

## **FILIOQUE: A Response To Eastern Orthodox Objections**

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"The Filioque controversy which has separated us for so many centuries is more than a mere technicality, **but it is not insoluble**. Qualifying the firm position taken when I wrote The Orthodox Church twenty years ago, I now believe, after further study, that **the problem is more in the area of semantics than in any basic doctrinal differences**." (Bishop Kallistos Ware, Diakonia, quoted from Elias Zoghby's A Voice from the Byzantine East, p.43)

The quote above (emphasis mine) from renowned Eastern Orthodox bishop and scholar Kallistos Ware illustrates how even a keen and scholarly Eastern mind (such as that of the good bishop) can easily overreact and zealously mischaracterize the doctrine of Filioque. While a Westerner might be tempted to attribute this to blind prejudice on the part of the East, the reality is that both East and West have so poorly communicated with one another on this issue over the centuries that it is easy to understand why an Easterner would object to Filioque as strongly as many do. Indeed, what is at stake for Easterners (or so it certainly seems to them) is the very integrity of their native (Apostolic) theology, as well as their Byzantine cultural heritage (I will elaborate on what I mean by these below). Filioque threatens both of these things; and this threat (whether real or perceived) is, and has always been, the driving force behind the East's zealous opposition to the doctrine –that is, to the Traditional and Apostolic perspective of the Western Church, resulting (in large part) in the Great Schism.

To most effectively address the controversy and respond to Eastern objections, we would do well to first review how the controversy came about. "Filioque," a Latin expression meaning "and the Son," is of course a clause that was added by the Latin West to the Constantinopolitan Creed, originally formulated in Greek by the First Council of Constantinople in the year A.D. 381. This Creed of 381, in regard to the Holy Spirit, originally read:

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, ***Who proceeds from the Father***. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified."

The Western Church, first in A.D. 589 at the regional council of Toledo, amended this statement to include:

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, ***Who proceeds from the Father and the Son (i.e., *Filioque*)***. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified."

Now, while it took quite some time for the Eastern Church to become aware of, and offended by, this Western amendment, it eventually became a serious bone of contention

between Eastern and Western churchmen. And for good reason. For, in the original Greek text of the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, the term “**proceeds**” (**ekporeusis**) had a specific and all-important meaning. It meant to originate from a *single* Source, Principal, or Cause (**Aitia**). And the single Source, Principal, or Cause of the Holy Spirit is of course the Father, and the Father alone. As St. Gregory of Nazianzus says ...

"The Spirit is truly the Spirit proceeding (*proion*) from the Father, not by filiation, for It is not by generation, but by *ekporeusis*" (Discourse 39. 12).

Indeed, it was this very theology of the Cappadocian fathers (i.e., Sts. Gregory Nazianzus, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa) that the bishops at Constantinople I (381) intended to promote when they authored the Creed to say “**The Holy Spirit ... Who proceeds from the Father.**” –a reference to the Father’s Monarchy as the sole Source, Principal, or Cause of the Spirit. And the bishops at Constantinople I did this to counter the heresy of the Macedonian Arians, who, at the time, were claiming that the Spirit is merely a “creation” of the Son. ‘No,’ say the Council fathers, ‘the Spirit is Divine and has His Source, like the Son, with the Father. It is from the Father that the Spirit proceeds.’

So, to someone coming from this Eastern heritage –indeed, for any Greek-speaker who knows what the term “**ekporeusis**” implies (i.e., procession from a *single* source, principal, or cause), the addition of the Latin clause “Filioque” (“and the Son”) seriously challenges, if not totally destroys, the originally-intended meaning of this Creedal statement. And we Roman Catholics fully agree and admit this. **The introduction of the Filioque is clearly a departure from the original intention and design of the A.D. 381 version of the Constantinopolitan Creed.** However, it is **not** a departure from Apostolic orthodoxy. And here is why:

First of all, one needs to appreciate the authentic history of the A.D. 381 Council of Constantinople, which was not recognized in the West (*or in the East*) as ecumenical until about the time of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. In the wake of the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), Arianism experienced a dramatic resurgence in the East, with very limited impact on the West. By the 360’s, and especially with the election of Pope St. Damasus I in A.D. 367, the West was free from any native Arian influences. Not so in the East, however, where a large number of bishops were still Arians. Constantinople itself was a formally Arian see, with Arianism officially promoted by the Eastern Emperor Valens. But when Valens was killed fighting the Visigoths in A.D. 378, his *very Catholic/Orthodox Western* colleague, Emperor Gratian, appointed the *very Catholic/Orthodox Spanish* general Theodosius to become the new Eastern Emperor as Theodosius I. After a year pacifying the rampaging Visigoths, Theodosius (who was, don’t forget, a Westerner) called a council to essentially rid the Eastern imperial capital of Arianism and restore it to communion with the rest of the Church. This is what the Council of Constantinople I was designed to do –namely, to be a *regional*, Eastern council. And while it was certainly approved and ratified by Pope Damasus at Rome (so says Photius in Mansi, III, 596 --for such regional councils always, as a matter of custom, sent rescripts of their decrees to Rome for ratification), Rome did not see itself as participating in the Council; and Alexandria, the Church’s second see, had some serious

problems with it. Thus, the Creed proclaimed at Constantinople I in A.D. 381, which is *markedly different* from the Creed proclaimed at Nicaea in A.D. 325 (**where no mention is made of the Spirit's procession**), was not adopted (at this time) by either Rome or the other patriarchates as anything like the Church's "official" or universal Creed –a Creed with *ecumenical* authority. This is a significant point, which I will address further below.

When the Roman West finally got around to implementing the 381 Constantinopolitan Creed (as opposed to the Nicene Creed of 325) in its Western Liturgies, ...which, once again, was not until about the time of the Council of Chalcedon (c. A.D. 451) ...the Latin translation of the Constantinopolitan Creed carried a notable difference. For, the Greek term for "**proceeds**" (**ekporeusis** – "**ek tou Patros ekporeuomenon**") was translated into Latin as "**procedit**" ("**ex Patre procedentum**") –a term that, unlike the Greek, does not imply procession from a single source, principal, or cause.

And it was only natural that the Latins would translate the Greek expression in this way. For, the Creedal statement was drawn (by the fathers at Constantinople I and the Cappadocians before them) from **John 15:26**, which reads:

**"...the Spirit of Truth, Who proceeds from the Father ..."**

In Greek, this is written: "...**para tou Patros ekporeutai**." But, in St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate, and in *all the earlier Latin translations of St. John's Gospel*, this was always rendered as "...**qui a Patre procedit**..."

Thus, the Greek implication of the word was *never* part of the Latin heritage or experience, nor was it directly known to the Latins from the time they adopted the Constantinopolitan Creed (c. 451 A.D.) on. Thus, when Toledo added the Filioque to the Constantinopolitan Creed in A.D. 589, the Western bishops had no intention of amending the *Greek* meaning of the Creed (i.e., the original, intended meaning of the Constantinopolitan fathers) because that original, intended meaning was not directly known to them. Rather, all that the West ever intended to do was to elaborate on what the Latin term "**procedit**" referred to, or *could* refer to, in orthodox Western understanding. And given that the Latin "**procedit**" carries a different implication than the Greek "**ekporeusis**," what this means is that it *was* possible (for the West) to stress a different, equally-orthodox truth about the procession of the Holy Spirit than what the fathers at Constantinople I originally intended to refer to (more on this in a moment).

With that said, however, it must be noted that neither the council of Toledo, nor any Roman decree in favor of Toledo or other accommodations of the Filioque, ever denied Constantinople I or the original Greek meaning of the Creed. On the contrary, Toledo itself anathematized anyone who denied the teachings of Constantinople I (381) and the other Ecumenical Councils. And so, it follows that the Western Church (*despite* any deficient appreciation of the Greek expression) has never abandoned or turned its back on the original, intended meaning of "proceeds" as proclaimed by the fathers at Constantinople I. Rather, the Western Church teaches, and has always taught, that the Father, and the Father *alone*, is the Source, Principal, and Cause ("**Aition**") of the Holy Spirit –that is, the formal proclamation of Constantinople I. Indeed, even St. Augustine,

who is often made into an intellectual scapegoat among some Eastern Orthodox (their argument being that Filioque is based totally on Augustine's supposedly flawed theology) clearly taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "**principaliter**" --that is, "as Principle" (De Trinitate XV, 25, 47, PL 42, 1094-1095). So, there is clearly no contradiction between Augustine and the Cappadocians or the Constantinopolitan fathers on this issue. Both Greek East and Latin West confess, and always have confessed, that the Father *alone* is the **Cause (Aition)** or **Principle (Principium)** of both the Son and the Spirit.

Ergo, the Catholic Church does not deny the Constantinopolitan Creed as originally written. This is why our Byzantine Catholic Churches recite the Creed without the Filioque, and why even we Romans are able to recite the Creed without the Filioque when participating in Byzantine Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Liturgies. This is also why we reject the clause "...**kai tou Uiou ...**" ("**...and the Son**") being added to the Creedal expression "**ek tou Patros ekporeuomenon**" in Greek, *even when used by Latin Rite Catholics in Greek-speaking communities*. If the Greek word "**ekporeusis**" is to be used or intended, then it is incorrect and heretical to say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son." Neither East nor West believes that the Spirit proceeds "from the Father and the Son" as a common source or principal (**aitia**). Rather, that one Source and Principal (**Aition**) is the Father, and the Father alone.

But, if the Western Church agrees with the East that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, then what does it mean by "Filioque" --that the Spirit proceeds "from the Father and the Son"? Very simply, and keeping in mind the West's isolation from the original Greek-language intention of the Constantinopolitan Creed, what the West means to express is a truth that is equally valid, but distinct and parallel to, the original Greek-language intention. For, when the West speaks of the Spirit "proceeding" from the Father *and the Son*, it is referring to something all-together different than "procession" as from a single source (**aitia**). It is not advocating two sources or principals for the Spirit, or some kind of "*double spiration*," as is all-too-commonly (wrongly) assumed by many Eastern Orthodox. Rather, it is using the term "proceeds" in an all-together different sense. And the best way to illustrate the two different senses or uses of the term "proceeds" (Greek vs. Latin) is through the following analogy:

If a human father and son go into their back yard to play a game of catch, it is the father who *initiates* the game of catch by throwing the ball to his son. In this sense, one can say that the game of catch "*proceeds*" from this human father (an "**aition**"); and this is the original, Greek sense of the Constantinopolitan Creed's use of the term "proceeds" ("**ekporeusis**"). However, taking this very same scenario, one can also justly say that the game of catch "proceeds" from *both* the father and his son. And this is because the son has to be there for the game of catch to exist. For, unless the son is there, then the father would have no one to throw the ball to; and so there would be no game of catch. And, it is *in this sense* (one might say a "collective" sense) that the West uses the term "proceeds" ("**procedit**") in the Filioque. Just as acknowledging the necessity of the human son's presence in order for the game of catch to exist does not, in any way, challenge or threaten the human father's role as the source or initiator (**aition**) of the

game of catch, so the Filioque does not deny the Father's singular role as the Cause (**Aition**) of the Spirit; but merely acknowledges the Son's *necessary Presence* (i.e., participation) for the Spirit's eternal procession *from* the Father *to* Someone else – namely, to the eternal Son. Father and Son are thus *collectively* identified as accounting for the Spirit's procession. This is all that the Filioque was ever intended to address; and it was included in the Creed by the Western fathers at Toledo in order to counter the claims of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish (Germanic) Arians. These Arians were of course denying this essential and orthodox truth –that is, the Son's eternal *participation* in the Spirit's procession –an issue which was never challenged or comprehensively addressed in the Byzantine experience, aside from the fact that there does exist throughout the writings of the Eastern fathers the profession that the Spirit proceeds from the Father “*through [or ‘by way of’] the Son.*” –an expression equivalent to the Filioque.

Now, it has unfortunately become a very popular (though largely baseless) argument among modern Eastern Orthodox to claim that the Eastern fathers, in professing that the Spirit proceeds “through the Son,” are always referring to the Son's temporal pouring forth of the Spirit upon the Church (e.g. **John 20:22**), and so *not* the eternal procession of the Spirit within the Trinitarian nature of God. This of course not only seriously (nay, dangerously) threatens the very essence of the Christian Gospel (i.e., Christ's adopting us into the *very same* Sonship –and so the very same *Spirit of Sonship* [**Romans 8:15**] – which He Himself enjoys *eternally* with the Father), but it also fails to acknowledge the full testimony of the Eastern fathers, which I will address in detail below.

### **The Canonical Authority of Filioque**

Before addressing Filioque's Apostolic validity as a matter of theology, we would do well to first explore its canonical validity and the history behind its inclusion in the Western Creed. For, it is often claimed by Eastern Orthodox that the West's insertion of Filioque into the Creed violates Canon VII of the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), which reads ...

“The holy Council decrees that no one should be permitted to offer a different Creed of Faith, or in any case, to write or compose another, **than the one defined by the holy fathers who convened in the city of Nicaea** ...As for those who dare either to compose a different Creed or Faith, or to present one, or to offer one to those who wish to return to recognition of the truth, whether they be Greeks or Jews, or they be members of any heresy whatsoever, they, if bishops or clergymen, shall be deprived as bishops of their episcopate, and as clergymen of their clericate; but if they are laymen, they shall be anathematized.”

Likewise, at this same Council, St. Cyril of Alexandria (as Council president) declared:

“We prohibit any change whatsoever in the Creed of Faith drawn up **by the holy Nicene fathers**. We do not allow ourselves or anyone else to change or omit one word or syllable in **that** Creed.”

Now, at first glance, and without resource to historical context, these decrees of the Council of Ephesus seem pretty damning to Filioque. And, while they are easily addressed and dismissed in the light of authentic history, they do call attention to a much larger difference in the way that modern Catholics and modern Eastern Orthodox view the Church and Church authority, and why it has been so difficult for us to communicate with each other about this particular issue. But, before we delve into this larger (and much more substantive) difference, let's explore why Canon VII of the Council of Ephesus is clearly not a barrier to the inclusion of Filioque.

First of all, please notice how, in the quotes from Canon VII of Ephesus and St. Cyril of Alexandria above, the prohibition is *not* against adding to the Creed of *Constantinople I* (A.D. 381), but rather adding to the Creed “**defined by the holy fathers who convened in the city of Nicaea**” (A.D. 325); and, as we already observed, the Creed of Nicaea **makes no mention of the Spirit's procession**, but merely reads:

“[We believe] **in the Holy Spirit ...**” (followed by a direct anathema against Arianism.)

So, if one wishes to be technical about it (as some Eastern Orthodox choose to do by using Canon VII of Ephesus to challenge the legitimacy of Filioque), then one must conclude that Canon VII of Ephesus renders the Constantinopolitan Creed *itself* illegitimate, since it also “added to” the Creed of Nicaea.

Indeed, an appreciation of the historical context of the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), and especially the role of the patriarchate of *Alexandria* at this Council, is all-important here. As I already mentioned above, the previous Ecumenical Council (or what would come to be counted as the previous Ecumenical Council), Constantinople I (381), was originally recognized to be a mere regional council of the Eastern Church. Not only did the West not participate in it, but Alexandria, the Church's second see and Eastern primate, was seriously alienated by the proceedings. For, Canon III of the Council of Constantinople unseated Alexandria from its Traditional position as primate in the East (a prerogative implicitly guaranteed by Canon VI of Nicaea) and made Constantinople itself (an episcopate with no Apostolic founder) into the second ranking see after Rome! So, the Council of Constantinople I (381) –the *same* Council that drafted the Constantinopolitan Creed (with its reference to the Spirit's procession); and a council that was not yet recognized as ecumenical, but *merely regional* --was a direct challenge to Alexandria's primal authority in the East. And, as we will soon see, this would dramatically influence the actions of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus, fifty years later.

