

Creation Summary; the Doctrine of Procession: Ecumenical Councils; Denominations; Early Church Councils; the Nicene Creed; Hypostatic Union

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *Creation, Chaos, and Restoration*. 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1995), 1-3.

John 15:26 - "When the Energizer/Mentor comes, whom I will send to you for your advantage from the source of the Father, the Spirit of Truth ...

1. The next phrase contains the key word in the procession controversy: "who proceeds from the Father." The word translated "proceeds" is the present middle indicative of the verb:

ἐκπορεύομαι, ekporeuomai: "to proceed" Stresses a place of origin or source.

present: Futuristic; denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass.

middle: Deponent; middle in form but active in meaning. The Holy Spirit produces the action of proceeding.

indicative: Declarative; a statement of reality in future time.
2. This is followed by the prepositional phrase, "from the Father." It begins with the proposition **παρά, para**, translated "from," followed by the ablative of source from the proper noun **Πατήρ, Patēr**: "from the source of the Father."

John 15:26 - "When the Energizer/Mentor comes, whom I will send to you for your advantage from the source of the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the source of the Father ...

3. In this verse we have two statements that combined indicate that the Church Age ministry of the Holy Spirit is the result of both Jesus Christ and God the Father participating in the Spirit's procession.
4. The first phrase mentions both Jesus and the Father: "Whom I (Jesus) will send to you for your advantage from the source of the Father." The second mentions the Father: "the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the source of the Father."
5. From these phrases is developed the Doctrine of Procession, which simply has to do with those who were involved in sending the Holy Spirit to the believers on the Day of Pentecost.
6. Whether it was the Father only or by both the Father and the Son erupted into a prolonged controversy within the Catholic Church beginning in 589.
7. In order to understand the controversy we must address certain preliminary subjects. First of all, we must define what are called **church councils**.
 - 1) Beginning in the early fourth century, several emperors, in efforts to reconcile differences among the churches across Europe, began to convene what became known as ecumenical councils.
 - 2) Ecumenism has to do with coordinating all the churches in the world under one doctrinal statement. It is known today as the ecumenical movement and is promoted by the World Council of Churches.

- 3) The idea is taken from the Lord's statement found in Matthew 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."
- 4) The original Greek for the phrase "in the whole world" is **ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ**, **en holēi tēi oikoumenē**, its final word being the source of the English term "ecumenical."
- 5) The problem with this interpretation is, first, the idea that the pope runs the Lord's church is antibiblical. Jesus is head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23). Peter was not a pope, he was an apostle. At the conclusion of the New Testament canon, spiritual authority was delegated to pastor-teachers of local congregations while administrative authority was delegated to governing bodies such as boards of deacons.
- 6) In the Church Age believers are to gather in local churches under the authority of these two entities. There is no biblical justification for denominations, much less a global ecumenical system where power is concentrated in one man convinced he is God's mouthpiece for the world's Christians.
- 7) Nevertheless, this idea emerged in the early church and when doctrinal issues occurred these ecumenical councils were convened to hash out a controversy, usually concluding with a summary proclamation, often called a "creed," that announced what was concluded to be the accurate biblical position.
- 8) A summary of how these councils developed is the subject of an article in:

Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia. 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979), 3:188:

Council, in the Christian Church, a meeting of bishops and other leaders to consider and rule on questions of doctrine, administration, discipline, and other matters. An ecumenical council is a meeting of bishops of the whole church.

Whereas the Eastern Orthodox churches recognize only seven councils as ecumenical, the Roman Catholic Church adds an eighth before the schism of 1054, which permanently divided Eastern and Western Christianity.

The term ecumenical council was first used by the historian Eusebius \yü-sē'-bē-as\ in the life of Constantine to describe the Council of Nicaea \nī-sē'-a\ (325), which was summoned by Constantine.

A long fight, led by Athanasius \ath-a-nā'-zhē-as\ [theologian at Alexandria, Egypt; *b.* 293, *d.* 373], began *c.* 360 over the word *homoousios* ([ὁμοούσιος]: "of one substance") included in the creed adopted by the Council of Nicaea. The idea developed that the decisions of Nicaea could not be reformed, and Athanasius argued that Nicaea was an especially sacred council because it was attended by bishops from all parts of the church. The Council of Ephesus (431) and of Chalcedon (451) declared that the decision of Nicaea were unalterable. But it was assumed, rather than formally stated, that ecumenical councils, once recognized to be such, could not err. In practice, the idea of irrefrangible canons was often confined to matters of faith.

- 9) Consequently, the Nicene Creed became sacrosanct and placed on a level just below divine revelation. The text of the Creed reads as follows:

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [ὁμοούσιος, *homoousios*] with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son [Latin: *qui ex Patre Filioque procedit*] who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

8. After its confirmation, the Creed came under assault by a presbyter of Alexandria named Arius \ar'-ē-as\, who argued with the inclusion of the term "one substance" to describe the essence of Jesus Christ, asserting that He was not the eternal Son of God.
9. Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, strongly opposed Arius's claim arguing that Christ was coequal, coeternal, and coinfinite with the Father. Athanasius won out, the Creed stood, and it became the first "binding" theological declaration for the Church.
10. The council of Chalcedon was called in 451 to clarify the issue of the hypostatic union. The Chalcedon Creed established the doctrine by declaring that "Christ's two natures exist without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." (See Walter L. Elwell. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984], 274-75.)

The Hypostatic Union: In the person of the incarnate Christ are two natures, divine and human, inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. (R. B. Thieme, Jr. *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. 4th ed. [Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2004], 87.)