

# An ecumenical exploration of the procession of the Holy Spirit in the theology of the Greek Fathers

“With objectivity, clarity, and great skill, the author guides the reader through the patristic corpus, East and West, demonstrating that there is something akin to a *consensus partum* on the active but not causal role played by the Son in the Spirit’s procession. In this way, Father Maspero shows a way out of the stale dialectic between procession ‘from the Father alone’ and procession ‘from the Son,’ between essentialism and personalism, and offers real hope that in looking back a new way forward may be found.”

—A. EDWARD SIECIENSKI, author of  
*The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy*

“Like the historical theologians of the last century whose study of medieval and early modern theories of justification opened the door for the lifting of anathemas between Catholics and Lutherans, Maspero challenges theologians to consider the possibility that East and West might come together affirming the Western *Filioque* grounded on classical Eastern pneumatology.”

—J. WARREN SMITH, Duke Divinity School

“Reaching back behind the ‘Filioquist’ polemics of the medieval period to examine developments from Origen to Gregory of Nyssa and beyond, Maspero demonstrates how the main line of Greek Trinitarian theology saw an active, but not causal, role of the Son in the procession of the Spirit and also utilized psychological analogies, all within an epistemology of apophatic reserve. Maspero thus offers a way for East and West to share in the common mystery of faith—a very welcome offering indeed.”

—JOHN BEHR, University of Aberdeen

# Does the Holy Spirit proceed only from the Father— or also from the Son?

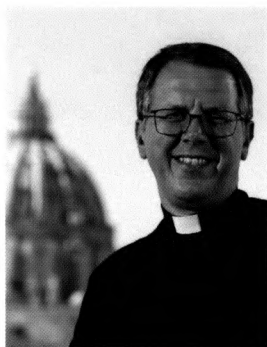
**Protestants and Roman Catholics** might immediately answer the latter and wonder why their Orthodox friends protest. Historically one of the major obstacles to Christian unity across the East-West divide, the *Filioque*—the part of the Latin translation of the Nicene Creed claiming the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*—still bedevils Trinitarian theologians today.

How can the church possibly achieve unity in the face of this dogmatic difference, implacable for over a millennium? Giulio Maspero shows us how the answer can be found in history. In the fourth century, when Pneumatomachians denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the Cappadocian Fathers came to a relational understanding of the most elusive person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit was conceived of as the glory and power eternally exchanged between the Father and the Son. In fact, this understanding is still fundamentally shared by Eastern and Western Christians. Examining Syriac traditions as an example, Maspero observes that both Syriac and Latin lack the linguistic precision to describe the nature of the Holy Spirit's procession from the Trinity in the same way as Greek, hence the ambiguous *Filioque*.

Yet this apparent translation error prompts deeper questions about God's triune nature. With rigorous theological argument, Maspero ultimately proposes a way forward for East and West—one based not on centuries of polemics, but on a common tradition established by the Greek Fathers. Essential reading for the ecumenically minded theologian, *Rethinking the Filioque with the Greek Fathers* takes a crucial step toward Christian unity.

“This text is a very welcome addition to the literature on this complex topic and can only serve to aid the dialogue between East and West.”

—LEWIS AYRES, Durham University



**GIULIO MASPERO** is professor of theology of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. His research focuses on Gregory of Nyssa, Trinitarian theology, and the relationship between philosophy and theology. He is the author of *Trinity and Man*, the co-author of *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology* (with R. Wozniak), and the coeditor of *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (with L. F. Mateo-Seco).