the Early Church", *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 28, 1977, pp. 303-344; cited by Mariamna Fortounatto & Mary B. Cunningham "Theology of the Icon," pp. 136-149 in Mary B. Cunningham & Elizabeth Theokritoff (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*. Trans. D. Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 8<sup>th</sup> century/1980), I.15; II.9; Augustine Cassidy, "Church fathers and the shaping of Orthodox theology," pp. 167-187 in M. B. Cunningham & E. Theokritoff, *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, p. 178; Fortounatto & Cunningham. See also P. Baker, P., "Byzantium: 330-1453. An introduction to the exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts for teachers and students" (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008) and Robin Cormack & Maria Vassiliki, *Byzantium, 330-1453* (Royal Academy Publications, 2008).

Second, **an icon of Christ affirms the incarnation**; and this was the central point that the decree wished to establish. In the words of St John of Damascus:

. . . I adore the one who became a creature, who was formed as I was, who clothed himself in creation without weakening or departing from his divinity, that he might raise our nature in glory and make us partakers of his divine nature.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the Incarnation changed our understanding of God, as St John of Damascus pointed out:

In former times, God, who is without form of body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see.<sup>18</sup>

Later, after the death of St John of Damascus, St Theodore the Studite (from the monastery of Studios in Constantinople) (759-826), rejected the iconoclastic argument that

Divinity cannot be portrayed. Either the divine nature is confused with the human nature, which is monophysitism; or else, if the human nature alone is portrayed, the two natures are separated, which is Nestorianism.<sup>19</sup>

On the contrary, argued St Theodore in *On the Holy Icons*:

If Christ cannot be portrayed, then either He lacks a genuine nature (which is docetism) or His nature is submerged in His divinity (which is monophysitism).<sup>20</sup>

In working out a justification for iconography, the decree of the Seventh Council clarified and deepened the human understanding of the Incarnation and the nature of Christ. Leonid Ouspensky reflected that the Church gradually created

an art new both in form and content, which uses images and forms drawn from the material world to transmit the revelation of the Divine world, making this world accessible to understanding and contemplation.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, I.4.

<sup>18</sup> St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, I.16.

<sup>19</sup> Catharine P. Roth, "Introduction" to St Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Roth, p. 11 and *On the Holy Icons*, I.2-4.

<sup>21</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, "The Meaning and Language of icons", pp. 23-49 in Leonid Ouspensky & Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*. Trans. G. E. H. Palmer & E. Kadloubovsky (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1952/1999), p. 30.

This art, “new both in form and content” was made possible by the incarnation, because an icon of Christ does not depict “either His divine or His human nature, but His Person in which both these natures are incomprehensibly combined.”<sup>22</sup>

Third, the confusion between prototypes and images was clarified; and Christians were urged to seek deification. The emphasis (set out in the previous paragraph) upon the person of Christ with His two natures, divine and human, firmly rejected monophysitism—the idea that Christ has a single nature in which God and manhood are somehow combined into a hybrid or ambiguous “mingled nature.”<sup>23</sup> The Seventh Ecumenical Council rightly recognised that iconoclasm was a form of monophysitism; and it was precisely because God became man that the image of Christ *can* be painted. Indeed, the image of Christ *should* be painted to help us to become more like God. What Dimitru Staniloae terms “the example of the deification of Jesus Christ’s humanity”<sup>24</sup> becomes a model for how each of us can seek deification, especially in painting or praying before an icon of Christ.

As St Theodore expressed it, “even if there are many representations, still there is only one Christ, and not many.”<sup>25</sup> The image of Christ drew a person to Christ, the prototype—the original form, the model—but the image was not Christ Himself. Following John Meyendorff’s *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, the French Jesuit theologian Egon Sendler has reflected:

. . . images are not the ultimate object of veneration because the image only has a reality in relation to the object represented: the image is the reflection of the prototype. Because the veneration of the image is

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<sup>22</sup> Ouspensky, p. 32. See also Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*. 2 vols. Trans A. Gythiel with E. Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978/1992).

<sup>23</sup> Father John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*. (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 228.

<sup>24</sup> Dimitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*. Trans. Archimandrite Jerome Newville & Otilia Kloos (South Canaan, PA: St Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002), p. 363.

<sup>25</sup> St Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981), I.9.

addressed to the prototype, Christ, [so] the veneration is transformed into worship.<sup>26</sup>

In a similar vein, icons of the saints represent them in such a way that those who see the images are drawn to behave as saints themselves:

The challenge for the iconographer is to paint human beings who already in their earthly lives have passed beyond the threshold of the Kingdom. The saints' experience of the divine must be translated so that the beholder may contemplate the Kingdom through the icon and acquire sanctification through the grace of the Holy Spirit, fulfilling what all God's creation is called to become. Thus, gold is used in haloes but also in backgrounds as a sign of deification.<sup>27</sup>

Underlying this desire to create "a longing" after the saints is an affirmation of the possibility of transformation, of remoulding ordinary human lives in the image of Christ. As Ouspensky comments:

The Church recognised that the divine action transfiguring man originates in the uncreated, imperishable light, the energy of the Divinity felt and contemplated in the body.<sup>28</sup>

The decree of the Seventh Council set up the foundations of a theology of the body.

Fourth, **reverence for images was distinguished from true worship of God.** St John of Damascus had distinguished between "adoration, which we offer to God" and "honour" or "respect" which we offer to exemplary persons of the Old Testament.<sup>29</sup> Sendler suggests that:

The central truth of the [Seventh] council can be summed up in the following distinction: images receive relative or honorific veneration, *proskynesis schetikie*, and not worship, *latría*, which we offer to God alone.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Sendler, p. 28, summarising John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1969/1975), pp. 173-192.

<sup>27</sup> Fortounatto & Cunningham, p. 142.

<sup>28</sup> Vol. II, p. 250, cited by Fortounatto & Cunningham, p. 142

<sup>29</sup> St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, I.14.

<sup>30</sup> Sendler, p. 28.



In trying to understand what St John of Damascus termed “the different degrees of worship [or proskynesis],”<sup>31</sup> it is important to remember that the vast majority of Christians in the eighth century were illiterate. As St John of Damascus reminds us, “Just as words edify the ear, so also the image stimulates the eye. What the book is to the literate, the image is to the illiterate.”<sup>32</sup> As the American historian, Robert Norrell has pointed out in a different context, we must take care to avoid “the fallacy of anachronism”—the representation of history out of its proper order.<sup>33</sup> The break of the Church from iconoclasm occurred when there were few books, few readers, few people aware that transformation could occur in their tightly defined social and spiritual lives. Today the icon still acts as “a window, or passageway, between human beings and God”<sup>34</sup>; however, outside of church we can also be drawn to God today by reading and reflecting on the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the saints, whereas for 8th century Christians the liturgy, especially the Eucharist and the readings in the midst of many icons, was the primary path for worshipping God.

Fifth, **respect and veneration for icons are an important aspect of how Orthodoxy overcomes the world.** The ringing proclamation that “honourable images” are part of “the faith of the Apostles ... the faith of the orthodox ... the faith which [makes] firm the whole world” was confirmed at the synod in Constantinople in 843 and first celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, 11 March 843 and thereafter as the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Each of these three aspects of faith are part of the theology of the holy icons—that the faith celebrated in the Orthodox Church of the eighth and ninth centuries was the same faith exercised by the Apostles, that Orthodox faith includes the veneration of icons, and that faith confirms the reality of both the material and the Divine world. In essence, the

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<sup>31</sup> St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, I.14.

<sup>32</sup> St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, I.17.