Now while, according to Photius (Mansi, III, 596), Rome apparently approved and ratified the dogmatic decrees of Constantinople I (as a mere regional council), Rome *did not* approve of Canon III and its attempt to give Constantinople primacy over Alexandria and Antioch. Rather, in the very same year, Pope St. Damasus issued the following decree, defending the Traditional integrity of the three Apostolic patriarchates:

“Although all the catholic churches spread abroad throughout the world comprise but one Bridal Chamber of Christ, nevertheless, the holy Roman church has been placed at the forefront, not by the councilor decisions of the churches, but has received the primacy by the evangelic voice of our Lord and Savior, Who says: "You are Peter ...(Matt 16:18-19)." In addition to this, there is also the companionship of the vessel of election, the most blessed Apostle Paul who, along with Peter in the city of Rome in the time of Caesar Nero, equally consecrated the above-mentioned holy Roman church to Christ the Lord; and by their own presence and by their venerable triumph, they set it at the forefront over the others of all the cities of the world. **The first see**, therefore, is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the **Roman church**, which has neither stain nor blemish, nor anything like that. The **second see is that of Alexandria**, consecrated on behalf of the blessed Peter by Mark, his disciple and an Evangelist, who was sent to Egypt by the Apostle Peter, where he preached the word of truth and finished his glorious martyrdom. **The third see is that of Antioch**, which belonged to the most blessed Peter, where first he dwelled before he came to Rome, and where the name ‘Christians’ was first applied, as to a new people.” (Decree of Damasus # 3, 382 A.D.)

This was written in defense of *Alexandria* and as a direct refutation of Canon III of the Council of Constantinople I, which, remember, was only seen as a *regional council* at the time. And, sixty-nine years later, Pope St. Leo the Great (Ep. cvi in P.L., LIV, 1003, 1005) would repeat this condemnation and declare that Canon III of Constantinople I was never accepted by Rome and (like Canon XXVIII of Chalcedon) was a violation of the Nicene order (i.e., Canon VI of Nicaea).

Indeed, this move by the Council of Constantinople I (to make the imperial capital the Eastern primate *in place of Alexandria*) would also inspire a bitter and ongoing “feud” between Alexandria and Constantinople, in which Alexandria became very zealous (indeed, almost paranoid) about defending its Apostolic prerogatives, and so its primacy in the East *over* Constantinople. This agenda was clearly at play when, two decades after Canon III was drafted, Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria, the immediate successor of Patriarch St. Timothy of Alexandria (who had attended Constantinople I), condemned St. John Chrysostom (then, Bishop of Constantinople, A.D. 398-404) and stripped him of his see. It was also clearly at play when Theophilus’ nephew and immediate successor, St. Cyril of Alexandria, condemned the heretical Nestorius (Bishop of Constantinople from A.D. 428-431) and presided over the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus against him.

But, why do I point all this out? I point it out because it gives us the *historical context* for what was said and intended by this *same* St. Cyril of Alexandria and by Canon VII of the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. For, in proclaiming that no one may add to the Creed “**of Nicaea**,” the *Ecumenical* Council of Ephesus (presided over by a contemporary Patriarch of *Alexandria*) could **not possibly** be referring to the Creed of Constantinople I (381). Once again, consider the historical progression, and so the contemporary perspective of St. Cyril of Alexandria and the other fathers at Ephesus:

A.D. 325 –The Council of Nicaea, an **Ecumenical** Council including **both East and West**, drafts the *original* Nicene Creed (a Creed with no reference to the Spirit’s procession).

A.D. 381 –The Council of Constantinople I, a **mere regional council of the East** called to restore Nicene orthodoxy in the Eastern Empire, amends the Nicene Creed and adds the section about the Spirit’s procession. It also challenges Alexandria’s authority –a move rejected by both Alexandria and Rome.

A.D. 431 --The Council of Ephesus, an **Ecumenical** Council, including **both East and West** (and presided over by the Patriarch of Alexandria *acting as an authorized vicar for the Pope of Rome*) issues its decree about not adding to the Creed “**of Nicaea.**”

Given this historical progression, the manifest intention of Canon VII of Ephesus is obvious. For, when the Council of Ephesus speaks of the Creed “*of Nicaea,*” it means just that –the Creed of the **Ecumenical** Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325! For, as we mentioned above, this was the Creed still in use throughout the entire Western Church at the time --a Western Church which had participated *at Nicaea*, but which had **not** participated at Constantinople I. Constantinople I was still seen as merely a regional council of the East. And while (by A.D. 431) its Creed may very well have been implemented in many of the Eastern sees (even Alexandria), it was **not** seen as a Creed with *ecumenical* authority. Rather, as far as St. Cyril and his colleagues at the Council of Ephesus were concerned, the last Council to involve the *entire* Church, and so to exhibit true **ecumenical** authority, was the Council of Nicaea in 325. And, once one realizes that the Western Church did not yet use the Constantinopolitan Creed (a Creed drafted by a [then] mere regional council), it suddenly becomes painfully obvious that St. Cyril and the other fathers at Ephesus could not hold the West (indeed, the universal Church) responsible for that which did not yet apply to it in an ecumenical context. Rather, the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus could only hold the Church responsible for what was manifestly ecumenical at the time; and this of course was the Creed *as originally written* at Nicaea. Indeed, it was the *Nicene* Creed of A.D. 325 (and **not** the Constantinopolitan version) that was read at the opening session of the Council of Ephesus (June 22, A.D. 431). This was the Creed as it could be recited (at the time) by *both East and West* together –an Ecumenical Creed for an Ecumenical Council. What’s more, when St. Cyril cites the Creed in his Epistle XVII excommunicating Nestorius (PG LXXVI, 117), it is the original *Nicene* form of the Creed that is presented, not the Constantinopolitan version. St. Cyril writes ...

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible ....**And in the Holy Spirit:** But those that say, There was a time when He was not, and, before He was begotten He was not, and that He was made of that which previously was not, or that He was of some other substance or essence; and that the Son of God was capable of change or alteration; those the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.”



So, in short, if one wishes to apply Canon VII of the Council of Ephesus to forbid the inclusion of the Filioque, then one must *also* apply it (as the historical context demands) to the Constantinopolitan Creed itself –something that of course no Eastern Orthodox (or Roman Catholic) wishes to do.

Now, with all this before us, it obviously follows that there are only two possible ways to interpret and obey Canon VII of the Council of Ephesus. Either one can interpret it in a purely *anachronistic* sense –the sense in which many modern Eastern Orthodox interpret it, who unreasonably (and legalistically) apply it to the period *after* the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), when the Constantinopolitan Creed was finally embraced by the universal Church in an Ecumenical context. *Or*, one can interpret Canon VII in an *organic* sense –as a reference to *the substance* of the Nicene Creed, meaning that no one is permitted to put forward a Creed that opposes or is contrary to the Nicene Creed –that is, the *organic faith* of the Nicene fathers. This, of course, was the interpretation presented by the Archbishop of Rhodes and adopted by the other fathers at the unifying Council of Ferrara-Florence (in 1439), including the Byzantine John Bessarion, but not the inflexible Mark of Ephesus, who simply could not incorporate it into his narrow, schismatic view. Indeed, the fathers at Ferrara-Florence were not even in a position to appreciate the authentic, 5<sup>th</sup> Century perspective of St. Cyril and the Council he led. If the Romans at Ferrara-Florence were fully aware of the A.D. 431 distinction between what was then seen as the *Ecumenical* Creed of Nicaea (325) vs. the *merely regional* Creed of Constantinople I (381), their argument against Mark of Ephesus would have been far more powerful.

Clearly, St. Cyril of Alexandria could only have had one of two objectives in mind when he declared that no one may add to the Creed “*of Nicaea.*” Either he directly intended to undermine any special, canonical importance for the Constantinopolitan Creed – something that would clearly bolster his defense of Alexandria primacy by setting limits to the authority of Constantinople I. (Although a saint, Cyril was not above such political maneuvering.) Or, he merely (innocently) intended to refer to the Creed of Nicaea in an organic and substantive sense –a sense that would be inclusive of the Constantinopolitan Creed and all other creeds in essential agreement with Nicaea’s. If the latter, then both modern Eastern Orthodoxy and modern Catholicism are in communion with St. Cyril and the fathers of Ephesus. If the former, then the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (which adopted the Constantinopolitan Creed in an Ecumenical context) cannot be reconciled, and one or the other must **not** be counted as ecumenical and binding. Thus, the only realistic option for an Eastern Orthodox or a Catholic is to interpret Canon VII of Ephesus in an organic sense –a sense which permits Chalcedon’s ecumenical adoption of the Constantinopolitan Creed, but which *also* permits the inclusion of the Filioque as a licit canonical addition.

So, Canon VII of the Council of Ephesus cannot be used to argue against Filioque’s inclusion in the Western Creed. A much stronger argument for the Eastern Orthodox position seems to be that the Eighth Council of Constantinople (as they count it –the Council of 879-80), which was called to heal the Photian schism and to maintain the original wording of the Creed for both Byzantium and Rome, also anamathetized anyone

who adapts the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. Now, on its surface, this too may seem damning of the Roman Catholic position. But, unless we also interpret this in a purely organic sense, it also stands condemned by Canon VII of Ephesus, which proclaims that no one may add to the Creed “*of Nicaea*” –something which the Constantinopolitan Creed obviously does. What’s more, even after A.D. 880, both Rome and Constantinople continued to hold communion with a great many Western Churches who openly professed the Creed with the Filioque. If the decree of 880 represented anything more than a ‘social contract’ between Constantinople and Rome itself (an agreement that Rome would maintain the faith expressed by Constantinople I –that is, a faith in the Father’s monarchy as Source of the Spirit), then Rome would have been forced to excommunicate the entire West, and Byzantium would certainly have pressed for this excommunication. This obviously did not happen, however.

At this point, it is also helpful to realize that the ancient Church, both before and after A.D. 431 (and A.D. 880), always possessed several different liturgical creeds. The Nicene Creed was of course an expanded version of the Apostles’ Creed (still in use today) and a number of other regional Baptismal creeds, such as the one used (even after Nicaea) by St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Indeed, there were at least four different versions of the Nicene Creed before the Council of Sardica in A.D. 341, and at that council *yet another* version was presented and inserted into the Acts, though not formally authorized by the council. And, even *after* Chalcedon’s adoption of the Constantinopolitan Creed, the Athanasian Creed (fl. 5<sup>th</sup> Century) was widely used in Gaul and eventually spread to the rest of the Church. It was even, for a time, embraced by the Russian Orthodox (minus the Filioque). Thus, looking at authentic history, one is forced to admit that there *never was* only one, “official Creed” for the universal Church.

However, the popular Eastern Orthodox insistence on a supposed “official Creed” illustrates the substantial difference in the way that the Eastern Orthodox communion and the Roman Catholic communion view binding Church authority. And an appreciation of this substantial difference is all-important to our discussion of Filioque, since it addresses a large part of the controversy –indeed, the driving force behind it. Now, it is no secret that the Byzantine East has often faulted the Roman West for being too “legalistic” in its approach to the Faith. However, when it comes to binding authority, it is actually the Byzantine East that is far more legalistic and divorced from the organic Tradition of the Church’s Christ-given power to “bind and loosen” (**Matt 16:19, 18:18**). In this, I have often argued that the true culprit behind our Schism is that the Eastern Orthodox Church is, in a fundamental way, the “imperial Church” created by Constantine the Great –the “state cult” and political “glue” employed to hold his Empire together. In saying this, I certainly do not mean to question, dispute, or downplay the Apostolic nature of Eastern Orthodoxy. On the contrary, we Catholics firmly believe that the Eastern Orthodox Church is Apostolic in nature, and that it has the true priesthood and true Sacraments. But, be that as it may, this Apostolic Church of the Byzantine East still *expresses itself* in ways, and according to a cultural mode of thought, that is thoroughly “imperial” in the old Byzantine sense of “One Church, one Empire” ...or perhaps, in its modern manifestation, “One Church, one cultural expression.” Because of this, the Byzantine East is very uncomfortable with anything that does not readily or neatly conform to its

own historical experience or Byzantine (that is, “imperial”) cultural heritage. And, in that cultural heritage, it is the Ecumenical Council –in essence, a state-sponsored exercise of imperial Roman/Byzantine law –which ultimately determines what is and what is not official Church doctrine.

The Western Church, on the other hand, never fundamentally associated itself with the imperial “state cult”; and this was the case both before *and* after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Rather, the West, along with the monastic communities in the East, always maintained a view of the Church as that old, underground society that was distinct from the secular world, and which was once persecuted by it. In this more ancient understanding, the teaching authority of the Church (what St. Cyprian called “the Chair of Peter”) was held by all Catholic bishops, whose unity and orthodoxy was identified and maintained, *not by the Empire*, but by their communion with Peter’s personal successor in the church of Rome –a church that St. Cyprian called “the womb and root of the Catholic Church” and “the *principal church* in which sacerdotal unity *has its source*” (Ep.liv.). Because of this, the West has always been able to distinguish between the Church and a given civilization in which the Church (or an area of the Church) happens to reside. It was also always able to appreciate the fact that the first Ecumenical Councils were not the be-all-end-all of Church authority itself, but state-sponsored events *at the service of the Church*, and through which the Church was able to express its organic authority –**an authority which it was quite free to express apart from an Ecumenical Council**, just as it did *before* Constantine legalized Christianity. Not so in the Byzantine East, however, where Church and Empire (that is, secular civilization) fit neatly and fundamentally together. So, when the Western Church embraced Filioque and actually introduced it into its native recitation of the Creed, what it was doing --*as the Byzantines saw it* --was “rebellious” against the theocratic unity of the Byzantine Empire, to which Italy and certain other parts of the West at least nominally belonged. Given that Byzantium was essentially a Church-State, what this meant was that its “official Creed” (the Constantinopolitan Creed –*as written*), was the “political constitution” of the Church-State –the constitution of the Christian Empire’s “state cult”; the thing that held the Empire together. But, by the 580’s, and certainly by the 1000’s, Western Europe was no longer realistically a part of the Byzantine Empire, and so no longer tied directly to its culture or subject to its political / societal agenda. Rather, Rome recognized that the Church was not formally bound or limited by any one, “official Creed”; and so amending its liturgical Creed to address real doctrinal challenges within its own Western experience was not a problem, but a valid defense of organic Christian orthodoxy. To the Byzantines, this was (and still is) a very uncomfortable approach, because it violates their view of the world and of the Church, where there was/is no separation whatsoever between Church and state (or secular Christian –that is, Byzantine –culture). Thus, when their fellow ethnic ‘Romans’ in the West (who were now under Visigothic and Frankish rule) approved of an altered version of the Creed, it seemed to the Byzantines as if their Western brethren were being “unpatriotic” --that is, “unRoman” / “unByzantine.” ...and so “unOrthodox.” This was, of course, not the case. They were merely being “Catholic” –that is, possessing a sensitivity to Christian truth as it transcends cultural or nationalistic points of view (e.g. the limits of Byzantine culture and experience).

To the Byzantines, however, Constantinople I had meant something specific by its use of the word “proceeds.” Now Rome had changed that. Now Rome meant *something else* all together. And, even if this “something else” was doctrinally valid and orthodox, it didn’t change the fact that Rome had “broken faith” *with its Byzantine heritage*. This is how the Eastern Orthodox have always seen it. And, even today, after ‘*three Romes have fallen*’ and there no longer exists a secular Christian culture (per Byzantium), there is still little if any room in the Eastern Orthodox imagination for an orthodox expression of Christianity that is “non-Byzantine” –that is, independent of their Byzantine cultural heritage. For example, Eastern Orthodox apologist Cyril Quattrone writes as follows on Toledo’s introduction of Filioque:

“...I have developed an argument against the Latin proposition that I believe to be rather conclusive. If we accept, for the sake of argument, that this distinction is valid [*i.e., between procession from the Divine essence and procession according to hypostasis*], then one of the biggest objections to the Latin Creed is that it changed the meaning of the original Greek Creed. In other words, the original Creed, as composed by the Ecumenical Council, had a sentence about the ultimate origin of the Holy Spirit. The Latins then decided, unilaterally, to scrap that teaching from the Creed and add a teaching about a joint procession. It is no good to say that we mean ultimate origin with reference to the Father because, if you do, then you mean ultimate origin with reference to the Son, for both are referred back to the same word ...Even if it is correct, the addition is not an addition, but a subtraction.”

