

Is the Spirit Still the Dividing Line Between the Christian East and West? Revisiting an Ancient Problem of *Filioque* with a Hope for an Ecumenical Rapprochement

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Abstract. This essay seeks to offer new perspectives on an ancient problem, namely how Christian West (Roman Catholics and Protestants) and East (Orthodox Churches) may confess the common trinitarian faith. In order to address that issue, the essay will first take a closer look at key postpatristic developments in the West, focusing particularly on the theology of St. Augustine. His theological work in general and Trinitarian reflection in particular has played critical role in the Latin-speaking church. Second, based on that discussion, the essay will focus on the question of the derivation of the Spirit.

Key words: Trinity, filioque, ecumenism, St. Augustine, Holy Spirit

Do East and West Confess the Same Trinitarian Faith?

According to conventional theological wisdom, “in general, Greek theology—of the Christian East—emphasizes the divine hypostases (persons), whereas Latin theology—of the Christian West—emphasizes the divine nature.”¹ In other words, it is claimed that the East begins with the threeness of the Trinity, the West with the oneness or unity.² While not without grounds, this kind of

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¹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “The Trinitarian Mystery of God,” *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 170, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). LaCugna calls the Eastern view emanationist in terms of descending order from Father to Son to Spirit and finally to the world, whereas the Western can be depicted as a circle enclosing all Trinitarian members in which the whole Trinity relates to the world. *Ibid.*, 170-71.

² The classic work contrasting Eastern and Western views is Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, 3 vols. (Paris: Retaux, 1892-1898); see also Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury, 1982), 3: xv-xxi.

description is also a caricature.³ A related issue, of course, has to do with the later *filioque*-clause and its ecumenically dividing results.

In order to address the question put forth in the title of the essay, I will first take a closer look at key postpatristic developments in the West. The reason for this choice is the common understanding that from St. Augustine, theological work in general and Trinitarian reflection in particular has its center in the Latin-speaking church. Furthermore, early Eastern contributions have been registered above quite extensively. Second, based on that discussion, I seek to focus on the question of the derivation of the Spirit. Finally, I attempt to offer some helpful ecumenical viewpoints toward a reconciliation and mutual acknowledgment.

So, what is the legacy of Augustine's Trinitarian thinking?⁴ And how does it relate to the question in the subheading: Do East and West confess the same Trinitarian faith? At the moment, it is quite challenging to discern scholarly consensus in the interpretation of Augustine's view of the Trinity.⁵ The older consensus is that because of his neo-Platonic leanings, Augustine put stress on the unity of the divine essence and had a hard time in accounting for distinctions. That would of course mean that his approach would be diametrically opposed to the Eastern view.⁶ One of the most vocal contemporary critics of Augustine along this line, Colin Gunton, has argued Augustine did not correctly understand the tradition, certainly not the teaching of the Cappadocians, and ended up viewing the divine substance "behind" relations. For the Cappadocians, so this critic says, on the contrary, relations are "ontological" whereas for the Bishop of Hippo only "logical."⁷ Thomas Marsh joins in and accuses Augustine of replacing the earlier Latin emphasis on the divine monarchy of the Father with "divine substance or nature which *then* is

³ Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 140.

⁴ "It is impossible to do contemporary Trinitarian theology and not have a judgment on Augustine." Michel René Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Trinity*, 145, eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S. J., and Gerald O'Collins, S. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵ Rightly, Barnes laments that too much of Augustine's interpretation goes without actually reading the Augustine! Barnes proposes to offer a new reading of the Bishop of Hippo based on reading everything he wrote on the topic of the Trinity; however, while fresh, Barnes' reading is also somewhat idiosyncratic since he focuses so much on the earlier writings. *Ibid.*, 145-46.

⁶ So e.g., George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, Toronto: W. Heinemann, 1936), 237; and Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. Edmund J. Fordman (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 110-21.