<sup>33</sup> Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Fortounatto & Cunningham, p. 137.

theology of the holy icons is that icons are included among “all things that pertain to life and godliness” that God in “His divine power has granted to us” in order that we may “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1.4).<sup>35</sup>

### **Toward an Integrated Orthodox Christian Life**

Catherine Roth, the translator of St Theodore the Studite’s *On the Holy Icons*, ponders the danger of the modern understanding of the material world as “mere matter”—what might be termed “a creation without a creator.”<sup>36</sup> However, as St Theodore has written these

visible things are corporeal models which provide a vague understanding of intangible things.... We see images in the creation which, although they are only dim lights, still remind us of God. For instance, when we speak of the holy and eternal Trinity, we use the images of the sun, light and burning rays....<sup>37</sup>

St John of Damascus was equally explicit:

I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who willed to take his abode in matter, who worked out my salvation through matter.<sup>38</sup>

Thus a sacramental awareness that matter is linked with the intangible and the invisible is central to a theology of the holy icons. However, the holy icons and the Holy Gifts are very different expressions of this connection between the spiritual and the material or physical. Whereas in the icon we have a prototype of the original, in the Eucharist and Holy Communion we have the reality Himself, Christ given to the faithful in the Body and the Blood. As soon, therefore, as the chalice is presented from the altar, all veneration should cease. We have Christ Himself!

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<sup>35</sup> Note that St Peter is not referring to icons explicitly in 2 Peter 1.4, but his text has been applied to icons here.

<sup>36</sup> Catharine P. Roth, “Introduction” to St Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981), p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> *On the Holy Icons*, I.11.

<sup>38</sup> *On the Divine Images*. I,16.

Sendler captures this unity of the material and spiritual worlds with his concluding definition of the theology of icons:

In the icon, we see a divine reality which goes beyond the dimensions of this earthly world but which at the same time respects this earthly world because it is created by God to become transfigured in his Spirit.... What is essential is that [in the icon] the world is transfigured.... Is not the most beautiful work that an artist can accomplish to be found in making God's light shine on his creatures?<sup>39</sup>

Not surprisingly, Ouspensky suggests that “the fullest teaching on the icon” was given by this Seventh Ecumenical Council because

The icon is placed on a level with the Holy Scriptures and the Cross, as one of the forms of revelation and knowledge of God, in which Divine and human will and action become blended.<sup>40</sup>

That is precisely the goal of Christian living to which the theology of the holy icons makes a significant contribution—to unite the Divine and human wills.

## Two 9th Century Theologians of Note

### St. Photios the Great (c. 810-c. 895)

In the aftermath of the iconoclastic controversy and in the ninth century one Eastern patriarch (of Constantinople) and his contribution to Orthodox theology sets both the tone and the agenda, above all others, for the growing alienation of the so called Latin West and Greek East—St Photios the Great. The controversy engendered by the long running altercation between himself and the rival patriarch Ignatius who preceded him—both men being sponsored alternately by rival and successive Emperors with and without the support of Rome—nudged both Christian traditions, east and west, further and further apart. The resentment in Constantinople against what was seen as Roman interference in the affairs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Latin bid for jurisdiction over the newly autocephalous Bulgarian Church prejudiced Orthodoxy against an ascendant papacy for centuries to come. Yet, St. Photios was no mere political figure. His impressive

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<sup>39</sup> Sendler, pp. 182-183.

<sup>40</sup> Ouspensky, pp. 30-31.

intellectual achievements in systematising to some degree Orthodox theology in the *Myrobiblion* and the *Amphilochia* was his lasting legacy to the Church. He wrote other treatises and sermons, notably one against the dualist Manichaeans (mainly concerning the Paulicians) and the other: “The Treatise on the Holy Spirit” a seminal work objecting to Western dogma, most especially the “Filioque” clause in the Nicene Creed (see Appendix). After a final deposition, he died at the Convent of Armeniaki at the close of the ninth century. Many of the theological components of the Great Schism of 1054 were anticipated in his works; not only the “filioque” but also the ecclesiology of the monarchical papacy as it was being developed in the West.

### **St. Symeon the New Theologian (949 - 1022)**

Symeon the New Theologian is the latest of three saints of the Church to have been given the title of “Theologian” although his title of “new” was to distinguish him from another contemporary Symeon, Symeon the Elder. He was born in Galatia, Paphlagonia and his father prepared for him an education to equip him for a life of service in the Imperial court. However, he abandoned this life for a monastery at the age of 27 under his Elder, Simeon the Pious at the Studite monastery. Later he became Abbot of the Monastery of St. Mammias in Constantinople.

The strict monastic discipline for which Symeon aimed made him unpopular in the monastery. One day after the Divine Liturgy some of the monks attacked and nearly killed him. After they were expelled from the monastery Symeon interceded for them. From the Church authorities also, Symeon encountered strong opposition, as his teaching was an implicit indictment of a church that had lapsed into formalism and indolence. Some wanted him banished from Constantinople. He left public life to take up residence in the Monastery of St. Makrina across the Bosphorus. Eventually he became a hermit. Symeon was a poet who embodied the mystical hesychastic tradition. He wrote that humans could and should experience *theoria* (direct experience of God). Symeon saw the vision of the Divine Light and personal

union with God as the goal and end of human existence. His works influenced the hesychastic movement of the 14th century (See Lecture 58).

### **Conclusion: The East and the West**

In this period of Church life before the Great Schism we can discern those characteristics of Orthodox theology from which the West was later to distance itself as it abrogated more power and universal exclusivity to the papacy. The East stood (as it always had) for an incarnational and mystical approach to theology expressed in a Spirit-infused Church life where regulation and authority were distributed across many different centres and always in a deeply personal and experiential form. The West on the other hand strengthened its commitment to juridical notions both in respect of salvation and canon law. The papacy became the supremely centralised management system through which all of this was to be achieved. Eventually the strains between these divergent models of Church life led, tragically, to separation.

[\(next: Appendix: Filioque\)](#)

## Appendix: The Filioque

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*Revised (2nd) edition*

The First Ecumenical Synod (Council) at Nicaea in A.D. 325, was concerned with defending the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ against the heresy of the Arians. As such, the Symbol of Faith formulated by its fathers said little about the Church's belief about the Holy Spirit. It stated:

*We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, will come to judge the living and the dead; And in the Holy Spirit.*

*But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.*

[trans. from Early Christian Creeds by J.N.D. Kelly]

The Second Ecumenical Synod, at Constantinople in A.D. 381 (also known as the first Synod (or Council) of Constantinople) was again concerned with defending the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but was also concerned with defending the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. For that reason, it expanded the Symbol of Faith formulated by the previous Ecumenical Synod in the section pertaining to the Church's belief regarding the Holy Spirit. This section then read:

*And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

[Orthodox Church in America translation]

The Symbol of Faith, as formulated by the Synod of Constantinople, is commonly known in the West as the "Nicene Creed" and more technically known as the "Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed" or sometimes the "Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed". Since then, Orthodox Christians have steadfastly refused to modify the Symbol in any way. The faith of Orthodox Christians today is identical to the faith of the Second Ecumenical Synod. Unfortunately, there were some who chose to follow a different faith.

In A.D. 587, the local council of Toledo (Spain), attempting to combat Arianism by emphasizing the Son's equality with the Father, added Filioque to the Symbol. (The Latin word Filioque is translated into English as "and the Son".) This changed the Symbol of Faith to:

*And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;*

From Spain, the Filioque spread to the Germanic tribe of the Franks (in present-day France). It was embraced by Charlemagne who went so far as to accuse the East of having deliberately omitted it from the ancient Symbol. Pope Leo III (795-816) intervened, and forbade any interpolations or alterations in the Second Ecumenical Synod's Symbol of Faith. He ordered the Symbol – without Filioque – to be engraved in Latin and Greek on two silver plates and mounted on a wall of St. Peter's in Rome. The Franks ignored the pope and continued to use the Filioque. Many historians think Charlemagne used the Filioque in an attempt to justify his claim to be emperor in opposition to the Roman Empire (located in New Rome, also known as Constantinople). The dispute between East and West grew and became the focus of the Synod of Constantinople which met A.D. 879-880. This synod (recognised as the Eighth Ecumenical Synod by Orthodox Christians) reaffirmed the Symbol of A.D. 381 and declared any and all additions to the creed invalid. This synod's teaching was affirmed by the patriarchs of Old Rome (John VIII), New Rome [Constantinople] (Photius), Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria and by Emperor Basil I.

