

# AS FROM THE FATHER, SO FROM THE SON: THE PROCESSION OF THE SPIRIT IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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## Introduction

The *filioque* clause affirms that the Spirit eternally ‘proceeds from the Father *and the Son,*’ countering the subordination of the Son with a demonstration of his coequality with the Father. From its affirmation by the Canons of the Council of Toledo in AD589, its inclusion in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed became increasingly widespread in the Church in the West, until it received official authorization by Pope Benedict VIII in the eleventh century. This has been a principal factor in the schism with the Church in the East, which alleges that, by seeming to deny that the Father is the sole principle and cause of the Son and the Spirit, the *filioque* clause threatens the unity of God and the distinction between the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup>

There has been an ecumenically-motivated renewal of attention to the *filioque* clause in the West, leading some to propose new mediating formulations for the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. While Moltmann concedes that ‘the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son’ and states that ‘the interpretation is correct which states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father “alone”,’ he suggests instead that we should speak of ‘the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father *of the Son.*’<sup>2</sup> The Church of England, like many Reformed churches at the time of the Reformation, retained the *filioque* clause in its formularies in the sixteenth century,<sup>3</sup> but in the Moscow Statement of 1976, emerging out of Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, the Anglican delegates agreed that the *filioque* clause should not be included in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, upon which the 1978 Lambeth Conference then acted, recommending that all member churches of the Anglican Communion should consider omitting the *filioque* clause altogether!<sup>4</sup> Although this proposal was not subsequently adopted, its legacy still lingers in the provision of an alternative text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, ‘The *filioque* clause in ecumenical perspective,’ in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (ed. L Vischer; London: SPCK, 1981), pp. 4–6, 13.

<sup>2</sup> J. Moltmann, ‘Theological Proposals Towards the Resolution of the Filioque Controversy,’ in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, pp. 166–169.

<sup>3</sup> Article V, *Of the Holy Ghost*, begins, ‘The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son.’

<sup>4</sup> D.M. Allchin, ‘The Filioque Clause: An Anglican Approach,’ in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, pp. 86–87.

in *Common Worship*, which omits the phrase ‘and the Son’ for use ‘on suitable ecumenical occasions.’<sup>5</sup>

One argument frequently made against the *filioque* clause, that the West added it without the consent of an ecumenical council, is important and should be noted, but will not be explored further here. Of particular relevance for this article are arguments based on texts concerning the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son in John’s Gospel, as one of the Church’s most significant primary sources for its formulation of Trinitarian doctrine. Especial emphasis is often placed on John 15:26, referring to ‘the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father.’ It is further argued that the use of texts describing the relationship of the Spirit to both the Father and the Son makes ontological claims out of statements properly referring to the Spirit’s temporal mission. The Moscow Statement reads:

It is with reference to the mission of the Spirit that we are to understand the biblical texts which speak both of the Father (John 14:26) and of the Son (John 15:26) as sending the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, there is a move to abandon altogether the distinction between the immanent and the economic, which, some allege, corrupts the biblical material with alien metaphysical concepts. LaCugna writes of those who ‘went considerably beyond the scriptural understanding of economy by locating God’s relationship to the Son (and the Spirit) at the “intradivine” level.’<sup>7</sup> Ayres identifies this as part of a larger trend to present classical Christian theology as unsustainable because of its debt to ‘Greek metaphysics,’ which has resulted in the overcoming of supposedly ‘dynamic’ fundamental biblical themes by ‘static’ ontological categories;<sup>8</sup> in this case, the sending of the Spirit into the world is supplanted by the eternal procession of the Spirit. Even the Eastern understanding of the Spirit would be a casualty of this approach: after all, the debate with the East is not over whether there is an eternal procession of the Spirit, but from whom the Spirit proceeds.

Responding to these arguments against the *filioque* clause, the approach of this article will be, first, to revisit the role of the Spirit in relation to the Son in the Gospel of John as a whole, and secondly, to investigate whether the Gospel itself invites us to draw conclusions about ontology from temporal statements, and indeed, to make any such distinction, and thus answer the question of whether the language of the

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<sup>5</sup> The Archbishops’ Council, *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, (London: Church House, 2000), p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> D.M. Allchin, ‘The Filioque Clause,’ p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> C.M. LaCugna, *God For Us* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), p. 388.

procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son is so inappropriate after all, in accounting for the Spirit's role.

