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ON THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

by *John F. McCarthy*

A principal objective of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II has been a return to the full ecclesiastical unity of the Eastern and Western Churches by means of a determined effort to eliminate all possible obstacles without in any way compromising the truth and holiness inherent in the Church. In the homily which he delivered in St. Peter's Basilica on the 29th of June 1995 in the presence of the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, he expressed the desire that "the traditional doctrine of the *Filioque*, present in the liturgical version of the Latin Credo," be clarified "in order to highlight its full harmony with what the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople of 381 confesses in its creed: the Father as the source of the whole Trinity, the one origin both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, with the intent of producing this clarification called for by the Holy Father, and as a contribution to the dialogue undertaken by the Joint International Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, published in French a lengthy doctrinal note in September 1995.¹ In its exposition the Council for Promoting Christian Unity summarized the historical background and linguistic departure-points underlying the controversy over the correct Christian belief in the Trinitarian origin of the Holy Spirit. Considerable research into the Greek and Latin traditions is reflected in this document of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and I believe that it is a valuable contribution on the way towards a full agreement of Orthodox Greeks and Roman Catholics regarding the dogmatic truth of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which all Christians are obliged to confess. A particular merit of this doctrinal note is that it draws together in an orderly fashion a good selection of quotations from the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church as well as from other sources. The reflection that follows is based mainly on an examination of the quotations and remarks given in the document and not upon independent research into the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers.

Historically, in the creed professed in Greek at the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D., which is the basis of the creed recited liturgically in the Roman Catholic Church, in the article "who proceeds from the Father and the Son," the expression "and the Son" was not present. The Latin *Filioque* ("and (from) the Son") was added later in the Western Church. In fact, in the West, the *Filioque* was added and confessed in some local Churches beginning in the fifth century with the *Athanasian Creed* (DS 75), but it was not officially admitted into the Latin liturgy in Rome until 1014 A.D. Nevertheless, it is a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, and it is in another way a dogma also of the Orthodox Church, as the Council for Christian Unity explains in its doctrinal note. Thus, the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons (1274 A.D.) made the following declaration with reference to union with the Greek Orthodox:

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In faithful and devout profession we declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles (*principiis*), but from one principle, not by two spirations (*spirationibus*) but by a single spiration. The most holy Roman Church, mother and teacher of all the faithful, has heretofore professed, preached, and taught this. This she firmly holds, professes, and teaches; this is the unchangeable and true understanding of the faithful (*orthodoxorum*) Fathers and Doctors, Latin as well as Greek. But because some through ignorance of the indisputable aforesaid truth have slipped into various errors, we, in our desire to close the way to errors of this kind, with the approval of the sacred Council, condemn and reprobate those who presume to deny that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, as well as those who with rash boldness presume to affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from two principles (*principiis*) and not as from one (DS 850).

The Ecumenical Council of Florence, in its *Decree for the Greeks* (1439 A.D.), reaffirmed this teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons and went on to declare that

... what the Holy Fathers and Doctors say, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, tends to this understanding that by this is meant that the Son is also, according to the Greeks the cause, and according to the Latins the principle, of subsistence of the Holy Spirit, as is also the Father. And, since all the things which are the Father's the Father Himself has given to his only-begotten Son in begetting him except being the Father, this very fact, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, the Son has eternally from the Father, by whom he was also eternally begotten. We define also that the explicitation in the expression *Filioque*, [effected] in order to clarify the truth at a time of pressing need, was added to the Creed licitly and reasonably (DS 1301-1302).

