

The Great Schism

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

What is the Great Schism?

The Great Schism, also known as the East-West Schism or the Schism of 1054, marked the break between the Western (Roman Catholic) and Eastern (Orthodox) Churches. Numerous theological, political, and cultural factors contributed to the split, and its consequences were profound and far-reaching. The effects of the Schism can still be felt today, and it remains a significant point of division between the two branches of Christianity. The seeds of division between the Eastern and Western Churches were sown over many centuries. Theological differences, such as the nature of the Holy Trinity and the role of the Pope, had long been a source of tension. Political tensions also played a role, as the Eastern and Western Roman Empires had split in the 4th century, leading to distinct cultural and political identities. Christianity was never transformed to such an extent again until the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Historical Background: The Fall of Rome

The schism between the Eastern and Western churches was not a sudden event with a clear starting date. Instead, it was the culmination of a long and complex process that began well before the eleventh century and continued for some time after.

During the 4th century AD, Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople, located in the eastern part of the empire. This shift in the center of power marked the beginning of a gradual divergence between the East and the West. Constantinople soon became the most powerful imperial city, overshadowing Rome in terms of political and cultural influence. By the end of the 4th century, the Roman Empire had been permanently divided into two parts: the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital in Constantinople, and the Western Roman Empire, of which Rome remained a key city. This division was further solidified when Theodosius I, the last Roman Emperor to rule the united empire, died in 395.

The Western Roman Empire faced significant challenges in the centuries that followed. It was plagued by internal political instability, economic decline, and barbarian invasions. In the 5th century,

the Western Empire finally disintegrated, and its lands were conquered and ruled by Germanic tribes. This marked the end of the Roman Empire in the West. In contrast, the Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the Byzantine Empire, survived for nearly a thousand years after the fall of the West. The Byzantine Empire preserved much of the Roman cultural and political heritage and became a major power in the eastern Mediterranean.

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the continued existence of the Eastern Roman Empire led to a significant divergence in the social, cultural, and political makeup of the East and the West. This divide was further exacerbated by linguistic differences, as Greek became the dominant language in the East, while Latin remained the language of the church in the West. As new states emerged in the West, the Roman Pope gradually grew in power and influence. The emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, founded by the Frankish king Charlemagne in 800, were crowned and legitimized by the Pope of Rome. These developments in the West were not replicated in the East, where the Eastern Roman Empire maintained its own political and religious structures.

As Rome's political power waxed in the West, the other patriarchal churches of the East, such as Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem, resisted its growing sense of superiority over them. This resistance laid the foundation for the eventual schism between the Eastern and Western churches, which would formally occur in 1054.

Rise of the Papacy

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century AD, Europe descended into chaos. The common language, coinage, communications, and mail service that had connected the vast empire all but disappeared. In its place, small tribal states emerged, each with its own ruler and culture. Amidst this fragmentation, the Church remained a beacon of stability and continuity. The monks, dedicated to preserving the Roman culture, wrote the Scriptures in Latin and taught in monasteries. The Bishop of Rome, the only Patriarch in the West, stood out as a central figure in a sea of small lordships. Two influential figures, Pope Leo the Great and Pope Gregory I, played a significant role in shaping the papacy's growing influence. Under their leadership, the Bishops of Rome became known in the West as Pope, or Father, a title that carried both spiritual and temporal authority.

The vacuum in leadership created by the collapse of the Roman Empire allowed the Pope to emerge as a symbol of stability and authority. Small kings and lords turned to Rome for decisions, not just on spiritual matters, but also on temporal issues. The Pope's influence extended far beyond the Church's walls, encompassing political, economic, and social realms. This transformation was further solidified by the concept of apostolic succession, which held that the Pope was the direct successor of

St. Peter, the apostle chosen by Jesus Christ. This belief granted the Pope spiritual authority and moral legitimacy, making him the ultimate arbiter of religious and ethical matters.

