

## **The Filioque: A Church Dividing Issue?: An Agreed Statement**

From 1999 until 2003, the North American Orthodox-Catholic Consultation has focused its discussions on an issue that has been identified, for more than twelve centuries, as one of the root causes of division between our Churches: our divergent ways of conceiving and speaking about the origin of the Holy Spirit within the inner life of the triune God. Although both of our traditions profess “the faith of Nicaea” as the normative expression of our understanding of God and God’s involvement in his creation, and take as the classical statement of that faith the revised version of the Nicene creed associated with the First Council of Constantinople of 381, most Catholics and other Western Christians have used, since at least the late sixth century, a Latin version of that Creed, which adds to its confession that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father” the word *Filioque*: “and from the Son”. For most Western Christians, this term continues to be a part of the central formulation of their faith, a formulation proclaimed in the liturgy and used as the basis of catechesis and theological reflection. It is, for Catholics and most Protestants, simply a part of the ordinary teaching of the Church, and as such, integral to their understanding of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Yet since at least the late eighth century, the presence of this term in the Western version of the Creed has been a source of scandal for Eastern Christians, both because of the Trinitarian theology it expresses, and because it had been adopted by a growing number of Churches in the West into the canonical formulation of a received ecumenical council without corresponding ecumenical agreement. As the medieval rift between Eastern and Western Christians grew more serious, the theology associated with the term *Filioque*, and the issues of Church structure and authority raised by its adoption, grew into a symbol of difference, a classic token of what each side of divided Christendom has found lacking or distorted in the other.

Our common study of this question has involved our Consultation in much shared research, prayerful reflection and intense discussion. It is our hope that many of the papers produced by our members during this process will be published together, as the scholarly context for our common statement. A subject as complicated as this, from both the historical and the theological point of view, calls for detailed explanation if the real issues are to be clearly seen. Our discussions and our common statement will not, by themselves, put an end to centuries of disagreement among our Churches. We do hope, however, that they will contribute to the growth of mutual understanding and respect, and that in God’s time our Churches will no longer find a cause for separation in the way we think and speak about the origin of that Spirit, whose fruit is love and peace (see Gal 5.22).

### **I. The Holy Spirit in the Scriptures**

In the Old Testament “the spirit of God” or “the spirit of the Lord” is presented less as a divine person than as a manifestation of God’s creative power – God’s “breath” (*ruach YHWH*) - forming the world as an ordered and habitable place for his people, and raising up individuals to lead his people in the way of holiness. In the opening verses of Genesis, the spirit of God “moves over the face of the waters” to bring order out of chaos (Gen 1.2). In the historical narratives of

Israel, it is the same spirit that “stirs” in the leaders of the people (Jud 13.25: Samson), makes kings and military chieftains into prophets (I Sam 10.9-12; 19.18-24: Saul and David), and enables prophets to “bring good news to the afflicted” (Is 61.1; cf. 42.1; II Kg 2.9). The Lord tells Moses he has “filled” Bezalel the craftsman “with the spirit of God,” to enable him to fashion all the furnishings of the tabernacle according to God’s design (Ex 31.3). In some passages, the “holy spirit” (Ps 51.13) or “good spirit” (Ps 143.10) of the Lord seems to signify his guiding presence within individuals and the whole nation, cleansing their own spirits (Ps. 51.12-14) and helping them to keep his commandments, but “grieved” by their sin (Is 63.10). In the prophet Ezekiel’s mighty vision of the restoration of Israel from the death of defeat and exile, the “breath” returning to the people’s desiccated corpses becomes an image of the action of God’s own breath creating the nation anew: “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live...” (Ezek 37.14).

In the New Testament writings, the Holy Spirit of God (*pneuma Theou*) is usually spoken of in a more personal way, and is inextricably connected with the person and mission of Jesus. Matthew and Luke make it clear that Mary conceives Jesus in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, who “overshadows” her (Mt 1.18, 20; Lk 1.35). All four Gospels testify that John the Baptist – who himself was “filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb” (Lk 1.15) – witnessed the descent of the same Spirit on Jesus, in a visible manifestation of God’s power and election, when Jesus was baptized (Mt 3.16; Mk 1.10; Lk 3.22; Jn 1.33). The Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the desert to struggle with the devil (Mt 4.1; Lk 4.1), fills him with prophetic power at the start of his mission (Lk 4.18-21), and manifests himself in Jesus’ exorcisms (Mt 12.28, 32). John the Baptist identified the mission of Jesus as “baptizing” his disciples “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Mt 3.11; Lk 3.16; cf. Jn 1.33), a prophecy fulfilled in the great events of Pentecost (Acts 1.5), when the disciples were “clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24.49; Acts 1.8). In the narrative of Acts, it is the Holy Spirit who continues to unify the community (4.31-32), who enables Stephen to bear witness to Jesus with his life (8.55), and whose charismatic presence among believing pagans makes it clear that they, too, are called to baptism in Christ (10.47).

In his farewell discourse in the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as one who will continue his own work in the world, after he has returned to the Father. He is “the Spirit of truth,” who will act as “another advocate (*parakletos*)” to teach and guide his disciples (14.16-17), reminding them of all Jesus himself has taught (14.26). In this section of the Gospel, Jesus gives us a clearer sense of the relationship between this “advocate,” himself, and his Father. Jesus promises to send him “from the Father,” as “the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father” (15.26); and the truth that he teaches will be the truth Jesus has revealed in his own person (see 1,14; 14.6): “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (16.14-15)

The Epistle to the Hebrews represents the Spirit simply as speaking in the Scriptures, with his own voice (Heb 3.7; 9.8). In Paul’s letters, the Holy Spirit of God is identified as the one who has finally “defined” Jesus as “Son of God in power” by acting as the agent of his resurrection

(Rom 1.4; 8.11). It is this same Spirit, communicated now to us, who conforms us to the risen Lord, giving us hope for resurrection and life (Rom 8.11), making us also children and heirs of God (Rom 8.14-17), and forming our words and even our inarticulate groaning into a prayer that expresses hope (Rom 8.23-27). “And hope does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” (Rom 5.5)

## II. Historical Considerations

Throughout the early centuries of the Church, the Latin and Greek traditions witnessed to the same apostolic faith, but differed in their ways of describing the relationship among the persons of the Trinity. The difference generally reflected the various pastoral challenges facing the Church in the West and in the East. The Nicene Creed (325) bore witness to the faith of the Church as it was articulated in the face of the Arian heresy, which denied the full divinity of Christ. In the years following the Council of Nicaea, the Church continued to be challenged by views questioning both the full divinity and the full humanity of Christ, as well as the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Against these challenges, the fathers at the Council of Constantinople (381) affirmed the faith of Nicaea, and produced an expanded Creed, based on the Nicene but also adding significantly to it.

