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# BULLINGER AND THE *FILIOQUE* CLAUSE

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In an article in this journal, Nick Needham indicated that he gravitates to the 'Eastern' view of the *filioque* clause and issued the following challenge:

Yes, I think it is time for us to do what the Reformers failed to do, and re-examine the *Filioque* clause. It would be a betrayal of the Reformation if Protestant tradition forbade us to do this, or anathematised those who tried.<sup>1</sup>

In point of fact, some Scottish theologians have indeed grappled with the *filioque* clause in recent years. For example, in a climate of growing ecumenism, it was debated by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1979.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, however, T.F. Torrance wrote in support and affirmation of the *filioque* clause.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, he interacted with Barth.<sup>4</sup>

For some, the issue of canonicity, is a major factor. That is to say, the addition of the *filioque* clause, during a period in the West of increasing numbers of new converts from a Visigothic Arian background, was not ratified by an ecumenical council of the whole church. Furthermore, the addition of the clause went against the canons of the Council of Ephesus.<sup>5</sup> For others, the insertion of the *filioque* or its rejection impacts upon one's theology of the Trinity. Referring to Calvin's understanding of the *filioque* in his *Institutes*, Gerald Bray noted:

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Needham, 'The *Filioque* Clause: East or West', *SBET*, 15 (1997), 142-62, (p. 162).

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Bray, 'The *Filioque* Clause in History and Theology', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 34 (1983), 91-144, (p. 102).

<sup>3</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), pp. 192-239; *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), pp. 231-47.

<sup>4</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), I.1, pp. 546-57. For Barth on the *filioque* clause see David Guretzki, *Karl Barth on the Filioque* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> The Council of Ephesus (451) forbade any change to the Nicene Creed (canon VII).

But although Calvin may not have said much about the controversy,<sup>6</sup> it does not follow that he regarded the issue as unimportant. On the contrary, set within the general framework of his theology, the doctrine of the *Filioque* is so obvious and fundamental that it is hardly worth arguing about. Without it there would have been no Evangelical faith at all.<sup>7</sup>

Needham referred to 'Protestant tradition' which presumably was a reference to *semper reformanda* in consort with *sola Scriptura*. This article will consider Bullinger's examination of the *filioque*.

## II. BULLINGER AND ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Following Zwingli, Bullinger affirmed decisions of ecumenical councils whenever he assessed that the particular decision was founded on a right interpretation of Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Thus, with respect to the addition of the *filioque*, the matter of canonicity would not have been a major consideration for Bullinger. Indeed, immediately prior to the fifty sermons of *The Decades* (1549-1551), Bullinger appended a brief introduction of the four general synods or councils of the church followed by the text of the Nicene Creed, the Creed of the Council of Constantinople, the Confession of Faith of the Synod of Ephesus, the Confession of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon, the Decree of the Synod of Chalcedon, the Creed of the First Council of Toledo, the Creed of the Fourth Council of Toledo, the Creed of Athanasius as well as a declaration of faith from Irenaeus, Tertullian's *Rule of Faith*, the Creed of Damasus as well as an imperial Decree for the Catholic Faith.<sup>9</sup> This was done *inter alia* by Bullinger to address the questioning of the orthodoxy of Zurich by Luther. It was also to address the Trinitarian teaching of radical reformers such as Hätzer, Campanus and Servetus. The *filioque* is stated in three of these creeds and decrees.

## III. THE *FILIOQUE* IN THE REFORMATION PERIOD

It cannot be overstated how, without exception, the reformers drew heavily from the work of Augustine. Indeed, the Western Church followed

<sup>6</sup> Calvin refers to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, 13:18-19 and III, 1:2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Bray, 'The *Filioque* Clause', p. 139.

<sup>8</sup> Joe Mock, 'Zurich and Trent Viewed Especially Through Bullinger: In Particular, His *Ecclesias evangelicas*', *Zwingliana*, 49 (2022), 33-67, (pp. 34-36).

<sup>9</sup> *Heinrich Bullinger Werke Band 3: Sermonum Decades quinque potissimum Christianae religionis capitibus* (1552), ed. by Peter Opitz (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2008), pp. 18-28.