In an age of darkness and uncertainty, the Papacy provided a sense of order and purpose for many people. It became the custodian of ancient knowledge, the protector of the poor and vulnerable, and the voice of reason in a turbulent world. The rise of the Papacy marked a new chapter in European history, where the Church, once subservient to the Roman Empire, became a dominant force in its own right.

Spiritual Pitfalls: Pride - Ego - Envy - Power

In the following passage from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus engages His disciples in a profound lesson on the nature of true greatness within His kingdom. The scene unfolds as Jesus and His disciples journey to Capernaum. He discerns that they have been disputing amongst themselves about who among them would be considered the greatest. This reveals a common human tendency towards ambition, rivalry, and the desire for recognition and status. However, Jesus' teachings challenge these worldly notions and offer a radically different perspective.

“Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 37 “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.” (Mark 9:33-37)

Jesus identifies the root cause of their dispute as residing in the spiritual pitfalls of pride, ego, envy, and the pursuit of power. These are deeply ingrained human tendencies that often lead to conflict, division, and a distorted understanding of one's place in relation to God and others. Pride is a sinful attitude that exalts oneself above others and seeks glory for oneself instead of giving glory to God. Highly related to pride, is ego - the sense of self that is separate from God and others which often leads to arrogance and self-centeredness. Jesus calls his disciples to reject pride and ego and instead adopt a humble and servant-hearted attitude.

The disciples were envious of each other and sought to be set apart from among each other where one would have more power than another. Yet, Christ clearly reprimanded them for such thoughts and pursuits. What happened here with the disciples is shockingly similar with how the

church of Rome approached the situation, being envious of Constantinople claiming supremacy over the other thrones.

In response to these spiritual pitfalls, Jesus calls His disciples to a radical reversal of values. He teaches that true greatness in His kingdom is not found in seeking positions of authority, dominance, or personal recognition. Instead, it is found in embracing a posture of humility, service, and self-sacrifice. Servanthood is the essence of Jesus' own life and ministry. He came not to be served but to serve, and ultimately to give His life as a ransom for many. He calls His disciples to follow His example and to consider others as more important than themselves. To further illustrate His point, Jesus takes a little child and places him in their midst. The child represents innocence, vulnerability, and dependence. He calls us to be like little children, who are humble, dependent, and trusting. He teaches us that true greatness is found in serving others and in putting their needs before our own. When we embrace humility and service, we experience the peace and joy that come from living in accordance with God's will.

Towards the end of the passage of Mark 9, the Lord concludes the dialogue by encouraging the disciples to be salt to the world by preserving its peace. A lack of peace, is a lack of salt. "Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." (Mark 9:50 NKJV)

Church Fathers

The Church Fathers, the esteemed theologians and leaders of the early Christian Church, consistently emphasized the paramount importance of humility as a foundational virtue for spiritual growth and communal harmony. Their teachings echo the Gospel message, underscoring that true exaltation is achieved through embracing lowliness and service.

Saint Augustine, a prominent figure in the Patristic era, eloquently articulated this principle through a metaphor of a tree. He observed, "Observe a tree, how it first tends downwards, that it may then shoot forth upwards. It fastens its root low in the ground, so that it may send forth its top towards heaven. Is it not from humility that it endeavors to rise? But without humility it will not attain higher things. You are wanting to grow up into the air without a root. Such is not growth, but a collapse." In this analogy, Augustine highlights the paradoxical nature of spiritual growth; it is through grounding oneself in humility, akin to a tree's roots delving deep into the soil, that one can truly ascend towards the divine.

Similarly, St. Gregory of Nyssa, a Cappadocian Father renowned for his mystical theology, stressed the importance of humility in fostering a sense of unity and fellowship within the Christian community. He urged believers to shun vanity and embrace simplicity, harmony, and a guileless attitude. "Let vanity be unknown among you. Let simplicity and harmony and a guileless attitude weld the community together. Let each remind himself that he is not only subordinate to the brother at his side, but to all. If he knows this, he will truly be a disciple of Christ." He emphasized the interconnectedness of the community, reminding each individual that they are not only subordinate to their neighbor but to all. This understanding, he asserted, is the hallmark of a true disciple of Christ.

