

The Western Church commonly uses a version of the Nicene creed which has the Latin word *filioque* ("and the Son") added after the declaration that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. Scripture reveals that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The external relationships of the persons of the Trinity mirror their internal relationships. 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 (Matt. 10:20).

The quotations below show that the early Church Fathers, both Latin and Greek, recognized the same thing, saying that the Spirit proceeds "from the Father and the Son" or "from the Father through the Son."

These expressions mean the same thing because everything the Son has is from the Father. The proceeding of the Spirit from the Son is something the Son himself received from the Father. The procession of the Spirit is therefore ultimately rooted in the Father but goes *through* the Son. However, some Eastern Orthodox insist that to equate "through the Son" with "from the Son" is a departure from the true faith.

The expression "from the Father *through* the Son" is accepted by many Eastern Orthodox. This, in fact, led to a reunion of the Eastern Orthodox with the Catholic Church in 1439 at the Council of Florence: "The Greek prelates believed that every saint, precisely as a saint, was inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore could not err in faith. If they expressed themselves differently, their meanings must substantially agree. . . . Once the Greeks accepted that the Latin Fathers had really written *Filioque* (they could not understand Latin), the issue was settled (May 29). The Greek Fathers necessarily meant the same; the faiths of the two churches were identical; union was not only possible but obligatory (June 3);

and on June 8 the Latin *credula* [statements of belief] on the procession [of the Spirit] was accepted by the Greek synod" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 5:972–3).

Unfortunately, the union did not last. In the 1450s (just decades before the Protestant Reformation), the Eastern Orthodox left the Church again under pressure from the Muslims, who had just conquered them and who insisted they renounce their union with the Western Church (lest Western Christians come to their aid militarily).

However, union is still possible on the *filioque* issue through the recognition that the formulas "and the Son" and "through the Son" mean the same thing. Thus the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "This legitimate complementarity [of expressions], provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed" (CCC 248).

Today many Eastern Orthodox bishops are putting aside old prejudices and again acknowledging that there need be no separation between the two communions on this issue. Eastern Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware (formerly Timothy Ware), who once adamantly opposed the *filioque* doctrine, states: "The *filioque* controversy which has separated us for so many centuries is more than a mere technicality, but it is not insoluble. Qualifying the firm position taken when I wrote [my book] *The Orthodox Church* twenty years ago, I now believe, after further study, that the problem is more in the area of semantics and different emphases than in any basic doctrinal differences" (*Diakonia*, quoted from Elias Zoghby's *A Voice from the Byzantine East*, 43).

TERTULLIAN

"I believe that the Spirit proceeds not otherwise than from the Father through the Son" (*Against Praxeas* 4:1 [A.D. 216]).

ORIGEN

"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" (*Commentaries on John* 2:6 [A.D. 229]).

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

"By nature the Holy Spirit in his being takes substantially his origin from the Father through the Son who is begotten (*Questions to Thalassium* 63 [A.D. 254]).

GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER

"[There is] one Holy Spirit, having substance from God, and who is manifested 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" (*Confession of Faith* [A.D. 265]).

HILARY OF POITIERS

"Concerning the Holy Spirit . . . it is not necessary to speak of him who must be acknowledged, who is from the Father and the Son, his sources" (*The Trinity* 2:29 [A.D. 357]).

"In the fact that before times eternal your [the Father's] only-begotten [Son] was born of you, when we put an end to every ambiguity of words and difficulty of understanding, there remains only this: he was born. So too, even if I do not grasp it in my understanding, I hold fast in my consciousness to the fact that your Holy Spirit is from you through him" (*ibid.*, 12:56).

DIDYMUS THE BLIND

"As we have understood discussions . . . about the in-

corporeal 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" (*The Holy Spirit* 37 [A.D. 362]).

EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS

"The Father always existed and the Son always existed, and the Spirit breathes from the Father and the Son" (*The Man Well-Anchored* 75 [A.D. 374]).

BASIL THE GREAT

"Through the Son, who is one, he [the Holy Spirit] is joined to the Father, one who is one, and by himself completes the Blessed Trinity" (*The Holy Spirit* 18:45 [A.D. 375]).

"[T]he 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" (*ibid.*, 18:47).

AMBROSE OF MILAN

"Just as the Father is the fount of life, so too, there are many who have stated that the Son is designated as the fount of life. It is said, for example that with you, Almighty God, your Son is the fount of life, that is, the fount of the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit is life, just as the Lord says: 'The words which I have spoken to you are Spirit and life' [John 6:63]" (*The Holy Spirit* 1:15:152 [A.D. 381]).

"The Holy Spirit, when he proceeds from the Father and the Son, does not separate himself from the Father and does not separate himself from the Son" (*ibid.*, 1:2:120).

GREGORY OF NYSSA

"[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" (*Against Eunomius* 1 [A.D. 382]).

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

"[W]e venerate one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in oneness. . . . The Father was not made nor created nor begotten by anyone. The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding" (*Athanasian Creed* [A.D. 400]).

AUGUSTINE

"If that which is given has for its principle the one by whom it is given, because it did not receive from anywhere else that which proceeds from the giver, then it must be confessed that the Father and the Son are the principle of the Holy Spirit, not two principles, but just as the Father and the Son are one God . . . relative to the Holy Spirit, they are one principle" (*The Trinity* 5:14:15 [A.D. 408]).

"[The one] from whom principally the Holy Spirit proceeds is called God the Father. I have added the term 'principally' because the Holy Spirit is found to proceed also from the Son" (*ibid.*, 15:17:29).

"Why, then, should we not believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son, when he is the Spirit also of the Son? For if the Holy Spirit did not proceed from him, when he showed himself to his disciples after his resurrection he would not have breathed upon them, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' [John 20:22]. For what else did he signify by

that breathing upon them except that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from him" (*Homilies on John* 99:8 [A.D. 416]).

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

"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" (*Treasury of the Holy Trinity*, thesis 34 [A.D. 424]).

"[T]he Holy Spirit flows from the Father in the Son" (*ibid.*).

"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" (*Letters* 3:4:33 [A.D. 433]).

COUNCIL OF TOLEDO

"We believe in one true God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, maker of the visible and the invisible. . . . The Spirit is also the Paraclete, who is himself neither the Father nor the Son, but proceeding from the Father and the Son. Therefore the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, the Paraclete is not begotten but proceeding from the Father and the Son" (*Council of Toledo* [A.D. 447]).

FULGENCE OF RUSPE

"Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the only God the Son, who is one person of the Trinity, is the Son of the only God the Father; but the Holy Spirit himself also one person of the Trinity, is Spirit not of the Father only, but of Father and of Son together" (*The Rule of Faith* 53 [A.D. 524]).

"Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the same Holy Spirit who is Spirit of the Father and of the Son, proceeds from the Father and the Son" (*ibid.*, 54).

JOHN DAMASCENE

"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; sharing in, not shared 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" (*Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 8 [A.D. 712]).

"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" (*ibid.*, 12).

"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" (*Dialogue Against the Manicheans* 5 [A.D. 728]).

COUNCIL OF NICAEA II

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, proceeding from the Father through the Son" (*Profession of Faith* [A.D. 787]).

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