

The Filioque

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Of old, the Church, in her teaching on the interrelationships of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, has taught that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, pre-eternally proceeds only from the First Person of the Holy Trinity God the Father. This teaching was based on Christ's words, that the Holy Spirit "proceedeth from the Father" (John 15:26). This doctrinal formula was inserted into the Symbol of Faith at the Second Ecumenical Council (381). After that, this Council, and likewise both the Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils, having confirmed the trueness of the Symbol of faith, forbade any additions to be made to the NiceanConstantinopolitan Symbol. However, in the year 589, at a local Spanish council in Toledo, an addition was made to the Symbol of Faith, according to which the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son (*qui a Patre Filioque procedit*). This insertion became known as the Filioque, and subsequently became one of the main causes of the Western Christianity's departure from Orthodoxy.

It was decided at the Toledo Council of the Spanish Church to unite to the Church the West Goths, who confessed the Arian heresy, and this circumstance served as the occasion for this addition. Since the teaching on the inequality of the Son with the Father was the fundamental point of the Arian heresy, the Spanish theologians at the Toledo Council, insisting on the full equality of the Son and the Father, decided to place the Son also in the same relationship to the Holy Spirit that the Father has to Him; that is, they said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the addition of the Filioque to the Symbol of Faith spread in the Frankish churches. At first, the Roman popes refused to recognize the Filioque. Thus, in the ninth century, Pope Leo III rejected the request of the Emperor Charlemagne to insert this addition into the Symbol of Faith. Moreover, the Bishop of Rome even ordered that the text of the NiceanConstantinopolitan Symbol of Faith be engraved on two silver tablets and that these tablets be set up at the tomb of the Apostles Peter and Paul with the inscription: "I, Leo, placed these tablets out of love for the Orthodox faith and to safeguard it".

But in spite of this, the false teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit also from the Son continued to spread in the Western churches right up to the year 1014, when the Roman Pope Benedict VIII finally inserted it into the Symbol of Faith.

Many presentday Christians consider that the dispute around the addition of one word to the Symbol of Faith is trivial, a subject for investigation by professional theologians, and does not in any way influence our faith.

As we remarked at the beginning, Christianity is the religion of the Holy Trinity. And faith in the Holy Trinity has a most immediate bearing on all aspects of our spiritual life. For Christians, the dogma of the Holy Trinity is not only a doctrinal formula, but a living and uninterruptedly developing Christian experience. Every addition or change to the teaching on the Holy Trinity violates the correctness of this cornerstone dogma and changes our faith.

On what, then, do Roman Catholics base the Filioque their dogma on the procession of the Holy Spirit also from the Son?

Catholic theologians say that the Savior's words themselves, "Who proceedeth from the Father", do not at all exclude the procession of the Holy Spirit also from the Son; on the contrary, they even contain this thought in themselves, inasmuch as the Father and the Son are one in essence, and all that the Father has,

the Son also has. The Orthodox Church teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit really are one in essence, but differ among themselves as Persons; all that the Father has, the Son also has and the Holy Spirit also has, with the exception of personal attributes. But if we assume that the procession of the Holy Spirit also from the Son is intended by the words "proceedeth from the Father", because the Son is one with the Father in essence, then we would have to allow that the begetting of the Son by the Spirit is also intended by the words "begotten of the Father", since the Spirit also is one with the Father in essence. Moreover, we would have to allow that the Son, while being begotten of the Father, is also begotten of Himself; and the Holy Spirit, while proceeding from the Father, also proceeds from Himself, since They are one with the Father in essence and are, furthermore, all co-eternal.

Catholics cite the Savior's words, "when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth...He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14). Catholics explain the expression, "shall receive of mine", thus: He shall receive of My essence, that is, shall proceed from Me. But in reality, this expression signifies only that the new Instructor the Spirit of truth will not preach any new teaching, different from the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, but will reveal, establish and help believers to assimilate the teaching proclaimed by the Savior. Roman Catholics further cite the fact that the Apostle Paul calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of [God's] Son" (Galatians 4:6) and "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9), and from this they conclude that if the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of [the] Father" (Matthew 10:20), because he proceeds from Him, then, consequently, He is also called "the Spirit of the Son" for the same reason. But from the context, it is obvious that the Apostle Paul is speaking not about the eternal Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, but about His grace filled gifts, which are sent down into the hearts of believers; and since all spiritual gifts are obtained for us by the endless merits of the Son of God, therefore the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of the Son.

Bishop Kallistos (Ware), a prominent English Orthodox theologian, well acquainted with Western theology, writes: "Latin Scholastic theology, emphasizing as it does the essence at the expense of the persons, comes near to turning God into an abstract idea. He becomes a remote and impersonal being, whose existence has to be proved by metaphysical arguments a God of the philosophers, not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, has been far less concerned than the Latin west to find philosophical proofs of God's existence: what is important is not that a man should argue about the deity, but that he should have a direct and living encounter with a concrete and personal God. "Such are some of the reasons why Orthodox regard filioque as dangerous and heretical. Filioquism confuses the persons, and destroys the proper balance between unity and diversity in the Godhead. The oneness of the deity is emphasized at the expense of His threeness; God is regarded too much in terms of abstract essence and too little in terms of concrete personality" (The Orthodox Church, page 222). In the Western Church consciousness, the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Son of God. It is sufficient to leaf through Western theological texts in order to be convinced as to what an insignificant place Catholic theologians allocate to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world, in the Church and in the life of individual men.

The Filioque places the Holy Spirit in a state of subordination to the Father and the Son, and it distorted the teaching on the Church in the West (of this, we shall speak separately). Every false teaching about the Holy Spirit is a blow against the dogma about the Church. Because the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in God's plan concerning man was ignored in Western theological thought, the Church gradually began to be accepted as an earthly institution, organized and administered according to the principles of worldly authority and juridical law.