Of particular note was this Creed’s more extensive affirmation regarding the Holy Spirit, a passage clearly influenced by Basil of Caesarea’s classic treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, which had probably been finished some six years earlier. The Creed of Constantinople affirmed the faith of the Church in the divinity of the Spirit by saying: “and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds (*ekporeuetai*) from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.” Although the text avoided directly calling the Spirit “God,” or affirming (as Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus had done) that the Spirit is “of the same substance” as the Father and the Son – statements that doubtless would have sounded extreme to some theologically cautious contemporaries - the Council clearly intended, by this text, to make a statement of the Church’s faith in the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, especially in opposition to those who viewed the Spirit as a creature. At the same time, it was not a concern of the Council to specify the manner of the Spirit’s origin, or to elaborate on the Spirit’s particular relationships to the Father and the Son.

The acts of the Council of Constantinople were lost, but the text of its Creed was quoted and formally acknowledged as binding, along with the Creed of Nicaea, in the dogmatic statement of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Within less than a century, this Creed of 381 had come to play a normative role in the definition of faith, and by the early sixth century was even proclaimed in the Eucharist in Antioch, Constantinople, and other regions in the East. In regions of the Western churches, the Creed was also introduced into the Eucharist, perhaps beginning with the third Council of Toledo in 589. It was not formally introduced into the Eucharistic liturgy at Rome, however, until the eleventh century – a point of some importance for the process of official Western acceptance of the *Filioque*

No clear record exists of the process by which the word *Filioque* was inserted into the Creed of 381 in the Christian West before the sixth century. The idea that the Spirit came forth “from the Father through the Son” is asserted by a number of earlier Latin theologians, as part of their insistence on the ordered unity of all three persons within the single divine Mystery (e.g., Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 4 and 5). Tertullian, writing at the beginning of the third century, emphasizes that Father, Son and Holy Spirit all share a single divine substance, quality and power (*ibid.* 2), which he conceives of as flowing forth from the Father and being transmitted by the Son to the Spirit (*ibid.* 8). Hilary of Poitiers, in the mid-fourth century, in the same work speaks of the Spirit as ‘coming forth from the Father’ and being ‘sent by the Son’ (*De Trinitate* 12.55); as being ‘from the Father through the Son’ (*ibid.* 12.56); and as ‘having the Father and the Son as his source’ (*ibid.* 2.29); in another passage, Hilary points to John 16.15 (where Jesus says: “All things that the Father has are mine; therefore I said that [the Spirit] shall take from what is mine and declare it to you”), and wonders aloud whether “to receive from the Son is the same thing as to proceed from the Father” (*ibid.* 8.20). Ambrose of Milan, writing in the 380s, openly asserts that the Spirit “proceeds from (procedit a) the Father and the Son,” without ever being separated from either (*On the Holy Spirit* 1.11.20). None of these writers, however, makes the Spirit’s mode of origin the object of special reflection; all are concerned, rather, to emphasize the equality of status of all three divine persons as God, and all acknowledge that the Father alone is the source of God’s eternal being. [Note: This paragraph includes a stylistic revision in the reference to Hilary of Poitiers that the Consultation agreed to at its October 2004 meeting.]

The earliest use of *Filioque language* in a credal context is in the profession of faith formulated for the Visigoth King Reccared at the local Council of Toledo in 589. This regional council anathematized those who did not accept the decrees of the first four Ecumenical Councils (canon 11), as well as those who did not profess that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (canon 3). It appears that the Spanish bishops and King Reccared believed at that time that the Greek equivalent of *Filioque* was part of the original creed of Constantinople, and apparently understood that its purpose was to oppose Arianism by affirming the intimate relationship of the Father and Son. On Reccared’s orders, the Creed began to be recited during the Eucharist, in imitation of the Eastern practice. From Spain, the use of the Creed with the *Filioque* spread throughout Gaul.

Nearly a century later, a council of English bishops was held at Hatfield in 680 under the presidency of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, a Byzantine asked to serve in England by Pope Vitalian. According to the Venerable Bede (*Hist. Eccl. Gent. Angl.* 4.15 [17]), this Council explicitly affirmed its faith as conforming to the five Ecumenical Councils, and also declared that the Holy Spirit proceeds “in an ineffable way (*inenarrabiliter*)” from the Father and the Son.

By the seventh century, three related factors may have contributed to a growing tendency to include the *Filioque* in the Creed of 381 in the West, and to the belief of some Westerners that it was, in fact, part of the original creed. First, a strong current in the patristic tradition of the West, summed up in the works of Augustine (354-430), spoke of the Spirit’s proceeding from the Father and the Son. (e.g., *On the Trinity* 4.29; 15.10, 12, 29, 37; the significance of this tradition

and its terminology will be discussed below.) Second, throughout the fourth and fifth centuries a number of credal statements circulated in the Churches, often associated with baptism and catechesis. The formula of 381 was not considered the only binding expression of apostolic faith. Within the West, the most widespread of these was the Apostles' Creed, an early baptismal creed, which contained a simple affirmation of belief in the Holy Spirit without elaboration. Third, however, and of particular significance for later Western theology, was the so-called Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque*). Thought by Westerners to be composed by Athanasius of Alexandria, this Creed probably originated in Gaul about 500, and is cited by Caesarius of Arles (+542). This text was unknown in the East, but had great influence in the West until modern times. Relying heavily on Augustine's treatment of the Trinity, it clearly affirmed that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. A central emphasis of this Creed was its strong anti-Arian Christology: speaking of the Spirit as proceeding from the Father *and* the Son implied that the Son was not inferior to the Father in substance, as the Arians held. The influence of this Creed undoubtedly supported the use of the *Filioque* in the Latin version of the Creed of Constantinople in Western Europe, at least from the sixth century onwards.

The use of the Creed of 381 with the addition of the *Filioque* became a matter of controversy towards the end of the eighth century, both in discussions between the Frankish theologians and the see of Rome and in the growing rivalry between the Carolingian and Byzantine courts, which both now claimed to be the legitimate successors of the Roman Empire. In the wake of the iconoclastic struggle in Byzantium, the Carolingians took this opportunity to challenge the Orthodoxy of Constantinople, and put particular emphasis upon the significance of the term *Filioque*, which they now began to identify as a touchstone of right Trinitarian faith. An intense political and cultural rivalry between the Franks and the Byzantines provided the background for the *Filioque* debates throughout the eighth and ninth centuries.