Finally, St. John Chrysostom, the Golden-Mouth, offered a direct and challenging exhortation to those seeking spiritual advancement. He proclaimed, "If you are in love with precedence and the highest honor, pursue the things in last place, pursue being the least valued of all, pursue being the lowliest of all, pursue being the smallest of all, pursue placing yourselves behind others." St. John Chrysostom's words serve as a powerful reminder that the path to true greatness lies in embracing humility and selflessness, even to the point of seeking the lowest position.

These teachings of the Church Fathers, rooted in the Gospel message and exemplified in the lives of the saints. In a world often driven by ambition, self-promotion, and the pursuit of recognition, the call to embrace humility and servanthood stands as a counter-cultural witness. By grounding oneself in humility, the doors of the transformative power of God's grace are opened and aligned with the example of Christ, who humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross.

Geographical Split: Rome - Pope Leo IX

Leo IX, born Bruno of Egisheim-Dagsburg in Alsace, Germany, ascended to the papacy in 1048 AD. His early training under Cluniac monks profoundly shaped his theological convictions. Leo firmly believed in the "filioque" doctrine, which asserts that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, rather than from the Father alone, as held by the Orthodox Church. He was also a staunch advocate of papal supremacy, maintaining that the pope held the highest authority within the Church and that all other bishops were subordinate to him. Additionally, Leo IX strongly supported the celibacy of clergy, believing that it was essential for priests to remain free from worldly distractions and fully dedicated to their spiritual duties.

Leo IX's theological beliefs were not mere abstract concepts; he actively sought to implement them throughout his territories. As an able administrator, he insisted that these doctrines be strictly adhered to by all clergy under his jurisdiction. When he encountered resistance, particularly in Southern Italy, where many clergy were married, Leo IX did not hesitate to take decisive action. He

deposed those who refused to comply with his demands, making it clear that he would tolerate no deviation from the theological principles he held dear.

Furthermore, Leo IX's pursuit of doctrinal uniformity extended beyond the Latin Church. He set his sights on Eastern rite churches that operated within his domains but refused to conform to his demands. With unwavering determination, Leo IX closed these churches, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to ensuring that his theological vision prevailed throughout his territories.

Pope Leo IX's theological convictions and his unwavering efforts to enforce them had a profound impact on the medieval Church. His insistence on papal supremacy strengthened the authority of the papacy and helped to centralize power within the Church. His advocacy for clerical celibacy significantly influenced the development of the priesthood and contributed to the establishment of a distinct clerical identity. Moreover, Leo IX's role in promoting the "filioque" doctrine contributed to the growing theological divergence between the Western and Eastern Churches.

Geographical Split: Constantinople - Patriarch Michael Cerularius

Meanwhile in Constantinople, Patriarch Michael Cerularius, a staunch and unyielding monk, ascended to the esteemed Patriarchal seat. His unwavering resolve and strict adherence to religious principles defined his character. The Patriarch was deeply disturbed and alarmed by Pope Leo IX's audacious act of deposing his archbishop and priests. He viewed this as an unacceptable encroachment upon the authority of the Eastern Orthodox Church and a direct challenge to his position as the supreme ecclesiastical leader in Constantinople.

In response to the Pope's actions, Patriarch Michael Cerularius retaliated swiftly and decisively. He ordered the closure of all Latin Rite churches within his jurisdiction. This bold move was a clear indication of his determination to safeguard the independence and autonomy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It sent a powerful message to the Pope and the Western Church, demonstrating that he would not tolerate any attempts to undermine his authority or the traditions of his church.

