A LINGUISTIC COMMENTARY ON THE NICEO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

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It is natural that a document of such fundamental importance as the Creed associated with the second Ecumenical Council meeting at Constantinople in 381 A.D. should be the subject of careful theological discussion, analysis and exegesis; the more so in view of confusion between this creed and the original Creed of Nicaea drawn up in 325 on the occasion of the first such council; and both creeds are cited by the definition of the faith promulgated at Chalcedon in 451 as well as being affirmed by the intervening ecumenical synod at Ephesus twenty years earlier. Thus these two creeds stand at the centre of the great Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries, and owe their precise formulation and promulgation as statements of belief to the need to rebut and combat current heresies: Arianism, Nestorianism and the several manifestations of monophysite tendencies amongst Christians of Egypt and Syria. It is also perhaps understandable that the two creeds should become confused, with the later in time usurping the name of its predecessor, as it had already borrowed, though selectively, much of its terminology. The growing authority of Constantinople, and the weakening through heresy of the great rival sees of the East (Alexandria and

Antioch) led to a reinforcement of the statement of belief or later ‘symbol’ of Constantinople as a universal rule of faith, and so it has come down to Christians of East and West in modern times with some variant formulations and under different names. Only one point of variance is of any theological significance and that at first sight apparently minor, but both proponents and opponents of the fateful filioque addition will be aware of how this one little word has come to epitomize a whole range of tensions, differences of emphasis and ruptures of cordial relations between the churches of East and West, so that it continues to bedevil such relations even today. While the case of filioque may be unique, it is the purpose of this study to examine the words of the Niceo-Constantinopolitan Creed for such lexical, etymological and associative insights as might be of doctrinal significance. Thus it is a proto-theological survey, and stands in a handmaidenly relationship to the many excellent theological commentaries available.

πιστεύομεν

The word is plural in the credal formulation, though singular in devotional and liturgical use. Plural forms ἡμᾶς and ἡμετέραν are however retained later in the creed, as in its English version. One should compare the number-switch in the Easter-liturgy renewal of baptismal promises in the Latin rite, where credite is answered with credo, a point lost in English.

εἰς ἕνα θεόν

It seems that πιστεύειν εἰς is a case of a new meaning of πίστις and its cognates giving rise to a new grammar, since the verb normally takes the dative in pre-Christian Greek, and continues to do so in the synoptic gospels and, partly, in St. Paul. It is partly St. Paul and mainly St. John who popularise its use with εἰς. An excellent illustration is provided by Jn.XII, 36-46 where πιστεύειν is used with εἰς seven times in ten verses, while only once with the dative, and that significantly in a quotation from the Old Testament. As the creed is formulated, εἰς is repeated once for each member of the Holy Trinity, with the unfortunate consequence that to the unwary it could appear to give the impression that only the Father is God. While the rest of the creed unambiguously dispels any such doubts, there remains the feeling sensed rather than spoken that ‘God’ in non-trinitarian contexts refers more appositely to the Father than to the Son or Holy Spirit. This may be nothing more than the modern way of affirming the derivation of the Godhead of the Son and Holy Spirit from that of the Father.

παντοκράτορα

The word used in the Septuagint to translate sabaoth or shaddai, conve-
niently renderable in English by ‘omnipotent’ or ‘almighty’, though neither is arguably exactly the same; the word means ‘ruler of all’. The same word is also commonly used of Christ in the traditional full-frontal pose of Eastern iconography, and it may be significant that the Athonite monastery of Pantokratoros has the Transfiguration, i.e. the glorified Christ, as the principal theme of its catholicon.

ποιητήν

This word, literally ‘maker’, is clearly to be understood in the absolute sense of ‘creator’. The more precise word κτιστής does not occur in the body of the creed, though its cognate κτιστόν (used dissociatively of the Son) occurs in the anathemas appended to the original Creed of Nicaea.

eίς ἕνα κύριον

κύριος is used in the Old Testament to render the sacred and unutterable personal name of God, Y’hw’h, following apparently the Jewish practice of reading adonai whenever they encountered the Name. As κύριος is the lexical equivalent of adonai (dominus, lord) it was a suitable choice. In the creed however it is used here of the Son, and later of the Holy Spirit, but not expressly of the Father. This use suggests that to call the Son and Holy Spirit κύριος is to acknowledge them as God, since κύριος represents the personal name of God the Father. Both credal uses are also scriptural; on Christ as κύριος see Mt.XVIII, 20; Eph.IV, 5; 1 Cor.VIII, 6, the last of which provides this phrase.

Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν

Ἰησοῦς is the personal, human name, meaning ‘saviour’ and cognate with ‘Joshua’. Χριστός is more a designation, almost a title, indicating ‘the One who is Anointed’ and so used inter alia in Peter’s profession of faith, Mt.XVI, 16. There seems to have been a certain confusion between this name and χρηστός, meaning ‘useful’ and serving as a nickname given to slaves, surfacing in Latin as ‘Chrestus’ in Tacitus, Annals XV, 44. It is the name χριστός which gives rise to the generic name for followers of the new religion (Acts XI, 26) and later for the religion itself.

tόν υἱόν τοῦ θεοῦ

The phrase clearly establishes the divinity of the subject of this part of the creed, using the well-known terminology of the New Testament. Fatherhood implies sonship, and so the relationship between the First and Second Persons is unambiguous. Not so the relationship between each of these and the Third Person, which underlies the filioque controversy. Whatever is meant by ἐξπόρευσις—see below—it is not a correlate, humanly expressible
relationship, as is the father-son relationship.

τὸν μονογενῆ

The elements of this word neatly go into Latin as unigenitum, though an early Latin creed, cited by Pope Leo I in his Tome, gives unicum. However the Greek word means ‘unique’ or ‘the only one of its kind’ even more perhaps than ‘only-begotten’ and is so used in secular, pre-Christian Greek. The uniqueness and incomparability of the Λόγος is intended, the ‘very offspring of the being of the Father’ (Athanasius), that of which in the nature of things there can be only one. The Latin and subsequent versions suggest rather misleadingly that it was necessary to stress that the Father generated only one Son, or even that the Λόγος incarnate had no human siblings; while these things are true, it was no purpose of the creed to affirm them. In the original Nicene formulation, the word μονογενὴ was paraphrased, almost by way of a gloss, as ‘that is, from the being of the Father’. The distinctness of the Holy Spirit, whose Godhead is also derived from that of the Father, is saved by a different terminology, namely that of ἐκπόρευσις or ‘procession’, further interpreted in the West so as to ensure distinct identity by its dual character. (See below on filioque, and Thomas Aquinas, S.T. I, qu. XXXVI, art.2.)

γεννηθέντα

Generation is the mode of the Son’s derivation from the Father, as Procession is the Holy Spirit’s. But γέννησις is not γένεσις; on a philosophical level, being born is not the same as coming into being. All agree that the Father is ἀγέννητος, and thus a fortiori ἀγένητος, but it does not follow that these two terms are synonymous, and it was the Arians’ undoing to treat them as if they were. The single or double ν is supremely significant, as it indicates derivation from γεννᾶν (to beget) or γίνεσθαι (to come about) respectively. The two adjectives are further confused when pronounced indistinguishably, as in the Byzantine or modern manner; in classical phonology double consonants were momentarily held, as in modern Italian, but the period when this ceased to be the case cannot be fixed with certainty.

οὐ ποιηθέντα

This confirms the point made with γεννηθέντα. Just as ποιητής is ‘creator’ rather than just ‘maker’, so is ποιηθεὶς used as if it were κτιστός, i.e. ‘created’, this being the Arian tenet.

ὁμοούσιον

This key word, commonly transliterated as closely to the Greek script as possible homoousion, might be described as the ‘filioque’ of the fourth cen-
tury. The Arians propounded ὀμοιούσιον. The orthographic difference is minimal: one uniquely simple letter, formed by a single straight stroke easily supplied or lost while copying a text. The Greek ὀμοιος can mean ‘like’ either in the sense of ‘approximating to’ or ‘a further copy of’, while ὀμο- is ‘same’ only in the strict sense of ‘one and the same thing’, and not in the looser sense of ‘the equivalent of’. It is not always clear what kind of ‘like’ was intended by the Arians, but in neither case was it enough, as full identity of being was and is required for Christological orthodoxy. The issue is today no longer a contentious one, not even among present-day Nestorians.