Charlemagne received a translation of the decisions of the Second Council of Nicaea (787). The Council had given definitive approval to the ancient practice of venerating icons. The translation proved to be defective. On the basis of this defective translation, Charlemagne sent a delegation to Pope Hadrian I (772-795), to present his concerns. Among the points of objection, Charlemagne's legates claimed that Patriarch Tarasius of Constantinople, at his installation, did not follow the Nicene faith and profess that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, but confessed rather his procession from the Father *through the Son* (Mansi 13.760). The Pope strongly rejected Charlemagne's protest, showing at length that Tarasius and the Council, on this and other points, maintained the faith of the Fathers (*ibid.* 759-810). Following this exchange of letters, Charlemagne commissioned the so-called *Libri Carolini* (791-794), a work written to challenge the positions both of the iconoclast council of 754 and of the Council of Nicaea of 787 on the veneration of icons. Again because of poor translations, the Carolingians misunderstood the actual decision of the latter Council. Within this text, the Carolingian view of the *Filioque* also was emphasized again. Arguing that the word *Filioque* was part of the Creed of 381, the *Libri Carolini* reaffirmed the Latin tradition that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and rejected as inadequate the teaching that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.

While the acts of the local synod of Frankfurt in 794 are not extant, other records indicate that it was called mainly to counter a form of the heresy of “Adoptionism” then thought to be on the rise in Spain. The emphasis of a number of Spanish theologians on the integral humanity of Christ seemed, to the court theologian Alcuin and others, to imply that the man Jesus was “adopted” by the Father at his baptism. In the presence of Charlemagne, this council – which Charlemagne seems to have promoted as “ecumenical” (see Mansi 13.899-906) - approved the *Libri Carolini*, affirming, in the context of maintaining the full divinity of the person of Christ, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. As in the late sixth century, the Latin formulation of the Creed, stating that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, was enlisted to combat a perceived Christological heresy.

Within a few years, another local council, also directed against “Spanish Adoptionism,” was held in Fréjus (Friuli) (796 or 797). At this meeting, Paulinus of Aquileia (+802), an associate of Alcuin in Charlemagne’s court, defended the use of the Creed with the *Filioque* as a way of opposing Adoptionism. Paulinus, in fact, recognized that the *Filioque* was an addition to the Creed of 381 but defended the interpolation, claiming that it contradicted neither the meaning of the creed nor the intention of the Fathers. The authority in the West of the Council of Fréjus, together with that of Frankfurt, ensured that the Creed of 381 with the *Filioque* would be used in teaching and in the celebration of the Eucharist in churches throughout much of Europe.

The different liturgical traditions with regard to the Creed came into contact with each other in early-ninth-century Jerusalem. Western monks, using the Latin Creed with the added *Filioque*, were denounced by their Eastern brethren. Writing to Pope Leo III for guidance, in 808, the Western monks referred to the practice in Charlemagne’s chapel in Aachen as their model. Pope Leo responded with a letter to “all the churches of the East” in which he declared his personal belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. In that response, the Pope did not distinguish between his personal understanding and the issue of the legitimacy of the addition to the Creed, although he would later resist the addition in liturgies celebrated at Rome.

Taking up the issue of the Jerusalem controversy, Charlemagne asked Theodulf of Orleans, the principal author of the *Libri Carolini*, to write a defense of the use of the word *Filioque*. Appearing in 809, *De Spiritu Sancto* of Theodulf was essentially a compilation of patristic citations supporting the theology of the *Filioque*. With this text in hand, Charlemagne convened a council in Aachen in 809-810 to affirm the doctrine of the Spirit’s proceeding from the Father and the Son, which had been questioned by Greek theologians. Following this council, Charlemagne sought Pope Leo’s approval of the use of the creed with the *Filioque* (Mansi 14.23-76). A meeting between the Pope and a delegation from Charlemagne’s council took place in Rome in 810. While Leo III affirmed the orthodoxy of the term *Filioque*, and approved its use in catechesis and personal professions of faith, he explicitly disapproved its inclusion in the text of the Creed of 381, since the Fathers of that Council - who were, he observes, no less inspired by the Holy Spirit than the bishops who had gathered at Aachen - had chosen not to include it. Pope Leo stipulated that the use of the Creed in the celebration of the Eucharist was permissible,

but not required, and urged that in the interest of preventing scandal it would be better if the Carolingian court refrained from including it in the liturgy. Around this time, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the Pope had two heavy silver shields made and displayed in St. Peter's, containing the original text of the Creed of 381 in both Greek and Latin. Despite his directives and this symbolic action, however, the Carolingians continued to use the Creed with the *Filioque* during the Eucharist in their own dioceses.

The Byzantines had little appreciation of the various developments regarding the *Filioque* in the West between the sixth and ninth centuries. Communication grew steadily worse, and their own struggles with monothelitism, iconoclasm, and the rise of Islam left little time to follow closely theological developments in the West. However, their interest in the *Filioque* became more pronounced in the middle of the 9th century, when it came to be combined with jurisdictional disputes between Rome and Constantinople, as well as with the activities of Frankish missionaries in Bulgaria. When Byzantine missionaries were expelled from Bulgaria by King Boris, under Western influence, they returned to Constantinople and reported on Western practices, including the use of the Creed with the *Filioque*. Patriarch Photios of Constantinople, in 867, addressed a strongly worded encyclical to the other Eastern patriarchs, commenting on the political and ecclesiastical crisis in Bulgaria as well as on the tensions between Constantinople and Rome. In this letter, Photios denounced the Western missionaries in Bulgaria and criticized Western liturgical practices.

Most significantly, Patriarch Photios called the addition of the *Filioque* in the West a blasphemy, and presented a substantial theological argument against the view of the Trinity which he believed it depicted. Photios's opposition to the *Filioque* was based upon his view that it signifies two causes in the Trinity, and diminishes the monarchy of the Father. Thus, the *Filioque* seemed to him to detract from the distinctive character of each person of the Trinity, and to confuse their relationships, paradoxically bearing in itself the seeds of both pagan polytheism and Sabellian modalism (*Mystagogy* 9, 11). In his letter of 867, Photios does not, however, demonstrate any knowledge of the Latin patristic tradition behind the use of the *Filioque* in the West. His opposition to the *Filioque* would subsequently receive further elaboration in his Letter to the Patriarch of Aquileia in 883 or 884, as well as in his famous *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, written about 886.