Emboldened by his actions, Patriarch Michael Cerularius refused to yield to Pope Leo IX's demands. Instead, he stood firm in his convictions, refusing to accept the Pope's claims of papal supremacy. He believed that the Bishop of Rome had no right to interfere in the affairs of the Eastern Orthodox Church and that his authority extended only to the Western Church.

Pope Leo IX, unwavering in his own beliefs, responded to Patriarch Michael Cerularius's defiance by issuing an ultimatum. He demanded that both the Patriarch and the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine IX Monomachus, submit to his papal authority. This audacious demand further escalated

the tensions between the Eastern and Western Churches and brought the centuries-long simmering differences to a boiling point.

The standoff between Patriarch Michael Cerularius and Pope Leo IX symbolized the deep-seated theological, cultural, and political divisions that had been brewing for centuries between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity. Their unwavering positions set the stage for the Great Schism of 1054, a momentous event that would permanently divide the Christian Church into the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Eastern Orthodox Church in the East.

Theological drift: The Filioque - Procession of the Holy Spirit

The Heresy explained

During this time, due to the difference practices and teachings differed geographically. For example, while the Orthodox church maintained its usage of the Nicene Creed, the Church of Rome amended it for the Filioque. The Filioque term, derived from the Latin phrase "Filioque," holds significant importance in Christian theology, particularly regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit. While the Catholic Church embraces the belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches reject this addition, viewing it as an unauthorized alteration of the original Nicene Creed.

The term "Filioque" translates to "and the Son," and its insertion into the Western version of the Nicene Creed underscores the doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son. This theological interpretation, introduced in the West, became a significant point of contention during the Great Schism of 1054, leading to a deep division between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity. At the heart of the Filioque controversy lies a distinction between the eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit and the temporal mission of the Spirit. The Catholic Church maintains that the verb "proceed" in the context of the Creed refers to the eternal relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father, asserting that the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father alone.

Conversely, the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches emphasize that the Procession of the Holy Spirit pertains solely to the Father's role. Our Lord Jesus Christ specified, "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." (John 15:26) The orthodox church maintains that the Holy Spirit's temporal mission, which involves being sent by both the Father and the Son, should not be conflated with the eternal Procession. While the Holy Spirit is sent into the world by the Son, as Jesus

stated in John 15:26, this does not mean that the Spirit originates from the Son. The Father remains the Unique Source of the Godhead, and the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father alone. To claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son diminishes the Spirit's status and undermines the fundamental nature of the Trinity. It reduces the Spirit to a mere extension or agent of the Father and the Son, rather than recognizing the Spirit's unique and essential role as the third person of the Trinity.

The Heresy as seen by the Fathers

The early Fathers, such as St. Didymus the Blind, underscored the Father's unique role as the "Fons Deitatis" or the "Source of Divinity." This doesn't imply any superiority or anteriority within the Godhead, as all three Persons are co-eternal and co-equal. Rather, it signifies the Father's distinct role as the Unbegotten, the One from whom the Son is eternally begotten and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds.

St. Didymus's commentary on the Spirit proceeding from the Father highlights this point. ““He does not say, “from God” or “from the Almighty” but “from the Father,” because though the Father and God Almighty are the same, yet the Spirit of truth properly proceeds from God as the Father, the Begetter.... The Father and the Son together send the Spirit of truth: He comes by the will both of the Father and the Son.” (St. Didymus the Blind) While acknowledging the Father and God Almighty as one and the same, he emphasizes that the Spirit of Truth "properly proceeds from God as the Father, the Begetter." This emphasizes the Father's unique paternal role within the Trinity.

The Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, is eternally begotten of the Father. This generation is not a temporal event but an eternal reality within the Godhead. As St. Augustine eloquently puts it, the Son refers "all that he has to him from whom he is." This reflects the Son's intimate relationship with the Father and his complete dependence on Him for his being. The quote can be read in its full context, “If the Holy Spirit then proceeds both from the Father and the Son, why does the Son say, “Who proceeds from the Father”? He says this because it agrees with his general way of referring all that he has to him from whom he is.” (St. Augustine)

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, proceeds from the Father. This procession is distinct from the Son's generation. As St. Gregory of Nazianzus explains, the Holy Spirit "comes forth from the Father indeed, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by generation but by procession." This distinction underscores the unique relationship of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity.

The disagreement over the Filioque term reflects broader theological differences between the Orthodox and Western Christian traditions. The Orthodox churches place great emphasis on the

monarchy of the Father, upholding the view that the Father is the sole source of divinity within the Trinity. Additionally, they emphasize the distinction between the uncreated nature of God and the created nature of the world, including the Holy Spirit's role in creation. The Father is the Unique Source of the Godhead, the Son eternally begotten by the Father, and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father, are also equally God. To claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son places the Holy Spirit in a state of subordination (one of the early church heresies) to the Father and the Son.

Theological drift: Leavened vs. Unleavened Bread

The Eastern and Western churches have also long debated over the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist. This seemingly simple difference in practice holds profound theological and symbolic significance. In the Orthodox tradition, leavened bread is used in the Eucharist, while the Western tradition uses unleavened bread. This divergence stems from differing interpretations of the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper.

In the Greek original manuscripts of the Gospels, the bread at the Last Supper is referred to as "artos," a term that does not specify whether the bread was leavened or unleavened. However, the Western church interprets the Jewish Passover tradition, which requires unleavened bread, to be the context for the Last Supper. Therefore, they hold that unleavened bread should be used in the Eucharist.

The Orthodox church, on the other hand, emphasizes the distinction between the Last Supper and the Passover meal. They argue that Jesus first ate the Passover meal with unleavened bread, as required by Jewish law. However, after washing the disciples' feet, He instituted the Eucharist with leavened bread, which they term the Mystical Supper. The choice of leavened bread in the Eastern tradition is rich in symbolism. Leaven, a substance that causes dough to rise, is seen as a symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). By using leavened bread, the Eastern church acknowledges that Christ, as the Lamb of God, carried the sin of the world (John 1:29). Furthermore, leavened bread is seen as a symbol of life and resurrection. Just as leaven causes dough to rise, so too does Christ's resurrection represent the triumph over death. The use of leavened bread in the Eucharist thus serves as a powerful reminder of Christ's victory over sin and death.

In contrast, the use of unleavened bread in the Western tradition emphasizes the purity and sinlessness of Christ. Unleavened bread, which is devoid of leaven, represents the absence of sin. This interpretation aligns with the Western church's understanding of Christ as the spotless Lamb of God. This practice, however, began only after the 9th century and only in the church of Rome.

Theological drift: Celibacy of Clergy

The Eastern Church has historically opposed the concept of celibate priests serving the congregation. This position is based on the belief that priests should be able to relate to the joys and challenges of married life and that a married clergy is better able to serve the needs of the faithful. This belief is rooted in the St. Paul's writings in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, where he outlines the qualifications for a bishop and a deacon. In these verses, Paul emphasizes the importance of a blameless life, faithfulness to one's wife, and the ability to manage one's household well. He also warns against pride, greed, and a lack of self-control:

If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. – 1 Timothy 3:1-7

St. Paul's words suggest that he believed that priests should be mature and responsible individuals who are able to lead by example. He understood that the life of a priest is a demanding one, and that it requires a deep commitment to God and to the Church. The Eastern Church's opposition to clerical celibacy is also based on the belief that marriage is a sacred institution that is blessed by God. Marriage is seen as a way for priests to experience the fullness of human love and to share in the joys and sorrows of family life.

While the Eastern Church has traditionally opposed clerical celibacy, there have been some exceptions to this rule. In some cases, priests who have been widowed or who have never been married have been allowed to serve in the clergy. However, these cases are relatively rare, and the vast majority of Eastern priests are married.