όι’ού τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο
Not just πάντα: all things, but τὰ πάντα: all the things covered by ὀρατῶν πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων: all visible and invisible (or seen and unseen) elements of the universe, alluded to previously as οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς. Note how the creed associates Father and Son in the act of creation; the participation of the Holy Spirit is not explicit but might be said to be contained implicitly in ζωοποιῶν below.

ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν
The word is plural here, though singular in οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς above. The original Nicene Creed omitted the phrase; it had however expanded τὰ πάντα of the preceding line to τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐν τῇ γῇ in allusion to the original οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς.

σαρκωθέντα
Though this word and its cognates are very much a part of the distinctive terminology of Christian Greek, the word σαρκοῦν existed in classical Greek, chiefly in medical contexts to mean ‘grow fleshy’, ‘put on flesh’ but also in sculpture: ‘give flesh to’ or ‘flesh out’. σάρξ in Greek is a very earthy word. Whereas in English ‘flesh’ has a literary, ‘meat’ a culinary, and ‘incarnate’ an excessively lofty tone. We might better render σάρξ in English as the hyphenated ‘flesh-and-blood’, recalling also Jn.VI, 53-56.

ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου
In the Greek text, the same preposition is made to cover both the Holy Spirit (as ‘agent’) and the Virgin Mary (as ‘vehicle’) of the incarnation. The Latin creed distinguishes: ‘. . . de spiritu sancto ex Maria virgine’; it is perhaps more precise, but hardly of doctrinal significance. The phrase clearly reflects Lk.I, 35, where also the Latin text shows greater contrast in the use of prepositions: ‘. . . spiritus sanctus superveniet in te . . . quod nascetur ex te sanctum’. The original Greek has ἐπὶ σε for ‘in te’ and nothing at all corresponding to ‘ex te’ of the Latin; it also has the present τὸ γεννῶ-
μενον for ‘quod nascetur’ (future).

tης παρθένου
A less frequent term of reference in Greek than ‘virgo’ or its derivatives in the West, though ἀειπάρθενος (ever-virgin) was later used. But Mary’s virginity is clearly relevant to her part in the incarnation; without pressing the point too closely, it is as if the Holy Spirit’s action had replaced the male role in procreation. The Latin prepositional usage noted above makes it clear that Mary’s and the Holy Spirit’s roles are not on the same plane, though correlated in the creed.

ἐνανθρωπήσαντα
This says the same as σαρκωθέντα, though more explicitly. The participle is active in Greek, whereas σαρκωθέντα is passive: so ‘became man’ rather than ‘was made man’, a distinction lost in the ‘homo factus est’ of Latin and thus blurred in subsequent Western versions.

σταυρωθέντα
It is curious, to the modern mind rather strange, but ultimately very significant, that the creed jumps from the incarnation of Christ without even explicitly mentioning His birth, not to mention childhood or public life, preaching or miracles, institution of the sacraments or proclamation of the kingdom, to the circumstances of His death.

ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν
As previously the plural pronoun is retained even when initial πιστεύομεν has become πιστεύω.

ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου
The Greek need mean no more than ‘during the term of office of Pontius Pilatus’. Had the creed been composed in Latin it would most probably have read ‘Pontio Pilato procuratore’. The absolute phrase in Latin is possible without a participle, though Greek, with more participles at its disposal, requires one in such phrases. Dating in ancient times is frequently by holders of public office, expressed absolutely in Latin, prepositionally in Greek. The Latin ‘sub Pontio Pilato’ is thus an overliteral translation of the Greek.

παθόντα
It is not expressly stated that Christ died, but this is obvious from the position of παθόντα following σταυρωθέντα, and from ταφέντα that follows. In the original Nicene text, παθόντα is the only participle between
ενανθρώπισαντα and ἀναστάντα; it is as if ‘suffer’ were a euphemism for ‘die’. However the human sufferings of Christ, as distinct from His actual death, were also told in prophecy and play a role in man’s redemption, as St. Paul continually reminds us.