Augustine who had advocated the *filioque* in his *De Trinitate*. Although the *filioque* had been inserted into the Nicene Creed at Toledo (589)<sup>10</sup> and thereafter used in the liturgy of the eucharist, it was not officially adopted by the Western Church until 1014. The Great Schism was to take place in 1054. Although Pope Leo III did not disapprove the doctrine of the *filioque*, he did not agree that it should be inserted into the Creed (810). Subsequently, Photios I the Patriarch of Constantinople (867) condemned the clause as well as the authority of the papacy.<sup>11</sup> He insisted that the Creed be understood in terms of 'from the Father *alone*.' As a consequence of this, Anselm was asked by Pope Urban II at the Council of Bari (1098) to write in response to Photius.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, the *filioque* was reaffirmed at the councils of Lyon (1274) and Florence (1439). In fact, Aquinas had died on the way to Lyon for the council. The Council of Florence took place after both Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus had condemned the clause in the wake of the Council of Lyon. Interestingly, delegates from the Eastern Church to both Lyon and Florence accepted the doctrine of the *filioque* but did not insert it into their creed. The Third Session of the Council of Trent (4 February 1546) reaffirmed the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed with the inclusion of the *filioque*.

Bullinger and the other reformers would have been cognisant of much of the above and particularly of what Lombard had written concerning the *filioque* in Distinctions XI and XII of Book I of the *Sentences*. They would have also been aware of Aquinas' treatment of the *filioque* in his *Summa Theologiae* (Prima Pars, Question 36, article 2). Moreover, Aquinas also wrote against the view of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father *through* the Son (Prima Pars, Question 36, article 3). Replacing *ek* with *dia* (thus *per filium*) would have been acceptable to the Eastern Church as it preserves the monarchy (*pēgē, archē* and *aitia*) of the Father.<sup>13</sup> As mentioned above, like the other reformers, Bullinger had to face several Trinitarian heretics. In addressing some of these heretics, his widespread affirmation of Augustine's writing on the Trinity is reflected in his works.

<sup>10</sup> This date is referenced by many scholars though some have suggested doubt that the clause was inserted this early. See, for example, A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: OUP, 2010), p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> In his *Mystagogy Concerning the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*.

<sup>12</sup> *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (1102). See Dennis K.P. Ngien, 'The *Filioque* Clause in the Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury – Part 1', *The Churchman*, 118 (2004), 105-122; 'The *Filioque* Clause in the Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury – Part 2', *The Churchman* 118 (2004), 219-234.

<sup>13</sup> This was the view of Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus.

IV. BULLINGER AND KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES THAT HAVE A CONNECTION WITH THE *FILIOQUE*

Writing concerning the *filioque* in his *Sentences*, Lombard had particularly referred to Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:9, John 15:26, Romans 8:11, Matthew 10:20 and John 14:26 (in that order) together with a quote from Augustine's *Contra Maximinum*.<sup>14</sup> An examination follows of how Bullinger linked these and other scriptural passages to the *filioque*.

In his commentary on Galatians 4:6 Bullinger did not mention the *filioque* but he did highlight the nature of the Trinity.<sup>15</sup> Presumably Bullinger had in mind Michael Servetus and Claude d'Aliod when he referred to old trinitarian heresies that had resurfaced. Bullinger cited passages such as Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 and Acts 5:3, 4 to affirm the deity of the Holy Spirit. Without elaborating on the nature of the 'sending' of the Spirit Bullinger did point out that the 'Spirit of the Father' and the 'Spirit of the Son' are interchangeable by citing Jerome's commentary on Galatians. Jerome had written against those who denied that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity.

Bullinger also indicated that the 'Spirit of the Father' and the 'Spirit of the Son' are interchangeable in his commentary on Romans 8:9.<sup>16</sup> He drew attention to the fact that this verse points to the deity of both Christ and that the 'Holy Spirit himself is one God with the Father and the Son.' Whereas Calvin viewed Romans 8 as an important text for the *filioque*, Bullinger's comment on Romans 8:11, however, has nothing germane to the *filioque*. Rather, he pointed out that believers should die to the flesh in view of the fact that they have the Spirit of God who vivifies.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Bullinger had nothing in his comments on Matthew 10:20 that directly relates to the *filioque*.

Bullinger's commentary on John 15:26 reveals he was fully aware of those who opposed the *filioque*.<sup>18</sup> He referred to the fact that the Church Fathers had greatly debated the *filioque* and that the matter was set-

<sup>14</sup> See W. Peter Stephens, *The Theology of Heinrich Bullinger* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), pp. 142-44 for a discussion of Bullinger and the *filioque*.

