

9-4
1957

Christian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism

By

BISHOP ATHENAGORAS KOKKINAKIS



GREEK ARCHDIOCESE OF N. & S. AMERICA
National Youth Office — Office of Public Relations

Fourth Edition

TO THE READER:

The text of this booklet first appeared in the periodical "Greek Orthodox Thought," published by the Committee of Publications of the Greek Orthodox church of St. Andrew in Chicago, Illinois. Later, S. J. Gregory, an ardent Orthodox Christian, was responsible for its circulation in pamphlet form in Greek.

Herein the same text is presented in English, prepared by a group of students of the Greek Archdiocese, Holy Cross Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, Mass., and revised by the author.

It is worth noticing here that some of the differences between Christian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism existed long before this separation, known very well and discussed by Theologians of both sides. When, however, they became an open threat to the unity of the Faith, the Church thought it was her duty to publicly expose and denounce them. The result was the tragedy of the schism.

To this effect, among other factors, political issues, human weakness, and selfish ambitions had played their part. By the pass of time the gap of the schism became more and more evident. Additional innovations and some of the policies of the Roman Church were responsible for the widening of the gap and for the creation of other splits within the body of the Roman Church, such as Protestantism with all its countless groups.

Nevertheless, we cannot but recognize the fact that the Roman or Latin Church is the nearest among all others to Christian Orthodoxy. We believe that the day will come when the Church will find herself united again and be free of schisms and splits. The prophesy of Christ, that "There shall be one fold and one shepherd" will be fulfilled (John 10, 16). The prayers of the Church "For the unity of all" will be answered. We will never stop praying for the coming of this blessing upon all Christians. In the meantime we must know the truth and give answers both to ourselves and to all those who want to know.

It is the hope of the Church that the Readers of this booklet will seek the truth of Christian Orthodoxy as it is exposed in books written by the Holy Fathers and authors both of yesterday and today. By these readings they will understand why the Orthodox Church is the Mother Church, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, which till today keeps and spreads the doctrines of Christ unchanged as they were delivered unto the Saints.

BISHOP ATHENAGORAS KOKKINAKIS

Greek Archdiocese
New England Archdiocesan District
Boston, Massachusetts
January 1, 1956

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

The Church was founded by our Lord and established throughout the known world by His Apostles. It was a body of people who kept the Faith of Christ and His moral teachings intact. Later, some persons began to change the teachings of Christ and His Disciples by reading into them their own interpretations. The Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, called these individuals together in various cities and pointed out their errors to them. Those who persisted in their erroneous beliefs were declared heretics. In contrast to these heretics, the true adherents of Christ's teachings called themselves *Orthodox*, a term meaning that they kept the Christian Faith exactly as the Lord and His Apostles had given it to them. From the very beginning, therefore, the term *Orthodox* was used to identify the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in its entirety, as opposed to the heretical groups formed by certain individuals who were distorting Christian Truth.

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

The Orthodox Church, therefore, is the Church of Christ. It is called *One* because the Lord founded only *one* Church. It is called *Holy* because its Founder is Holy and also because its members, the saints (as the first Christians were called), received Christ's Sanctifying Grace through Baptism and are, thereby, cleansed of sin, equipped

to avoid evil works and dedicated to God. It is also called *Catholic* (universal as well as one in faith) since it is destined to become the church of the whole world, and has preserved the Christian Faith unadulterated and entire. Consequently, from this viewpoint, the word *Catholic* is identical with the word *Orthodox*. Lastly, it is called *Apostolic* because it was established by the Apostles and spread throughout the known world by them and their co-workers. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Ephesians 2, 19-20)

ECCLESIASTICAL DISTRICTS

This Church, which was named Catholic and Orthodox in order to be distinguished from the heretical churches which had separated from her, continued to branch out in the East and West. Through the initiative of the bishops, priests and deacons, and of pious and learned laymen the church spread everywhere and convoked councils at which she was represented by learned bishops from all corners of the earth.

For administrative reasons, the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Orthodox Church was divided into districts. These districts were five in number: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Since Rome was the seat of the Empire, the Bishop of Rome was honored

by the other prelates as first among equals (*primus inter pares*), solely, however, in deference to his position as the Bishop of the Capital.