Mentions of preferred celibacy in the church of Rome began in the 4th century when one Pope left his wife in order to accept the office and another, Pope Pelagius II, enacted orders of clerical celibacy while his successor Pope Gregory I, thought these regulation too strict and modified them. These development gradually occurred in Rome, while all other apostolic sees maintained their stance.

St. Peter notably respected in the Western church was married. According to Clement's account, when St. Peter witnessed his wife being led to her execution, he did not succumb to despair or overwhelming grief. Instead, his heart filled with a sense of profound joy and encouragement. He recognized that her death was not an end but rather a journey home to the Lord. With a voice filled with love and comfort, St. Peter called out to his wife by name, reminding her, "Remember the Lord." These simple yet powerful words served as a testament to their extraordinary bond and unwavering commitment to their faith.

“They say, accordingly, that the blessed Peter, on seeing his wife led to death, rejoiced on account of her call and conveyance home, and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, 'Remember the Lord'. Such was the marriage of the blessed, and their perfect disposition towards those dearest to them. Thus also the Apostle says, 'That he who marries should be as though he married not', and deem his marriage free of inordinate affection, and inseparable from love to the Lord; to which the true husband exhorted his wife to cling on her departure out of this life to the Lord.” (St. Clement of Alexandria) In this moment of ultimate sacrifice, St. Peter demonstrated the true meaning of marital love. He fulfilled St. Paul's objective when St. Paul says 'That he who marries should be as though he married not' as St. Peter did not cling to his wife with selfish desire but encouraged her to embrace her destiny and find solace in her connection to the divine.

Theological drift: Primacy and "Infallibility" of the Roman Pope

The teaching on the supremacy of the pope arose in the ninth century and remains a fundamental difference between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Catholics believe that Jesus Christ designated the Apostle Peter as his vicar on earth, granting him unparalleled authority over the apostles and the entire Church. They interpret the passage in Matthew 16:17-19, where Jesus says to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”(Matthew 16:17-19), as evidence of St. Peter's special role. Additionally, they emphasize St. Peter's prominence in various biblical accounts, such as his walking on water and his pivotal role in the early Church.

However, Orthodox Christians challenge this interpretation, pointing to other passages in the Bible that suggest a more egalitarian relationship among the apostles. Instances where Jesus emphasized humility and service rather than hierarchical structures are an example. On the way to

Capernaum, the disciples discussed who would be the greatest among themselves (Mk 9:34), so our Lord sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mk 9:35).

In Matthew 20:25-26, when the mother of Zebedee’s sons (St. James & St. John) asked the Lord that they might sit one on His right and the other on His left in His Kingdom (Mt 20:21), our Lord said to the disciples, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave” (Mt 20:25-26). He admonishes the disciples against seeking greatness or authority. Obviously our Lord did not assign St. Peter (or any other disciple) the leadership of the twelve, on the contrary He explicitly said, “It shall not be so among you” (Matthew 20:26).

The Acts of the Apostles further supports the Orthodox view, as it depicts the apostles and elders collectively making decisions and resolving disputes, without any indication of Peter's singular authority. For instance, in Acts 15:6, when the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter of keeping Moses’ Law by the Gentiles (Acts 15:6), St. James presided over the assembly and gave the final decision on the matter while St. Peter was among the regular speakers (Acts 15:13).

