



# The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology)

By A. Edward Siecienski

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## **The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology)** By A. Edward Siecienski

Among the issues that have divided Eastern and Western Christians throughout the centuries, few have had as long and interesting a history as the question of the filioque. Christians everywhere confess their faith in the ancient words of the Nicene Creed. But rather than serve as a source of unity, the Creed has been one of the chief sources of division, as East and West profess their faith in the Trinitarian God using different language. In the Orthodox East, the faithful profess their belief in "the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father." In the West, however, they say they believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father "and the Son"-in Latin "filioque." For over a millennium Christendom's greatest minds have addressed and debated the question (sometimes in rather polemical terms) in the belief that the theological issues at stake were central to an orthodox understanding of the trinitarian God. To most modern people, this may seem like a trivial matter, and indeed most ordinary Christians would be hard pressed to explain the doctrine behind this phrase. In the history of Christianity, however, these words have played an immense role, and the story behind them deserves to be told. For to tell the story of the filioque is to tell of the rise and fall of empires, of crusades launched and repelled, of holy men willing to die for the faith, and of worldly men willing to use it for their own political ends. It is, perhaps, one of the most interesting stories in all of Christendom, filled with characters and events that would make even the best dramatists envious.

*The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* is the first complete English language history of the filioque written in over a century. Beginning with the biblical texts and ending with recent agreements on the place and meaning of the filioque, this book traces the history of the doctrine and the controversy that has surrounded it. From the Greek and Latin fathers, the ninth-century debates, the Councils of Lyons and Ferrara-Florence, to the twentieth- and twenty-first century-theologians and dialogues that have come closer than ever to solving this thorny problem, Edward Siecienski explores the strange and fascinating history behind one of the greatest ecumenical rifts in Christendom.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"The tragic schism between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Christianity has for more than a millennium centered on the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father, or from the Father and the Son (*Filioque*), and in particular on the Western addition of the phrase *Filioque* to the creed. It is a long and tangled controversy which is traced in all its twists and turns with admirable clarity by Edward Siecienski in this fine book. Siecienski explores the past and looks to the future. One of his more astonishing revelations is that it is one of the earliest attempts at an irenical approach to the question-by the seventh-century monk and theologian, St Maximus the Confessor-that holds out the best hopes in the present for a final resolution of this controversy."

--Andrew Louth, Author of *Greek East and Latin West: the Church ad 681-1071*

"At last we have the history of the *Filioque* controversy from beginning to end, free of confessional bias, engaging with both the theology and the historical context. An admirable presentation of the blend of Trinitarian theology, ecclesiastical rivalry, and historical events that sustained (and sometimes still sustain) the controversy, Siecienski's book should be required reading for interested historians, theologians, and ecumenists. I have wanted this book for a long time and am thrilled to have it on my desk at last."

--Tia Kolbaba, Author of *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century*

"Siecienski excavates the intricacies of the *Filioque* controversy with magisterial ability in this excellent study. He is equally adept in telling us why the argument arose, and why it still matters. This is a book that is bound to become an authoritative classic on the subject."

--John A. McGuckin, Author of *The Orthodox Church: Its History and Spiritual Culture*

"This is a hugely accessible, up-to-date survey of the field free of the fog of polemic and bias."--Aristeides Papadakis, University of Maryland-Baltimore County

"He writes gracefully and is remarkably free of the bias that plagues most of the literature devoted to the filioque. We are in his debt."--Rober M. Haddad, Smith College

"...I heartily recommend this volume to anyone who has been touched by the issues surrounding the filioque, which in truth should be all Christians."--Nick Norelli

"...the work will likely established itself as the best English introduction to the topic."--*John T. Slotemaker*

"Beacause of th eclarity and brevity of its methodology and textual analysis, The Filioque is destined to become a classic on the subject for decades to come."--*Bradley Nassif, Church History*

"Edward Siecienski has written a valuable history of the doctrinal controversy of the *filioque*, the Western addition to the Creed of Constantinople I (381) meaning that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*. Siecienski says that his book "is, first and foremost, a theological work" (vii). He gives not merely a review of the evidence from one of the longest and most complicated disputes in Christian history, but an explicit theological interpretation that will illuminate and challenge a spectrum of interested readers."--*The Thomist*

About the Author

**A. Edward Siecienski** is Associate Professor of Religion and Pappas Professor of Byzantine Culture and Religion at Stockton University.

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