The Pontifical Council has organized its note of clarification in terms of two fundamental ideas: that "the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son," as dogmatically defined by the Second Council of Lyons (see above); and that the Father is "the source of the whole Trinity, the one origin both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," as expressed by Pope John Paul II in his homily of 29 June 1995. Perhaps the chief thrust of this doctrinal note lies in its erudite attempt to clarify, in light of the fact that "the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son," how one can understand (in our limited human way) what it means that the Father is "the one origin both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The analysis presented in the doctrinal note opens with a comparison of the words in the Greek and Latin creeds. The Latin translation reads: "*qui ex Patre Filioque procedit*" ("who proceeds from the Father and the Son"). The original Greek formula of this creed, professed at the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, reads: "τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον," which the doctrinal note translates as "*qui tire son origine du Père*." In the English-language translation of *L'Osservatore Romano* (which I shall use for the most part in my citations from the document of the Pontifical Council), the same clause is translated as "who takes his origin from the Father." The Pontifical Council thus presents and examines a contrast between what it sees as an inexact translation of the original creed, namely, "who proceeds from the Father," and its proposed translation, "who takes his origin from the Father." The aim of the Pontifical Council is to show that the inexact or ambiguous translation in the Latin formula involuntarily suggested "a false equivalence" between the Greek word ἐκπορευόμενον and the Latin word *procedit*, and thus became historically an unfortunate element of misunderstanding between Orthodox and Roman theologians.

In the original Greek expression of the Creed of Constantinople, the word ἐκπορευόμενον is a participle meaning, according to the wording of the Council of Lyons, "proceeding," and, according to the wording suggested here by the Pontifical Council, "taking his origin." The basic Greek verb from which this participle is taken is ἐκπορεύω, and the noun derived from it, ἐκπόρευσις, would mean, according to the two versions mentioned above, either "a proceeding" or "a taking one's origin." The Pontifical Council expresses its understanding of the difference between the two words as follows:

The Greek ἐκπόρευσις signifies only the relationship of origin to the Father alone as 'the principle without principle' of the Trinity. The Latin *processio*, on the contrary, is a more common term, signifying the communication of the consubstantial divinity from the Father to the Son and from the Father, through and with the Son, to the Holy Spirit. In confessing the Holy Spirit '*ex Patre procedentem*,' the Latins, therefore, could only suppose an implicit *Filioque* which would later be made explicit in their liturgical version of the Symbol.

The clarificatory note of the Pontifical Council traces the word *procedit* in the Latin version of this Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed to the Vulgate and earlier translations of John 15:26: "*Spiritus veritatis qui a Patre procedit*" ("the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father"). The Greek original of these words in John 15:26 is "τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας ὃ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, wherein the same word ἐκπορεύω appears. The document of the Pontifical Council avers that, in the light of these same words in John 15:26, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the original Greek is declaring that the Holy Spirit takes his origin from the Father alone. The document explains as follows:

The Father alone is the principle without principle (ἀρχὴ ἄναρχος) of the two other persons of the Trinity, the sole source (πηγή) of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, therefore, takes his origin from the Father alone (ἐκ μόνου τοῦ Πατρὸς) in a principal, proper, and immediate manner. (These are the terms employed by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 36, a. 3, 1um and 2um.)

The Greek Fathers and the whole Christian Orient speak, in this regard, of the 'monarchy of the Father,' and the Western tradition, following St. Augustine, also confesses that the Holy Spirit takes his origin from the Father '*principaliter*,' that is, as principle (*à titre de principe*). In this sense, therefore, the two traditions recognize that the 'monarchy of the Father' implies that the Father is the sole Trinitarian Cause (Αἰτία) or principle (*principium*) of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The document of the Pontifical Council is here treating of a subtle difference in the Greek and Latin versions of the Creed, but not without some difficulties in the wording of the explanation, as compared with other standing expositions. The fact that the Father alone is "the principle without principle" is brought out in the Decree of the Council of Florence *Pro Iacobitis* (DS 1331) and also, as the document points out, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as follows:

At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he 'who proceeds from the Father,' it affirms that he *comes from* the Father *through* the Son (Jn 15:26). The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son (*Filioque*). It says this 'legitimately and with good reason,' for the eternal order of the divine Persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as 'the principle without principle' (DS 1331), is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only-begotten Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds (DS 850). This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed" (CCC 248).