## Revealing the Truth of the Son

In considering John's presentation of the role of the Spirit in relation to the Son, then, which is foundational for subsequent discussion about the existence of any immanent relationship, one major theme which emerges is the Spirit's continuation of Jesus' revelatory ministry in Jesus' absence. The very first action of the Spirit mentioned in the Gospel of John is to make Jesus' identity known. In John 1:29–34, John the Baptist announces that Jesus is the Lamb of God, but also admits he himself did not know him; it is only the descent of the Spirit that enables him to recognize Jesus.<sup>9</sup> The ongoing revelation of Jesus by the Spirit, however, becomes a major theme in the Farewell Discourse in chapters 14 to 16. The revelation of Jesus to John the Baptist by the Spirit takes place while Jesus is still in the world; in chapter 13, however, Jesus introduces the idea that he is leaving the world (John 13:33, 36) and in chapter 14, it becomes apparent that he is returning to the Father, when he tells his disciples that he is going to his 'Father's house' to 'prepare a place' for them (John 14:2–3). Jesus' disciples still need further instruction, as well as being reminded of what Jesus has already taught them (John 14:26, 16:13). They at least have had the benefit of hearing Jesus firsthand and seeing the signs he performed. Those who read John's Gospel will not have seen and heard Jesus in this way, and there will be an increasing lapse of time separating them from Jesus' ministry. It is the Holy Spirit who supplies what is lacking in Jesus' absence.

When Jesus introduces the Holy Spirit, he describes him as 'another Advocate,' with the implication that Jesus himself is already an Advocate.<sup>10</sup> Space precludes a discussion of what it means for the Spirit to be the Paraclete, but what is important for our purposes is the implication that, as another Paraclete, the Spirit and Jesus share some of the same functions, and that the Spirit will keep on doing the work that Jesus began on earth after Jesus has returned to the Father. The Spirit is not another Jesus: the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection are, for John,

<sup>9</sup> C.R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 134–135.

<sup>10</sup> ἄλλον παράκλητον; While this could be rendered 'another, a Paraclete,' removing the implication that there had been an earlier Paraclete, this is not the obvious meaning; John 10:16 for example reads ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω, 'I have other sheep,' that is, others of the same class of entity, not 'I have others—sheep,' that is, others of a different class. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 638.

unique events. Rather, the Spirit discloses the truth about those events.<sup>11</sup> Thus Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will teach them everything and remind them of what Jesus has said to them (John 14:26). Reminding establishes a connection with the past, calling to mind the things Jesus has already made known, while the teaching of all things, linked so intimately with reminding, means bringing new insight into what Jesus has said. The Gospel of John itself contains evidence of this work of the Spirit in reminding and teaching. In John 2:19, after Jesus has cast out the traders and money-changers from the temple and a sign is demanded from him, he replies, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.' According to verse 22, it is when Jesus is raised from the dead that the disciples remember this saying, and, presumably, understand it as referring to the rebuilding of the temple of his body (verse 21). Similarly, it is when Jesus is glorified that the disciples remember and understand Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey.<sup>12</sup> The origin of the Spirit to this end is described as the Father sending the Spirit at Jesus' request (John 14:16) and the Father sending the Spirit in Jesus' name (John 14:26).

The connection between the Spirit and truth is significant in this regard. Jesus claims to be the one who embodies God's truth when he identifies himself as 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6). The Paraclete is then described as 'the Spirit of truth' (John 14:7, 16:12). As the Spirit of truth, he will guide the disciples into all the truth, which in the light of this, must mean that the Spirit will bring people to Jesus who is the way and the truth.<sup>13</sup> The Spirit's truth cannot be separated from the truth that Jesus has already made known. It is in this sense that we also understand that the explanation for the Spirit's guiding of the disciples into all truth is that the Spirit will not speak on his own, but speak what he hears (John 16:13). Presumably this refers to what the Spirit hears from the Son, because Jesus goes on to say that the Spirit will take what is Jesus' and declare it to his disciples. This also helps us to understand the promise that the Spirit will declare to the disciples 'the things that are to come.' This is best taken as a reference not to the prediction of future events, but, in the context of the night of Jesus' betrayal, Jesus' passion and resurrection; the same phrase<sup>14</sup> is used later to describe the content of Jesus' knowledge as he goes forward to be arrested (John 18:4).