<sup>15</sup> *Heinrich Bullinger Werke Band 7: Kommentare zu den neutestamentlich Briefen Gal – Eph – Phil – Kol*, ed. by Luca Baschera (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2014), pp. 81-82.

<sup>16</sup> *Heinrich Bullinger Werke Band 6: Kommentare zu den neutestamentlichen Briefen Röm – 1Kor – 2Kor*, ed. by Luca Baschera (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2012), pp. 133-134.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *In divinum Iesu Christi Domini nostri Evangelium secundum Ioannem Commentariorum libri X* (Zürich: Froschauer, 1543), p. 173v.

tled. Without using perichoretic terminology, in citing key sayings of Jesus from John's Gospel, Bullinger underscored that the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. Bullinger further linked this to Jesus declaring, 'I and the Father are one.' It is precisely in this context that the sending by the Father of the Spirit of the Father is the same as the sending by the Son of the Spirit of the Son. Moreover, Bullinger opposed the expression 'from the Father through the Son (*a patre per filium*)' *inter alia* because it could be wrongly interpreted that the Spirit is sent as a quasi *instrumentum*.

Bullinger has some further detailed comments on the Trinity and the *filioque* in his commentary on John 14:26.<sup>19</sup> He explained that the Holy Spirit is 'common' to both the Father and the Son and proceeds from both of them (*procedens ab utroque*). His choice of the word *communis* indicates that the Holy Spirit has the same *essentia* as the Father and the Son. He pointed out that when Christ refers to the Father sending the Spirit in Christ's name it also means that Christ sends the Holy Spirit. To make this clear, Bullinger underlined that the catholic doctors of the Church taught that the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, is of the same essence (*essentia*) and is the third person of the Trinity who proceeds from both the Father and the Son. This is Bullinger's understanding of the immanent Trinity. In terms of the economic Trinity, he explained that the three persons of the Trinity are involved together in regenerating, illuminating, justifying, vivifying and saving of the elect (*contra tritheism*). At the same time, he was quick to stress that this particular verse indicates a clear distinction between the three persons of the Trinity (*contra Sabellianism*).<sup>20</sup>

Bullinger's commentary on John 16:12-15 has an emphatic note that the Holy Spirit has the same substance and divine nature as the Son and the Father. In this context, he explained that 'the Father of the creature does not dwell in any other way except through the Son in the Spirit.'<sup>21</sup>

## V. THE DECADES AND THE *FILIOQUE*

That Bullinger appreciated the importance of the *filioque* can be seen in his extended discussion of it in *The Decades* (1549-1551). Bullinger's understanding of the Holy Spirit is found in sermon IV.3 and sermon IV.8. Sermon IV.3 covers the true knowledge of God and that God is

<sup>19</sup> Bullinger, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, pp. 162v-163r.

<sup>20</sup> *Personarum distinctionem clarissime designat discriminatque praesens hic locus* [The present passage very clearly defines and separates the distinction of the persons].

<sup>21</sup> Bullinger, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, p. 179v.

one in substance and three in persons whereas sermon IV.8 focuses particularly on the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> In sermon IV.3 Bullinger reveals a catholic understanding of the Trinity.

For God is the Father both by nature (*naturaliter*) and from the beginning, because from the beginning he begat the Son in an unspeakable way; the same God is the Son by nature because He has been begotten of the Father from the beginning; the same God is by nature the Holy Spirit because He is the eternal spirit of both, as he proceeds (*procedens*) from both and is God with them.<sup>23</sup>

Further on in the same sermon Bullinger has a section on the Trinity where he also referred to the *filioque*. This follows a reference to Cyril on John's Gospel. He pointed out that the Trinity is clearly set forth in the epistles of Paul and in John's Gospel as well as John's epistles:

The Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father; neither is the Holy Spirit the Father or the Son. But the Father is the Father of the Son and the Son is the Son of the Father; but the Holy Spirit (*unctio*) proceeds (*proficiscitur*) from both of them. Moreover, these persons are so joined together and united that whoever denies one of them, has none of them. Indeed, whoever denies this Trinity is pronounced to be the Antichrist.<sup>24</sup>

Noting Basil's warning in his letter to Gregory about the difference between *ousia* and *hypostasis* concerning the use of illustrations to explain the Trinity,<sup>25</sup> Bullinger suggested Tertullian's illustration of the sun, sun rays and the heat which comes from both:

As the sun is the fountain (*fons*) of light and heat, so the Father is the fountain of the Son who is light from light. And as heat flows from the sun and the sun rays so the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.<sup>26</sup>

Bullinger was fully aware of the limitations of human illustrations, parables or similitudes and urged the reader to firmly believe in the clear word

<sup>22</sup> This sermon has the title *De spiritu sancto, tertia in adoranda trinitate persona, eiusque divina virtute* [Concerning the Holy Spirit, the third person in the adorable Trinity, and his divine power]. Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 661.