Well, here, my good friend Cyril of course overlooks several aspects of historical reality. Firstly, as I mentioned above, we Catholics did not “scrap” the Creed’s original teaching (its original meaning in Greek) at all. Rather, as already discussed, we retain the doctrine that the Father is the sole Cause (**Aition / Principium**) of the Spirit. As also mentioned, neither the regional council of Toledo, nor Rome itself, has ever denied or rejected the Constantinopolitan Creed as originally written; Toledo, in fact, anathematized anyone who denies the Council of Constantinople I; and Rome has issued similar decrees many times. Secondly, while we admit that the West indirectly changed the original meaning of this part of the Creed, Filioque’s inclusion in the Creed is not a “subtraction,” but a *totally different* affirmation of truth. As I illustrated above, since the Greek meaning of “proceeds” was never consciously received by the Latin-speaking West, not one word, but two different words (two different implications) are assumed; but both of those implications are used to serve the Apostolic Faith and to express two different truths (two equally valid expressions) about the procession of the Holy Spirit. The reason Byzantines find this uncomfortable is because they assume that a *formal, cultural* unity is needed for East and West to truly share one Faith. To the Byzantine mind, East and West are professing two unrelated things –two different “constitutions,” so to speak. But, the Church of the living God is not limited by cultural forms or preoccupations, nor is orthodoxy merely a matter of outward expression, but of substantive truth. Thus, it is quite possible and valid for East and West to recite two

formally different Creeds ...*if* those Creeds are substantially in agreement and *if* they reflect the same Apostolic Faith, which they do.

Now, in regard to this very point, Cyril Quattrone continues ....

“Analogous to this situation is a recent attempt by some Greek liberals to alter the Creed. They wanted to change “...for us men and for our salvation ...” to “...for us and for our salvation ...” Even if the two clauses have an equivalent meaning (and I would contend that they don’t), the alteration was an abomination. It dropped a word from the original Creed. Thankfully the hierarchy squashed this blasphemy quickly. ...But what difference between this instance and the filioque? The libs dropped a word, which conveyed a certain meaning, and contended there was no difference between the two Creeds ....You Latins not only, in essence, dropped a clause about the ultimate origin of the Holy Spirit, but you even added a new clause about the medial origin of the same Divine Person.”

Well, needless to say, I certainly share Cyril’s disdain of liberals and their promotion of unnecessary “inclusive language.” I would, however, stop short at automatically characterizing such misguided liberal attempts as “*blasphemy*” or “*abominations*.” This, I think, perfectly illustrates the cultural rigidity prevalent among many well-intentioned Eastern Orthodox, which is the same mentality –the xenophobic mentality of old Byzantium --that fuels their zeal against Filioque.

But, to address his question, the difference between the case of these liberals and the Filioque is obvious. Firstly, the liberals seek to amend the Creed for foolish and doctrinally unsound reasons. The Greek already uses the word “anthropos” (“homo” in Latin), which does not refer to only male human beings, but to all mankind, male and female together. To merely say “...*for us* and for our salvation ...” would render the Creed meaningless. Who is meant by “us”? Us Christians? Us Gentiles? Us people with brown eyes, as opposed to people with blue eyes? Us angels and men together? For, the reason that the Creed specifically says “for us men” is because it wanted to counter a popular notion (promoted by Origen and others) that Christ died, not only to save human beings from our sins, but also to save the fallen angels! Thus, the Creed specifically says “us men” for that reason. Now, Filioque was not added in order to appease some unreasonable request, but to counter the very real threat of Arian doctrine as it manifested itself in 6<sup>th</sup> Century Spain. Thus, it was included in response to an obvious error. The Spanish Arians claimed that the Son could not be God if the Spirit of Sonship (the Holy Spirit) existed eternally apart from Him. In response, the bishops at Toledo (drawing on the consistent testimony of the Latin fathers) proclaimed that the Son *is essential* to the procession of the Spirit of Sonship –that the Spirit’s procession is part of the co-eternal relationship of Father and Son. For, one cannot be an eternal Father unless one begets an eternal Son; and one cannot be an eternal Spirit *of Sonship* unless there is an eternal Son, Who is eternally begotten by an eternal Father. Thus, unlike the mere ‘political’ agenda of liberals, the Filioque was not an example of “inclusive

language,” but a substantive and needed response to a true doctrinal error. What’s more, we do not claim that there is no difference in meaning between the original version of the Constantinopolitan Creed and the version that includes the Filioque. On the contrary, we recognize that the Roman Creed and the Byzantine Creed refer to two different things. But, we likewise maintain that *both* these things are true and equally Apostolic. They are merely different expressions, crafted to fit two different experiences and two different needs. And, lastly, the Filioque is also different from the case of these liberals insofar that it was proclaimed by authoritative bishops in council, and ultimately declared to be orthodox by the Bishop of Rome. Thus, unlike some flippant liberal attempt to amend the Creed, it possesses true Magisterial authority.

But, to address the heart of Cyril Quattrone’s argument, what is clear from his expression above is that he (like most Eastern Orthodox) views the Filioque as a kind of “betrayal” of the Creed –that is, of the “official constitution” of the civilization that he sees himself as belonging to. For Cyril, like most Eastern Orthodox, the Church must be a formal, cultural whole modeled on Byzantine “excellence.” But this is not, and never has been, a true or realistic image of the Church. For, as my own late father used to say, ‘The Church is like a beautiful Woman who occasionally changes her gown –that is, her cultural expression. And whether this beautiful Woman wears *Jewish* fashion, or *Greco-Roman* fashion, or *Byzantine* fashion, or *medieval / Germanic* fashion, or *Renaissance* fashion, or *modern* fashion, she is still the same beautiful Woman. Her substance does not change.’ The Eastern Orthodox have yet to truly come to terms with this truth. Rather, they see “ontological difference” in the mere changing of a “gown.”

In the Catholic understanding, however, true ecclesial authority is not hampered by canonical expressions or historical conventions, but resides ultimately with the Spirit-guided Magisterium, which is the Divinely-appointed arbiter and interpreter of authentic Apostolic Tradition *in whatever cultural mode it manifests itself*. This, again, presents a challenge to the Eastern Orthodox; but it is nevertheless a part of their own Sacred Tradition –the far older, pre-imperial heritage of the Eastern Church. For, the Byzantine fathers clearly testify to the belief that the Bishop of Rome (that is, the ultimate successor of St. Peter) possesses authority *over* an Ecumenical Council (that is, a political act of the Byzantine “state cult”), and has the Magisterial right to substantially define the Faith over and above the literal expression of an Ecumenical Council. This too overturns the impression that the medieval Popes who ratified Filioque were forbidden to do so by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus. For the understanding of the Eastern Church prior to the time of Photius argues against such an assumption.

For example, St. Maximos the Confessor (c. A.D. 650) writes ....

"How much more in the case of the clergy and church of the Romans, which from old until now presides over all the churches which are under the sun? Having surely received this canonically, as well as from councils and the apostles, as from the princes of the latter (Peter & Paul), and being numbered in their company, she is subject to no writings or issues in synodical documents, on account of the eminence of her Pontificate

.....even as **all these things all are equally subject to her (the church of Rome) according to sacerdotal law.** And so when, without fear, but with all holy and becoming confidence, those ministers (the Popes) are of the truly firm and immovable rock, that is of the most great and Apostolic church of Rome." (Maximus, in J.B. Mansi, ed. Amplissima Collectio Conciliorum, vol. 10)

Likewise, St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople (758-828) says ....

"Without whom (the Romans presiding in the seventh Council) a doctrine brought forward in the Church could not, **even though confirmed by canonical decrees and by ecclesiastical usage,** ever obtain full approval or currency. **For it is they (the Popes of Rome) who have had assigned to them the rule in sacred things, and who have received into their hands the dignity of Headship among the Apostles.**" (Nicephorus, Niceph. Cpl. pro. s. imag. c 25 [Mai N. Bibl. pp. ii. 30]).

And, St. Theodore the Studite of Constantinople (759-826) says, writing to Pope Leo III ....

Since to great Peter Christ our Lord gave the office of Chief Shepherd after entrusting him with the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, **to Peter or his successor must of necessity every novelty in the Catholic Church be referred.**" (Theodore, Bk. I. Ep. 23)

...and ....

"Let him (Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople) assemble a synod of those with whom he has been at variance, if it is impossible that representatives of the other patriarchs should be present, a thing which might certainly be if the Emperor should wish the Western Patriarch (the Roman Pope) to be present, **to whom is given authority over an ecumenical synod;** but let him make peace and union by sending his synodical letters to the prelate of the First See." (Theodore the Studite, Patr. Graec. 99, 1420)

Also, during Photius' own time, his Byzantine contemporary St. Methodius, the brother of St. Cyril and Apostle to the Slavs (c. 865), clearly testifies to the belief that the authority of an Ecumenical Council depends on the authority of Rome:

"Because of his primacy, the Pontiff of Rome is not required to attend an Ecumenical Council; **but without his participation, manifested by sending some subordinates, every Ecumenical Council is as non-existent, for it is he who presides over the Council.**" (Methodius, in N. Brianchaninov, The Russian Church (1931), 46; cited by Butler, Church

and Infallibility, 210) (Upon This Rock (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 177).

And we can of course multiply other examples. But, according to the ancestors of the modern Eastern Orthodox, the authority of the Bishop of Rome is superior to an Ecumenical Council, since it is only the Petrine authority of Rome that can ratify an Ecumenical Council. This has, of course, been the constant argument put forward by Roman Catholics when Eastern Orthodox claim, for example, that Filioque violates Canon VII of Ephesus. However, this Roman argument only make reasonable sense to an Easterner once his unrealistic notions of what an Ecumenical Council is have been exposed. For, when we say that Rome outranks an Ecumenical Council, we are not saying that the Pope is a ‘one-man Council’ or that an Ecumenical Council, in which all bishops participate, is without authority. On the contrary. What we mean is that the teaching authority of the “Chair of Peter” (that is, of all bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome) can express itself even apart from the legalistic construct of an Ecumenical Council; and that the See of Rome itself is able to focus and express the true consensus of all orthodox bishops; which is, of course, what Rome really does when it ratifies an Ecumenical Council. Now, this of course involves many ecclesial mysteries, and a discussion of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility is not our focus here. What must be admitted, however, is that, according to the ancient pre-imperial understanding of Church authority, the Roman Papacy had every right (nay, duty) to ratify the decrees of the Council of Toledo as sound and orthodox; for Toledo decreed nothing that was alien to the Apostolic Faith.

### A Western Contradiction?

As stated several times above, the Roman Catholic Church does **not** hold to a ‘double procession’ (‘double spiration’) of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we firmly believe and teach that it is the Father, and the Father alone, Who is the Source, Principal, and Cause (**Aition / Principium**) of the Holy Spirit. As I also mentioned, both the Council of Toledo and numerous Papal decrees have consistently affirmed the dogmas of Constantinople I (381), and so the Constantinopolitan Creed as originally written. However, many Eastern Orthodox would argue that modern Catholicism is guilty of historical revisionism and that we contradict what the medieval West originally intended to express via the doctrine of Filioque. For example, Eastern Orthodox apologist Cyril Quattrone writes (I present his full, rather-lengthy criticism):

“It seems to me that though the Catholics are today moving away from a theology of a double procession, albeit a double procession from one, and relegating the Son’s involvement to a medial role, this was not always the case. If they did not hold to the teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son though as from one principal, why did they not contend that St. Photius had misrepresented their position during the Councils of Lyons and Florence? And when St. Mark [of Ephesus ... at the Council of Ferrara-Florence] quoted St. Dionysius who wrote, ‘There



is one source of the pre-essential Godhead –God the Father,’ why did they not give a hearty AMEN! Indeed, from The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy, we read, ‘John [de Montenegro] then found it beneficial to make a formal statement, and said, “The Church of Rome does not admit of two principles or causes in the Trinity, but only one cause and one principal, anathematizing all who think to the contrary.” This, however, was a superficial proclamation, because a full explanation of what he truly meant was avoided. John had not disavowed that the Son was the cause of the Holy Spirit. What he did say was that though the Father is the original cause of the Spirit, the Son receives power from the Father to educe (or put forward, project) the Spirit not from Himself, but from the Father. Nevertheless, John’s words were to have an enormous impact.’

There are more explicit examples of the teaching of a double procession. The 11<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo in 675 states: ‘We believe that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is God, and that He is one and equal with God the Father and God the Son, of one substance as well as of one nature. However, He is not begotten or created, but He proceeds from both and is the Spirit of both. We believe that the Holy Spirit is neither unbegotten nor begotten: lest, if we say unbegotten we should be asserting two Fathers; and if we say begotten, we should appear to be preaching two Sons. He is called the Spirit, not only of the Father nor only of the Son but **equally of the Father and of the Son. He proceeds not from the Father into the Son nor from the Son to sanctify creatures; but He is shown to have proceeded from both equally, because He is known as the Love of the sanctity of both.**’ ‘He proceeds not from the Father into the Son’ is a clear denial of your contention that Rome has never taught that the Filioque meant a double procession. Toledo teaches that in whatever way the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, He also proceeds from the Son. [Likewise] the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council (1215) states: ‘The Father is from no one; the Son is from the Father only; and the Holy Spirit is from both the Father and the Son **equally.**’ Again, the adverb ‘equally’ indicates that in whatever way He proceeds from the Father, in the same manner He proceeds from the Son. Double Procession is even found in modern Catholic documents. The new official Catechism of the Catholic Church, pg. 246 [reads]: ‘The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: The Holy Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son; **He has His nature and subsistence at once (simul) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principal and through one spiration** ...And, since the Father has through generation given to the only begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being the Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from Whom He is eternally begotten, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.’ St. Augustine himself writes, ‘**But the Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son and then proceed from the Son for our sanctification, but He proceeds from Both at the same time, although the Father has given this to the Son, just as the Holy Spirit proceeds from Himself, so**

*He also proceeds from the Son.”* (On the Trinity, xv:27). It seems to me that the Double Procession is a very prominent aspect of Rome’s teaching about the Holy Spirit’s supposed procession from the Son.”

Now, Cyril Quattrone has obviously hit us with a lot of allegations here. The unfortunate thing is that all of them are mischaracterizations (read: misinterpretations) of the Western expressions presented. For, as is perhaps natural for a Byzantine, Mr. Quattrone presumes that all doctrinal statements about the Spirit’s procession must be rooted in the originally intended meaning of the Creedal statement (in Greek) of Constantinople I (381) –that is, a reference to the Father’s monarchy, and in that context alone. However, as we’ve already illustrated several times, the West (given the semantic differences between Greek and Latin in the wake of Constantinople I) was never consciously aware of, or exclusively devoted to, this context of the Father’s monarchy. Rather, the West was organically able to speak of the Spirit’s procession in an all-together different, but equally valid, context –namely, the *collective* context of Father and Son. And I already illustrated the difference between these two contexts in my analogy of the ‘game of catch’ between a human father and a human son, and how (depending on which context one wishes to focus on), the ‘game of catch’ can be said to proceed from either the human father *alone* (because he initiates the game –as an “**aition**”) or the ‘game of catch’ can be said to proceed from *both* the father and the son, since the participation of both is necessary for the ‘game of catch’ to exist –a collective context. And these two different contexts / perspectives are not contradictory, but totally complimentary. Both are equally valid and true. But, in all of the quotes from the Western Church cited by Cyril Quattrone above, it is the *collective* context that is being addressed, **not** the monarchical context (the Father as the sole Source of the Spirit). A Byzantine needs to appreciate this fact in order to fairly and honestly interact with the Western Church in true catholic charity. Indeed, if Cyril Quattrone is correct and we Roman Catholics are so obviously contradicting ourselves (and in such overt places as our official Catechism!), one would of course have to conclude that every Byzantine Catholic in the world, to say nothing of tolerant Orthodox scholars like Kallistos Ware, is profoundly naïve and blind. Clearly, this cannot be the case.