<sup>11</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, p. 148.

<sup>12</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, pp. 152–153.

<sup>13</sup> In John 14:6, Jesus describes himself as *ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια*. In John 16:13, *ἀλήθεια* recurs and *ὁδὸς* is contained within the verb *ὁδηγέω*. This is a verbal indication that we are meant to connect the Spirit's leading of the disciples into all truth with Jesus as the way and the truth in this manner.

<sup>14</sup> *τὰ ἐρχόμενα*. The NRSV obscures this connection in translating the second instance 'all that was to happen to him.'

The Spirit's declaration of things to come means declaring the meaning of Jesus' coming death and resurrection.<sup>15</sup>

The Spirit continues the revelation of Jesus not only to the disciples but also to the world. John 15:18–25 refers to the hatred and persecution of the disciples by the world, since the world, according to Jesus, hated and persecuted him, and he has chosen his disciples out of the world. It is in this context that the crucial text, John 15:26, comes. The Spirit of truth will testify on Christ's behalf, that is, continue to disclose the significance of his words and deeds, and expose the truth about the world's alienation from Jesus and thus the Father who sent him in their rejection of Jesus and his disciples. The Spirit's work in the world is also seen in John 16:8–11, which again comes in the context of persecution, in this case, the disciples' exclusion from the synagogue and even their murder (John 16:1–2). In particular, the Spirit will convict the world of sin, specifically, unbelief, and of righteousness, because Jesus' departure to the Father confirms that Jesus is no unrighteous opponent of God, but has completed his work of obedience in his earthly ministry and death on the cross.<sup>16</sup> Here we note that in both chapters, Jesus is spoken of as sending the Spirit to give this testimony (John 15:26, 16:7), while chapter 15 includes the statement that Spirit comes from the Father. It is this that appears to underlie the mission on which Jesus sends his disciples in John 20. He breathes the Holy Spirit on them to empower them by their proclamation of the forgiveness or retention of sins to confront the world's sin and extend the offer of release (John 20:22–23).<sup>17</sup>

## Imparting the Life of the Son

A second major theme in considering the role of the Spirit in relation to the Son is that of the Spirit as the means by which Jesus gives people life. The Prologue introduces the Word as the one in whom was life (John 1:4). John the Baptist identifies Jesus as 'the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit' (John 1:33). What this means is elucidated in later chapters. In chapter three, Jesus teaches the impossibility of entrance into the kingdom of God without being born of the Spirit (John 3:5). Then, in chapter four, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that he has living water to offer (John 4:10). On one level, living water could simply mean flowing water, not stagnant water, and this is how the Samaritan woman understands it, asking incredulously how Jesus could get that living water without a bucket (verse 11). It can also mean water that leads to eternal life, as Jesus explains in verse 14, saying of the water he gives that it becomes in those to whom he gives it 'a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'

<sup>15</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, pp. 155–156.

<sup>16</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, pp. 151–152, 153–154.

<sup>17</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, p. 149.

That this water can be a metaphor for the Spirit is explicitly established in John 7:37–39. Having mentioned ‘living water,’ John 7:39 adds that ‘he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive.’ This living water will flow from Jesus to believers (verse 38). The translation ‘believer’s heart’ (NRSV) for the source is unlikely since the believer does not become a source of living water for others in the Gospel; it is always Jesus who gives the water and the Spirit.<sup>18</sup> Verse 39 also establishes the necessity of Jesus’ glorification before the Spirit is given, which, for John, means Jesus’ crucifixion; in John 13:31, immediately after Jesus’ revelation to his disciples that one of them was going to betray him, and his dismissal of Judas to perform that task, Jesus says, ‘Now has the Son of Man been glorified.’ John describes the crucifixion in a way that makes precisely this connection between the giving of the Spirit and Jesus’ glorification. In John 19:30, Jesus ‘gave up his spirit,’<sup>19</sup> referring in the first instance to his death. However, this could also be translated ‘handed over the Spirit,’ and it is not unreasonable given John’s predilection for double meanings to assume that he intends both. Jesus’ death makes possible the handing over of the Spirit. A graphic connection with Jesus’ promise in chapter 7 that living water would flow from within him<sup>20</sup> is made when the centurion pierces Jesus’ side with a spear in John 19:34, and blood and water flow out.<sup>21</sup>