Nevertheless, a problem arises in saying that the Father is "the sole source (πηγή) of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," unless by this is meant either that the Father is the only one who is the source both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit taken together (since the Son, although He is also the source of the Holy Spirit, is not the source of Himself), or else that the Father alone is the "first source" of both the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And, in fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in the paragraph cited above, proclaims that "the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit."

Again, to affirm that the Holy Spirit takes his origin "from the Father alone in a principal, proper and immediate manner" raises another question of interpretation. The document of the Pontifical Council does not indicate from where it has taken the expression "from the Father alone" (ἐκ μόνου τοῦ Πατρὸς), but it simply says in a note as quoted above: "These are the terms employed by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*." Now, in these two replies, St. Thomas explains why one can say two things: a) that, "since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in common, the Holy Spirit is found to proceed immediately from the Father inasmuch as He is from Him, and mediately (from the Father) inasmuch as (He is) from the Son;" and b) that the Holy Spirit "proceeds equally from both (the Father and the Son), although at times He may be said to proceed principally or properly from the Father, on account of this that the Son has his power from the Father." Thus, this reference to St. Thomas in the note of clarification pertains only to the affirmations by St. Thomas that the Holy Spirit may be said to proceed from the Father in a principal, a proper, and an immediate manner," but not to the preceding phrase "from the Father alone." In fact, St. Thomas here affirms that "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in common."

In article 2 of the same question,² St. Thomas addresses the objection that Sacred Scripture does not say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, but only that He proceeds from the Father. "But when the Paraclete comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall give testimony of me" (Jn 15:26). St. Thomas replies that "it is necessary to say that the Holy Spirit is from the Son, for, if He were not from Him, in no way could He be personally distinguished from Him," for, he says, "only by relations are the divine Persons distinguished from one another." And so, he continues, "Regularly, also in Sacred Scripture, it is to be held that what is said of the Father must be understood of the Son, even if an exclusive expression [e.g., "alone"] be added, except only for those things in which the Father and the Son are distinguished according to opposing relations. For, when the Lord says in Matthew 11:27 'No one knows the Son except the Father,' that the Son knows Himself is not excluded. Thus, therefore, when it is said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, the Son would not be excluded by this, because with reference to what it is to be the principle of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are not opposed [are not in an opposite relation], but only with regard to the fact that this one is the Father and that one is the Son."³

St. Augustine brings out that the Father and the Son are the one origin, or principle (*principium*), of the Holy Spirit, where he says: "if, therefore, that also which is given has him for a principle by whom it is given, since it has received from no other source what proceeds from him, it must be admitted that the Father and the Son are one principle of the Holy Spirit, not two principles, but, as the Father and the Son are one God, and one Creator, and one Lord relatively to the creature, so are they one principle relatively to the Holy Spirit."⁴

The distinction presented by St. Thomas according to which the Holy Spirit may be said to proceed in one sense immediately from the Father and in another sense mediately from the Father through the Son opens up a way toward recognizing the harmony which exists between the Greek and the Latin expressions of the Creed, as called for by Pope John Paul II in his homily of 29 June 1995, referring to the Father as "the source of the whole Trinity, the one origin both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," while at the same time not obscuring the corresponding truth solemnly defined by the Ecumenical Council of Lyons that the Holy Spirit "proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles but from one principle." St. Thomas affirms that the Holy Spirit "proceeds equally" from both the Father and the Son, "although at times He may be said to proceed principally or properly from the Father, on account of this that the Son has his power from the Father" (quoted above). In this statement, St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, is using the

word "principally," not in its conventional meaning of *chiefly* or *in a greater fashion*, but in the unconventional sense of *beginningly* or *in a beginning fashion*, basing this use upon the Latin word *principium*, which means *beginning*. Thus, by *principaliter*, St. Thomas is declaring that the Holy Spirit may be said to proceed "beginningly," or to take his *first origin* from the Father and his second origin from the Son, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* proclaims. The document of the Pontifical Council indicates that this unusual meaning of the word *principally* is the sense intended where it says that "the Western tradition, following St. Augustine, also confesses that the Holy Spirit takes his origin from the Father "*principaliter*, that is, as principle (*à titre de principe*)."⁵