However, in order to demonstrate the truth of the matter, let’s address Mr. Quattrone’s allegations one by one. Mr. Quattrone asks why the Council fathers at Lyon II and Ferrara-Florence never accused Photius of misrepresenting the Western view. The quick and most honest reply to this is that the medieval West was not particularly interested in establishing a synthesis of Greek and Latin theologies, but in proving that Photius was wrong to condemn Filioque and that a ‘collective procession’ (the Western preoccupation) is doctrinally valid –that is, to ‘dazzle’ the Byzantines with the Scholastic common sense of Filioque and to settle the matter in that way. Such were the many missed opportunities for Greeks and Latins to effectively communicate with one another. Indeed, attempts at more subtle and effective ‘translation’ are typically found on the pro-Roman Byzantine side (e.g. St. Maximos the Confessor, John Beccus, etc.), where certain fathers tried to illustrate how their fellow Greeks misunderstood the Western expressions. These attempts are typically dismissed by modern anti-Filioquists, however.

Mr. Quattrone asks why the Westerners at Ferrara-Florence did not voice an “Amen!” to Mark of Ephesus’ promotion of the Father’s monarchy. To this, I must give the same answer. The Father’s monarchy in the Spirit’s procession was not an issue for the Westerners, nor did the West ever deny it (as illustrated by John of Montenegro’s passionate but imperfect defense). Their focus was on proving the validity of a ‘collective procession’ of the Spirit (a procession involving both Father and Son), because that is what the Byzantines denied. What’s more, the author of The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy (quoted by Mr. Quattrone above) is simply wrong when he claims that John of Montenegro (and thus the Western Church) saw the Son as a “cause” of the Spirit in the sense of an “**aition**.” This is specifically what John of Montenegro was denying when he proclaimed that Rome recognizes only one Cause (**Aition**) of the Spirit –namely, the Father. It is only when one twists and misrepresents the Western view (force-fitting it into a Byzantine preconception) that a ‘contradiction’ is created. The Roman position has never changed: The Father is the sole Cause (**Aition / Principium**) of the Spirit; but, with that taken for granted, one may *also* validly speak of the Spirit proceeding from *both* Father and Son in a collective sense --that is, with the Father acting as Cause (**Aition / Principium**) and the Son acting as eternal, essential Participant in the Father’s spirating of the Spirit –the Spirit *of Sonship*, which of course requires the Personal existence and participation of a Son.

At this point, it may be very helpful for us to distinguish between two important Greek words. Above, we discussed the semantic differences between the Greek term “**ekporeusis**” (i.e., to proceed from a sole Source, Principal, or Cause) and the unequivocal Latin term “**procedit**” –the term unwittingly used by the West to translate Constantinople I’s “**ekporeusis**,” and so the root of the semantic confusion. However, there is yet another Greek term for “proceeds,” which is “**proienai**,” and this term, which *is* equivalent to the Latin term “**procedit**,” is used quite often among Eastern (especially Alexandrian) fathers to refer to the Spirit’s procession from *both* Father and Son. For, when the Greek fathers use “**proienai**,” they are not referring to the Father’s monarchy at all, but to the same, *collective* sense of the Spirit’s procession (involving both Father and Son) as expressed in the Western tradition. We will explore this aspect of the Eastern fathers’ theology below. But, for now, let us merely focus on the distinction and address what is recounted in the relatively recent document promoted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which is entitled Filioque: A Clarification. I quote a large section of the document below because it addresses several of Mr. Quattrone’s citations. It reads (emphasis mine):

“The fact that in Latin and Alexandrian theology the Holy Spirit proceeds (*proeisi*) from the Father and the Son in their **consubstantial communion does not mean that it is the Divine essence or Substance that proceed in Him**, but that it is communicated [*Personally*] from the Father and the Son Who have it in common [*i.e., the exclusive, Personal relationship*]. This point was confessed as dogma in 1215 by the fourth Lateran Council:

*‘The Substance **does not** generate, is not begotten, does not proceed; but it is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, the Holy Spirit who*

*proceeds: so that there is distinction in Persons and unity in Nature. Although other (alius) is the Father, other the Son, other the Holy Spirit, they are not another reality (aliud), but what the Father is the Son is and the Holy Spirit equally; so, according to the orthodox and catholic faith, we believe that they are consubstantial. For the Father, generating eternally the Son, has given to Him his substance ... It is clear that, in being begotten the Son **has received the substance of the Father without this substance being in any way diminished**, and so the Father and the Son have the same substance. So the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, **Who proceeds from them both, are one same reality**" (DS 804-805).*

"In 1274, the second Council of Lyons confessed that '*the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, **not as from two principles but as from one single Principle (tamquam ex uno principio)***' (DS 850).

"In the light of the Lateran Council, which preceded the second Council of Lyons, it is clear that it is not the Divine essence that can be the "one principle" for the procession of the Holy Spirit. **The Catechism of the Catholic Church interprets this formula** in no.248 as follows:

*'...the eternal order of the Divine Persons in their consubstantial communion implies that **the Father, as the 'principle without principle,' is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that, as Father of the only Son, He is, with the Son, the single Principle from which the Spirit proceeds.***' (Council of Lyons II, DS 850).'"

Now, please note that, above, Mr. Quattrone presents *part* of what the Catechism of the Catholic Church has to say about the procession of the Spirit, but not its *full teaching*. This was no doubt an honest oversight on the part of Mr. Quattrone, but it illustrates the common failure of many Eastern Orthodox to appreciate comprehensive Catholic doctrine, and their inclination to dismiss the Roman tradition without fully analyzing what we really believe. This is a common sin against charity, unworthy of an Eastern Orthodox. For, the Catechism of the Catholic Church goes on to explain:

"The Western tradition expresses *first* the **consubstantial communion between Father and Son**, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (Filioque). ...This legitimate **complementarity**, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no.248).

This is the context in which the Catechism of the Catholic Church is speaking (as quoted above by Cyril Quattrone) when it asserts that the Spirit "*has His nature and subsistence at once (simul) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principal and through one spiration.*" That one Principal of the Spirit is **the Father**,

and the Father *alone*. It is only in the *collective sense* of the Personal, consubstantial communion between Father and Son that the Spirit proceeds from both.

And, indeed, once one steps away from a narrow Byzantine perspective and realizes that the Roman tradition expresses and embraces two distinct but equally valid truths –i.e., both the Father as the sole Cause (**Aition / Principium**) of the Spirit’s procession (“**ekporeusis**”) and the consubstantial communion of Father and Son resulting in the procession of the Spirit in a collective sense (“**proienai**”), we can suddenly read the other Western expressions presented by Cyril Quattrone in their true and intended light. For, when the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council declares that “...*the Holy Spirit is from both the Father and the Son equally.*,” this does not mean, as Mr. Quattrone assumes, that “...the adverb ‘equally’ indicates that in whatever way He proceeds from the Father, in the same manner He proceeds from the Son.” Rather, it merely refers to the *collective sense* of procession from Father and Son (“**proienai**”) and does not deny or threaten the Father as the sole Cause of the procession (“**ekporeusis**”). Likewise, the 11<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo (not to be confused with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Council of Toledo, which first proclaimed Filioque) in no sense declares, as Mr. Quattrone misinterprets it, that “...in whatever way the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, He also proceeds from the Son.” This is not what Toledo XI says at all. Rather, when it says that the Spirit “is called the Spirit, not only of the Father nor only of the Son, but equally of the Father and of the Son,” this is merely a reference to their Personal consubstantial communion –the collective context of procession. Likewise, when it declares that the Spirit “proceeds not from the Father into the Son nor from the Son to sanctify creatures; but He is shown to have proceeded from both equally, because He is known as the Love of the sanctity of both,” this is not a denial of the Father as the sole Cause (**Aition / Principium**) of the Spirit, but a denial of the *Arian* position that the Son is merely a *temporal* participant in the Spirit’s procession –that the Son merely receives the Spirit after the procession (from the Father) comes about, as opposed to this taking place in the context of an eternal communion between Father and Son. It is of course quite disturbing (from the Western perspective) that modern Eastern Orthodox (i.e., Photian) theology comes very close to advocating this same *Arian* view by refusing to incorporate the Son’s participation in the Spirit’s eternal procession in any way. We will discuss this further below.

But, Cyril Quattrone also cites a (somewhat distorted) statement from St. Augustine, in which that father is presented as saying (emphasis Mr. Quattrone’s):

*‘But the Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son and then proceed from the Son for our sanctification, but He proceeds from Both at the same time, although the Father has given this to the Son, just as the Holy Spirit proceeds from Himself, so He also proceeds from the Son.’*  
(On the Trinity, xv:27).

Now, as with the other citations above, when Augustine says that the Spirit “does not proceed from the Father into the Son,” this is not a denial of the Father’s monarchy or His role as the Spirit’s sole Source or Cause (**Aition / Principium**). For, as we’ve already presented, Augustine clearly taught that the Father is the sole “**Principium**” (Augustine’s

word) of the Spirit. Indeed, in this very same section of his On the Trinity, Augustine clearly writes (emphasis mine)...

“For **the Father alone is not from another**, and therefore **He alone is called unbegotten**, not indeed in the Scriptures, but in the usage of disputants, who employ such language as they can on so great a subject. And the Son is begotten of the Father; and **the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father principally**, the Father *giving* the procession without any interval of time, **yet** in common from Both [Father and Son]. **But He [the Spirit] would be called the Son of the Father and of the Son, if--a thing abhorrent to the feeling of all sound minds--Both had begotten Him. Therefore the Spirit of Both is not begotten of Both, but proceeds from Both.**” (On the Trinity, xv; 26)

Here, Augustine uses ‘begotten’ as a synonym for ‘spirated’ –a reference to the Spirit’s one spiration (from the Father). And this is what Augustine says *just before* the quote presented by Mr. Quattrone, thus establishing *the context* of what Augustine means when he says that the Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son “at the same time.” The reference is to the eternal, consubstantial communion between Father and Son (the context of a collective procession –“**proienai**”), *not* to the procession from the Father alone (“**ekporeusis**”) as the Spirit’s ultimate Cause or Source. Augustine’s statement that the Spirit “does not proceed from the Father into the Son” is clearly not a denial of “the Father *giving* the procession” but is intended to dispute the Arian error that the Son is merely a *temporal* recipient of the Spirit –the same error that the 11<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo condemns above. For, when viewed *in context*, what Augustine is referring to is how the Spirit does not proceed from Father and Son in the sense that a child proceeds from a human father and mother. His *full* quote reads:

“...the Holy Spirit is not said to be begotten, but rather to proceed; since if He, too, was called a Son, He would certainly be called the Son of both, which is most absurd, since no one is son of two, save of father and mother. But far be it from us to surmise any such thing as this between God the Father and God the Son. Because not even a son of men proceeds at the same time from both father and mother; but when he proceeds from the father into the mother, he does not at that time proceed from the mother; and when he proceeds from the mother into this present light, he does not at that time proceed from the father. **But the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son, and from the Son proceed to sanctify the creature, but proceeds at once from both; although the Father has given this to the Son, that He should proceed, as from Himself, so also from Him.**” (On the Trinity, xv; 27)

This is what Augustine is actually referring to, but the full quote is not presented by Mr. Quattrone. Ergo, Augustine is clearly not contradicting the Creedal Statement of Constantinople I. Such a ‘contradiction’ can only be created by wrenching Augustine out of his intended context.

Please note also that Mr. Quattrone's quote somewhat distorts the final line. For, in reality, St. Augustine never says (as Mr. Quattrone's quoted renders it),

*"...although the Father has given this to the Son, just as the Holy Spirit proceeds from Himself, so He also proceeds from the Son."*

...a statement which seems to imply that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Himself (the Holy Spirit) and/or that an equal kind of procession is being applied to Father and Son. Rather, he says ...

*"...although the Father has given this to the Son, that He (THE SPIRIT) should proceed, as from Himself (THE FATHER), so also from Him (THE SON)."*

Once again, the reference is to the consubstantial communion of Father and Son and the context of a collective (participatory) procession, not to the Monarchical procession from the Father alone. Augustine is **not** saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Son in the very same way that He proceeds from the Father. Such a statement would be contradicting what Augustine says just prior to this about the Father being the sole "**Principium**" (Source/ Cause) of the Spirit and the one Who "gives" the Spirit to the Son. That should be obvious for anyone who reads Augustine honestly and comprehensively.

Yet, despite Augustine's true position (so obvious to most Westerners), Eastern Orthodox seem consistently prone to mischaracterizing him and the Western approach to this mystery. For example, Metropolitan Ionannis Zizoulas of Pergamon writes ...

"Does the expression 'principaliter' necessarily preclude making the Son a kind of secondary cause in the ontological emergence of the Spirit? The Filioque seems to suggest two sources of the Spirit's personal existence, one of which (the Father) may be called the first and original cause (principaliter), while the other one (the Son) may be regarded as a secondary (not principaliter) cause, but still a 'cause' albeit not 'principaliter.' The discussions both at the time of St. Photius and at Lyons and Ferrara-Florence seem to have paid special attention to this delicate point. It is not accidental that the Greek theologians even since the time of Photius insisted ...the Father is the sole cause of the Son as well as of the Spirit. This concern does not seem to be fully covered by the Augustinian expression 'principaliter.' The Second Council of Lyons is unclear on this matter when it says that the Father as the Father of His Son is 'together with Him the single principal from which the Spirit proceeds.'" (Metropolitan Ionannis Zizoulas of Pergamon critiquing The Clarification, cited by Cyril Quattrone).

As I think is pretty obvious by now, Metropolitan Zizoulas is simply the victim of his own native, Byzantine point of view, which forces all discussion of the Spirit's procession into the context of Constantinople I's statement about the Father's monarchy

as the sole Cause (**Aition**) of the Spirit. Simply put, the Western Church does not view the Son as a ‘cause’ of the Spirit’s procession at all –not in the sense of **ekporeusis**. The Son is not a ‘secondary cause’ (**aition**) of the Spirit, vs. the Father’s role as primary Cause (**Aition**). It is not a matter of “the Son alone” or “the Son *in addition to the Father*.” Rather, what Filioque refers to is the reality that the Son eternally *participates* with the Father in the procession of the Holy Spirit --that Father and Son *together* account for a procession of the Spirit (**proienai**), in a context that is totally complimentary to the dogma that the Spirit proceeds (**ekporeusis**) from the Father alone as His ultimate Source or Cause (**Aition / Principium**).

Metropolitan Zizoulas’ problem (and it is a stumbling block for many Eastern Orthodox) is that he can only see “*and the Son*” (*Filioque*) as an addition to the Creedal statement of the Byzantine Church, and thus assumes that the context must be one of ‘causes’ –the Son as an ‘additional’ or ‘secondary’ cause. But since, as we discussed earlier, the Latin-speaking West never used the Creedal statement of Constantinople I to specifically refer to the Father as Cause (because of the implied meaning of the Latin “**procedit**” vs. the Greek “**ekporeusis**”), it never had this focus in mind. The West certainly never denied that the Father is the Spirit’s Source and Cause (as is clear from St. Augustine’s statements above). But, this was simply not the West’s focus or preoccupation, and so not the way in which it implemented the Creed. Rather, the preoccupation of the West was always the *collective* context of the Spirit’s procession, which is, yes, a different approach from the Byzantine tradition, but also an equally valid and orthodox one. As in my analogy, does the ‘game of catch’ proceed from the human father who initiates it, or from both the human father and the human son, who jointly participate in it? The answer is that the ‘game of catch’ proceeds from both these things, complementarily and at the same time. The procession of the Spirit is no different. Our different approaches are just that –a matter of context, perspective, and emphasis. The only uncertainty or confusion is rooted in an unwillingness to step outside of one’s native preoccupation and to view the matter from the other’s point of view –something which catholicity, and catholic charity, demands.