ἀναστάντα

The basic form ἀνιστάναι is transitive and means ‘raise up’. Middle forms, and also the second aorist active form, of which ἀναστάντα is the participle, are intransitive and mean ‘rise’, ‘get up’, ‘stand up’, ‘get to one’s feet’ and are so used very frequently in the New Testament as well as in secular Greek. This very ordinary, everyday word was the one chosen to represent the crowning miracle of Christ’s life, the Resurrection. Whereas this English word is very clearly a word of religious discourse, this was not so of the Greek word from which the idea originates. The Greek noun however ἀνάστασις (as distinct from the verb) came to have a distinctly Christocentric tinge, since occasions for a nominal form of ‘get up’ were and are rare in Greek, as in English. In classical Greek both the simple noun στάσις and the double-compound noun ἐπάναστασις mean something very far from ‘resurrection’, namely ‘revolt’ or ‘insurrection’.

τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ

‘Third’ by inclusive reckoning. In fact Christ was dead for barely 36 hours, if that.

κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς

γραφάι are the Scriptures as a whole, γραφὴ a single scriptural quotation. In the New Testament, reference is logically to the Old Testament; in later writing including the creeds, either Testament can be intended. Here the obvious New Testament references are Jn.II, 19; Mk.VIII, 31; Lk.XXIV, 46 and 1 Cor.XV, 4. But the latter two texts themselves refer to Old Testament γραφάι; while it is not very obvious which Old Testament writings are intended, Hosea VI, 2 and Psalm XVI, 10 (Vulgate enumeration) seem likely references.

eἰς τοὺς οὐράνους

‘Heaven’ is plural once again. It seems that the word is plural when indicating a point of arrival or departure, singular when connoting an element in the ‘kosmos’, which comprises ‘heaven and earth’.

πάλιν ἐρχόμενον

All Greek creeds have the present participle, excepting the Caesarean, which has ἧξοντα. But the Latin has venturus or sometimes veniet, and
modern texts follow suit. Surprisingly, even texts prepared for Western Orthodox or other western attenders at eastern liturgies show a preference for the future here.

κρίναι ζωντάς καὶ νεκρούς

The phrase is taken from 1 Pet.IV, 5, though the exact sense of ‘living’ and ‘dead’ is unclear in both epistle and creed. νεκρός is basically a noun meaning ‘corpse’; it can also be used adjectivally in classical Greek and this use predominates in New Testament Greek where one might have expected τεθνηκότας. But forms of τέθνηκα (have died, be dead) are rare in the New Testament, and outside the gospels only a single participial use is attested, in Acts XXV, 19. In many other places where a participle might be expected, a form of νεκρός is used, as in Peter’s epistle and here.

οὐ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἐσται τέλος

While these words more readily call to mind Jn. XVIII, 36, they more directly reflect Lk.I, 33. They are missing from the original Nicene text.

καὶ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα

The original Nicene Creed read καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα and the body of the creed finished here. But the phraseology of the Constantinopolitan Creed should be noted: it is not the Holy Spirit who is lord and life-giving, but the Spirit who is holy, lord and life-giving. This is the effect of the displacement of ἅγιον.

ἁγιον

Despite the sentence arrangement noted above, there is no doubt that the Spirit of God is normally called the ‘Holy Spirit’, as appeared also in the original formulation. Like many other fundamental words of Christian Greek, ἁγιος was taken over from earlier religious terminology where it did duty for both sacer and sanctus, the former being its basic meaning.

κύριον

See above on κύριος referring to the Son; here to the word is direct evidence of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the association derives from 2 Cor.III, 17-18.

ζωοποιόν

St. Paul tells us that the Spirit is life (Rom.VIII, 2) and that He gives life (2 Cor.III, 6). Further, the Spirit is ζωοποιοῦν (participial form) in Jn.VI, 63. In the creed we have a purely adjectival form clearly taken from this last. ‘Life’ is an analogical term and at limit may be taken to be the force
that sustains all things in existence, thus attesting the Holy Spirit’s part in creation.