## The Inconclusiveness of Proof-Texts

In John, then, the Spirit continues the ministry of Jesus, particularly in his absence, in revealing Jesus to his disciples and the world, and imparting the life that is in Jesus. To this end the Spirit is portrayed variously as being sent by the Father at Jesus’ request or in Jesus’ name, as coming from the Father, as being sent by Jesus, and as being given by and coming from Jesus in some sense. There is a tendency to read all statements about the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son as exclusively temporal. Brown notes how the description of the Spirit as the one ‘who comes forth from the Father’ in John 15:26 made its way into the fourth-

<sup>18</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, p. 145. Moreover, ‘believer’ is imported from the beginning of the verse, which takes *ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ*, ‘the one who believes in me,’ to be the subject of *πινέτω*, ‘let him drink,’ in a parallel structure with *τις διψᾷ*, ‘anyone who thirsts’ and *ἔρχέσθω*, ‘let him come to me.’ This move is unnecessary, however; the phrase is simply *ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ*. *αὐτοῦ* could simply be referring to the same individual as the *ἐμέ* from earlier—Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> *παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα*.

<sup>20</sup> John 7:38 (NRSV) refers to living water flowing out of the ‘heart,’ *κοιλία* not *καρδία*. ‘Heart’ is a more figurative use of *κοιλία* and it has a broader semantic range of ‘belly’ or ‘stomach’; it is upon this use that John 19:34 draws.

<sup>21</sup> Koester, *Word of Life*, p. 146.

century creeds to refer to the eternal procession of the third Person of the Trinity from the Father. Attention is sometimes drawn to the present tense of ‘comes,’ in contrast with the future tense of ‘send’ in the same verse<sup>22</sup> as an indication that the former is referring to what is eternally the case. However, Brown argues that, since the coming forth is in parallelism with the promise to send, both refer to the mission of the Spirit to human beings; the writer is not ‘speculating about the interior life of God’ but is ‘concerned with the disciples in the world.’<sup>23</sup> Even commentators whose approach is more theological, such as Lincoln, assume this verse refers to the Spirit’s activity in time, without discussing the question of intra-Trinitarian relationships.<sup>24</sup>

This approach to parallelism has been challenged by James Kugel, who argues that Robert Lowth’s eighteenth-century classification of parallelism into ‘synonymous,’ ‘antithetical’ and ‘synthetic’ is defective; the second line in a ‘synonymous parallelism’ does not in fact say the same thing twice, but is the completion of the idea introduced in the first line.<sup>25</sup> The difference in tenses between ‘who proceeds’ and ‘will send’ remains, and its significance may be that the eternal procession of the Spirit is completed by the Spirit’s mission in the world. This is not, however, decisive, and it does not solve the lack of reference to the Spirit’s proceeding from the Son. What is clear is that a different approach is needed if we are to answer the question of whether the *filioque* clause remains a defensible way of describing the relationship between the Spirit and the Son as portrayed in John’s Gospel. The key hermeneutical question is then, whether we can, on the basis of what John says, distinguish between the ontological and the temporal, and whether these statements about the relationship of the Spirit to the Son have a basis in the inner divine life.

## The Analogy with the Son’s Relationship to the Father

It is fruitful to consider the ways in which the relationship between the Spirit and Jesus is analogous to that between Jesus and the Father. With regard to the theme of revelation, Jesus is the one who makes the Father known (John 1:18). He testifies to what he has seen and heard (John

<sup>22</sup> ἐκπορεύεται, third person singular present middle indicative; πέμψω first person singular future active indicative.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *John*, p. 689. Schnackenburg and Carson advance the same argument. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John Vol. 3* (London: Burns & Oates, 1982), p. 118; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Nottingham: Apollos, 1991), p. 529.

<sup>24</sup> A.T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 411–412.

<sup>25</sup> J.L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 12–13.

