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**Ἐκπόρευσις and *Processio*:
Complementary Ways to Understand
the Procession of the Holy Spirit**

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1. Introduction

Certainly one of the saddest events in the history of the Church is the schism consummated in 1054 that resulted in the separation of many Eastern Christians from the Church of Rome, a schism remaining largely unhealed to the present day. Of the many differences of custom and culture that gave rise to the schism, among the foremost is the controversy surrounding the procession of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Creed is recited in the Greek language, or in a Divine Liturgy (which is in general translated from Greek) in any language, the phrase “and the Son” is always omitted.¹ In the Western Church, however, the word *Filioque* has been in use in the Roman Church since 1014, and from at least the seventh century in Spain. Although, as will be seen below, the *Filioque* does not seem to have been the principal issue in the schism of 1054, it has led to many accusations of heresy on both sides. This paper, by analyzing texts from the Fathers of the Church, will investigate whether there is a really a difference of faith between the Western and Eastern traditions, or if a difference in terminology might not be at the root of the misunderstandings.

¹ See PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, “The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit”, in *L’Osservatore Romano*, September 20 (1995).

2. Origin of the Problem

The controversy stems from the Church Fathers' efforts to grapple with the ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity. Christianity inherits monotheism from Judaism, and yet the New Testament reveals three distinct subjects that all have the prerogatives of God. Jesus repeatedly calls God his Father, understood by all his hearers to be referring to the God of Israel.² Jesus himself is called "Lord,"³ "the author of life,"⁴ even "God;"⁵ he accepts acts of worship without protest;⁶ and he attributes to himself repeatedly the divine name "I AM."⁷ John's prologue, moreover, makes Jesus' divinity quite explicit.⁸ The Holy Spirit is the spirit of both the Father⁹ and the Son,¹⁰ he makes men's bodies his temple,¹¹ and he is the author of the Incarnation.¹² That these subjects are not simply "aspects" or "modes" of the same reality (as Sabellius taught),¹³ but really distinct (as Origen correctly maintained),¹⁴ can be seen from a number of facts revealed by the Gospels: for example, Jesus addresses his Father in the second person,¹⁵ he is "led up by the Spirit into the wilderness,"¹⁶ and he refers to the Holy Spirit as "another" Paraclete.¹⁷ Moreover, although Father, Son,

² See, for example, John 5:18, IGNATIUS PRESS, *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition (RSV-CE)*, San Francisco 1994.

³ See John 20:28, Philippians 2:11, and 1 Corinthians 12:3.

⁴ Acts 3:15.

⁵ John 20:28.

⁶ John 9:38.

⁷ See, for example, John 8:58.

⁸ John 1:1.

⁹ Matthew 10:20.

¹⁰ Galatians 4:6.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19.

¹² Luke 1:35.

¹³ K. BIHLMAYER and H. TUECHLE, *Storia della chiesa*, vol. 1: *l'antiquità cristiana*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1994¹³, 197.

¹⁴ See J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. 2: *The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*, Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland, 1992, 77.

¹⁵ See, for example, John 11:41-42, John 17, and Matthew 11:25.

¹⁶ Matthew 4:1.

¹⁷ John 14:16-17. In fact, these verses summarize the relationships among the Persons quite well: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive."

and Spirit appear perfectly equal in dignity and Divinity, it seems that the Father has, in a way, a special role in the Trinity. The Son is begotten, but the Father is unbegotten. The Son is sent by the Father,¹⁸ but the Son does not send the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father¹⁹ and is sent by him,²⁰ but the Holy Spirit never sends any of the other two Persons, nor do any of the others come from him.²¹ Therefore, any good Trinitarian theology must take into account three factors that are always in tension—the uniqueness of God, the real distinction among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the ὑποστάσεις or Persons of the Trinity, as Trinitarian theology has come to call them), and the monarchy of the Father—without exaggerating any one at the expense of the others.

In the Greek-speaking East, the controversy over the doctrine of Arius—who thought of the Son as the Father’s first creature, intermediate between God and the rest of creation²²—placed speculation about the relationship between the Father and the Son in the forefront. In the face of the heresies, Fathers such as St. Alexander of Alexandria and above all St. Athanasius affirmed that the Father and the Son are equally God (ὁμοούσιος), and that the unbegotten Father eternally begets the Son.²³ Perhaps in part because it is much easier to understand the analogy with human fatherhood and sonship, the orthodox understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit did not stabilize until the First Council of Constantinople in 381,²⁴ after strident efforts by the Cappadocian Fathers to clarify the ter-

¹⁸ John 17:18, John 20:21.

¹⁹ John 15:26.

²⁰ John 14:16.

²¹ We might add that the Son sends the Spirit (John 15:26, John 20:21), but the Spirit does not send the Son. However, this fact, which is of central importance to the topic of this paper, will be dealt with later on. The Gospels certainly only speak of the sending of Persons of the Trinity in way that precisely follows the order of origin. St. Thomas quotes Isaiah 48:16 (“And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his Spirit.”) in a *sed contra* as an example of the Son being sent by the Holy Spirit (THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae: pars prima, a quaestione I ad quaestionem XLIX*, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII*, vol. 4, Typographia Polyglotta, Rome 1888, I, q. 46, a. 8, sc.), but the quotation is not very convincing, because the “Lord GOD” could easily be interpreted as the Father, and, in any event, in the Old Testament, Trinitarian theology was far from clear or complete.

²² See J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. 3: *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*, Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland, 1992, 8.

²³ See *ibid.*, 18, 66-70.

²⁴ Historically, the controversy over the πνευματόμαχοι arose more than a generation after the First Council of Nicaea. For example, Athanasius’ letters to Serapion in defense of the the divin-

minology. It is thanks to the Cappadocians that terms such as ὑπόστασις and οὐσία were differentiated.²⁵ Moreover, St. Gregory of Nazianzus first applied the term ἐκπόρευσις—central to the topic discussed in this paper—as the distinctive property of the Holy Spirit.²⁶

In the Latin-speaking West, Tertullian was the first to make a systematic presentation of the Trinity, found in his polemical work *Adversus Praxean*.²⁷ He laid down the linguistic framework that was to be used in the West: *trinitas*, *persona*, and *substantia*.²⁸ Moreover, he makes use of the Latin verb *procedo* to describe the begetting of the Son.²⁹ St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Leo the Great further developed the Latin tradition on the Trinity, somewhat independently of the Eastern Fathers: the First Council of Constantinople of 381, in which the Cappadocian Fathers played such an instrumental role, did not come to general knowledge or acceptance in the West until the Council of Chalcedon in 451.³⁰ Regarding the Holy Spirit, the concepts of *procedo* and *processio* in the West took on a different connotation from ἐκπόρευμαι and ἐκπόρευσις, as will be seen below.

When, however, the creed of Constantinople I was translated into Latin, the phrase τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον was rendered as *ex patre procedentem*, following the translation of John 15:26—παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, rendered as *qui a Patre procedit*—in the *Vetus Latina* and *Latin Vulgate*. When the creed arrived in the West, this phrase was soon interpreted in the light of the previous Western reflection on the Holy Spirit. In this way, in later encounters between East and West, a false equivalence was often

ity of the Holy Spirit are dated around 359. See BIHLMAYER and TUECHLE, *L'antiquità cristiana*, 309-310.

²⁵ See QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 228. St. Basil the Great was the first to insist on this distinction.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁷ TERTULLIAN, *Adversus Praxean*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 2, D'Ambroise, Paris 1844.

²⁸ See QUASTEN, *The Ante-Nicene...*, 325.

²⁹ [U]nicum quidem deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione, quam οἰκονομίαν dicimus, ut unicus dei sit et filius, sermo ipsius qui ex ipso *processerit*, per quem omnia facta sunt et sine quo factum est nihil (TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Praxean*, II, 6).

³⁰ See A. DI BERNARDINO, ed., *Patrology*, vol. 4: *The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon*, trans. by P. SOLARI, Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland, 1992, 54-61, 169-170, 427-430; BIHLMAYER and TUECHLE, *L'antiquità cristiana*, 310.

made between *processio* and ἐκπόρευσις, leading to many misunderstandings.³¹ For example, already in the seventh century, St. Maximus the Confessor reports that the Church of Rome was accused of falling into heresy, because the Pope of the time—possibly Martin I—professed the *processio* of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.³² This profession, evidently, was translated with ἐκπόρευσις or a related word, because St. Maximus laments the confusion that results when translating Latin words into Greek:

Μεθερμηνεύειν δέ τὰ οἰκεῖα, τοῦ τὰς ὑποκλοπᾶς χάριν διαφυγεῖν τῶν
ὑποπιπτόντων κατὰ τὴν ὑμετέραν κέλευσιν, παρεκάλεσα τοὺς Ῥωμαίους.³³

Over the course of the centuries, the misunderstandings hardened, so that the *Filioque* became an important issue in the Photian Schism of the ninth century and the schism of 1054,³⁴ and the efforts of the unification councils of Lyons II and Florence were not able to effect a lasting solution.

³¹ See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”.

³² See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”; see also ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Epistola ad Marinum*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 91, D’Ambroise, Paris 1865, PG 91, 136 A-B.

³³ ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Epist. ad Marinum*, PG 91, 136 C: “I have asked the Romans to translate what is peculiar to them in such a way that any obscurities that may result from it will be avoided” (translation from PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”).

³⁴ K. BIHLMAYER and H. TUECHLE, *Storia della chiesa*, vol. 2: *Il medioevo*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1989⁹, 116-117, 121.

3. Scriptural Basis

As was briefly demonstrated above, the divinity the Holy Spirit and his distinction from the other Persons can be deduced from the Scriptures, although we must recognize that this doctrine is not explicit, but must be inferred by careful theological reflection, guided by the Church's Magisterium. Reflecting on the relationship between the Father and the Son has the advantage that an analogy can readily be drawn with human fatherhood and sonship. However, the place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity offers no such analogy, so much so that St. Basil the Great was unable to express the Holy Spirit's "property."³⁵ The Gospel of John gives the most direct indications, especially John 15:26, which says,

ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα
τῆς ἀληθείας ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ
ἐμοῦ.³⁶

In this passage, first of all, the Paraclete, or Spirit of Truth, has his ultimate origin in the Father. The passage says, "παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται:" the verb ἐκπορεύομαι, composed of ἐκ (out of) and πορεύομαι (to go),³⁷ specifically connotes origin from a source. In context, Jesus promises to send the Paraclete, but he takes pains to say that the Paraclete is παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς (from the Father); in other words, in some way the Son's action is dependent on the Father. In other passages, the Son's dependence is shown by the fact that the Father sends the Son; for example, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21); "as thou didst send me into the world, so I send them into the world" (John 17:18). Moreover, from the very fact that the Son is called "Son," "only begotten" (μονογενής), and λόγος (the Word "spoken" by the Father), it is clear that he has his origin in the Father. Similarly, Jesus emphasizes the Father's "monarchy" in John 14:15, "I

³⁵ QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 250.

