

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

Studies in the Faith

History of the Church - Part III



**GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH
OF THE
ASSUMPTION**

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THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH - PART III

***“Better that my brother’s empire should perish than the purity of the Orthodox faith.
I would rather see the Muslim turban in the midst of the city than the Latin miter.”***

(The Sister of Michael VIII the emperor of Constantinople, 1259-1282)

READING & VIEWING ASSIGNMENTS

The Orthodox Church: by Timothy Ware, Pages 41-69 and 189-201.

The Great Divorce: Christian History, Vol. 16, No. 2, Pages 10-18.

Better the Infidel: Christian History, Vol. 16, No. 2, Page 19.

The Spirit-Bearers: Christian History, Vol. 16, No. 2, Pages 24-25.

Acts of the Apostles 18:23-21:16.

Video: History of Orthodox Christianity - A Hidden Treasure:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/history-of-orthodox-christianity-a-hidden-treasure-3-of-3->

THE GREAT SCHISM: 1054 A.D.

POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

When the Church was first established, the Roman empire was one entity. It’s cultural and political structure was uniform throughout the entire empire. Late in the third century (282 A.D.) the size of the empire necessitated its division for it had grown too large to be effectively administered by one emperor. Hence the empire was divided into two halves, still a united kingdom, but each half having its own emperor. The emperor Constantine in 324 even established a new capitol in the east, Constantinople, named after himself. His desire to move the capitol of the Roman empire from Rome to Constantinople was due partly to the fact that the "Old Rome" was too steeped in pagan associations to be the seat for the new Christian empire which he wanted to create (which came to be known as the Byzantine Empire). Hence, the east had it's own emperor and capital as did the west, for Rome was still the political center of the western part of the united Roman Empire.

In the fifth century, the Germanic invasions divided the western part of the Roman Empire. The Goths invaded Italy and Spain. The Gauls invaded France and the Anglo-Saxons came to England. What is today England, Britain, France, Italy, North Africa and Spain all started as independent tribal states. As a result of these invasions, the political, economic and social order in the west disintegrated. The Bishop of Rome, and more specifically the Church, was the only institution which could provide stability amongst the multitude of Gothic tribes that existed. Hence, the Church became a unifying force amongst the chaos. Even though the Eastern part of the Roman Empire continued to regard the entire empire as "universal," in fact, however, the political division of the east and west was now permanent.

At about the same time, with the west being under siege, the bishop of Constantinople took the title of Ecumenical Patriarchate, becoming the spokesman for world Orthodoxy. Rome, (being first among all of the bishops due to the fact that he was the Bishop of Rome, but sharing equal authority with all the Bishops), of course, objected. Due however to the political struggles which were occurring in the west, the empire’s political power gradually shifted completely to Constantinople. Hence, even though Rome objected to the Bishop of Constantinople assuming the title of Ecumenical Patriarchate, the west was not in a position, due to the Germanic invasion and the chaos which followed, to challenge this political appointment. Even though the invasions from the North disintegrated the unity of the Roman empire in the west and severed the political unity between the east and west, the Churches in the Byzantine east and the Latin west were still united in their faith.

In addition to political division, the Germanic invasions in the west brought with them other consequences.

When the Church was founded in the year 33 A.D. all in the Roman Empire spoke both Greek and Latin. By the year 450 A.D. few in the west could speak Greek and few in the east could speak Latin. The Germanic invasion exacerbated the situation so that by the year 600 A.D. even though the Byzantine east considered itself part of the Roman empire, virtually all spoke only Greek, including many theologians. This cultural division began to inhibit the exchange of theological thought between east and west.

This exchange of theological thought was further inhibited with the rise of Islam and the Islamic invasion from the east. As Islam invaded Byzantium, they also took control of the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, the Avars and Slavs took control of the Balkan Peninsula, which acted as a bridge between the east and west. The Byzantine East and the Roman West became isolated from each other. As a result, by the late 600's, cultural contacts between the east and west became very difficult. The East and West began to diverge Theologically.

THEOLOGICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Hence, as the Byzantine Empire in the east continued to employ a decentralized form of Ecclesiastical government as defined by the Ecumenical Councils, the west, due to political and historical circumstances developed a centralized form of ecclesiastical government where the center of authority shifted completely to the Bishop of Rome. The east had no problem with this as long as the Pope of Rome did not try to interfere in the affairs of the other Patriarchates.

On Christmas day in the year 800 A.D. Pope Leo III, Bishop of Rome, crowned Charlemagne (king of the Franks) as emperor of the entire Roman Empire. Of course, Charlemagne immediately sought recognition from the emperor of Byzantium (eastern half of the Roman Empire). However, the emperor of Byzantium still considered himself the emperor of the eastern half of a united Roman Empire. As a result he considered Charlemagne an intruder and the Papal coronation as an act of schism.

