

**A POCKET
CHURCH HISTORY
for ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANS**

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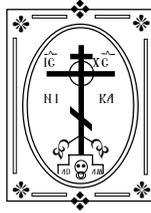


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In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

GOD INCARNATES; THE CHURCH FOUNDED



OME 2,000 years ago, our Lord Jesus Christ directly intervened in human history. Although He is God (together with the Father and the Holy Spirit), He became a man—or, as we often put it, He became **incarnate**—enfleshed. Mankind, at its very beginning in Adam and Eve, had fallen away from Divine life by embracing sin, and had fallen under the power of death. But the Lord Jesus, by His incarnation, death upon the Cross, and subsequent resurrection from death on the third day, destroyed the power death had over men. By His teaching and His whole saving work, Christ reconciled to God a humanity that had grown distant from God¹ and had become ensnared in sins.² He abolished the authority the Devil had acquired over men³ and He renewed and re-created both mankind and His whole universe.⁴ Bridging the abyss separating man and God, by means of the union of man and God in His own Person, Christ our Saviour opened the way to eternal, joyful life after death for all who would accept it.⁵

Not all the people of Judea, the Hebrews, God's chosen people (*Deut 7:6; Is 44:1*), were ready to hear this news, and so our Lord spoke to them mostly in parables and figures. For the complete revelation of His teachings, He chose out twelve simple men whom He taught more perfectly.⁶ These twelve are called His **Apostles**.⁷ As part of His salvation of the human race, Christ established a Church (*Mt 16:18; Mt 18:17*).

¹ Rom 5:1, 2, 10; 2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph. 2:14-17; Col 1:19-22

² Gen 8:21; Eph 2:1-3

³ Ps 123:7; Act 26:18; Rom 6:17-18, 22; Col 1:13; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Jn 3:8

⁴ 1 Cor 5:7, 17; Heb 9:15; Apoc 21:5

⁵ Jn 3:14-16; Rom 5:21; 1 Cor 15:22; Tit 3:7; Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 3:22

⁶ Mt 10:2; Lk 6:13; Mt 26:20; Jn 6:70; 1 Cor 15:5; Apoc 21:14

⁷ Mk 6:30; Lk 9:10; Lk 22:14; Lk 24:10; Lk 8:1; Rom 16:7

He appointed the Apostles to govern it, and He imbued them with priestly power (*Mt 16:19; Jn 20:21*), breathing on them and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they shall be forgiven them" (*Jn 20:21-23*). He commissioned them in particular to preach the **Gospel** (good news) of His saving death and resurrection, saying, "Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*Mt 28:19*). Christian tradition is unanimous that during the forty days after rising from death, until the time that He ascended into heaven, the Lord Jesus instructed the Twelve in establishing His Church upon earth, a Church which He promised would never be overcome by the powers of darkness (*Dan 2:44; Mt 16:18*). The Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would be with and guide the Church, preserving it from untruth.¹

CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS' CHURCH

It is important to understand that the Church was and is both earthly and heavenly. Existing on earth, it was and is affected by human weaknesses. For example, although the Head of the Church is Christ,² unworthy men are at times chosen to positions of leadership within it. As a heavenly assembly, however, it is grounded upon the guarantee of the Lord Himself that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (*Mt 16:18*); that is, that the Grace and salvation God willed to impart to His people through it can never be invalidated by unworthy individuals. The Church which the Lord Jesus founded had specific characteristics, which are as applicable today as when the Apostles walked the earth. It was...

... **ONE**. Although composed of local congregations, it was a united body, visibly sharing the same Faith and Grace.³ It was not a set of different denominations having a common claim to follow or be founded by Jesus, united only in some invisible way by that claim. Christ's "high priestly" prayer which He prayed the night before His death on the Cross (*Jn 17:11, 21-23*) was that

¹ Is 37:2-3; Mt 16:18; Mt 28:19-20; Jn 14:16-17

² Eph 4:15; Eph 5:23-24; Col 1:18

³ Jn 10:16; Jn 11:51-52; Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-13, 20, 27; Eph 4:4-5, 15-16; Col 2:18-19; Col 3:15

His Church would be one, even as He and the Father are one. The seamless garment of Christ, to which an unusual amount of attention is paid in St. John's Gospel (*Jn 19:23-24*), represents the unity of Christ's Church. It was...

... **HOLY.** The Church is holy because its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is holy (*Eph 1:22-23; Eph 2:19-22*). It numbered individuals who were sinners among its members, but it was the means chosen by God to give these sinners forgiveness (*Mt 16:19*), Grace, and sanctity. Its teachings were the very path to holiness, and still are. "Holy" means, originally, "set apart," and the Church was holy because it went not the way of the world, but along the paths willed by Jesus Christ our Lord. It was...

... **CATHOLIC.** *Catholic*¹ comes from two Greek words, *kata holos*, meaning "according to the whole." The Church was given to the whole of mankind; it was for all tribes, tongues, and peoples, and not only for the Hebrew people.² It embraced *all* the teachings the Apostles shared with the peoples of the world. Nothing the Lord wished us to know has been lost, because the Church has preserved it all from century to century. It was...

... **APOSTOLIC.** For it was established by the Twelve and remained faithful to their teachings, and not only the part of their teachings recorded in the Scriptures, but all of them.³ The Church was also apostolic in its form of government; it has always been governed by successors of the Apostles. These successors are called Bishops⁴ and are visibly united in a single body made of local Churches which share the same Faith and participate in Communion with each other.

"CHRISTIANS"

After about three years, the members of the Church became known as "Christians," a nickname first given to them at Antioch (*Acts 11:26*). This name has always been accepted by the faithful, for it is indeed Jesus Christ⁵ Whom we preach and

¹ *It should be remembered that "Catholic" in the 2nd century after Christ did not mean the same thing as "Catholic" means today, in the 20th century.*

² *Lk 13:29; Lk 24:47; Rom 1:5; Rom 10:12*

³ *2 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 1 Jn 2:24* ⁴ *Act 20:28; 1 Tim 3:1-2; Tit 1:7*

⁵ *Jesus (or Joshua) means "Saviour" (Mt 1:21). Christ means "Anointed One."*

worship, and it is He Who is our Way and Life. It is He Who founded our Church and promised to be in her midst, among His people, “even to the consummation of the world” (*Mt 28:20*).

WRITING THE BIBLE

The Twelve Apostles, who were hand-picked by Christ, walked next to Him, heard the most profound of His teachings, and left everything to follow Him, the Lord expressly designated as the first leaders of His Church. It was on their personal testimony of His Resurrection from the dead that the Church was established and flourished during what is called its **Apostolic Age**. At this time, God permitted numberless and spectacular miracles to blaze forth everywhere the Apostles preached (see the Book of Acts and contemporary historians), to confirm that it was His Truth they were teaching. At this time also, the Apostles and disciples were writing memoirs of their vivid experience of Christ, as well as important letters to each other and to the faithful. Three or four hundred years later, Church councils would gather the inspired writings together, sort them out, and call them the **New Testament**. During the Apostles’ lifetimes, however, their personal witness and authority were much more decisive and immediate for the faithful than their writings. We must always keep in mind that the Church existed before the Bible. Therefore, any church that claims to be based on the Bible is not the Church of Jesus Christ; only a church that claims to have **produced** the Bible can even be close to the Original Church.

CONTINUITY

Inevitably, the Apostles had to die. But the Lord did not mean for the Church to die with them; to perpetuate the Church, the Apostles ordained successors called **Bishops** (*Philipp 1:1*) for local congregations. To these men they imparted the apostolic Grace they had received from Christ Himself, a process which has been called “apostolic succession” and which is discussed prominently in the New Testament (in Titus and 1 & 2 Timothy).

Deacons, too, were ordained by the Apostles. Their order was established because after rapid growth it became impossible for the Apostles to tend to the Christians both materially and

spiritually (*Act 6:1-6*). The duties of the Deacons were to distribute charities and maintain order, allowing the Apostles to concentrate exclusively on teaching, exhorting, and celebrating the awesome Mysteries of Christ (*e.g.*, the mystery of the “breaking of bread,” which we know today as the **Eucharist**, Liturgy, or Mass, and the mystery of Holy Baptism).

Not long after the order of Deacons sprang up, the order of **Presbyters** or Priests was created (*Acts 14:22*; some translations have “elders” since “Priest” means “elder.”) The Priests were given nearly all the graces which marked the Bishops’ office. They celebrated Baptism, the Eucharist, the anointing of the sick, etc., relieving the heavy burden of the Bishops, but the Priests did not have the ability to consecrate other Priests or Bishops. The primitive threefold hierarchy of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons remains the distinctive mark of all historic Christian churches. There were also lesser ministries such as those of the Readers, Subdeacons, Acolytes, and Deaconesses.

BOTH JEW AND GENTILE

In the Apostolic Age, the Church had to make one painful transition. It had begun, of course, in Palestine among the Hebrew people, for God had chosen this people to be a light to the world, to be the first to receive the Messiah and to tell the world about Him and eternal life in Him. However, many of the chosen nation of Israel did not choose to follow Christ, and so the torch of faithfulness to Christ largely passed to the Gentile peoples, to former pagans, as the Prophet Isaias had foretold some 700 years earlier (*Is 2:2; 60:3, 5*). The question immediately arose whether Gentile Christians had first to be circumcised and observe the law of Moses—whether, in essence, they had to become Jews first in order to become Christians. The Apostles were not found in full agreement. The Apostle Paul was very insistent that it was not necessary, and a Council was convened at Jerusalem attended by all the Twelve. St. **James**, leader of the church at Jerusalem, presided. By the light of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles ruled that new Christians did not need to be circumcised or observe all of the law of Moses. After this dilemma was resolved, the Church continued spreading and flourishing among the Gentile peoples. Jerusalem itself was

utterly destroyed in 70 A.D. by Roman troops, and soon the major Christian centres were Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria.

RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

When the Apostles met in a council which superseded their individual views, they established a principle that would guide the Church for centuries to come. No one Apostle was infallible, nor were any of the Bishops they ordained as successors. However, meeting in council under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Bishops of the entire Church have, on seven occasions, proclaimed dogmas and issued canons (regulations) which bear the stamp of the Holy Spirit and are of greater authority than the word of any one Bishop. The Jew/Gentile controversy was but the first of many divisive disputes, usually sparked by some untrue teaching, which at times have threatened the unity which is one of the four marks of the Church. Thanks to the Holy Councils, which spoke with the authority of the Spirit for all the Church, such disputes have never succeeded in tearing Church unity asunder.

FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The Primitive Church underwent a profound development in its worship during the first 100 years. Originally, the Mystical Supper, the breaking of bread, had been celebrated in the evening directly after a community meal. In these early years, all of the instructive and inspirational material which now surrounds the central act of Holy Communion in the Liturgy took place *separately* from the Eucharist in the synagogue. Over time, however, those Jews who did not accept Christ as the Messiah developed increasingly hard-line attitudes towards the Christ-following Jews and eventually refused to allow them to worship in the synagogue. This dramatic change of circumstances resulted in the basic structure the Divine Liturgy has today: penitential prayers, praises of God, scripture readings, and a sermon (liturgical features lifted straight out of the synagogue) are now followed by the breaking of bread and Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ. When the Eucharist ceased being an evening affair, Christians started fasting before attending it.

WHAT HOLDS THE CHURCH TOGETHER?

Unlike other faiths, Orthodox Christianity looks not to a bureaucracy, hierarchy, or position paper to provide a focus for the Church. The centre of Orthodoxy is the very worship of God—the Eucharist, and the celebration of the Divine Office. Because this is so, any substantial history of the Church must include liturgical development, but we should avoid the trap of taking a casual, factual approach like so many scholars do. The history of our Liturgy is not just an arbitrary succession of additions and changes, but the unfolding work of the Holy Spirit, guiding the Holy Church century by century in a holy and right worship of God. We worship not as we think best but as God has willed to be worshipped.

THE AGE OF MARTYRS

The period just after the passing of the Twelve Apostles is often called the **Age of Martyrs**. As the news of the Faith spread like wildfire, Satan's immediate reaction was to inspire a bloody and total annihilation of Christianity. It is amazing how in spite of all obstacles the Christians persisted in meeting **together** on the Lord's Day. Often they would meet in a different house each week, since discovery meant certain death. Many Christians, since they refused to deny Christ and worship the pagan gods, even by some small word or sign, were killed summarily or by terrible tortures. But the Lord used their joyous deaths and their divinely-courageous sufferings, together with other stupendous miracles, to turn the hearts of many people to Himself. Far from destroying the Church, persecution only refined and strengthened it. Survivors wrote the Martyrs' names in calendars so as to keep a yearly memorial of their victories, forming the basis for our modern Church calendar with its Holy Days.

COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY

The Church's trial by fire was spiritual as well as external. **Heresies** sprang up like weeds, and no uniform consensus of faith could be trotted out against them. The word *heresy* comes from Greek *hairoumai*, to choose. Heretics were those who chose their own beliefs instead of accepting the Church's Faith as it stood. The **Gnostics** tried to blend Christianity with a secret

wisdom ideal, thinking that salvation came through arcane knowledge, not through the Grace of Christ. **Judaizers** did not accept the Apostles' decision that Christians do not observe the Mosaic Law, and sowed distrust and discord wherever pastors were too soft to stop them. The followers of **Marcion** believed that the God of the Old Testament was not the same as the Father of Jesus Christ. The **Manichæans** believed physical matter was evil and only pure spirit was good. The **Montanists** rejected the Church's hierarchy to emphasize spectacular spiritual phenomena and preached a new age of the Holy Spirit. The **Sabellians** held that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were just three "masks" God wore at different times when He did different things; they denied the reality of the Holy Trinity. Very few heresies since that time have been original; most have been mere rehashes of these timeworn follies.

In the midst of the confusion and bitterness stirred up by heretical movements, the Church of Christ was like a ship tossed on the sea; yet Christ was its Pilot, and the challenges of persecution and heresy were both overcome. The persecutions ended when the Emperor Constantine, a great friend of Christianity, overcame his pagan enemies, took control of the Roman Empire, and made Christianity legal (in A.D. 312; not till 392 did it become the state religion).

THE FIRST COUNCIL - NICAEA (325 A.D.)