3:32) and the Father has sent him to utter the words of God (verse 34). Similarly, Jesus' teaching is not his own, but that of the Father who sent him (John 7:16). Jesus declares to the world what he has heard from the Father who sent him (John 8:26). To see Jesus is to see the Father (John 14:7–9). With regard to the theme of giving life, the Father gives life and the Son gives life to whom he will (John 5:21). These are all statements about Jesus' mission in time. However, John is also clear that this is only possible because Jesus' relationship to the Father has a basis in eternity. Jesus makes the Father known because he is the one who 'was in the beginning with God' (John 1:2) and 'close to the Father's heart' (NRSV) or, better, 'at the Father's side' or 'in the bosom of the Father' (John 1:18).<sup>26</sup> Jesus sees and hears because he is 'from above' (John 3:31). Jesus shows the Father because he is in the Father and the Father is in him (John 14:10). The Son is able to give life, because the Father has granted the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26). The Father sends the Son, and the Son is able truly to reveal the Father and give the life that the Father gives precisely because he shares in the being of the Father. The temporal mission reveals the ontological relationship. As we have seen, like Jesus with the Father, the Spirit brings to mind and teaches the truth about Jesus, speaks what he hears from Jesus, and gives the life that Jesus gives. Though not explicitly stated, the ability for the Son to send the Spirit to do this must presuppose the same participation in the being of the Son that the Son has in the being of the Father to be able to do the same things in relation to the Father.

### The Son's Prerogative to Send the Spirit

A further indication of the distinction between God in himself and God in his dealings with humankind, and the dependence of the latter on the former, can be seen when we examine further the basis on which the Son sends the Spirit. Thompson has noted that the recent Christological emphasis on the Spirit has led to a neglect of the consideration of the implications of the Spirit for our understanding of God.<sup>27</sup> In particular, many of the activities which we have seen are common to the Spirit and the Son are also common to the Spirit and the Father. For example, just as the Spirit testifies to Jesus, so does the Father (John 5:37, 8:18). Similarly, just as the Spirit teaches, so God teaches (John 6:45).<sup>28</sup> That the Spirit does the same things in relation to the Son as the Father is an indication that the Father has given the Son the prerogative to give the Spirit to others. Again, this is analogous to the Father granting the Son to have

<sup>26</sup> εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς.

<sup>27</sup> M.M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, p. 183.



life in himself in order to confer that life to others (John 5:26). Similarly, Jesus exercises other divine prerogatives because the Father has conferred them upon him, namely the authority to exercise judgement (verse 27). These are, in fact, the implications of the statement that the Father has given all things into Jesus' hand (John 3:35). This takes us once more out of the temporal into the realm of eternal relations. The actions of water and breath coming from within demonstrate that Jesus has and bestows the Spirit as an entity not alien to himself but one which comes from his being.<sup>29</sup> Recovering a pneumatology in John that is not primarily Christological nevertheless has important Christological consequences, namely the characterisation of Jesus, by sharing the divine prerogative of giving the Spirit, as sharing in the being of God.<sup>30</sup>

### Augustine's Reading of 'Spirit' Texts in the Fourth Gospel

Reasoning from John's presentation of the Son's relationship to the Father informs Augustine's own classically ontological reading of texts about the Spirit's relationship to the Son, which can therefore be sustained against the objection that these are texts about the Spirit's temporal mission, or that this introduces a concept altogether foreign to John. Augustine argues that the Spirit's ability to reveal in time presupposes an eternal participation in the being of the one who is revealed. Expounding John 16:13, he writes that the Spirit "will not speak of himself" because he is not of himself.' Rather, the Spirit's hearing is the Spirit's knowing, and 'to know is to be.' Thus, 'his knowledge is of him of whom his essence is.'<sup>31</sup> Augustine also regards the Spirit's participation in the being of the Son in this way as the necessary grounds by which the Son is able to bestow the Holy Spirit in John 20:22: 'For if he did not proceed from him, [Jesus] after the Resurrection, showing himself anew to his disciples, would not have breathed upon them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit."<sup>32</sup> Augustine argues on the basis of the more explicit analogous relationship between the Father and the Son. Answering the objection of why the Son says that the Spirit proceeds from the Father in John 15:26, Augustine argues that the Spirit belongs to the Son as the eternal gift of the Father in a similar manner to the way the teaching of the Son is not his own but his who sent him.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, pp.175–177.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, p.187.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *Tractates on John* 99.4, in *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 55–111 (trans. J. Rettig; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), pp. 223–224.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *Tractates on John* 99.6, pp. 225–226.