By the time Pope Nicholas I took office, the center of authority had focused so much on the Bishop of Rome that Nicholas I believed that his absolute power extended into the Byzantine east as well. Of course, the east, in keeping with the synodical form of ecclesiastical governance, rejected this Papal claim of universal jurisdiction. The final outcome of the above is the Catholic dogma of the supremacy of the Pope, something to which the Orthodox object, seeing the Pope as the first Bishop among equals. In addition to the issue of the supremacy of the Pope, was the Papal dogma of the Filioque. In the sixth century, as a safeguard against Arianism, the west changed the creed. They inserted a phrase. The ninth article of the creed states, "And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father,..." The west changed the creed to read, "And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father **and the Son**." (Filioque in Latin),..." The Byzantine East, of course, objected. Since the creed was developed within the context of an Ecumenical Council, only another Council could change the creed. Hence, Bishop Photius of Constantinople in 867 denounced the filioque and those who used it as heretics. Although there was much debate in the west by the Bishops as to whether the creed should even be changed, with time, the Filioque became entrenched in Latin theology. The traditional Western Churches continue to recite the creed with the Filioque inserted to this day.

THE GREAT SCHISM

All the above having transpired, on Saturday, July 16, 1054, while Patriarch Michael Cerularius was celebrating the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in St. Sophia, Cardinal Humbert (a western bishop) entered the Church and placed on the Holy Altar the Bull of Excommunication. A few days later, Patriarch Michael, then Patriarch of Constantinople, convened a council in Constantinople and excommunicated the Roman west.

Even though the schism was now official, there were many instances where Eastern and Western Christians were still worshiping together. However that came to an end in the year 1204 with the fourth crusades. The Western crusaders invaded Constantinople in 1204. Although the invasion was politically motivated, the pain left in the hearts of those who survived the sacrilege forever divided the west from the east.

There were attempts at reconciliation. The first was in 1274 at the council of Lyons. At that time, Constantino-

ple desperately needed military protection against the threats made by Charles of Anjou, sovereign of Sicily. As a result, the Orthodox delegates agreed at the council of Lyons to recognize the papal claims of universal jurisdiction and to recite the Creed with the Filioque. However, this union was fiercely rejected by the majority of Orthodox Christian Clergy and Laity.

A second attempt was made through the council of Florence in the year 1438. The political situation of the Byzantines had become desperate. The only hope of defeating the Moslems was through the military help of the West. Again, the delegates of the council accepted union with Rome. This attempt at reunion was more conciliatory. Sincere effort was made by both sides. However, once again, the majority of the Orthodox world did not accept the decrees of the Council.

The East and West remain divided to this day.

As a result of a weakened Byzantine empire, when the Moslems invaded in the year 1453, the Byzantine Empire fell—never to recover. The Eastern Roman Empire fell. The Church of the East entered, once again, into a state of repression and persecution.

HISTORICAL CHART

<u>33 A.D.</u>	<u>451 A.D.</u>	<u>1054 A.D.</u>
Eastern Orthodox	Monophysites	Roman Catholics

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

- 862 AD: Mission of Cyril and Methodius to the Slavs.
- 988 AD: Vladimir, prince of Kiev, embraces Christianity; conversion of Russia follows.
- 1014 AD: Rome introduces filioque into its Liturgy; the pope is no longer commemorated at Constantinople.
- 1022 AD: Death of Simon, the New Theologian.
- 1054 AD: Papal legates excommunicate the Patriarch of Constantinople, who in turn excommunicates Rom.
- 1204 AD: Crusaders sack Constantinople.
- 1274 AD: Union of Lyons rejected by the Orthodox Church.
- 1338 AD: Gregory Palamas defends Hesychasm in his Triads
- 1438 AD: Council of Florence attempts to re-united East and West. Rejected by the Orthodox Church.
- 1453 AD: The Turks conquer Byzantium.