³⁶ John 15:26, PONTIFICIUM INSTITUTUM BIBLICUM, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, Rome 1992¹¹: "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me" (RSV-CE).

³⁷ See OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, *Greek-English Lexicon: Abridged Edition*, Oxford 1891, 210.

will pray the father, and *he will give you another Counselor*,” and in John 14:26, “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, *whom the Father will send in my name*, he will teach you all things.” It follows that the Father is not simply “one of the origins” of the Holy Spirit, but his ultimate origin, his source, “spring,” or πηγῆ (borrowing the image used by the Greek Fathers): indeed he is the source of the entire Trinity. When John employs the term ἐκπορεύεται, therefore, we must understand it according to its etymological meaning of “going out of,” and keep in mind that the translation in the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate as *procedit*, although it translates the common meaning of the Greek word correctly,³⁸ is not exact: *procedo*, composed of *pro* (forward) and *cedo* (to go), literally means “to go forward,” and does not specifically connote origin from a source; in other words, it is more generic than its Greek equivalent.³⁹

Second, the Son has a role to play in the origin of the Holy Spirit. He promises to send the Holy Spirit, not only in John 14:26, but also in John 16:7—“If I do not go, the Counselor will not come, but if I go, I will send him to you”—and after the Resurrection, when he confers the power to forgive sins on his disciples: “[H]e breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:22). This capacity is received from the Father, for, as Jesus says, “All that the Father has is mine” (John 16:15), but it must be more than a mere participation in the Father’s “power” to send the Spirit: otherwise, it would be impossible to maintain the perfect equality of divinity of the Father and the Son.⁴⁰

Evidently, there is a distinction between the “sending,” or mission, of the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world and their eternal procession⁴¹ from the Father. Jesus, however, reveals himself as the image of the Father.⁴² Moreover, the Holy Spirit is shown to be the

³⁸ See OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 210.

³⁹ See D.P. SIMPSON, *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*, Wiley, New York 1968⁵, 474.

⁴⁰ We could add other references; for example, Romans 11:8-9, which describes the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Christ.”

⁴¹ When I use this term or its companion verb “to proceed” in English, I intend to use it in a generic sense, which would include both the Latin *processio* and the Greek ἐκπόρευσις, unless otherwise noted.

⁴² “Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, “Show us the Father?”’” (John 14:18). See also 1 Corinthians 1:15: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.”

revealer of all truth to the Church (especially of Jesus, the “way the truth and the life”):⁴³ “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”⁴⁴ Therefore, the missions of the Son and Spirit are precisely what reveals the processions, which would be otherwise unknown to man.⁴⁵

In summary, then, the Scriptures reveal that the Father sends the Son, and the Father and the Son both send the Spirit. From the perfect equality in divinity of the Father and the Son, we deduce that the Son, who receives everything from the Father, truly sends the Spirit, although he sends him in the manner of being Son. These “sendings” or missions reveal the internal origins of the Persons: in other words, for each mission made known to man, there is a corresponding “procession” in God. The Father is the Source or πηγὴ of the Spirit, not only because he is the source of the whole Trinity and the source of the Son, but because only the Father sends the Spirit in the manner of being Father; that is, as source, or *principium*, or αἰτία. It is in this context that the Gospel of John makes use of the verb ἐκπορεύεται, and so we must keep in mind that the Latin translation *procedit* is necessarily more generic (but not for that reason untrue). Moreover, we deduce from the fact that the Son, and not only the Father, sends the Spirit, that the Son, and not only the Father, must have a role in the procession of the Holy Spirit: the Father, in the manner of Father, and the Son, in the manner of Son.

⁴³ John 14:6.

⁴⁴ John 16:12-14.

⁴⁵ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 32, a. 7. In fact, if the missions are considered with regard to their eternal principle, it is possible to consider them as including the eternal procession with the temporal aspect added (see THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 43, a. 2, ad 3), although St. Thomas seems to prefer making a clean distinction between the eternal *processio* and the temporal *missio*. What is clear is that God cannot pass from potency to act, as if, in his eternal reality, the Father could pass from “not yet sending” to “having sent,” or as if the Son and Spirit could pass from being “not yet sent” to “sent.” Such a position would be tantamount to reproducing the confusion of some of the Apologists regarding the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and the λόγος προφορικός.

4. History of the Doctrine

4.1 Latin tradition

4.1.1 Tertullian

The Latin tradition regarding the Trinity, as we saw, effectively began with Tertullian, whose terminology was taken up by subsequent Latin fathers. He uses the verb *procedo* to refer to the begetting of the Son, but he understands it as being equally applicable to the Holy Spirit, since it does not refer to begetting and fatherhood as such, but merely the fact of “coming forth.”⁴⁶ For example, in addition to the passage cited above, he says,

[A]t ego nihil dico de deo inane et vacuum prodire potuisse, ut non de inani et vacuo prolatum, nec carere substantia quod de tanta substantia processit et tantas substantias fecit.⁴⁷

Speaking here of the Word pronounced by God, he argues that this Word cannot be empty or vain, since it proceeds (*processit*) from such a substance (that is, the divine Essence), and since it has created so many substances (that is, created beings). Indeed this Word must have (divine) substance itself. A few paragraphs earlier, Tertullian also expresses for the first time the formula *a Patre per filium*: “*Spiritum non aliunde puto, quam a Patre per Filium.*”⁴⁸ Although neither the terminology nor the concepts are yet perfected, already Tertullian makes use of the verb *procedo* to signify the communication of the divine Essence, a model taken up by practically the entire Latin tradition.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”, footnote on Tertullian.

⁴⁷ TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Praxean*, VII, 6.

⁴⁸ TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Praxean*, IV, 1.

⁴⁹ See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”, footnote on Tertullian.

4.1.2 St. Hilary of Poitiers

St. Hilary of Poitiers staunchly defended the Nicene dogma in the West, when the Arian controversy began to spread to northern Italy and Gaul. His chief concern was to defend the unity in nature and substance of the Son with the Father, without explicitly drawing the natural conclusion with the regard to the Holy Spirit (but without denying it either).⁵⁰ In this context, he did not make use of *procedit* or *processio* as a technical term, but in his *De Trinitate* Book VIII, 20, he says, “[Spiritus Sanctus] a Filio igitur accipit, qui et ab eo mittitur, et a Patre procedit,” following John 15:26, and then asks, “utrum id ipsum sit a Filio accipere, quod a Patre procedere.” Although he does not answer this question directly with an affirmative, his subsequent development shows that the answer is “yes,” for later on in the same chapter, he says, “A Patre enim procedit Spiritus veritatis: sed a Filio a Patre mittitur. Omnia quae Patris sunt, Filii sunt: ed idcirco quidquid accipiet, a Filio accipiet ille mittendus.”⁵¹ St. Hilary in this way shows that the sending or “mission” reveals the eternal origin of the Persons. It is in this context that we are to understand his description in Book II, 29, of the Father and the Son as “authors” (*auctores*) of the Holy Spirit.⁵² As can be seen, St. Hilary’s principal concern is to defend the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, not so much to defend the monarchy of the Father. In this regard, he emphasizes the equality of the Son with respect to the Father, and such equality includes, therefore, the equality of their role in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Hilary sees no problem in affirming, “[S]anctum Spiritum tuum, qui ex te per unigenitum tuum est, promerear.”⁵³ This affirmation hints at the formula *per Filium* or διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, which, as we will see, can be applied to both *processio* and ἐκπόρευσις.

⁵⁰ DI BERNARDINO, *The Golden Age of Latin...*, 57.

⁵¹ ST. HILARY OF POITIERS, *De Trinitate*, ed. by L. LADARIA, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 1986.

⁵² [Spiritus Sanctus] Patre et Filio auctoribus, confitendus est (ST. HILARY OF POITIERS, *De Trin.* II, 29).

⁵³ ST. HILARY OF POITIERS, *De Trin.* XII, 57.

4.1.3 St. Ambrose

St. Ambrose of Milan, a contemporary of St. Hilary, was well formed in classical culture, including the Greek language, and he was familiar with the writings of the Greek Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, such as Didymus the Blind, St. Athanasius, and St. Basil the Great. St. Ambrose's *De Spiritu Sancto*, in fact, owes a lot of its content to these authors. Writing at the time of the πνευματόμαχοι, he takes great pains to insist on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In fact, he seems to have finished his work in 381, the year in which the First Council of Constantinople formulated the clause in the Creed regarding the Holy Spirit, and the same year in which Ambrose was instrumental at a parallel a synod in Aquileia.⁵⁴ In Ambrose, we already see a maturing Latin doctrine on the procession of the Holy Spirit, for he says, "Spiritus quoque sanctus cum procedit a Patre et Filio, non separatur a Patre, non separatur a Filio."⁵⁵ He is the first to use the expression *Filioque*,⁵⁶ and he uses the verb *procedit*, evidently, in the more generic sense. Later on, in Chapter 15, he says,

[S]icut Pater fons vitae est, ita etiam Filium plerique fontem vitae memorarunt significatum; eo quod apud te, inquit, Deus omnipotens, Filius tuus fons vitae sit, hoc est, fons Spiritus sancti; quia Spiritus vita est, sicut Dominus ait: *Verba quae ego locutus sum vobis, Spiritus et vita sunt* quia ubi Spiritus, et vita est: et ubi vita est, etiam Spiritus sanctus.⁵⁷

He thus calls the Son a "source" of the Holy Spirit; evidently, he does not take the word *fons* in the monarchical sense given to the word πηγή by the Greek fathers.

⁵⁴ H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Latin and Italian, ed. by P. HÜNERMANN, Dehoniane, Bologna 1996², 150.

⁵⁵ ST. AMBROSE, *De Spiritu sancto*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 16, D'Ambroise, Paris 1888, I, 11, 120.

⁵⁶ Or, at any rate, the equivalent expression *et Filio*. See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, "Greek and Latin Traditions...".

⁵⁷ ST. AMBROSE, *De Spiritu sancto*, I, 15, 152. It is significant that St. Ambrose makes these rather explicit statements in the same year as the ecumenical council of Constantinople I. It seems unlikely that St. Ambrose—a staunch Homoousian—should make such affirmations and consider them to be in disagreement with the doctrine of the Cappadocians, his allies in Constantinople.