In the first of these two replies, St. Thomas affirms that the Holy Spirit proceeds immediately as well as mediately from the Father. He says this in answer to the objection: "What proceeds from someone through someone does not proceed from the former immediately." He explains that in any action two things are to be taken into consideration, namely, the thing acting and the power by which it acts. "If, therefore, in the Father and the Son the power by which they spirate the Holy Spirit is in focus, no medium occurs there, because this is one and the same power. But, from the viewpoint of the spirating Persons Themselves, since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son together, the Holy Spirit is found to proceed immediately from the Father inasmuch as He is from Him, and mediately inasmuch as (He is) from the Son." And to illustrate this distinction, he gives an example which he admits is not very apt, inasmuch as the procession of the divine Persons is totally immaterial. However, he says, "Able proceeded immediately from Adam inasmuch as Adam was his father and mediately inasmuch as Eve was his mother, because she came from Adam."⁶

This answer raised for St. Thomas another question. If the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, does He proceed more from the Father than from the Son? St. Thomas replies: "If the Son received from the Father a numerically other power for spirating the Holy Spirit, it would follow that He would be like a secondary and instrumental cause, and He [the Holy Spirit] would thus proceed more from the Father than from the Son. But numerically one and the same spirative power is in the Father and the Son, and, therefore, He proceeds equally from both; although sometimes He is said to proceed principally or properly from the Father on account of this that the Son has this power from the Father."⁷

While the document of the Pontifical Council affirms that "the Greek Fathers and the whole Christian Orient" speak of "the monarchy of the Father" (see inset quotation above), it does not, amidst its abundant citations from the Greek Fathers, actually quote any Greek Father of the Church as having used this expression. Assuming, however, that some of the Greek Fathers did use this expression, there still remains a problem of interpretation and a danger of misunderstanding. The word "monarchy" (μοναρχία, *monarchie*) has in classical or biblical Greek and in modern languages only one conventional meaning: "the rule or domination of one." But here an unconventional meaning is derived from the other basic meaning of the Greek noun ἀρχή. Since ἀρχή can mean in classical or in biblical Greek both "rule" or "sovereignty" on the one hand and "beginning," or "origin" on the other, it is possible to utilize the word μοναρχία (of the Father) with the unconventional meaning of "beginning from one." But such a use, unless it is well understood, is misleading to the public, because it seems to imply that the Father is the *Ruler* of the Trinity, which is contrary to the fact that the three divine Persons are absolutely equal to one another, as is clearly set forth in the teaching and tradition of the Church. Thus, the Fourth Lateran Ecumenical Council declared in 1215 A.D. that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are "consubstantial and coequal and coomnipotent and coeternal" (DS 800), and there have been many similar solemn statements of faith both before and after this decree.⁸

Hence, it seems more exact to follow the lead of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in characterizing the Father as the sole *first origin*, or *first principle*, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, while expressing also the full origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, in keeping with these words of St. Augustine quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* from his work *On the Trinity*: "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (CCC 264).

Perhaps a more easily understood translation of μοναρχία would be the "prime originality" of the Father" so as to present the Father as the *Prime Originator* of the Trinity rather than as the *Ruler of the Trinity*. By substituting *prime originality* for *monarchy*, one can more easily see what the document of the Pontifical Council means when it says: "The doctrine of the *Filioque* must be understood and presented by the Catholic Church in such a way that it cannot appear to contradict the monarchy [read: "*prime originality*"] of the Father nor the fact that He is the sole origin (ἀρχή, Αἰτία) [read: **sole first origin**] of the ἐκπόρευσις of the Spirit."