Furthermore, St. Paul who mentioned not preaching where another apostle preached (Romans 15:20), was clearly mentioned having served Rome. St. Paul met with the leaders of the Jews in Rome three days after his arrival to the city (Acts 28:16-17) and they did not know anything about Christianity, they said to St. Paul, “we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22). On an appointed day, they all gathered at St. Paul’s house who started to persuade them concerning our Lord from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening (Acts 28:23) and “some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved” (Acts 28:24). St. Paul said to them, “Let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it” (Acts 28:28). It is written that St. Paul stayed for two whole years in Rome preaching the Kingdom and teaching the things, which concern our Lord with all confidence, no one forbidding him (Acts 28:30-31). St. Paul is the founder of the Church of Rome

Moreover, we distinguish between the role of St. Peter as an apostle and the concept of papal primacy. St. Peter’s apostleship was limited to the Jews, while St. Paul was entrusted with the mission to the Gentiles. St. Paul said, “The gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter for He worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles” (Gal 2:7-8) The Lord said to St. Paul,

“Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21) The Epistle to the Galatians reinforces this distinction, referring to St. Peter as the apostle to the circumcised and Paul as the apostle to the uncircumcised.

Catholics assert that the Roman pope became the successor of the Apostle Peter and received all rights and privileges from him as well. He, the pope, is the head of the whole Church, the vicar of Christ, the sole bearer for the whole visible Church of all her grace-filled rights; his voice in matters of faith. They believe that the Roman Church is the ‘Catholic’ Church and all local Churches (Coptic, Russian, Greek, etc.) should be part of this one Roman Catholic Church. The name ‘Roman Catholic’ is self-contradictory; how could it be ‘Catholic’ (Universal) and ‘Roman’ at the same time? In this dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, three elements stand out: 1) the teaching on the supremacy of the Apostle Peter, 2) on the supremacy of the pope and 3) on his infallibility.

The Orthodox Church also contests the notion of papal infallibility, asserting that the pope is not immune from error in matters of faith and doctrine. In 1054 AD, the East-West Schism occurred when the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other, leading to a permanent division between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This schism further solidified the doctrinal differences, including the issue of papal primacy and infallibility.

Limitation of Confirmation to the Bishop

In the early church, the Holy Spirit was believed to be given to believers through the laying on of hands by apostles or other church leaders. This practice is mentioned in several passages of the New Testament, including Acts 8:18, 1 Timothy 4:14, and 2 Timothy 1:6.

- “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money” – Acts 8:18
- “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” – 1 Timothy 4:14
- “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” – 2 Timothy 1:6

The laying of the hands for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit is a specific rite of the Fathers the Apostles and their successors the Bishops, and as the regions of mission increased, consequently the number of believers and those who entered the faith increased. It was not possible for the Apostles to wander throughout all the countries and cities to lay hands on the baptized, so they established anointing by Myron as an alternative for laying hands for the Holy Spirit dwelling.

The first to make the Myron were the Fathers, the Apostles as they kept certain fragrant oils, which were on the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ during His burial, and they added spices brought by the women who prepared them to anoint the Lord, but He had risen. They melted all of this in pure olive oil, prayed on it in the Upper Room and made it a holy ointment to grant the Holy Spirit to the baptized. They decided that their successors the Bishops could renew the making of Myron whenever it was about to end, by the remainder of the original, so that it never finishes in Churches.

What specifically is the Myron (Chrism)? Myron is a Greek word, which means ointment or fragrant perfume. In the Coptic Orthodox Church it is a mixture of specific oils mixed with spices that were presented when the Lord Jesus Christ was shrouded. What is used today is the same as what was used in the Era of the Apostles. Truly our Church heritage has preserved many blessings that enrich our life and assist to secure our salvation in exactly the same manner as they did more than 2000 years ago.

The decree of Excommunication

In the year 1009, Pope Sergius IV of Rome made a fateful decision that would have far-reaching consequences for the Christian Church. He issued a confession of faith that included the filioque clause in the Nicene Creed. This addition to the Creed, which stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, was vehemently opposed by the Church of Constantinople.

In response, the Church of Constantinople removed the names of Pope Sergius and the Roman Church from their diptychs, the official list of sister churches and bishops commemorated in liturgical worship. This act symbolized a break in communion between the two churches. For over two centuries, the Roman Church resisted Germanic pressure to adopt the filioque. However, in 1014, during the coronation of Henry II as Holy Roman Emperor, the Roman Church finally used this addition to the Creed in public worship for the first time. This action further strained relations between Rome and Constantinople.