In A.D. 330 Emperor Constantine the Great transferred the seat of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium, the city which was later named Constantinople in his honor. As a result, the honor and respect which the Bishop of Rome had enjoyed prior to this change were now bestowed upon the Bishop of the new Capital, which was also known as New Rome. The status given the Bishop of Constantinople was officially recognized by the whole Church at the Fourth Ecumenical Council held in Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

In A.D. 393 Emperor Theodosius divided the Empire into two sections, the Eastern, with Constantinople as its capital, and the Western, with Rome as its capital. On the basis of this political division the Church was also divided into two sections. Constantinople became the foremost ecclesiastical seat of the Eastern part of the Church and its presiding Bishop was named Patriarch. Rome became the seat of the Western part of the Church and its presiding Bishop was named Patriarch or Pope of the West.

Along with these two hierarchs the Bishops of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem were recognized as Patriarchs inasmuch as the cities which they represented were political, social or commercial centers. In addition, these cities were especially noted for their history, a history intrinsically in-

terwoven with the struggles and achievements of Christendom.

These five Patriarchates constituted administrative sections of the One, Holy, Apostolic, Orthodox Church, which was governed democratically; that is, one section did not infringe upon the jurisdictional rights of the other nor intervene in its affairs. However, when an issue of general scope concerning the Church as a whole presented itself (for example, heresy), then a General Council of all the bishops of the Church was convoked to discuss the issue at hand and reach a definite decision. The decisions of the Church at the General Councils were infallible, because they were made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with Holy Scripture and Christian Tradition as the basis for discussion and debate. Moreover, the decisions were always in accord with the genuine spirit of the Church.

THE GREAT SEPARATION

For nine centuries the Church of the East and the West was united and governed in a democratic manner. Unfortunately, however, something occurred which separated the Western section of the Church from the Eastern. The following events brought about this separation.

In 858 Photius, the scholarly and venerable Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Byzantine Empire, was elected Patriarch of Constantinople. When Pope Nicholas the First was informed of

Photius' election he sent a letter to Constantinople in which he stated that the Church had no right to elect a Patriarch without asking for his permission, and, especially, a person who had been a layman only six days prior to his elevation to the Patriarchal Throne. Photius then wrote the Pope a friendly and courteous letter mentioning the circumstances which had made his acceptance of the election necessary. Moreover, he stressed that the Pope had no right to expect Constantinople to seek his permission to elect a Patriarch, because each church was jurisdictionally independent and needed only to conform to the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. Regarding his having been a layman very recently, he cited examples of laymen who had become bishops and had later been canonized saints, even though their elevation from the laity to the priesthood had been effected in a few days.

Photius was quite correct, for we have many examples of laymen who became heads of their churches in an extraordinarily short time. Let us bring to mind the exceptional instance in Italy. In A.D. 378 Ambrose was elected bishop of Milan though he was still a layman. In fact, he was not even a Christian. At the time of his election he was being instructed in the Faith, was baptized, and subsequently ordained after he had already been elected to the rank of a bishop.

The Pope remained adamant in his convictions. He wrote to the Emperor of Byzantium and, in his letter, he termed Photius a thief. He refused to

recognize his election. Photius ignored the Pope's insults and continued to perform his patriarchal duties. However, when he was informed that the Pope had sent missionaries to Bulgaria his patience was overly taxed. In the first place, Bulgaria had accepted Christianity from missionaries sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Secondly, the Pope's representatives introduced teachings to the Bulgarians which were contrary to Orthodox doctrine. They began to teach that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son; that married priests are not actually canonical; and that priests are not allowed to confirm anyone.

In 867 Photius sent a letter to all the bishops of the East denouncing these teachings. From 867 to 1054 many conferences were held both in Italy and Constantinople, and the main topic for discussion was the "Procession of the Holy Spirit."