Still, the Filioque continued to be used by the Franks and even spread to other Germanic tribes. Eventually, even Rome began to use the Filioque – at the coronation of Henry II in 1014 as emperor of the so-called Holy Roman Empire. Most historians agree the pope (Benedict VIII), due to his dependence on the Holy Roman Empire for military protection, acquiesced to its use. But from that point, Rome continued using the Filioque. In time, belief in the Filioque became dogma in Roman Catholicism.

### Criticism of the Filioque

#### Objection 1:

**The addition is neither from, nor consistent with, Sacred Scripture.**

The original phrase of the Symbol of Faith: "We believe ... in the Holy Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father" is directly from John 15:26:

ὅταν	δὲ	ἔλθῃ	ὁ	παράκλητος	ὃν	ἐγὼ	πέμψω
when	and	comes	the	Comforter	whom	I	will send

ὑμῖν	παρὰ	τοῦ	πατρός	τὸ	Πνεῦμα	τῆς	ἀληθείας
to you	from	the	Father	the	Spirit	of	truth

ὃ	παρὰ	τοῦ	πατρός	ἐκπορεύεται
who	from	the	Father	proceeds

ἐκεῖνος	μαρτυρήσει	περὶ	ἐμοῦ
that One	will witness	concerning	me

Examining the key words, we find:

ἔλθῃ  
comes active voice of ἔρχομαι meaning "to come from one place to another (used of persons arriving), to appear, make one's appearance, come before the public"

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παράκλητος  
Comforter in the widest sense, a helper, succourer, aider, assistant. More specifically, one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, defence counsellor, legal assistant, an advocate

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πέμψω  
send "to dispatch", "to send", "to thrust in"

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ἐκπορεύεται  
proceeds derived from ἐκ + πορεύμαι

ἐκ preposition denoting origin as in "from", or "out of", the point from whence the motion or action proceeds

πορεύμαι "to traverse", "to travel"

---

Thus, the most important word of the passage, ἐκπορεύεται ("proceeds") refers to the Holy Spirit's origin. Since that origin is "from all eternity" (i.e. outside of time), it refers to the Holy Spirit's eternal origin and not to the Holy Spirit's being sent in time (temporal origin).

Roman Catholicism admits ἐκπορεύεται refers only to the eternal origin of the Holy Spirit. It has acknowledged this in publications:

... the term εκορευσις as distinct from the term "proceed" (προιναι) can only characterize a relationship of origin to the principle without principle of the Trinity: the Father.

Source: L'Osservatore Romano, 20 September 1995,  
"The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit"

Because of this recognition, Greek-speaking Roman Catholics do not use the Filioque when reciting the Creed.

To use an analogy, if I give a Rawlings baseball glove to my son he may tell others he received the glove from me, but the glove's ultimate origin is Rawlings. Similarly, we can say we receive



the Holy Spirit from the Son (because the Son sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost), but the Holy Spirit's ultimate origin is the Father.

The difference between the "eternal origin" and the "sending in time (temporal) origin" is important. Most attempts to support the Filioque confuse the two or fail to recognise the difference. They are not the same.

The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son is not to be found in Sacred Scripture. It is a man-made addition. However, recent Vatican statements notwithstanding, because Roman Catholicism has altered the ancient Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Faith and now teaches that the Holy Spirit's eternal procession is from both the Father and the Son, it is commonplace for Roman Catholic translations of the Bible to distort the plain meaning. Here's how two popular Roman Catholic translations handle the passage (John 15:26).

New Jerusalem Bible

When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from\* the Father, he will be my witness.

Text

New American Bible

When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father - and whom I myself will send from the Father - he will bear witness on my behalf.

\* The sending of the Spirit into the world rather than the "eternal" proceeding from the Father within the Trinity.

Notes

Comes from the Father: refers to the mission of the Spirit to men, not to the eternal procession of the Spirit. Compare 14:26, where the Father, not Jesus, is said to send the Spirit.

There is nothing wrong with the New Jerusalem Bible's translation. The use of "issues from" instead of "proceeds" is a fine translation of ἐκπορεύεται, but by footnoting "issues from" and stating this does not refer to the Holy Spirit's eternal procession (His ultimate origin from all eternity) but only to the sending of the Holy Spirit into the world (in time), it simply denies the truth.

The New American Bible (deliberately?) distorts the passage using the verb "comes" in place of the far more accurate (and traditional) "proceeds". This mistranslation obscures the clear meaning of the Greek text. Its comment is essentially the same as the New Jerusalem translation: a denial of the clear meaning in favour of the Roman Catholic error. The reference to John 14:26 is a red herring. No one denies the Holy Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son into the world. These Roman Catholic translations would have one believe there is nothing in Scripture that explicitly reveals the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps future editions will follow the more recent Vatican statements and correct these errors.

Thus, the addition of the Filioque is neither from nor consistent with Sacred Scripture. Whereas the Symbol of Faith as maintained by Orthodox Christians retains the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Roman Catholicism (and its Protestant offspring) add to the Scripture.

## Objection 2:

### The Filioque is the result of giving human "wisdom" (philosophy) precedence over Divine Revelation

The Orthodox approach to the Holy Trinity stresses more what cannot be said rather than what can be said. This is predicated on the recognition that, ultimately, God is beyond human comprehension; beyond human language and definitions. The following are typical:

*You ask what is the procession of the Holy Spirit? Do you tell me first what is the unbegottenness of the Father, and I will then explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be stricken with madness for prying into the mystery of God.*

— Saint Gregory the Theologian

*We have learned that there is a difference between begetting and procession, but the nature of the difference we in no wise understand.*

— Saint John of Damascus

Unfortunately, Augustine of Hippo, the originator of the Filioque, did not have the same attitude. He was a Neoplatonist, well-read in the Marius Victorinus' Latin translation of Plotinus' Enneads as evidenced by the numerous passages Augustine took and placed into his writings. (Augustine also expressed gratitude to Plotinus in the Confessions for leading him to the truth and even compared Plotinus' writings to the Scriptures.)

Neoplatonism metaphysics held there to be a series of emanating principles beginning with an Uncaused Cause known as the "One". This "One" was the source of all being, all will, all activity, all thought, all everything – yet the "One" was beyond all these things. According to Plotinus, one could not even ascribe thought to the "One" (or anything else) because thinking implies a distinction between thinker and the object of thought and there is no distinction in the "One". The "One" is "utterly simple" (i.e. the quality or state of being not complex, consisting of no "parts"). Somehow (it is never really explained), the "One" overflows an emanation, and thus causality is attributed to the "One". But since there are no distinctions within the "One", there is no difference between causality and divinity. The first emanation is called "Thought" which causes the next emanation, the "World Soul" and the series of emanations continues.

Arianism was Neoplatonic. It identified the Father with the "One", the Son/Logos with "Thought", and the Holy Spirit with the "World Soul". Arguing against Arianism, Augustine accepted the Neoplatonic assumptions. Reading his On the Trinity, the reader is struck by Augustine's effort to show the Son's equality with the Father. (The preoccupation is so great, the Holy Spirit seems largely overlooked.) Time and again, Augustine shows how the Son is like the Father in all ways, demonstrating Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all equivalent to the Neoplatonic "One".

