

Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission

Agreed Statement

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# The Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit



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## Introduction

The Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission (AOOIC) resumed its work in 2013 and completed its Agreed Statement on Christology in 2014, which was submitted to the responsible authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion for their consideration and action. Following the agreed agenda of our dialogue and addressing matters rooted in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the AOOIC began its work at the same time on the theological understanding of the Holy Spirit, in Woking, England, in 2013. At its 2014 meeting at the St Mark Centre in Cairo, Egypt, the Commission completed a preliminary statement on the Holy Spirit: Part A, ‘The Procession of the Holy Spirit’. This was further amended and completed at its October 2015 meeting at Gladstone’s Library at Hawarden, Wales. Work on Part B, ‘The Sending of the Holy Spirit in Time’, was started there and completed at the October 2016 meeting of the Commission at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon. These two texts (Parts A and B) were put together by the Commission meeting in Dublin, Ireland, in October 2017, to make a continuous whole.

The agreed foundation of this work is an understanding of the Holy Spirit as an eternal person of the Holy Trinity who is active in the world and in time, sanctifying the lives of believers.



## Part A: The Procession of the Holy Spirit

1. We recognize that the original text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 does not include the clause referring to the procession of the Holy Spirit, as from the Father and the Son (*Filioque*), but only from the Father. We acknowledge that the insertion of this clause was done unilaterally by the Church in the Latin West, without the authority of an Ecumenical Council, and inherited by the Anglican Tradition.
2. Though we understand the historical circumstances that led to the addition of the *Filioque*, the Anglican Churches generally interpret this addition in the sense of the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit who is sent from the Father, through the Son and by the Son, to the world.
3. We accept that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, based on the Scriptures,<sup>1</sup> is intended to imply the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Oriental Orthodox Churches consider the addition of *Filioque* as an error since it breaks the order within the Trinity and puts into question the Father's role as source, cause, and principle of both the Son and the Spirit. The Anglican Tradition, however, sees the *Filioque* clause as 'an interpolation, irregularly put in the text of the Creed and devoid of any canonical authorization.'<sup>2</sup> This led to the *Moscow Agreed Statement* 1976 of the Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue and subsequent statements referring to the inappropriateness of its insertion in the Creed. Following the *Moscow Agreed Statement* of 1976, Anglicans agree that "The *Filioque* clause should not be included in this Creed."<sup>3</sup>
4. We distinguish between the two levels: *Theologia* (θεολογία) which refers to the essence (οὐσία) of God and the intra-trinitarian relationships, and *Economia* (οἰκονομία), which refers to the activities (ἐνέργεια) of God and his relation to the world. Consequently, we distinguish the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, from the Father, through the Son.
5. We agree that while the Holy Fathers speak of a relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father through the Son,<sup>4</sup> they never hold that the Spirit proceeds from or through the Son: 'The Spirit was and is the Son's as He was and is the Father's; for though He proceeds from the Father, yet He is not alien from the Son; for the Son has all things in common with the Father, as the Lord has himself taught us.'<sup>5</sup> When the Holy Fathers proclaim that the Spirit is 'from the Father and the Son',<sup>6</sup> or that He progresses (πρόεισι) or flows forth (προκείται) from both,<sup>7</sup> they mean the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit. In *Economia*, the Holy Spirit is sent from the Father and receives manifestation from the Son. 'He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.'<sup>8</sup> 'He shines forth (ἐκλάμπει) and is sent and given by the Word';<sup>9</sup>

‘The Holy Spirit from whom all the abundance of good things gushes up to creation, depends (ἤρτηται) on the Son, with whom he is indivisibly apprehended.’<sup>10</sup>

6. In the relationship between the Holy Trinity and Creation, ‘The Father does (κτίζει) all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit.’<sup>11</sup> ‘Every operation (ἐνέργεια) which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin (ἀφορμάται) from the Father, and proceeds (πρόεισι) through the Son and is perfected (τελειοῦται) in the Holy Spirit.’<sup>12</sup>

## Part B: The Sending of the Holy Spirit in time

7. We affirm that the Holy Spirit, sent by the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>13</sup> speaks in and gives life to the Church and, as we confess together in the Creed, makes it ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic’.