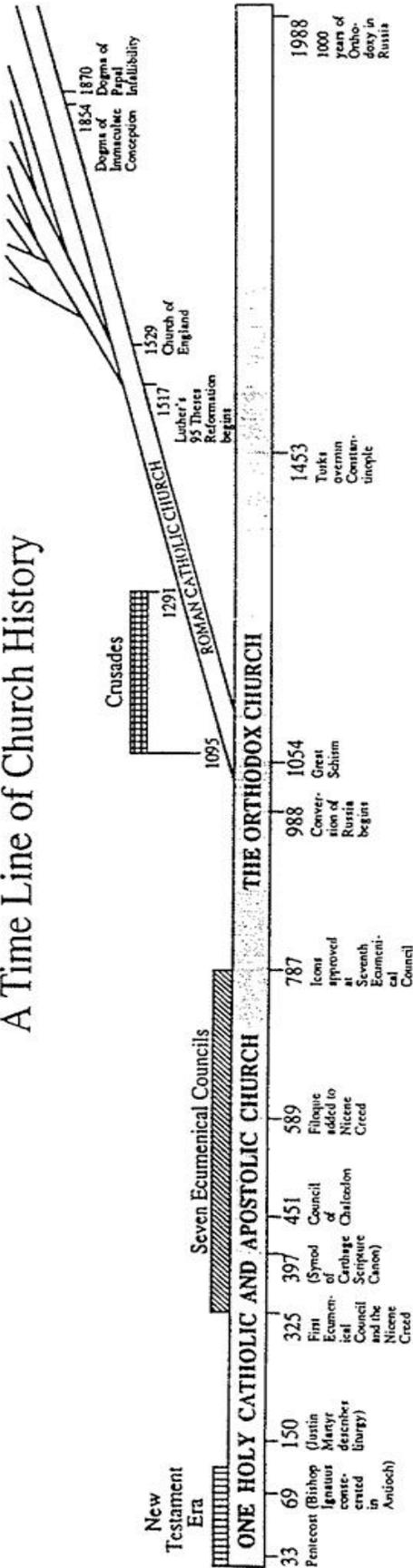
CLASS CHECK LIST

- Attended class
- Previous Class Review
- Read pages 41-69 and 189-201 of The Orthodox Church, by Timothy Ware.
- Read the article The Great Divorce In Christian History, Vol. 16, No. 2, Pages 10-18
- Read the article Better the Infidel In Christian History, Vol. 16, No. 2, Page 19
- Read the article The Spirit-Bearers In Christian History, Vol. 16, No. 2, Pages 24-25
- Read Acts of the Apostles 18:23 - 21:16
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Ecumenical Council of Florence - 1438 AD

A Time Line of Church History



- 33 Pentecost (A.D. 29 is thought to be more accurate).
- 45 Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) establishes precedent for addressing Church disputes in Council. James presides as bishop.
- 69 Bishop Ignatius consecrated in Antioch in heart of New Testament era—St. Peter had been the first bishop there. Other early bishops include James, Polycarp, and Clement.
- 95 Book of Revelation written, probably the last of the New Testament books.
- 150 St. Justin Martyr describes the liturgical worship of the Church, centered in the Eucharist. Liturgical worship is rooted in both the Old Testament and New Testament.
- 325 The Council of Nicea settles the major heretical challenge to the Christian faith when the heretic Arius asserts Christ was created by the Father. St. Athanasius defends the eternity of the Son of God. Though declared heretics, the Arians continue their assault on true Christianity for years. Nicea becomes the first of Seven Ecumenical (Church-wide) Councils.
- 397 Synod of Carthage ratifies biblical canon.
- 451 Council of Chalcedon affirms apostolic doctrine of two natures in Christ.
- 589 In a synod in Toledo, Spain, the *filioque*, asserting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the father *and the Son* is added to the Nicene Creed. This error is later adopted by Rome.
- 787 The era of Ecumenical Councils ends at Nicea, with the Seventh Council bringing the centuries-old use of icons back into the Church.
- 988 The conversion of Russia begins.
- 1054 The Great Schism occurs. Two major issues include Rome's claim to a universal papal supremacy and her addition of the *filioque* clause to the Nicene Creed.
- 1095 The Crusades begun by the Roman Church.
- 1453 Turks overrun Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire.
- 1517 Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to the door of the Roman Church in Wittenburg, starting the Protestant Reformation.
- 1529 Church of England begins pulling away from Rome.
- 1854 Rome establishes the Immaculate Conception dogma.
- 1870 Papal Infallibility becomes Roman dogma.
- 1988 One thousand years of Orthodoxy in Russia, as Orthodox Church world-wide maintains fullness of the Apostolic faith.

“The Great Divorce”

For centuries Christian East and West lived as strangers to one another. Then Catholics violated the Orthodox.

+Mark Galli

One summer afternoon in the year 1054, as a service was about to begin in the great Church of the Holy Wisdom, or Hagia Sophia, at Constantinople, Cardinal Humbert and two other legates of the Roman pope entered. They made their way to the sanctuary. They placed a sealed papal document—called a “bull” - on the altar and marched out. The bull proclaimed the patriarch of Constantinople and his associates excommunicated, no longer in communion with the church, no longer allowed to receive the grace of God through the sacraments.

When the cardinal passed through the western door, he shook the dust from his feet and said, “Let God look and judge.” A deacon, guessing the contents of the bull, ran after Humbert in great distress and begged him to take it back. Humbert refused, and the deacon dropped the document in the street.

This incident is usually portrayed as the key moment in the Great Schism between the Orthodox East and the Latin West. But this incident is but one of many on the path to permanent schism—though surely the bloody events of 1204 put a seal on a break that lasts to this day. The schism's causes are manifold and complex and they reveal much of the uniqueness of what we now call the Eastern Orthodox Church—and how the Orthodox understand this chapter of Christian history.

GEO-POLITICAL REALITIES

During the time of the apostles, the Roman Empire was a close-knit political and cultural unity. The empire embraced a variety of ethnic groups who spoke a variety of languages and dialects. Yet all were governed by the same emperor; all shared in a broad Greco-Roman civilization. Either Greek or Latin was understood almost everywhere, and Latin was commonly used as the political language of the empire. Beginning in the late 200s, the empire was still theoretically one but was usually divided into two parts, an eastern and a western, each under its own emperor. Constantine even founded a second imperial capital, in the East—Constantinople, the “New Rome.” Then came the Germanic invasions of the fifth century, and the West was carved up among the Goths, Lombards, Franks, Vandals, and other Germanic tribes. The Byzantines in the East still regarded the Roman Empire as universal, but, in fact, the political division of the Greek East and the Latin West was now permanent.

Then the Avars and Slavs occupied the Balkan peninsula. Illyricum, which used to serve as a bridge between Byzantium and the West, instead became a barrier. With the rise of Islam in the 600s, the Mediterranean now passed largely into Arab control. Cultural contacts between the eastern and western Mediterranean became far more difficult.