4.1.4 St. Augustine

The Latin Father with the greatest influence on the Western Trinitarian tradition is certainly St. Augustine. His doctrine was largely taken up by Scholastic theology, including St. Thomas Aquinas.⁵⁸ St. Augustine makes a number of important contributions to the reflection on the inner workings of the relations between the Persons. He teaches that God is utterly simple, and that the Persons are perfectly equal in divinity (indeed unique in nature or essence), but really distinct as Persons:

[Deus] simplex dicitur, quoniam quod habet hoc est, excepto quod relative quaeque persona ad alteram dicitur. Nam utique Pater habet Filium, nec tamen ipse est Filius, et Filius habet Patrem, nec tamen ipse est Pater.⁵⁹

Denying the real distinction among the Persons would amount to Sabellianism, and denying the equality of divinity would amount to subordinationism or Arianism, and the only way to avoid that, asserts Augustine, is this doctrine of relations. In God, we can only speak of “substance” and “relation”: God does not have accidents, but he does have relation, which, in God, is not accident. The Persons, however, have the substance in common (“non est tamen diversa substantia”), and therefore they are distinct only in relation (“non secundum substantiam dicuntur, sed secundum relativum”).⁶⁰ The various processions and missions revealed in the Scriptures merely indicate the order of origin, not subordination,⁶¹ and the equality in nature implies that all *ad extra* operations are common to all the Persons.⁶²

As regards the origin of the Holy Spirit, St. Augustine affirms, in continuity with the Western tradition, that the Holy Spirit proceeds (*procedit*) from the Father and the Son. He specifies, however, that the Father and the Son are a single principle of the Holy Spirit,

⁵⁸ DI BERNARDINO, *The Golden Age of Latin...*, 427-428.

⁵⁹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Civitate Dei*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 41, D’Ambroise, Paris 1864, 11, 10, 1.

⁶⁰ ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 42, D’Ambroise, Paris 1865, 5, 5, 6.

⁶¹ See ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 4, 20, 27.

⁶² See ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 2, 10, 18.

not two principles.⁶³ Augustine, perhaps keeping in mind the reflections of the Cappadocian Fathers, takes care to preserve the monarchy of the Father. The procession of the Holy Spirit may pertain equally to Son as to the Father, but the Father gave the Son the “power” to communicate the divine Essence in begetting him. Therefore, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *principaliter*.⁶⁴ Augustine also investigates what distinguishes the Son from the Spirit: he notes that the Son is begotten of the Father, which specifically means to proceed as *image*, whereas the Spirit proceeds as *love*—which means *pondus*, gift, and communion—not so much as image.⁶⁵ As can be seen, then, Augustine, taking *processio* in a generic sense, draws the necessary conclusion: if the Son has everything that the Father has except the property of Fatherhood,⁶⁶ then the Holy Spirit must proceed (in a generic sense) equally from the Father and from the Son. There is, however, only *one* principle of procession, because the Father and the Son are distinct *only* by means of their mutual relations, and in “spirating” the Spirit, they are identical. Augustine is still able to maintain the monarchy of the Father, because the Spirit still proceeds from the Father *principaliter*; that is, with the Father as the first origin. For Augustine, moreover, *processio* is “common” or “generic” also in a different sense: like Tertullian, he admits that the begetting of the Son is a type of procession, stating, “Non omne quod procedit nascitur, quamvis omne procedat quod nascitur,” so that *processio* as a concept is broader than the origin of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷

⁶³ [F]atendum est Patrem et Filium principium esse Spiritus Sancti, non duo principia, sed sicut Pater et Filius unus Deus, et ad creaturam relative unus Creator et unus Dominus, sic relative ad Spiritum Sanctum unum principium (ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 5, 14, 15).

⁶⁴ Et tamen non frustra in hac Trinitate non dicitur Verbum Dei nisi Filius, nec Donum Dei nisi Spiritus Sanctus, nec de quo genitum est Verbum et de quo procedit principaliter Spiritus Sanctus nisi Deus Pater. Ideo autem addidi, Principaliter, quia et de Filio Spiritus Sanctus procedere reperitur. Sed hoc quoque illi Pater dedit, non iam existenti et nondum habenti: sed quidquid unigenito Verbo dedit, gignendo dedit. (ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 15, 17, 29). See also ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47 and ST. AUGUSTINE, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 35, D’Ambroise, Paris 1864, 99, 8-9.

⁶⁵ See ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 15, 27, 50; see also *De Trin.* 9, 12, 18.

⁶⁶ Of course, not being Father is not a “lack,” “privation,” or “diminution” in the Son: it merely reflects the order of origin, as Augustine says.

⁶⁷ ST. AUGUSTINE, *Contra Maximinum*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 42, D’Ambroise, Paris 1865, II, 14, 1.

4.1.5 St. Leo the Great

Following closely in the footsteps of the Latin tradition up to his time, Pope St. Leo the Great dogmatically affirmed the *Filioque* in 447, a generation after the death of Augustine.⁶⁸ In his epistle *Quam laudabiliter* to Turribium, bishop of Astorga, he denounces the errors of Modalists, stating simply,

Primo itaque capitulo demonstratur, quam impie sentiant de Trinitate divina, qui et Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti unam atque eandem asserunt esse personas, tamquam idem Deus nunc Pater, nunc Filius, nunc Spiritus Sanctus nominetur; nec alius sit qui genuit, alius qui genitus est, *alius qui de utroque processit*, sed singularis unitas in tribus quidem vocabulis, sed non in tribus sit accipienda personis.⁶⁹

Evidently, he is using the generic, Western conception of the verb *procedo*. Leo made this affirmation four years before the Council of Chalcedon, during which the Church of Rome accepted the symbol of the First Council of Constantinople for the first time. Leo seems to accept the *Filioque* as established dogma, because he makes use of the term in Sermons LXXV, 3 and LXXVI, 2.⁷⁰

4.1.6 Development of the Latin Tradition up to the Schism of 1054

The Western concept of *processio* continued to be used, without much controversy, until around the eighth century. An early witness can be found in the *Quicumque*, the so-called “Athanasian Creed,” attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria, but which appears to have been written in France between 430 and 500.⁷¹ It states simply, “Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio, non factus nec creatus nec genitus, sed procedens.”⁷² In the face of the continued threat of Arianism in Visigothic Spain, several local synods in Toledo proposed the *Filioque* to safeguard the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. For example,

⁶⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Doubleday, New York 1997², 247.

⁶⁹ DENZINGER, *DH* 284.

⁷⁰ See ST. LEO THE GREAT, *Sermones*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 54, D’Ambroise, Paris 1846, LXXV, 3; see also ST. LEO THE GREAT, *Sermones*, LXXVI, 2.

⁷¹ DENZINGER, *DH* 75.

⁷² *Ibid.*

the profession of faith of the synod held in 470 says, “Spiritus aequae Sancti confitendus a nobis et praedicandus est a Patre et a Filio procedere et cum Patre et Filio unius esse substantiae.” Given the generic Latin understanding of the verb *procedo*, omitting the procession from the Son would make it seem as if the Son were subordinate to the Father, and thus would undermine Son’s divinity.⁷³ Similar statements can be found from the synods held in 633, 638, 675, and 693.⁷⁴ It seems that a synod in 589 in Toledo mandated the use of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, with the addition of the word *Filioque*, but this version did not begin to have widespread use until the eighth century, when the Frankish kingdom adopted it.⁷⁵ Already by the seventh century, translation difficulties began to foster misunderstandings between the Latin-speaking West and Greek-speaking East,⁷⁶ so much so that in 808, the Frankish monks on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem were branded as heretics by the local Greek-speaking Christians for using the Creed with the *Filioque*, and Pope Leo III, who died in 816, had the Creed cast on silver tablets in Latin and Greek at St. Peter’s Basilica without the *Filioque*, so as to avoid confrontations with the Byzantine Christians.⁷⁷ Patriarch Photius of Constantinople, during his struggle with Pope Nicholas I, wrote an encyclical in 867 with a number of accusations, including the charge that the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is a heresy.⁷⁸ When Patriarch Michael I Cerularius of Constantinople ordered a series of polemical works against Western customs, Pope St. Leo IX’s secretary, Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida, responded in 1053 with his *Dialogus*, which accused the Greek Church of “Macedonianism” for omitting the *Filioque* from their Creed.⁷⁹ While the *Filioque* was an

⁷³ See DENZINGER, *DH* 470.

⁷⁴ See DENZINGER, *DH* 470, 485, 490, 527, and 568. It is interesting that the synod in 675 gives the Latin translation of the Greek words ὁμοούσιος, ὁμοῦς, and οὐσία (see DENZINGER, *DH* 526) but does not make use of the Greek term ἐκπόρευσις.

⁷⁵ See BIHLMAYER and TUECHLE, *Il medioevo*, 99.

⁷⁶ See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”.

⁷⁷ See BIHLMAYER and TUECHLE, *Il medioevo*, 99.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 116.

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, 121.

excuse, rather than a cause, of the schism,⁸⁰ the circumstances made mutual understanding of the different conceptions of procession nearly impossible.

4.1.7 Fourth Lateran Council

In the West, the doctrine of the *Filioque* remained largely uncontroversial, although there were Trinitarian heresies, such as the tritheism of Gilbert de la Porée and Joachim of Fiore. The latter in particular was subject to the examination of the Fourth Lateran Council, especially as regards his *De unitate Trinitatis*, now lost.⁸¹ According to the condemnation by the council, Joachim had accused Peter Lombard of positing a sort of quaternity, by professing a single divine Essence common to all three Persons. Thus, Joachim proposed a collective or moral unity in the Trinity, as when Acts 4:32 speaks of the Church as being “of one heart and soul” or when Christ asks the Father in John 17:22 “that they [the disciples] may become perfectly one.”⁸² The council dogmatically affirms, against Joachim, that the divine Essence truly exists, and is, in fact, identical with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, although the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct from each other.⁸³ The council then affirms, following Peter Lombard,

[I]lla res [essentia sive natura divina] non est generans neque genita nec procedens sed est Pater qui generat Filius qui gignitur et Spiritus Sanctus qui procedit ut distinctiones sint in personis et unitas in natura.⁸⁴

Thus, against a possible misinterpretation, it is always the Person who begets, is begotten, or proceeds, not the divine Essence. Moreover, the council reaffirms the traditional anti-Arian formulation of the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit, when it says,

Patet ergo quod sine ulla diminutione Filius nascendo substantiam patris accepit et ita Pater et Filius habent eandem substantiam et sic eadem res est Pater et Filius necnon et Spiritus Sanctus ab utroque procedens.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ It was not even the most important issue: the Greek Church objected most of all to the use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist. See BIHLMAYER and TUECHLE, *Il medioevo*, 120-121.

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 228.

⁸² DENZINGER, *DH* 803.