The document of the Pontifical Council also points out that the term used in Greek theology for the Latin *procedere* in the general sense of "to proceed" is προϊέναι. This is the term used by St. Gregory Nazianzen and the Cappadocian Fathers as well as by St. Athanasius and St. Cyril of Alexandria. St. Maximus the Confessor, in undertaking a reconciliation of the seeming contrast in the wording of the Greek and Latin creeds, wrote in a letter of the seventh century, as follows: "They [the Romans] know, indeed, that the Father is the sole cause of the Son and of the Spirit, of the one by generation and of the other by ἐκπόρευσις - but they explained that the latter comes (προϊέναι) through the Son, and they showed in this way the unity and the immutability of the essence."⁹ The Pontifical Council understands from this letter that, according to St. Maximus, interpreting the teaching of Rome, "the *Filioque* does not concern the ἐκπόρευσις of the Holy Spirit issued from the Father as from the source of the Blessed Trinity, but rather manifests his προϊέναι (*processio*) in the consubstantial communion of the Father and the Son, while excluding any possible subordinationist interpretation of the monarchy of the Father."

This explanation of the Pontifical Council, in bringing out for Roman Catholics that the term in Greek tradition which parallels the Latin term *procedere* is προϊέναι and not ἐκπόρευσις, eases the way to a reconciliation of the two traditions. In affirming the Latin tradition, St. Thomas pointed out¹⁰ that to declare that the Holy Spirit "is, indeed, from the Son, but does not *proceed* from the Son" is illogical in that the word *procession* is the broadest of all terms to indicate that one thing is from another. He was unconvinced by the claim that the preposition ἐκ [in the word ἐκπορευόμενον] does refer to the Father alone as the "principle without principle," seeing that the Son with the Father is the one principle of the Holy Spirit. But this claim becomes more convincing when it is seen in the light of a distinction between two aspects of the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Greek tradition sees the procession of the Holy Spirit with emphasis upon the interpersonal relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father, while the Latin tradition places emphasis upon the act of procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. Orthodox teaching, in opposing the *Filioque*, has tended to stress the extratrinitarian and soteriological sense of John 15:26, whereas the intratrinitarian sense has been emphasized in Catholic dogmatic exposition.¹¹

Again, in the document, where St. Maximus is quoted just above as having said that the Romans "do not make the Son cause ([Αἰτία] of the Spirit," it would seem more exact to say that the Romans do not make the Son the *first cause* of the Spirit, even though they confess the Son to be with the Father an equal cause of the Holy Spirit, and not a mere channel or secondary cause of the power originating from the Father. In the use of the term "monarchy of the Father," it is difficult to avoid a subordinationist interpretation, namely, to avoid a subordination of the Son and of the Holy Spirit to the Father. But a subordinationist interpretation can be avoided by speaking instead of the "prime originality" of the Father."

The notion of equal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son leads St. Thomas to assert that within the existence of God the proper name of the Holy Spirit is Love. "The name love on the divine level can be taken either essentially or personally, and, as taken in the personal sense, it is the proper name of the Holy Spirit."¹² And, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is Love personified, He is the link, or bond of mutual love, between the Father and the Son. "But from this very fact that the Father and the Son mutually love each other, it is behooving that the mutual love, who is the Holy Spirit, proceed from both. According to origin, therefore, the Holy Spirit is not between but is the Third Person in the Trinity, while, according to the relationship mentioned, He is the middle link of the Two, as proceeding from both."¹³ Again, explains St. Thomas: "If the power of spiration is regarded, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father

and the Son inasmuch as they are one in spirative power. ... But, if the *supposita* of the spiration are under consideration, thus the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as they are more than one, for He proceeds from them as the unitive love of the Two.¹⁴