Geo-political realities complicated things. For centuries, the popes had turned naturally to Constantinople and its emperor for military and economic help. But in 754, Pope Stephen II, cut off from the East and in need of help to defend his papal states from attacks by the Lombards, turned north and sought help from the Frankish ruler, Pepin. Henceforth, the papacy began to pass increasingly under Frankish influence.

A half-century later, a more symbolic and dramatic event took place. On Christmas Day in the year 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, king of the Franks, as emperor of the “Holy Roman Empire.” Charlemagne immediately sought recognition from the emperor at Byzantium. The Byzantine emperor, however, considered himself ruler of a still united Roman Empire. Charlemagne he regarded as an intruder, and the papal coronation, an act of schism. He didn't recognize Charlemagne for years.

BECOMING STRANGERS

With the reign of Charlemagne, the schism of civilizations first became apparent. For all the cultural renaissance promoted by Charlemagne's court, it was marked at its outset by a strong anti-Greek prejudice in literature, theology, and politics. The Byzantines, for their part, remained enclosed in their own world of ideas and failed to take Western learning seriously. They dismissed all Franks as barbarians.

This mutual prejudice was reinforced by language. The days when educated people were bilingual were over. By the year 450, few in the West could read Greek, and after 600, although Byzantium still called itself the Roman Empire, it was rare for a Byzantine to speak Latin. Photius, the greatest scholar in ninth-century Constantinople, could not read Latin. In 864 a "Roman" Emperor at Byzantium, Michael III, called the language of Virgil a "barbarian" tongue.

In addition there was a significant difference between the educated. Byzantium was a civilization of great wealth and learning, and many educated laymen took an active interest in theology. The lay theologian has always been an accepted figure in Orthodoxy: some of the most learned Byzantine patriarchs—Photius, for example—were laymen before their appointment to the patriarchate.

In the West, mired in political confusion and cultural retreat, the only effective education that survived the early Middle Ages (often called the "dark" ages) was given solely to the clergy. Theology became the preserve of priests. Most of the laity were illiterate; most could not comprehend the nuances of theological discussion.

So theology took different paths, East and West. In general the Latin approach was more practical, the Greek more speculative. Latin thought was influenced by Roman law, while Greeks understood theology in the context of worship. Regarding the Crucifixion, Latins thought primarily of Christ the victim on the Cross, Greeks of Christ the victor over death. Latins talked more about redeeming sinners, Greeks, about the deification of humanity.

There were also a few practical differences: the Greeks allowed married clergy; the Latins insisted on priestly celibacy. The two sides had different rules about fasting. The Greeks used leavened bread in the Eucharist, the Latins unleavened bread, or "azymes."

Still, these two distinctive approaches were not in themselves contradictory—each served to supplement the other, as do the differences between husband and wife.

OPEN CONFLICT

From the sixth century on, a number of disputes erupted between Rome and Constantinople. One conflict in the middle of the ninth century revealed just how estranged East and West had become. The incident is usually known as the "Photian schism"—though the East would prefer to call it "the schism of Pope Nicholas."

It began in 858, when Patriarch Ignatius of Constantinople was exiled by the Byzantine emperor (for criticizing the emperor's private life). Ignatius resigned his office under pressure, and a gifted layman named Photius was appointed patriarch of the capital city. Photius has been called "the most distinguished thinker, the most outstanding politician, and the most skillful diplomat ever to hold office as patriarch of Constantinople."

Photius, as was the custom, sent a letter to the bishop of Rome, Pope Nicholas I, announcing his accession. Normally the pope would immediately recognize a new patriarch. But Nicholas balked. He had heard that the former patriarch still had supporters who claimed Photius was a usurper. Pope Nicholas decided to look into the matter. In 861 he sent legates to Constantinople. Photius wanted no dispute with the papacy, so he treated the legates with great deference; he even invited them to preside at a local council to settle the issue. The council decided Photius was the legitimate patriarch. When the legates returned to Rome, though, Nicholas accused them of exceeding their powers. He retried the case himself at Rome. This council repudiated Photius's claims, deposed him of all priestly dignity, and recognized Ignatius as patriarch.

The Byzantines ignored this Roman council and refused to answer the pope's letters.

The dispute centered on the papal claims, which had become another growing issue between East and West. Among Eastern churches, there was a strong sense of equality among bishops because a number of city churches claimed to have been founded by an apostle. The East acknowledged the pope as the first bishop of the church but saw him as only the first among equals.

In the West, only one great city church claimed apostolic foundation—Rome—so that Rome came to be regarded as the apostolic see. The Western church was seen less as a college of equals and more as a monarchy with the pope at its head. But the Byzantines didn't care if the Western Church was centralized, as long as the papacy did not interfere in the East.

Furthermore, the East had a strong secular head, the emperor, to uphold the civilized order. But after the invasion of Germanic tribes in the West, there was only a plurality of warring chiefs. Only the Roman pope could act as a representative of the remaining political life of Western Europe. It was Pope Leo I, for example, who persuaded Attila the Hun in 452 to bypass Rome on one of his campaigns. After this the pope increasingly issued commands not only to ecclesiastical subordinates but to secular rulers as well. Still, the Eastern church didn't mind—as long as the pope claimed absolute power only in the West.