This reversal of affairs was followed by a spiritual victory over heresy. A Council of all Christian Bishops was called by Emperor Constantine to decide officially what the Christian Faith consisted of, since a priest named **Arius** was teaching that Christ was not God but merely a unique man, and winning many adherents. The Council met at Nicæa and refuted his doctrine, writing a summary of the true Faith we now know as the first part of the Creed chanted in the Liturgy. At the same time, the Nicene Fathers agreed how Pascha (Easter Day) would be computed; required all Christians to stand, not kneel, at Sunday worship; and settled clergy affairs. These decisions are abided by even today by the Orthodox Christians of the East and of the West.

Just a few follow-up remarks. First, after Nicæa the Arian Christians grew to be more numerous than the faithful, showing

that it is not sheer strength of numbers that determines where the authentic Church lies. Second, although defining the Faith in terms of human language was necessary to safeguard the Truth, it was very painful for the Fathers of Nicæa to do. They felt keenly that Christ's Faith was something to be treasured and stored up within the human heart, not baked into a formula. We can only become their spiritual heirs if we embrace the Faith in the actions of our lives as well as by accepting their Creed.

THE CONSTANTINIAN ERA

After Emperor Constantine legalised the Christian Faith, and it was clearly defined at the General Council of Nicæa, momentous changes swept through the Church, and not all the winds were favourable. Christianity had not usually attracted ambitious men; now they sought to be made Priests and Bishops, with some success. There was a large influx of converts, not as fervent and sincere as converts had been. Public churches were built, and replaced the catacombs and private homes as the site where the Sacraments, or Mysteries, were celebrated. This new freedom allowed the cultivation and perfection of liturgical music and a flourishing of liturgical art, the groundwork for the church hymnody and iconography which so beautify and elevate our worship today.

The **Constantinian Era** is the name often given to that period following Constantine's reign when the aims of Christianity and those of the secular kingdom largely overlapped, when the expertise and resources of society were expended to the glory of God. This benefitted the Church in certain ways. For example, Bishops are not known for working well together, and it is possible that without imperial intervention no Ecumenical Council would ever have been assembled. All seven of the Holy Councils which upheld our Faith were convened by the summons of an Emperor or Empress. At its best, the policy of *symphony* between the Church and the State was advantageous for the Faith. The drawback was that worldly influence at times crept into the Holy of Holies, and this was a concern for many sincere Christians. In fact, whenever the secular authorities tried to interfere outright in the teachings of the Church, saintly Bishops were there to lay down their lives, if need be, to defend the Truth. Our calendar of martyrs is full of their names.

MONASTICISM

One reaction to worldliness was spearheaded in the deserts of Egypt, where once the Christ Child had fled to escape the hands of a worldly despot. A young man named **Anthony** retired into the deserts to serve God in solitude and prayer. St. Anthony was eventually encompassed by large numbers of enthusiastic disciples, and organised them as Christian monks. "Monk" comes from Greek *monos*, "alone," and at first meant a hermit or solitary.¹ The monks foreswore secular involvement, dainty food, the married life, and personal property. In short, their aim was to fulfill not only all the *commandments* of Christ, but also all His *counsels* given in the Holy Gospels, such as voluntary poverty, virginity, obedience, and **ascetic** life (asceticism is voluntary deprivation and struggle for God's sake). St. **Pachomius** started a formal monastery, where these religious men could dwell in mutual support under a rule of life. These ideals, which fired the souls of many men and women whom we know today as Saints, spread from Egypt to Palestine to Syria and all the East. They were imported to the West by the great St. **John Cassian**, and there they shone forth as brightly as in the East.

"NEW ROME"; THE SECOND COUNCIL (381 A.D.)

Emperor Constantine set another mighty wheel in motion when he moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, an obscure village in Greece not far from Nicæa. It soon became known as Constantinople or New Rome, and there it was that the Second Holy Council of the Church was held in 381.² At the First Council, the main issue was the Divinity of Christ; this Second Council discussed the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The genuine teaching that the Holy Spirit is God was enshrined by the council Fathers in statements which now form the second half of the **Creed** we sing every Sunday at Divine Liturgy. Another way in which this teaching was enshrined was promoted by St. Cyril of Jerusalem. To the Eucharistic Liturgy he added an explicit invocation to the Holy Spirit to descend upon the Gifts and transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ. This invocation is called the **epiclesis**, and all the rites

¹ The word **monk** may also come from the Egyptian word for rug-weaver. The early monks in Egypt supported themselves by weaving baskets and rugs.

² This Council was only of Eastern Bishops, but the whole Church accepted it.

used today in the Orthodox Church include such a prayer.¹

STANDARDISATIONS OF THE LITURGY

Some time before 450 A.D., a major transformation occurred in the way the Liturgy was celebrated at Rome. Originally, it had been done in Greek, until Pope St. Victor began using Latin. At some point, which no scholar has been able to discover precisely, the prayers were rearranged, and the terse, symmetrical Roman Canon was established. After this, the changes to the **Roman** Rite were minor indeed, at least after St. Gregory brought the Our Father and Kyrie into place (about 600 A.D.). The Roman Rite was present in Spain in the 5th century and developed independently as the **Mozarabic** Rite. In Gaul, the **Gallican** Rite, a Latin rite with Eastern features, was used. At Milan a rite similar to the Roman, called the **Ambrosian**, developed independently. In the East, St. **Basil** codified the Liturgy and from it St. **John Chrysostom** (5th century) produced a shortened version. These two Liturgies, together with the hours of prayer from St. Sabbas Monastery near Jerusalem, were the foundation for the **Byzantine** Rite. Other important Eastern Liturgies were that of St. Mark (**Coptic** Rite) and St. **James** (Syriac Liturgy). Nearly all the Eastern and Western rites named above have been used in the Orthodox Church in modern times, if only occasionally. But the Rite which is the spiritual heritage of the vast majority of Orthodox today is the Byzantine.

“ORTHODOXY”

Ever since the first four Councils, the term most commonly used to denote our beliefs has been “Orthodox.” It comes from Greek *orthos*, “correct, straight,” and *doxa*, “glory, worship.” The Orthodox, then, are those who worship God truly and rightfully, with true belief. This word had the special meaning in those early days of “one who accepts all the Councils.” (In the East and West, the word “Catholic” continued to be used to describe the Church, although, as we will see, “Catholic” and “Orthodox” nowadays connote two different faiths).

¹ An explicit epiclesis is found in the Western rites too—for example, early Roman sacramentaries, the Sarum rite of England, and other Roman-based rites.

FOUR FATHERS

Four great and holy men graced the Church as the 4th century gave way to the 5th. St. **Athanasius** was (almost) single-handedly responsible for the success of the Nicene Council when its popularity faded, and this earned him the title “Pillar of Orthodoxy.” When still a Deacon, he denounced the priest Arius, and when he returned from Nicæa he was made Pope¹ of Alexandria. Soon, however, he was exiled from his see, and travelled across East and West barely escaping the clutches of angry heretics. Over the course of five separate exiles, he wrote letters, guided his flock from afar, and preserved an irrepressible sense of humour, one of the most effective weapons in his spiritual arsenal. St. Athanasius reposed in Christ in 373.

St. **John Chrysostom** (“Golden Mouth”) made his start as a humble hermit in Syria, earned fame as a Priest and preacher at Antioch, and then was forced to be Archbishop of the New Rome, Constantinople. His zeal for virtue (an area in which the imperial couple were markedly deficient) attracted the imperial wrath. John was exiled from New Rome repeatedly. When he died in exile in 407, he left a massive legacy of letters, sermons, and commentaries. He is especially loved today for having given the Church her most commonly-used Liturgy for the Eucharist.

Another Saint of this era spanned the Eastern and Western worlds. St. **Jerome** hailed from Sidonium (modern-day Yugoslavia), lived at Old Rome, then moved to Bethlehem and as a Priest and monk lived the rest of his life in the spot where Christ was born. He translated the Bible into Latin from Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, using ancient manuscripts which survive no longer. His great opus is called the **Latin Vulgate**, and it is the version of Scripture on which the Douay-Rheims Bible² is grounded. By the year 400, the Church had decided what writings were to be included in the Bible, and our list has not changed since.

The great giant of the West was St. **Augustine** of Africa, a man who came to Christ late in life. After many years as a wild-living Manichæan heretic, Augustine was converted through

¹ A Patriarch is the chief Bishop of a major Christian centre. “Pope” is the age-old title of the Patriarchs of Rome and Alexandria.

² English translation much loved among Russian Orthodox who speak English.

the New Testament and the preaching of his friend St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. He became Bishop of Hippo in Africa, where he took aim at heresies of all sorts. He is a controversial figure because his pen often outraced his God-loving heart, and his logically-produced speculations were later utilised to develop certain Roman Catholic and Protestant teachings, which will have to be discussed eventually in this book. However, at the end of his life of service to God, Augustine wrote an entire book of retractions, deferred to the judgment of the Church everything he had ever written, and died in the odour of sanctity, bequeathing to us a legacy as massive as St. John Chrysostom's.

THE THIRD COUNCIL - 431 A.D.

The year after St. Augustine fell asleep, the Church's Third Holy Council was convened at Ephesus, where the Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had lived. **Nestorius**, the Patriarch of Constantinople, was drawing such a line of distinction between Christ's human side and His Divine side that he said in a Christmas sermon it was demeaning for him to worship a God in a crib! The Holy Council defrocked him and stated that, because Christ is both God and man, the Virgin Mary is truly *Theotokos*, Mother of God. Nestorius headed east, "consecrated" many clergy, and set up many churches, all separated from the Orthodox and calling him St. Nestorius. But the next Council occasioned an apostasy still more terrible.

THE FOURTH COUNCIL - 451 A.D.

There were those who went so far in avoiding Nestorianism that they developed another error, **Monophysitism** (from the Greek for "one nature"). These taught that Christ's human nature and Divine nature were fused into one nature. The arguments and disorders grew fierce, and the Empress St. Pulcheria convened a General Council at **Chalcedon**. There, assisted by an evident miracle worked at the tomb of the early martyr **Euphemia**,¹ the assembled Fathers ruled against the Monophysite ringleader Dioscorus of Alexandria, who refused to

¹ *The Council Fathers wrote the Orthodox teaching on one scroll & that of the Monophysites on another, then placed both in St. Euphemia's tomb & began to fast & pray. After 3 days, they opened the tomb to find the Orthodox scroll in the Saint's hand & the Monophysite scroll trampled under her feet. The case was closed.*

profess before the Council that Christ exists in two natures. (Orthodox teach that Christ exists in two natures—Divine and human—each distinct, unmixed yet indivisible.) For reasons both religious and political, a large dissident denomination formed around Dioscorus, which today includes Egyptian **Copts**, Syrian **Jacobites**, and many **Ethiopians** and **Indians**. This group, often called “Oriental Orthodox,” recognises only three Ecumenical Councils. More recently, the historically Monophysite groups have begun to adopt much of the language Dioscorus repudiated, and this turn of affairs may lead to their re-entry into Orthodoxy. High hopes notwithstanding, an optimistic unity plan formulated in 1990 at Chambesy, Switzerland, failed; it aroused mistrust since it failed to address allegiance to the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Ecumenical Councils. Condemnations of the Chambesy plan erupted from Mount Athos and from within many Patriarchates, as well as traditionalist circles. Orthodox still feel they have more common ground with the Orientals than any other separated Christians, but as long as they reject most of the Ecumenical Councils, there is little practical chance of any immediate unity.

ROME FALLS

Turned upside down by moral decay, weakened by internal conflicts, and reeling from the economic and ideological blow dealt by Constantine when he relocated the capital to Constantinople, Old Rome shuddered in the 5th century under repeated barbarian attacks. Finally, in 476, Rome fell permanently to heathen invaders. Many thought the world had ended as *The City*, the erstwhile hub of Western learning, civilisation, and order, collapsed. The repercussions for the Church of Christ were great, especially in the long term, for as public order disintegrated in Italy, the Popes of Rome were forced by sheer compassion to assume a new quasi-governmental role. They began to oversee public charities and to mediate and even rule in public affairs. Before long, the see of Rome had become a government in its own right. As long as holy and capable men steered the Roman church, the arrangement worked, but in later years the saying “Power corrupts” came true. Slowly, over the course of the next 300 years, the attitude that the Popes ruled the whole Church reared its head, and alarmed the other local Churches.

A GODSEND

Just four years after Rome fell, St. **Benedict** the Great was born in Norcia, Italy. Schooled in Rome, he left it as a young man to seek Christ as a hermit living inside a cave in the wild. He gained many disciples, and wrote a Rule to guide them in monastic life. The Holy Rule revealed Benedict as a genius of discretion and moderation. The severity of the Eastern monks' asceticism he adapted to the Western character, insisting more on obedience and internal work than fasting or great labours. St. Benedict is known as the *Father of Western Civilisation* because the monasteries were for many years the only oases of stability and learning in a barbaric world. They fed the poor, saved the books, taught people how to read them, and fostered a new ethic, teaching the world that manual labour was honourable. (Formerly, manual work was thought contemptible, only fit for paupers and slaves.)

Many people today object to Christianity on the grounds that no one is doing as the early Christians did: sharing all possessions in common, renouncing private property, living in community, praying daily, "working with [the] hands, the thing that is just," and the other things mentioned in the Book of Acts in the Bible. In monasteries of the Orthodox Church, at least, this way of life still exists—to the glory of Jesus Christ.

THE FIFTH COUNCIL - 553 A.D.

The 5th Ecumenical Council of Christendom was called because certain letters called the *Three Chapters* were being circulated, stretching and straining the definition of faith agreed on at Chalcedon. In the uproar, Pope **Vigilius** wearied of the argument and decreed that, taken in the best sense, these letters were acceptable, adding a little hazy theologising of his own. The Bishops of Africa cut the Pope off from communion, ordering him to repent. Emperor Theodosius called a Holy Council against the Pope's wishes, and the Fathers assembled at Constantinople ruled that the Three Chapters were not orthodox and implied that Pope Vigilius was heretical. This Council condemned **Origen** (d. 254), a brilliant teacher who had taught that souls lived spiritually before they are placed in bodies as a result of sin, and that all wicked angels and people

would some day enter Heaven after purification.¹

THE FIVE PATRIARCHATES

In the 5th century, the overall structure of the Church became fixed as a **Pentarchy**. Five Patriarchs, Bishops shepherding major sections of the world from the important Christian centres and holding equal communion with one another, were invested with special archpastoral care. These Bishops were described as the “five senses” of the Church. We can see that the essence of the Church was still in the unanimity of faith, though, not in a command structure, for at times certain Patriarchs, such as Pope Vigilius of Rome, strayed from the faith and were cut off from the Church. The Patriarchates were, in descending order of honour, **Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem**. *Pentarchy* is still the ideal of the Church, but various defections and contentions have made it practically impossible since at least 1054 A.D., and newer Patriarchates have developed over the centuries—those of Serbia, Moscow, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Georgian nation.