*As the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son to have life in Himself.*

— On the Trinity, 5.27.47

*Augustine saw the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as existing in a Unity of being, will, activity, thought, etc., known as the "Godhead" which was virtually a fourth person. He went so far as to refer to "the Person of the Holy Trinity" [On the Trinity, 2.10.8]! Nevertheless, the principle of "divine simplicity remained".*

*Godhead is absolutely simple essence, and therefore to be is then the same as to be wise.*

– On the Trinity, 7.1.2

But this "divine simplicity" causes Augustine to subordinate persons to attributes and attributes to the essence. He shows no hesitation explicitly confusing Persons with attributes:

*The terms [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] are used reciprocally and in relation to each other.*

– On the Trinity, 6.5.6

*Because both the Father is a spirit and the Son is a spirit, and because the Father is Holy and the Son is Holy, therefore ... since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God, and certainly God is Holy, and God is a spirit, the Trinity can be called also the Holy Spirit.*

– On the Trinity, 5.11.12

*For we cannot say that the Holy Spirit is not life, while the Father is life, and the Son is life: and hence as the Father ... has life in Himself; so He has given to Him that life should proceed from Him, as it also proceeds from Himself.*

– On the Trinity, 5.27.48

(Note in the last quote how Augustine not only exchanges the Father's personal distinction of causality with the Son because of a shared attribute of "life", but also makes the shared attribute a Divine Person: the Holy Spirit. Thus, a person is confused with an attribute common to all three Divine Persons.

This concept of "divine simplicity" creates a problem for Augustine. The names "Father" and "Son" express a clear relationship: the Father is unbegotten and the Son is begotten. But where does the Holy Spirit fit? There cannot be more than one means of generation of Divine Persons in the Godhead as that would be a distinction contrary to "divine simplicity". But if the Son and the Holy Spirit are both generated by the Father by the same means of generation, they would both be Sons. Augustine's "solution", conceived within the Neoplatonic framework, was brilliant – but it was the wisdom of philosophy.

Using the Neoplatonic model, Augustine stressed the Son's equality with the Father by making the Son the cause of a Divine Person, thus sharing the attribute of causality with the Father and solving the "problem" of distinguishing between the Son and the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit was made ontologically different than the Son: the Filioque.

*Therefore, the Spirit is both the Spirit of God who gave Him, and ours who have received Him. . . . If, therefore, that also which is given has him for a beginning by whom it is given, since it has received from no other source that which proceeds from him; it must be admitted that the Father and the Son are a Beginning of the Holy Spirit, not two Beginnings; but as the Father and Son are one God, and one Creator, and one Lord relatively to the creature, so are they one*

*Beginning relatively to the Holy Spirit. But the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one Beginning in respect to the creature, as also one Creator and one God.*

– On the Trinity, 5.14.15

There is a problem with this reasoning. If the Father is divine because He causes the Son, and the Son is divine because He causes the Holy Spirit, should the series not continue? Is the Holy Spirit not the cause of a (fourth) Divine Person? Why not continue the Neoplatonic series? Here Augustine encounters an explicit limit from Divine Revelation: only three Divine Persons have been revealed. Augustine executes another brilliant manœuvre. He makes the Holy Spirit the source of unity between Father and Son.

*Wherefore also the Holy Spirit consists in the same unity of substance, and in the same equality. For whether He is the unity of both, or the holiness, or the love, or therefore the unity because the love, and therefore the love because the holiness ... Therefore the Holy Spirit, whatever it is, is something common both to the Father and Son. But that communion itself is consubstantial and co-eternal; and if it may fitly be called friendship, let it be so called; but it is more aptly called love.*

– On the Trinity, 6.5.7

This last quotation, Augustine's infamous definition of the Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son, again manifests Augustine's confusion of "persons" and "attributes".

But there is still a problem with Augustine's reasoning. If the love between Father and Son establishes another Divine Person, there is no reason to stop there. The love between the Father and the Holy Spirit could be a fourth Divine Person; the love between the Son and the Holy Spirit could be a fifth Divine Person; the love between the Father and the fourth Person could be a sixth Divine Person; etc. etc. ad infinitum. He rejects this as "most absurd" [On the Trinity, 15.19.37] and refused to go farther. One cannot help but wonder if Augustine was not "stricken with madness for prying into the mystery of God"!

By beginning from a pagan philosophical presupposition of "divine simplicity" instead of Divine Revelation, from whence we know there are three Divine Persons in one Godhead, the West has so confused the Divine Persons that their distinction becomes unimportant. (Roman Catholicism's offspring, Protestantism, tends to go the furthest, commonly resorting to blatantly Sabellianistic analogies like the three forms of H<sub>2</sub>O (steam, water, ice) to explain the Holy Trinity.) When faced with this:

Does the ability to "spirate" the Holy Spirit come from the Godhead or from a specific Person? If a specific Person, which one?

Roman Catholics do not know how to respond. For those who recognise three distinct Persons Who have been revealed to us, it is clear that if the ability to "spirate" is attributed to the Godhead, then there are two options: either the Holy Spirit is not God, or the Holy Spirit has the power to "spirate" Himself

The first is a denial of the Holy Trinity; the second a ridiculous absurdity.

Thus, we see the rationale for the Filioque is based on a feeble attempt to employ human wisdom to explain that which is unexplainable. It is convoluted, confused, and rooted in a man-conceived god (as of the Neoplatonists) rather than the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and

Moses, the God of Jesus Christ. From the Orthodox perspective the only acceptable attitude towards God is one of humble awe and submission. We humbly and gratefully accept that which He reveals to us. We recognise that our feeble minds are utterly incapable of understanding God as He is. We recognise that our human conceptions of justice, mercy, and everything else – even love itself – falls infinitely short of the Truth. God is "beyond all intellection", or as Saint John of Damascus wrote:

*God then, is Infinite and Incomprehensible, and all that is comprehensible about Him is His Infinity and His Incomprehensibility.*

### Objection 3:

#### The Filioque distorts the meaning of personhood within the Holy Trinity

Pagan Greek ontology taught that God is first and foremost, His substance or nature. Heretics such as the Arians and Nestorians, working from this pagan Greek thought, taught that the substance or nature preceded God's existence as Trinity, i.e. as Three Persons. This is the same interpretation that has come to prevail in Western Christian thought as can be seen by the typical arrangement of books on dogmatic and systematic theologies. (First is the existence of God, then the nature of God, then the attributes or qualities of God; all before the existence of the Trinity is broached.)

This interpretation is important inasmuch as it assumes a priori that the ontological "principle" of God lies not in a Person, but in the substance, the "being" of God. In the West, this has led to the belief that the unity of God consists of the one divine substance.

This is a distortion of Patristic theology. Among the Fathers the unity of God, the "cause" of the being and life of God consists not in the one substance of God, but in the Person of the Father (His hypostasis). The one God is not the one substance, but the Father who begets the Son and "spirates" the Holy Spirit. Thus, God is not bound by some ontological "necessity" to exist. God exists because the Father exists, He who out of love freely and eternally begets the Son and freely and eternally "spirates" the Holy Spirit.