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Tractates on John* 99.8, pp. 227–228.

Moreover, by only positively affirming that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, the Son ‘refers even what belongs to himself to him from whom he himself also is.’ Christ does this ‘in such a way that he did not say, “He does not proceed from me.”’ Thus the Son has it from the Father ‘that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from him’ and so ‘the Holy Spirit has it from the Father himself that he proceeds also from the Son, just as he proceeds from the Father.’ While, therefore, the Spirit ‘proceeds from each at the same time,’ this procession is not exactly symmetrical: the Spirit proceeds from the Father without qualification, but it is only because ‘the Father has given this to the Son that [the Holy Spirit] proceeds as from himself, so also from him.’ Similarly, the Spirit’s ability to give life derives from the Spirit’s procession from the Son; this is the Father’s gift to the Son, comparable to the way Son has life because the Father has granted it to him:

We cannot say that the Holy Spirit is not life when the Father is life [and] the Son is life. And for this reason, just as the Father, although he has life in himself, has given also to the Son to have life in himself [Jn 5:26], so he has given to him that life proceed from him as it also proceed from himself.<sup>34</sup>

For Augustine, according to Ayres, the Spirit proceeds from the Father, but proceeds as the Father’s eternal gift to the Son; both Father and Son are thus the *principium* of the Spirit, but without jeopardising the ultimacy of the Father as the cause and source of the Trinitarian communion.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

The Spirit’s role in relation to the Son in John’s Gospel makes it necessary to say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. It is what guarantees the Spirit’s ability to remind the church accurately of Jesus’ teaching and provide a correct understanding of Jesus’ ministry to the church and world, and to impart the life that Jesus has in himself and promises to others. Moreover, it is of Christological significance in affirming the equality of the Son with the Father, since the Father shares all things with the Son. As Kostenberger and Swain write, John’s portrayal of Father, Son, and Spirit ‘puts pressure’ on fourth-century discussions about the nature of God, although their conclusion that ‘later formulations and terminology should be viewed less as evolutionary developments beyond the New Testament data and more as attempts to describe,’ inadequately

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *Tractates on John* 99.8, pp. 227–228.

<sup>35</sup> L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 264–265.

accounts for the newness of the way the language of procession is used.<sup>36</sup> As Augustine's exegesis illustrates, Ayres is correct in observing that while patristic writers employ particular philosophical doctrines, they are using them in the service of elucidating particular themes or passages from Scripture; they are deeply shaped by a notion of the Scriptural text as the primary resource for the Christian imagination.<sup>37</sup> Augustine's account of the relationship of the Spirit to the Son and the Spirit's role draws on categories he already sees in the text.

Saying new things and using new arguments should not be regarded as an inherently bad thing. As Williams argues in relation to the earlier *homoousios* controversy, it is sometimes necessary in order to make no change to the deposit of tradition. We need to progress from a 'theology of repetition'; the strict adherence to neutral terms, in this case, the phrase 'who proceeds from the Father,' can be a potential betrayal of the historic faith, for example, when faced with disputes against the Arians over the full divinity of the Son, a contributory factor to the inclusion of the *filioque* in the West.<sup>38</sup> We have to keep moving just to stand still. With regard to the concerns of the Church in the East over the *filioque* clause, Ayres writes that 'Western understandings of *filioque* do not contravene the assertion of the Father's priority in the Triune life,'<sup>39</sup> which we have seen in our analysis of the Johannine material and Augustine's exposition of it. Ecumenical dialogue, if it is to proceed at all, must move beyond simply acquiescing in the tired claims that the *filioque* clause has no textual support, relies on mistaking temporal for ontological statements, and smuggles in categories altogether foreign to the text.

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<sup>36</sup> A.J. Köstenberger and S.R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: the Trinity and John's Gospel* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, pp. 391–392.

<sup>38</sup> R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2001), p. 235.

<sup>39</sup> Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 266.