⁸³ DENZINGER, *DH* 804-805.

⁸⁴ DENZINGER, *DH* 804.

⁸⁵ DENZINGER, *DH* 805.

This formulation follows the path traced out by St. Augustine, when he speaks of the Holy Spirit as processing from the Son precisely because the Son receives everything from the Father.

4.1.8 St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas largely follows the doctrine of St. Augustine on the Trinity, and he maintains the Latin tradition already discussed regarding the *processio* of the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas does, in any event, make some very useful clarifications and distinctions. He defines *processio* simply: “Processio enim significat motum ad extra,”⁸⁶ although of course this refers to *princeps analogatum* of *processio* that we know from experience. St. Thomas is quick to point out,

Cum autem Deus sit super omnia, ea quae in Deo dicuntur, non sunt intelligenda secundum modum infimarum creaturarum, quae sunt corpora; sed secundum similitudinem supremarum creaturarum, quae sunt intellectuales substantiae; a quibus etiam similitudo accepta deficit a repraesentatione divinorum. *Non ergo accipienda est processio secundum quod est in corporalibus*, vel per motum localem, vel per actionem alicuius causae in exteriorem effectum, ut calor a calefaciente in calefactum; *sed secundum emanationem intelligibilem, utpote verbi intelligibilis a dicente, quod manet in ipso*. Et sic fides Catholica processionem ponit in divinis.⁸⁷

In other words, it is dangerous to use concepts from earthly realities and apply them univocally to God; they must be purified. We are not to think of the procession of the Holy Spirit the way water “proceeds” from a spring, at least not too literally, for God is pure spirit and utterly simple. It is clear, in any event, that St. Thomas is thinking in terms of the generic, Western concept of *processio*, which does not imply, in itself, the notion of first origin,⁸⁸ a point that he makes clear when he says,

Quia si quis recte consideret, inveniet processionis verbum inter omnia quae *ad originem qualemcumque pertinent*, communissimum esse. Utimur enim eo ad designandum qualemcumque originem; sicut quod linea procedit a

⁸⁶ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 27, a. 1, arg. 1.

⁸⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 27, a. 1.

⁸⁸ The term ἐκπόρευσις would be defined as “motus ex aliquo” rather than “motus ad extra.”

puncto, radius a sole, rivus a fonte; et similiter in quibuscumque aliis. Unde ex quocumque alio ad originem pertinente, potest concludi quod spiritus sanctus procedit a filio.⁸⁹

He does not seem to have been aware of the difference in concept between ἐκπόρευσις and *processio*, because he says, regarding the Greek Christians,

Et quidam eorum dicuntur concedere quod sit a filio, vel profluat ab eo, non tamen quod procedat. Quod videtur vel ex ignorantia, vel ex protervia esse.⁹⁰

Along the same lines, St. Thomas adheres faithfully to the doctrine that *processio* can apply to the the begetting of the Son as well as the procession of the Holy Spirit,⁹¹ although of course the latter procession does not have a special name.⁹²

A key concept in St. Thomas' doctrine is that of relation: by reason of God's simplicity, the relations are not really distinct from the divine Essence, or as St. Thomas puts it,

Quidquid autem in rebus creatis habet esse accidentale, secundum quod transfertur in Deum, habet esse substantiale, nihil enim est in Deo ut accidens in subiecto, sed quidquid est in Deo, est eius essentia.⁹³

This must be the case, because in God a real distinction between substance and accident does not exist.⁹⁴ The relations, however, are really distinct among themselves, precisely because they are real relations that therefore entail real opposition,⁹⁵ and to deny real relations would amount to Sabellianism.⁹⁶ Indeed, "Distinctio autem in divinis non fit nisi per relationes originis."⁹⁷ There are four relations: fatherhood, sonship, spiration, and *processio*, that can only be derived only from God's intrinsic actions—the workings of the intellect and the will—each of which gives rise to a *processio*, in the broad sense.⁹⁸ The

⁸⁹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 27, a. 2-3.

⁹² See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 27, a. 4, ad 3.

⁹³ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 28, a. 2.

⁹⁴ Regarding God's simplicity, see THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 3, a. 6.

⁹⁵ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 28, a. 3.

⁹⁶ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 28, a. 1.

⁹⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 29, a. 4.

⁹⁸ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 28, a. 4.

processiones each give rise to two opposite relations: one in the “principle,” and the other in the Person proceeding from that principle. In the case of the “procession of the will,” which is the “procession of love,” these relations are spiration and *processio*.⁹⁹ In this way, St. Thomas makes it clear what the “difference” is between the Son and the Holy Spirit: whereas the Son proceeds by way of Word, the Holy Spirit proceeds by way of love.¹⁰⁰ Since the relations have “esse substantiale,” not “accidentale,” in God, it follows that the relations found in a Person are subsistent: we may truthfully say “the Father is fatherhood,” “the Son is sonship, and “the Holy Spirit is *processio*,” keeping in mind that, properly speaking, what subsists is the divine Nature.¹⁰¹

Regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit more specifically, St. Thomas devotes an entire article to defend the *processio* of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as the Father. His key argument is that the Persons are only distinct by reason of relation. If the Holy Spirit did not proceed (in the Latin sense) from the Son, then there could not be a real relation between Son and Spirit, and thus the two Persons would not be really distinct, which would be a heresy. Moreover, if the Son proceeds by way of the intellect as Word, and the Spirit proceeds by way of the will as love, then it seems that the love must proceed also from the word, because it is impossible to love what has not first been apprehended. In fact, St. Thomas suggests that if there were no order of procession between the Son and the Holy Spirit, then it would be as if they were individuals of the same species that differ only by their matter, which would be impossible.¹⁰²

St. Thomas also develops the idea that the the Holy Spirit can be thought of as proceeding from the Father *through* the Son (*a patre per filium*), citing the same passage from St. Hilary of Poitiers seen above.¹⁰³ He summarizes his argument succinctly by saying,

⁹⁹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 28, a. 4.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 29, a. 4.

¹⁰² For these arguments, see THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 2.

¹⁰³ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 3 sc. see also ST. HILARY OF POITIERS, *De Trin.* XII,

Quia igitur filius habet a patre quod ab eo procedat spiritus sanctus, potest dici quod pater per filium spirat spiritum sanctum; vel quod spiritus sanctus procedat a patre per filium, quod idem est.¹⁰⁴

Since the Son receives from Father that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him, we can say that the Holy Spirit proceeds *through* him. Moreover, the Father and the Son spirate the Holy Spirit using one and the same “power” or *virtus*; considering that *virtus*, the spiration of the Spirit is immediate. However, considering the agents spirating, we can truthfully say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father immediately and from the Son mediately.¹⁰⁵ This allows us to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds *principaliter* or *proprie* from the Father, because the Son receives from the Father the *virtus* of having the Spirit proceed from him.¹⁰⁶ A consequence of this is that the Father and the Son are one principle of the Holy Spirit, a doctrine taken from St. Augustine, as we saw:

[P]ater et filius in omnibus unum sunt, in quibus non distinguit inter eos relationis oppositio. Unde, cum in hoc quod est esse principium spiritus sancti, non opponantur relative, sequitur quod pater et filius sunt unum principium spiritus sancti.¹⁰⁷

Because of God’s simplicity, anything between the Persons that does not pertain to an opposition of relations must be perfectly identical, and between Father and Son, that includes the spiration of the Holy Spirit.

St. Thomas’ synthesis on the Trinity is a monumental work: although St. Thomas does not seem to be aware of the subtle difference between the Western and Cappadocian concepts of procession, he has the advantage of a great precision in language and metaphysical rigor. His discussion of the formula *per Filium* offers a sound platform on which to base dialogue with the Greek tradition, as will be seen below.

¹⁰⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 3.

¹⁰⁵ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 3, ad 1 and ad 2.

¹⁰⁶ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 3, ad 2.

¹⁰⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.* I, q. 36, a. 4.

4.2 Alexandrine tradition

It may come as a surprise to those familiar with the Cappadocian tradition that a concept very similar to *processio* was developed in Alexandria, in parallel to the Latin tradition, using the verb πρόειμι (and its infinitive τὸ προϊέναι or the participle προϊόν), which is etymologically very similar to *procedo*. The preposition πρό means “before,” and εἶμι¹⁰⁸ means “to go,” and so the compound means “to go before;” like *processio*, the term is generic and does not connote coming from a particular origin.¹⁰⁹

4.2.1 Origen

The first Alexandrian to investigate the inner workings of the Trinity systematically was Origen, who is credited with emphatically affirming the real distinction among the persons against Monarchian heresies, as well as affirming God’s simplicity and purely spiritual nature.¹¹⁰ Origen—the subject of controversy during his lifetime and afterwards—has been both accused and exonerated of subordinationism by various Fathers,¹¹¹ and so his views on the Trinity must be accepted with due care, in particular because he views the Son and the Spirit as intermediaries between the Father and creatures.¹¹² One passage in particular is relevant to this discussion, from his commentary on the Gospel of St. John:

ἡμεῖς μέντοι γε τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις πειθόμενοι τυγχάνειν, τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ ἀγέννητον μηδὲν ἕτερον τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι πιστεύοντες, ὡς εὐσεβέστερον καὶ ἀληθὲς προσιέμεθα τὸ πάντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενομένων τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα εἶναι τιμώτερον, καὶ τάξει πάντων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγεννημένων.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Not to be confused with εἶμι, *to be*.

¹⁰⁹ See OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 328, 584, 591. However, as will be seen, the term in Greek is nearly always used in opposition to ἐκπόρευσις.

¹¹⁰ See QUASTEN, *The Ante-Nicene...*, 75-77.

¹¹¹ St. Jerome accused him of subordinationism, but St. Gregory the Wonderworker and St. Athanasius exonerated him. See *ibid.*, 77.

¹¹² See *ibid.*, 77.

¹¹³ ORIGEN, *The Commentary of Origen on S. John’s Gospel*, ed. by A.E. BROOKE, vol. 1, University Press, Cambridge 1896, II, 6: “We indeed are persuaded that there are [literally, “happen to be”] three Hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we believe that no other is unbegotten except the Father. We admit as true and more pious that, all things being made through the Word, the Holy Spirit is the most excellent [of these things], and [most excellent] in the order

He professes faith in three ὑποστάσεις, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Of note is that he says that the Holy Spirit comes to be ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ Χριστοῦ, which is the first formulation of the procession of the Spirit *through the Son* (however imperfect is the choice of the verb γίνομαι, which ordinarily implies strict causality).