THE RISE OF THE PAPACY

From 600 A.D. on, the question of the Papacy’s role in the Church proved thornier and thornier. At the turn of that century, however, an ideal man was drafted to fill the Roman see. St. **Gregory** the Great shepherded his patriarchate in a truly inspired way. First of all, he was mission-minded. He sent a troop of monks from the monastery he had founded in Rome into England to convert the Germanic people that had settled there and had re-paganised the land. St. Gregory is revered as the Father of the Roman Rite of the Church. He popularised the word *Mass* to describe the Liturgy of the Eucharist.² He polished and codified the chants then in the infancy of their use, resulting in an otherworldly musical form called, after himself, Gregorian

¹ *The doctrine denying eternal damnation is **apokatastasis**, meaning “restitution of all.” This is not a Christian belief; both the words of Christ (Mk 9:44-48; Mt 18:8, 25:41, 46; see also 2 Tim 1:9 and Jude v. 6) and the ancient liturgies of the Christians (e.g., “deliver us from eternal damnation” in the W. Rite Canon) teach the reality of eternal Hell for those who refuse God’s forgiveness.*

² *Sts. Ambrose of Milan and Gregory of Tours also used the word **Mass**, which derives from the word for “send” and means the Offering Sent Up to God.*

Chant. The Saint felt it was his personal responsibility that no poor man or woman should ever die of neglect in the city of Rome. Times were often hard, but whenever Gregory heard that a homeless man had died, he counted himself unworthy to celebrate Mass on that day. A dispute broke out between Gregory and the Bishop of Constantinople, St. **John the Faster**. All the high offices held in Constantinople, which was the capital city of the Roman Empire, were dubbed *ecumenical* (the librarian of New Rome, for example, was the *ecumenical* or “universal” librarian), and this title was bestowed by the Emperor on the city’s Patriarch as well. Convinced because of the language barrier that John thought himself to be a Universal Bishop, that is, a Bishop ruling over all other Bishops, St. Gregory reacted violently. In the most charitable language possible, he condemned St. John of insufferable pride and demanded he forfeit the title, adopting for his part the very opposite title, “Slave of the Slaves of God.” St. Gregory’s plea was, “May all Christians reject this blasphemous title [Universal Bishop]—this title which takes the priestly honour from every Priest the moment it is insanely usurped by one!” Though feelings ran high, the unity of the Church was not broken by this misunderstanding.

A SNAKE IN THE GARDEN OF THE CHURCH

In St. Gregory’s lifetime, however, a quiet event transpired in Spain that *did* lead, in time, to a permanent division. In 589, at the Council of Toledo, the word **filioque**¹ was inserted in the Nicene Creed, so that it read, “I believe... in the Holy Spirit... Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.” This was done to bolster the Divinity of God the Son, since Spain had been overrun by Arians who denied His equality with God the Father. But the phrase revised at Toledo is a passage of Scripture,² and Scripture cannot just be altered. This local council disobeyed the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, which had ruled that no change could at any time be made to the Nicene Creed. Passing slowly into Central Europe and the rest of the West, the *filioque* was a theological time bomb with a fuse 4½ centuries long.

¹ “Filioque” is a Latin word meaning “and from the Son.”

² At the Last Supper Christ said, “The Spirit of truth, Who proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me” (Jn 15:26).

THE SIXTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL (680 A.D.)

The schism of the Monophysites, who did not accept the Fourth Council, greatly reduced the size and influence of the Church in Eastern lands, so to conciliate them the Emperor promulgated a doctrine called **Monothelism**, which claimed that even though Christ's Divinity and humanity were two distinct natures, He possessed but a single Divine will. The Monophysites liked it, and no fewer than three Patriarchs of Constantinople and Pope Honorius of Rome favoured the notion. In the East St. **Maximus**, and in the West Honorius' successor as Pope, St. **Martin I**, vigorously assaulted this teaching and spoiled the Emperor's plans. If Christ has no distinct human will, they insisted, then He is not truly a man, for no man without a human will is a true man. Both Saints bore the full brunt of the imperial displeasure. Pope Martin was captured and condemned to labour as a common criminal near the Black Sea, where he died from exhaustion.

Amidst the uproar, Emperor Constantine Pogonatos called the Sixth Ecumenical Council of the Church to order in 680 at New Rome. Monothelism was condemned and Pope Honorius was denounced as a heretic. It is interesting that the history of his condemnation continued to be read once a year in the Roman Catholic service of Matins until the uncomfortable passage was yanked in the 16th century. Pope St. **Agatho** and Patriarch St. **George** of Constantinople gave the Holy Council their full support. It must be remembered that at this time in history the Popes of Rome were widely revered throughout the Church, East and West, as holding the most steadily orthodox of any ancient, apostolic see. Rome was scarcely touched by Arianism, Monophysitism, Monothelism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, and other -isms. The Roman Popes steadfastly resisted the *filioque* change to the Creed as well.

THE "QUINISEXT" COUNCIL - 692 A.D.

The 5th and 6th Ecumenical Councils had concerned themselves entirely with matters of dogma and had issued no canons for running church affairs. Therefore, a sacred Council was called at Constantinople to issue canons. It is often called the "Quinisext" or "Fifth-Sixth" and is considered an extension

of those Councils. Just a few of its rulings: Bishops could not be married; Deacons and Priests must be allowed to marry before ordination, but must never marry afterwards; the Roman custom of fasting on Saturdays, which differed with apostolic custom, was not permitted. Also, all clergy of the Church were strictly excluded from the political, military, and economic affairs of this world. Although Rome had local rules by this time forbidding Deacons or Priests to marry, and the Romans fasted on Saturdays, the canons which would not allow these practices were officially admitted at Rome, at least for a time, and the Roman and Eastern churches remained united.

MISSIONS

Throughout the 7th and 8th centuries, the Gospel was slowly accepted by more and more of Europe, but it must be remembered that much of Europe was still staunchly pagan. Many of the European peoples were so fierce that their eventual acceptance of the gentle Jesus of Nazareth is considered by some historians to be the greatest miracle of Christian history. Evangelism at this time was conducted mainly by monks, and their principles were very sound and are relevant today. They would found a monastery in a lonely place, away from human habitation in a pagan area. Some among them might preach to the people, but only if they had a special gift for this. The other brethren would simply live their Gospel lifestyle to the fullest. With the passage of time, the local inhabitants would discover the true nature of the Christians' lives, and when they liked what they saw, they would be near to Baptism. The compunction and orderly beauty of the church services also warmed the hearts of these peoples, and served to convert them as much as any conversation or reasoning. In Western Europe, it was the **Irish** monks who were the most active missionaries; in Central Europe, Benedictine monks and nuns from England christianised the German lands.

ICON-SMASHERS

The 8th century was one of general doctrinal stability and harmony in the Western churches, but one of great turmoil for the Eastern churches. A succession of Byzantine Emperors called the **iconoclasts** or "icon-smashers" condemned the

general Christian practice of venerating images (“icons”) of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints, and raised a bloody persecution against those who would not surrender their images for destruction. The iconoclasts quoted Scripture itself—had not God forbidden His people to adore graven images? The icon-venerators, mostly pious women and monks, persevered in the face of torture and death.

THE SEVENTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL - 787 A.D.

Finally, in 787 A.D., a General Council was convened at Nicæa by Empress Irene. This was the Seventh and Last Ecumenical Council of the Church (Nicæa II). The Holy Fathers declared that the veneration of icons is not only *possible* but *integral* to the Christian faith. They saw the whole conflict as Christological—that is, they took the objection that God cannot be depicted as a denial that God truly took flesh. No man can see the invisible God. In Jesus Christ, however, the Invisible has willed to be made visible, as Christ told Philip at the Last Supper, “Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth My Father also.” The Fathers carefully defined, however, that we dare not worship the icons themselves—they are but wood and paint—but rather, through them, we honour the *prototype*, what they were made to represent. We do not honour our country’s flag, for example, because we wish to worship cotton, but because of what the flag stands for. The Council also proclaimed that icons are “the Gospel in paint,” and are necessary for the biblical instruction of those who cannot read.

THE ICON-SMASHERS RETURN

Despite the stance taken at Nicæa, the battle over icons raged on. In 792, Charlemagne sent books to the Pope condemning the veneration of icons in the Nicene sense. They likewise excoriated the East for “dropping” (!) *filioque* from the Creed. Charlemagne’s plan was to de-legitimise the Eastern Roman Empire in order to build his own new Roman Empire. His

¹ “Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God” (Lev 26:1). In the Orthodox Church, painted icons are used instead of graven images (statues).

political plans were successful, but his assault on our Creed and the holy icons was not. Alarmed by his theological pretensions, Pope St. **Leo III**, the same man who had crowned him eight years previously, had the original Creed (without *filioque*), engraved on plates of gold and silver, in Greek and Latin, and affixed to the left and to the right of St. Peter's tomb.

In 802 Empress Irene died and a fierce iconoclast captured the Byzantine throne. It was not until 843 that the icons were permanently restored in the East, this time by another Empress—St. **Theodora**. As the wife of the iconoclastic Emperor, she had managed to keep her icons by calling them her “dolls.” Upon his death, she ascended the throne and renewed Constantinople's allegiance to the Seventh Council. For all its wavering during the Patristic era, Constantinople proved to be as staunchly Orthodox *after* the Seventh Council as Rome had been *before* it.

EAST AND WEST DRIFT APART

Very early on, the Eastern and Western halves of the Church began to drift apart. The Greek language prevailed in the East; Latin prevailed in the West. The Byzantine liturgy predominated in the East; the Roman liturgy in the West. The Easterners tended to a mystical outlook; the Westerners to practicality. When considering God, the Latins started with the Unity and moved on to the Trinity; the Greeks began with the Trinity and then passed to the Unity. When considering the Crucifixion, the Latins stressed Christ as Sacrifice, the Greeks Christ as Victor. Westerners spoke more of redemption, Easterners more of deification, and so on. It was easy for misunderstandings to arise and difficult to dispel them. Still, the unity of the Church was preserved and indeed prevented the individual emphasis of any one area of the Church from upsetting the balance of Christian thought as a whole. **Unity in diversity** was the ideal, though in practice Eastern and Western believers were relating to each other, more and more often, as strangers.

POWER PLAYS

We know that in the West the Popes of Rome began as early as the 5th century to play a role more monarchical and unilateral than that of their Eastern colleagues. Ever since the

faithful had been granted freedom by the government of the Roman Empire, the Bishop of Rome, the capital city, had been awarded a primacy of honour by the other Bishops of the world. Disputes between Bishops were referred to the area's Metropolitan (Bishop of a major city), and disputes between Metropolitans and other thorny cases were brought before the Pope of Rome, though even his decisions were not considered absolutely binding. In fact, because of Rome's consistent Orthodoxy, even religious disputes were referred there. Of course, the absence of political stability in Italy forced its Popes to be benevolent rulers of a para-secular sort. Many Popes handled this necessity admirably, but others, heedless of St. Jerome's dictum *Let the lust for Roman power cease*, escalated a relentless campaign to increase the scope of their authority. By the year 850, the Pope could act not only as an elder brother, but, in the West at least, as a master. This was, of course, precisely the complaint Pope St. Gregory, 250 years before, had hurled at Patriarch John.

CHURCH UNITY IS INTERRUPTED

In 858, 15 years after Theodora restored the icons, the seething question over Papal prerogative boiled over. In that year St. Ignatius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was replaced as patriarch by the brilliant St. **Photius** the Great. Pope Nicholas I saw an opportunity to increase his influence. He claimed that St. Ignatius, who was in fact Photius' friend, had been unjustly ousted, called Photius an impostor, and sent three representatives to New Rome to try Photios' "case." St. Photius received the delegates with honour and invited them to preside over a hearing, at which they tried his case. The result was that they endorsed his legitimacy without reservations. When they returned to Rome, Nicholas balked at their decision and held his own hearing, deposing Photius. No one in the East paid any attention to his sentence, and there was an open breach in Rome's communion with Constantinople as long as Nicholas was pope.

CROSSED CREEDS

East-West conflict acquired a theological dimension when German missionaries (who added *filioque* to the Creed) and Greek missionaries (who did not) were both evangelising newly-Christian **Bulgaria**, at Constantinople's back door. Rome itself

did not use the *filioque*, but Pope Nicholas fully supported the Germans in promulgating it. Bulgaria see-sawed between the Old Rome and the New. St. Photius wrote a learned work on the *filioque*, showing that it is not a doctrine of the Holy Fathers of the Church. The dispute was not resolved, however, since no theological terms with which to discuss it had been settled upon. Bulgaria opted for the East, and Nicholas' successor, John VIII, restored communion with Constantinople. This was far from a happy ending, however; neither of the sticking points, Papal mastery and the *filioque*, were substantively addressed; they were merely patched over, while the shadow cast by West-East estrangement lengthened and deepened.

WORSHIP

Because the very name Orthodoxy shows that the Church's beliefs are inseparably intertwined with her rites of worship (**doxa** implies both right belief and right worship), a word of explanation must be given about how we adore God.

The living Body of Christ, the Holy Church, grew and developed as a human body does. In the infancy of the Church, only the people of Judea made up this body. Growing, and guided at all times by the Holy Spirit, the Church gained an experience and wisdom which the Fathers enshrined in their writings and in the holy canons, to be passed to future generations. In her liturgical life, too, the Church matured, perfecting a liturgy which brought together the very best of Scripture, the Sacraments bequeathed by the Apostles, religious poetry, and sacred art and music—to offer the soul and body, the complete man, everything that can be offered at a service. Just as Christ was perfectly omniscient as a child, though possessing the tiny body of a child, so also the nascent Church was fully aware of the Faith and in full intimacy with the Holy Spirit, though its liturgy was somewhat unformed and the liturgical arts had not been fully developed. Also like Christ, the life of the Church, when finished on earth, will resume in eternity in Heaven. Imperfect here, she shall be “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing” in the coming Kingdom. (*Eph. 5:27*)

It is in the Church's **worship** that we both prepare ourselves for and joyfully anticipate that heavenly feast, and it

is in the Church's worship that we find the true centre and heart of the Church—not any one leader or organisational structure.