In concluding his letter of 867, Photios called for an ecumenical council that would resolve the issue of the interpolation of the *Filioque*, as well as illuminating its theological foundation. A local council was held in Constantinople in 867, which deposed Pope Nicholas I - an action which increased tensions between the two sees. In 863, Nicholas himself had refused to recognize Photios as Patriarch because of his allegedly uncanonical appointment. With changes in the imperial government, Photios was forced to resign in 867, and was replaced by Patriarch Ignatius, whom he himself had replaced in 858. A new council was convened in Constantinople later in 869. With papal representatives present and with imperial support, this Council excommunicated Photios, and was subsequently recognized in the Medieval West, for reasons

unrelated to the *Filioque* or Photios, as the Eighth Ecumenical Council, although it was never recognized as such in the East.

The relationship between Rome and Constantinople changed when Photios again became patriarch in 877, following the death of Ignatius. In Rome, Pope Nicholas had died in 867, and was succeeded by Pope Hadrian II (867-872), who himself anathematized Photios in 869. His successor, Pope John VIII (872-882), was willing to recognize Photios as the legitimate Patriarch in Constantinople under certain conditions, thus clearing the way for a restoration of better relations. A Council was held in Constantinople in 879-880, in the presence of representatives from Rome and the other Eastern Patriarchates. This Council, considered by some modern Orthodox theologians to be ecumenical, suppressed the decisions of the earlier Council of 869-870, and recognized the status of Photios as patriarch. It affirmed the ecumenical character of the Council of 787 and its decisions against iconoclasm. There was no extensive discussion of the *Filioque*, which was not yet a part of the Creed professed in Rome itself, and no statement was made by the Council about its theological justification; yet this Council formally reaffirmed the original text of the Creed of 381, without the *Filioque*, and anathematized anyone who would compose another confession of faith. The Council also spoke of the Roman see in terms of great respect, and allowed the Papal legates the traditional prerogatives of presidency, recognizing their right to begin and to close discussions and to sign documents first. Nevertheless, the documents give no indication that the bishops present formally recognized any priority of jurisdiction for the see of Rome, outside of the framework of the Patristic understanding of the communion of Churches and the sixth-century canonical theory of the Pentarchy. The difficult question of the competing claims of the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople to jurisdiction in Bulgaria was left to be decided by the Emperor. After the Council, the *Filioque* continued to be used in the Creed in parts of Western Europe, despite the intentions of Pope John VIII, who, like his predecessors, maintained the text sanctioned by the Council of 381.

A new stage in the history of the controversy was reached in the early eleventh century. During the synod following the coronation of King Henry II as Holy Roman Emperor at Rome in 1014, the Creed, including the *Filioque*, was sung for the first time at a papal Mass. Because of this action, the liturgical use of the Creed, with the *Filioque*, now was generally assumed in the Latin Church to have the sanction of the papacy. Its inclusion in the Eucharist, after two centuries of papal resistance of the practice, reflected a new dominance of the German Emperors over the papacy, as well as the papacy's growing sense of its own authority, under imperial protection, within the entire Church, both western and eastern.

The *Filioque* figured prominently in the tumultuous events of 1054, when excommunications were exchanged by representatives of the Eastern and Western Churches meeting in Constantinople. Within the context of his anathemas against Patriarch Michael I Cerularios of Constantinople and certain of his advisors, Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida, the legate of Pope Leo IX, accused the Byzantines of improperly deleting the *Filioque* from the Creed, and criticized other Eastern liturgical practices. In responding to these accusations, Patriarch Michael recognized that the anathemas of Humbert did not originate with Leo IX, and cast his own



anathemas simply upon the papal delegation. Leo, in fact, was already dead and his successor had not been elected. At the same time, Michael condemned the Western use of the *Filioque* in the Creed, as well as other Western liturgical practices. This exchange of limited excommunications did not lead, by itself, to a formal schism between Rome and Constantinople, despite the views of later historians; it did, however, deepen the growing estrangement between Constantinople and Rome.

The relationship between the Church of Rome and the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem were seriously damaged during the period of the crusades, and especially in the wake of the infamous Fourth Crusade. In 1204, Western Crusaders sacked the city of Constantinople, long the commercial and political rival of Venice, and Western politicians and clergy dominated the life of the city until it was reclaimed by Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261. The installation of Western bishops in the territories of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem, who were loyal to Rome and to the political powers of Western Europe, became a tragically visible new expression of schism. Even after 1261, Rome supported Latin patriarchs in these three ancient Eastern sees. For most Eastern Christians, this was a clear sign that the papacy and its political supporters had little regard for the legitimacy of their ancient churches.

Despite this growing estrangement, a number of notable attempts were made to address the issue of the *Filioque* between the early twelfth and mid-thirteenth century. The German Emperor Lothair III sent bishop Anselm of Havelberg to Constantinople in 1136, to negotiate a military alliance with Emperor John II Comnenos. While he was there, Anselm and Metropolitan Nicetas of Nicomedia held a series of public discussions about subjects dividing the Churches, including the *Filioque*, and concluded that the differences between the two traditions were not as great as they had thought (PL 188.1206B – 1210 B). A letter from Orthodox Patriarch Germanos II (1222-1240) to Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) led to further discussions between Eastern and Western theologians on the *Filioque* at Nicaea in 1234. Subsequent discussions were held in 1253-54, at the initiative of Emperor John III Vatatzes (1222-1254) and Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254). In spite of these efforts, the continuing effects of the Fourth Crusade and the threat of the Turks, along with the jurisdictional claims of the papacy in the East, meant that these well-intentioned efforts came to no conclusion.

Against this background, a Western council was held in Lyons in 1274 (Lyons II), after the restoration of Constantinople to Eastern imperial control. Despite the consequences of the crusades, many Byzantines sought to heal the wounds of division and looked to the West for support against the growing advances of the Turks, and Pope Gregory X (1271-1276) enthusiastically hoped for reunion. Among the topics agreed upon for discussion at the council was the *Filioque*. Yet the two Byzantine bishops who were sent as delegates had no real opportunity to present the Eastern perspective at the Council. The *Filioque* was formally approved by the delegates in the final session on July 17, in a brief constitution which also explicitly condemned those holding other views on the origin of the Holy Spirit. Already on July 6, in accord with an agreement previously reached between papal delegates and the Emperor in Constantinople, the reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches was proclaimed, but it was

never received by the Eastern clergy and faithful, or vigorously promoted by the Popes in the West. In this context it should be noted that in his letter commemorating the 700th anniversary of this council (1974), Pope Paul VI recognised this and added that “the Latins chose texts and formulae expressing an ecclesiology which had been conceived and developed in the West. It is understandable [...] that a unity achieved in this way could not be accepted completely by the Eastern Christian mind.” A little further on, the Pope, speaking of the future Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, observed: “...it will take up again other controverted points which Gregory X and the Fathers of Lyons thought were resolved.”