4.2.2 Athanasius

St. Athanasius, the great champion of the ὁμοούσιον, while remaining a disciple of Origen, attenuated whatever subordination was to be found in his master and affirmed the full divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁴ An important tenet of Athanasius' understanding of the origins of the person is the communication of divinity: the Son is God precisely because he is ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, literally “out of the substance (or essence) of the Father,” and for this reason the formula ὁμοίος κατ’ οὐσίαν is unsatisfactory.¹¹⁵ This is true to such an extent that there can only be one Son, since the begetting of the Son “exhausts” the Father’s fecundity.¹¹⁶ Athanasius applies a similar reasoning to the Holy Spirit, whom he defends as similarly consubstantial with the Father. If the Spirit were not God, he argues, we could not become “sharers in the divine nature,”¹¹⁷ nor could the Spirit be ranked as one of the Holy Trinity.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the Spirit, like the Son, is ὁμοούσιος with the Father.¹¹⁹ His first letter to Serapion summarizes the idea that what applies to the Son also applies to the Spirit. He states,

Εἰ γὰρ ἐφρόνουν ὀρθῶς περὶ τοῦ Λόγου, ἐφρόνουν ὑγιῶς καὶ περὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος, ὃ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἴδιον ὄν, παρ’ αὐτοῦ δίδεται τοῖς μαθηταῖς καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς αὐτόν.¹²⁰

of all things made by the Father through the Christ” (my translation). It is immediately clear from this passage why Origen is accused of subordinationism.

¹¹⁴ QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 66, 76.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 69-70. We could object at this point that St. Athanasius is making the divine essence the “principle” of the Trinity, but we must keep in mind that the doctrine of the monarchy of the Father was not fully developed at this point.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹⁷ See 1 Peter 1:4.

¹¹⁸ QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 76.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 57.

¹²⁰ ST. ATHANASIUS, *Epistulae ad Serapionem*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNÉ, vol. 26, D’Ambroise, Paris 1857, I, 2, 6: “If, however, it rightly regards the Son, it soundly regards also the

The phrase that most interest this topic is ὁ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, which is of course a quotation from John 15:26. The verb ἐκπορεύομαι is still not a technical term for him, but since it is a justification of the Holy Spirit’s divinity, it must make at least some reference to the Holy Spirit’s eternal origin, not just his mission. The very next phrase, καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἴδιον ὄν, is also of note, because he speaks of the Spirit as “being the Son’s own,” which implies that the Son has a role to play in the Holy Spirit’s origin. He states this idea more fully in the third letter to Serapion:

Καὶ ὡσπερ ὁ Υἱὸς λέγει, «Πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ Πατήρ ἐμὰ ἐστίν.»¹²¹ οὕτως ταῦτα πάντα διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ εὐρήσομεν ὄντα καὶ ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι.¹²²

Even though Athanasius does not use the term οὐσία, he expresses clearly the idea that the very essence (οὐσία) of the Father—that is, Πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ Πατήρ—is communicated to the Spirit *through the Son* (διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ).

4.2.3 Didymus the Blind and Epiphanius of Salamis

Other writers followed along the same lines as Athanasius. The last famous director of the Alexandrian catechetical school, Didymus the Blind, wrote a treatise on the Holy Spirit—extremely influential in St. Ambrose’s *De Spiritu Sancto*—defending the consubstantiality of the Spirit against the πνευματόμαχοι. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says (attributing the words to the Son), “quia non ex se est, sed *ex Patre et me est*.”¹²³ Later on in the same work, he says,

Spiritus non accipit quod ante non habuit. Si enim quod prius non habebat accepit, translato in alium munere, vacuus largitor effectus est, cessans habere

Spirit, *who originates from the Father and is the Son’s own*. He [the Spirit] was given from him [the Son] to the disciples and to all those who believe in him” (my translation).

¹²¹ John 16:15.

¹²² ST. ATHANASIUS, *Epist. ad Serap.* III, 1, 33: “And even as the Son says, ‘All things that the Father has I have,’ in the same way, we find that all these things are also in the Spirit” (my translation).

¹²³ DIDYMUS THE BLIND, *De Spiritu sancto*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 39, D’Ambroise, Paris 1858, 34, PG 39, 1064 A. No surviving Greek text exists for this work, but St. Jerome made a translation, which, it seems, is so faithful that he repeats misquotations. Reconstructing the Greek is rather straightforward in this case: it would have been similar to “ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἐμοῦ ἐστίν.” See QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 87.

quod tribuit. Quomodo igitur supra de naturis incorporalibus disputantes intelleximus, sic et nunc Spiritum sanctum a Filio accipere, id quod suae naturae fuerat cognoscendum est, et non dantem et accipientem, sed unam significare substantiam. Siquidem et Filius eadem a Patre accipere dicitur, quibus ipse subsistit. Neque enim quid aliud est Filius, exceptis his quae ei dantur a Patre, *neque alia substantia est Spiritus sancti praeter id quod datur ei a Filio*. Propterea autem ista dicuntur, ul eandem in Trinitate credamus esse naturam Spiritus sancti, quae est Patris et Filii.¹²⁴

As can be seen, he makes here a more explicit expression of the doctrine of the communication of substance (or essence). Since the Son and the Holy Spirit are incorporeal,¹²⁵ it is impossible that they “lack” something first and then “receive” it later. The Son receives from the Father the very things by which the Son subsists (that is, the substance); and most significantly, the Holy Spirit receives no other substance other than the one given to him by by the Son.

St. Epiphanius of Salamis—although not an Alexandrian—says something similar in his *Ancoratus*: refuting the idea that the Son and the Spirit come from the Father by way of composition (σύνθησις), he says,

Πνεῦμα τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Υἱοῦ· οὐ κατὰ τινα σύνθησιν, καθάπερ ἐν ὑμῖν ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα, ἀλλ’ ἐν μέσῳ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ, ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, τρίτον τῇ ὀνομασίᾳ.¹²⁶

He conceives of the Spirit as being “between” the Father and the Son (but not the “compound” of the Father and the Son, as we are compounds of soul and body), and “out of” (ἐκ) both.

¹²⁴ DIDYMUS THE BLIND, *De Spiritu sancto*, 37, PG 39, 1065 C – 1066 A.

¹²⁵ We would hasten to add, not only incorporeal, but utterly simple. Angels are incorporeal, but they can and do receive things that they previously did not have. The difference is that angels, being creatures, are capable of going from potency to act; God, no.

¹²⁶ EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS, *Ancoratus*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 43, D’Ambroise, Paris 1864, VIII, PG 43, 29 C: “The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of the Son: not according to a sort of composition (σύνθησιν), like the soul and the body in us, but in the midst of the the Father and the Son, from the Father and the Son, third in name” (my translation).

4.2.4 St. Cyril of Alexandria

The great St. Cyril of Alexandria, although best known for his role in the controversies surrounding Nestorianism, summarized the Alexandrian tradition regarding the Holy Spirit in his *Thesaurus*, in the following way:

Ὅτε τοίνυν τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐν ἡμῖν γενόμενον, συμμόρφους ἀποδεικνύει Θεοῦ, πρόεισι δὲ καὶ ἐκ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ, πρόδηλον ὅτι τῆς θείας ἐστὶν οὐσίας, οὐσιωδῶς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ἔξ αὐτῆς προϊόν.¹²⁷

Cyril is trying to prove that the Holy Spirit is truly divine, following St. Athanasius' argument, by saying that, because by dwelling in us he divinizes us (συμμόρφους ἀποδεικνύει Θεοῦ), he is truly of the divine Essence (τῆς θείας ἐστὶν οὐσίας). When Cyril makes use of the verb πρόειμι, he cannot be referring merely to the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit, because the purpose of the passage is to show that the divine Essence is communicated to the Holy Spirit: the Spirit is proceeding (προϊόν) from the Essence substantially (οὐσιωδῶς).¹²⁸ In the same work, he makes a similar statement:

[εἶπον] ἐν δὲ τῷ Υἱῷ φυσικῶς τε καὶ οὐσιωδῶς διῆκον παρὰ Πατρός τὸ Πνεῦμα, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα χρίων ἀγιάζει.¹²⁹

Here he does not use the verb πρόειμι, but the idea is evidently the same, and he is quite explicit about the distinction between the eternal communication of Essence to the Spirit

¹²⁷ ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Thesaurus*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 75, D'Ambroise, Paris 1863, XXXIV, PG 75, 585 A: "When, therefore, the Holy Spirit, dwelling (γενόμενον) in us, renders us conformed to God, he goes forth (πρόεισι) from the Father and the Son. It is clear that he is of the divine Essence, going forth (προϊόν) substantially (οὐσιωδῶς) in it and from it" (my translation).

¹²⁸ It would be fair to ask how this affirmation (τῆς θείας ἐστὶν οὐσίας, οὐσιωδῶς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ἔξ αὐτῆς προϊόν) squares with the definition of the Fourth Lateran Council. It is important to keep in mind the particular accusation made by Joachim of Fiore, that Peter Lombard had created a sort of fourth Person of the Trinity called the "essence." We could specify that *in quantum* essence, the Essence does not beget, spirate, or proceed, but that it is the Persons who beget, spirate, and proceed. Since each Person is ontologically identical with the Essence, then we could say, in a less proper sense, that the Essence begets, spirates, and proceeds *in quantum* the corresponding Person, and in this sense Cyril's doctrine is perfectly orthodox, especially since he did not have to deal with that particular controversy.

¹²⁹ ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Thesaurus*, XXXIV, PG 75, 577 A: "[I said that] the Spirit, through whom all things are sanctified by his anointing, is flowing (διῆκον) from the Father in the Son naturally (φυσικῶς) as well as essentially [or substantially] (οὐσιωδῶς)" (my translation).

and his temporal mission in the world (his “sanctification by anointing”). Cyril does, at times, use the verb ἐκπορεύομαι to describe the relation of the Son’s origin from the Father (which is legitimate, albeit less precise than the Cappadocian usage, because the Father is the πηγὴ of the entire Trinity). However, he never confuses τὸ προεῖναι (communication of the divine Essence) with ἐκπόρευσις (originating from the source of the divine essence).¹³⁰

4.3 Cappadocian tradition

The crown jewel of the the Church’s reflection on the Holy Trinity is almost certainly the work of the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. As has been said, they coined and purified the terms in Greek used in Trinitarian theology, and they masterfully combated both the Arian heresy in its manifold expressions, as well as the controversy of the πνευματόμαχοι. As with their contemporary St. Ambrose, their chief concern as regards the Holy Spirit was to defend his divinity, although it also became necessary to defend the monarchy of the Father.