But, in regard to Augustine specifically, Metropolitan Zizoulas also writes ...

“In the Byzantine period, the Orthodox side accused the Latin speaking Christians, who supported the Filioque, of introducing two Gods, precisely because they believed that the Filioque implied two causes –not simply two sources or principles –in the Holy Trinity. The Greek patristic tradition, at least since the Cappadocian fathers, identified the one God with the Person of the Father, whereas St. Augustine seems to identify Him with the one Divine substance.” (Ibid)

Here, again, we see how some Eastern Orthodox scholars are apparently unable to see beyond their own native cultural / theological tradition. For, the “Greek patristic tradition” is not the same thing as the Apostolic Faith itself, nor is the Apostolic Faith limited to, or solely defined by, the Greek patristic tradition. Eastern Orthodox seem typically unable to distinguish between these two things, and so assume (very unrealistically) that Greek theology (esp. Antiochian / Cappadocian theology) represents



the be-all-end-all of ancient orthodox Christianity. In this, they basically ignore the equally-valid Latin theological tradition, and so sin against the catholicity of the ancient Church. We will discuss this shortcoming in greater detail below.

As for the Byzantine allegation that Augustine and the West present us with “two God,” we have already seen above that Augustine does not contradict the Cappadocian tradition in regard to the Father being the sole Cause of the Spirit. It is true that Augustine and the West tend to focus on the Divine Substance rather than the Personal Monarchy of the Father. But, that is simply a different, equally-valid theological approach. The only ‘damage’ created by such a theological approach is that it disturbs the “neat order” and distinct cultural integrity of the Greek theological tradition. But, as I just said, the Greek theological tradition is not the Apostolic Faith itself. If one can accept this distinction, and so embrace true catholicity in regard to the various, totally-valid ancient cultural expressions of the one Apostolic Faith, then there is no conflict between the Greek and Latin approaches. It is only when the Byzantine East demands that their native theological approach *define* the Apostolic Faith (i.e., their old “one Church, one Empire” mentality) that problems are created. For, the Byzantine opposition to Filioque, from its start, and in its very essence, has been driven by a kind of ‘theological nationalism,’ to the exclusion of both Rome’s primal authority (which Constantinople sought to usurp) and the perfectly valid and Traditional Western expression of the Apostolic Faith.

Indeed, Metropolitan Zizioulas himself essentially admits that the Byzantine allegation of “two Gods” was nothing but a phantasm. For, he continues ...

“It is of course true that, as the Vatican document points out, the Fourth Lateran Council excludes any interpretation that would make Divine substance the Source or Cause of the Son’s generation or the Spirit’s procession. And yet the Cappadocian idea of ‘cause’ seems to be almost absent in the Latin theological tradition.”

As we keep pointing out, this last statement is simply untrue. Rather, the Father as the “Cause” (**Aition / Principium**) of the Son and of the Spirit is taken for granted in the Latin tradition. For, unlike the Cappadocians and the fathers at Constantinople I, the Western Church never had to defend the Father’s monarchy against the Macedonians, etc. Rather, the Arian challenge to orthodoxy in the West (e.g. Spain) took the form of an attack on the Son’s eternal *participation* in the procession of the Spirit; and so this became the Western focus, resulting in Filioque. It is not that we ignore the Father’s role as Cause (**Aition / Principium**) of the Spirit. Rather, we focus on an equally orthodox and valid truth, which is distinct *but complementary to* the Cappadocian concern.

And Zizioulas continues ...

“...the notion of ‘cause’ seems to be of special significance and importance in the Greek patristic argument concerning the Filioque. If Roman Catholic theology would be ready to admit that the Son in no way constitutes a ‘cause’ (aition) in the procession of the Spirit, this would

bring the two traditions much closer to each other with regard to the Filioque.” (Ibid)

Well, as is clear from the very Vatican document that Metropolitan Zizioulas is critiquing, the Roman Catholic Church *does* declare that the Son is **not** a ‘cause’ of the Spirit in the sense of an “**aition**” –the sense in which the Creedal statement of Constantinople I refers to the procession. What we *cannot* do, however, is deny that the Son’s eternal participation is intrinsic to the Spirit’s procession. Such a denial is the very schismatic, purely-Photian position that many Eastern Orthodox would like to force the West to embrace –claiming that we still make the Son into a ‘cause’ (**aition**) unless we do embrace it. But, as in my analogy of the ‘game of catch,’ saying that the human son is equally essential (in a collective, participatory context) to the ‘game of catch’ as the human father who alone *initiates* the game (as its “**aition**”) does not make the human son into a co-initiator of the game or a secondary ‘cause’ (**aition**) of the game in the sense that the human father is its initiator and cause (**aition**). This is the all-important distinction. So, what we Romans demand (which is the demand of catholic charity) is that Byzantines interpret our expressions, not according to their own native forms or preconceptions, but according to *our* native forms, meanings, and intentions, and so appreciate *the substance* of what we are truly confessing. As long as Eastern Orthodox refuse to do this, they will continue to hide behind self-made, xenophobic (read: bigoted) phantasms and so embrace an invalid excuse for maintaining our Schism, brining sin and shame upon their own heads.

### **The Fathers Know Best**

A major stumbling block in regard to Filioque for many Easterners today is that modern Eastern Orthodox theology is dominated by the 9<sup>th</sup> Century views of Photius of Constantinople, who (in direct response to his *misinterpretation* of what his contemporary Latin brethren meant by “Filioque”), developed a (very ‘Antiochian’) system of Pneumatology in which Son and Spirit have no eternal Personal connection (aside from their consubstantial essence). Eastern Orthodox apologist Cyril Quattrone reflects this view when he writes (emphasis his) ...

“...while some ‘Orthodox’ scholars have toyed with the idea of admitting some sort of medial role for the Son in the procession of the Holy Spirit, this IS NOT THE TEACHING OF THE ANCIENT, HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. I believe it was St. Ireneaus who spoke of the Holy Spirit as the right and left arms of God the Father. While the analogy cannot be pushed too far, it does illustrate the lack of any role of the Son in the pre-eternal procession of the Holy Spirit.”

...and also ...

“We hold that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. Unlike Roman theology, which teaches that the procession of the Spirit would be impossible if the Son did not exist, we teach that the Spirit’s procession is

from the Father alone. Even if the Son did not exist, humanly speaking, the Holy Spirit would still exist.”

As I have already touched on above, this position is most troubling and problematic, given that it threatens the very Personal identity of the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Sonship,” and, in so doing, it distorts both the revealed nature of the Trinity and the very meaning of the Gospel, by which the eternal Son, through the eternal Spirit *of Sonship*, adopts us into *the very same Sonship* which He Himself enjoys eternally with the Father, thereby making us “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) –a mysterious participation in the Trinitarian nature of God. I will address this in greater detail below.

What cannot be denied, however, is that the Photian view (held to so strongly by many Eastern Orthodox) is very much at odds with the testimony of *other* Eastern fathers, most especially the Alexandrians.

For example, St. Cyril of Alexandria clearly teaches (in several places) that the Spirit proceeds from the Father “**through the Son.**” As modern Eastern Orthodox bishop and scholar Photios of Iona explains:

“Saint Cyril taught that the Spirit proceeded from the Father through the Son. In words that could be taken from Augustine, Cyril remarks, ‘inasmuch as the Son is God and from God by nature, since He has been truly generated from God the Father, the Spirit is His own, and He is in Him and from Him.’ The tendency of Cyril at times to confuse the terms ‘person’ and ‘nature’ is well known. ...It is quite significant that Cyril, a product of Alexandrian theology, influenced as it was by Neo-Platonism, is unfortunately ambiguous in his choice of words ...” (Bishop Photios of Iona, a.k.a. Dr. Joseph P. Farrell, quoted in correspondence from Cyril Quattrone to Mark Bonocore).

Setting aside the unfortunate, though somewhat amusing, attempt by modern Eastern Orthodox to brand all non-Antiochian Greek theology (along with Latin theology) as somehow “Neo-Platonic,” the reality is that St. Cyril’s connection between Son and Spirit is found throughout Alexandrian, Cappadocian, and, yes, even some Antiochian theology. However, many modern Eastern Orthodox seem unwilling to see this. The statement cited above by St. Cyril is by no means isolated, accidental, or rare, but occurs many times in his theological works. For example, he writes to Nestorius, saying ...

“For although the Spirit is the same essence, yet we think of Him by Himself, as He is the Spirit and not the Son; but **He is not unconnected with Him [the Son]; for He is called the Spirit of Truth and Christ is the Truth, and He is sent by Him just as He is from God the Father.** ...Since, therefore, He is the Spirit of the Power and Wisdom of the Father, **that is, of the Son,** He is evidently Wisdom and Power. (Epist., xvii, Ad Nestorium, De excommunicatione in P.G., LXXVII, 117)

Here, St. Cyril clearly denies the Photian position (i.e., the popular Eastern Orthodox view, advocated by Cyril Quattrone above) that the Son has no eternal, Personal connection to the Spirit. For, after establishing that They are of the same essence yet distinct in their Personhoods, St. Cyril then maintains that there is a specific connection between them, and that the Spirit is from the Son as He is from the Father.

St. Cyril also says ...

“We must not say that the one Lord Jesus Christ has been glorified by the Spirit, in such a way as to suggest that through the Spirit He made use of **a power foreign to Himself**, and from the Spirit received the ability to work against unclean spirits, and to perform Divine signs among men; but must rather say that **the Spirit, through Whom He did indeed work His Divine signs, is His own**. [The Twelve Errors, Error 9, 430 A.D.]

Here again, St. Cyril of Alexandria clearly acknowledges the Son’s eternal, *Personal* possession of (i.e., participation in) the Spirit. Christ did not work from some post-incarnational pouring forth of the Spirit, but by a Spirit Who was proper to Himself (the *Person* of the Son) from all eternity.

And, perhaps most striking of all, St. Cyril also writes ...

“Just as the Son says ‘All that the Father has is mine’ [John 16:15], so shall we find that **through the Son it is all also in the Spirit**” (Letters 3:4:33 [A.D. 433]).

The Son did not come to possess the Holy Spirit in time, but from all eternity. Likewise, and this is all-important, the Spirit possesses all that is of the Father ***through*** the Son! This *clearly* shows that St. Cyril recognized an eternal, *Personal* connection between the Son and the Spirit, and it firmly pits St. Cyril’s position against that of Photius, who claims that the Spirit’s procession from the Father has nothing to do with the Person of the Son.

Now, as I said above, this view of an eternal, Personal connection between Son and Spirit is not limited to St. Cyril alone. Rather, it is clearly a preoccupation in all Alexandrian Greek theology, going back at least as far as St. Athanasius and St. Didymus the Blind.

For example, St. Didymus the Blind writes ...

“As we have understood discussions ...about the **incorporeal natures**, so too it is now to be recognized that the **Holy Spirit receives from the Son that which He is of His own nature**. ...So too the Son is said to receive from the Father the very things by which He subsists. **For neither has the Son anything else except those things given Him by the Father, nor has the Holy Spirit any other substance than that given Him by the Son**” (The Holy Spirit 37 [A.D. 380]).

The reference is to the principal of *Sonship*. In other words, it is from the Father ‘through the Son’ that the Spirit eternally receives His Personal identity. Please note that St. Didymus writes this contemporaneously with Constantinople I’s confession about the Spirit proceeding from the Father. Yet no contradiction was perceived, because *there is* no contradiction. Indeed, Didymus was drawing from a time-honored Alexandrian tradition:

For, St. Athanasius himself testifies that....

“Insofar as we understand **the special relationship of the Son to the Father**, we also understand that **the Spirit has this same relationship to the Son**. And since the Son says, ‘everything that the Father has is mine (John 16:15),’ we will discover ***all these things also in the Spirit through the Son***. And just as the Son was announced by the Father, Who said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17),’ so also is **the Spirit of the Son**; for, as the Apostle says, ‘He has sent **the Spirit of His Son** into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' (Galatians 4:6).” (Athanasius, Letters to Serapion, III, 1, 33, PG 26, 625 B).

Once again, it is the eternal relationship of Persons that is being referred to. Either the Sonship of Christ is eternal or it is not. St. Athanasius clearly promoted one, eternal Sonship, and so an eternal *Spirit of Sonship* Who proceeds eternally from the Father ‘through the Son.’ This is precisely why the Alexandrians (just like the Latins –e.g. St. Augustine) constantly cite **John 16:15** in regard to the Son’s possession of the Spirit. The Son does not possess or participate in the *Spirit of Sonship* in a mere temporal sense, but from all eternity; and the Spirit (as the *Spirit of Sonship*) receives His Personal identity from the Father ‘**through the Son**.’

And, even the Cappadocians recognize this Apostolic reality.

For example, St. Basil the Great writes ...

“**Through the Son**, Who is one, **He (i.e., the Holy Spirit) is joined to the Father**, Who is one, and by Himself completes the Blessed Trinity.” (The Holy Spirit 18:45 [A.D. 375]).

What cannot be disputed here is that the Spirit, for Basil, is joined to the Father eternally and *Personally through* the Son. There *is* a Personal connection –an eternal, Personal participation of the Son. This is the reality that Filioque addresses. .

And St. Basil clarifies this even further when he writes ...

“...the goodness of [the Divine] nature, the holiness of [that] nature, and the royal dignity reach **from the Father through the only-begotten [Son] to the Holy Spirit**. Since we confess the Persons in this manner, there is no infringing upon the holy dogma of the Monarchy.” (ibid., 18:47).

And the same is true of the Filioque (properly understood). Again, the reference is to the *eternal* relationship of the Persons, with the Son having an intrinsic, Personal connection to the Spirit. Here, St. Basil acknowledges the orthodoxy of the contemporary Alexandrian position, even though that is not the principal concern of the Cappadocians, which is of course the Father's monarchy.

Likewise, St. Gregory Nazianzus says ...

“...the Spirit is a middle term (**meson**) between the Unbegotten and the Begotten.” (Discourse 31, 8).

This too addresses the same reality appreciated by the Alexandrians and the Latins, which sees the Spirit as an eternal, Personal ‘connection’ between Father and Son –the Spirit of Sonship.

Also, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes ...

“The Holy Spirit is said to be of the Father and it is [further] attested that He is **of the Son**. St Paul says: 'Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to Him' (Romans 8:9). So the Spirit Who is of God (the Father) is also the Spirit of Christ. However, **the Son Who is of God (the Father) is not said to be of the Spirit: the consecutive order of the relationship cannot be reversed.**” (Fragment in Orationem Dominicam, quoted by St John Damascene, PG 46. 1109 BC).

Once again, it is the *eternal* order that is being described here, not merely the temporal imparting of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit “of the Son” (the Spirit of Sonship) in an *eternal* capacity. The Spirit's Personal identity is depended upon the Personhood of the Son.

And, St. Gregory of Nyssa also writes ...

“While we confess the invariableness of the [Divine] nature we do not deny the distinction of Cause and of Caused, by which alone we perceive that one Person is distinguished from Another, in our belief that it is one thing to be the Cause and another to be From The Cause; **and in That which is From The Cause, we recognize yet another distinction.** It is one thing to be directly from the First Cause (i.e., the Father), **and another to be through Him (i.e., the Son) Who is directly from the First**, so the distinction of being Only-begotten abides undoubtedly in the Son, nor is it doubted that **the Spirit is from the Father; for the middle position of the Son is protective of His distinction as Only-begotten, but does not exclude the Spirit from His natural relation to the Father.**” (Ep. ad. Ablabius).