In 1054, Pope Leo IX sent a delegation of three men, Cardinal Humbert, Archbishop Frederick of Lorraine, and Bishop Peter of Amalfi, to Constantinople. Their mission was to deliver papal demands, including the return of the province of Illyricum to papal control. The delegation arrived in Constantinople with an air of superiority, viewing Patriarch Michael Cerularius as inferior to the Pope. This perception stemmed from the fact that in the West, the Pope wielded both temporal and spiritual power, unlike the Patriarch in Constantinople.

The papal legates' haughty attitude and demands infuriated Patriarch Michael. He refused to negotiate or compromise, leading to a deadlock in discussions. As tensions escalated, events took a dramatic turn. The Normans, a formidable force in Southern Italy, invaded Rome itself, capturing and imprisoning Pope Leo. News of this event traveled slowly, leaving the papal legates unaware of their diminished authority.

Despite the change in circumstances, the legates persisted in pressing their demands on Patriarch Michael. However, the Patriarch remained steadfast in his refusal. On July 16, 1054, while Patriarch Michael was celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of St. Sophia, the papal legates entered the church and placed a "Decree of Excommunication" on the altar itself. This act symbolized the formal excommunication of Patriarch Michael and the Eastern Church by the Roman Church.

In response, Patriarch Michael convened a council within days and excommunicated the papal legates in retaliation. The churches of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria sided with Constantinople, deepening the division between the Latin West and the Greek East. The year 1054 marked the beginning of the "Great Schism," a separation that would endure for nearly a thousand years. Despite hopes for reconciliation and compromise, the mutual excommunications between the Patriarch and the Pope proved to be a significant obstacle.

The Great Schism had profound implications for the Christian Church, shaping its history and contributing to theological and cultural differences between the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity.



Review Questions

1. What was the date of the Great Schism? (A. 1054)
2. True or False: The Great Schism, also known as the East-West Schism. (A. True)
3. What is the Great Schism? (A. was the break between the Eastern and Western Churches in the eleventh century)
4. What are the political causes for the Great Schism? (A. The fall of Rome - The rise of the Papacy)
5. What were the doctrinal reasons for the Schism? (A. The "filioque" and The supremacy of the Pope)
6. Why is the term filioque so significant? (A. It changes the balance of the three persons of the Holy Trinity.)

7. When was the first visit of a Coptic Pope to the Vatican? (A. In 1973 His Holiness made a historic visit to the Vatican and held a meeting with Pope Paul VI in which both popes signed a common declaration of faith in Christology and a commitment to Christian unity.)
8. Are there any current dialogues? (A. No. Currently the Coptic Church cuts theological dialogue with Catholic)The Great Schism occurred on July 16, 1054, marking a significant turning point in the history of Christianity.
9. True. The Great Schism, also known as the East-West Schism, refers to the split between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.
10. The Great Schism was the division of the Christian Church into Eastern and Western branches in the 11th century. It resulted in the establishment of two distinct ecclesiastical structures, each with its own unique traditions, practices, and theology.
11. Some of the political causes for the Great Schism include the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Papacy. The fall of the Roman Empire led to a power vacuum in the West, which the Papacy sought to fill. This, in turn, led to tensions between the Eastern and Western Churches.
12. The doctrinal reasons for the Schism were primarily related to the "filioque" clause and the supremacy of the Pope. The "filioque" clause, which was added to the Nicene Creed in the West, stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, while the Eastern Church maintained that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. Additionally, the Eastern Church rejected the claim of the Pope to universal jurisdiction over all Christians.
13. The term "filioque" is significant because it changes the balance of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. By stating that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, the "filioque" clause suggests that the Son is equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit, which is not in line with the Eastern Orthodox understanding of the Trinity.
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Books & References

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