4.3.1 St. Basil the Great

St. Basil affirms quite clearly the origin of the Holy Spirit through the Son:

τὸ ἅγιον τὸ Πνεῦμα [...] δι’ ἐνὸς Υἱοῦ τῷ ἐνὶ Πατρὶ συναπτόμενον, καὶ δι’ ἑαυτοῦ συμπληροῦν τὴν πολυύμνητον καὶ μακαρίαν Τριάδα.¹³¹

Like St. Cyril of Alexandria, Basil cannot be speaking of the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit, but his eternal origin: it would otherwise be absurd to refer to the Holy Spirit as “completing” (συμπληροῦν) the Trinity or being “joined” (συναπτόμενον) to the Father. Later in the same work, he says:

¹³⁰ In the West, the two concepts were conflated into one analogous term, as has been noted.

¹³¹ ST. BASIL THE GREAT, *De Spiritu sancto*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 32, D’Ambroise, Paris 1857, XVIII, 45 PG 152 A: “The Holy Spirit joined together through the one Son to the one Father, and himself [literally “through himself”] helps to fill the renowned and blessed Trinity” (my translation).

ἡ φυσικὴ ἀγαθότης καὶ ὁ κατὰ φύσιν ἀγιασμός, καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν ἀξίωμα ἐκ Πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ Μονογενοῦς ἐπὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα διήκει.¹³²

The Father's natural goodness (ἀγαθότης), holiness (ἀγιασμός), and royal dignity (βασιλικὸν ἀξίωμα) extend to the Holy Spirit *through the Only-begotten* (διὰ τοῦ Μονογενοῦς). Again, these are attributes of the Father that can only apply to the divine Nature or Essence,¹³³ and they extend to the Holy Spirit through the Son. Thus, Basil cannot be speaking of the Holy Spirit's temporal mission, but of the communication of the divine Nature or Essence. Basil, writing against the extreme Arian sect of the Eunomians, refutes the idea that Son is the only "cause" (αἰτία) of the Spirit; if there are two αἰτία, there would be two principles (ἀρχαί) in God, which would amount to a sort of Manichaeism or Marcionism:

Πῶς οὖν τοῦ Πνεύματος τὴν αἰτίαν τῷ Μονογενεῖ μόνῳ προστίθῃσι, καὶ κατηγορήμα τῆς φύσεως αὐτοῦ τὴν τούτου λαμβάνει δημιουργίαν; Εἰ μὲν οὖν, δύο ἀρχὰς ἀντιπαρεξάγων ἀλλήλαις, ταῦτά φησι, μετὰ Μανιχαίου καὶ Μαρκίωνος συντριβήσεται· εἰ δὲ μᾶς ἐξάπτει τὰ ὄντα, τὸ παρὰ τοῦ Τίῳ γεγενῆσθαι λεγόμενον πρὸς τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἔχει.¹³⁴

Basil seems to understand well that the "proper characteristic" (ιδιότης) of the Father is "unbegottenness" (ἀγεννησία) and that of the Son is "begottenness" (γέννησις), but he hesitates to attribute a property to the Holy Spirit, which he fears he will never understand until he attains the Beatific Vision.¹³⁵

¹³² ST. BASIL THE GREAT, *De Spiritu sancto*, XVIII, 47 PG 153 C: "The Father's natural goodness, holiness according to nature, and royal dignity from the Father through the Only-begotten extend unto the Holy Spirit" (my translation).

¹³³ Evidently, the term that Basil has in mind here is φύσις, but in God, of course, φύσις and οὐσία refer to the same reality.

¹³⁴ ST. BASIL THE GREAT, *Adversus Eunomium*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 29, D'Ambroise, Paris 1857, 34, PG 29, 652 A: "How, therefore, does he [Eunomius] attribute the cause (αἰτίαν) of the Spirit to the One Onlybegotten, and level the accusation of the creation (δημιουργίαν) of his nature [i.e., accuse the Son of creating the Holy Spirit]? For if he has said these things, placing two principles (ἀρχάς) in opposition to each other, he is rubbing shoulders with Manichaeus and Marcion. If, on the other hand, he hangs all things from one, which is said to be made by the Son, this makes a reference to the First Principle (τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν)" (my translation). For Greek Trinitarian theology, as we saw, ἐκπόρευσις can only apply to the origin from the αἰτία. If we were to say that the Spirit ἐκπορεύεται from the Father and the Son, it would imply two αἰτία, which is reminiscent of Gnostic dualism.

¹³⁵ See QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 250; see also ST. BASIL THE GREAT, *Adv. Eunom.* 2, 28, PG 636 C–639 A, and ST. BASIL THE GREAT, *Adv. Eunom.* 3, 6-7, PG 665 D – 669 D.

4.3.2 St. Gregory Nazianzen

St. Gregory of Nazianzus makes significant advances over St. Basil in Trinitarian dogma. He develops the doctrine of the *ιδιότητες*, the distinguishing characteristics of the Persons: *ἀγεννησία*, *γέννησις*, and *ἐκπόρευσις* or *ἔκπεμψις*,¹³⁶ and thus for the first time the word *ἐκπόρευσις* appears in its fully technical sense. It is in this context that Gregory makes a careful distinction between *ἐκπόρευσις* and *τὸ προϊέναι*:

Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἀληθῶς τὸ πνεῦμα, *προϊόν* μὲν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς, οὐχ υἱκῶς δὲ, οὐδὲ γὰρ γεννητῶς, ἀλλ' *ἐκπορευτῶς*.¹³⁷

We could translate, “The Holy Spirit is truly *receiving the divine essence* (*προϊόν*) from the Father, not by begetting but *by originating from the source of that essence* (*ἐκπορευτῶς*).” Like Tertullian and Augustine, Gregory considers the reception of the divine Essence (*τὸ προϊέναι*) as common to the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸ Even if he does not employ the word *πρόεμι* in the same way St. Cyril of Alexandria, he affirms at least implicitly the communication of the divine Essence through the Son, for he calls the Holy Spirit the “middle term” between the Father and Son:

Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται· ὃ καθ' ὅσον μὲν ἐκεῖθεν ἐκπορεύεται, οὐ κτίσμα· καθ' ὅσον δὲ οὐ γεννητόν, οὐχ υἱός· καθ' ὅσον δὲ ἀγεννήτου καὶ γεννητοῦ μέσον θεός.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ See QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 250. Literally, *ἔκπεμψις* means “being sent out of.”

¹³⁷ ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Oratio 39 in sancta lumina*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 36, D'Ambroise, Paris 1858, XII, PG 36, 348 B: “The Holy Spirit is truly Spirit, going from (*προϊόν*) the Father, not as a Son (*οὐχ υἱκῶς*) nor indeed as begotten (*γεννητῶς*) but as originating (*ἐκπορευτῶς*)” (my translation).

¹³⁸ See PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”. Just before the passage cited above, Gregory says, “Υἱὸς ὁ υἱός, καὶ οὐκ ἀναρχος· ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γάρ,” using the very same expression—*ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς*—as for the Holy Spirit.

¹³⁹ ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Oratio 31 de Spiritu sancto*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 36, D'Ambroise, Paris 1858, X, PG 36, 141 C: “The Holy Spirit, ‘who has his origin in the Father’ [John 15:16], who inasmuch as he has his origin in him, is not a creature. Inasmuch as he is not begotten, he is not the Son; inasmuch as he is the ‘middle’ (*μέσον*) of the Unbegotten and the Begotten, he is God” (my translation).

It is precisely “inasmuch as he is the middle” between the Father and the Son that he is God, and so the Father and the Son together (without denying that the Father is the sole Cause) must communicate the divine Essence to the Spirit.

Gregory emphasizes the monarchy of the Father much more than St. Basil,¹⁴⁰ and he is the first to elaborate the principle that the only distinctions between Persons is the opposition of relation:

Τί οὖν ἐστί, φησιν, ὃ λείπει τῷ πνεύματι, πρὸς τὸ εἶναι υἰόν; εἰ γὰρ μὴ λειπὸν τι ἦν, υἱὸς ἂν ἦν. οὐ λείπειν φαμέν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐλλειπῆς θεός· τὸ δὲ τῆς ἐκφάνσεως, ἴν’ οὕτως εἶπω, ἢ τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως διάφορον, διάφορον αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν κλήσιν πεποίηκεν.¹⁴¹

Like St. Augustine, he takes up the question of what the “difference” is between the Son and the Spirit.¹⁴² He insists that they are both perfect, being God; it is not that the Spirit “lacks” something that makes him “less” than the Son. Rather, it is τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως διάφορον,¹⁴³ their mutual relations.

4.3.3 St. Gregory of Nyssa

St. Gregory of Nyssa continues to develop the idea that the Spirit is from the Father through the Son. For example, in a fragment of a Sunday discourse recorded by St. John Damascene, he says,

Τὸ δὲ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς λέγεται, καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ εἶναι προσημαρτυρεῖται· εἰ γὰρ τις, φησὶ, πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ

¹⁴⁰ See QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 249.

¹⁴¹ ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Orat. 31 de Spiritu Sancto*, IX, PG 36, 141 C: “ ‘What, therefore, is it,’ they say, ‘that is lacking in the Spirit, for him to be [i.e., that prevents him from being] the Son? For if he did not lack what is, he would be the Son.’ ‘He is not lacking,’ we say: ‘For in no way can God be lacking. For the difference (τὸ διάφορον, literally “the different”) of the manifestation—or if I may say so—of their relation (σχέσεως) toward each other (πρὸς ἄλληλα), also produces the difference in how they are called (τὴν κλήσιν)’ ” (my translation). The language in this passage closely recalls that of Aristotle, who defines essence (οὐσία) as τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι and the category of relation as πρὸς τί.

¹⁴² See ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.* 1, 5, 8; 9, 12, 18; and 15, 27, 48.

¹⁴³ Literally the “difference proper to the condition of being toward each other;” hence the Western formulation of *relationis oppositio*, approved by the Council of Florence, renders the concept very well.

ἔστιν αὐτοῦ [Romans 8:9]. Οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν Πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ [τοῦ Πατρὸς] καὶ Θεοῦ Πνεῦμά ἐστιν. Ὁ δὲ Υἱὸς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὢν, οὐκέτι καὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος, οὔτε ἐστίν, οὔτε λέγεται· οὐδὲ ἀντιστρέφει ἡ σχετικὴ ἀκολουθία αὕτη.¹⁴⁴

St. Gregory here uses the same terminology as Didymus the Blind and St. Epiphanius of Salamis, saying that the Spirit is ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς and also ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ. The Son cannot, however, be said to be ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος, because the order of origin cannot be reversed. Moreover, he says in his polemical work against Eunomius,

ἐν ἧ [προαιωνίῳ οὐσίᾳ] πατὴρ μὲν ἀναρχος καὶ ἀγέννητος καὶ αἰὲ πατὴρ νοεῖται, ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ κατὰ τὸ προσεχὲς ἀδιαστάτως ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς τῷ πατρὶ συνεπινοεῖται, δι' αὐτοῦ δὲ καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ, πρὶν τι κενὸν τε καὶ ἀνυπόστατον διὰ μέσου παρεμπεσεῖν νόημα, εὐθύς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον συνημμένως καταλαμβάνεται.¹⁴⁵

As can be seen, the ontological origin of the Holy Spirit through the Son is quite explicit in St. Gregory of Nyssa. His philosophical underpinning is profoundly Platonic and Origenian,¹⁴⁶ which explains why he frames this passage on the basis of the *concepts* (νοήματα) of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but there can be no doubt that he is characterizing the communication of the divine Essence from the Father through the Son to the Holy Spirit.