Once again, it is the *eternal* relationship of Persons that is referred to. The Cappadocians clearly recognized an eternal, Personal connection between Son and Spirit, which is to be understood in the sense of the Father as the Spirit's Cause (**Aition**), with the Son as an intrinsic and eternal *Participant* in the eternal procession –a *middle position* (i.e., “through Him”) that does not interfere with the Father's exclusive role as Cause (**Aition**).

And the same theology is found in many other fathers belonging to the Antiochian sphere of influence. For example, as early as A.D. 265, and before any possible taint of “Neo-Platonism,” St. Gregory the Wonder Worker produced the following Creed:

“One God, the Father of the living Word, of subsistent Wisdom and Power, and of the Eternal Image. Perfect Begetter of the Perfect, Father of the Only Begotten Son. One Lord, Only of Only, God of God, Image and Likeness of the Godhead, Efficient Word, Wisdom comprehending the constitution of the universe, and Power shaping all creation. Genuine Son of Genuine Father, Invisible of Invisible, and Incorruptible of Incorruptible, and Immortal of Immortal, and Eternal of Eternal.  
**And one Holy Spirit, having substance of God, and Who is manifested through the Son; Image of the Son**, Perfect of the Perfect; Life, the Cause of living; Holy Fountain; Sanctity, the Dispenser of Sanctification; in Whom is manifested God the Father, Who is above all and in all, **and God the Son**, Who is through all. Perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty neither divided nor estranged.” (Confession of Faith)

In some Eastern Orthodox sources, the clause “manifested through the Son” is typically followed by “[to men, that is]” –something universally recognized by scholars to be a medieval, and very obvious, embellishment, intended to reconcile St. Gregory with the Photian view. Indeed, the clauses just before and afterward, which speak of the Spirit as having the substance of God and calling the Spirit the “Image of the Son” reveal St. Gregory the Wonder Worker's true intention. His reference is to the *eternal* order.

Likewise, we have the witness of St. Epiphanius of Salamis, who writes ... .

“For the Only-Begotten Himself calls Him [the Spirit] ‘the Spirit of the Father,’ and says of Him that ‘He proceeds from the Father,’ and ‘will receive of mine,’ so that He is reckoned as not being foreign to the Father nor to the Son, but is of their same substance, of the same Godhead; He is Spirit Divine ... of God, and He is God. For He is Spirit of God, Spirit of the Father **and Spirit of the Son**, not by some kind of synthesis, like soul and body in us, **but in the midst of Father and Son**, of the Father **and of the Son**, a Third by appellation. ... The Father **always existed** and the Son **always existed, and the Spirit breathes from the Father and the Son**; and neither is the Son created nor is the Spirit created.” (Ankyrotos or The Man Well Anchored, A.D. 374).

Once again, an *eternal*, Personal connection between Son and Spirit is recognized. And St. Epiphanius also says ...

“The Spirit is **always** with the Father and the Son, ... **proceeding from the Father and receiving of the Son, not foreign to the Father and the Son**, but of the same substance, of the same Godhead, of the Father and the Son, He is with the Father **and the Son, Holy Spirit ever subsisting**, Spirit Divine, Spirit of glory, **Spirit of Christ**, **Spirit of the Father**. ... He is Third in appellation, equal in Divinity, not different as compared to Father and Son, **connecting Bond of the Trinity**, Ratifying Seal of the Creed. (Panarion)

This is exactly the same theology found in the Alexandrians and Cappadocians above, in which an eternal, Personal connection between Son and Spirit is recognized.

He also writes ...

“No one knows the Spirit, besides the Father, except **the Son, from Whom He proceeds (proienai) and of Whom He receives.**” (OP.. cit., xi, in P.G., XLIII, 35):

Also, in the year A.D. 410 –that is, after the A.D. 381 Council of Constantinople, the Council of Seleucia (in the Antiochian patriarchate), declared its faith in ...

“...the Holy Living Spirit, the Holy Living Paraclete, **Who proceeds from the Father and the Son**.” (Lamy, “Concilium Seleucia”, Louvain, 1868).

The Greek term used was “**proienai**” (not “**ekporeusis**”). It was, thus, an orthodox profession, and possibly an intentional attempt to validate the Alexandrian theology of St. Athanasius, etc. Please keep in mind also that, in A.D. 410, this regional Council of Seleucia was on par with the contemporary view of Constantinople I, which was also seen as merely a regional council, and not yet counted as Ecumenical. Indeed, if the bishops at Seleucia in A.D. 410 interpreted the Constantinopolitan Creed in the exclusive, rigid sense in which most modern Eastern Orthodox interpret it, they would never have been able to make the profession quoted above. A change in Eastern understanding has clearly taken place.

And this is self-evident from the very language of the Constantinopolitan Creed itself. For, in one place, the Creed describes the Personal identity of the Spirit as “the Life Giver” (“the Giver of Life”). But, in another place, it tells us that it is “*through*” the Son that “all things were created” –a reference to the Son’s eternal, Personal identity as the Word. For, as **John 1:3-4** declares of the Son:

“All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was **life**...”

This alone reveals the necessity of an eternal, *Personal* connection between Son and Spirit. For, if the Spirit is the “Giver of Life,” and if life comes “*through*” the Son, then the Spirit cannot possibly be the “Giver of Life” (His Personal identity) except ***through***



*the Son*. Thus, the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father must intrinsically involve the Son –the very thing which Photian theology denies.

Moving along in history, but prior to the Photian age, it is clear that numerous Byzantines were able to appreciate the difference between the true meaning of Filioque (as the Latins used it) and popular Greek misconceptions about it.

For example, St. Maximos the Confessor clearly saw no problem with the theology behind Filioque. At the height of the Monothelite controversy, when the Roman curia issued its profession of faith to the imperial court of Constantinople, employing the Greek term “*ekporeusis*,” but then including “*and the Son*,” the Byzantines were understandably scandalized, since the expression in Greek obviously (though unintentionally) implied two Causes for the Spirit. However, St. Maximos came to Rome's defense, writing ...

"Those of the Queen of cities (Constantinople) have attacked the synodal letter of the present very holy Pope, not in the case of all the chapters that he has written in it, but only in the case of two of them. One relates to the theology [of the Trinity] and according to this, says 'the Holy Spirit also has his *ekporeusis* from the Son.' The other deals with the Divine incarnation. With regard to the first matter, they (the Romans) have produced the unanimous evidence of the Latin Fathers, and also of Cyril of Alexandria ... **On the basis of these texts, they have shown that they have not made the Son the Cause of the Spirit --they know in fact that the Father is the only Cause of the Son and the Spirit, the one by begetting and the other by procession --but that they have manifested the procession through Him [the Son] and have thus shown the unity and identity of the essence.** They (the Romans) have therefore been accused of precisely those things of which it would be wrong to accuse them, whereas the former (the Byzantines) have been accused of those things it has been quite correct to accuse them (i.e., Monothelitism). **In accordance with your request I have asked the Romans to translate what is peculiar to them (the 'also from the Son') in such a way that any obscurities that may result from it will be avoided.** But since the practice of writing and sending (the synodal letters) has been observed, I wonder whether they will possibly agree to doing this. **It is true, of course, that they cannot reproduce their idea in a language and in words that are foreign to them as they can in their mother-tongue, just as we too cannot do.**" (Epistle to Marinus, PG 91, 136.)

Here, in the mid 600's, St. Maximos already recognizes that the problem is a semantic one, rooted in different cultural expressions and preoccupations. If only Photius and others had followed his example of catholic charity.

And, even in his own writings, St. Maximos will echo the Filioque –that is, the substance of the Filioque as it is found in the writings of other Eastern fathers. For example, in his

Questiones et Dubia, Interr. XXXIV, St. Maximos speaks of the Spirit proceeding “through the Son” and “by means of the Word.” (PG 90, 813B).

Likewise, St. John Damascene, while always careful to protect the Father’s role as the sole Cause of the Spirit, echoes the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria and the others, saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father “through the Son.” He writes ...

“Neither do we say that the Spirit is from (“**ek**”) the Son, but we call Him the Spirit of (“**de**”) the Son.” (OF 188/ PG 141 B).

Yet, he also says ...

“He is the Spirit of the Son, not as being from Him but as **proceeding through Him** from the Father.” (OF 196/PG 148 B).

And also ...

“He is a sanctifying force that is subsistent, but proceeds **unceasingly from the Father and abides in the Son.**” (OF 201/ PG 151 c).

And also ...

“And the Holy Spirit is the power of the Father revealing the hidden mysteries of His Divinity, **proceeding from the Father through the Son** in a manner known to Himself, *but different from that of generation*” (ibid., 12).

And, echoing St. Gregory Nazianzus above ...

“[The Holy Spirit] is the median (**meson**) of the Unbegotten and the Begotten and He **is joined with the Father through the Son.**” (OF 200/ PG 151 B)

And also ...

“I say that God is **always** Father since He has **always** His Word [the Son] coming from Himself and, **through his Word, the Spirit issuing from Him**” (Dialogue Against the Manicheans 5 [A.D. 728]).

Once again, we see the *eternal*, Personal connection between Son and Spirit –the very thing denied in Photian theology. Indeed, for St. John Damascene, the Spirit is most typically presented as the eternal “Breath” accompanying the Father’s eternal utterance of the eternal Word (the Son). In this, we again see the intrinsic, Personal connection and the Spirit’s role as the *Spirit of Sonship* –the eternal Breath released (by the Father) *because* He utters the eternal Word, and thus the Word’s (the Son’s) necessary participation in the procession of the Breath (the Spirit). For as St. Thomas Aquinas would later elaborate on St. John’s imagery, the Cause of both the Word (the Son) and

the Breath (the Spirit) is the Speaker (the Father). And to say that the Word is essential to the procession of the Breath does not make the Word the Cause of the Breath, but merely asserts that the Breath depends on the Cause's utterance of the Word. For, in begetting an eternal Son, the eternal Father spirates an eternal Spirit of Sonship.

And, to cite a much later, post-Schism example of the Eastern Orthodox profession, ...

In 1285, the Eastern Council of Blachernae, though it did reject the Latin formulations of the unifying Council of Lyon II (along with the mistaken notion that the West proclaimed a “double spiration”), it also declared its faith in an “*eternal* manifestation of the Spirit through the Son.” (Aristeides Papadakis, Crisis in Byzantium). Likewise, the comprehensive, 14<sup>th</sup> Century Eastern Orthodox work, the Synodikon of Orthodoxy, which exposes and condemns more than sixty anathemas representing the doctrinal decisions of Eastern councils, there is no mention of the Filioque, or even of Photius' denial that the Spirit proceeds eternally ‘through’ the Son.

So, in short, it is simply untrue (as Mr. Quattrone asserts above) that there is no medial role of the Son in Eastern Pneumatology or that “Even if the Son did not exist, humanly speaking, the Holy Spirit would still exist.” This is not the comprehensive position of the Eastern fathers, but a later, *medieval* position popularized by certain factions in the Byzantine Church *in direct response* to contemporary misconceptions about the Latin term “Filioque.”

But, even if it were otherwise –even if no Eastern father said anything remotely supportive of the theology behind Filioque –there would still be an enormous problem for modern Eastern Orthodox to deal with. Why? Because, as the Greek bishops at Ferrara-Florence discovered to their dismay, almost every Latin father who ever lived is on record supporting Filioque in even more explicit terms.

Just to cite some examples of this (setting aside St. Augustine, whose support of Filioque is beyond question), we have ...

Tertullian:

”I believe that the Spirit proceeds *not otherwise than from the Father through the Son.*” (Against Praxeas 4:1 [A.D. 216]).

St. Hilary of Poitiers:

”Concerning the Holy Spirit . . . it is not necessary to speak of Him Who must be acknowledged, Who is **from the Father and the Son, His sources**” (The Trinity 2:29 [A.D. 357]).

..and ...

”In the fact that before times eternal, Your [the Father’s] Only-Begotten [Son] was born of You, when we put an end to every ambiguity of words and difficulty of understanding, there remains only this: He was begotten. So too, even if I do not grasp it in my understanding, I hold fast in my consciousness to the fact that **your Holy Spirit is from You through Him**” (ibid., 12:56).

St. Ambrose of Milan

”Just as the Father is the fount of life, so too, there are many who have stated that the Son is designated as the fount of life. It is said, for example that with You, Almighty God, **Your Son is the fount of life, that is, the fount of the Holy Spirit.** For the Spirit is life, just as the Lord says: ‘The words which I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.’ [John 6:63]” (The Holy Spirit 1:15:152 [A.D. 381]).

...and ...

”The Holy Spirit, when **He proceeds from the Father and the Son,** does not separate Himself from the Father and does not separate Himself from the Son” (ibid., 1:2:120).

Please note that St. Ambrose’s theology was very “Cappadocian.”

The Quicumque Vult (an early Western Creed, c. A.D. 380)

“The Father is of none, neither made, nor created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, neither made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is **of the Father and of the Son,** neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but **proceeding.**”

Pope St. Damasus I

“**The Holy Spirit is not of the Father only, or the Spirit of the Son only, but He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son.** For it is written, ‘In anyone loves the world, the Spirit of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15)’; and again it is written: ‘If anyone, however, does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (Romans 8:9).’ When the Father and the Son are named in this way, the Holy Spirit is understood, of Whom the Son Himself says in the Gospel, that the Holy Spirit ‘proceed from the

Father (John 15:26),’ and that ‘He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you (John 16:14).’”(Acts of the Council of Rome, 382).

Pope St. Leo the Great

“The Son is the Only-begotten of the Father, and **the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son**, not as any creature, which also is of the Father and of the Son, but as living and having power with both, and **eternally subsisting of that which is the Father and the Son.**” [Sermons 75:3]

The Athanasian Creed

“[W]e venerate one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in Oneness. . . . The Father was not made nor created nor begotten by anyone. The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. **The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son**, not made nor created nor begotten, but **proceeding.**” (Athanasian Creed [A.D. 450]).

St. Fulgence of Ruspe

”Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the only God the Son, Who is one Person of the Trinity, is the Son of the only God the Father; but the **Holy Spirit Himself also one Person of the Trinity, is Spirit not of the Father only, but of Father and of Son together.**” (The Rule of Faith 53 [A.D. 524]).

...and ...

”Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the same **Holy Spirit who is Spirit of the Father and of the Son, proceeds from the Father and the Son.**” (ibid., 54).

And we can, of course, multiple many other examples, such as Pope St. Gregory the Great, who obviously approved of the canons of Toledo and held communion with the Spanish and Gaulish bishops who Liturgically professed Filioque.

Now, above I mentioned how Mark of Ephesus and the other Greeks at Ferrara-Florence (1439) were quite surprised and disturbed by the consistent and overwhelming testimony of the Western fathers in regard to Filioque. Their response to this was most interesting, and it reveals a less than commendable side of Byzantine ‘catholicity.’ As Joseph Gill

comments in his very balanced historical account, The Council of Florence (emphasis mine):

“It was probably a shock to many of them [the Greek members of the Council] ... The Saints of both Churches had written at length on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Latin Saints, it is true, used a phraseology that was suspect to the Greek mind, for they wrote 'From the Father and the Son'. The Greek Saints were less emphatic, but they spoke of the Spirit being produced 'from both' and 'through the Son'. No Saint could err in matters of faith, for they all -- this was taken almost as a definition of sanctity -- were inspired by the one Holy Spirit. ... [Mark of Ephesus] **persisted in asserting that the quotations advanced from the Latin Fathers were falsified (since the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son, the Saints could not have said that He does, was his reasoning), in spite of their number and in spite of the fact that they are found so widespread in Latin writings and so interwoven into the treatises that to exclude them would leave no more than blank pages (as Bessarion rejoined):** at the least they were doubtfully authentic, since the Greeks lacked the means of checking them, **so only the Greek Fathers should be followed.** Syropoulos was of the same opinion and, if we are to accept all that he retails in his *Memoirs*, he dilated on this theme even more than Mark of Ephesus.”