At the Eastern Council of Blachernae (Constantinople) in 1285, in fact, the decisions of the Council of Lyons and the pro-Latin theology of former Patriarch John XI Bekkos (1275-1282) were soundly rejected, under the leadership of Patriarch Gregory II, also known as Gregory of Cyprus (1282-1289). At the same time, this council produced a significant statement addressing the theological issue of the *Filioque*. While firmly rejecting the “double procession” of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the statement spoke of an “eternal manifestation” of the Spirit *through* the Son. Patriarch Gregory’s language opened the way, at least, towards a deeper, more complex understanding of the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in both the East and the West. (see below) This approach was developed further by Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), in the context of his distinction between the essence and the energies of the divine persons. Unfortunately, these openings had little effect on later medieval discussions of the origin of the Spirit, in either the Eastern or the Western Church. Despite the concern shown by Byzantine theologians, from the time of Photios, to oppose both the idea of the *Filioque* and its addition to the Latin creed, there is no reference to it in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, a collection containing more than sixty anathemas representing the doctrinal decisions of Eastern councils through the fourteenth century.

One more attempt was made, however, to deal with the subject authoritatively on an ecumenical scale. The Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1445) again brought together representatives from the Church of Rome and the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, to discuss a wide range of controversial issues, including papal authority and the *Filioque*. This Council took place at a time when the Byzantine Empire was gravely threatened by the Ottomans, and when many in the Greek world regarded military aid from the West as Constantinople’s only hope. Following extensive discussions by experts from both sides, often centered on the interpretation of patristic texts, the union of the Churches was declared on July 6, 1439. The Council’s decree of reunion, *Laetentur caeli*, recognized the legitimacy of the Western view of the Spirit’s eternal procession from the Father and the Son, as from a single principle and in a single spiration. The *Filioque* was presented here as having the same meaning as the position of some early Eastern Fathers that the Spirit exists or proceeds “through the Son.” The Council also approved a text which spoke of the Pope as having “primacy over the whole world,” as “head of the whole church and father and teacher of all Christians.” Despite Orthodox participation in these discussions, the decisions of Florence – like the union decree of Lyons II - were never received by a representative body of bishops or faithful in the East, and were formally rejected in Constantinople in 1484.

The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the fracturing effect of the Protestant Reformation in the West, as well as subsequent Latin missions in the former Byzantine world and the establishment of Eastern Churches in communion with Rome, led to a deepening of the schism, accompanied by much polemical literature on each side. For more than five hundred years, few opportunities were offered to the Catholic and Orthodox sides for serious discussion of the *Filioque*, and of the related issue of the primacy and teaching authority of the bishop of Rome. Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism entered into a period of formal isolation from each other, in which each developed a sense of being the only ecclesiastical body authentically representing the apostolic faith. For example, this is expressed in Pius IX's encyclical *In Suprema Petri Sede* of January 6, 1848, and in Leo XIII's encyclical *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae* of June 20, 1894, as well as the encyclical of the Orthodox Patriarchs in 1848 and the encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople of 1895, each reacting to the prior papal documents. Ecumenical discussions of the *Filioque* between the Orthodox Churches and representatives of the Old Catholics and Anglicans were held in Germany in 1874-75, and were occasionally revived during the century that followed, but in general little substantial progress was made in moving beyond the hardened opposition of traditional Eastern and Western views.

A new phase in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church began formally with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the Pan-Orthodox Conferences (1961-1968), which renewed contacts and dialogue. From that time, a number of theological issues and historical events contributing to the schism between the churches have begun to receive new attention. In this context, our own North American Orthodox-Catholic Consultation was established in 1965, and the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches was established in 1979. Although a committee of theologians from many different Churches, sponsored by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, studied the *Filioque* question in depth in 1978 and 1979, and concluded by issuing the "Klingenthal Memorandum" (1979), no thorough new joint discussion of the issue has been undertaken by representatives of our two Churches until our own study. The first statement of the Joint International Commission (1982), entitled "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Trinity," does briefly address the issue of the *Filioque*, within the context of an extensive discussion of the relationship of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The Statement says: "Without wishing to resolve yet the difficulties which have arisen between the East and the West concerning the relationship between the Son and the Spirit, we can already say together that this Spirit, which proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15:26) as the sole source of the Trinity, and which has become the Spirit of our sonship (Rom. 8:15) since he is already the Spirit of the Son (Gal.4:6), is communicated to us, particularly in the Eucharist, by this Son upon whom he reposes in time and eternity (Jn. 1:32)." (No. 6).

Several other events in recent decades point to a greater willingness on the part of Rome to recognize the normative character of the original creed of Constantinople. When Patriarch Dimitrios I visited Rome on December 7, 1987, and again during the visit of Patriarch Bartholomew I to Rome in June 1995, both patriarchs attended a Eucharist celebrated by Pope

John Paul II in St. Peter's Basilica. On both occasions the Pope and Patriarch proclaimed the Creed in Greek (i.e., without the *Filioque*). Pope John Paul II and Romanian Patriarch Teoctist did the same in Romanian at a papal Mass in Rome on October 13, 2002. The document *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on August 6, 2000, begins its theological considerations on the Church's central teaching with the text of the creed of 381, again without the addition of the *Filioque*. While no interpretation of these uses of the Creed was offered, these developments suggest a new awareness on the Catholic side of the unique character of the original Greek text of the Creed as the most authentic formulation of the faith that unifies Eastern and Western Christianity.