4.3.4 Other witnesses in the Greek tradition

The Greek theological tradition continued to produce witnesses along similar lines. For example, St. Maximus the Confessor, as we saw, was well aware of the difference of

¹⁴⁴ ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Fragmentum in orationem dominicam*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 46, D'Ambroise, Paris 1863, PG 46, 1109 B-C: "For the Holy Spirit is said to be from both the Father and the Son: 'For if anyone,' he [St. Paul] said, 'does not have the Spirit of Christ, he [Christ] is not in him,' [Romans 8:9]. Therefore the Spirit, which is from God [the Father], is also the Spirit of God. However, the Son, being from God, neither is nor is said to be of the Spirit: this relative order cannot be reversed" (my translation).

¹⁴⁵ ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Eunomium*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 45, D'Ambroise, Paris 1863, PG 45, 369A: "In this [the eternal Essence] the Father is considered as unoriginate, unbegotten and always Father; the only-begotten Son, who is from the Father and in continuous union with him, is considered together with the Father. Through him [the Son] and with him, before any empty and unfounded idea finds its way in the middle, the Holy Spirit is also immediately understood" (my translation).

¹⁴⁶ See QUASTEN, *The Golden Age of Greek...*, 285-6.

tradition between the East and the West, and he considered them essentially compatible.

In fact, he rather explicitly summarizes what has been said above in his letter to Marinus:

Καί τό μέν πρῶτος, συμφώνους παρήγαγον χρήσεις τῶν Ῥωμαίων Πατέρων· ἔτι γε μήν καί Κυρίλλου Ἀλεξανδρείας, ἐκ τῆς πονηθείσης αὐτῷ εἰς τόν εὐαγγελιστήν ἅγιον Ἰωάννην ἱερᾶς πραγματείας· ἐξ ὧν, οὐκ αἰτίαν τόν Υἱόν ποιοῦντας τοῦ Πνεύματος, σφᾶς αὐτούς ἀπέδειξαν· μίαν γάρ ἴσασιν Υἱοῦ καί Πνεύματος τόν Πατέρα αἰτίαν· τοῦ μέν κατά τήν γέννησιν· τοῦ δέ, κατά τήν ἐκπόρευσιν· ἀλλ' ἵνα τό δι' αὐτοῦ προῖέναι δηλώσωσι· καί ταύτη τό συναφές τῆς οὐσίας καί ἀπαράλλακτον παραστήσωσι.¹⁴⁷

He notes the similarity between the Roman and Alexandrian traditions, and he accepts the idea that the Essence (οὐσία) is communicated (προῖέναι) to the Spirit through Son. Saying otherwise would imply that the Son and the Spirit “lack” something that the Father has. In any event, without using the same words, Maximus accepts the same idea in other passages; for example, he says,

Τό γάρ Πνεῦμα τό ἅγιον ὡσπερ φύσει κατ' οὐσίαν ὑπάρχει τοῦ Θεοῦ καί Πατρός, οὕτως καί τοῦ Υἱοῦ φύσει κατ' οὐσίαν ἐστίν, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ Πατρός οὐσιωδῶς, δι' Υἱοῦ γεννηθέντος, ἀφράστως ἐκπορευόμενον.¹⁴⁸

St. Maximus very clearly attributes the subsistence of the Holy Spirit to the Essence of the Father and the Son (evidently, it is the very same Essence, but possessed fully by both), without confusing the communication of the Essence with the origin from the one Cause.

Likewise, St. John Damascene expresses a similar idea in his *Expositio de fide orthodoxa*, saying,

¹⁴⁷ ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Epist. ad Marinum*, PG 91, 136 A-B: “Regarding the first issue [the origin of the Holy Spirit], they [the Romans] brought the witness of the Latin Fathers, as well, of course, as that of St. Cyril of Alexandria in his sacred study on the Gospel of St. John [cited above]. On this basis they showed that they themselves do not make the Son Cause of the Spirit. They know, indeed, that the Father is the sole Cause of the Son and of the Spirit, of one by generation and of the other by ἐκπόρευσις—but they explained that the latter comes (προῖέναι) through the Son, and they showed in this way the unity and the immutability of the essence” (translation from PONT. COUNC. FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”).

¹⁴⁸ ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 90, D’Ambroise, Paris 1865, LXIII, PG 90, 672 C: “For even as the Holy Spirit subsists by nature according to the Essence (οὐσίαν) of God the Father, in the same way, he is also by nature according to Essence of the Son (οὐσίαν), as marvelously originating (ἐκπορευόμενον) substantially (οὐσιωδῶς) from the Father through the begotten Son” (my translation).

Ὅμοίως πιστεύομεν καὶ εἰς ἓν πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον καὶ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον καὶ ἐν υἱῷ ἀναπαυόμενον, [...] ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον καὶ δι' υἱοῦ μεταδιδόμενον.¹⁴⁹

Thus, the Holy Spirit is described as “taking his rest” in the Son: while this expression is not perfectly explicit, other passages from the same work are more so. For example,

Τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκφαντορικὴ τοῦ κρυφίου τῆς θεότητος δύναμις τοῦ πατρὸς· ἐκ πατρὸς μὲν δι' υἱοῦ ἐκπορευομένη, ὡς οἶδεν αὐτός, οὐ γεννητῶς.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, in his *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, he says,

[ὁ Πατήρ] αἰεὶ ἦν, ἔχων ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ τὸν αὐτοῦ λόγον, καὶ διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὸ Πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐκπορευόμενον.¹⁵¹

In these passages, as with St. Cyril of Alexandria and other Fathers who make similar statements, he cannot be referring to the temporal mission of the Spirit, but to his eternal origin. For example, in the passage from *De fide orthodoxa* XII, he carefully distinguishes his revealing power (ἐκφαντορικὴ τοῦ κρυφίου τῆς θεότητος) from his origin from the Father through the Son (ἐκ πατρὸς μὲν δι' υἱοῦ ἐκπορευομένη).¹⁵²

Finally, St. Tarasius, the patriarch of Constantinople at the time of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, made the following profession of faith, along the same lines:

¹⁴⁹ ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *De fide orthodoxa*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 94, D'Ambroise, Paris 1862, VIII, PG 94, 821 B-C: “In the same way, we believe also in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-maker, who originates from the Father, and in the Son takes his rest, [...] who originates from the Father and is given through the Son (my translation). The last part, δι' υἱοῦ μεταδιδόμενον, could be interpreted as regarding the Holy Spirit's temporal mission, but not ἐν υἱῷ ἀναπαυόμενον.

¹⁵⁰ ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *De Fide Orth.* XII, PG 94, 848-849 A: “And the Holy Spirit is the power revealing the hidden divinity of the Father, originating from the Father through the Son, not as begotten, but in a way known to him” (my translation).

¹⁵¹ ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J.P. MIGNE, vol. 94, D'Ambroise, Paris 1862, PG 94, 1512 B: “I say that God is always Father since he has always his Word coming from himself, and through his Word, having his Spirit issuing from him” (translation in PONT. COUNCIL FOR PROM. CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Greek and Latin Traditions...”).

¹⁵² He even makes use of the common rhetorical device in Greek of δὲ and μὲν to make an opposition here: I could have translated, “And on the one hand, the Holy Spirit is the power revealing..., on the other hand, originating from the Father through the Son...”

τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον καὶ ζωόποιον, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ
Υἱοῦ ἐκπορευόμενον.¹⁵³

What emerges after this overview of the Latin, Alexandrian, and Cappadocian traditions is that there is a profound unity of faith, not only through time, but among the various traditions. It is true that the language and the philosophical underpinnings are different in each of the schools; however, after a careful study, it seems impossible to conclude otherwise than that their faith is the same. It is important to remember that the Church was indisputably united between East and West at least until the time of the schism of Photius, and, in fact, for another two centuries once the schism was healed. There seems to be unanimity among the fathers about the fundamental aspects of the procession of the Holy Spirit: the Father as the unique Source, Cause, or Principle, and the communication of the divine Essence to the Holy Spirit from the Father through the Son, or—since there is no distinction in the Trinity where there is not opposition of relation—from both Father and Son.

4.4 Reunion Councils of Lyons and Florence

Two ecumenical councils were held in an attempt to heal the breach between the Eastern and Western churches: one held in Lyon, France, in 1274, and the second in Florence, held from 1439 to 1445. Both of the councils ultimately failed to effect a lasting union; however, both councils shed light on the mystery of the procession of the Holy Spirit and helped both parties to reach a better understanding of each other's positions.

From the Second Council of Lyons, the relevant texts are the *Constitutio de summa Trinitate et fide catholica* from May 18, 1274, and Emperor Michael Palaeologus' profes-

¹⁵³ J.D. MANSI, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 12, Florence 1766, 1122 D.

sion of faith, given on July 6 of the same year.¹⁵⁴ The solemn definition from *De summa Trinitate* reads as follows:

Fideli ac devota professione fatemur, quod Spiritus Sanctus aeternaliter ex Patre et Filio, non tanquam ex duobus principiis, sed tanquam ex uno principio, non duabus spirationibus, sed unica spiratione procedit: hoc professus est hactenus, praedicavit et docuit, hoc firmiter tenet, praedicat, profitetur et docet sacrosancta Romana Ecclesia, mater omnium fidelium et magistra: hoc habet orthodoxorum Patrum atque Doctorum Latinorum pariter et Graecorum incommutabilis et vera sententia.