⁷ Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 38-43 especially.

verified in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”⁸ All of this has even caused some to speak of the “Theological Crisis of the West”!⁹

Not all are convinced that this is a fair reading of Augustine.¹⁰ Two foundational problems are found in the older interpretation of Augustine, the correction of which may change our picture of the view of the Trinity held by this most influential early Western theologian. First, it is doubtful whether the Cappadocians had as developed a social doctrine of the Trinity as is assumed, and second, whether Augustine really started with the unity of the divine essence rather than with the distinctiveness of persons. Rather, it has been suggested, Augustine could have built on the Cappadocians’ view: “Augustine begins where the Cappadocians leave off: accepting their answer to the question ‘why not three gods?’ he proceeds to ask ‘three *what?*’”¹¹ The best way to look at this debate is to discern key ideas in Augustine’s Trinitarian teaching.¹²

Augustine of course affirms the tradition concerning consubstantiality as well as distinctions of the Son and Spirit.¹³ Furthermore, somewhat similarly to

⁸ Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God. A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 132.

⁹ Colin Gunton, “Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 33-58.

¹⁰ The most vocal critic of the alleged neo-Platonic influence on Augustine is Barnes, “Rereading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity.” A careful, cautious interpretation, quite critical of the old consensus, is offered by Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation. The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. Matthias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 167-85.

¹¹ Philip Cary, “Historical Perspectives on Trinitarian Doctrine,” *Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship Bulletin* (November-December 1995): 9. A helpful summary of views pro and con can be found in Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity. Guides to Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 44-45.

¹² Main sources for Augustine’s Trinitarian teaching besides the 15-volume “On the Trinity,” written between 400 and 420 are “The City of God,” “Confessions,” “Tractates on the Gospel of John,” “Letter 169 to Bishop Evodius,” “Letter 11 to Nebridius,” “On the Spirit and the Letter,” “On the Soul and Its Origins,” and “Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament.” Olson and Hall contains a comprehensive listing of Augustine’s writings on the Trinity (“The Trinity,” 46 n. 97).

¹³ E.g., Augustine, “Letters 169,” *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 540: “The Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Son, and neither the Father nor the Son is the Holy Spirit... [T]hese are equal and co-eternal, and absolutely of one nature... an inseparable trinity.” For the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, see e.g., Augustine, “On the Trinity” 1.6.9: 21-22; and for the Spirit with the Father and Son, see e.g., *ibid.*, 1.6.13: 23-24; 7.3.6: 108-9.

Eastern theologians, Augustine depicts the Father as the *principium*, primary or beginning of the deity.¹⁴

Well-known are the reflections of Augustine on the Spirit in the Trinity. He conceives the Spirit as communion (of the Father and the Son),¹⁵ their shared love,¹⁶ and a gift.¹⁷ In book 8 of *De Trinitate*, he develops his thought on the Trinity with the help of the idea of interpersonal love in terms of filiation and paternity. The Father is Lover, the Son the Beloved, and the Spirit the mutual Love that connects the two. Here of course the obvious question arises whether this depersonalizes the Spirit: shared love can hardly be a “person.”¹⁸

For Augustine, incarnation is a major Trinitarian event, and it shapes his view of the Trinity more fully than is often acknowledged by his interpreters.¹⁹ He takes pains in convincing his readers that incarnation is a unique event. For example, in expositing the gospel story about Jesus’ baptism, Augustine argues that while the manifestation of the Spirit in the form of a dove and the Father’s voice from above were temporary and symbolic, the incarnation is a permanent assumption of humanity in a real union of two natures.²⁰

Pannenberg, who otherwise is somewhat critical of the Augustinian legacy,²¹ has shown convincingly that “Augustine took over the relational definition of the Trinitarian distinctions which the Cappadocians, following Athanasius, had developed. He made the point that the distinctions of the persons are

¹⁴ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 4.20.28-29: 84-85. See further, Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo. Christocentrism or Theocentrism?* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 104-5.