έκ τοῦ πατρός

The preposition έκ reflects έκ τοῦ πατρός γεννηθέντα of the generation of the Son in respect of the Father. However the Johannine text which establishes the Spirit’s procession from the Father has παρά, not έκ, Jn.XV, 26. Neither gospel nor creed contains any allusion to ‘dual procession’, nor do they expressly exclude it; see supplementary note.

έκπορευόμενον

This is a common word in the New Testament, occurring more than thirty times, but only once is it a word of theological significance, namely in the passage quoted above, Jn.XV, 26. Its common meaning is simply ‘go out’ or ‘come out’, and thus what we learn from gospel and creed is simply that the Holy Spirit ‘comes out’ of the Father. It is only in subsequent controversy that έκπορευόμενος has become elevated to an abstract notion, namely the kind of ‘coming out’ or the mode of derivation predicated of the Holy Spirit in respect of the Father. Following the Latin translation of the Johannine passage, ‘proceed’ and ‘procession’ are the standard words in English. It is a valuable contrastive exercise to compare other passages in the Fourth Gospel where internal relations within the Trinity may be in question. In Jn.VIII, 42; XIII, 3; XVI, 27-30 and XVII, 8 come no less than six occurrences of έξήλθον or variants, all referring to the Father-Son relationship, and all but one rendered into Latin by the appropriate form of exire. The exception is Jn.VIII, 42 where έκ τοῦ θεοῦ έξήλθον και ήκω is given as ex deo processi et veni. It is also arguable, though by no means self-evident, that this passage is more obviously about the intrinsic relationship between Father and Son, whereas the other έξήλθον-passages lend themselves more easily to interpretation in terms of the Son’s temporal mission. One can also note that in the Latin translation the preposition ex is used only with forms of procedere, while exire has a throughout. Greek prepositional use seems less exact, with έκ not only in VIII, 42 and XV, 26 but also in XVI, 28; while the remaining passages have ἀνά or παρά without any apparent pattern or differentiation. παρά is also a varia lectio in XVI, 28 however. No other biblical passages refer to the mode of derivation of the Holy Spirit, as distinct from that of the Son, and one is thus limited to what appears to be a largely random collection of linguistic signals: choice of verb, choice of preposition, choice of designation of source (‘from God’ four times, ‘from the Father’ twice, ‘from you’ in a prayer addressed to the Father, once); oddly, the Latin text appears to be less haphazard than the Greek. At best one can deduce from the Greek text that the mode of derivation of the Holy
Spirit is somehow different from that of the Son, with little or no indication of what that difference in fact comprises. Again, the supplementary note at the end of these comments should be consulted in this connection.

\[\text{οὐνπροσκυνοῦμενον}\]

The spelling with \(\nu\) is the ‘purist’ form, that with \(\mu\) reflects the assimilation of this consonant with \(\pi\) following, which took place in speech in any case. This word and \[\text{οὐνόοξαζόμενον}\] following serve to stress both the coequal Godhead of the Spirit and the association of \textit{lex credendi, lex orandi}. The verb \(\piροσκυνεῖν\) in classical Greek meant ‘make obeisance’, later ‘kiss’ or ‘greet’. In the New Testament it means ‘adore’, ‘worship’, which is also the credal meaning, though in the N.T. passages (Mt.II, 2, 11; Jn.IV, 21, 23) with this meaning, as well as many others with the original meaning, it governs the dative. Only once, also in Jn.IV, 23, is there an unambiguous use of this verb with the accusative in New Testament Greek, if we except variant uses in the Apocalypse. Yet an accusative syntax is required in this place in the creed. The same word, now invariably with the accusative, is used in modern Greek both for worship in general and for veneration of the icons.

\[\lambdaλήσαν\]

\(\lambdaλεῖν\) is a common New Testament word for ‘talk’, whereas in classical Greek it is more restricted and means rather ‘babble’ or ‘prattle’, though not necessarily pejorative. It is interesting that it is the \textit{Spirit} who in the creed ‘spoke through the prophets’; in St. Paul generally and in particular at the beginning of Hebrews it is ‘God’ who speaks in this way, and the Hebrews passage makes it clear that the Father is intended, since He more recently \[\έλάλησεν ήμῖν ἐν υἱῷ,\] the same Son we are told \[δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τούς αἰώνας.\] That is, the Father speaks to man through, or rather in, His Son, just as the Father created the world and the ages through Him, and the creed associates both of these acts of God with the work of the Holy Spirit.