<sup>23</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, pp. 580-81 (unless otherwise stated all translations of *The Decades* are those of the author).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 585.

<sup>25</sup> Basilus Magnus, *Epistolae* 38. See *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church - Basil: Letters and Select Works*, ed. by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Classics Ethereal Library, 2003), pp. 371-78.

<sup>26</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 586.

of God concerning the Trinity. Indeed, Bullinger declared, 'that which is not attained by human reason, let faith hold fast.'<sup>27</sup> Moreover, although the Trinity is clearly attested in the New Testament, Bullinger drew attention to the fact that the Trinity is also attested in the Old Testament for 'certainly the mystery of the Trinity was well known to the patriarchs and prophets.'<sup>28</sup> Here Bullinger was echoing what he had earlier expounded in his *The Old Faith* (1537) concerning the Trinity in the Old Testament. Bullinger saw references to the Trinity in Psalm 110<sup>29</sup> and Psalm 33,<sup>30</sup> though *The Old Faith* does not refer to the *filioque*.

In sermon IV.8, Bullinger referred the reader to what had been explained in sermon IV.3 and stated, 'The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity to be worshipped, very God proceeding (*procedens*) from the Father and the Son who illuminates, regenerates and sanctifies the faithful (*fideles*) and fills them up with all good things (*omnibus bonis*).'<sup>31</sup> In this statement Bullinger was effectively juxtaposing the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity. In doing so, because of his constant reference to salvation history, he pointed out that the salvific work of the Trinity is for the salvation of the elect<sup>32</sup> who, in Christ, are blessed with 'all good things' (*omnia bona*) from God, who as 'the horn of plenty' (*cornucopia*), established his one and eternal covenant with the elect.<sup>33</sup>

Bullinger was quick to emphasize the order of the listing of the three persons of the Trinity has nothing to do with rank or degree:

Moreover, he (the Holy Spirit) is truly God, the same power, glory, majesty and substance (*essentia*) with the Father and the Son which needs to be stated of first importance because he is the third person of the holy Trinity. Neither must it be thought that he is lesser than they (the Father and the Son) because he is counted in the third place. For although the blessed Trinity is remembered by us according to an order, nonetheless there is no degree, no time, no place or number in the blessed Trinity.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *Antiquissima fides et vera religio* (Zürich: 1544 (translation of *Der alt gloub* into Latin by Cellarius)), pp. 38r-38v.

<sup>30</sup> Bullinger, *Antiquissima fides*, p. 42r.

<sup>31</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 663.

<sup>32</sup> *Fideles* is often used by Bullinger in his works to refer to the elect.

<sup>33</sup> This is expounded in Bullinger's treatise on the covenant *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (Zürich: Froschouer, 1534).

<sup>34</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 663. This supplements what he wrote in his extended commentary of John 16:13-15, Bullinger, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, pp. 178v-180v.



Bullinger further underscored that the explanation he gave is abundantly clear in the Athanasian Creed which he cited to that effect. In sermon IV.3 Bullinger had already commented on the 'order' in the Trinity:

In fact, although there is an order in the Trinity, nonetheless by no means at all is there any inequality. None of them is, in time, before the other nor in dignity superior to the other. But of the three there is one Godhead and these three are one and eternal God.<sup>35</sup>

Citing Book XV chapter 26 of Augustine's *De Trinitate* Bullinger stated,

In the high Trinity, which is God, there are no breaks of time by which it might be shown or at least required whether the Son were first born of the Father and afterwards the Holy Spirit to proceed from them both (*de ambo- bus processerit*).<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Bullinger made it abundantly clear that the Holy Spirit is not the servant, minister or instrument of the Father nor of the Son.<sup>37</sup>