¹⁵ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 5.11.12: 93; 15.27.50: 226-27. See further, Joseph Ratzinger, “The Holy Spirit as *Communio*. Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine,” *Communio* 25 (1998): 325-39.

¹⁶ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 15.17.27: 215; Augustine, “Homilies, Tractates on the Gospel of St. John” 105.7.3, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 396.

¹⁷ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 5.12.13: 93-94; 5.15.16: 95.

¹⁸ Bernd Jochen Hilberath, “Pneumatologie,” *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, 446-47, ed. Theodor Schneider, et al., vol. 1 (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1992).

¹⁹ See further, Barnes, “Rereading,” 154-68; Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 168-85 especially.

²⁰ Augustine, “Letters” 169.2.5-9, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 540-41.

²¹ Pannenberg is critical of the entire Western tradition up until Barth which employs a mental or psychological analogy of the Trinity, which in Pannenberg’s view leads to the primacy of a divine single mind rather than the idea of divine unity in terms of relationality. Pannenberg calls this approach a “pre-trinitarian, theistic idea of God.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Father, Son, Spirit. Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God,” *Dialog* 26.4 (August 1987): 251.

conditioned by their mutual relations.”²² For Augustine the relations are eternal.²³ The Eastern idea of *perichoresis*, mutual interpenetration, is no stranger to his views.²⁴ At the same time, Augustine was also building on the Cappadocians’ idea mentioned above of the unity of the three persons in their outward works, the consequence of which is that from the creaturely works we may know the divine unity.²⁵

It is often claimed that the psychological analogies are key to the Trinitarian teaching in Augustine. It is true that the latter part of his *On the Trinity*²⁶ employs images such as *mens/notitia/amor*—mind, mind’s knowledge of itself, and the mind’s love for itself—an illustration of Father as Being, Son as Consciousness, and Spirit as Love.²⁷ His logic is compelling: if the human mind knows love in itself, it knows God since God is love. These illustrations are of course biblically sustainable based on the idea of humanity as *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26-27). However, it is important to note that Augustine did not try to derive the Trinitarian distinctions from the divine unity. The psychological analogies that he suggested and developed in his work on the Trinity were simply meant to offer a very general way of linking the unity and trinity and thus creating some plausibility for trinitarian statements.²⁸

²² Pannenberg here refers to Augustine, “On the Trinity” 8.1; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 284. In his “Sermon on Matthew 3:13,” Augustine speaks of a distinction of persons, and an inseparableness of operation. Augustine, “Sermon on New Testament Lessons. Matthew 3:13,” 2.1-23, especially 2.15, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 259-66 (262). See also Augustine, “On the Trinity” 5.11.12: 93 for an important statement about relationality in Trinity.

²³ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 284.

²⁴ Augustine in “On the Trinity” says it strongly: “in that highest Trinity one is as much as the three together, nor are two anything more than one. And They are infinite in themselves. So both each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all are one.” Augustine, “On the Trinity” 6.10.12: 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.4.7: 20; 4.21.30: 85; see further, Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 283-84.

²⁶ In addition to “On the Trinity” 8-15: 166-228, analogies are also discussed in “Homilies. Tractates on the Gospel of St. John” 23: 150-57, as well as in “Letters” 11: 228-30 and 169: 539-43, among others.

²⁷ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 8.10.14: 124; 9.2.2: 126-27. The idea of Mind, of course, has its legacy in early Christian theology beginning from the Apologists, who taught that as the Word the Son is the Father’s thought/idea. Augustine also developed further the idea of the “vestiges of the Trinity” with the help of the tripartite constitution of the human soul, *memoria/intelligentia/voluntas*: memory, intelligence, and willing. Augustine, “On the Trinity,” 9.8: 131; 10.10.14-16: 141-42; 11.10-11.17-18: 153-54.

²⁸ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 284; see also 287: “Augustine’s psychological analogies should not be used to derive the trinity from the unity but to simply illustrate the Trinity in whom one already believes.”

