

Week 1 Introduction: The Nicene Creed

Prayer:

Prayer to the Holy Spirit by Augustine of Hippo (354-430AD)

Breathe in me O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.

Amen.

(<https://www1.villanova.edu>)

Video:

Although it is not necessary to watch the short video it gives a short introduction to the context of the study.

Scripture: John 14:15-26; 15:26 -16:15; 20:19-23

Note how John primarily uses the following titles for the Holy Spirit:

- *Spirit of Truth* (14:17; 15:26; 16:13)(compare 1 John 4:1-6 where John cautions about the spirits of falsehood and speaks again of the Spirit of Truth); and
- *Paraclete* (14:15-16; 14:26; 15:26).
- The metaphor of water is also used in John (4:7-24; 7:37-39).

Introduction: Nicene Creed

The Church has always struggled to express its understanding of the Triune God. After almost a century of debate over the nature of the *relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, and two ecumenical councils - one in Nicaea (present-day Iznik, Turkey) in AD 325, and one in Constantinople (now Istanbul) in AD 381, the Nicene Creed was finalised.

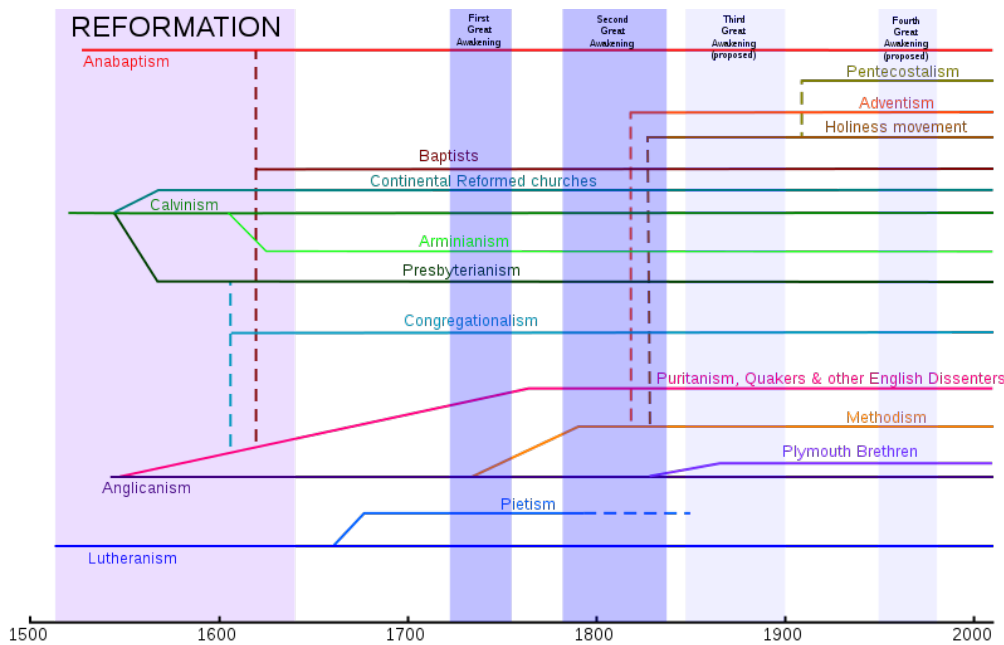
The agreement did not last and a major split in the came in 1054 – the split of the so-called Eastern and Western Churches. One of the main differences between the Eastern and Western churches is the understanding of the position of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity. The difference can be summed up in the one Latin word *filioque* (proceeding from the Son). The Nicene Creed reads:

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, ... who proceeds from the Father (*and the Son*).” The Eastern church, (basing their reasoning on John 15:26) only declare “who proceeds from the Father”, thus refuting the part of the Nicene confession, which reads “*and ‘proceeding from’ the Son*”. The Eastern Church argue that to confess “and from the Son” diminishes the Holy Spirit as an “equal person” in the Trinity and makes the Holy Spirit subject to Christ, the Son.

We are part of the so-called Western Church, which itself is complex and diverse, including the two main line, Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations. The church’s understanding of the Holy Spirit are further enriched and made more complex with the rise of Pentecostalism and Charismatic churches in the twentieth century. These terms are of-

course interpreted differently, but generally speaking Pentecosts emphasise the *relationship with and role of the Holy Spirit* – the so called experiential approach. The Protestant Churches are regularly been accused of neglecting the Holy Spirit, and focussing on God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

Below is a diagram of some of the main denominational traditions in the Western Church.



(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Christianity)

Questions to discuss in group or reflect upon individually:

- 1 What *images* come to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit?
- 2 What *words* do you use to describe the Holy Spirit?
- 3 How do you think the Holy Spirit works
 - In your personal life?
 - In the church? (compare your experiences across the number of churches you have been exposed to)
- 4 How would you describe the Holy Trinity?
- 5 Do you think the Uniting Church has neglected the Holy Spirit?

Closing prayer:

Tune In: There will be a ZOOM meeting to discuss the past week’s focus every Sunday evening at 6pm.