LITURGICAL DIVERSITY - PROS AND CONS

We saw already how great adaptations were made in Christian worship in the 200 years after the Apostles taught us the basics. By the 10th century, a very definite rite of worship had been established throughout Christendom; by no means, however, was it uniform from place to place—rather, distinct traditions were preserved in different regions, and in these wide areas there were local ritual variances. In the East, the predominant rite was the Byzantine, but other Eastern Rites were also widespread. There was the Liturgy of St. Mark in Egypt, the Liturgy of St. James in Syria, and others. By 1200 A.D., due to imperial pressure, the Byzantine Rite had largely replaced the other Eastern Rites within the Empire. This forcible standardisation of worship was hailed in the capital as a stroke of civilising genius, but it was catastrophic for the Church of Christ, for its end result was to disaffect the native Christians of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Syria from the “Foreign” Church and to rally them around “their” church, around the Monophysite leaders who preserved the ancient rites of their peoples. In the West, the Liturgy of St. Gregory, the Roman Rite, was also exported with a heavy hand. Charlemagne ordered it to displace the native Gallican Rite in his dominions, and about 1060 A.D. it was forced by the Pope upon the Christians of Spain, who had used their own Mozarabic or Visigothic Rite. In the West, as in the East, the new fashion of liturgical standardisation bore bitter fruit; eventually the identity of the various national Churches of the West was so seriously weakened that they lost their ability to act apart from Rome.

The weight given to liturgical matters in Christian history, and in Orthodoxy today, must appear extreme to anyone raised in today's secular culture. It does tell us one thing, however: the faith of the Christians in these early centuries found powerful expression both in their daily lives and in the keystone of daily life, the **liturgy**. Theirs was not a faith confined to the margins of life, but a faith prayed and sung and experienced every day. The symbols of the liturgy were closely identified with the doctrines they expressed, so closely that if a ceremony or prayer

especially significant in one rite was noticed missing or sharply varying in another rite, the orthodoxy of those who held that rite might be called into question. This dynamic must be borne in mind as we examine the vicissitudes of Church history.

CHRISTIANITY'S GREATEST TRAGEDY

Century by century, we have been building toward a dramatic break, a catastrophic split, between the Christians in the East and the Christians in the West. I hope that prior pages have sufficiently prepared the ground so that these sorrowful and decisive moments may be understood.

In the 800s, despite cultural / linguistic differences, the art, worship, and discipline of the Eastern and Western Churches were remarkably similar, if we contrast this common ground to the gulf that divides the Roman Catholicism of today from Orthodoxy. Yet the two menacing currents of the *filioque* change to the Creed and the pursuit of Papal power threatened to tear asunder this unity, and indeed did so for a brief period in the 800s. Throughout the 900s, the Byzantines were preoccupied with the Muslim threat and tended to isolate themselves in a narrow, classical world of high cultural standards and court refinements. At the same time, the Popes of Rome presented such a morally decrepit and administratively weak picture that they were in no position to make any major moves which would impact the Eastern churches.

PRELUDE TO THE SCHISM

As the year 1000 A.D. grew nearer, Central Europe continued to be christianised, mostly through the efforts of monks. Parts of present-day Germany, Poland, and Denmark were accepting the Faith around this time, and in Eastern Europe the great Slavic missionary movement begun by the brothers Sts. **Cyril** and **Methodius** in the 9th century matured and bore rich fruit. These two apostles to the Slav peoples translated the liturgy, scriptures, and spiritual writings into the Slavonic tongue which is the ancestor of modern Russian, Serbian, Polish, and Bulgarian. Although they were careful to gain the support of the Popes as well as the Patriarchs of Constantinople, the brothers' mission was bitterly attacked by

the German Bishops, who insisted that services could only be held in Greek, Latin, or Hebrew, since these were the three languages inscribed on the title above Christ's Cross. The Germans also insisted upon the addition of *filioque* to the creed, and when the disciples of Cyril and Methodius would not agree to these things, they closed their churches and sold the missionaries themselves into slavery. None of this bode very well for future relations between East and West.

In 988, the ruler of Kievan Rus, St. **Vladimir**, led his nation into the Christianity of the Eastern form, a move which was later to provide Orthodoxy with a new, northern heartland. In both East and West, the liturgical life of the Church reached a new maturity and stability; in fact, the Roman¹ and Byzantine rites scarcely changed at all after 1000. Seven Holy Councils were accepted by both the Eastern and the Western Christians, and there was still a measure of cultural borrowing and goodwill on both sides.

FILIOQUE PREVAILS OVER ROME

After the year 1000, however, a series of more intelligent and organised Popes began to stir up the old East-West tensions. In 1008, Pope **Sergius** issued a statement of faith which contained the *filioque*. This was the first time it was formally adopted by Rome, and at Constantinople the response was to remove the Pope's name from the diptychs (the prayer list of Patriarchs who are considered Orthodox). In 1014, **Henry II**, master of the Western Roman Empire, demanded that the Pope include the *filioque* in the Creed sung at Mass (previously, the Creed was not done at Mass in Rome). The Pope balked at first, then gave in. Steeped in the writings of St. **Photius**, the East naturally refused this intruder phrase whenever the issue arose.

THE GREAT SCHISM - 1054 A.D.

What brought matters to a head was the Norman French invasion of Italy. In 1052, the Normans forced Byzantine-Rite

¹ That is, the Old Roman Rite. Pius V severely curtailed this rite with his reformed Tridentine Rite, and after Vatican Council II the depleted remains of the Rite were utterly swept out of the Roman Catholic Church in 1969.

churches, of which there were many in Italy, to adopt Western customs. The Emperor at Constantinople reacted by shutting down all the Western-Rite churches in Constantinople that would not adopt Eastern customs, and there were many of them.

In the heat of this charged atmosphere, the Roman church changed in 1053 to the use of unleavened bread at the altar, a Jewish practice which aroused suspicion among the Easterners. Tempers were hot; therefore, Pope Leo IX sent a delegation headed by the most hot-tempered and tactless churchman available—Cardinal **Humbert**—to negotiate with Patriarch **Michael** of Constantinople (no model of patience himself). When Humbert and his cohorts arrived at New Rome, they refused the usual courtesies to the Patriarch and thrust into his hands a paper listing their demands, including the submission of all the Patriarchs of the East to the Pope. After this initial contact, Michael simply refused to meet with the delegation. Before long, Humbert lost patience and drew up a Bull of Excommunication against Michael and “those in sympathy with him.”

Early on the morning of June 16, 1054, Humbert and the others entered the Cathedral before the service and slapped the Bull of Excommunication down upon the altar. Ignoring the Deacons who ran after them pleading with them to reconsider, they left the city, shook the dust off their feet, and reported to Rome. Curiously, Pope Leo, on whose authority they supposed they were acting, had died three months before they cast their sentence at Michael. The Patriarch, for his part, summoned a council of Bishops who excommunicated Humbert and “all those responsible” for the incident. At this point, communion between Rome and the East was effectively and irreversibly shattered.

In the 1080s, the Eastern Patriarchs appealed to the Pope to initiate the standard procedure for re-establishing communion between two churches: they begged him to write a confession of faith, of the sort St. Gregory the Great had written to St. John the Faster, in accord with the Early Christian Fathers and Orthodox tradition. This was to be followed by their affirmation of the Pope as the most honoured of Patriarchs, but it was not to be. The Pope angrily retorted that neither he nor his faith could ever be brought into question by mortal men.

SCHISM OR FAMILY QUARREL?

Hindsight, as the saying goes, is 20/20, and as we look back on the events of 1054 we can detect a decisive rift between Christian West and Christian East. However, the original terms of the Schism were limited to a dispute between Rome itself and Constantinople itself, and there are signs of more closeness between other parts of Christian East and West during this time. For example, Western pilgrims to the Holy Land were still given Holy Communion by the Greek clergy at the holy places. In the minds of many Christians, the squabble between Old and New Rome might have been merely another family altercation of the sort which had happened before and could always happen again. Yet the Schism in 1054 was permanent, for several reasons:

Filioque: Before 1054, the *filioque* caused disturbances, but in the main the Popes stood firmly against it, which pacified the Eastern churches. After 1014, *filioque* invaded Rome itself and the Popes began ordering the Easterners to adopt it. In 1054, this was the only dogmatic issue on which Rome and the East could not at all see eye to eye. Soon after 1054, Western theologians hastened to justify the Creed change with a number of “dogmatic” opinions, cementing the mistake in place.

Papal Power: As we saw earlier, East-West unity was severely threatened in the 9th century by Pope Nicholas I’s power dramas. After a century of dormancy, a series of 11th-century Popes stirred up the unholy fires of ambition afresh, and Papal power reached its peak in the 13th century. At Rome, the papal pretensions finally grew so ingrained that no moderating voice could be found to reconcile Pope to Patriarchs.

Disparity of Customs: The Greeks were already wary of certain liturgical innovations adopted at Rome, such as unleavened bread (1053) and single-immersion baptisms (in some regions). This suspicion was often levelled against the West indiscriminately, and in some circles had risen to nothing short of a fever pitch. Ancient Western customs, such as omitting the singing of “alleluia” during Lent and the manner of preparing the bread and wine for the Eucharist, etc., were bitterly attacked.

THE CRUSADES - 1096 TO 1290 A.D.

The Church is often affected not so much at the intellectual level or the dogmatic level as at the gut level. This was certainly true as the shadow cast by the Great Schism deepened over time, and the main catalyst is usually considered to be the Crusades. Crusades, of course, were Western holy wars, and absolution of sins was promised by the Western Church to soldiers who died in battle. The **First Crusade** was stirred up by Pope Urban II (1096), and was successful in capturing much of the Levant and establishing a Latin Kingdom there. Of course, Latin bishops were installed where Greek Bishops had governed, and for the first time the practical effects of the Schism were felt in the East. Bishop was set against bishop, altar against altar, and both claimed to represent the One Church of Christ. After the **Second Crusade**, stirred up by Bernard of Clairvaux, the Westerners living in Constantinople were massacred (1186). Obviously, emotions were heated, but the final blow to any hope of reconciliation between Roman West and Byzantine East came in 1204, when participants in the **Fourth Crusade** turned their weapons not on the Muslims but on their fellow Christians.

THE SACK OF CONSTANTINOPLE - 1204 A.D.

For three days in 1204, Christian blood ran in the streets of New Rome as her churches and holy things were desecrated. Prostitutes were placed upon the altars of the churches, and many relics and other holy things were destroyed in the name of the Papacy. It is difficult for Western people to imagine the horror felt by Orthodox Christians at this violence; it continues to smoulder even today.

TWO CHURCHES

From this point on, it was clear to everyone that the Schism was not a matter of brother Bishops who could not get along, but of two different groups of believers—the **Orthodox**, who clung doggedly to the faith of their ancestors, and the Western Papal **Catholics**, who after separating from the Apostolic Church developed with surprising rapidity into a religion different both from pre-Schism Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy. The impact was devastating both for the Western Christians, as

they lost touch with the Orthodox Faith, and for the Eastern Christians, as the numbers of communicants of the Church plummeted and (worst of all) the Orthodox Faith came to be thought of as an Eastern affair, rather than as a universal faith, embracing all peoples and cultures—as the Holy Fathers had always understood it.

Since after the Schism of Rome the Faith which we profess was preserved in Eastern lands exclusively, our Church history will largely be an Eastern one from this point onward. Still, we will keep abreast of events which shaped the Roman Catholic Church so that the present-day situation, and the revival of Orthodoxy among Western Christians in the 20th century, can be understood and appreciated.

THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

During the 12th century, the Greek Church struggled to hold its own against the geographic expansion of the Islamic religion. Already, the Byzantine Empire was much reduced in size and influence, largely because its borders continued to be absorbed into the Muslim sphere. But as Greek Christendom shrank, the Church gained new wings in the conversion of the Slavic peoples. The 12th century, for example, was a Golden Age of Christianity in **Rus** (now Russia and the Ukraine). The characteristics of this Golden Age are worth noting: a deep faith among the people, tireless efforts by the hierarchy of the Church to eradicate old pagan ways, missionary fervour, a healthy monastic presence with a charitable rather than legalistic bent, and the penetration of Orthodoxy into every area of the people's lives. A fire at Kiev in 1124 destroyed **600** churches—which is some indication of the attention paid to Divine worship by the inhabitants of that city. In the same century, the **Serbian** Christians, another Slav people, formed a strong Orthodox nation under the leadership of St. **Sava**.

WESTERN DEVELOPMENTS

Meanwhile, in the now-heterodox West, the Papacy was amassing its power with daring and calculation. The Popes acquired the right to appoint and depose kings and emperors, and applied to themselves the sole authority to enroll saints in

the calendar of the new Roman Catholic Church. Rapid changes were sweeping through the West, changes which have prompted one historian to comment that an early Christian would have felt at home in the Western Church of the 11th century, but out of place in that of the 12th century. A new emphasis was being placed on **emotions** in the spiritual life, a trend which only gathered steam throughout the Middle Ages and resulted in such fantastical phenomena as **stigmata** (the appearance of wounds said to be like Christ's on the bodies of those in an ecstatic or trance state).¹ Another result was that the centrality of the *Resurrection* of Christ came to be usurped by an emphasis on the *Death* of Christ. In popular devotion, Christ was approached more as a suffering fellow-man than as the God-Man. In art, the mystical iconography which had emphasised Divine qualities and theologically instructed the people came more and more to be replaced by passionate art,² which depicted in a familiar, worldly, realistic manner events of great joy or pathos in the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints.