In sermon IV.8, Bullinger has a section explaining the nature of the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.<sup>38</sup> He was very much aware of the disagreement concerning the *filioque* between the Western Church and the Eastern Church.<sup>39</sup> Although he understood that many questions had been raised concerning the *filioque*, he chose to focus only on some of the issues: 'I pass over untouched other questions which are intricate and very many. In these matters I require a religious mind that is not at all curious and a faithful mind that is not shrewd.'<sup>40</sup> This is consistent with his earlier comment: 'leaving aside several curious questions, we will briefly present those things which are helpful and agreeable to the holy Scriptures.'<sup>41</sup> This reflects Bullinger's constant practice of avoiding speculative theology to focus, rather, on the godly living of a person with a 'religious mind.' This recurring practice of Bullinger has led to G.W. Bromiley making the comment about the theological writ-

<sup>35</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 581.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 663.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 666.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 666-68.

<sup>39</sup> Bullinger drew attention to the difference between the West and the East – *In qua questione Latini a Graecis plurimum dissentire videntur* [In which question the Latins seem to differ greatly from the Greeks]; Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 666.

<sup>40</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 668.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 666.

ing of Bullinger vis-à-vis that of Zwingli as ‘the works of Bullinger are undoubtedly pedestrian as compared with the bold but hasty flights of his predecessor.’<sup>42</sup>

He made a deliberate point to quote from Cyril of Alexandria’s commentary on John’s Gospel. Significantly, he referred to Cyril as *scriptor Graecus* [a Greek writer]. In this quote from his commentary on John 15:26, Cyril had concluded:

When he (Christ) referred to the Spirit of truth which is his Spirit (for he is the truth) he named him the Paraclete and said that he proceeds from the Father. For just as the Spirit of the Son naturally abides in him and proceeds (*procedens*) through him so certainly, he is also the Spirit of the Father. But those with whom the Spirit is common certainly cannot be substantially separated.<sup>43</sup>

The point being made is that since the Son sends (*mittam*) the Spirit it means that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. Furthermore, Christ said that the Spirit is sent from the Father and, moreover, proceeds (*procedit*) from the Father. The context being the Son in the Father and the Father in the Son.<sup>44</sup>

Bullinger reiterated that he resolved to demonstrate the *filioque* clause from Scripture and, therefore, chose not to deal with all manner of questions that had been raised over the centuries. In doing so, Bullinger was being consistent with his stance of agreeing with Church Fathers or Church councils only when, in his view, they rightly read and interpreted Scripture. Thus, Bullinger stated: ‘Scripture manifestly teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds (*procedere*) from the Father and from the Son. The Scripture also very clearly shows that he is the spirit of either or both of them.’<sup>45</sup>

Not surprisingly, Bullinger cited Augustine again from Book XV, chapter 26 of *De Trinitate*. After explaining that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and that the Son is co-eternal with the Father, the relevant section of the quote declares:

<sup>42</sup> G. W. Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 667.

<sup>44</sup> John 14:11 *Credite mihi quod ego in patre sum et pater in me* [Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me]; Bullinger, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, p. 158v.

<sup>45</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 667.

let him understand just as the Father has in himself that the Holy Spirit might proceed from him thus he has given to the Son that the same Holy Spirit might proceed from him and both without beginning, moreover, so it is said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father that it might be understood that what proceeds from the Son is from the Father and from the Son. For, in fact, whatever the Son has, he has it from the Father so of course he has it from the Father that the Holy Spirit might proceed from him.<sup>46</sup>

This extended quotation from Augustine is important as it clearly maintains the monarchy (*pēgē*, *archē* and *aitia*) of the Father (*contra* Photios and others) and can be understood as referring to a single spiration of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. After his careful discussion of the *filioque* Bullinger summed up as follows: 'From all of these we come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and from the Son (*tam a patre quam filio*).'<sup>47</sup>

Bullinger identified two modes of the Holy Spirit's proceeding. One is temporal while the other is eternal. By the temporal procession is meant his role in sanctifying the elect. This may be called a sending (*missio*) or a gift (*donum*).<sup>48</sup> He comes visibly at times (such as in the book of Acts) and also invisibly for 'he is given to the faithful every day and every moment as if by watering us with his grace with the spirit of Christ and giving us faith, hope and charity.'<sup>49</sup>

By the eternal procession, Bullinger means eternally proceeding from God. To explain this further Bullinger again highlighted the *filioque*:

The eternal procession is that which emanates (*emanat*) from God from eternity. In both ways the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Nor does the Spirit flow separately from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the creatures. For I say that the nature and substance of the Father and the Son are one and the same, indivisible and coeternal.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the substance of the Father and the Son is ineffable, just as the generation of the Son from the Father is ineffable. Hence in the gospel it is not said that he proceeded or that he will proceed, but that he proceeds. For in this way the Lord of the proceedings shows that the substance of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is eternal and co-eternal and not in the least different.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 667-68.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 667.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 668.