### ‘One’

8. We affirm that the Holy Spirit makes the Church one, united with Christ, through holy Baptism in the name of the Trinity.<sup>14</sup> Baptism, which is rebirth to life in the Spirit,<sup>15</sup> requires the confession of the One Apostolic Faith. Thus the unity of the Church, that is the communion of all the local churches confessing the one faith in Christ, is realized by the Holy Spirit who dwells in those who believe: ‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.’<sup>16</sup>

9. The Spirit, the giver of life, guarantees the oneness of the body of Christ, the Church. Without the Spirit, the body becomes lifeless. Through the activity of the Spirit, the faithful have communion in the sacraments of the Church and hence in the gift of eternal life granted by the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit bonds the baptized faithful together with the Lord in a *koinonia* (κοινωνία) of concord and love. He enables the unity of the people of God in conformity with the image of the communion of love within the Trinity described as *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις). Therefore St Paul exhorts the Church ‘to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’.<sup>17</sup> As God is one in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so also the Church, in all its diverse rich traditions, preserves the unity of faith. The Holy Trinity is the supreme model of Christian unity. Believing in the co-essential Trinity binds us in love towards each other, in a movement towards that visible unity for which our Lord prayed.<sup>18</sup>

## **‘Holy’**

**IO.** We affirm that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and perfects the personal lives of believers, and the sacraments of the Church, and is active in the entire cosmos.<sup>19</sup> In the Church, as the body of Christ, believers receive purification, sanctification, and justification by the Spirit,<sup>20</sup> for it is the very nature of the Church to be, according to the divine call, ‘holy and without blemish’.<sup>21</sup> Holiness, which is the gift of the Spirit, is manifested in the fruits of the Spirit.<sup>22</sup> The holiness of the Church, deriving from Christ Himself, has its source in the indissoluble union of the Church with Christ. The Church is holy because God is Holy. Concerning life and holiness, the Church is invited to share the holiness of God and the eternal life of His kingdom, by the action of the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> The Spirit impels the faithful to pray to the Father.<sup>24</sup> The nature of the holy Church as such implies the union of heavenly and earthly realities in the communion of saints. Moreover, according to the teaching of the early Christian Church, she is described as holy in the Creeds because she has been chosen by God, because He has predestined her to a glorious inheritance, and because He dwells in her in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The holiness of the Church is not dependent on the virtues of her members, nor undermined by their failings, all of whom pray ‘Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth!’

## **‘Catholic’**

**II.** We affirm that the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth<sup>25</sup> and sets us free,<sup>26</sup> and so is the source and guarantor of the catholicity of the Church, existing throughout the world in different local manifestations under the One Lord, Jesus Christ, in the realm of space and time. The Holy Spirit also unites the earthly Church with the heavenly, as revealed in the anamnestic and liturgical acts of the Church, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, in which we are joined with the worship of heaven.<sup>27</sup>

**I2.** These universal and cosmic marks of the Church catholic always take particular and local manifestations, as the histories of our two families of churches show. Regional and local synods are thus part of the greater whole. The Holy Spirit enables these local manifestations of the catholicity of the Church together to become greater than the sum of their parts, that is universal, by exhibiting unity of faith through ecumenical conciliar action. At the same time, the Holy Spirit, empowering the earthly manifestations of the Church, enables them to become a sign of the heavenly banquet prepared for all peoples, in all places, in all times. Thus, the Holy Spirit is both source and guarantor of the temporal speaking of the eternal and the local speaking of the universal, which we understand to be the catholicity of the Church.

**I3.** In this way the Holy Spirit creates a new humanity in which ‘There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’.<sup>28</sup>

### ‘Apostolic’

**I4.** We affirm that as the Father sent the Son for salvation, into the world in the Incarnation, so in the era that follows the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord, the Father sent the Spirit into the world to the goal of sanctification of the created order,<sup>29</sup> until the Lord comes again in glory. Pentecost is God’s gift of new life to the world in the form of the Church as the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit takes forward into each new day the invitation and imperative in the Lord’s Prayer, to do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven, and in this way connects the witness of the prophets and the disciples with eschatological hope. The apostolic mission of the Church combines prophetic discipleship in the energy of divine engagement with the response of personal witness in the world.

**I5.** The word *apostolic* describes the origin and beliefs of the Church as rooted and continuing in the living Tradition of the apostles who proclaimed Jesus Christ crucified and risen. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Church faithfully preserves and continues the preaching and teaching of those sent out by Jesus as apostles. Hence the Church is called *apostolic* because her faith is founded on the confession of the apostles as a whole, which would later be referred to as ‘the canon or rule of faith’. The apostles’ faith and mission are handed down through the generations in the Church. As new bishops are consecrated into the episcopal colleges, they are considered as the successors of the apostles. So bishops in historic succession are the sign and guarantee of the apostolicity of the Church as a whole.<sup>30</sup>

**I6.** Apostolic succession is inseparable from the activity or operation (*ἐνέργεια*) of the Holy Spirit. From earliest times, the Spirit appointed ministers,<sup>31</sup> and spoke through the prophets<sup>32</sup> and the disciples.<sup>33</sup> The Spirit directed the mission of the Church,<sup>34</sup> giving the disciples power to witness.<sup>35</sup> The Holy Spirit continues to transmit afresh to each generation the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles in Scripture and Sacraments; in witness and ministerial responsibilities; in communion expressed in prayer, love, joy, and suffering; in the proclamation of the Gospel; in service to those in need of grace and goodness; and in unity among churches locally and universally.