Substance or nature does not exist in a vacuum, without a mode of existence (i.e. a hypostasis or person, an individuation). The one divine substance/nature is the being of God only because it has three modes of existence – Three Persons – which it owes not to the substance, but to the source (ἀρχή) of the Three: the Father. Apart from the Holy Trinity there is no God, no divine substance because the ontological "principle" of God is the Father. By regarding some Divine substance as the source of the Holy Trinity, the existence of the Three Divine Persons is made a kind of logical necessity, thus undermining the autonomy of the Holy Trinity. In the Filioque, this emphasis on the likeness<sup>41</sup> of Divine substance between the Father and the Son results in the subordination of the Holy Spirit<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> This is an inadvertent error in the writing of T R Valentine. The Son and the Father are of course 'homouousios', of one substance, not of "like" substance (homoiousios). [Comment by Fr Gregory Hallam]

<sup>42</sup> In the Filioque, the emphasis on the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son as the basis for the dual procession and the unity of the Godhead results in the subordination of the Holy Spirit since each hypostasis is not accorded his due personal role. The Spirit merely becomes the principle of unity between the Father and the Son, a sort of binitarian instantiation of their exclusive relationship. However, the Spirit exists in His own right and in His own perfect and equal coordination of roles with the Father and the Son. [Comment by Fr Gregory Hallam]

## Objection 4:

### The addition of the Filioque was arbitrary

Even Roman Catholic historians and theologians now admit that the addition of the Filioque was done arbitrarily, without consulting the East. The Filioque expressed a novel belief which was not a part of that which had been believed "everywhere, always, and by all". As Alexei Khomiakov wrote in "The Church Is One":

*Therefore the pride of reason and of illegal domination, which appropriated to itself, in opposition to the decree of the whole Church (pronounced at the Council of Ephesus), the right to add its private explanations and human hypotheses to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol is in itself an infraction of the sanctity and inviolability of the Church. Just as the very pride of the separate Churches, which dared to change the Symbol of the whole Church without the consent of their brethren, was inspired by a spirit not of love, and was a crime against God and the Church, so also their blind wisdom, which did not comprehend the mysteries of God, was a distortion of the faith; for faith is not preserved where love has grown weak.*

If the True Faith were not preserved in the West where love had grown weak (as evidenced by the arrogance of Rome in arrogating to itself all authority within the Church) then one should expect that innovations that developed in this realm where the True Faith were no longer preserved will be inconsistent with the truth. Sadly, this is the case with the Filioque.

## Objection 5:

### The addition was novel

The Eleventh Council of Toledo (Spain) is the first organized attempt to make an addition to the Symbol of Faith. The language is right out of Augustine, who had reposed two and one-half centuries earlier. (Note: All text **in this format** has been added for emphasis.)

#### The 11th Council of Toledo, 675

We also believe that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Trinity is God, and that he is one and equal with God the Father and God the Son, of one substance as well as of one nature. However, he is not begotten nor created, but he **proceeds from both** and is the Spirit of both. We believe that the Holy Spirit is neither unbegotten nor begotten: lest, if we say unbegotten we should be asserting two Fathers; and if we said begotten we should appear to be preaching two Sons. He is called the Spirit, not only of the Father nor only of the Son but **equally of the Father and of the Son**. He proceeds not from the Father into the Son nor from the Son to sanctify creatures; but he is shown to have **proceeded from both equally**, because he is known as the love or the sanctity of both.

Other attempts were made, but none ever received support from the pope. Charlemagne's Libri Carolini, issued in response to the Seventh Ecumenical Synod in 787, insisted on the use of the Filioque (and opposed the Seventh Ecumenical Synod's teaching on ikons). Local councils held under Charlemagne defended the use of the Filioque (Frankfurt, 794), decreed the Filioque was necessary for salvation (Aachen, 809), and petitioned the pope to authorize the addition of the Filioque to the Creed (Aachen, 810) even though they were already using it. (Pope Leo III refused the request.)

It was not until after the Filioque had been accepted in Rome (1014), the hot-headed Cardinal Humbert exceeded his authority in excommunicating the Patriarch of Constantinople (1054), and the Papal Revolution (1075-1122) that Roman Catholicism made the Filioque official. This first occurred at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, regarded by Roman Catholicism as an ecumenical council.

#### The 4th Lateran Council, 1215

"A definition against the Albigenses and other heretics"

The Father is from no one; the Son is from the Father only; and the Holy Spirit is **from both the Father and the Son equally**.

After this, the Filioque became a routine part of Roman Catholicism.

#### The 2nd Council of Lyons, 1274

"Constitution on the Procession of the Holy Spirit"

...we confess that the Holy Spirit **proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son**, not as from two principles, but as from one; not by two spirations but by one.

#### The Council of Florence, 1438-45

"Decree for the Jacobites"

The Father is not begotten; the Son is begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit **proceeds from the Father and the Son**.

#### The Roman Catechism

(The official Roman Catholic catechism, 1566-1994)

I.8.6. With regard to the words immediately succeeding: "who proceeds from the Father and the Son," the faithful are to be taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds, by **eternal procession, from the Father and the Son** as from one principle. This is a truth taught to us by the rule of the Church from which the least departure is unwarrantable on the part of Christians.

#### First Vatican Council, 1869-1870

"Dogmatic Constitution on the Principal Mysteries of the Faith"

For from all eternity the Father generates the Son, not in producing by emanation another essence equal to his own, but in communicating his own simple essence. And in like manner, the Holy Spirit proceeds, not by a multiplication of the essence, but he proceeds by a communication of the same singular essence by one eternal spiration **from the Father and the Son** as from one principle.

In recent years, Roman Catholicism has soft-pedalled the Filioque. This change of tone is reflected in the Catechism of 1994.

#### Catechism of the Catholic Church

(The official Roman Catholic catechism since 1994)

246. The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque)." The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: "The Holy Spirit is **eternally from Father and Son** He has his nature and subsistence at once (simul) from the Father and the Son. He **proceeds eternally from both** as from one principle and through one spiration . . . . And, since the Father has through generation given to the only begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that **the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.**"

248. At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he "who proceeds from the Father," it affirms that he comes from the Father through the Son. The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that **the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque).**

With these statements and the 1995 essay "The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit", Roman Catholicism has probably gone as far as it can without repudiating councils it deems to have been Encyclical. Unfortunately, because of Roman Catholicism's understanding of its "teaching authority" (magisterium) in conjunction with the belief in Roman Catholicism's infallibility, it is unable to repudiate earlier these statements, even after recognising them to be in error.

As much as Orthodox Christians appreciate Roman Catholicism's move away from the more radical aspects of the Filioque and its affirmation of the Father as the ultimate Source of the Holy Trinity, expressions like "The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son" and "He proceeds eternally from both" remain problematic. These statements reaffirm a subordination of the Holy Spirit to Father and Son and are thus unacceptable.

The above referenced article from L'Osservatore Romano is typical of these recent attempts to distance themselves from the older, explicit teachings of a double procession. The article is easily summarised: although the Greek word *εκορευσις* which in Latin is rendered *procedit* "can only characterize a relationship of origin to the principle" [first page of article], *procedit* can refer to either an ultimate origin or an intermediary origin.

In effect, the Vatican document claims that the Latin rendering of the Symbol of Faith is really the equivalent of:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who **is sent** from the Father and the Son...

The problem with such an interpretation should be obvious. First, it is a clear change from the original meaning. Even for those who might not understand that *εκορευσις* can only refer to ultimate origin (and, since the Holy Spirit is eternal, must refer to His eternal origin), it should be clear that this disrupts the parallel with the Symbol's explication of the Son's origin ("one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, eternally begotten of the Father").

The Symbol declares what we believe regarding the ultimate origin of the Son. Does it not make logical sense that it would also declare what we believe regarding the ultimate origin of the Holy Spirit instead of the sending of Him into the world at a specific moment in time?

The addition of the Filioque was a violation of the ancient principle established by Saint Vincent of Lerins (? - ante A.D. 450):



In the Catholic Church herself every care must be taken that we may hold fast to that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all. For this is, then, truly and properly Catholic.

The Notebooks, ca. A.D. 434

The Filioque certainly was not and is not something believed "everywhere, always, and by all". Roman Catholicism, by adopting something not "truly and properly Catholic" forfeited its claim to be "Catholic".