Furthermore, the bishop of Hippo was aware of the limitation of the images.²⁹ The potential weakness of this analogy of self-presence, self-knowledge, and self-love—widely used in subsequent tradition—is that it leans toward a “monopersonal, modalistic view of God.”³⁰ This is interesting in that in principle Augustine’s analogies grow out of an interpersonal, thus communal and relational context, especially when it comes to love. Richard of St. Victor in the Medieval era picks up the relational aspect of Augustine’s emphasis on love and develops it into a communion theology.

He considers the origin of the Spirit in a nuanced way. The Spirit proceeds “originally” from the Father and also in common from both the Father and Son, as something given by the Father.³¹ In other words, Augustine is careful in safeguarding the Father as the primary source of the Spirit.³² And even when the Son is included in the act of procession of the Spirit, it is not from two sources but rather from a single source in order to protect divine unity.³³ I think it is important to notice here that again Augustine’s legacy is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, there is no denying that Augustine’s idea of the Spirit as the shared love between Father and Son and his teaching about the double-procession of the Spirit helped the Christian West to ratify the *filioque* clause. On the other hand, had the West been more sensitive to the shared tradition and to the sensibilities of the East, Augustine’s idea of the procession of the Spirit from the Father through the Son and thus in a secondary way, possibly could have helped avoid the conflict between East and West. Eastern theologians are not necessarily against the idea of the Spirit proceeding from the Father (who is the source after all) through the Son. And for Augustine, unlike so much of later Western tradition, the Spirit’s derivation also from the Son did not necessarily mean inferiority in status any more than the Son’s generation from the Father does (this was of course the affirmation against the Arians).³⁴

Now, in light of key ideas of Augustinian teaching, we are in a place to try to address at least tentatively the question of the subheading, namely, do East and West confess the same Trinitarian faith? I think it very important to make the distinction between Augustine’s own ideas and his legacy as carried on by later (Western) tradition.³⁵ Looking at Augustine’s own writings, “[i]t hardly appears

²⁹ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 15.23.43: 222.

³⁰ O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, 137.

³¹ Augustine, “On the Trinity” 15.26.47: 225.

³² See *Ibid.*, 4.20.29: 84-85.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5.14: 94-96.

³⁴ See further, O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, 139.

³⁵ For a balanced judgment, see Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 198-200.

that Augustine had little interest in the distinctions of the persons, or that he was averse to the full import of the Incarnation.”³⁶ Nor is it true that Augustine developed his Trinitarian theology abstractly based on analogies; he did not. He is thoroughly biblical as a quick look, for example, in the first half of the *De Trinitate* clearly shows, let alone his biblical expositions. Nor is it right to say that—in contrast to the Cappadocians and Athanasius—Augustine neglected spirituality and salvation.³⁷ His focus on incarnation alone would counter-argue this charge.

In light of these considerations, a more nuanced and sophisticated way of looking at the differences between the Christian East and West is in order.³⁸ I think it is best done by trying to discern the key characteristics and unique features in each without trying to artificially reconcile those nor make them more dramatic than they are.³⁹ Almost everyone agrees that for Eastern theologians the significance of the *hypostatic* distinctions among Father, Son, and Spirit has often been a key concern. The East has wanted to speak of the “concrete particularity of Father, Son, and Spirit.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, as noted several times, they have emphasized the Father as the source of the deity. Son and Spirit proceed from the Father from eternity. In the West, there has often been more emphasis on the divine being/substance/essence from which the personal distinctions derive. Consequently, there has been emphasis on the joint working of the three in the world.⁴¹ Whatever the difference between the Christian East and West, each of them has faced its own challenges: for the East, it was the danger of tritheism because of the emphasis on three different *hypostaseis* and subordinationism because of the idea of the Father as the source of divinity. Westerners have tended to be more modalistic. Moreover, Eastern theological traditions in general and Trinitarian ones in particular have been more pneumatologically oriented,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 195. So also Gerald O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 135.

³⁷ This is one of the theses of Catherine Mowry LaCugna’s *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 81-104.