WESTERN CHURCH REORGANISED

In the High Middle Ages, a new order was manifesting itself in the church of Catholicism from top to bottom. Instead of a college of ruling Bishops with honorary Metropolitans and Patriarchs among them, as envisioned by the Seven Councils, a college of ruling bishops subject to a powerful Pope characterised the hierarchy. The West held many councils, considering them ecumenical, since the participation of the Orthodox was thought unnecessary. New religious orders were invented to allow men and women to pursue particular emphases (*i.e.*, Cistercians were formed so that manual labour could be pursued, Dominicans for the sake of preaching, Franciscans for the sake of begging, Carthusians for the sake of solitude, *etc.*). The **married priesthood** was vigorously suppressed at this time and faded out of the people's daily experience of Christianity. The worship of the Church was now considered the exclusive province of the clergy, and the idea took root of having a Mass which is not sung,

¹ *The stigmata phenomenon dates back to the early 13th c. in the Roman church and is found in the Muslim and Anglican faiths, but not in Holy Orthodoxy.*

² *The most pertinent examples of this trend are the gaunt and grotesque crucifixes of the 14th century.*

or at which no one attends but the priest himself. On the tactical side, the Pope began to appoint legates and cardinals to represent him throughout Europe; often, they carried more authority than the local bishop or archbishop. A doctrine of **Purgatory** was devised and soon afterwards a doctrine of **Indulgences**, which was fairly complete by the year 1300. Legalism reigned supreme as ordinary Christians donated money to construction funds to receive 200 or 300 days off their sentence in Purgatory (and, over time, indulgences were beset by inflation). The official teaching on the nature of **witchcraft** managed an about-face, and now the Roman Catholic leaders came to believe that witches had genuine independent powers, could travel supernaturally, and could assume various shapes at will. There was a persistent decline in the Western Christians' **fasting** discipline, and a more legal approach to fasting, as local officials granted "dispensations" from fasting or "commutations" in return for donations or directed labour. The Eucharist came to be viewed quite differently. Originally, the bread and wine of the Eucharist were considered principally as the mystical Presence of Christ among Christians, a matter of prayer and praise and song, and the taking of Communion. The Eucharist was an **Action**. The mediæval Western view of the Eucharistic elements, both popular and official, was of a Thing to be objectively adored, something to "visit," something to "keep company," something to be displayed to the people for worship, something to be carried around outside of the Liturgy, even to be carried around as a character or prop in religious dramas—the Eucharist as an **Object**, however greatly honoured. Gradually, the sense of Christ's presence among His faithful was replaced by a more restricted sense of His presence in the eucharistic bread exclusively. The nature of the Eucharist as a community endeavour was forgotten, and the Mass became a time for private devotions. The last change worth mentioning is that human **reason** came to occupy a more prominent place in Western theology. Rationalism, in an attempted wedding with Christianity, spawned **Scholasticism**, a system of interconnected philosophical and theological doctrines, encompassing the spheres of astronomy and canon law as well as Christian dogma. It must be remembered that all this was not an overnight process. The drifting of the Roman/Western clergy and people from Orthodox Christianity into what is now called **Catholicism** was dramatic,

but gradual and incremental compared with, say, the Protestant explosion. While change characterised the West, the Eastern Orthodox faithful remained tenaciously unchanging in their expression of Christianity.

CENTURY THIRTEENTH

In the 13th century, the conditions under which Christians laboured were rather polarised. In the East the faithful were suffering at the hands of the Muslims, of the Mongolian Tartars (Russia), and, most tragically, of the Catholics. In Western and Central Europe, the sovereignty of the Roman church was undisputed, and its political clout and property holdings grew simply immense; this is referred to as the Golden Age of the Papacy. The Scholastic system, intertwining Christian teaching and rational philosophy, was promoted by such men as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus and slowly gained ground. For the first time, the Sacraments were numbered at seven¹ and the exact way they “work” was sought. It was during this century that the split of Rome from Orthodoxy was made final and irrevocable. Ironically, a council was assembled at this very time to effect the reunion of the Eastern and Western churches.

FALSE COUNCIL OF LYONS - 1274 A.D.

In 1261 Michael VIII recovered Constantinople from the Western conquerors. His empire was very weak, however—it was subject in the West to attacks from Charles of Anjou (ruler of Sicily) and, in the East, from the Muslims. Out of sheer self-preservation, he engineered a council to reunite the Christians of East and West, and it met at **Lyons** in France in 1274. All but one of the Eastern delegates agreed to recognise the Pope as sole master of the Church and to add *filioque* to the Creed. The marvellous thing is that this meeting, considered an Ecumenical Council by the Catholics, proved to be no more than a paper agreement, since as soon as the compromising Bishops returned to the East, faithful clergy and people disowned them.

¹ While it is true that there are seven Sacraments (Mysteries) in the Church, some Orthodox count more, including monastic tonsure, anointing of monarchs, etc. ‘Sacramentum’ is Latin for ‘Holy Mystery’—a Sacrament is a Church rite in which God’s Grace works its wonders in the soul, in a variety of ways.

This was not the first time in history that common Orthodox people foiled the schemes of a politically-motivated hierarchy by sheer stubborn fidelity to our sacred Religion. As the Emperor Michael's sister put it, "Better that my brother's Empire should perish, than the purity of the Orthodox Faith." As soon as Michael died, the engineered Union was joyfully repudiated.

CENTURY FOURTEENTH

It is sometimes thought that the Ecumenical Councils were the last defining moments in the Church's theology. This is not quite true. In the 14th century, for example, a fierce battle raged within the Orthodox Church over the principles of hesychasm. **Hesychasm** is a rigorous method by which great stillness and unceasing prayer of mind and heart unite the Christian with God. Hesychasts, in short, are those who by unceasing prayer, most frequently through the Jesus Prayer,¹ experience God Himself and behold His Uncreated Light, that Divine radiance wherewith Christ shone on Mt. Tabor (Mt 17:2). In 1326, the Greek monk **Barlaam**, came to Constantinople. He and a circle of sophisticates ridiculed the notion that man could experience God *directly*, citing the Fathers who taught that God is unknowable and transcendent. Barlaam charged that God can be known only *indirectly*, that the physical method of the hesychasts' prayer was a falsely materialistic conception of prayer, and that the light beheld by those who achieved this great nearness to God was a created, not an Uncreated, light. The great St. **Gregory Palamas** arose in defence of the hesychasts and defended their physical labours (such as uniting their breathing to their prayers) and that the light they beheld was truly Uncreated. He did this by resurrecting the teaching of St. Basil the Great (+379) which distinguished between the **energies** and the **essence** of God. In His *energies*, which are God Himself in His revelation to man and His action in the universe, God can be known by the pure of heart who see Him; in His *essence*, He is absolutely incomprehensible and above all things. This hesychastic teaching was championed at councils held at Constantinople in 1341 and 1351. (Disappointed, Barlaam joined the Roman church.) One contemporary of St. Gregory was

¹ "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" is the most widely-used form today of this ancient, Patristic prayer.

Blessed **Nicholas Cabasilas**, who wrote about the Saviour as being closer to us than our own soul, and stressed the life given through the Sacraments in the Church. St. Gregory seemed to emphasise ceaseless interior prayer, and Bl. Nicholas the external, sacramental life of the Church, but in reality they were expressing two sides of one coin: there is no true mysticism without the hierarchy and Sacraments of the Orthodox Church, nor is an externally correct Christianity enough, for we must **all** strive to enkindle our hearts with the very Light of Christ.

After one has studied mediæval Orthodox thought in all its vitality, the common objection to Orthodoxy summed up by the author Dom Gregory Dix seems rather indefensible: “Into the closed world of Byzantium, no really fresh impulse ever came after the 6th century. Sleep began in the 9th century.” Orthodoxy did not add new beliefs to Christianity, being very content with the apostolic faith—but she certainly was not asleep!

WESTERN COUNCILS OF CONSTANCE & BASEL

From 1378 to 1417, there were two, and later three, claimants to the Papacy, each supported by certain bishops and secular rulers. This divisive scenario is called the **Western Schism** (not to be confused with the “Great Schism” of 1054) and it was terminated when the influential “ecumenical” council of **Constance**, a purely Western council, elected a fourth man, Martin V, as Pope. Martin V convoked yet another council, that of **Basel**, which opened in 1431, in order to combat ecclesiastical corruption and deal with dissenting movements in Europe. This council entered into a tug-of-war with Martin’s successor, Eugene IV. The council subpoenaed the Pope; the Pope dissolved the council. The prelates of Basel refused to disperse and, in fact, deposed the Pope.

YET ANOTHER FALSE UNION

The Council of Basel then announced a council to unite the Greeks with Rome, that is, to accomplish their submission to Rome. The Byzantine Empire was now in such imminent danger of collapse that the Emperor’s Bishops were ready to consider joining Rome to secure military aid. However, as long as Papacy and Council were battling, the unionist Greeks were not sure

which side to enter into communion with, and the Council of Basel could not agree on a location. Seizing the moment, Eugene IV summoned a reunion council at Ferrara, and in 1438 it was called to order. The Greeks soon arrived and discussions began, centered on the Trinity, the Papacy, and Purgatory. The Greeks at first maintained the Orthodox teachings on all these points. The disputes grew long and wearisome, and the Greek prelates wished to return home. Eugene IV convinced them to adjourn at **Florence** and discuss the *filioque*. At Florence, they were placed under virtual house arrest and were told that they could not leave until they had kissed the Pope's slippers. Food and supplies were withheld from them, and eventually all the Greek Bishops acquiesced to Catholicism in the three disputed teachings—all the Bishops, that is, except one. **St. Mark of Ephesus**, the most learned theologian present, refused, saying, "There can be no compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith."

"UNION" (1439) & THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (1453)

In July, 1439, a union between the Orthodox East and the Western church was declared. Throughout the West there was rejoicing—all the bells of England were rung in commemoration. But like the false union at Lyons, this "ecumenical" council also proved in the end to be a political farce. Military aid from the West, the whole reason for the Byzantine submission, never materialised. The Byzantine Emperor did not even dare to publicly announce the union until December of 1452, and almost immediately afterwards, in May of 1453, Constantinople fell to the Muslim Turks and the Christian Empire of the East ceased to exist. This was not the end of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, however; the next Patriarch thoroughly repudiated the false union, as did the whole Orthodox people. In the West, Catholicism continued to prevail; in Byzantium and the Balkans, the faithful groaned under the heavy Turkish Yoke, clinging to their ancestral Faith and Liturgy more tightly than ever; in **Russia**, which had now broken free of the Tartars, a new nation was forged, the only great power in the Orthodox world. The Russian Christians saw themselves as the defenders and heirs of the true Orthodox Faith, and many of them believed that Byzantium had perished precisely because of its tryst with Rome.

PAPAL SUPREMACY

The Council of Florence prepared the way for a new structure in the Western church. The Councils of Constance and Basel had both decreed as a dogma of Catholicism that the highest authority in the Roman church was an *ecumenical council* of bishops. The Council of Florence reversed this trend and re-established the *Papacy* as the heart of Western Catholicism. Now, the manner of church government in the West was neither a college of ruling bishops with honorary Patriarchs and Metropolitans (with the Pope in titular precedence) nor yet a college of ruling bishops with an autocratic Pope above them. Increasingly, it was that of a college of powerless bishops appointed and directed solely by the Pope at Rome.

CORRUPTION IN THE WEST ...

As power plays dominated the Western skyline, and all best efforts at internal reform were thwarted by the entrenched hypocrisy and corruption of Roman Catholic officials of all ranks and all lands, a sense of hopelessness spread like a cancer across Western Europe. In particular, the common people's respect for the Papacy dwindled to almost nothing, as eyewitness accounts of Vatican orgies and sadistic entertainments were borne from Rome back to all Catholic nations. The Roman Curia¹ held nothing sacred, and soon the people of Europe felt the same way about their leadership. A grass-roots **Revolt** was unavoidable.

... AND IN THE EAST

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Serbia, Greece, Bosnia, and Egypt capitulated to the Turks as well. Much of Europe and all of Asia Minor and the Levant were ruled by Muslims, and the national Orthodox Churches were dismantled as the Turks placed all Christians in the Ottoman Empire under a Greek Patriarch of Constantinople who dwelt in the shadow of the Sultan. A great deal of corruption entered the Church in Greece; for one example, the government exacted higher and higher fees from newly-elected Patriarchs, making the Patriarchate a rich man's enclave. In a debacle recalling the

¹ "Curia" means "court," and is the bureaucracy of the Roman Catholic church.

contemporary morals of the Papacy, the Turks would depose or execute Patriarchs in rapid succession to accrue more income from accession fees. In spite of the danger involved, there was always someone willing to pay enough money to be Patriarch.

MOSCOW—THE “THIRD ROME”

Things took quite a different turn in Russia, however, where a powerful Orthodox nation was being born. There, a monastic controversy erupted in the 15th century between the **possessors**, who stressed the Church’s public and national role, and believed that the Church should own great properties, maintain splendour in worship, and distribute charity on a vast scale, and the **non-possessors**, who stressed the inner and spiritual orientation of the Church, called for a return to monastic ideals of poverty and seclusion, and shunned collaboration with the State. St. **Joseph** of Volotsk led the possessors and St. **Nilus** of Sora the non-possessors. Although the ideals of the non-possessors remained an active leaven in Russian church life, the possessors won the day, and, in fact, the next several centuries. The monk Philotheus of Pskov propounded his Third-Rome theory at this time. He told Tsar Basil III that the first Rome had fallen through heresy, the second Rome (Constantinople) through sin. Moscow, he said, was the **Third Rome**, or Christian centre, and there would not be a fourth. Not only the Slavic, but also the Greek Orthodox began to look to Russia as the great protector of Orthodoxy.

WESTERN VOLCANO ERUPTS

After Pope Eugene IV outmanoeuvred the Conciliar movement, which would have exalted the collective Episcopate of the West above its Pope, other challenges to Papal control of the European scene arose quickly. The secular monarchs of Europe, overcoming the opposition of their nobles, united their kingdoms around themselves. As a new sense of **national identity** grew stronger, the trans-national influence of the Popes naturally waned. Dissident movements abounded. Typical of them was the uprising of **Jan Hus** in what is now Czechoslovakia—Hus questioned papal authority and insisted that the eucharistic wine should be given to the people at Mass (that was the Orthodox and Early Western custom). But the

Council of Constance had forbidden laity to receive the chalice, and it had Hus captured and burnt at the stake. The **Inquisition**, which had been established in the 13th century and whose power to torture and kill opponents of the Catholic denomination had been given a theological footing by Thomas Aquinas, increased the scope of its activities and strengthened the Papacy. Simultaneously, a cultural revolution was underway—**Humanists** embraced the æsthetic ideals of the pagan Romans and Greeks, and pre-Christian culture was the rage of the age. Popes and princes patronised humanist artists who rejected Christian iconography and lionised realism, nudity, and emotionalism. The Catholic hierarchy was amazingly corrupt; Pope Julius II rode into battle in full plate armour; the behaviour of Pope Alexander VI is too shocking to be retold in a Christian publication. The average Christian in the West was seeing indulgences which were distributed by lottery, bishops who oppressed commoners with heavy taxes to pay for their lavish lifestyles, and hideous Popes who claimed, as Boniface VIII had in 1302: “We declare, state, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” A general revolt was inevitable, and the seminal spark is often pinpointed to October 31, 1517, when **Martin Luther**, a German friar, nailed his **95 Theses** to the door of the Wittenberg church to protest abuses. Later he left the Catholic denomination, married, and founded the **Lutheran** religion. Luther and many other early Reformers were not Protestants as we might picture, however—Luther taught in his catechism that Christians should cross themselves daily, believed that in the eucharist the actual body and blood of Christ are received, and venerated the Holy Mother of God.