To elaborate on the choice of ‘ineffable’ Bullinger cited yet again Book XV chapter 26 of Augustine’s *De Trinitate* to point out that just as the eternal begetting of the Son from the Father from eternity to eternity is difficult for human minds to grasp, so it is with the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son.<sup>52</sup> Bullinger further explained why, if the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, he is not referred to as a ‘son.’<sup>53</sup> This indicates Bullinger’s knowledge of what some Greek scholars had written. This section dealing with the *filioque* is brought to a close with an extended quotation from Didymus the Blind whose work on the Holy Spirit had been preserved in Latin by Jerome.<sup>54</sup> Before the quotation, Bullinger explained that the sending or the proceeding of the Holy Spirit needs to be understood spiritually by faith. Without employing perichoretic terminology, the quote points out that, although the Son is sent of the Father, the Son ‘remains in the Father and has the Father in himself,’ not being separated from the Father nor the Father separated from him. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is sent from the Son and, at the same time, proceeds from the Father. Furthermore, the ‘movement’ of the Spirit is not the same as the movement of physical bodies. Hence, ‘Therefore the ineffable word is to be believed by faith alone, that the savior is said to have come out from God, and that the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father.’<sup>55</sup>

In the years following *The Decades*, the *filioque* is mentioned in Bullinger’s *Compendium Christianae religionis* (1556),<sup>56</sup> in his *Summa Christenlicher religion* (1558),<sup>57</sup> in his catechism (1561),<sup>58</sup> and in the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Didymus Alexandrinus, *Liber de spiritu sancto*.

<sup>55</sup> Opitz, *Sermonum Decades*, p. 668.

<sup>56</sup> *Spiritus vero sanctus procedit ex patre et filio* [The Holy Spirit truly proceeds from the Father and the Son]; Heinrich Bullinger, *Compendium Christianae religionis decem libris comprehensum* (Zürich, Froschouer, 1556), p. 21v.

<sup>57</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *Summa Christenlicher religion* (Zürich: Froschouer, 1558), p. 25r.

<sup>58</sup> *Procedentem ex patre et filio* [Proceeding from the Father and the Son]; Heinrich Bullinger, *Catechesis pro adulatoribus* (Zürich: Froschouer, 1561), p. 40v.

<sup>59</sup> *Spiritus sanctus vero procedat ab utroque idque ab aeterno* [The Holy Spirit truly proceeds from them both [the Father and the Son] from eternity] – *Confessio Helvetica posterior* (Zürich, 1566), III.3.

## VI. BULLINGER AND OTHER REFORMERS ON THE FILIOQUE

In his *Institutes*, Calvin acknowledged that the Father is the fountain (*fons*) and the wellspring (*scaturigo*) of the Trinity. He stated that ‘the Son is said to come forth (*exsistere*) from the Father alone; the Spirit is from the Father and the Son at the same time (*simul*).’<sup>60</sup> Calvin’s wording seems to indicate a single spiration. He saw the *filioque* primarily from his understanding of Romans 8 and 2 Peter 1:11 where the Spirit of the Father is interchanged with the Spirit of the Son. He further underlined that ‘the Father is wholly in the Son, the Son wholly in the Father.’ In citing the names of Hilary, Athanasius, Ambrose and Cyril, the *filioque* is referred to in the *French Confession of Faith* (1559), ‘the Holy Spirit proceeding eternally from them both (*Le Saint-Esprit procédant éternellement de tous deux*).’<sup>61</sup>

In his commentary on John’s Gospel, Calvin’s comment on John 15:2 engages with the stance of the Eastern Church. Calvin pointed out that the context clearly indicates that Christ will send (*missurum*) the Holy Spirit in tandem with the Holy Spirit proceeding (*procedere*) from the Father.<sup>62</sup> The sending of the Spirit by the Son is a given according to Calvin and the point about the Spirit proceeding from the Father was ‘to augment the weight of his authority (*ad augendum auctoritatis pondus facit*).’ He followed up this explanation with a sharp word against the Eastern Church: ‘Whence it appears how frivolous was the verbal trickery (*argutia*) of the Greeks when by the pretext of these words they deny that the Spirit proceeds from the Son.’ Calvin’s understanding of John 15:26 parallels that of Oecolampadius who, noting the difference between the Western and Eastern Churches, wrote, ‘There is no small disagreement as to whether the Holy Spirit proceeds (*proficiscatur*) from the Father and the Son, or whether from the Father alone.’<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Oecolampadius pointed out that the Eastern Church wanted to assert that the Holy Spirit came down (*descendere*) from the Father as if from one principle (*ab uno principio*). It is a dispute over words, he added and then concluded,