\[\epsilonἰς \muίαν \άγιαν\]

\(\epsilonἰς\), used already to introduce each Person of the Holy Trinity, is used again to introduce the Church. It is omitted, mistakenly, from the Latin version. \(\muίαν\) is the first of the four marks of the Church, reflecting many of Christ’s utterances, among them Jn.X, 16 and XVII, 21-23. \(\άγιαν\) is the second such mark; it clearly refers to the holiness of the Church as such, not necessarily to individual members. By parity of reasoning one could argue that the unicity of the Church, equally an essential mark, is not incompatible with individual cases of disunity, i.e. schism; whether this argument would extend to heresy is more doubtful.
καθολικήν
Universal in outreach, in mission, i.e. ‘comprehensive’ or ‘exhaustive’ rather than simply ‘universal’. The common interpretation, which we may call the geographical one, derives the word from καθ’όλην την οἰκουμένην γῆν, but clearly this was not so when Christianity began, nor is it fully the case now. The derivation from καθόλου as an adverbial expression meaning ‘in general’ or ‘on the whole’ and opposed to κατὰ μέρος ‘in part’, ‘partly’, gives a deeper sense, and is corroborated by the adjectival and adverbial use of καθολικός in classical Greek. The subsequent history of the word is fascinating, if often confusing: members of the Church of England, the Church of Rome, the Orthodox Church and the Uniate Churches (so-called ‘Greek Catholics’ who may be Arab, Rumanian, Ukrainian or other Slav nationals, but hardly ever Greeks) all can and do lay claim to the appellation ‘Catholic’; there is also the secular, lower-case use and meaning of the word, as in ‘catholic tastes’.

ἀποστολικὴν
The Church as a whole is apostolic in episcopal authority and succession, while some local churches are apostolic in foundation and nomenclature. The use of ἀπόστολος and also the abstract ἀπόστολη as formal, technical terms appears very early in post-resurrection church history, namely in Acts I, 24-26, i.e. before Pentecost. It is in view of this that ‘apostolic’ makes sense as a mark of the Church, even though in itself apostolicity is no automatic guarantee of orthodoxy, cf. the non-Chalcedonian churches, and the unsolved difficulties between Rome, Canterbury and Constantinople.

έκκλησίαν
As is well known, the Greek word means ‘assembly’, deriving from ἐκκαλεῖν. This verb does not occur directly in the New Testament, though a close echo in both from and meaning comes in 1 Cor.I, 9: ἐκκληθῆτε εἰς κοινωνίαν, ‘you have been called to fellowship’. The word is early used in the plural to mean local churches, and later used indiscriminately for both the institution and the building that comprises a ‘church’, though in modern use ναός and καθολικόν are more commonly the latter.

ἐν βάπτισμα
‘One’ baptism to distinguish the baptism of Christ from that of other baptizers, including John the Baptist, and cf. Acts X, 37; XVIII, 25; XIX, 3-5. Christ had Himself received the baptism of John. The root of ‘baptism’ is βάπτειν, which in classical Greek means ‘dip’, ‘submerge’, ‘dye’ or ‘tinge’ rather than simply ‘wash’, for which there are other words. Baptism is the only sacrament mentioned in the creed.
For ‘sin’ Greek uses a word that in the classical language means ‘missing the mark’, ‘being off target’. It is defined in moral philosophy by Aristotle in Socratic terms (Ethica Nicomachea §§1110b29, 1115b15). Although the creed does not mention sacramental absolution, it associates baptism with the forgiveness of sins, a point commonly missed when infant baptism is widespread.