PROTESTANT MOVEMENTS

In England, King **Henry VIII**, unable to secure from the Pope a divorce from the first of his six wives, had himself declared Head of the Church in England. The resulting **Anglican** Church began more as a political necessity than a new religion. Its worship and theology remained virtually unchanged for a time, evolving into a truly Protestant form only under Edward VI. Henry VIII, like Luther, was not what the word “Protestant” conjures up today. His book defending the seven

sacraments of Catholicism was famous throughout Europe, and he continued to burn Lutherans at the stake as heretics until syphilis cut him down. From Geneva in Switzerland came a different sort of Protestant leader, **John Calvin**, who introduced a stark faith with a worship stripped of symbolism and artistry. Calvin taught that the sacraments were merely symbols used by the church to confirm the disembodied faith of its people. He vigorously defended infant baptism (a practice over which Protestants are still divided) but did not believe as did Luther that the eucharist gave a Christian the actual body and blood of Christ. Calvin's ideas, which included God's absolute predestination¹ of human beings to heaven or hell irrespective of their good will or good deeds, swept like wildfire through France, Switzerland, and Scotland, producing **Reformed** and **Presbyterian** churches. Ostensibly, the Orthodox people were untouched by these developments, but the ripples spreading outward from the Protestant movement would eventually stir Orthodox as well as Roman Catholic waters.

The Protestant revolt had one lasting effect which actually helped Western Christians become re-acquainted with their Orthodox roots. Reformers promoted study of the early Church Fathers, since they found discrepancies between these ancient Christian writings and later Roman Catholic doctrines and practices. Since the rise of the Scholastic system, study of the Fathers had sharply declined. Now both Protestant and Catholic disputants were keenly interested in this field, which is called **Patristics**. Many ancient Christian authors were published. Too often, though, both sides missed the point of what the Fathers were saying, since their aim was often to "win" rather than to learn. Also, the Protestants encouraged study of the Bible, which Catholic authorities at first resisted, but later recommended.

COUNTERREVOLUTION—THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The Protestant Revolt devastated mediæval Roman Catholicism. Most of the countries of northern Europe became Protestant; geographically, the Roman church was down by 50%. The papal authorities reacted in two ways: first, they were so desperate that they tried to genuinely reform the Church;

¹ *This idea was a throwback to some of St. Augustine of Africa's early errors.*

second, they pinned their hopes on expansion into the New World, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The effort at reform was called the **Counter-Reformation**, and it was, by and large, a moral success. However, instead of a return to the original Orthodoxy of the Western Church, the instinct in the 16th century was to cling ever more tightly to the Papacy. It was hoped that a less scandalous, more centralised Papacy would be a great unifying force for Counter-Reformation Catholicism. The great triumph for this school of thought was the Council of **Trent**, which the Catholics considered to be yet another ecumenical council. This Council drew the wagons around Rome, shot down Protestant heresies, and affirmed post-Schism Catholicism, with its papal supremacy, indulgences, purgatory, and all the rest which, sadly, still forms a wall between Rome and Orthodoxy. For the first time, it made binding the Scholastic union of dogma, philosophy, and science, with the practical effect that mediæval sciences were dogmatised.¹ The Council of Trent also tried to pinpoint with scientific exactitude the precise source, nature, and operation of the Sacraments. A standardised rite of worship called the **Tridentine** rite² was appointed for the Roman church, drawn up by Pope Pius V, a former official of the Inquisition.³ It was based on the original traditions of the Western Church, but curtailed many age-old traditions. In order to compete with the less-demanding Protestant groups, worship began to be shortened and was more and more **spoken** rather than sung; rows of **pews**, for the first time in Christian history, came to replace the open naves of churches where once the people had stood and moved freely; ancient **chant** was replaced by secular-styled music using various musical instruments as well as the voice. The **Divine Office**, the round of prayers which formerly united Christian communities with frequency around the local church, became a legal requirement for clergy and

¹ *Thus the Roman church's fear of Galileo's discoveries; by questioning the mediæval view of astronomy, Galileo seemed to cast doubt on the dogmas of Catholicism as well.*

² *Tridentine is from the Latin word for Trent, **Tridentinus**.*

³ *Pius V was a fiery figure. As Pope, in his zeal to exterminate heretics, he reopened Inquisition cases that had been closed for 20 years. He raised a great fleet to defeat the Turkish Armada, saving Italy from the Saracens (Muslims). Pius V has been canonised a saint by Rome.*

monastics to fulfill by private prayers. So much were Papal prerogatives increased that Charles V of Spain, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, complained that his bishops went off to the Council of Trent bishops and returned parish priests. Older versions of the ancient Roman rite, such as England's Sarum and York rites, fell into oblivion before the advancing Tridentine rite. Only certain monastic orders, and churches in Lyons, Milan, and Toledo, kept versions of their ancient liturgical rites alive into the twentieth century.¹

A RENAISSANCE MAN OF GOD

One fascinating man unites in his experience all the Christian currents of the 16th century. St. **Maximus** the Greek studied in Florence, Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance (the rebirth of pagan culture) and eagerly pursued Humanist ideals. (Humanism was a way of thought which strove to place mankind, instead of God, at the forefront of society.) Then he listened to the fiery sermons of the friar Savaronola, who was preaching against Humanism and against Papal corruption. Maximus became a Dominican monk for some two years. Catholicism could not satisfy him, however, and in 1504 this brilliant scholar returned to Greece and to Orthodoxy, becoming a monk on Mount Athos.² In 1517 he was invited to Russia by the Tsar to help translate Patristic literature from Greek and to correct the errors in Russian service books. Having arrived there, he was accused of crimes by suspicious locals and imprisoned for 26 years as a friend of the non-possessors.

THE FAITH - A MASTERPIECE

To understand the difference between Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity, the Faith is often compared to a masterpiece painted by a great master (Christ). Roman Catholicism, seeking to improve the painting, has added strokes of its own design (doctrinal innovations). Protestantism, feeling the original beauty obscured, has attempted to remove whole layers (accretions) from the painting, but in the process has destroyed much of the original work.

¹ *Some of these older Western Rites have found a home in the Eastern Orthodox Church of today, an arrangement having its origins in the 19th century.*

² *Athos: monastic stronghold in Greece, fierce guardian of Orthodox traditions.*

ORTHODOXY AT THE RENAISSANCE

Holy Orthodoxy has added nothing to this masterpiece which is the Faith of Christ, nor removed anything, but has simply preserved the “painting,” seeking only to encompass it in a fitting and complementary frame (the best and most beautiful of art, music, and thought). The weaknesses of Orthodoxy in Reformation times were an over-emphasis on external ritual; poor education; Muslim interference; too near an identification of nationality and faith; and, in many places, a real dearth of missionary activity. In 1589, the Metropolitan of Moscow was made a Patriarch; in these years a fascinating correspondence took place between Lutherans at Tübingen and the Patriarch of Constantinople.¹ Western trends in methodology and terminology affected the Church’s manner of teaching, often to Orthodoxy’s detriment, and throughout this era there was no Western liturgy in Orthodoxy, nor any beachhead of Orthodox faithful in Western lands. Until the 20th century, Orthodoxy remained something mysterious and inaccessible for Western people, although there were some positive contacts in the 19th century which sparked the interest of Westerners who had wearied of the ideological standoff between Rome and Protestantism.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE WESTERN WORLD

In the 1500s and 1600s, Western Christianity’s worldview underwent quite a metamorphosis. The monopoly of mediæval Catholicism was broken; exploration and scientific experiment posed serious challenges to the Scholastic system and directed the minds of men away from spiritual priorities to the new frontiers of secular knowledge. (On the positive side, this investigative spirit also fueled the first historical studies of liturgy.) **Capitalism**, with its worldly priorities, took shape; national identities were stronger than ever. Protestant groups, many affected by capitalist ideals, proliferated. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII recast the ancient Christian calendar, a change resisted by Orthodox and, initially, by Protestants. This **Gregorian calendar** is nowadays the civil calendar for most countries of the world, and is used by Catholics, Protestants, and

¹ *In the end, Patriarch Jeremias sadly concluded that Lutheranism had passed the point of no return to the Orthodox Faith.*

some Orthodox. However, the majority of Orthodox Christians worldwide still use the original **Julian** calendar.

JESUITS AND UNIATES

The Roman church expanded into the New World, Africa, and the Far East, especially through the efforts of the **Jesuit** Order. Ignatius **Loyola**, a Spanish soldier, founded the group in 1540; by 1600 the Order could claim 10,000 professed members. The Jesuits were a new breed of religious order: they urged a private, rather than communal, divine office; abandoned any cloistered ideal; and took a special vow of fealty to the Papacy. Working across traditional diocesan boundaries, they superseded local authorities to serve as shock troops for Rome. Their educational techniques were widely admired, but their reputation for assassinating their opponents earned them the unflattering motto "*When good, there are none better; when bad, none worse.*" Theologically, the Jesuits promoted Sacred Heart veneration, the Immaculate Conception of Mary, devotion to the Papacy, formal "meditation" methodologies, lenience over high moral standards, and the active over the contemplative life.

The Roman Catholics expanded into America, Africa, and Asia, to places where the name of Christ was scarcely known. Simultaneously, they waged a war to subdue the Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe. Their strategy, called **Uniatism**, allowed Easterners to keep their own forms of worship and customs (such as a married priesthood), provided they leave Orthodoxy and join with the Pope. Many commoners did not understand what was happening; some believed the Pope had joined the Orthodox Church. In 1596, with the Polish kingdom (along the East-West fault line) at the zenith of its power, the **Union of Brest** forced tens of thousands of Orthodox in Poland to join the papal fold. Uniate bishop Josaphat Kuntsevich, who was known to the faithful as **The Butcher** for his eagerness to kill non-Uniatist villagers, was canonised as a saint by Rome for his efforts. The hands of Orthodox and Catholics alike were bloodied in those years, and the scars of Uniatism run deep. In fact, there are fresh wounds even today, since Rome has capitalised on Eastern Europe's new-found freedoms to proselytise in Orthodox homelands, whilst demanding (successfully) that Orthodoxy curtail its presence in Catholic strongholds like Italy.

COUNCIL OF BETHLEHEM (A.D. 1672)

Orthodox thought was undermined at this time by an intellectual fascination with the Western scene, and in response the Eastern Patriarchs met at a number of **Pan-Orthodox Councils**. These Councils were not touted as Ecumenical, but are of great importance. Three of them condemned the calendar changes made by Pope Gregory XIII and upheld the **Julian**, or Orthodox, calendar. One of them, the Council of Bethlehem (called also the Council of Jerusalem), is of chief importance; it produced a Confession of Faith, under the name of Patriarch Dositheus of Jerusalem, which was a strong defense against Protestant ideas. All these Councils rejected both Catholicism and Protestantism, and decisively upheld the Apostolic Faith.

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

Perhaps the greatest bulwark of our Faith at this time was **Mount Athos**, the Holy Mountain, a peninsula in Greece teeming with monasteries populated by monks of all Orthodox national backgrounds.¹ While Orthodox people were busy bartering their rich cultural heritage for Western fads, Mt. Athos preserved the old culture and faith of Eastern Christianity, together with the highest ideals of Christian ascetic and contemplative life as expounded by the Early Fathers.

SCHISM IN RUSSIA

In imperial Russia, a terrible schism exposed the worst susceptibilities of Orthodoxy in the Third Rome. In the 1650s, **Patriarch Nikon**, an overbearing man much taken with all things Greek, changed Russian services and customs to accord with the Greek-ruled Patriarchates, and in the process alienated many of his flock. The Patriarchs deposed Nikon but ratified his reforms; the **Old Believers** (Old Ritualists is a more accurate term) refused his decrees and formed a schism. For making the

¹ *In earlier times, the monastic communities on the Holy Mountain reflected a broader range of national origins than at present: Bulgarians, Georgians, Moldavians, Wallachians, Spaniards, and Italians all had their own monasteries, making Athos a truly pan-Orthodox commonwealth. For more information on Athos' Italian monasteries, see the leaflet "Amalfion: The Western-Rite Monastery of Mt. Athos," available from St. Hilarion Press.*

sign of the Cross a little differently, for making processions around the church in one direction rather than another, Old Believers were oppressed and killed. The Church hierarchy showed that it allowed no room for a loyal opposition, and the opposition believed that the only true Orthodox were in Russia and were, in fact, themselves. A year after Nikon died, Tsar Peter I gained the throne and abolished the Moscow Patriarchate.

UNIATE MOVEMENT RESISTED

In the 17th century, the Unia, the union of many Slavic believers with the Roman church, remained in force. As early as 1588, Patriarch Jeremias of Constantinople had blessed **lay brotherhoods** to defend the Faith against Catholicism. Helped by the **printing press** of Ivan Fedorov (who had been expelled from Muscovy with his “diabolic invention”), ordinary believers and simple monks in the Ukraine and Galicia were very successful in rallying against the Unia and preserving Orthodox church life.

PROTESTANT PATRIARCH ?!

Western trends most often affected not the dogmas of the Eastern Church but the style in which they were presented. However, Orthodox Christendom recoiled in horror when the Patriarch of Constantinople, **Cyril Lukaris**, came out with his Confession of Faith. This work was thoroughly Calvinist, and was swiftly condemned by Orthodox councils held in Kiev, Jassy, and Jerusalem. In 1638, Cyril was drowned by the Turks.

WESTERN CURRENTS

Within Roman Catholicism, the lax moral theology of the Jesuit Order was attacked by thinkers such as Bishop Cornelius Jansen of Ypres—a champion, like Calvin, of St. Augustine’s extreme views on Grace and human free-will. A power struggle ensued as the Jesuits and Jansenists each sought to have the other proscribed by Rome (and the wish of each was fulfilled at least once). Abbot Jean du Vergier de Hauranne brought Augustinian ideals to the famous convent of Port Royal near Paris, to which centre a number of influential people attached themselves for guidance, including **Blaise Pascal**, father of the

modern computer. Pope Innocent X condemned the Jansenists, and eventually Port Royal was shut down.