Nicholas I was a reforming pope, with an exalted idea—at least according to the Orthodox—of the prerogatives of his office. He believed his absolute power extended to the East. As he put it in a letter of 865, he believed the pope was endowed with authority "over all the earth, that is, over every church." When a dispute erupted in Constantinople, Nicholas thought it a golden opportunity to make both parties submit to his arbitration, to enforce his claim to universal jurisdiction.

Ironically, Photius's initial submission to the legates had proved to be a problem. His action did not in itself confirm the supremacy of the pope but only that Photius had shown diplomatic courtesy. To demonstrate his authority, then, Nicholas called a new council.

Again, the Byzantines were not troubled about appeals going to Rome but only under the specific conditions laid down in Canon 111 of the Council of Sardica (343). This canon states that retrials cannot be conducted by the pope at Rome but only by bishops of the provinces adjacent to that of the condemned bishop. The Byzantines believed Nicholas had violated this canon and interfered in the affairs of another patriarchate.

On the issue of papal authority alone, then, the incident between Nicholas and Photius had explosive potential. But another issue, more subtle but equally divisive, was also at work.

MISSIONARY POLITICS

Both Byzantium and the West (chiefly the Germans) were at this time launching missionary ventures among the Slavs. The two lines of missionary advance, one from the East and one from the West, soon converged in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria was a country both Rome and Constantinople were anxious to add to their spheres. The Bulgarian khan, Boris, was at first inclined to ask the German, i.e. Catholic, missionaries for baptism. But when threatened with a Byzantine invasion, he changed his mind, and around 865 accepted baptism from Greek clergy.

Still, Boris wanted independence for the Bulgarian church, so he asked Constantinople to grant the Bulgarian church the same autonomy enjoyed by the other patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). Constantinople refused.

So Boris turned again to the West in hopes of better terms. He gave the Latins a free hand in Bulgaria, and Latin missionaries promptly launched harsh verbal assaults against the Greeks, singling out the points where Byzantine practice differed from their own: married clergy, rules of fasting, and above all the *filioque*.

This last dispute involved the words about the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed. Originally the phrase read: "I believe. . . in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, *who proceeds from the Father*..." This original form is still

recited unchanged by the East to this day. But the West gradually had inserted an extra phrase "and from the Son" (in Latin, *filioque*), so that in the West, the Creed read "... who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*."

The addition originated in Spain in the sixth century as a safeguard against Arianism; it helped emphasize the full divinity of Jesus. The addition spread to France and Germany, where it was welcomed by Charlemagne and adopted at the Council of Frankfurt (794).

Rome did not use the *filioque* until the start of the eleventh century. In 808 Pope Leo III wrote Charlemagne that, although he himself believed the *filioque* to be doctrinally sound, he considered it a mistake to tamper with the wording of the Creed.

It wasn't until the ninth century that the Greeks paid much attention to the *filioque*, but once they did, they reacted strongly. The Orthodox objected (and still object) to this addition for two reasons. First, the Creed is the common possession of the whole church; if any change is to be made in it, it must be made by the whole church at an ecumenical council. The West, in altering the Creed without consulting the East, is guilty (as one Orthodox writer put it) of "moral fratricide," of a sin against the unity of the church.

Second, most Orthodox believe the *filioque* to be theologically mistaken. Some say it's a heresy because it changes the delicate balance in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Though the *filioque* was still used at Rome in the ninth century, Nicholas supported the Germans when they insisted upon using it in Bulgaria.

Photius was alarmed at this development on the very borders of the Byzantine Empire. In 867 he wrote a letter to the other Eastern patriarchs; he denounced the *filioque* at length and charged those who used it with heresy. Photius then summoned a council at Constantinople, which declared Pope Nicholas excommunicated, calling him "a heretic who ravages the vineyard of the Lord."

Christendom was on the verge of schism.

Then the situation suddenly changed. This same year, 867, the Byzantine emperor was murdered, and the usurper deposed Photius and gave the patriarchate back to Ignatius—the man whose exile and resignation began the controversy. About the same time, Pope Nicholas died, and Hadrian II became pope, followed by John VIII. Thus a whole new set of rivalries and alliances, too complex to detail here, came into play.

Another council at Constantinople, known as the Anti-Photian Council, condemned Photius, reversing the decisions of 867. The council decided the Bulgarian church belonged to the patriarchate of Constantinople. Realizing Rome would allow him less independence than Byzantium, Boris accepted this decision. In 870 Western missionaries were expelled, and the *filioque* was heard no more in Bulgaria.

And this was not the end of the story. At Constantinople, Ignatius and Photius were reconciled, and when Ignatius died in 877, Photius once more succeeded him as patriarch. In 879 yet another council was held in Constantinople. The previous council was anathematized and all condemnations of Photius were withdrawn! Rome did not press the question of the *filioque* nor attempt to enforce the papal claims in the East.

Thus the schism was outwardly healed, temporarily.

DIPLOMATIC FAILURE

At the beginning of the eleventh century, there was fresh trouble. In 1014 at the coronation of Holy Roman Emperor Henry II at Rome, the Creed was sung in its edited form. Furthermore, under German influence now, Rome began reforming itself. Through the rule of men such as Pope Gregory VII, it gained an unparalleled position of power in the West. The papacy naturally revived claims to universal jurisdiction.