### Responses to Arguments in Support of the Filioque

In this section, we will examine the usual arguments presented by supporters of the Filioque. The first part of the section will be an examination of the "logical" arguments. The second part will look at excerpts taken from Patristic writings that apologists for the Filioque present as proof-texts. Not surprisingly, Augustine and other Western writers are the most frequently cited Patristic sources. But since we have already demonstrated that Augustine is unreliable as an orthodox source of theology of the Holy Trinity, we will not examine his texts in this section. Neither will we examine the texts of those writers who followed in Augustine's footsteps. Rather, we will limit our examination to Eastern writers since apologists for the Filioque think these should be more impressive to Orthodox Christians.

Three warnings about Patristic citations should be noted:

1. Just as it is quite easy to proof-text the Scriptures, it is also quite easy to do the same with Patristic writings. Frequently, such proof-texts are taken out of context and/or misapplied to the topic. One need not look very far to see how various Protestant denominations use proof-texts to support mutually exclusive beliefs.
2. Orthodox Christians do not regard any single person as infallible in matters of dogma. It is not difficult to find instances where the Fathers have been in error about a particular thing. (Of course, if the errors are serious or numerous, the writer does not qualify as a "Father".) Orthodox Christians seek to find the consensus of the Fathers. In non-dogmatic matters, this may be very difficult to do as the Fathers may have a wide variety of opinions. But, in cases of dogma, it is generally easy to find that which has been believed "everywhere, always, and by all", i.e. universality, antiquity, and consent. Opinions which are limited to a region (e.g. the West), that have developed after the Apostolic Age, or are not held by the overwhelming majority of Fathers, does not meet the standards for dogma.
3. These texts are presented in English to English speakers. They are translations. Without examining the passage in its original language and in context, it may be easy to misinterpret these texts. If anyone reading this could supply the original Greek for the following passages, this author would be most grateful.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that one frequently finds in the writings of the Eastern Fathers the formula "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son". This formula is deemed perfectly orthodox by Orthodox Christians. It testifies to the fact that none of the Divine Persons acts apart from the others; they share the one Divine Will.

A common analogy is that as a man, when vocalizing a word exudes breath, so the Father, when speaking (begetting) the Word exudes (spirates) the Holy Spirit (the Greek word for "breath", πνεύμα also means "spirit"). This analogy demonstrates both the distinction between the Son and the Holy Spirit and their inseparableness. It also demonstrates that the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the Father and not the Father's creations.

When the Fathers testify that the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of God" as well as the "Spirit of Christ", they mean that the Holy Spirit has His eternal and existential origin in the Father whilst being inseparably one with the Son with whom He (the Holy Spirit) is naturally united and of the same essence. In other words, the Holy Spirit has His "perfect procession" (the phrase is from Saint Cyril of Alexandria) from the Father and is joined to the Son in unity by reason of their shared essence (their consubstantiality). It is the consubstantiality of the Three Divine Persons that is being expressed or, as Saint Maximus the Confessor phrases it: "the unity and unchangeableness of the Divine Essence".

Apologists for the Filioque frequently assert that "proceeds from the Father and the Son" is equivalent to "proceeds from the Father through the Son". Although "and" and "through" may sometimes be synonymous in English (the paperwork must go through the boss usually means that the boss needs to add something such as a signature and thus constitutes an addition, an "and"), in Greek "through" (διὰ) and "and" (καί) are never synonymous. "Through" (διὰ) never means a contributory effect; it means a "tunnelling" or "channelling", whereas "and" (καί) usually means a "copulative" (i.e. a joining together which expresses an addition) and sometimes also a cumulative effect (i.e. an addition which implies an insufficiency on the part of the elements separately). In sum, διὰ always excludes addition; καί always means addition. The words are mutually exclusive.

**ARGUMENT:** Just as the Father externally sent the Son into the world in time, the Son internally proceeds from the Father in the Trinity. Just as the Spirit is externally sent into the world by the Son as well as the Father [John 15:26, Acts 2:33], He internally proceeds from both Father and Son in the Trinity. This is why the Spirit is referred to as the "Spirit of the Son" [Gal. 4:6] and not just the Spirit of the Father.

**RESPONSE:** The phrase "Spirit of the Son" [Gal 4:6], "Spirit of Christ" [Rom 8:9 and 1 Pet 1:11], and "Spirit of Jesus Christ" [Phil 1:19] do not speak of origin, let alone existential origin as does John 15:26. All beings have "spirits". The Spirit of the Son, He Who is consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, must be the Holy Spirit lest we separate the Son and the Holy Spirit. This does not, however, mean that the Son is the existential origin of the Holy Spirit. As explained above, if I give a Rawlings baseball glove to my son he may tell others he received the glove from me, but the glove's ultimate origin is Rawlings. Similarly, we can say we receive the Holy Spirit from the Son (because the Son sent Him), but the Holy Spirit's ultimate origin is the Father. Possession is not the same as existential origin.

**ARGUMENT:** All things that the Father has belong to the Son [Jn 16:15], and thus the Father's ability to "proceed" the Holy Spirit is given to the Son.

**RESPONSE:** Those who use this argument must admit that this cannot mean all things since the Father cannot give His Fatherhood to the Son (which would be an absurdity!), but because they make a Divine substance the source of the Holy Trinity, they fail to understand the nature of the Fatherhood – that which makes the Father the source (αρχή) of the Son and Holy Spirit.

**ARGUMENT:** That the Holy Spirit is from the Son can be seen in Jn 20:22: "And having said this He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

**RESPONSE:** This argument ignores the difference between the Holy Spirit's Eternal Origin and His temporal coming into the world. The Holy Spirit was not "spirited" for the first time in the Upper Room, but exists eternally. Once this distinction is recognized it becomes clear that this passage speaks of the Holy Spirit's coming into the world (His temporal origin) and does not refer to His eternal, existential origin. This verse does, however, testify to the formula "the

Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son" because the Holy Spirit comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

**ARGUMENT:** It oversimplifies to say that the Son does not impart existence to others. John 1:3 states: "All things through Him came to be, and without Him came to be nothing which has come to be." This is reaffirmed in the Nicene Creed itself which makes clear that the creation is the work of both Father and Son. Indeed, Christians both East and West acknowledge that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the work of creation (see Genesis 1:1-3).

**RESPONSE:** This argument has been included because, as incredible as it may seem, it is frequently found in arguments presented in support of the Filioque. Roman Catholics arguing for the Filioque (self-described as "traditionalist and/or conservative") have written these passages:

... the procession into the temporal world must be through the Son (and as such from both simultaneously) because all temporal creation is through the Son, or Logos.

All temporal creation is through the Logos, and all procession in the temporal world is through the Logos, "as from one principle". Still, from the Father ultimately who creates all, including the begotten Son.

The point missed in the east is that all creation was through the Logos, and as such the Spirit must come to us through the Logos.

"Father and Son as from one principle" implies the necessity of the Son, upon which all creation depends, for procession to the temporal world. Ultimately, the question is, does or can the Spirit exist or come forth into the temporal world without participation of the Logos? We say no, because the entirety of temporal creation, it is revealed, is through the Word.

This argument is incredible because John 1:3 (as well as the application of that which is the Nicene Creed) teaches that "through the Son" all creation was created. The Holy Spirit is not a creation; He is eternally God. Any person who teaches that the Holy Spirit is included in those things which "came to be" as referred to in John 1:3 cannot be regarded as a Christian. Such an argument is in the same category as the claim from the Jehovah's Witnesses that the Son is created as "a god".

**ARGUMENT:** If the dual procession be denied, it is not clear how we are to distinguish between the Word and the Spirit, between the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity. We distinguish between the Father and the Son, even though they are co-eternal and co-equal, and omnipotent, by virtue of the fact that the One begets and the other is begotten – that is, the being of One is derived from the being of the Other. But if we say that the Son is derived from the Father alone, and that the Spirit is derived from the Father alone, how are the Son and the Spirit different? We may indeed say that it is the Second Person, not the First or the Third, that was made flesh for our salvation in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. But this does not answer the question at hand, for the distinction of the Divine Persons must lie in the nature of the Godhead, not in the relation of God to a universe which He need not have created.