Not long after the meeting in Rome between Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Vatican published the document "The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit" (September 13, 1995). This text was intended to be a new contribution to the dialogue between our churches on this controversial issue. Among the many observations it makes, the text says: "The Catholic Church acknowledges the conciliar, ecumenical, normative and irrevocable value, as the expression of one common faith of the Church and of all Christians, of the Symbol professed in Greek at Constantinople in 381 by the Second Ecumenical Council. No confession of faith peculiar to a particular liturgical tradition can contradict this expression of faith taught and professed by the undivided Church." Although the Catholic Church obviously does not consider the *Filioque* to be a contradiction of the creed of 381, the significance of this passage in the 1995 Vatican statement should not be minimized. It is in response to this important document that our own study of the *Filioque* began in 1999, and we hope that this present statement will serve to carry further the positive discussions between our communions that we have experienced ourselves.

### **III. Theological Reflections**

In all discussions about the origin of the Holy Spirit within the Mystery of God, and about the relationships of Father, Son and Holy Spirit with each other, the first habit of mind to be cultivated is doubtless a reverent modesty. Concerning the divine Mystery itself, we can say very little, and our speculations always risk claiming a degree of clarity and certainty that is more than their due. As Pseudo-Dionysius reminds us, "No unity or trinity or number or oneness or fruitfulness, or any other thing that either is a creature or can be known to any creature, is able to express the Mystery, beyond all mind and reason, of that transcendent Godhead which in a super-essential way surpasses all things" (*On the Divine Names* 13.3). That we do, as Christians, profess our God, who is radically and indivisibly one, to be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit – three "persons" who can never be confused with or reduced to one another, and who are all fully and literally God, singly and in the harmonious whole of their relationships with each other – is simply a summation of what we have learned from God's self-revelation in human history, a revelation that has reached its climax in our being able, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to confess Jesus as the Eternal Father's Word and Son. Surely our Christian language about God must always be regulated by the Holy Scriptures, and by the dogmatic tradition of the Church,

which interprets the content of Scripture in a normative way. Yet there always remains the difficult hermeneutical problem of applying particular Scriptural terms and texts to the inner life of God, and of knowing when a passage refers simply to God's action within the "economy" of saving history, or when it should be understood as referring absolutely to God's being in itself. The division between our Churches on the *Filioque* question would probably be less acute if both sides, through the centuries, had remained more conscious of the limitations of our knowledge of God.

Secondly, discussion of this difficult subject has often been hampered by polemical distortions, in which each side has caricatured the position of the other for the purposes of argument. It is not true, for instance, that mainstream Orthodox theology conceives of the procession of the Spirit, within God's eternal being, as simply unaffected by the relationship of the Son to the Father, or thinks of the Spirit as not "belonging" properly to the Son when the Spirit is sent forth in history. It is also not true that mainstream Latin theology has traditionally begun its Trinitarian reflections from an abstract, unscriptural consideration of the divine substance, or affirms two causes of the Spirit's hypostatic existence, or means to assign the Holy Spirit a role subordinate to the Son, either within the Mystery of God or in God's saving action in history.

We are convinced from our own study that the Eastern and Western theological traditions have been in substantial agreement, since the patristic period, on a number of fundamental affirmations about the Holy Trinity that bear on the *Filioque* debate:

- both traditions clearly affirm that *the Holy Spirit is a distinct hypostasis* or person within the divine Mystery, equal in status to the Father and the Son, and is not simply a creature or a way of talking about God's action in creatures;
- although the Creed of 381 does not state it explicitly, both traditions confess the Holy Spirit to be God, *of the same divine substance (homoousios)* as Father and Son;
- both traditions also clearly affirm that the *Father is the primordial source (archē) and ultimate cause (aitia) of the divine being*, and thus of all God's operations: the "spring" from which both Son and Spirit flow, the "root" of their being and fruitfulness, the "sun" from which their existence and their activity radiates;
- both traditions affirm that *the three hypostases or persons in God are constituted* in their hypostatic existence and distinguished from one another solely *by their relationships of origin*, and not by any other characteristics or activities;
- accordingly, both traditions affirm that *all the operations of God* - the activities by which God summons created reality into being, and forms that reality, for its well-being, into a unified and ordered cosmos centered on the human creature, who is made in God's image – are *the common work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, even though each of them plays a distinctive role within those operations that is determined by their relationships to one another.

Nevertheless, the Eastern and Western traditions of reflection on the Mystery of God have clearly developed categories and conceptions that differ in substantial ways from one another. These differences cannot simply be explained away, or be made to seem equivalent by facile argument. We might summarize our differences as follows:

## 1) Terminology

The *Filioque* controversy is first of all a controversy over words. As a number of recent authors have pointed out, part of the theological disagreement between our communions seems to be rooted in subtle but significant differences in the way key terms have been used to refer to the Spirit's divine origin. The original text of the Creed of 381, in speaking of the Holy Spirit, characterizes him in terms of John 15.26, as the one "who proceeds (*ekporeuetai*) from the Father": probably influenced by the usage of Gregory the Theologian (Or. 31.8), the Council chose to restrict itself to the Johannine language, slightly altering the Gospel text (changing *to pneuma...ho para tou Patros ekporeuetai to: to pneuma to hagion... to ek tou Patros ekporeuomenon*) in order to emphasize that the "coming forth" of the Spirit begins "within" the Father's own eternal hypostatic role as source of the divine Being, and so is best spoken of as a kind of "movement out of (*ek*)" him. The underlying connotation of *ekporeuesthai* ("proceed," "issue forth") and its related noun, *ekporeusis* ("procession"), seems to have been that of a "passage outwards" from within some point of origin. Since the time of the Cappadocian Fathers, at least, Greek theology almost always restricts the theological use of this term to the coming-forth of the Spirit from the Father, giving it the status of a technical term for the relationship of those two divine persons. In contrast, other Greek words, such as *proienai*, "go forward," are frequently used by the Eastern Fathers to refer to the Spirit's saving "mission" in history from the Father and the risen Lord.

The Latin word *procedere*, on the other hand, with its related noun *processio*, suggests simply "movement forwards," without the added implication of the starting-point of that movement; thus it is used to translate a number of other Greek theological terms, including *proienai*, and is explicitly taken by Thomas Aquinas to be a general term denoting "origin of any kind" (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 36, a.2), including – in a Trinitarian context – the Son's generation as well as the breathing-forth of the Spirit and his mission in time. As a result, both the primordial origin of the Spirit in the eternal Father and his "coming forth" from the risen Lord tend to be designated, in Latin, by the same word, *procedere*, while Greek theology normally uses two different terms. Although the difference between the Greek and the Latin traditions of understanding the eternal origin of the Spirit is more than simply a verbal one, much of the original concern in the Greek Church over the insertion of the word *Filioque* into the Latin translation of the Creed of 381 may well have been due – as Maximus the Confessor explained (*Letter to Marinus*: PG 91.133-136) – to a misunderstanding on both sides of the different ranges of meaning implied in the Greek and Latin terms for "procession".