Matters were made worse by the Normans, Vikings who attacked Byzantine-controlled regions in southern Italy. In addition, Venice, a powerful commercial city-state, encroached on Byzantine business in Italy and Asia Minor.

In the early 1050s, the Normans began forcing the Greeks in Byzantine Italy to conform to Latin practices. Patriarch Michael Cerularius in return demanded that the Latin churches at Constantinople adopt Greek practices. When the Latins refused, he closed their churches.

In 1053 Cerularius took up a more conciliatory attitude and wrote to Pope Leo IX, offering to settle the disputed questions on usages. In 1054 Leo sent three legates to Constantinople, the chief of them being Humbert, bishop of Silva Candida.

Cardinal Humbert and Cerularius were both stiff and intransigent; their meeting was not likely to promote good will. The legates, when they called on Cerularius, thrust a papal letter at him and then retired without the usual salutations. The letter had actually been drafted by Humbert and was antagonistic in tone.

The patriarch refused to deal further with the legates. Humbert lost patience and drew up a bull of excommunication against Cerularius. Among other ill-founded charges in the document, Humbert accused the Greeks of *omitting the filioque* from the Creed!

Humbert promptly left and in Italy represented the whole incident as a great victory for Rom. Cerularius and his synod retaliated by excommunicating Humbert. The attempt at reconciliation left matters worse than before.

Even after 1054, though, friendly relations continued. The two parts of Christendom were not yet conscious of the great gulf between them. At the time, this seemed like a misunderstanding that, with tact and diplomacy, could be cleared up. With the Crusades, however, all hope was forever dashed.

SACRILEGE

In the early 1090s, the Byzantine emperor, Alexis, appealed to Pope Urban II to help the East. Muslims had recently conquered large areas of the Byzantine Empire, including many precious sites in the Holy Land. The West rallied to the cause, sending thousands of Crusaders, who liberated both Antioch and Jerusalem.

The Crusaders set up Latin patriarchs in both Antioch and Jerusalem, alongside the Greek patriarchs. In Jerusalem, Greeks and Latins at first accepted the Latin patriarch as their head. In 1107 a Russian pilgrim at Jerusalem found Greeks and Latins worshiping together in harmony at the holy places (though he noted with satisfaction that at the ceremony of the holy fire, Greek lamps lit miraculously while Latin lamps had to be lit from the Greek!).

After 1187, when Saladin captured Jerusalem, the situation in the Holy Land deteriorated: two rivals resident in Palestine itself now divided the Christian population between them—a Latin patriarch at Acre, a Greek at Jerusalem. The growing schism had come down to the local level.

A century later, any remaining harmony between East and West evaporated completely. In 1204 Western Crusaders were headed to Egypt on what is now considered the Fourth Crusade. They were persuaded to take a detour, through Constantinople, by two parties: first, by merchants in Venice (who were helping finance the crusade) who sought to destabilize the Byzantine situation for their own gain; second, by Alexis, son of Isaac Angelus, the dispossessed emperor, who wanted to restore himself and his father to the Byzantine throne. But the Western intervention did not go well, and eventually the Crusaders, disgusted with Byzantine politics, lost patience and pillaged the city.

The three-day sack of Constantinople is unparalleled in history. Or 900 years, the great city had been the capital of Christian civilization. Works of art from ancient Greece and Byzantine masterpieces of exquisite craftsmanship spotted the city. Many pillagers, especially those from Venice, carried off these treasures to adorn the squares and churches of their towns.

Mobs of soldiers rushed down the streets and through the houses. They snatched everything that glittered and destroyed whatever they could not carry—neither monasteries nor churches, nor libraries were spared. Estates and hovels alike were entered and wrecked. They paused only to murder or to rape or to break open wine-cellar for refreshment. Nuns were ravished in their convents. Bleeding women and children lay dying in the streets.

In Hagia Sophia, the most glorious church in Christendom, drunken soldiers tore down silk hangings and pulled the great silver iconostasis - which held sacred icons - to pieces. Sacred books and icons were trampled upon. While soldiers drank merrily from the altar vessels, a prostitute set herself on the patriarch's throne and sang a bawdy French song.

For three days, the appalling scenes continued, till the great and beautiful city was a shambles.