The Jesuits fostered a new and unheard-of devotion to Jesus' physical heart (the **Sacred Heart**), a highly imaginative and emotional piety stressing Christ's human nature over His Divine nature. This devotion was in fact a revival of the early heresy of Nestorianism, which had singled out Christ's humanity for a separate veneration. Using the pulpit and the confessional, the Jesuits spread this and their other concepts throughout Roman Catholicism.

The Jesuits won the day, but the Jansenists continued as a movement, centred most visibly at Utrecht in Holland, which was both Roman Catholic in faith and separate from Rome in practice. In the 20th century this movement, reconstituted with the name **Old Catholicism**, brought a number of traditional Western Christians to the doorstep of the Orthodox Church.

It was not only Rome who felt the winds of controversial change in the West of the 17th-18th centuries; in the Protestant churches, whether Lutheran or Reformed, **Pietism** and **Rationalism** carved new landscapes among the people. Pietism de-emphasised church structure and the abstract doctrines it was then popular for church leaders to multiply. It stressed an individualistic experience of God, often through dramatic feelings and experiences. Rationalism examined all of religion through the spectacles of human logic. While addressing shortcomings in Western "churchianity," such movements could not ultimately address the human need for a balanced sense of church-as-family, of the sacramentality of life, and of awe for what lies beyond the floodlamps of the human mind. In many ways, Pietism laid the groundwork for the Charismatic Movement of the 20th century, and its impact was felt throughout Western Christianity.

RUSSIA AFTER 1700

In the most powerful sphere of the Orthodox Faith—Russia—traditional Church life was disrupted by Tsar Peter I's **Spiritual Regulation**. Drafted by a layman, the Regulation abolished the patriarchate and set up a Synod of Bishops presided over by a layman, the State-appointed "ober-procurator."

The administration of the Russian Church at this time was modelled on that of Western Protestant bodies. The reign of the Empress **Catherine**, a German by birth and training, was even more disastrous for Russian Orthodoxy. She closed half the monasteries of the Empire, and when in 1773 the Jesuit Order was abolished by the Papacy itself, and a sigh of relief was breathed by Europe's crowned and mitred heads, Catherine harboured the Jesuits in Russia and preserved their Order. These were dark days for Orthodoxy, and yet the same Lord Who promised to be with us "to the consummation of the world" preserved His Holy Church through thick and thin.

GRASS-ROOTS ORTHODOX REVIVAL

In the face of oppression and obstruction, as well as foreign influence, God granted Orthodoxy outstanding Saints to reinvigorate His Church. St. **Nicodemus** of Mt. Athos (+1809) compiled the **Philokalia**, the teachings of the Holy Fathers on interior prayer of the heart. St. **Paisius**, who lived on Athos and then in Moldavia, founded monasteries where contemplative prayer flourished. His hesychastic revival blossomed in Russia and bore rich fruit in the person of great Saints such as **Seraphim of Sarov** and the **Optina Elders**—a succession of spiritual giants who spanned the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries in a golden chain of holiness reminiscent of Christianity's earliest days.

EVANGELISATION

The late 18th and the 19th centuries were times of great missionary fervor in the Church. In 1794—the very year that St. Paisius reposed—the first Russian missionaries arrived in Alaska. Won over by great teachers such as **St. Herman** and **St. Innocent** of Alaska, a large proportion of the Eskimo and Aleut Indians became staunch Orthodox Christians. In Japan, which had no native Orthodox, St. **Nicholas** of Tokyo (+1912) converted thousands of Japanese and set up a self-sufficient native Orthodox Church there. In Russia, the seminary of **Kazan** was the missionary heart of the nation, and in this region the Liturgy was celebrated in over 20 different languages. Orthodox missionaries were often successful precisely because they did not employ the coercive tactics other Christians of that era too often

favoured. On the North American mainland, the first church to represent our Faith—since the abortive Scandinavian mission of the tenth century—was built in 1812 at **Fort Ross**, California. St. **Juvenal** of Alaska was the first American martyr for Orthodoxy. In 1879, an archbishopric was established at San Francisco and, in 1898, St. **Tikhon** was made Archbishop for North America (later he suffered for the Faith as Patriarch of Moscow). It was in San Francisco too that another martyr for Christ, an Indian, sanctified the New World with his blood. St. **Peter the Aleut** sailed down from Alaska to California with Russian traders. When he refused to convert to Roman Catholicism, the Franciscan friars dispatched him to eternal life by cutting off his fingers one by one until he bled to death.

MUSLIM STRANGLEHOLD IS BROKEN

Ever since the fall of the Levant and Byzantium to Arab and Turkish forces, Eastern Christians (the Russians excepted) had generally lived in subjugation to Saracens or Catholics. In 1821, however, the **Greek** Christians toppled their Muslim overlords in a bloody massacre. They wished to establish an Orthodox kingdom, but the European powers had other designs for the young nation. Greece was forced to accept a Catholic king, and its Orthodox people were enticed to embrace the onrush of Western, “enlightened” influences. In **Serbia**, **Bulgaria**, and **Romania**, the faithful threw off the Turkish Yoke as had the Greeks, and these lands then revived their ancient national Churches, each with its own Patriarch. This liberation was a mixed blessing, however; as long as the Turks held sway, native Christians were cut off from the rest of the world, and oppression encouraged them to value their traditions. Now, winds of humanism and modernism began to blow within the Church’s precincts, imperceptibly at first, later with hurricane force.

TWO NEW DOGMAS FROM ROME

In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared as a dogma that the Virgin Mary was conceived immaculately, without original sin (in spite of the fact that Catholic teachers such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, and other Roman Catholic authorities, taught the contrary). This same daring Pope, who called himself “The way, the truth, and the life,” called the Catholic bishops of the

world to the **First Vatican Council**, where in 1870 they defined that the Pope of Rome is infallible when defining faith or morals. The Christian world reeled. Protestants were vindicated; this was the culmination of their direst warnings. The Orthodox were aghast. In the USA, the Catholic Archdiocese of St. Louis had just published a catechism stating that Papal infallibility was a notion dreamed up by Protestants to make Catholicism appear absurd. A second, revised printing was hastily prepared.

OLD CATHOLICISM

In only one part of the world was a serious, lasting protest raised against the Papacy by Roman Catholics themselves. In Germany, a circle of scholar-priests, risking their careers, stood up to Papal infallibility. In 1873, they banded together and, with sympathetic lay people and founded the Old Catholic church,¹ which soon merged with the Jansenist group at Utrecht. The Old Catholics expressed their wish to return to the ancient Christian faith and practice, but because they had no unbroken, living tradition to link them with their Orthodox ancestors (as did the Eastern Orthodox), they could not agree on what the ancient Christian faith and practice were. Ultimately, the Old Catholics of Europe felt most comfortable with the Anglican church; later, in America, a number of Old Catholics converted to Eastern Orthodoxy, fulfilling their original aspirations.

SPLITTING HAIRS AND SPLITTING UP

The twentieth century has heralded one unique and very unfortunate phenomenon. As in no other epoch of Christian history, we have seen the proliferation of a countless multitude of denominations. Prior to 1900, the most well-known denominations, Moravians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, which sprang up in that order, were new groups who most influenced the lives of Europeans and Americans. In America, the new religions of Mormonism (founded 1830), Seventh-Day Adventism (1844), Christian Science (1879), and the Jehovah's Witnesses or Russellites (1884) were formed and began disseminating doctrines widely differing from historic Christian teachings. In the more traditional Protestant bodies, a great deal of division

occurred over differences in Scripture interpretation, differing ideas of church government, and purely political concerns.

"SACRAMENTAL" CHURCHES PROLIFERATE

The explosion in split-off denominations was not confined to Protestants; many Catholic or Orthodox clergymen seceded from their respective churches to form new groups. We can begin to understand the actions of these men and their splintering movements if we understand how they viewed **Holy Orders**, the process of ordaining clergy.

The Fathers of the Church teach us that the Grace of the Sacraments, given by God, resides in His Holy Church. This Grace is poured out upon the faithful through the clergy ordained for the Church to this purpose. This mysterious power resides, then, not in the individual men who celebrate the Sacraments, but in the single Body of the Church, from whom the Bishops and clergy receive any authority they may possess. If any clergyman separates from the Church, whether by heresy or simply seceding from the Church (schism), any "sacraments" he performs are utterly **invalid** and void, since, as St. Basil the Great put it, "He has become a layman." He is like a lamp unplugged from its source, or a branch cut off from a tree; the one cannot give light, and the other cannot sustain life.

However, the Roman Catholic teaching, made official at the Council of Trent, says that sacramental authority rests in the **person** of the clergyman as an effect of his ordination; therefore, if he secedes from the Church, he can continue to perform sacraments, though he may sin by so doing. In this view, his sacraments are **valid but irregular**. This teaching became the rationale for the hundreds of independent bodies now called Catholic or Orthodox (or both), which profess to have an *apostolic succession* and *sacraments*, but have lost that which is essential to them both, the characteristic of Church **unity** as understood by Christianity's early Fathers. Often, these bodies have more clergy than constituent people.

AN OCEAN OF BLOOD

In the year 1917, a horrific calamity befell the Christian world. A revolution overthrew the Orthodox Tsar of Russia, and

the “Third Rome” fell to atheistic **Communists**. In many ways, this event signalled the end of the Church’s prosperous “Constantinian Era” and the return of a **martyric age**. Over 20 million people lost their lives in the conflict, many of them Martyrs for the name of Christ.¹ Indeed, their number surpasses even the number of early Martyrs who suffered in the catacombs and amphitheatres of the Roman world for Christ’s name. Although the Communists strove for 70 years to stifle the Faith with torture and death, it remained utterly unconquerable.

ORTHODOX DIASPORA

But the calamity caused a river of Orthodox émigrés to flow out of Russia to every corner of the earth. This is of great importance, for we know that the end of the world will not come until the Gospel has been preached everywhere, and according to **St. John Maximovitch**, a great wonder-working Saint of God in the 20th century diaspora, this preaching is not a preaching by just anyone, in just any manner; it signifies a preaching in the fullness and authority of Holy Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Christian diaspora has made this impossibility a reality. We have seen, in this century, a resurrection of the Orthodox Faith in Western lands after its long, 900-year exile, and the spread of the Faith all over the globe, far beyond its historical confines.

VARIETY OF “JURISDICTIONS” ENTERS AMERICA

Orthodox missionary activity in America was initiated along the northeastern seaboard by “cloaked” (monastic) Bishops from Norway in 956 A.D. However, the lasting missionary work here was begun in Alaska by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1794. Thereafter, all Orthodox Christians in America, of whatever ethnicity, were under the Russian Orthodox Bishops, in accordance with the canons of the Church. After 1917, the Russian Church was thrown into violent disarray, at which point different ethnic groups of Orthodox people, in violation of the Church canons,² arranged for clergy of their own ethnicity

1 Over 1000 were glorified as Saints in Moscow in 2000, but the actual number of Martyrs exceeds that exponentially.

2 The canons (churchwide rules) state that an area which has been evangelised by a particular Church shall remain under the authority of that Church.

to be sent to them, and they then considered themselves to belong to the same Church to which their families remaining in the Old World belonged. Unruly as this procedure was, it must be borne in mind that the needs of Orthodox immigrants were unusual and pressing. These overlapping extensions of various national Orthodox Churches from the Old World are called **jurisdictions**, and many tedious rivalries have arisen between them in the American lands, to the discredit of our sacred Faith.

MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

After World War II the number of Orthodox emigrating to the United States increased. Labouring among them were the blessed **Nicholas** Velimirovitch, a Serbian-American Bishop considered by many to be an Apostle to America (+1956), and Bishop **Theodore** (Irtel), a monk and disciple of the Russian startsi (spiritual elders) at Valaam and Pskov. During this period several substantial Orthodox **seminaries** were founded in the U.S. such as Holy Cross Theological School, St. Vladimir's Seminary, and Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New York. In Europe, in the aftermath of the Second World War, millions of Orthodox in **Eastern Europe** found themselves languishing under the heel of Marxist regimes, clones of the Soviet one, which attempted to obliterate faith in God by terror and torture. Most churches were forced to close and active believers were punished with imprisonment, house arrest, and death. And, just as in the case of the early Romans' persecutions, the Communists' failed utterly to extinguish the light of faith from among the believing people, proving—once again—that the Orthodox Faith is a thing eternally indestructible.

ROME TURNS AWAY FROM ITS HERITAGE

In 1962, the **Second Vatican Council** of the Roman Catholic church was called by Pope John XXIII. Vatican II, considered an ecumenical council by the Catholics, was unique among all the "ecumenical" councils of history because it issued no dogmatic decrees, concerning itself only with social, structural, and liturgical issues. The results were a mixed bag—in some cases, early Christian ideas were re-introduced into the Roman Catholic system; in other cases, the last vestiges of Roman Orthodoxy were swept away. The most notable change was to

Roman Catholic worship, where the Tridentine rite (the bare-bones remnant of Western Orthodox liturgy) was replaced heavy-handedly by forms of worship so unaspiring, irreverent, and banal that Roman Catholics by the millions stopped attending Sunday masses in disgust and disillusionment. Many Catholics turned to Episcopal churches for reverence and ceremony, or even to Judaism. In view of their desperation, it was felt that many such Christians could be welcomed back into the Orthodox Church, and that this reunion could be helped if they were offered familiar, Western forms of worship.

WESTERN RITE ORTHODOXY

The use of Western forms in the Eastern Orthodox Church, called Western Rite Orthodoxy, began in the 19th century and accelerated in the mid-20th century. It was hoped that the movement would sweep through Western Christendom, bringing many back to the faith of their forefathers. Yet this movement remains one without any great numbers or overwhelming support. The Western Rite has been hindered by Eastern suspicions of things Western, a dearth of Western Rite monastic communities, and the use in many quarters of modern Western liturgies which are steeped in the non-Orthodox spiritualities of their originations. It is a big step for a Western Christian to plunge into the unfamiliar deeps of ancient Orthodoxy, with its ascetic and otherworldly ways; yet many Western converts have found their soul's contentment in precisely such a way—especially in the United States, where in 1995 Eastern Orthodoxy was reported to be the fastest growing of all Christian churches.