The Council of Florence (1439 A.D.) affirmed that, with some difference of terminology, both the Greek and the Latin traditions hold that "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son" (as quoted above). For the use of the expression "from the Father through the Son" in the Greek tradition (διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορευόμενον), the document of the Pontifical Council cites St. Basil the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. John Damascene, and the seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicea (787 A.D.). St. Thomas explains this where he concludes: "Because, therefore, the Son has it from the Father that from Him the Holy Spirit proceeds, it can be said that the Father spirates the Holy Spirit through the Son, or that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, which is the same thing."¹⁵

In the light of these distinctions, I shall now attempt to present four illustrative geometrical figures, keeping in mind that a diagram can at best only very remotely express a truth about the internal life of the Blessed Trinity which is only very partially understood even by our human intelligence illuminated by the light of faith.

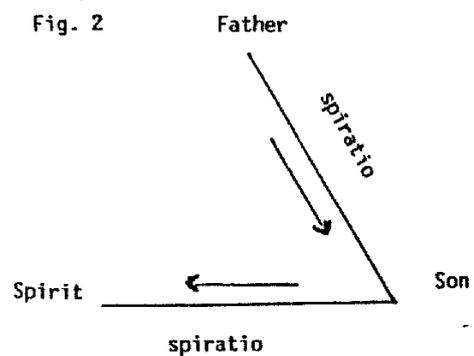
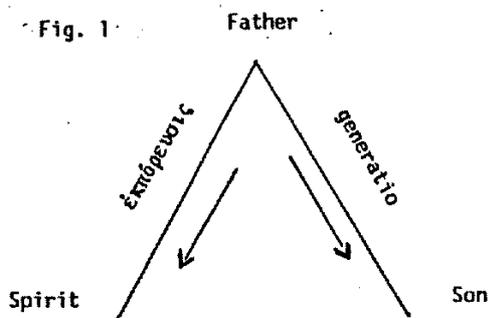


Figure 1 illustrates the idea that the Holy Spirit "takes his origin from the Father alone," meaning that the Father is the *sole origin* of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In Figure 1 the Holy Spirit is not shown to proceed also from the Son, but only from the Father. Now, St. Thomas argues that, if such an idea were true, the Person of the Holy Spirit would not be distinct from the Person of the Son, and there would, therefore, not be a Blessed Trinity, as Christian faith believes. St. Thomas says: "It is necessary to believe that the Holy Spirit is from the Son. For, if He were not from Him, in no way could He be personally distinguished from Him." His reason is that "only by relations are the divine Persons distinguished from one another," and "relations cannot distinguish Persons except according to the fact that they are opposite." Hence, if the Father had two relations of origin which were not opposite to each other, the Son and the Holy Spirit would be one Person having two relations opposite to the two relations originating from the Father. "Therefore, it is necessary that the Son and the Holy Spirit be related to one another by opposite relations. But there cannot be in the Godhead any other relations than relations of origin."¹⁶

The document of the Pontifical Council follows a similar line of reasoning where it quotes St. Gregory Nazianzen as he says: "What then is lacking to the Spirit to be the Son? - We say that nothing is lacking to Him, for nothing is lacking to God; but it is the difference in manifestation, if I may say so, or in the relationship between them which makes also the difference in what they are called."¹⁷

Figure 2 illustrates the idea that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father through the Son." This second diagram seems to represent the Latin tradition of the *Filioque*, but it leaves out the aspect of immediate spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father as well as by the Son. The reasoning of St. Thomas about the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Son could be employed in a sense here also regarding the relation

of the Holy Spirit to the Father. That is to say, if there were no direct relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father, then, from the aspect of interpersonal relations within the Trinity (as distinguished from the aspect of the act itself of spiration), the Holy Spirit would seem to be identical with the Father, since both would have a direct relation of opposition only to the Son. Hence, the necessary direct relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father is missing from Figure 2.