**RESPONSE:** This argument was taken, verbatim, from a supporter of the Filioque. It is, of course, the problem explained in Objection #2 above, that human "wisdom" (philosophy) is given precedence over Divine Revelation. Rather than restating all the problems with this argument, let us simply recall the statement of Saint John of Damascus:

We have learned that there is a difference between begetting and procession, but the nature of the difference we in no wise understand.

– Saint John of Damascus

**ARGUMENT:** The first distinctive statement about the Holy Spirit that we find in the Creed is that He is the Life-giver. Now, what does it mean to give life? What is the difference between a dead cat and a live one? A dead body may have all the parts that a live one has, but in a live body the parts are interacting, each part carrying out its distinctive function for the good of the whole body. The life of an organism, the spirit of an organism, is the "glue" that unites the parts into an integrated whole. So, in the Church, it is the Spirit that gives to each member a function to be carried out for the enhanced life of the whole Body of Christ, and gives the gifts necessary for carrying out that function. Not all members receive the same gifts; but, as the Apostle Paul points out to the Corinthians, the one gift available to every member is also the one gift most to be desired, and that is the gift of love, by which the whole body is joined together, all the members being united in love with Christ and with one another. Thus, if anyone asks what is the special activity of the Holy Spirit, we must answer that it is to unite in love. And if it is of the nature of the Spirit to unite things, then we may be sure that He has been carrying out this activity for all eternity. Before there was a Church, before there was physical life of any kind, the Spirit was the bond of love and unity between the Father and the Son. From all eternity, independently of any created being, God is the Lover, the Loved, and the Love itself. And the bond of unity and love that exists between the Father and the Son proceeds from the Father and the Son.

**RESPONSE:** This argument was also taken from a supporter of the Filioque. The error of subordinating the Holy Spirit to a bond of love between the Father and the Son has already been addressed. There is a second error in the above argument: equating the Holy Spirit to a member of the Church. The Holy Spirit is God, not a member of the Church. There is also a third, more subtle error in this argument: the idea that life is dependent upon role/purpose. First, the Holy Spirit, being God, is not dependent upon anything for His existence. Second, the gift of life we humans have from the Giver of Life (the Holy Spirit along with the Father and the Son) is a free gift. We live the roles of our life because we first exist. It is not necessary for us to engage in some role in order for us to exist.

**ARGUMENT:** A creator (e.g. a writer, sculptor, musician, architect, etc.) first conceives of an idea before he is able to give it expression (e.g. a word, statue, composition, building, etc.). The expression does not create the idea; the idea creates the expression. Thus it is that "No one knows the Son, except the Father, and no one knows the Father, except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him." [Matt 11:27] Thus theologians say that the Father is aware of Himself only by contemplating His image in the Son. And, just as in any creative act on the part of a human creator, the appreciative and understanding response proceeds not simply from the creative idea but from the creative idea revealed in the creative expression of that idea, so on the level of the Divine Creator, the Holy Spirit proceeds not solely from the Father but from the Father and the Son.

**RESPONSE:** The first part of this argument is fine. Clearly, idea precedes expression. But one needs to be careful about applying human concepts about human beings to the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. As soon as one expresses a limitation of any of the Divine Persons (e.g. "the Father is aware of Himself only ...") alarms should go off in the mind of any right-thinking Christian. This idea seems more dependent upon human "wisdom" (philosophy) than upon Divine Revelation. It seems to deny the Father's self-awareness. But if even human creatures possess self-awareness, then to deny this to the Father is a gross blasphemy. Furthermore, it is unclear

how the creative process of human beings can apply to the Son or the Holy Spirit Who are not creatures.

## QUOTATIONS

Tertullian, Against Praxeas, 4:1

*I believe that the Spirit proceeds not otherwise than from the Father through the Son.*

This is the typical Eastern formula "through the Son" discussed above.

It should be noted that whenever Tertullian is cited, one must examine from which of the three periods of his life the citation is taken: his Orthodox period, his semi-Montanist (a heresy) period, or his Montanist period. His Against Praxeas is from Tertullian's Montanist period. Since Tertullian died a heretic, he is not deemed a Father of the Church.

Origen, Commentaries on John, 2:6

*We believe, however, that there are three persons: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and we believe none to be unbegotten except the Father. We admit, as more pious and true, that all things were produced through the Word, and that the Holy Spirit is the most excellent and the first in order of all that was produced by the Father through Christ.*

Like Tertullian, Origen was judged by the Church to be a heretic and is not deemed a Father of the Church. The above is clearly heretical, reducing the Holy Spirit to being the first of creation, i.e. a creature. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit is uncreated God.

Saint Maximus the Confessor, Questions to Thalassium, 63

*By nature the Holy Spirit in his being takes substantially his origin from the Father through the Son who is begotten.*

This is the typical Eastern formula, "through the Son".

Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, Confession of Faith

*One God, the Father of the living Word, of subsistent Wisdom and Power, and of the Eternal Image. Perfect Begetter of the Perfect, Father of the only begotten Son. One Lord, Only of Only, God of God, Image and Likeness of the Godhead, Efficient Word, Wisdom comprehending the constitution of the universe, and Power shaping all creation. Genuine Son of Genuine Father, Invisible of Invisible, and Incorruptible of Incorruptible, and Immortal of Immortal, and Eternal of Eternal. And one Holy Spirit, having substance of God, and who is manifested [to men, that is,]\* through the Son; Image of the Son, Perfect of the Perfect; Life, the Cause of living; Holy Fountain; Sanctity, the Dispenser of Sanctification; in whom is manifested God the Father, who is above all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all. Perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty neither divided nor estranged.*

*\*(The bracketed phrase above is thought to be a later editorial addition.)*

"... manifested through the Son" means that it is through the Son that the Holy Spirit is presented to men. This has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit's eternal origin. It refers to His temporal origin as is described in John 20:22.

Didymus The Blind, The Holy Spirit, 37

*As we have understood discussions . . . about the incorporeal natures, so too it is now to be recognized that the Holy Spirit receives from the Son that which he was of his own nature . . . So too the Son is said to receive from the Father the very things by which he subsists. For neither has the Son anything else except those things given him by the Father, nor has the Holy Spirit any other substance than that given him by the Son.*

Didymus the Blind followed Origen in much of his teachings regarding creation. Like Origen, his writings were condemned as heretical. For this reason, he is not a Father and is not regarded as a reliable source for doctrine. This passage appears to be Neoplatonic inasmuch as it appears to echo Augustine's identification of causality as the defining attribute of Divinity. The above presents the Father as the cause of the Son and the Son as the cause of the Holy Spirit, i.e. a plurality of spheres of being, arranged in hierarchical descending order, each sphere of being derived from its superior. If this is an accurate understanding of the above, the passage should be rejected as heretical.

Saint Athanasius, To Serapion of Thmuis

*Insofar as we understand the special relationship of the Son to the Father, we also understand that the Spirit has this same relationship to the Son. And since the Son says, "everything that the Father has is mine" [John 16:15], we will discover all these things also in the Spirit through the Son. And just as the Son was announced by the Father, who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" [Matt 3:17], so also is the Spirit of the Son; for, as the Apostle says, "He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"" [Gal 4:6]*

We have previously addressed the passage of John 16:15. "Announcing" obviously is not the equivalent of existential origin. We have also previously addressed the passage of Gal 4:6 and similar passages that speak of the 'Spirit of the Son'.