## 2) The Substantive Issues

Clearly two main issues separate the Eastern and Western Churches in their history of debating the *Filioque*: one theological, in the strict sense, and one ecclesiological.

**a) Theological:**

If “theology” is understood in its Patristic sense, as reflection on God as Trinity, the theological issue behind this dispute is whether the Son is to be thought of as playing any role in the origin of the Spirit, as a hypostasis or divine “person,” from the Father, who is the sole ultimate source of the divine Mystery. The Greek tradition, as we have seen, has generally relied on John 15.26 and the formulation of the Creed of 381 to assert that all we know of the Spirit’s hypostatic origin is that he “proceeds from the Father,” in a way distinct from, but parallel to, the Son’s “generation” from the Father (e.g., John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* 1.8). However, this same tradition acknowledges that the “mission” of the Spirit in the world also involves the Son, who receives the Spirit into his own humanity at his baptism, breathes the Spirit forth onto the Twelve on the evening of the resurrection, and sends the Spirit in power into the world, through the charismatic preaching of the Apostles, at Pentecost. On the other hand, the Latin tradition since Tertullian has tended to assume that since the order in which the Church normally names the persons in the Trinity places the Spirit after the Son, he is to be thought of as coming forth “from” the Father “through” the Son. Augustine, who in several passages himself insists that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father,” because as God he is not inferior to the Son (*De Fide et Symbolo* 9.19; *Enchiridion* 9.3), develops, in other texts, his classic understanding that the Spirit also “proceeds” from the Son because he is, in the course of sacred history, the Spirit and the “gift” of both Father and Son (e.g., *On the Trinity* 4.20.29; *Tractate on Gospel of John* 99.6-7), the gift that begins in their own eternal exchange of love (*On the Trinity* 15.17.29). In Augustine’s view, this involvement of the Son in the Spirit’s procession is not understood to contradict the Father’s role as the single ultimate source of both Son and Spirit, but is itself given by the Father in generating the Son: “the Holy Spirit, in turn, has this from the Father himself, that he should also proceed from the Son, just as he proceeds from the Father” (*Tractate on Gospel of John* 99.8).

Much of the difference between the early Latin and Greek traditions on this point is clearly due to the subtle difference of the Latin *procedere* from the Greek *ekporeuesthai*: as we have observed, the Spirit’s “coming forth” is designated in a more general sense by the Latin term, without the connotation of ultimate origin hinted at by the Greek. The Spirit’s “procession” from the Son, however, is conceived of in Latin theology as a somewhat different relationship from his “procession” from the Father, even when – as in the explanations of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas – the relationship of Father and Son to the Holy Spirit is spoken of as constituting “a single principle” of the Spirit’s origin: even in breathing forth the Spirit together, according to these later Latin theologians, the Father retains priority, giving the Son all that he has and making possible all that he does.

Greek theologians, too, have often struggled to find ways of expressing a sense that the Son, who sends forth the Spirit in time, also plays a mediating role of some kind in the Spirit's eternal being and activity. Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, explains that we can only distinguish the hypostases within the Mystery of God by "believing that one is the cause, the other is from the cause; and in that which is from the cause, we recognize yet another distinction: one is immediately from the first one, the other is through him who is immediately from the first one." It is characteristic of the "mediation" (*mesiteia*) of the Son in the origin of the Spirit, he adds, that it both preserves his own unique role as Son and allows the Spirit to have a "natural relationship" to the Father. (*To Ablabius*: GNO III/1, 56.3-10) In the thirteenth century, the Council of Blachernae (1285), under the leadership of Constantinopolitan Patriarch Gregory II, took further steps to interpret Patristic texts that speak of the Spirit's being "through" the Son in a sense consistent with the Orthodox tradition. The Council proposed in its *Tomos* that although Christian faith must maintain that the Holy Spirit receives his existence and hypostatic identity solely from the Father, who is the single cause of the divine Being, he "shines from and is manifested eternally through the Son, in the way that light shines forth and is manifest through the intermediary of the sun's rays." (trans. A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium* [St. Vladimir's, 1996] 219) In the following century, Gregory Palamas proposed a similar interpretation of this relationship in a number of his works; in his *Confession* of 1351, for instance, he asserts that the Holy Spirit "has the Father as foundation, source, and cause," but "reposes in the Son" and "is sent – that is, manifested – through the Son." (*ibid.* 194) In terms of the transcendent divine energy, although not in terms of substance or hypostatic being, "the Spirit pours itself out from the Father through the Son, and, if you like, from the Son over all those worthy of it," a communication which may even be broadly called "procession" (*ekporeusis*) (*Apodeictic Treatise 1*: trans. J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* [St. Vladimir's, 1974] 231-232).

The Greek and Latin theological traditions clearly remain in some tension with each other on the fundamental issue of the Spirit's eternal origin as a distinct divine person. By the Middle Ages, as a result of the influence of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, Western theology almost universally conceives of the identity of each divine person as defined by its "relations of opposition" – in other words, its mutually defining relations of origin - to the other two, and concludes that the Holy Spirit would not be hypostatically distinguishable from the Son if the Spirit "proceeded" from the Father alone. In the Latin understanding of *processio* as a general term for "origin," after all, it can also be said that the Son "proceeds from the Father" by being generated from him. Eastern theology, drawing on the language of John 15.26 and the Creed of 381, continues to understand the language of "procession" (*ekporeusis*) as denoting a unique, exclusive, and distinctive causal relationship between the Spirit and the Father, and generally confines the Son's role to the "manifestation" and "mission" of the Spirit in the divine activities of creation and redemption. These differences, though subtle, are substantial, and the very weight of theological tradition behind both of them makes them all the more difficult to reconcile theologically with each other.