³⁸ Overstatements abound and those need to be corrected: “We must acknowledge that the doctrine of the trinity in the East is an integral part of its total theological understanding. The same cannot be said for the Western formulation stemming chiefly from Augustine. Here, the doctrine is an unneeded appendage to theology.” John B. Cobb, Jr., “The Relativization of the Trinity,” *Trinity in Process. A Relational Theology of God*, ed. Joseph A. Bracken and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki (New York: Continuum, 1997), 5.

³⁹ Letham’s *The Holy Trinity* includes a quite helpful chart of the key features of both East and West even when it tends to be quite categorical (250-51).

⁴⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God. The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 8. See also Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 39.

⁴¹ This is the so-called “Augustinian rule”: the works of the Trinity *ad extra* are indivisible.

whereas in the West Christology has often played the key role. This, again, brings us to the question of the *filioque* to be discussed in what follows.

Having said all this, one also has to acknowledge that there are several aspects of the Augustinian tradition that were picked up by later Western tradition that led to the eclipse of the Trinitarian doctrine so evident in the judgment of contemporary theologians. First, with all his stress on relationality, there is no denying that Augustine also emphasizes the divine unity and substance.⁴² Therefore, there is some truth in the insistence that whereas for the Christian East distinctions of persons (*hypostaseis*) are the key to Trinity; for Augustine substance is, though not to the neglect of relations. Second, Augustine's idea of the Spirit as shared love between Father and Son is problematic ecumenically and biblically. In the Bible, God is love rather than Spirit. Furthermore, Augustine's idea feeds the idea of *filioque*. And last but not least, this analogy can hardly argue for any distinct personality of the Spirit. Third, while Augustine seemed to handle analogies of the Trinity with care and was aware of their limitations, many of his followers elevated them to a role that easily leads away from the concrete biblical salvation history into abstract speculations. While valid in itself—based on the idea that humanity is created in the image of the Triune God—it can end up being a Trinitarian theology “from below.” There are not only similarities but also differences between the Trinity and humanity.⁴³

Is the Origin of the Spirit Still a Theological Impasse?

As is well known, the Bible does not clarify the interrelations of Father, Son, and Spirit. A classic example, with reverberations still felt, is the question of the procession of the Spirit. On the one hand, Jesus says that he himself will send the Spirit (John 16:7) or that he will send the Spirit (called *Parakletos* here) who proceeds from the Father (15:26). On the other hand, Jesus prays to the Father for him to send the Spirit (14:16), and the Father will send the Spirit in Jesus' name (14:26).⁴⁴ Because of the lack of clarity in the biblical record as well as the rise to prominence of the Augustinian idea of the Spirit as shared love (another idea which of course has its basis in the biblical idea of the Spirit as *koinonia*), the

⁴² LaCugna's comment is an overstatement, yet contains a kernel of truth: “[Augustine's] focus on the individual apart from its personal and social relations flows directly from the ontology that begins from substance rather than person.” LaCugna, *God for Us*, 102. LaCugna, however, qualifies this by saying that was not Augustine's intention, yet it was picked up by his followers.

⁴³ See further, Miroslav Volf, “‘The Trinity Is Our Social Program’ The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” *Modern Theology* 14.3 (July 1998): 403-23.

⁴⁴ In terms of biblical scholarship, speculation into the “immanent” and “economic” sendings is quite problematic. See e.g., Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 203. Those distinctions have to do with postbiblical historical and systematic constructions.