## Conclusion

**I7.** Holy Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit as movement in vivid imagery of water, fire, and wind. The Holy Spirit speaks in the Church and moves her from the area of internal comfort to the arena of external engagement. The Holy Spirit acts as the dynamic force within a redemptive understanding of memory as found in a historical past and leading to future responsibility in a changing world.

**I8.** In a world of enforced displacement and fearful arrival; in a world of accelerated movement; in a world of war-torn fragmentation and courageous martyrdom; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, transcends time and space and yet inhabits both. The same Spirit is sent to commission and empower the weak to be strong, the humble to be courageous, and the poor to be comforted and blessed in a fallen world that is upheld by the providence and grace of God the Trinity who makes all things new in faith and hope and love.

**I9.** We submit this statement to the responsible authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the responsible authorities of the Anglican Communion for their consideration and action.

The Rt Revd Gregory Cameron  
Anglican Co-Chairman

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy  
Oriental Orthodox Co-Chairman

Signed in Dublin, 26 October 2017

## Endnotes

1 John 15.26.

2 H. M. Waddams (ed.), *Anglo-Russian Theological Conference, Moscow, July 1956* (London: Faith Press, 1958), 93. Lambeth Conference 1978 Resolution 35.3 'requests that all member Churches of the Anglican Communion should consider omitting the *Filioque* from the Nicene Creed, and that the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission through the Anglican Consultative Council should assist them in presenting the theological issues to their appropriate synodical bodies and should be responsible for any necessary consultation with other Churches of the Western tradition'.

3 *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Moscow Agreed Statement* (London: SPCK, 1977), 87–8.

4 'Through the Son, He (i.e., the Holy Spirit), is joined to the Father' (Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 18,45; Eng. trans.: Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, 72). 'The one (i.e., the Son) is directly from the First and the other (i.e. the Spirit) is through the one who is directly from the First' (Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, in Fridericus Mueller, ed., *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 3.1: *Gregorii Nysseni opera dogmatica minora*, Leiden: Brill, 1958, 56). '[The Holy Spirit] is the Spirit of God the Father as well as of the Son, and comes forth substantially from both, that is from the Father through the Son' (Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate* 1, PG 68, 148).

5 Cyril of Alexandria, *Apologia XII anathematismorum contra Theodoretum* (PG 76, 433).

6 Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 9 (PG 43, 32).

7 Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali trinitate* 34 (PG 75, 585); *De fide sanctae et individuae Trinitatis* (PG 77, 105–22).

8 John 16.14.

9 Athanasius, *Epistola ad Serapionem* 1.20; Eng. trans. Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius, The Early Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 220.

10 Gregory of Nyssa, Letter to Peter 4; Eng. trans. John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 419.

11 PG 26, 623; St Athanasius, Third Letter to Serapion, chapter 28, Eng. trans. C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, 134–5.

12 PG 45, 125; Gregory of Nyssa, 'On "Not Three Gods" to Ablabius', in Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. V (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 334. 13 Cf. John 16.7

13 Cf. John 16.7.

14 Cf. Matthew 28.19.

15 Cf. Romans 6.4; 7.6.

16 Ephesians 4.4–5.

17 Ephesians 4.3.

18 Cf. John 17.11.

19 Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16,38; 20,51.

20 Cf. I Corinthians 6.11.

21 Ephesians 5.27.

22 Cf. Galatians 5.22–23.

23 Cf. Hebrews 2.17; I John 1.7.

24 Cf. Romans 8.15.

25 Cf. John 16.13.

26 Cf. John 8.32.

27 Cf. Revelation 7.9.

28 Galatians 3.28.

29 Cf. Romans 8.

30 ‘Those who wish to see the truth can observe in every Church the tradition of the Apostles made manifest in the world ... This tradition the Church holds from the Apostles, and this faith has been proclaimed to all, and has come down to our own day through the succession of bishops’ (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 3.1).

31 Cf. Acts 13.2, 4.

32 Cf. Ezekiel 2.2; Mark 12.36; 2 Peter 1.21.

33 Cf. Mark 13.11; Acts 2.4.

34 Acts 15.28.

35 Cf. Acts 1.8.