## **b) Ecclesiological:**



The other issue continually present since the late eighth century in the debate over the *Filioque* is that of pastoral and teaching authority in the Church – more precisely, the issue of the authority of the bishop of Rome to resolve dogmatic questions in a final way, simply in virtue of his office. Since the Council of Ephesus (431), the dogmatic tradition of both Eastern and Western Churches has repeatedly affirmed that the final norm of orthodoxy in interpreting the Christian Gospel must be “the faith of Nicaea.” The Orthodox tradition sees the normative expression of that faith to be the Creeds and canons formulated by those Councils that are received by the Apostolic Churches as “ecumenical”: as expressing the continuing and universal Apostolic faith. The Catholic tradition also accepts conciliar formulations as dogmatically normative, and attributes a unique importance to the seven Councils that are accepted as ecumenical by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. However, in recognizing the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome in matters of faith and of the service of unity, the Catholic tradition accepts the authority of the Pope to confirm the process of conciliar reception, and to define what does and does not conflict with the “faith of Nicaea” and the Apostolic tradition. So while Orthodox theology has regarded the ultimate approval by the Popes, in the eleventh century, of the use of *Filioque* in the Latin Creed as a usurpation of the dogmatic authority proper to ecumenical Councils alone, Catholic theology has seen it as a legitimate exercise of his primatial authority to proclaim and clarify the Church’s faith. As our own common study has repeatedly shown, it is precisely at times in which issues of power and control have been of concern to our Churches that the question of the *Filioque* has emerged as a central concern: held out as a condition for improving relations, or given as a reason for allowing disunity to continue unhealed.

As in the theological question of the origin of the Holy Spirit discussed above, this divergence of understanding of the structure and exercise of authority in the Church is clearly a very serious one: undoubtedly Papal primacy, with all its implications, remains the root issue behind all the questions of theology and practice that continue to divide our communions. In the continuing discussion of the *Filioque* between our Churches, however, we have found it helpful to keep these two issues methodologically separate from one another, and to recognize that the mystery of the relationships among the persons in God must be approached in a different way from the issue of whether or not it is proper for the Western Churches to profess the faith of Nicaea in terms that diverge from the original text of the Creed of 381.

### 3) Continuing our Reflections

It has often been remarked that the theology of the Holy Spirit is an underdeveloped region of Christian theological reflection. This seems to hold true even of the issue of the origin of the Holy Spirit. Although a great deal has been written about the reasons for and against the theology of the *Filioque* since the Carolingian era, most of it has been polemical in nature, aimed at justifying positions assumed by both sides to be non-negotiable. Little effort has been made, until modern times, to look for new ways of expressing and explaining the Biblical and early Christian understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, which might serve to frame the discussion in a new way and move all the Churches towards a consensus on essential matters that would be in continuity with both traditions. Recently, a number of theologians, from a variety of

Churches, have suggested that the time may now be at hand to return to this question together, in a genuinely ecumenical spirit, and to seek for new developments in our articulation of the Apostolic faith that may ultimately win ecumenical Christian reception.

Recognizing its challenges, our Consultation supports such a common theological enterprise. It is our hope that a serious process of reflection on the theology of the Holy Spirit, based on the Scriptures and on the whole tradition of Christian theology, and conducted with an openness to new formulations and conceptual structures consonant with that tradition, might help our Churches to discover new depths of common faith and to grow in respect for the wisdom of our respective forbears. We urge, too, that both our Churches persist in their efforts to reflect – together and separately – on the theology of primacy and synodality within the Church’s structures of teaching and pastoral practice, recognizing that here also a continuing openness to doctrinal and practical development, intimately linked to the Spirit’s work in the community, remains crucially necessary. Gregory Nazianzen reminds us, in his *Fifth Theological Oration* on the divinity of the Holy Spirit, that the Church’s slow discovery of the Spirit’s true status and identity is simply part of the “order of theology (*taxis tēs theologias*),” by which “lights break upon us gradually” in our understanding of the saving Mystery of God. (Or. 31.27) Only if we “listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches” (Rev 3.22), will we be able to remain faithful to the Good News preached by the Apostles, while growing in the understanding of that faith, which is theology’s task.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

We are aware that the problem of the theology of the *Filioque*, and its use in the Creed, is not simply an issue between the Catholic and Orthodox communions. Many Protestant Churches, too, drawing on the theological legacy of the Medieval West, consider the term to represent an integral part of the orthodox Christian confession. Although dialogue among a number of these Churches and the Orthodox communion has already touched on the issue, any future resolution of the disagreement between East and West on the origin of the Spirit must involve all those communities that profess the Creed of 381 as a standard of faith. Aware of its limitations, our Consultation nonetheless makes the following theological and practical recommendations to the members and the bishops of our own Churches:

- that our Churches commit themselves to a new and earnest dialogue concerning the origin and person of the Holy Spirit, drawing on the Holy Scriptures and on the full riches of the theological traditions of both our Churches, and to looking for constructive ways of expressing what is central to our faith on this difficult issue;
- that all involved in such dialogue expressly recognize the limitations of our ability to make definitive assertions about the inner life of God;

- that in the future, because of the progress in mutual understanding that has come about in recent decades, Orthodox and Catholics refrain from labeling as heretical the traditions of the other side on the subject of the procession of the Holy Spirit;
- that Orthodox and Catholic theologians distinguish more clearly between the divinity and hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit, which is a received dogma of our Churches, and the manner of the Spirit's origin, which still awaits full and final ecumenical resolution;
- that those engaged in dialogue on this issue distinguish, as far as possible, the theological issues of the origin of the Holy Spirit from the ecclesiological issues of primacy and doctrinal authority in the Church, even as we pursue both questions seriously together;
- that the theological dialogue between our Churches also give careful consideration to the status of later councils held in both our Churches after those seven generally received as ecumenical.
- that the Catholic Church, as a consequence of the normative and irrevocable dogmatic value of the Creed of 381, use the original Greek text alone in making translations of that Creed for catechetical and liturgical use.
- that the Catholic Church, following a growing theological consensus, and in particular the statements made by Pope Paul VI, declare that the condemnation made at the Second Council of Lyons (1274) of those "who presume to deny that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son" is no longer applicable.

We offer these recommendations to our Churches in the conviction, based on our own intense study and discussion, that our traditions' different ways of understanding the procession of the Holy Spirit need no longer divide us. We believe, rather, that our profession of the ancient Creed of Constantinople must be allowed to become, by our uniform practice and our new attempts at mutual understanding, the basis for a more conscious unity in the one faith that all theology simply seeks to clarify and to deepen. Although our expression of the truth God reveals about his own Being must always remain limited by the boundaries of human understanding and human words, we believe that it is the very "Spirit of truth," whom Jesus breathes upon his Church, who remains with us still, to "guide us into all truth" (John 16.13). We pray that our Churches' understanding of this Spirit may no longer be a scandal to us, or an obstacle to unity in Christ, but that the one truth towards which he guides us may truly be "a bond of peace" (Eph 4.3), for us and for all Christians.

Washington, DC  
October 25, 2003