Christian West added the Spirit's dual procession, *filioque* (from Latin: "and from the Son") to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that originally said that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father." While some of the historical details are somewhat debated,⁴⁵ it is clear that in the first major breach of the Christian church in 1054 the *filioque* clause played a major role with political, ecclesiastical, and cultural issues. The Christian East objected vigorously to this addition claiming that it was a one-sided addition without ecumenical consultation,⁴⁶ that it compromises the monarchy of the Father as the source of divinity,⁴⁷ and that it subordinates the Spirit to Jesus with theological corollaries in ecclesiology, the doctrine of salvation, and so on.⁴⁸ While the details of the origin of the *filioque* addition in the West are not fully known, besides the Augustinian idea of the Spirit as the mutual love, it is believed that the addition also served a function in

⁴⁵ The standard view is that this addition was first accepted by the Council of Toledo in 589 and ratified by the 809 Aachen Synod. It was incorporated in later creeds such as that of the Fourth Lateran in 1215 and Council of Lyons in 1274. See, e.g., Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 264-65; Kenneth Scott Latourett, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 304, 360. A standard full-scale study on the theology and history of *Filioque* is Bernd Oberdorfer, *Filioque. Geschichte und Theologie eines Ökumenischen Problems* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

⁴⁶ "Can a clause deriving from one theological tradition simply be inserted in a creed deriving from another theological tradition without council?" Theodore G. Stylianopoulos and S. Mark Heim, eds., *Spirit of Truth. Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1986), 32.

⁴⁷ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 210-14, defends the Father's monarchy as the reason for opposing *Filioque*. Ware critiques the Western idea of Father and Son as two independent sources of the Spirit. Ware, however, does not take into consideration the quite nuanced view of Augustine according to which the Father is the principal source while the Son is the source of the Spirit in a derivative sense, Augustine, "On the Trinity" 15.17.27.

⁴⁸ Vladimir Lossky has most dramatically articulated the charge of "Christomonism" against Western theology. According to him, Christianity in the West is seen as unilaterally referring to Christ, the Spirit being an addition to the church, to its ministries and sacraments. Vladimir Lossky, "The Procession of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox Trinitarian Doctrine," *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), ch. 4. See also Nikos A. Nissiotis, "The Main Ecclesiological Problem of the Second Vatican Council and Position of the Non-Roman Churches Facing It," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 6 (1965): 31-62. All of these three objections, namely, that it was a unilateral act, it subordinates the Son to the Spirit, and that it compromises the Father's monarchy were already presented by the most vocal critic in history, the ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople, Photius in his *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (Astoria, NY: Studien Publications, 1983), 51-52, 71-72 especially.

opposing Arianism. Mentioning the Son alongside the Father as the origin of the Spirit was seen as a way to defend consubstantiality.⁴⁹

With all its exaggerations,⁵⁰ the Eastern critique of the *filioque* is important both ecumenically and theologically and should not be dismissed.⁵¹ The West did not have the right to unilaterally add *filioque*.⁵²

In my judgment, *filioque* is not heretical even though ecumenically and theologically it is unacceptable and therefore should be removed.⁵³ Ecumenically and theologically it would be important for the East to be able to acknowledge the nonheretical nature of the addition. Furthermore, the Christian East should keep in mind the fact that with all its problems, at first *filioque*, as mentioned above, was used in the West in support of consubstantiality, an idea shared by both traditions.⁵⁴

In Lieu of Conclusions. Some Hopes for the Future

While there are those who for some reason or another support the *filioque* clause,⁵⁵ there is a growing consensus among Western theologians, both Roman

⁴⁹ Against the standard view, Richard Haugh surmises that the addition happened just by way of transposition with any conscious theological reason. Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians. The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, MA: Norland, 1975), 160-61.

⁵⁰ Photius insisted that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *alone*, the Son having no part to play. The intention of this polemical statement was not of course to argue the total exclusion of the Son from the Spirit but to defend vigorously the monarchy of the Father as the source of the deity of both Spirit and Son. See further, Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 205.

⁵¹ For an important Orthodox statement, see Nick Needham, "The Filioque Clause. East or West?" *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15 (1997): 142-62.

⁵² Peters puts it bluntly: "The insertion of *filioque* in the Western version of the Nicene Creed was an act of unwarranted authority and certainly not done in the interest of church unity." Peters, *God as Trinity*, 65.