It is the dead who will rise again; the text is not ἀνάστασιν ἐκ νεκρῶν, though the meaning is scarcely different. The phrase should be read with καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰώνος of the next line. Thus apart from the Trinitarian profession of faith and the four distinguishing marks of the Church, the only other specific dogmas of the creed are baptism and the resurrection of the dead. Much has been bypassed: the creed contains no mention of the Jewish people by name, no mention of Christ’s public life, no express mention of worship, no reference to the veneration of Mary or the saints or to any sacrament except baptism. There is only passing and undefined reference to Holy Scripture, and none at all to the hierarchical structure of the Church. Man’s soul and its relationship to the body is undefined, as is sin. From the creed we know only that sin is forgiven through baptism and that the bodies of the dead will rise. It is very obvious that the creed is not a complete or exhaustive statement of faith, nor was it meant to be, given its origins in refuting particular heresies. But the few points of dogma it mentions are far-reaching in their span, covering the believer from birth, or rather rebirth, in Christ to his final enjoyment of eternity well beyond the grave.

Just as we previously had ζώντας καὶ νεκρούς in close conjunction, here we have the dead rising to eternal life, with the same intended contrast.

αιών is a long period of time, aevum in Latin more precisely than saeculum. In classical Greek we find ὁ μέλλων αἰών for ‘posterity’ and τὸν ὅτι αἰώνος χρόνον for ‘for ever’. New Testament Greek contrasts οὐτος ὁ αἰών ‘this world’ with ὁ μέλλων αἰών ‘the world to come’, which is eternal.

It is well known that nothing corresponding to ‘filioque’ occurs in the original formulation of the Greek Niceo-Constantinopolitan Creed, but in view of the interminable controversy generated by the intrusion of this
seemingly innocuous word, no comprehensive discussion of the creed would be complete without it. Its origins are obscure in detail but clear in outline: added to a local Spanish creed not later than 589 A.D. (possibly earlier) as an anti-Arian measure, its use gradually spread throughout the West, though its inclusion in the creed at Rome was resisted until the early years of the eleventh century, i.e. until shortly before the culminating point of the Great Schism. It transpires from the above textual comments that neither the creed nor the Johannine passage on which the contentious phrase is based provides hard evidence either way in the controversy, though it can be argued on the side of the East that the onus of proof lies with the authors of the addition, i.e. with the West. The issue is really twofold: firstly whether the ‘Dual Procession’ is sound doctrine, i.e. legitimate in itself; and secondly whether it is legitimate, or politic, to amend the creed in this sense. Clearly the second point can only arise if a favourable answer is given to the first, and the points are here discussed in that order.

Jn.XV, 26 and the credal passage can be taken to establish that the mode of derivation of the Holy Spirit from the Father is distinct from that of the Son from the Father, but that it is otherwise undefined. From the terminology of gospel and creed, this undefined mode has become known as *ecporeusis*. The West posits *ecporeusis* from the Father and Son jointly, and this position is defended not scripturally (numerous passages, principally from Christ’s discourse at the Last Supper as recorded by St. John, can be adduced, but all are better interpreted as referring to the *temporal mission* of the Holy Spirit, whose joint sponsorship is undisputed) but philosophically, for which the *locus classicus* is Part I of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, quaestiones XXVII-XXX and especially XXXVI. It is noteworthy that in qu.XXVII, art.3 Aquinas considers *processio* as a generic term, covering both *generatio* as between Father and Son and an unspecified *quaedam alia processio* to account for the Holy Spirit. This is significant because it suggests that for Aquinas *processio* (*ecporeusis*) is not a *specific* mode of derivation at all, and therefore does not alone establish the distinctness of the Holy Spirit from the Son. For this, recourse is had to the principle of internal relations as being the only divine properties not common to all three Persons, resulting in the well-known conclusion: (qu. XXXVI, art.2) *si non esset ab eo, nullo modo posset ab eo personaliter distinguui*; in other words, only dual procession preserves the separate identity of the Holy Spirit. The objections of the East to the doctrine (as distinct from the credal interpolation) seem to be based on fears of weakening the uniqueness of the Father as a source of Godhead, but this rightful insistence has nothing to fear from the Thomistic position that as no internal relation distinguishes Father and Son in respect of the Holy Spirit, it follows that the relation of either Father or Son to Holy Spirit is the relation of both; it is
effectively one relation, or 'one spiration', and the Father's unique position is not compromised. This position seems to have been found satisfactory at the Union Councils of Lyons (1274) and Ferrara-Florence (1438-39), with the compromise formula δ'υίου (used previously in the East, e.g. by Patriarch Tarasios to Pope Adrian I in 787: το πνεύμα . . . το ἐκ τοῦ πατρός δι'υίου ἐκπορευόμενον) in the declaration of union, and no modification to either version of the creed. However while this reasoning is sound, ultimately no face-saving formula is psychologically satisfying to either side, and if it can be agreed that ecporeusis is basically an unknown mode of 'procession', it seems safer not to attempt to make express assertions or denials as to its operation, or at least not to consider such views as may be expressed on the matter to be a part of divinely revealed truth, necessary for salvation.