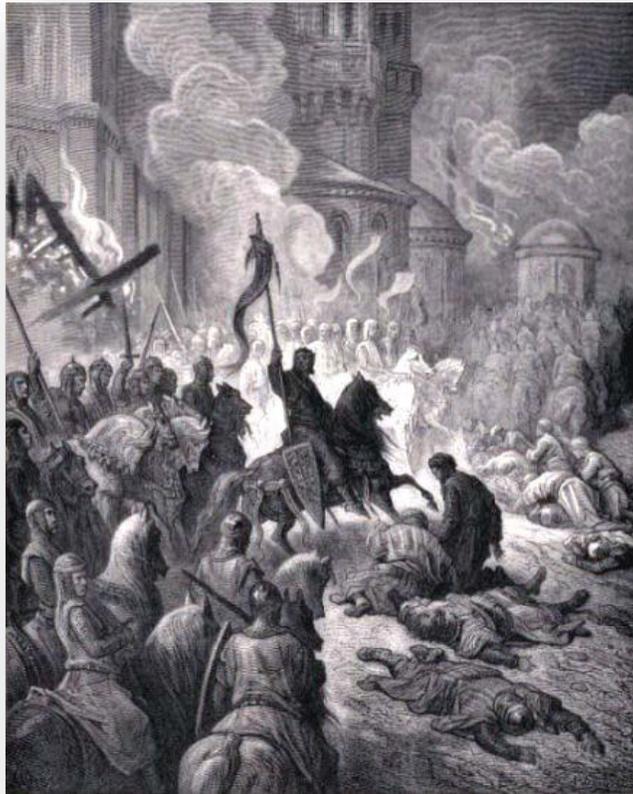
SCHISM

Constantinople never recovered. The Byzantine empire was permanently weakened; in another 200 years, when Turks attacked, there was little strength to sustain a defense. In 1453 the great city fell, the Byzantine civilization was finished, and the Eastern church found itself a permanent minority in a hostile culture.

Eastern Christendom has never forgotten the slaughter and the pillage of those three terrible days in 1204. Historian Steven Runciman wrote, "The Crusaders brought not peace but a sword, and the sword was to sever Christendom." Resentment and indignation against Western sacrilege was emblazoned on Eastern hearts. "Even the Saracens [Muslims] are merciful and kind," protested one contemporary Orthodox historian, "compared with these men who bear the Cross of Christ on their shoulders."

Historians still engage in genteel debates about when the Great Schism began, but after 1204, it's clear that which had been joined together was now decisively put asunder.

[MARK GALLIS is editor of CHRISTIAN HISTORY. He is indebted to Timothy Ware's *THE ORTHODOX CHURCH* (Penguin, 1993) for large sections of this article.]



“Better the Infidel”

Why two attempts at reunion were rejected by the Orthodox people.

+Mark Galli

In the decades following the sack of Constantinople, political events conspired to prompt the Eastern church to seek reunion with the West.

Michael VIII (reigned 1259-82), the emperor, who recovered Constantinople from the Catholics, made the first attempt. He primarily desired political protection; he was militarily threatened by Charles of Anjou, sovereign of Sicily, and he desperately needed the papacy's protection.

At a council held at Lyons in 1274, the Orthodox delegates agreed to recognize the papal claims and to recite the Creed with the *filioque*.

But the union was fiercely rejected by the overwhelming majority of Orthodox clergy, and laity. The emperor's sister summed up the Greek attitude: "Better that my brother's empire should perish than the purity of the Orthodox faith." The union of Lyons was formally repudiated by Michael's successor.

POWERLESS AGREEMENT

A second reunion council was held at Florence in 1438-9. This time Emperor John VIII (reigned 1425-48) attended, together with the patriarch of Constantinople and a large delegation from a number of Orthodox churches. A genuine attempt was made by both sides to reach a true agreement.

The Greeks knew their political situation had become desperate. The only hope of defeating the Turks lay in help from the West. Eventually an agreement was drawn up, which was signed by nearly all the Orthodox present.

The Florentine Union sought unanimity in doctrine but respect for the traditions peculiar to each church. Thus the Orthodox accepted the papal claims (though the wording was ambiguous), the *filioque* (though they weren't required to insert the phrase into their reciting of the Creed), and the doctrine of purgatory (a relatively new point of contention). Greeks were allowed to use leavened bread, while Latins were to continue to employ unleavened.

The Union of Florence was celebrated throughout Western Europe; bells were rung in all the parish churches of England. But it proved no more of a reality in the East than its predecessor at Lyons. John VIII and his successor, Constantine XI (the last emperor of Byzantium), were powerless to enforce it on their subjects. They did not even dare to proclaim it publicly at Constantinople for 13 years. Many who signed at Florence revoked their signatures when they reached home.



The council's decrees were never accepted by more than a tiny fraction of Orthodox clergy and people. The Grand Duke Lucas Notaras, echoing the words of the emperor's sister after Lyons, remarked, "I would rather see the Muslim turban in the midst of the city than the Latin miter."

← SEEKING PEACE AND ARMS. For this painting, *Procession of the Magi*, Florentine painter Benozzo Gozzoli used Byzantine Emperor John VIII as his model. John and a party of Orthodox officials had recently journeyed to Florence to seek reunion with the papacy—an military help for his struggle against the Turks.

“The Spirit-Bearers”

*If you know a little about Eastern monasticism,
you know a great deal about Eastern Orthodoxy.*

+John Chryssavgis

Monasticism began on a Sunday morning in the year 270 or 271 in an Egyptian village. The Gospel passage read in worship that day included the words "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Matt. 19:21). In the congregation sat a young man called Antony, who, upon hearing these words, sought a life not merely of relative poverty but of radical solitude.

Antony's step into the uninhabited desert was little noticed outside, or even inside, his village at the time. But when he died at the age of 106, his friend and biographer Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373) informs us that his name was known "all over the road." "The desert," he wrote, "had become a city," meaning thousands had regularly flocked to Antony to be taught by him.

Monasticism has been an essential feature of Eastern Orthodoxy ever since, and one cannot understand Orthodoxy without understanding its monastic tradition.