ST. JOHN OF SAN FRANCISCO (+1966)

One of America's greatest Saints was Archbishop **John Maximovitch**. Born in Russia, ordained Priest as a young man in Serbia, he was consecrated Bishop to lead the Russian Orthodox community in China, where, in Shanghai, he built a large cathedral and orphanage. After some years as a Bishop in Western Europe, where he encouraged Western Rite Orthodoxy as a means of bringing the Orthodox Faith back to Europe, St. John was appointed Archbishop of San Francisco, where he healed a bitter dispute and built the famous Russian cathedral. He is best remembered as a great Orthodox educator and

theologian, a loving pastor, an amazing ascetic, and a wonderworking saint. In 1994 he was glorified as a Saint, and his sacred incorrupt relics rest today in a shrine in his cathedral in San Francisco. It is hard to think of a Saint of 20th-century Orthodoxy who is more famed or beloved than St. John.

ORTHODOXY'S TRAIL OF TEARS

Perhaps the most sorrowful, but necessary, words must now be spoken regarding the state of the Orthodox Church in the 20th century and as we turn the first leaf in the book of the 21st. As the author of this historical sketch, I pray almighty God for the objectivity and charity to negotiate these stormy straits—for it would be dishonest to sail around them.

At the beginning of our century, a common obedience to the ancient Christian faith and traditions united all Eastern Orthodox faithful. In the 1920s, a heresy called **Ecumenism** began to tear this unanimity. Ecumenists believe most or all churches named “Christian” are parts of one inclusive, invisible Church. The unity of which Christ spoke, they believe, was lost in the course of history, but may be regained by the unification of the many existing denominations of today. An ecumenist, to take an example, would claim that for unification purposes each denomination can cease to insist on those teachings which are its distinctives. This is a reasonable course when applied to man-made doctrines, but the Orthodox obviously have a record of believing there is more than that to the distinctives of their Faith, that they have miraculously guarded and preserved the actual deposit of the ancient Christian revelation. So the Ecumenist model is rejected by the traditionally Orthodox, who maintain that—for all its reference to love and brotherhood—Ecumenism cannot sacrifice the truth which is the very foundation for Christ-like love. Also, the conduct of Ecumenist-minded Orthodox leaders towards the traditional-minded has been scandalous and has even turned violent. Genuine unity does not have to be concocted; it has always existed in the Orthodox Church as we share together one unaltered and authentic Christian Faith.

Ecumenism gained ground in 1923, when Meletius IV (a Freemason who had been made Patriarch of Constantinople

uncanonically with the help of British and French forces remaining in the neighbourhood of Greece following the First World War), called an “**Inter-Orthodox Congress**,” which recommended the Papal calendar, married Bishops, and abolition of fasts and other traditions. Only six Bishops and a few Priests attended, and the Congress mostly failed. It succeeded in one respect, however—it planted the new or **Papal calendar** in Romania and Greece. Pious believers who maintained the old Orthodox calendar were persecuted savagely. Worse yet, Meletius’ successor, Patriarch Gregory VII, supported the “**Living Church**” movement in Russia, a sort of *Orthodoxy Lite* engineered by the Communist regime and repudiated by the Russian faithful. Meletius, after being expelled by the Greek people, became Patriarch of Alexandria in 1925, and carried out his revisionist programmes in Africa. Since Meletius’ time, many more local Orthodox churches have adopted the revised calendar, but all Eastern Orthodox celebrate Pascha (Easter) on the Julian calendar, and thus the essential Sunday cycle for every year is according to the Julian calendar (Finnish Orthodox are a rare exception).

In 1966, Patriarch **Athenagoras** of Constantinople and his Synod declared they had lifted the 1054 excommunication against the Roman Pope. Despite the fact that the Papacy resembles Orthodoxy much less now than in 1054, Athenagoras also entered the Pope’s name in the diptychs (official list of Orthodox Patriarchs). Athenagoras praised the movement toward one chalice by those “who don’t know the difference in their doctrines and are not concerned about them.” His successor, **Demetrius**, concelebrated part of a Mass with Pope John Paul II in 1987, underscoring his Ecumenist thinking. In 1990, representatives of all Patriarchates except Jerusalem signed the **Chambesy Agreement**, urging Orthodox churches to merge with the Orientals (that is, the historic Monophysite churches) by setting aside the Fourth Ecumenical Council.¹

All the developments named above do more than run against the grain of Orthodox tradition. In a way that cannot be ignored, they point to the formation of an “Eastern Orthodoxy”

¹ *Chambesy would not have required rejoining Monophysites to assent to this Council, which is embraced by Catholics and Anglicans as well as Orthodox.*

retaining all her ethnic and ritual trappings but based on neither the Seven Ecumenical Councils, nor on the teachings of the early Christian Fathers, nor on Orthodox Tradition. The leaders caught up in this trend are eager to please and to associate with the powerful Catholic and other Western leaders, at the same time they have shown scant tolerance towards those of their own heritage who insist upon Orthodox theology and practice. These latter, the **Traditionalists** of Orthodoxy, are often branded “schismatics,” “fanatics,” or “heretics,” and repressive measures have been let loose against them.¹ At the vanguard in this battle against revisionism in Orthodoxy are the **Old-Calendar Synods** of Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Greek Orthodox Bishops, some of whom are united in full communion, others of whom are disorganised and scattered. Answering their sentiment from within the official Patriarchates is a growing solidarity of clergy and people determined to pull away from the excesses of false ecumenism, restore traditional liturgy and piety, end modernist secularisations, and withdraw from the ecumenistic World Council of Churches.

WHITE-WATER NAVIGATION

The picture outlined above is disheartening, and it may well represent the last and greatest temptations faced by the Church of Christ. Nonetheless, our Saviour Jesus has told us that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against” His Church.² Perhaps the most encouraging thing to do is look at how the Church has handled these sorts of troubles before. Let us look back to the roiling 4th century, to the lifetime of St. Basil the Great: the lives of Christians were rocked by a fantastic battle between the Arians and the Orthodox. Heresy had penetrated into the Church structure in various shades and shapes, and a common result was that a number of Bishops who **were** faithful feared to be in communion with other Bishops who, in reality, were as faithful as themselves. A good part of St. Basil’s life was spent trying to re-establish communion between orthodox Bishops, using the Nicene Creed as a touchstone. It seemed then,

1 In 1992, for example, Traditionalist monks on Athos were expelled from their monastery by agents of the Patriarch of Constantinople and armed federal agents. The monks were deposited, homeless, on the sands of the Greek shore.

2 Mt. 16:18

as now, that the ship of Apostolic Christianity had been dashed to pieces, yet her Bishops, by obedience to the Faith, were in the end able to express their spiritual unity in organic unity.

WHAT'S AN ORTHODOX TO DO?

Many concerned Orthodox, shocked by turncoat Bishops and Patriarchs, are misled into thinking they have to “rescue” or “defend” the Church. Such an attitude can quickly degenerate into fanaticism or prideful “hyper-correctness.” St. Isaac of Syria (7th century) comments thus: “Someone who is considered among men to be zealous for truth has not yet learnt what truth is really like: once he has truly learnt it, he will cease from zealousness on its behalf.” It is the personal duty of every one of the faithful to remain unwavering in the Orthodox Faith. Those who wish to depart from it, let them depart; if they hold the title of Bishop, our responsibility is to seek out Bishops who teach truly and rightly, and place ourselves under their care. It is not necessary for us to know what the Church will “look like” in the event of significant upper-echelon defections, nor need it be our particular concern.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TODAY

Orthodox Christendom, our holy Mother, whose great and sacred legacy is as dear as our own hearts, stands today at a great and decisive crossroads. On the positive side, vast missionary opportunities await us on every continent and across our own nation. With the advantage of highly-developed media, great numbers of people may now come to know what Orthodoxy is and what she teaches. Byzantine iconography is becoming well-known and well-respected the world over, so that there is great opportunity for our holy icons to accomplish their silent preaching. Since the Iron Curtain has been “torn in twain,” the faithful in formerly Communist lands (85% of all Orthodox) have new freedoms to preach and practice the Faith, and spiritual revivals in Russia, Romania, and elsewhere appear promising. In places as unlikely as Australia, Uganda, Sicily, and the U.S., Orthodox communities are flourishing and the grace and mercy of God are evident. Moreover, in varying degrees and at varying paces, separated Christian bodies who are searching for historical Christian truth are moving ever closer towards Orthodoxy.

On the sobering side, however, it cannot be denied that the spirit of our age is one of materialism, hedonism, selfishness, and aimless religious wandering—antitheses of spiritual health. Ethnic exclusivity and jurisdictional infighting threaten the integrity of our Orthodox witness. In America there is a terrible shortage of monks and nuns, and so often as spiritual goals are set aside for financial and political schemes, Orthodoxy will be hamstrung like another Sampson, her valuable testimony to the world muzzled. Our souls and the souls of our children are in real danger from the materialistic, morally bankrupt, religiously empty culture of self-worship which surrounds us in the West and which is being exported, frenetically, into Orthodox lands.

Since the battle lines have been drawn up, our own response to Christ will have much to do with the future of the Church and of our planet. This is not a time to shirk or be gloomy. When a theologian complained to the holy bishop Nicholas Velimirovitch (†1956) about the lack of faith today, he received this reply:

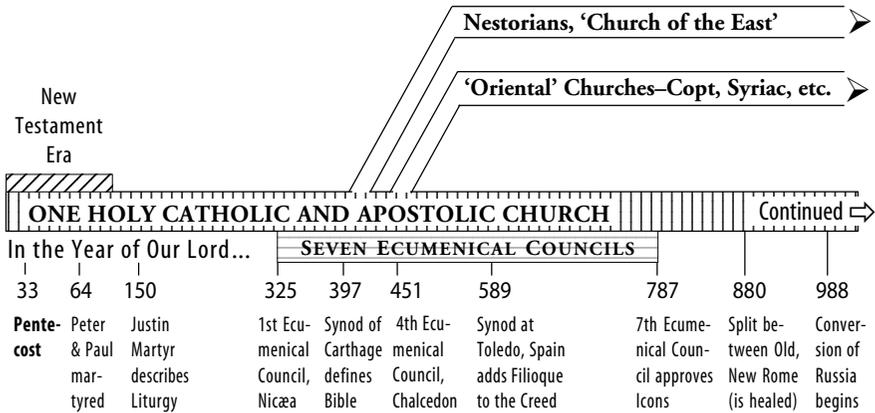
“There is bitter truth in your letter. However, let all despair be far from us. Despair is the dowry of death which unbelievers accept alongside their marriage with death. There have been even more difficult times for the Church of Christ, but the soldiers did not collapse, nor was the battle lost. You’ve only to read the picture St. Basil paints of the state of affairs in the Church and in the world (4th century), a picture black as the black night on a rough sea. It looked as though the world’s end were nearing and God’s judgment were in sight. Since then, some 16 centuries have rushed by. Not only did the Christian Faith not extinguish itself, but its light enveloped the entire globe and enlightened every corner of the world... Will disbelief destroy God’s Faith? This is the question that Christ’s heroic Apostle asked in the first days of a history which has now reached 19 centuries. These numerous centuries have justified his bright look into the future. Take as your own this radiant apostolic glance into the future of Christianity. Try to write an article on the Church entitled *Christ’s Triumphant Chariot*.”

And now, dear reader, may the peace of God remain with you, and may you be borne aloft to the Heaven of joy in this triumphal Chariot, whose destination is the Throne of the Living God. 🙏

TIMELINE OF CHURCH HISTORY

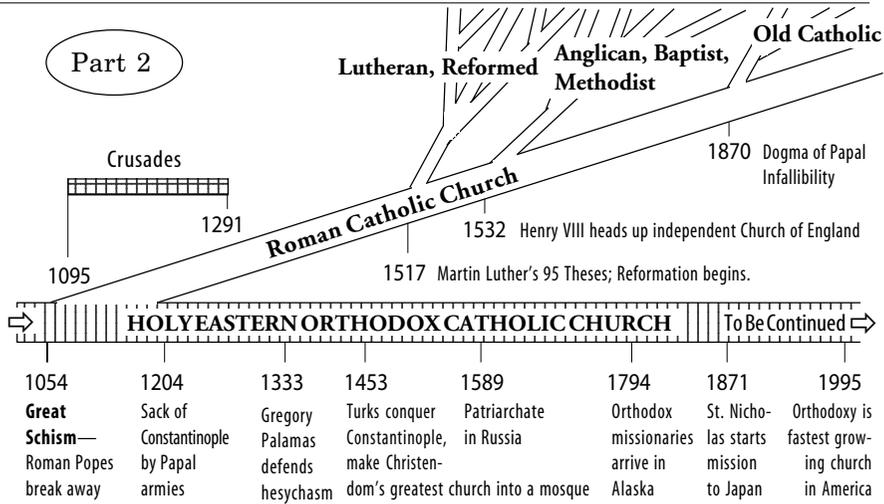
inspired by a timeline from Conciliar Press

Part 1



ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Council	Remembered	Heresy It Addressed
1st Ecum. Council	May 29	Arianism — Son of God is less than God the Father
2nd Ecum. Council	May 22	Pneumatomachianism— Holy Spirit less than the Father
3rd Ecum. Council	Sept. 9	Nestorianism — Division between Christ's humanity and His divinity
4th Ecum. Council	July 16	Monophysitism — Christ is not in two natures, Divine and human
5th Ecum. Council	July 25	Origenism — Apokatastasis (see p. 16); also quasi-Nestorianism (see above)
6th Ecum. Council	Jan. 23	Monothelitism — Christ has only one will, not a Divine will and a human will
7th Ecum. Council	Sept. 14	Iconoclasm — God is offended by visible icons



All Christian churches can be traced back historically to the Orthodox Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

NON-EASTERN-ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Church/Movement	Came About	Distinctives
Arian Churches	4th c.	Followed Arius; were once in the majority, but no longer exist
Donatism	4th c.	Donatus was ringleader; purist movement in Africa; no longer exists
Church of the East	5th c.	'Assyrian,' honours Patriarch Nestorius
Oriental Christian	5th c.	Follows Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria; Monophysite origins
Roman Catholic	11th c.	Followed Popes when they seceded from the other Apostolic Sees
Lutheran	16th c.	From Martin Luther; "faith alone"
Anglican	16th c.	Compromise between Catholic, Protestant
Presbyterian, Calvinist	16th c.	John Knox, John Calvin were founders
Congregationalist	16th c.	Robert Brown founded in 1582
Baptist	17th c.	John Smyth founded in 1605
Methodist	18th c.	John, Charles Wesley founded in 1744
Mormon (Latter Day Saints)	19th c.	Cult founded by Joseph Smith, 1829
Charismatic / Holiness	20th c.	Wide variety; most begin after 1910

HISTORY

RELIGION

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