In Figure 3 and Figure 4 an attempt is made to depict, according to the variant Latin and Greek traditions, the direct relation of the Father to the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Spirit to the Father which appears to be missing in Figures 1 and 2. Figures 3 and 4 are as follows:

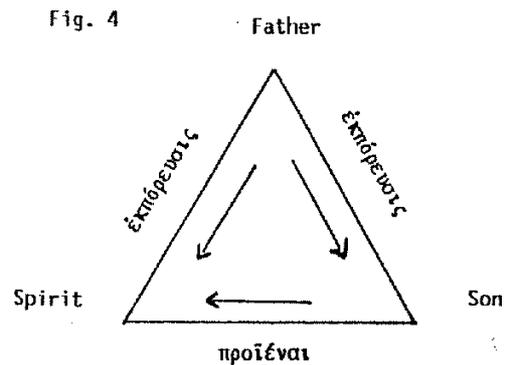
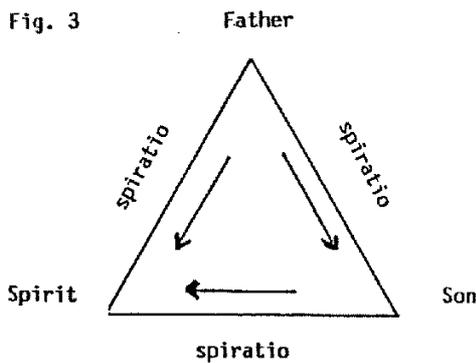


Figure 3 illustrates the idea of the spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son both from the viewpoint of the act of spiration and from the viewpoint of the spirating Persons. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit is spirated directly by the Father and, on the other, He is spirated by the Father through the Son. From the aspect of origin, the numerically single act of spiration originates from the Father and passes through the Son. From the aspect of the Persons spirating, the Holy Spirit proceeds immediately both from the Father and the Son so that direct relations exist between all three divine Persons. Figure 3 thus represents one single act of spiration as seen from two complementary viewpoints.

Figure 3 also illustrates that the Holy Spirit is from the Father and from the Son as the realization of their love for one another. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is "between" the Father and the Son, not from the viewpoint of his origin, but from the viewpoint of relations between the three divine Persons, keeping always in mind that there is only a single act of spiration from the viewpoint of the act itself.

Figure 4 illustrates the ἐκπόρευσις of the Holy Spirit according to the Greek tradition. From the aspect of origin, the Father is the sole first source of the Holy Spirit. From the aspect of personal relations within the Blessed Trinity, both the Father and the Son are the one source of the Holy Spirit. The Greek tradition calls the first origin of the Holy Spirit ἐκπόρευσις and the second origin προϊέναι. From the viewpoint of the act itself, the Holy Spirit takes his origin from the Father through the Son. From the viewpoint of the relations of the Persons to one another, the Holy Spirit takes his origin both directly from the Father by ἐκπόρευσις and from the Father through the Son by ἐκπόρευσις/προϊέναι, as the realization of the mutual love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father.

In comparing Figures 3 and 4, it is worthy of note that the Latin term *spiratio* (spiration, breathing) is common to the Father and the Son as denoting the single act of spiration of the Holy Spirit, while the term ἐκπόρευσις is specific to the Father. On the other hand, the Greek term προϊέναι is equivalent to the most generic Latin term *processio* and is, therefore, less specific than the Latin *spiratio*, with the result that the Latin term for the spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Son is more specific than is the Greek term. But both diagrams express the same belief.

Hence, the question comes down to a search for a common formula which would adequately express this common belief while preserving what is distinctive in both the Greek formula of Constantinople and the Latin formula of the Second Council of Lyons, as well as the respective liturgical expressions of the same. From what has been said above, I think that the desired formula of reconciliation should read "*qui ex Patre et per Filium procedit*," that is, "who proceeds from the Father and through the Son." The

introduction of the conjunction **and** appears to be important, because, on the one hand, it retains the first origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, while, on the other hand, it includes the origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.