<sup>60</sup> *A patre simul et filio spiritus* [‘From both (the Father and the Son) the Spirit’]; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), I.13.18.

<sup>61</sup> Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom vol. III* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), p. 363.

<sup>62</sup> John Calvin, CO, XLIX, p. 354.

<sup>63</sup> Johannes Oecolampadius, *Annotationes piae ac doctae in evangelium Ioannis* (Basel, 1533), p. 294v.

Here you have it unmistakably, that he is from the Father and the Son because he said ‘whom I will send.’ That is, it is afterwards that he said, ‘Who proceeds (*procedit*) from the Father.’<sup>64</sup>

In his *Loci communes*, in commenting on John 15:26, Vermigli wrote,

When the Son says that he will send the Spirit, (as we have quoted above), he also asserted that he (the believer) would receive from his (the Son’s) own. No one can doubt that he (the Spirit) proceeds (*prodire*) from the Son. He now eloquently says, ‘he who proceeds (*procedit*) from the Father.’<sup>65</sup>

Luther referred to the *filioque* in the *Smalcald Articles* (1537, Article II) though it is not in the *Augsburg Confession* (1530). It appears that Luther did not write much on the *filioque* but this extended quotation from his *Treatise on the Last Words of David* reveals Luther’s understanding of the *filioque* in the context of the Trinity.

All of this has been said so that we may recognize and believe in three distinct Persons in the one Godhead and not jumble the Persons together nor divide the essence. The distinction of the Father, as we have heard, is this, that He derived His deity from no one, but gave it from eternity, through the eternal birth, to the Son. Therefore the Son is God and Creator, just like the Father, but the Son derived all of this from the Father, and not, in turn, the Father from the Son. The Father does not owe the fact that He is God and Creator to the Son, but the Son owes the fact that He is God and Creator to the Father. And the fact that Father and Son are God and Creator they do not owe to the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit owes the fact that He is God and Creator to the Father and the Son. Thus the words “God Almighty, Creator” are found [in the Creed] as attributes of the Father and not of the Son and of the Holy Spirit to mark the distinction of the Father from the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, again, the distinction of the Son from the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the distinction of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son; namely, that the Father is the source, or the fountainhead (if we may use that term as the fathers do) of the Godhead, that the Son derives it from Him and that the Holy Spirit derives it from Him and the Son, and not vice versa.<sup>66</sup>

The successors of Luther did reach out to the Eastern Church. There was extended contact with the Joasaph II, Patriarch of Constantinople. Mel-

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Loci communes*, I.xi.6 (Zürich: Froschouer, 1580), p. 37.

<sup>66</sup> Martin Luther, ‘Treatise on the Last Words of David’, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 15 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), pp. 309-10.

anchthon sent a copy of the *Augsburg Confession* in Greek. Joasaph's successor, Hieremias II, continued to interact with the German Lutherans. Through the interchange of correspondence Hieremias II asked about the Lutherans' understanding of the *filioque*, noting that it is not referred to in the *Augsburg Confession*. In 1581 he wrote, 'Go your own way, and do not send us further letters on doctrine but only letters written for the sake of friendship.'<sup>67</sup>

Although other reformers were certainly aware of the significance of the *filioque*, it appears that only Bullinger had an extended discussion of it.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Bullinger is more known as a biblical theologian who emphasized salvation history rather than as a systematic theologian. Nonetheless, his extended and considered comments on the *filioque* reveal that he understood its theological significance. Above all, that the *filioque* can be demonstrated from Scripture. Without using the terminology of the immanent Trinity or the economic Trinity or perichoresis Bullinger clearly understood the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son in the context of the immanent Trinity. Further, this same procession is also evident in the Triune God's external works. In this connection, his explanation of the two modes of the Spirit's procession involves both eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son and *missio* from both the Father and the Son.

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<sup>67</sup> Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 256.