Or, as Mark of Ephesus expressed himself in his own words (emphasis mine)...

“The words of the western Fathers and Doctors, which attribute to the Son the cause of the Spirit, I never recognize (**for they have never been translated into our tongue nor approved by the Oecumenical Councils) nor do I admit them, presuming that they are corrupt and interpolated...**’ (Mark's *Confessio fidei*, in Petit, *Docs.* P. 438 [300] ).

Notice how Mark of Ephesus, despite exhaustive Latin explanations, still twists Filioque into a doctrine making the Son a “cause” of the Spirit. His argument that the Western Church intentionally distorted, indeed *forged*, the entire Latin corpus of patristic literature (i.e., literally *thousands* of antique manuscripts) is of course blatantly ridiculous.

But, true to form, Mark’s Byzantine colleague, John Bessarion, took a more rational, albeit tongue-in-cheek view. He of course makes light his fellow Greeks’ reaction:

“They [the Latins] brought forward passages not only of the western teachers but quite as many of the eastern... to which we had no reply whatsoever to make except that they were corrupt and corrupted by the Latins. They brought forward our own Epiphanius as in many places clearly declaring that the Spirit is from the Father and the Son: corrupt we said they were. They read the text mentioned earlier in Basil's work against Eunomius: in our judgment it was interpolated. They adduced

the words of the Saints of the West: the whole of our answer was 'corrupt' and nothing more. We consider and consult among ourselves for several days as to what answer we shall make, but find no other defense at all but that ... We had no books that would prove the Latin texts to be corrupt, no Saints who spoke differently from those put forward. We found ourselves deprived of a just case in every direction. So we kept silent ' (P.G. 161, 358CD).

Such are the extents that 'patriots' will go to defend, not objective history or Apostolic truth, but their own way of life and cultural expression. I refer to the cultural heritage of Byzantine civilization, which was obviously more important to Mark of Ephesus and the other schismatics than the true and comprehensive testimony of the fathers, most especially the Western ones.

Indeed, what cannot be denied, and surely most modern Eastern Orthodox are willing to admit this, is that the theology behind Filioque is at least natural and intrinsic to the ancient heritage of the Western Church –a Church with which their Eastern forefathers maintained communion, both before *and after* the Western belief became a point of contention. Yet, if Filioque is indeed a heresy (as some Eastern Orthodox would boldly assert), then not only did ancient Eastern Christians hold communion with heretics, but it means that Christ's own promise about the Church (against which "the gates of hell will not prevail") is null and void. Why do I say this? Because, given that the Roman West consistently held to a belief in Filioque, and given that (as Eastern Orthodox historians admit) there were numerous periods when the entire East fell into formal heresy, with only the Roman West (supposedly) holding fast to orthodoxy, it would therefore follow that the *entire* Church fell short of the Apostolic faith during these times; and so the Church cannot be (as **1 Tim 3:15** calls it) "the pillar and foundation of Truth." Thus, during the Arian schism of the 340's-360's, the Acacian schism of the 480's-early 500's, and the Monothelite schism of the 650's-680's, etc., Filioquist Rome was lost to the same doctrinal darkness that eclipsed the contemporary Eastern communion, leaving the universal Church with no promised connection to the Holy Spirit --no authoritative "Rock" of orthodoxy. Those who think that Filioque is a "heresy" would do well to reconsider their position because of this problem alone. Either Filioque is a valid doctrinal expression, or Christ Himself is a liar and the Church is not Spirit-guided and infallible, but prone to universal error. And, if that's the case, then the entire Orthodox faith is "up for grabs."

Still another major problem for the zealous anti-Filioquists (and this became obvious at the Council of Florence) is that they are arguing from silence. For, while the Eastern fathers consistently defend God the Father's monarchy and speak of the Spirit proceeding from the Father (a truth the West has never denied), there is not one orthodox father (Eastern or Western) who directly *denies* that the Son participates in this procession from the Father (i.e., the true meaning of Filioque). Rather, the very best that Eastern Orthodox can do is cite one isolated passage from Theodoret of Cyrillus (fl 5<sup>th</sup> Century), in which he draws from the same Antiochian preoccupation that will later produce Photian Pneumatology and says ...

“The Holy Spirit does not gain its existence from the Son or through the Son, but by procession from the Father, we say that It is of the Son since it is co-essential (homoousios).’ [PG 83;1484C].

Needless to say, this statement by Theodoret is strongly at odds with the other Eastern fathers quoted above, who *do* recognize that the Spirit proceeds eternally “through the Son.” It is also no secret that Theodoret was a Nestorian, or at least possessed strong Nestorian tendencies. And that of course should be enough to disqualify him.

Yet, setting Theodoret aside, the Eastern Orthodox possess no patristic witness to totally exclude the Son from the Spirit’s eternal procession. Rather, what they do (just as many Protestants do with Scripture) is impose their own (medieval / Photian) presumptions upon what the fathers have to say and dismiss (indeed, ignore or rationalize away) anything that interferes with their interpretations. This of course is very sad, and unworthy of an Apostolic Christian.

### **Photius and the Doctrinal Problems Created by His View**

In their rejecting of the Filioque, do I say that the Eastern Orthodox are heretics? No, I do not say that; at least not as far as formal heresy goes –that is, heresy as a matter of direct profession, as opposed to *a failure* to profess or appreciate essential truth. For, officially-speaking, the Eastern Orthodox Church merely holds fast to the original, orthodox pronouncement of the Constantinopolitan Creed –the decree that the Father alone is the Cause (**Aition**) of the Spirit. However, in focusing on this truth and rigidly ignoring additional truth, many Eastern Orthodox come very close to heresy –that is, the sin of a schismatic mentality, which is the sin of rejecting the totality of Truth, and so dividing the unity of the Church, which is “the pillar and foundation of Truth” (**1 Tim 3:15**). As a very wise priest once said, “All heresies are, in some sense, ‘true.’ The problem is that they zealously stress one truth at the expense of other truths.” Such is the case with the popular Eastern Orthodox rejection of Filioque –that is, their unwillingness to appreciate and accept the orthodox theology that Filioque addresses, as testified to by the fathers. Indeed, by implicitly ‘dogmatizing’ the Photian theolegoumenon, in which Son and Spirit are presented as having no eternal, *Personal* connection, they strongly imply that the eternal Sonship of Christ is something all-together different from the Divine Sonship into which Christians are adopted, *through the Holy Spirit*, in Baptism. And this comes very close to the Spanish Arian view, if not also the ancient heresy of Adoptionism! For Christ was God’s only Son *prior to* His Baptism and His anointing in the Spirit (**Mark 1:10-11**), and it is this same, *eternal* Sonship (for there is no other) that He calls us to partake of, *through the Spirit*, in Baptism. For, as St. Paul says, ...

“...you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a **Spirit of adoption**, through which we cry, ‘**Abba,**’ ‘**Father!**’  
(**Romans 8**)

This is the *eternal* cry of the eternal Son. And, St. Paul goes on ...



“The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, **heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ**, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (**Ibid**)

Now, Eastern Orthodox typically try to avoid this problem by appealing to the post-Photian (13<sup>th</sup> Century) theology of Gregory Palamas, which distinguishes between God’s “essence” (“nature”) and His “energies” (“actions, operations”). But, even Gregory himself, though an extreme Cappadocian / Antiochian in his theological outlook, mirrors the authentic tradition of St. Augustine in recognizing that the Spirit represents the *eternal* Divine Love between Father and Son. He writes ...

"The Spirit of the most high Word is like an **ineffable Love of the Father for this Word ineffably generated**. A Love which this same Word and beloved Son of the Father entertains (**chretai**) towards the Father: but insofar as He (the Son) has the Spirit coming with Him (**sunproelthonta**) from the Father and reposing connaturally in Him" (*Capita physica* XXXVI, PG 150, 1144, D-1145 A).

This is not quite the expression of Augustine (viz. Filioque), but it comes extremely close; and, more to the point, it addresses the same reality. For Gregory Palamas (unlike Photius), there *is* an eternal, *Personal* connection between the Son and the Spirit, and this eternal, Personal connection effects the Spirit’s Personal identity.

However, a misapplication of the authentic Palamite view --something many Eastern Orthodox typically fall into in their opposition to Filioque --can create enormous, and arguably heretical, problems. Indeed, while Palamite theology was a valid and fitting response to the brutal, pseudo-Scholastic (and most impious) assertions of Barlaam of Calabria (who claimed that man can only know God intellectually), it was simply not designed to take on the nuances of Western doctrine, viz. Filioque. For if, as Gregory asserted, human beings can only know God via His “energies” and not His “essence” (the Divine essence being known to God alone), it therefore follows that our Baptismal Covenant with God, through which we receive the Holy Spirit, is merely a communication of “energy” and not essence. So far, so good. But, if this is the case, then the same must be true of the Son’s reception of the Spirit from the Father. For, according to the Photian assumption, the Holy Spirit only proceeds ‘through the Son’ in a temporal sense (i.e., Christ’s pouring forth of the Spirit upon the Church) and not an eternal sense. And, if this is the case, then one must conclude that Jesus’ conception in the womb of the Blessed Theotokos, and His Baptism in the Jordan, and His bodily Resurrection --all of which were brought about through the Holy Spirit --were merely acts of the “energy” of God, and so not manifestations of the eternal Sonship of God in the context of the Divine essence, but purely-temporal, “adoptive” acts, in which the Father made Christ into His Son in ways that are totally distinct and *separate from* the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son. This *must* be the case if the procession of the Spirit “through the Son” is not an eternal reality, but merely a temporal reality --that is, if, as Cyril Quattrone asserts, the Son has no role in the ‘pre-eternal’ procession of the Holy Spirit.

The West, however, creates no such artificial distinction. Rather, we confess that the Son was and is, always and eternally, the Son of God –always and eternally the recipient of the Spirit of Sonship. This is clearly the position of the Eastern fathers as well. For example, St. Cyril of Alexandria writes ...

“We, therefore, confess one Christ and Lord, not as worshipping a man with the Word (lest this expression ‘with the Word’ should suggest to the mind the idea of division), but worshipping Him as one and the same, forasmuch as the body of the Word, with which He sits with the Father, is not separated from the Word Himself, **not as if two Sons were sitting with Him, but one, by the union with the flesh.** If, however, we reject the Personal union as impossible or unbecoming, we **fall into the error of speaking of two Sons, for it will be necessary to distinguish, and to say, that He who was properly man was honoured with the appellation of Son, and that He who is properly the Word of God has by nature both the Name and the reality of Sonship. We must not, therefore, divide the one Lord Jesus Christ into two Sons.**” -- The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius.(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. III., col. 315; Migne, Patr. Græc., Tom. LXXVII. [Cyril., Opera, Tom. X.]; Epist. iv., col. 43.)

So, when Christ was conceived in time *by the Holy Spirit*, and when He was anointed *by the Holy Spirit* at His Baptism in the Jordan, and when He was raised from the dead *by the Holy Spirit* to prove His Divinity as God’s only Son, all of these were merely manifestations of the **eternal** reality –of the **eternal** Sonship of Christ. They were not “additional sonships” conferred upon Him as a man, but manifestations of His one and only Sonship, which is eternal and which is accompanied by His eternal, Personal participation in the procession of the Spirit of Sonship: the Holy Spirit. And it is this same Spirit of Sonship, which Christ possesses eternally, which we Christians receive in Baptism. The Eastern Orthodox rejection of Filioque calls all of this into question, however. Does “Christ the man” possess a Sonship with the Father that is distinct and different from the *eternal* Sonship of the Son? Or does the Christian Gospel recognize only one, eternal Sonship of Christ, just as the Creed proclaims:

“We believe in **one Lord**, Jesus Christ, the **only Son** of God, **eternally begotten of the Father** ...”

If we recognize only one Lord, then we recognize only one Son, Who possesses an *eternal* Sonship. This is the one and only Sonship into which we are adopted, through the Holy Spirit (the Spirit *of Sonship*), in Christ Jesus. And, if this Sonship is *eternal* in nature, not created or brought into being in time (at the conception of the Theotokos, or at the Jordan, or in the Resurrection), then the Spirit Who inspires the cry of “Abba!” –the Spirit of Sonship –is also eternal, and so eternally connected to the Person of the eternal Son, Who must participate in this Spirit of Sonship’s procession (from the Father) *in order to be* an eternal Son.

This valid and authentic approach was never fully developed in the Antiochian school of theology, which gave birth to the Pneumatology of Gregory Palamas, and Photius, and the Cappadocian fathers before them. And it is through this essentially “Antiochian” shortcoming that the Nestorian heresy also came about. We of course already presented the quote from Theodoret of Cyrhus above, in which he (long before Photius) denies any eternal, Personal connection between the Son and the Spirit. Given his Nestorian tendencies, it is not hard to see why. And modern Eastern Orthodox who deny any eternal, Personal connection between Son and Spirit come very close to the Nestorian error themselves. They would do well to take this into account.

As for Photius’ own theology, as I mentioned above, it was basically developed as a knee-jerk reaction to his misconceptions about what the Western Church meant by “Filioque.” For this reason alone (its unsubstantiated, reactionary design), it possesses many shortcomings.

Eastern Orthodox writer A.A. Slepukhof illustrates the Photian presumptions very well. He writes:

“...the Filioque undermines the doctrine of the Trinity by confusing the Divine Nature with the Divine Persons; by confusing Natural and Personal attributes. It violates the revelations we have about the Trinity, as recorded in Scripture, that being the Source of the Holy Spirit is a Personal (and not Natural) attribute of the Father (John 15:26). In its haste to safeguard the Deity of the Son, the Council of Toledo failed to address the consequences of the Filioque on the Holy Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit God? If He is, then He must possess the same Divine Nature as the Father and the Son. If we say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Nature of the Father and from the Nature of the Son, then are we not compelled to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Nature of the Holy Spirit? If it is God’s Nature to be the source of the Holy Spirit, then does the Holy Spirit also proceeds from Himself? ...Any attempt to resolve these dilemmas while retaining the Filioque leads quickly to one of three conclusions. Either –(1) the Personal distinctions within the Trinity are erased, or (2) Natural distinctions are introduced where there can be none, or (3) the Holy Spirit is stripped of His Divine Personhood. ...If we say that being the Source of the Holy Spirit is a Natural (and not a Personal) attribute of the Father, the absolute unity of God’s nature is maintained, but the Personal distinctions are lost. Descriptive titles such as ‘the Begetter of the Son’ or ‘Source of the Spirit’ become meaningless as a means of referring to the Father, since the Son is now also a ‘Source of the Spirit’ and the Spirit is a ‘Begetter of the Son.’ ...This results in Modalism (*i.e.*, *Sabellianism*), the belief that the Persons of the Trinity are merely different ways in which God appears to us at different times. St. Photius aptly described this as ‘Sabellianism reborn, or rather some semi-Sabellian monster.’” (A.A. Slepukhof in The Dawn, published by OCA-South, 1996).

Though we've covered this many times, it bears repeating once more to illustrate the baseless nature of Slepukhof's (that is, Photius') argument. For, as the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) clearly confesses, ...

**“The Substance (i.e., Divine Nature) does not generate, is not begotten, does not proceed; but it is the Father Who generates, the Son Who is begotten, the Holy Spirit Who proceeds.”**

A.A. Slepukhof has apparently never read this –the authentic Western confession. Nor has he apparently read the universal testimony of the Western fathers (both before and after Toledo), who consistently maintain that *the Father* is the sole and Personal Source/Cause of both the Son and the Spirit.