Flexible rigorists

In Egypt three main types of monasticism developed, roughly corresponding to three geographical locations:

1. The hermit life, found in lower Egypt, where Antony (d. 356) is the model. Here monks lived an isolated and austere life of prayer.
2. The cenobitic or communal form, found in upper Egypt, where Pachomius (d. 346) formed a community of monks who prayed and worked together.
3. The middle way, in Nitria and Scetis, west of the mouth of the Nile, started by Ammon (d. about 350). Here a loosely knit group of small settlements of two to six monks together looked to a common spiritual elder, or "abba".

The center of Eastern monasticism moved from Egypt to Asia Minor in the late 300's, to Palestine in the 400's, to Sinai in the 500's, and in the 900's to Mount Athos, Greece, where these three types of monasticism still exist.

Other regions produced a variety of lifestyles: in Syria, for example, we find "stylites," who chose to live on pillars. In Cappadocia (in modern Turkey), a more learned, liturgical, and social monasticism appeared under the inspiration and influence of Basil the Great (d. 379). In Palestine the tradition of spiritual direction was established by such men as Isaiah of Scetis (d. 489) and Sabas (d. 532). On Sinai a more silent, or "hesychast," spirituality was founded by John Climacus (d. about 679).

Monasteries could also be found in cities. By 518 Constantinople numbered some 70 communities for men alone. Monks became increasingly influential in ecclesiastical and social life: they intervened in theological disputes, they taught liturgy and spirituality, and they inspired the laity, who tended to follow charismatic monks.

In general monasticism in the East has been more flexible and less uniform than in the West. The East never had an Augustine or a Benedict, who wrote strict regulations for monks. The "rules" of Basil of Caesarea, by contrast, are not nearly as systematic. His *Longer Rules* is a series of sermons, while his *Shorter Rules* are answers to questions raised by monks as Basil visited the monasteries of his diocese. There has been no generally accepted rule or order in the East. One simply becomes attached to a specific monastery with its own particular tradition.

There were also monasteries for women, which may have risen earlier than those for men. Before retiring to the desert, Antony had placed his sister in a “home for virgins,” a fact that unintentionally reveals that women were already organized into Christian communities in Egypt.

In general in the East, there was less emphasis on “stability,” that is, the requirement that monks and nuns live in one monastery their whole lives. In the East, monks and nuns often changed monasteries.

“SLEEPLESS ONES”

Stability may not have been a main feature of Eastern monasticism, but “sitting in one’s cell” was. In the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Abba Moses (d. 407) reveals “The cell teaches us everything.”

The cell was foremost a place of prayer, and prayer was the primary social service of the Byzantine monk. Most Eastern monasteries were located in desolate areas, remote from civilization, and thus conducive to prayer: St. Sabas's monastery in the Holy Land, St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai, the monastic republic of Mount Athos, and the towering rocks of Meteora in central Greece.

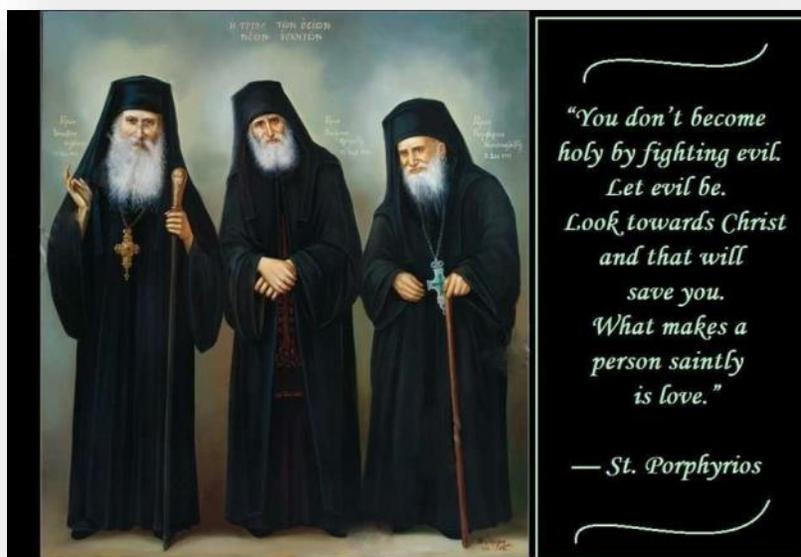
Some Eastern monks and nuns engaged in education, evangelism, and charitable work, but these works were considered secondary to the monastic's main vocation—prayer. Visitors to the monasteries expected to find places of prayer, to discover persons of prayer, and to encounter holy people with the gift of spiritual direction.

The goal of prayer, and of all monastic life, was union with God. Such union was made possible only through a life of spiritual purification and total renunciation - a self-stripping of both material possessions and intellectual projections. This was the way of negation, or of apophatic knowledge. The unknowable God was venerated through a series of negations that showed God as “ever beyond.” The apophatic way had a moral dimension too: the purification from wrongful desires.

In the West, monasteries often became nurseries of scholarship, but in the East, they were always centers of spirituality. The most precious service of Eastern monasticism was its ever burning flame of prayer and spirituality. One monastery in Constantinople was called *Akoimetoï* (literally, “the sleepless ones”), where prayer was ongoing, 24 hours a day, with monks taking turns to recite prayers.

In a sense, then, Eastern monastic life has been an experience of charismatic enthusiasm, a Pentecostal reality. The monk has been a *pneumato phoros* (“Spirit-bearer”), bearing witness to the abiding presence of the Spirit in the Church.

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"Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God"