The matter of the insertion in the creed is perhaps less complex, if more noticeable to the ordinary worshipper. Firstly, the creed under discussion is commonly regarded as a filling-out by extension and addition of the original Nicene Creed—though this view is now disputed. Secondly, the East has never objected to another interpolation in the Latin text of the creed under discussion, namely deum de deo, which does not occur in the Greek text, though it does occur in the original Nicene text θεόν ἐκ θεοῦ, and is echoed in both with θεόν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ. Clearly there can be no theological objections to deum de deo, but a stickler for textual purity might argue that the insertion should never have been made. Strangely enough this insertion also seems to have originated at the same Council of Toledo that was responsible for the insertion of filioque, and for the same reason, i.e. to combat Arianism. Thirdly, the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431) forbade alterations rather than additions to the creed before it, i.e. it forbade teaching not in accordance with that creed, but does not seem to have proscribed clarifications, embellishments or complementations, always provided of course that such adjuncts be doctrinal truth and not at variance with the original creed. And for this council the original creed was that of Nicæa; the creed now in general use did not fully supplant the original one until its promulgation at Chalcedon twenty years later. Further, it must be recognised that the filioque addition remained uncontested for several centuries before being called into question as a weapon in the controversy, political as much as theological, which split the Church temporarily in the ninth century and then permanently (with fleeting remissions) in the eleventh. Other arguments adduced by the East against the West comprised quite non-doctrinal issues such as celibate clergy, unleavened bread, fasting regulations, confirmation by a priest, and the like. The filioque controversy has stuck longer because it has had the misfortune to have doctrinal connotations, however abstruse. But when all
that has been said, the fact remains that the *filioque* is an addition without scriptural basis that has caused offence to many Christians and been a needless bone of contention for many centuries, and it is licit to raise the question, aside from the theology issue raised above, whether the West, meaning mainly the Roman and Anglican Churches, could not consider removing the word from the creed, or at the very least publicly accepting its non-recitation by the Orthodox—the West’s own tradition, time-tried and intrinsically defensible though it may be, cannot simply be imposed on the East as a matter of dogma when its justification, however valid, is found in philosophical argument rather than the sources of revealed truth. If it can be maintained that the addition of the word comprised no alteration of Trinitarian dogma, then neither would its removal. After all, Uniate Christians or ‘Orthodox in union with Rome’ have never been required to recite the word or its equivalent in their creed, and while they are supposed in theory to accept the doctrine, they tend in practice to be evasive about it. It is here suggested that a solution acceptable to all sides might be worked out on the lines of the declaration of Ferrara-Florence as far as text and wording are concerned: that is, either version of the creed would continue to be used where traditionally established, with the tacit agreement that for the purposes of Divine Procession *ex filio* and ὑιοῦ be considered as equivalent expressions. The liberty taken with semantics is small, while that granted to legitimate differences of opinion on matters of doctrine is thereby considerably enlarged. The doctrinal issue itself would thus be left in abeyance, in the humility of man’s limited capacity to grasp the total truth of God. In that way the Florentine conclusions would lose their character of submission or compromise, and acquire instead the function of providing a first step in the joint exploration in all love, humility and mutual respect for each other’s opinions, of the deep mysteries involved in the self-revelation to man of the nature of the Triune God.

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Over and above constant reference to the Greek New Testament, Greek and English concordances to the same, the Liddell & Scott Lexicon and occasional use of the Latin text, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness not only to other works cited in the body of this article, but also, and in particular, to *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* by T. Herbert Bindley, 1899, revised in 1950 by F.W. Green, pub. Methuen.