But, Slepukhof is of course merely repeating Photius' own insensitive and erroneous interpretation of Filioque and what it actually means. For, he claimed that Filioque was an example of Sabellianism “...or rather some semi-Sabellian monster” –a presumption rooted in Photius' total inability to look beyond the conventions of Greek (Antiochian) theology or to appreciate the fact that Trinitarian mystery can be expressed in ways not limited to the convention of “Person” vs. “Nature.”

St. Augustine, for example, describes the Spirit as “the Love” between Father and Son. The Photian position counters this with the Scriptural revelation that the Trinity itself (that is, the Divine Nature) is Love (**1 John 4:8**). But, such expressions are not mere either-or dynamics. For example, we call the Third Person of the Trinity “the Spirit.” But God the Father is also called “a Spirit” by Christ (**John 4:23-24**). Likewise, Christ Himself, though the Second Person of the Trinity and clearly distinct from the Third Person of the Trinity, is called “a life-giving Spirit” (**1 Corinth 15:45**). Does this conflict with the Creed's description of the Third Person as “the Holy Spirit ...*the Giver of Life*”? Indeed, God is “Spirit” as a quality of His very Nature –the Trinity Itself. Does this ‘confuse Natural and Personal attributes,’ as Slepukhof maintains? Does it create a “semi-Sabellian monster,” as Photius presumed? Of course not.

Rather, in the Filioque, a third possibility is presented in regard to the procession of the Spirit. For, as the West confesses, the Spirit does not proceeds as an action of the consubstantial Nature (Substance) or as the act of only one Divine Person divorced from any other. Rather, He proceeds from the act of one Divine Person (the Father) *with the Personal participation* of another Divine Person (the Son). If such a Personal participation is impossible for Father and Son, since (so someone might say) it excludes the Person of the Spirit from Their consubstantial communion, then it must also be impossible for the Father (as only one Person within the consubstantial Trinity) to act in any Personal capacity on His own, thus making Him unable to beget the Son (or to spirate the Spirit). Yet, no Eastern Orthodox (or Catholic) would ever maintain such a thing. In reality, the Spirit is not excluded from the consubstantial communion accounting for His own procession, given that this is an eternal and simultaneous reality – that is, the Father's eternal begetting of the Son is the very same *arch* as His spirating of the Spirit. The Speaker (the Father) Who eternally utters the eternal Word (the Son) simultaneously releases (spirates) the eternal Breath (the Spirit) –a Breath released

*because* of the utterance of the eternal Word, and so with the eternal Word's intrinsic participation (i.e., "through the Son"). Thus, the *entire* consubstantial nature of God is involved; but the Spirit's procession is brought about (in a collective sense) via the participation of two Persons (the Father and the Son) within that consubstantial nature.

However, Photius himself was simply unable to fit this into the static conventions of his native theology. As Catholic scholar Yves Congar explains (emphasis mine) ...

"Photius ...believed that the Persons were distinguished by personal properties **that could not be communicated**. Their properties were, in his opinion, sufficient to characterize them. The Father was **Anarchos**, without principle or beginning. The Son was begotten, and this referred Him to the Father as such. The Spirit proceeds from the Father as **Aitia**, the cause and the only cause both of the Spirit and of the Son.

Photius regarded the monarchy of the Father as the principle both of the Spirit and of the monogenous One, and as the principle of their consubstantiality. **Whereas the Greek Fathers saw this monarchy as moving dynamically in a straight line, from the Father through the Son in the Spirit,** however, Photius adopted a scheme consisting of two branches:

FATHER <      SON  
   SPIRIT

He also either **passed over in silence or eliminated numerous patristic texts which were open to the idea that the Son played a part in the eternal coming of the Spirit to consubstantial being.**

In his view, there were only two possibilities --an activity that is common to the three Persons and goes back to their nature, or one that is strictly personal. **To admit, as the Latins did, that the procession of the Spirit came both from the Father and from the Son, as from a single principle, was to withdraw that procession from the hypostases and to attribute it to their common nature.** In those conditions, it would be wrong to dissociate the Spirit from that common nature, because he also possesses the same nature as the Father and the Son --thus he would proceed from himself, which would be clearly absurd.

**The Latin construction is only tenable if the Persons are distinguished by an opposition in relationship, but the spiration does**

**not allow for such an opposition in relationship between the Father and the Son. It can therefore be common to them. We do not, for that reason, do an injustice to the hypostatic order and favor the Divine nature, because that nature is hypostatic in its existence and the hypostases are constituted by their *subsistent* relationships** -- the Father *is* Fatherhood and the Son *is* Sonship or Begottenness. What is more, **in that unity of the principle of active spiration, the Father is the first principle (*Principaliter*)**. It is necessary to admit that this is not sufficiently apparent -- the word 'procession' is not clear. The Father and the Son seem to be at the same level, whereas they are in fact not, since 'the Father is greater than I'. The Father is the absolute and primordial origin.

It cannot be denied that the teaching of the Fathers and of John Damascene was narrowed down and hardened in the theology of Photius. Although, as Sergey Bulgakov has pointed out, 'there is no unanimous and homogeneous patristic doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit', and there are openings in the direction of a procession *per Filium* and even *Filioque*.

Photius enshrined pneumatology in a form of expression which put out of the question an agreement with the West or even with those Latin Fathers whom the Orthodox Christians accept as their own. As a result of this, confrontation and polemics have all too often prevailed over an attempt to reach agreement. But -- as I shall be happy to show -- the victory of confrontation has not been total, nor is it definitive. We must, however, take Photius' arguments seriously -- the more so because the Greek Church has taken over his theology -- without at the same time losing sight of those Fathers whose work Photius himself tended to leave aside." (Congar, "I Believe in the Holy Spirit," vol. 3, p. 57-60).

I think this is the nature of our theological controversy in a nutshell. And, the first step in resolving the controversy (presuming that Eastern Orthodox would like it to be resolved) is for modern Eastern Orthodox to admit that Photius' view is not the final word, not even in regard to their own authentic tradition

### **Some Challenging Thoughts**

In closing, I would like to pose the following issues for our Eastern Orthodox brethren to consider:

Given that we Roman Catholics fully accept and support your right to express the Apostolic Faith according to *your own* Byzantine tradition (i.e., the originally intended meaning of the Constantinopolitan Creed); and given that what we profess in regard to the Filioque is not at odds with that Byzantine tradition (as evidenced by the testimony of

the Greek fathers, and also the Latin fathers, who also represent your larger Catholic heritage, and with whom your ancestors shared full communion), what is your *real* reason for rejecting Filioque as a valid doctrinal expression for the *Western Church*? I strongly recommend that you ask yourself that question –honestly and prayerfully.

As historical context reveals, one cannot justly cite Canon VII of Ephesus to argue that Filioque is an illicit addition to the Creed for the Western Church. Ergo, there is no canonical prohibition against Filioque. As we have also seen, Filioque does not refer to what Photius assumed it refers to –that is, a procession from the Divine Nature, as opposed to a procession from the Father (as sole Cause), with the intrinsic *participation* of the Son (e.g. just as a Breath proceeds from the Speaker alone, but not without the participation of the Speaker’s Word). As we have also seen, there is a strong and consistent Tradition among the fathers (both Eastern and Western) in which the Son possesses an eternal, Personal connection to the Spirit and participates in the eternal procession from the Father (i.e., “through the Son”) –the very reality that “Filioque” refers to. In addition to this is the fact that Eastern Orthodox maintained full communion with Roman Catholics long after the Filioque doctrine became a point of theological contention. In all this time, it was not a Church-dividing issue. So, why and how did it *really* become one? Well, please consider the following, chronological facts:

- 1) It is a clear historical reality that the Western Church professed the theology of Filioque from earliest times. This being the case, there are only two possibilities. Either the Roman West was heretical long before the time of Constantine, or Filioque is a valid and Apostolic expression, paralleling the doctrine expressed by St. Cyril of Alexandria and other Eastern fathers, in which the Spirit is said to proceed from the Father “through the Son.”
- 2) The first recorded conflict between Romans and Byzantines over the doctrine of Filioque occurred in about A.D. 650 when Pope St. Martin I issued a decree against Monothelitism to the Byzantine court. This Papal decree included an expression of faith conveying a poorly-worded Greek translation of Filioque, in which the term “**ekporeusis**” was used. The Byzantines correctly objected to this Greek expression, and St. Maximos the Confessor interceded for the Romans and explained what they really meant –that is, what the doctrine of Filioque really referred to. This evidently satisfied the Byzantines of this time, since no further objections were voiced by them, nor did Filioque become an issue at the Council of Constantinople III (A.D. 680), which condemned Monothelitism, and even posthumously anathematized a Roman Pope! Funny enough, in the very same year (680), a council of English bishops at Hatfield, presided over by Archbishop St. Theodore of Canterbury –*a Byzantine* appointed a decade earlier by Pope St. Vitalian –declared that the Holy Spirit “proceeds in an ineffable way from the Father **and the Son.**” (Bede the Venerable, Hist. Eccl. Gent. Angl. 4.15 [17]). If Filioque is an error serious enough to divide the Churches today, why was it tolerated (and sometimes even professed) by Byzantines of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century?
- 3) In the following century, the Iconoclast controversy once again alienated Rome from Byzantium. But, through all this time, no Byzantine (whether Iconoclast or

Orthodox) voiced any objection against Rome's Filioquist beliefs. Indeed, at the time of the unifying Council of Nicaea II (A.D. 787), Patriarch Tarasius of Constantinople is recorded making the following profession of faith to the Romans:

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, proceeding from the Father **through the Son**" (Nicaea II, Profession of Faith, Mansi 13.760 [A.D. 787]).

This was clearly intended to be an ecumenical "nod" to the Western profession of Filioque. Thus, so far, the treatment of the issue is a thoroughly tolerant one.

- 4) But, in the following century (the early 800's A.D.), the relationship changed dramatically. The first direct Eastern denial of Filioque took place in Palestine at the Monastery of Mar Saba (A.D. 808), where a Greek priest bitterly objected to the presence of Filioque in liturgical missals used by *Frankish* monks. Hearing of the scandal created, the newly-crowned Western Emperor Charlemagne (a.k.a. King of the Franks) petitioned Pope Leo III to formally amend the Creed – a request he refused, so as not to alienate the Byzantines. Yet, it is from this point on that Filioque began to become a contentious issue between the Eastern and Western Churches. Why so? I would strongly submit to you that the reason was not really doctrinal at all, but predominately political in nature. The Romans, who up until this time had been at least nominal subjects of the Byzantine Empire, had recently created a new Western Emperor for themselves – a Western Emperor who, to Byzantine eyes, was nothing more than a 'barbarian.' The Frankish nation had now become a serious political and cultural rival to the ancient Byzantine order. And, in the person of their King (i.e., Emperor), they had officially championed the doctrine of Filioque – a doctrine that was, after all, formally "alien" to the Byzantine expression of faith, and so something that arguably "threatened" the Eastern way of life – the faith of the Eastern Church ("Holy Byzantium").
- 5) It was in A.D. 867 that Patriarch Photius of Constantinople became the first Byzantine with any real authority to formally condemn Filioque as an "error." And while he probably realistically believed that it was, please consider the historical context which led him to denounce the Western doctrine. The Byzantine Empire desperately needed to exert political influence over the Bulgarians and Slavs on their northern borders – something it had typically done through religious assimilation (that is, by making potential invaders part of its imperial "state cult"). But, at this very same time, the Carolingian Franks had a strong presence (both militarily and religiously) in the Balkans, and were trying to recruit the natives into their sphere of influence. Thus, Photius' condemnation of the Filioque was not driven by mere religious conviction, but principally by the already-existing civil / ecclesial conflict over the Balkans, and it served as a way to undermine and discredit the Roman religion of Byzantium's Western rivals – to exploit a notable difference between the two competing Empires. This is the



- true beginning of the popular Eastern Orthodox objection to Filioque, and one must be honest about that. That is, one must admit that an ulterior motive was involved –a motive that was very nationalistic. For, a strong prejudice against Filioque would be enshrined with the promotion of Photius as a saintly champion of the Byzantine way of life. The fact that Photius’ theological arguments against Filioque were based on misinterpretations, and possibly even intentional mischaracterizations, was not important. If nothing else, Photius was a Byzantine hero –a personality who clearly and forcefully articulated that there was indeed a difference between “us” and “them.” What is unfortunately is that this “difference” was merely superficial and cultural, and not a substantial difference in the Apostolic Faith.
- 6) Yet, even after the short Photian schism was healed, with Rome agreeing (for the sake of peace) to maintain the Creed as written throughout Italy, the impression that Filioque was a “foreign,” “barbarian” doctrine still prevailed among the Byzantines. But, at the same time, these Byzantines continued to hold communion with the “Franks” of the West (that is, Catholics living in France, Germany, Spain, England, and other places where Filioque was recited in the Creed). For, despite the protestations of Photius, and the continuing displeasure of his theological disciples, the Western doctrine was still not seen as an error serious enough to divide the Churches.
- 7) I would assert that it was only when the Papal legate Humbertus formally excommunicated Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople (for other, legitimate offenses) in 1054 that the Filioque actually became a Church-dividing issue. And why? Because the Byzantines thought it was a heresy? Not really. Rather, in the bull excommunicating Cerularius (which was actually written by Humbertus after Pope Leo IX’s death), the charge was leveled that the Byzantines had invalidly “removed” the Filioque from the Creed. Now, while liberal and anti-Catholic scholars are quick to point out how “ridiculous” this supposedly was, the truth is that we are not totally certain what Humbertus was referring to. He may have been referring to the profession of faith made by the Byzantines at Nicaea II in 787, when “from the Father *through the Son*” at least conceded and recognized the doctrine of Filioque. Yet, whatever the truth, from this point on, Filioque became not merely an “alien” doctrine that should be dismissed if possible, but a doctrine that was (or certainly seemed to be) **forced upon** the Byzantines, and so which had to be resisted at all cost. And why? Because it was untrue? Not necessarily. Its validity or invalidity did not really matter. What did matter, and what was unquestionable, is that the doctrine was “un-Byzantine” –that is, it threatened the consistent, culture integrity of the ancient (and “holy”) Empire of the Eastern Romans –an ancient integrity that was now under attack by pretentious “barbarians” from the West.

I would strongly yet respectfully suggest that this is the *real* motivating cause behind the zealous Eastern Orthodox rejection of Filioque –a quasi-“nationalistic” reaction to something that is, or at least perceived to be, a threat to the ancient and venerable Byzantine tradition. Such was the motivating instinct of the Eastern bishops at

Blachernae, and of Mark of Ephesus and the other Byzantines who rejected the union of Ferrara-Florence. And it is the motivating instinct that governs the Eastern Orthodox Church to this day, which fears that it will ‘lose itself’ (its own identity) if it indulges any charitable compromise with the West. All canonical and theological arguments against Filioque merely serve to rationalize, and attempt to justify, what is essentially a cultural “gut reaction” against that which is seen as alien to Byzantine heritage. And, because Byzantine heritage (i.e., the civilized, Christian heritage of ‘true’ Roman Empire) is presumed to be one and the same thing as Apostolic Christianity, anything that is alien to it ‘must be wrong.’ It is my fervent hope that our Eastern Orthodox brethren will come to admit that they are prone to such assumptions, and that they will at least thoughtfully and prayerfully reconsider what drives them to condemn Filioque out of hand. If an Eastern Orthodox is capable of at least second-guessing his preconceived notions and perhaps admitting that Byzantine history and theology present no substantive reasons for rejecting Filioque as a valid doctrine (when approached from the Western point of view –the tradition in which it was formulated), perhaps then we can place this needlessly-divisive issue behind us and work to establish the unity that Christ so desires among His disciples (**John 17:20-21**). If such a unity could exist between the ancient fathers of the East and those of the West (who unquestionably professed Filioque), why can’t it exist among their spiritual children today? The Eastern Orthodox need to address this issue and account for it.