

## Divisions in the East and West

Historian Earle Cairns ably summarizes the growing tensions between the Eastern and Western Church.<sup>1</sup>

*When Constantine moved his capital to Constantinople in 330, he paved the way for political and, finally, ecclesiastical separation of the church into the East and the West. The church in the East was under the jurisdiction of the emperor, but the pope in Rome was too far away to be brought under his control. In the absence of effective political control in the West, the pope became a temporal as well as spiritual leader in times of crisis. Emperors were almost popes in the East, and in the West popes were almost emperors. This gave the two churches an entirely different outlook concerning temporal power.*

*The intellectual outlook of the West also differed from that of the East. The Latin West was more inclined to consider practical matters of polity and had little trouble formulating orthodox dogma. The Greek mind of the East was more interested in solving theological problems along philosophical lines. Most of the theological controversies between 325 and 451 arose in the East, but in most cases the same problems caused little difficulty in the West.*

*Another difference between the two churches concerned celibacy. Marriage of all parish clergy below the rank of bishop was permitted in the East, but in the West the clergy were not allowed to marry. Disputes even arose on some occasions over the wearing of beards. The priest in the West might shave his face, but the clergymen in the East had to wear a beard. Also, the West stressed the use of Latin while the Eastern churches used Greek. This occasionally led to misunderstanding. Though these and similar matters may seem trivial now, they were of great importance at that time to both sections of the church.*

*The two churches clashed over doctrinal matters. In 867 Photius, the patriarch in the East, charged Nicholas I and the church in the West with heresy because the West had the filioque clause in its form in the Nicene Creed (“the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son”). The West accepted the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son, but this was rejected by the East.*

*Then a series of controversies embittered relations between the East and West. With each dispute the hostility increased.*

*The iconoclastic controversy in the Eastern church in the eighth and the ninth centuries caused many hard feelings. In 726, Leo III, as emperor of the East, forbade any kneeling before pictures or images and in 730 he ordered all except the cross removed from the churches and destroyed to [in part]...refute Muslim charges of idolatry. This attempt at lay revival in the Eastern church ran into the vested opposition of the parish and monastic clergy. In the West the pope and even the emperor Charlemagne took a stand in favor of the use of visible symbols of divine reality. This interference by the West in the affairs of the church in the East increased the antagonism between the two areas. The church in the West continued to use pictures and statues in worship; the church in the East, however, finally*

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<sup>1</sup> Cairns, pp. 203-206.

*eliminated statues but kept icons, usually pictures of Christ which were to be accorded reverence but not worship, which belong to God alone.*

*The people of the East particularly resented the attempt by Pope Nicholas I in the middle of the ninth century to interfere with the appointment of the patriarch of the church in the East...Though Nicholas was not successful, his interference, in what many in the East felt was a matter for the East alone, intensified the bad feeling between the two churches.*

## **I. The Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church**

*In 1054, the final controversy revolved around what was apparently a minor matter. Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople from 1043 to 1059, condemned the church in the West for the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. Such use had been a growing practice in the West since the ninth century. Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert and two other legates to the East to end the dispute. The differences of opinion widened as the discussions went on. On July 16, 1054, the Roman legates finally put a decree of excommunication of the patriarch and his followers on the high altar of the cathedral church of Saint Sophia. The patriarch was not to be outdone, and thereupon...he anathematized the pope of Rome and his followers. The first great schism in Christianity broke the unity of the church. From this time on the Roman Catholic church and the Greek Orthodox church went their separate ways. This mutual excommunication was not removed until December 7, 1965, by Paul VI and Athenagoras.<sup>2</sup>*

Teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church:

### **A. Authority**

As indicated in our study of Roman Catholicism, the foundational issue for any church is that of authority. We saw that Roman Catholicism grants equal authority to Tradition and Scripture. So, too, does the Greek Orthodox Church:

Generally speaking, the Orthodox...affirm that the Orthodox churches have kept the Deposit of Faith undistorted, just as the apostolic church received it...The Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1546-1563) declared that "both saving truth and moral discipline" are "contained in the written books and the unwritten traditions, and it belongs to holy mother church...to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures."

Similarly, the Orthodox claim that the content of revelation has been transmitted in the Scriptures and the Holy tradition. The 1962 Almanac of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America states, "eternal truths are expressed in the Holy Scripture and the Sacred Tradition, both of which are equal and are represented pure and unadulterated by the true Church established by Christ to continue His mission: man's salvation."

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 205-206.

**B. Salvation – by works**

*The means whereby human beings [are saved] are the sacraments and human effort. The Orthodox stress on the sacraments as the means of [salvation] lead to the logical conclusion that [such] is impossible outside the church. Coniaris writes, “From the Church, Christ reaches out to us with the Sacraments to bring to us His grace and love. Every sacrament puts us in touch with Christ and applies to us the power of the Cross and the Resurrection... Thus salvation... is possible only in and through the church, because “the Church and the Sacraments are the way to God, for the Church is in absolute reality the Body of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>*

**II. Denominations from the Protestant Reformation****A. The Reformation in Germany (1521-1580) - Lutheran**

It was not Martin Luther's intention to begin a new church but rather to reform the existing church. However, after his refusal to recant his writings in Worms in 1521, he was excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, Luther, faced the need to develop doctrine and organization for the church in Germany.

1. Church Government
2. Worship

**B. The Reformation in Switzerland (1521-1564) – Reformed/Presbyterian**

1. Church Government
2. Worship
  - a. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)
  - b. John Calvin (1509-1564)

**C. The Reformation in England (1532-1620)- Anglicanism**

1. Church Government
2. Worship

**D. The “Radical Reformation” (1525-1580) - Anabaptist**

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<sup>3</sup> *Christian Research Journal*, Eastern Orthodoxy (January – March 1998)