⁵³ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 319 concurs. Peters makes the brilliant point that in principle there is nothing against adding to the creeds as long as it is done in concert. Theology is an ongoing reflection, elaboration, and processing of tradition. No creed as such has to be the final word. Peters, *God as Trinity*, 66.

⁵⁴ See further, Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 213.

⁵⁵ Well-known is the defense of *Filioque* by Karl Barth, who feared that dismissing it would mean ignoring the biblical insistence on the Spirit being the Spirit of the Son. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), I/1: 480. Gerald Bray defends the addition with reference to the doctrine of salvation. In his opinion, the Eastern doctrine of *theosis* with its focus on pneumatology severs the relationship between Son (atonement) and Spirit. Gerald Bray, "The *Filioque* Clause in History and Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 34 (1983): 142-43. While I disagree with Bray, I also commend his relating the question of the *Filioque* to the Spirit, which is indeed at the heart of Eastern theology. For this, see further the comment by Theodore Stylianopoulos ("The Biblical Background of the Article on the Holy Spirit in the Constantinopolitan Creed," *Études Théologiques: Le IIe Concile Oecuménique*, 171

Catholic and Protestant, about the need to delete the addition and thus return to the original form of the creed.⁵⁶ J. Moltmann for years has appealed for the removal of the addition and has suggested a more conciliar way of putting it, namely, that the Spirit proceeds “from the Father of the Son.” He wants to emphasize the biblical idea of reciprocity of Spirit and Son.⁵⁷ An alternative to *Filioque* “from the Father through the Son” would be also acceptable to the Christian East. It would defend the monarchy of the Father (and in that sense, some kind of subordination of the Son to Father, an idea not foreign to the East) and still be ambiguous enough.⁵⁸

I agree with Pannenberg that beyond *Filioque* there is a weakness that plagues both traditions, namely, the understanding of relations mainly in terms of origins. Both East and West share that view both in their own distinctive way, the East by insisting on the role of the Father as the source and the West by making the Father primary in the deity with their idea of the proceeding of the Son from the Father and then the Spirit from both.⁵⁹ This blurs the key idea of Athanasius—the importance of which he himself hardly noticed—that relations are based on mutuality rather than origin.

The Lutheran Ted Peters, who supports the removal of the *filioque* clause, however, remarks that the idea of the Spirit proceeding both from the Son as well as the Father also points to something valuable. It highlights relationality and communality, the Spirit being the shared love between Father and Son (and by extension, between the Triune God and the world). Furthermore, on this side of

(Chambésy-Genève: Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Oecuménique, 1982): “At stake was not an abstract question but the truth of Christian salvation.” For this quotation, I am indebted to Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 203.

⁵⁶ For a helpful discussion, see *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ. Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer (London: SPCK, 1981). For Roman Catholic support of the removal of the *filioque* clause, see Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3: 72ff. In addition to Moltmann and Pannenberg, to be discussed in what follows, a strong defender of the Eastern view has been the Reformed Thomas F. Torrance, who was instrumental in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue. For the dialogue, see Thomas F. Torrance, ed., *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993), 219-32. For his own views in this respect, see Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives. Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 110-43. For these references to Torrance, I am indebted to Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 218 n. 66.

⁵⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God. The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 178-79, 185-87.

⁵⁸ Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1999), 302-3. Again, my appreciation for bringing this source to my attention goes to Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 217 n. 64. For incisive comments, see also O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, 139.

⁵⁹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 319.

Pentecost, it reminds us of the importance of resurrection and ascension: the risen Christ in Spirit is the presence of Christ. "In this work of transcending and applying the historical event of Jesus Christ to our personal lives, we must think of the Spirit as proceeding from Jesus Christ."⁶⁰ Finally, Peters notes, within the divine life the Spirit indeed is the principle of relationship and unity. "The separation that takes place between Father and Son—the separation that defines Father as Father and the Son as Son—is healed by the Spirit. It is the Spirit that maintains unity in difference."⁶¹

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⁶⁰ Peters, *God as Trinity*, 66.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

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