The formula, "who proceeds from the Father and through the Son," seems to fit the wording of both the Greek and the Latin expressions of the Creed as referred to above. It is implied in the Greek expression inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is firmly believed and known to be a Person distinct from the Son. And it is implied in the Latin expression by its always naming the Father first. The importance of the **and** is that it brings into relief both aspects of the mystery, the aspect of the interpersonal relations and the aspect of the act of originating, one or the other of which is not expressed in the respective Greek and Latin formulae.

Figures 3 and 4 also address a question implied in the expression "first origin" as used in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Since only the first origin is the absolute origin of a thing, does not the use of this term imply that the Father is the one and only absolute origin of the Holy Spirit? The answer suggested in Figures 3 and 4 is that, from the viewpoint of interpersonal relations within the Blessed Trinity, the Father is the one and only first and absolute origin of the Holy Spirit, but, from the viewpoint of the single and undivided act of spiration of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are the one absolute origin of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, since the act of spiration cannot be reduced either to the Father or to the Son, but is common to the Two.¹⁸ Thus, in the formula "from the Father and through the Son," the separate naming of the Father implies that He is the first origin of the Holy Spirit, while the inclusion of the conjunction **and** implies the act itself of the spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son as the one origin of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Also implied in the introduced **and** is the origin of the Holy Spirit from the mutual love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. I submit these thoughts subject to the judgment of those who are better informed and in full submission to the teaching authority of the Church.

ENDNOTES:

1. This doctrinal note appeared in the 13 September 1995 issue of the daily edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, with the French original and an Italian translation. An English translation was published in the English weekly edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, dated 20 September 1995.

2. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 2, corp.

3. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 2, ad 2um. St. Thomas takes up this question also in his commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, at John 15:26, "the Spirit of truth," who, he notes, is the Spirit of the Son, since the Son is the truth of God. And this fact is confirmed in other passages of the New Testament. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by me" (Jn 14:6). "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6). Regarding the general principle that where an act of the Father is mentioned, an act of the Son is also implied, St. Thomas points out that the converse is also true. When John 15:26 quotes Jesus as saying "when the Paraclete comes, whom I will send you from the Father," it is not excluding the fact that also the Father will send the Paraclete.

At this same place in his commentary, St. Thomas gives a parallel exposition of the need for an opposition of origin between the Son and the Holy Spirit in order that they not be one and the same divine Person. Thus, he says, the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit can be distinguished from one another only by their order of origin, since there is nothing else on the divine level that could distinguish them, and, therefore, the generation of the Son is the origin of the procession of the Holy Spirit. "*Unde relinquitur quod solum secundum ordinem originis distinguantur, in quantum scilicet nativitas Filii est principium processionis Spiritus Sancti. Unde, si Spiritus Sanctus non esset a Filio, nec distingueretur a Filio, nec processio a nativitate.*"

4. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, bk. 5, ch. 14.

5. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, bk 15, ch. 26.

6. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 3, ad 1um.

7. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 3, ad 2um.

8. Regarding the absolute equality of the three divine Persons, the fifth-century creed *Quicumque*, for instance, declares as follows: "In this Trinity there is nothing earlier or later, nothing greater or less, but all three Persons are coeternal and coequal to one another" (DS 75). The Ninth Council of Toledo declared in 675 A.D. that of the three divine Persons there is "one undivided and equal Godhead, majesty or ruling power (which is) neither lessened among individuals nor increased in the Three ..." (DS 529). See also DS 71, 441, 616-618, 682, 851, and 853.

9. Maximus, *Letter to Marinus of Cyprus*, PG 91, 136.

10. Aquinas, in Jn 15:26.

11. Cf. H. Seidl, in *Studi Tomistici* 61, pp. 163-165.

12. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 37, art. 1, corp.

13. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 37, art. 1, ad 3um.

14. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 4, ad 1um.

15. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 3, corp.

16. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 2, corp.

17. Gregory Nazianzen, Discourse 31, 9, in *Sources chrétiennes* 250, pp. 290-292.

18. Cf. Aquinas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. 36, art. 4, ad 4um.