Saint Epiphanius of Salamis, The Well-Anchored Man, 8, 75

*For the Only-Begotten Himself calls Him 'the Spirit of the Father', and says of Him that 'He proceeds from the Father', and 'will receive of mine', so that He is reckoned as not being foreign to the Father nor to the Son, but is of their same substance, of the same Godhead; He is Spirit divine, . . . of God, and He is God. For he is Spirit of God, Spirit of the Father and Spirit of the Son, not by some kind of synthesis, like soul and body in us, but in the midst of Father and Son, of the Father and of the Son, a third by appellation. . . . The Father always existed and the Son always existed, and the Spirit breathes from the Father and the Son; and neither is the Son created nor is the Spirit created.*

Epiphanius of Salamis is regarded as an Orthodox saint primarily for his work as a pastor of his flock. He is not a "Father" of the Church. Most of the above passage addresses the consubstantiality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The only phrase that may bear on the Filioque is 'the Spirit breathes from the Father and the Son'. It would be helpful to study the

original language. However, since εκορευσις is conventionally translated as 'proceeds' whereas this passage employs 'breathes', it seems unlikely that εκορευσις is used. That the Holy Spirit is 'breathed' forth from the Son (see John 20:22) refers to the Holy Spirit's temporal mission into the world, not His eternal origin.

Saint Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion (Breadbox), 62:4

*The Spirit is always with the Father and the Son, ... proceeding from the Father and receiving of the Son, not foreign to the Father and the Son, but of the same substance, of the same Godhead, of the Father and the Son, He is with the Father and the Son, Holy Spirit ever subsisting, Spirit divine, Spirit of glory, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of the Father. ... He is third in appellation, equal in divinity, not different as compared to Father and Son, connecting Bond of the Trinity, Ratifying Seal of the Creed.*

Like the previous passage from the same saint, the thrust of this passage is the consubstantiality of the Holy Trinity. Saint Epiphanius does not assert that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son – only the Father is presented as the source of the Holy Spirit's procession, i.e. the eternal and existential source of the Holy Spirit. Rather, Saint Epiphanius states that the Holy Spirit "receives" from the Son. Though this passage does not explain what it is that the Holy Spirit receives from the Son, Orthodox teaching is that the Holy Spirit is eternally manifested by the Son. Since it would be proper, therefore, to state that the Holy Spirit receives His eternal manifestation from the Son, there is nothing in this passage to which Orthodox Christians would object.

Saint Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit, 18:45

*Through the Son, who is one, he [the Holy Spirit] is joined to the Father, one is one, and by Himself completes the Blessed Trinity.*

This is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'. It ought to be noted that the purpose of Saint Basil the Great's On the Holy Spirit was to demonstrate against the Pneumatomachoi (literally 'Spirit fighters') that the Holy Spirit was a Divine Person within the Holy Trinity. The Pneumatomachoi were anathematised at the Second Ecumenical Synod in 381.

Saint Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit, 18:47

*The goodness of [the divine] nature, the holiness of [that] nature, and the royal dignity reach from the Father through the only-begotten [Son] to the Holy Spirit. Since we confess the persons in this manner, there is no infringing upon the holy dogma of the monarchy.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, 1

*The Father conveys the notion of unoriginate, unbegotten, and Father always; the only-begotten Son is understood along with the Father, coming from Him but inseparably joined to Him. Through the Son and with the Father, immediately and before any vague and unfounded concept interposes between them, the Holy Spirit is also perceived conjointly.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Letter to Ablabius

*While we confess the invariableness of the [Divine] Nature we do not deny the distinction of cause and of caused, by which alone we perceive that one Person is distinguished from another, in our belief that it is one thing to be the cause and another to be from the cause; and in that which is from the cause, we recognize yet another distinction. It is one thing to be directly from the First Cause, and another to be through Him who is directly from the First, so the distinction of being Only-begotten abides undoubtedly in the Son, nor is it doubted that the Spirit is from the Father; for the middle position of the Son is protective of His distinction as Only-begotten, but does not exclude the Spirit from His natural relation to the Father.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son', albeit much more wordy.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Treasury of the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity, thesis 34

*Since the Holy Spirit when He is in us effects our being conformed to God, and He actually proceeds from the Father and Son, it is abundantly clear that He is of the Divine Essence, in it in essence and proceeding from it.*

At first appearance this passage seems to support the Filioque. However, Saint Cyril also taught that the Holy Spirit had His 'perfect procession' from the Father. The writings of Saint Cyril were thoroughly discussed during the Filioque controversy that erupted during the patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyrus (1283-1289). The Synod of Blachernae (1285) concluded that Saint Cyril was addressing the consubstantiality of the Holy Trinity rather than the eternal and existential origin of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, this same Saint Cyril of Alexandria's interpretation of John 21 is often used against Roman Catholic claims that Saint Peter was made leader over the Apostles. The usual response by Roman Catholics is that the 'solitary phrase of Saint Cyril is of no weight against the overwhelming patristic authority' which stands against him. Of course, the same could be said if indeed this solitary phrase of Saint Cyril supports the Filioque. It would be necessary to examine the original language to be certain.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Letters, 3:4:33

*Just as the Son says 'All that the Father has is mine' [John 16:15], so shall we find that through the Son it is all also in the Spirit.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, The Twelve Anathemas, Error 9

*We must not say that the one Lord Jesus Christ has been glorified by the Spirit, in such a way as to suggest that through the Spirit He made use of a power foreign to Himself, and from the Spirit received the ability to work against unclean spirits, and to perform divine signs among men; but must rather say that the Spirit, through whom He did indeed work His divine signs, is his own.*

This passage addresses the consubstantiality of the Three Divine Persons.

Saint John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 8

*Likewise we believe also in one Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life . . . God existing and addressed along with Father and Son; uncreated, full, creative, all-ruling, all-effecting, all-*



*powerful, of infinite power, Lord of all creation and not under any lord; deifying, not deified; filling, not filled; shared in, not sharing in; sanctifying, not sanctified; the intercessor, receiving the supplications of all; in all things like to the Father and Son; proceeding from the Father and communicated through the Son.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'.

Saint John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 12

*And the Holy Spirit is the power of the Father revealing the hidden mysteries of His Divinity, proceeding from the Father through the Son in a manner known to Himself, but different from that of generation.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'.

Saint John of Damascus, Dialogue Against the Manicheans, 5

*I say that God is always Father since he has always his Word [the Son] coming from Himself and, through his Word, the Spirit issuing from Him.*

Again, this is the typical Eastern formula, 'through the Son'.

Thus, once the "preponderance" of Patristic support for the Filioque is examined, the claims of supporters of the Filioque are shown to be non-existent. Granted, many Latin writers endorsed the Filioque, but they were caught in the wake of Augustine's disproportionate influence on the West.

To conclude this section and the essay, let us look at this explanation by Saint Gregory Palamas (from his Confession). It is one of the most succinct and precise expressions of the Holy Spirit's relation to the Father and Son in all of Patristic writings.

*On the one hand, the Holy Spirit is, together with the Father and the Son, without beginning, since He is eternal; yet, on the other, He is not without beginning, since He also – by way of procession, not by way of generation – has the Father as foundation, source, and cause. He also [like the Son] came forth from the Father before all ages, without change, impassibly, not by generation, but by procession; He is inseparable from the Father and the Son, since He proceeds from the Father, and reposes in the Son; He possesses union without losing His identity, and division without involving separation. He, also, is God from God; He is not different since He is God, yet He is different since He is the Comforter; as Spirit, He possesses hypostatic existence, proceeds from the Father, and is sent – that is, manifested – through the Son; He also is the cause of all created things, since it is in the Spirit that they are perfected. He is identical and equal with the Father and the Son, with the exception of unbegottenness and generation. He was sent – that is, made known – from the Son to His own disciples. By what other means – the Spirit which is inseparable from the Son – could He have been sent? By what other means could He – Who is everywhere – come to me? Wherefore, He is sent not only from the Son, but from the Father and through the Son, and is manifested through Himself.*