Sed quia nonnulli propter irrefragabilis praemissae veritatis ignorantiam in errores varios sunt prolapsi: Nos huiusmodi erroribus viam praeccludere cupientes, sacro approbante Concilio, damnamus et reprobamus, qui negare praesumpserint, aeternaliter Spiritum Sanctum ex Patre et Filio procedere sive etiam temerario ausu asserere, quod Spiritus Sanctus ex Patre et Filio, tanquam ex duobus principiis, et non tanquam ex uno, procedat.¹⁵⁵

The definition has two essential points: that the Holy spirit proceeds (*procedit*) eternally from the Father and the Son, and—following the doctrine long before affirmed by St. Augustine—that he proceeds “not as from two principles, but as from one principle, not by two spirations but by one sole spiration.” Evidently, *procedit* here is understood in the Latin sense, as the communication of the divine essence. Moreover, there is not here a perfect equivalence between the Latin term *principium* and the Greek term αἰτία, although there is compatibility: St. Augustine’s purpose in formulating this doctrine, as we saw, is to show that there is no distinction in the Trinity except as regards the relations; for the Greek Fathers, on the other hand, the starting point is the monarchy of the Father as the Source. The document stresses the fundamental agreement and unity of faith between the Eastern and Western Fathers, a unity that seems to be amply corroborated by the analysis above.

The *filioque* was the central topic of debate in the Council of Florence between the Greek-speaking and Western bishops participating at the council. On June 28, 1439, the decree of union *Laetentur caeli* was drawn up, and then signed on July 6 by the majority of

¹⁵⁴ DENZINGER, *DH* 850-853. There is no need, however, to analyze the emperor’s profession of faith in detail, because regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit it simply says, “Credimus et Spiritum Sanctum [...] ex Patre Filioque procedentem.”

¹⁵⁵ DENZINGER, *DH* 850.

the participants, including the vast majority of the Greek bishops. In the following years until the conclusion of council, other decrees of union were made with various separated churches, including the Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopic, Syriac, and Cypriot Maronite churches.¹⁵⁶ Regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit, two texts are especially relevant: the solemn definition of *Laetentur caeli*, and the doctrine on opposition of relations found in *Cantate Domino*, the decree of union with the Coptic and Ethiopic Christians.

The definition in *Laetentur caeli* reads as follows:

In nomine igitur Sanctae Trinitatis, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, hoc sacro universali approbante Florentino Concilio, diffinimus, ut haec fidei veritas ab omnibus Christianis credatur et suscipiatur, sicque omnes profiteantur, quod Spiritus Sanctus ex Patre et Filio aeternaliter est, et essentiam suam suumque esse subsistens habet ex Patre simul et Filio, et ex utroque aeternaliter tamquam ab uno principio et unica spiratione procedit;

declarantes, quod id, quod sancti Doctores et Patres dicunt, ex Patre per Filium procedere Spiritum Sanctum, ad hanc intelligentiam tendit, ut per hoc significetur, Filium quoque esse secundum Graecos quidem causam, secundum Latinos vero principium subsistentiae Spiritus Sancti, sicut et Patrem.

Et quoniam omnia, quae Patris sunt, Pater ipse unigenito Filio suo gignendo dedit, praeter esse Patrem, hoc ipsum quod Spiritus Sanctus procedit ex Filio, ipse Filius a Patre aeternaliter habet, a quo etiam aeternaliter genitus est.

Diffinimus insuper, explicationem verborum illorum «Filioque» veritatis declarandae gratia, et imminente tunc necessitate, licite ac rationabiliter Symbolo fuisse appositam.¹⁵⁷

The definition, in the first place, affirms that the Holy Spirit “is eternally” from the Father and the Son (*ex Patre et Filio aeternaliter est*). Significantly, it carefully specifies that by using the term *procedit*, it means that the Holy Spirit “has his Essence and his Being from both the Father and the Son” (*essentiam suam suumque esse subsistens habet ex Patre simul et Filio*); in other words *processio*, in the context of the *Filioque*, refers to the communication of the divine Essence. Moreover, it reiterates what was already stated at the Second Council of Lyons; namely, that this *processio* takes place “as from one principle and by one unique spiration” (*tamquam ab uno principio et unica spiratione*). Second,

¹⁵⁶ See DENZINGER, *DH* 1300, introduction.

¹⁵⁷ DENZINGER, *DH* 1300-1302.

it affirms the validity of the formula *per filium*¹⁵⁸ found in both the Eastern and Western Fathers, as we saw, and that this formulation is essentially equivalent to the doctrine of the *Filioque*. This equivalence can be deduced, because just as the doctrine of the *Filioque* means that the Spirit “has his Essence and his Being from both the Father and the Son,” in the *per Filium* formulation, both the Father and the Son are the “Cause” or “Principium” of the Spirit.¹⁵⁹ Third, as a justification for the above doctrine, it takes up the Augustinian doctrine that everything that the Father has (that is, the divine Essence), the Son has as well, except for being Father (because that is a property of the person of the Father); and this means that the Spirit proceeds (receives the divine Essence) from the Son, as well as the Father. Finally, it solemnly approves the addition of the word *Filioque* to the Latin version of the Creed, as a necessary clarification to avoid heresy.

The decree of union with the Coptic and Ethiopic Christians, *Cantate Domino*, includes a summary of Trinitarian dogma, mostly reiterating what was said in *Laetentur caeli*. The most important affirmation, as regards this paper, is the one that canonizes the doctrine, proposed St. Gregory of Nyssa as well as St. Augustine, that there is no

¹⁵⁸ The council Fathers were thinking, no doubt, of the Greek formula δία τοῦ Υἱοῦ.

¹⁵⁹ The definition follows the doctrine of St. Augustine with regard to the term *principium*. St. Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 5, 14, 15, “[F]atendum est Patrem et Filium principium esse Spiritus Sancti.” *Principium*, however, is an analogous term, and so it could refer to the Father alone as the Source of the whole, or else to the Father and the Son inasmuch as they communicate the divine Essence to the Holy Spirit, or else to the entire Trinity inasmuch as it is the cause of all creation. As we saw, St. Augustine insists that the Father proceeds (*procedit*) from the Father *principaliter*: “[P]rocedit principaliter Spiritus Sanctus nisi Deus Pater” (*De Trin.* 15, 17, 29). While the infallible doctrine taught in this solemn definition is to be fully affirmed, it still seems to me that there was a certain confusion among the council fathers as to how to translate the Greek terms αἰτία and ἀρχή, terms that in Greek theology refer *only* to the monarchy of the Father. As we saw, no Greek Father ever called the Son αἰτία or ἀρχή, and thus Greek Orthodox Christians reading the text without the context we have discussed in this paper would at first glance think that the Church teaches either (incoherently) that there are two αἰτία in the Trinity, or else that the Father and the Son—while being a unique Principle—are jointly the αἰτία or first origin of the Trinity (which would eliminate the distinction between the Father and the Son). Clearly, especially in the light of the first paragraph of the definition, the council fathers are using *principium* in the Augustinian sense, referring to the communication of the divine Essence; however, in dialogue with the Orthodox today, this distinction must be carefully made.

distinction between the Persons of the Trinity except insofar as there is an opposition of relation:¹⁶⁰

Hae tres Personae sunt unus Deus, et non tres dii: quia trium est una substantia una essentia, una natura, una divinitas, una immensitas una aeternitas *omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio.*¹⁶¹

This affirmation is fundamental, as we saw, for understanding why it is that the Father and the Son are the unique principle of the Holy Spirit, as regards the communication of the divine essence; and why the Holy Spirit must proceed (*procedit*, πρόεισι) not only from the Father but also from the Son, who has received everything from the Father.

¹⁶⁰ It seems that the first formulation of this principle, stated explicitly in these terms, is from St. Anselm of Canturbury, in his *De processione Spiritus Sancti*. See DENZINGER, *DH* 1330, footnote.

¹⁶¹ DENZINGER, *DH* 1330.

5. Toward a Possible Solution

Having made this historical overview of the teachings of the Fathers and the Magisterium regarding the procession (ἐκπόρευσις as well as *processio*) of the Holy Spirit, some conclusions may be drawn that might shed light on a way to resolve the doctrinal differences on this topic between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox. Regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit, there does not seem to be a fundamental difference in the faith among the different schools of the Church Fathers, just a difference of terminology and philosophical underpinnings. Two main points, however, must be held firm on all sides.

First of all, the Father is the Source, Principle, Cause, or first origin of the entire Trinity. In this sense, we must affirm his monarchy; namely, that he is the *only* Principle of the Trinity. In this sense, the Holy Spirit proceeds (ἐκπορεύεται) from the Father alone, and it would, in fact, be heresy to claim that he proceeds (ἐκπορεύεται) from the Son. Such a claim would imply either that there are two irreducible principles in God (similar to Manichaeism) or that there is no real distinction between the Father and the Son (a sort of modified Sabellianism). In Latin terminology, the same affirmation can be made by saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds (*procedit*) from the Father *principaliter*, keeping in mind that in Latin, *processio* is an analogous term that includes the concepts of both ἐκπόρευσις and τὸ προϊέναι.

Second, the Father communicates his divine Essence completely to the Son. By receiving the Essence from his Father, the Son also receives, as it were, the ability to communicate that Essence. The only thing he does not receive is Fatherhood, not because this is something “lacking” in the Son, but because the only distinction among the persons is to be found in the opposition of relations—a principle formulated by both Latin and Greek traditions—and “Fatherhood” (opposed to “Sonship” in the Son) is precisely

what distinguishes the Father from the Son. Father and Son *both*, therefore, communicate the divine Essence to the Holy Spirit, and because the only distinction between Father and Son is that of opposition of relations, there is only one principle of “spiration” and only one *processio* of the Holy Spirit. This reality, the communication of the divine Essence, is formulated with different terminology among the different traditions. In the Latin tradition, the term used is *processio*; in the Alexandrian tradition, the term is τὸ προΐέναι; and the Cappadocian tradition prefers to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds (ἐκπορεύεται) from the Father (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς) *through the Son* (διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ), while making it clear that it is referring to the same reality. Regardless of the formulation, the Fathers we analyzed unanimously spoke of an ontological communication of the divine Essence from the Father, from the Son, and from the Father through the Son, that cannot be reduced to the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit (which is an *ad extra* action of the Trinity and hence a work of the whole Trinity).

Attached to these two levels (ἐκπόρευσις and τὸ προΐέναι) of the term *processio* are two distinct uses of the terms *principium* and αἰτία and ἀρχή. In Latin, *principium* follows the same analogy as the term *processio*, and it can refer, either to the role of the Father as the Source of the entire Trinity, or else to the role of either Father and Son in communicating the divine Essence. In Greek, however, αἰτία and ἀρχή can properly refer *only* to the monarchy of the Father. Thus, in dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox, it is important to keep these distinctions in mind to avoid misunderstandings and mutual accusations.

In fact, when the writings of the Fathers are examined, as we saw, a profound unity of faith emerges that transcends the philosophical and linguistic traditions. Ἐκπόρευσις and *processio* are not identical concepts, but neither are they incompatible. Rather, they offer complementary ways to understand the procession of the Holy Spirit that mutually shed light on each other.

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