For a period of 187 years the Western Church at times agreed and at others disagreed with the Eastern. The Eastern Church refused to accept the Pope as having the right to interfere in the other ecclesiastical districts. Also, it rejected the teachings that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father AND THE SON (Filioque). Therefore, in 1054 the Pope sent representatives to Constantinople to discuss the differences existing between the two sections of the Christian Church. Regrettably, the Papal delegation acted rashly. It placed a bull of excommunication against the Ecumenical Patriarch and his followers upon the holy altar of Saint Sophia. In July of the same year Patriarch

Michael Cerularius convoked a special synod consisting of bishops. This synod denounced the delegation's action. Eventually, the decision of this council was also accepted by the other Patriarchates of the East. Henceforth, the Western Church was considered schismatic. Thus, in 1054 communion between the East and West virtually ceased to exist.

This separation gave the Western Church the freedom to add man-made teachings and practices foreign to Christian Tradition. These innovations primarily distinguish the two churches today. We find that these differences may be classified under three headings: Dogmatic, Liturgical, and Administrative. First we shall examine the dogmatic divergences (differences in matters of faith).

I. DOGMATIC DIFFERENCES

These concern the Holy Trinity, Life after Death, and the Immaculate Conception.

A. PROCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Nicene Creed, which was formulated by the Entire Church, Western and Eastern, at the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, declared that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. No mention of a Second Procession was made. Moreover, according to Holy Scripture the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, *which*

proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." (John 15, 26) However, in spite of this, during the eighth and ninth centuries the Roman Church added the phrase "and the Son" (Filioque) to the Creed. When the Bishops of the Eastern part of the Church learned of this addition they wrote to the Bishop of Rome on this matter through the Patriarch of Constantinople. In this way a great discussion between the Western and Eastern theologians was initiated.

The question of the Filioque is clearly answered by Holy Scripture, as previously mentioned. In support of this contention, the following quotation, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, v. 33, might be added: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, *and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit*, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

On the basis of these and other scriptural proofs, the Church formulated the Doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. Later, Greek Fathers of the Church, philosophers and theologians like Photius and Marcus Eugenius, Bishop of Ephesus, expounded a philosophical and logical analysis of the error of the Western theologians. Thus, the danger of the Filioque was vividly exposed. From 867, when the issue arose, to 1054 many fruitless conferences took place. Unfortunately, the Western theologians refused to revert to the teachings of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils on this point.

B. THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Another dogmatic difference deals with the person of the Holy Theotokos Virgin Mary. Up to 1854 the two Churches did not differ regarding the person of Saint Mary. To both Churches Mary was known as the Theotokos, the Ever-Virgin, the Mother of Life, the Queen of the Angels and by many other titles similar to these expressing reverence for her holy person. In 1854, however, at a Council of the Vatican, the Western Church proclaimed that the Virgin Mary was born without the Original Sin; that is, free of the sin of Adam and Eve. This doctrine was named "Immaculate Conception."

The theory of the Immaculate Conception is based neither on Holy Scripture nor on Sacred Tradition. None of the Fathers of the Undivided Church or any of its renowned theologians ever supported this theory. Even theologians of the Western Church, like Thomas Aquinas and Bernard, opposed this teaching.

The question might be asked, What harm was done by declaring that the Theotokos Mary was free from Original Sin? Was it not promulgated out of reverence? One might answer, Yes. But is it reverent to destroy the unique meaning of the Incarnation of our Lord? This is what it brought about by the teaching of the Immaculate Conception, for, since it was possible for someone to be born without the Original Sin then, in a sense, the Incarnation of our Lord was limited in its general scope. No wonder the Fathers of the

Church could not conceive and accept a theory of this kind, for it contradicts the uniqueness of our Lord's Redemptive Work. Poetic and rhetorical expressions found in the writings of the Fathers concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary cannot be regarded as Patristic proof in support of this dogma.

Reverence has its limits, especially in this case where the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception raises the person of the Blessed Virgin to the state of having preceded Christ in sinlessness. Thus, the Virgin Mary is deified. On the basis of this error one might expect more acts of deification by the Roman Church, let us say, of certain saints.

For these reasons, our Church teaches, as did the Western Church until 1854, that the Theotokos Mary was born with the Original Sin but was cleansed by the Holy Spirit at the event of the Annunciation. In other words, the Orthodox Church looks upon Mary as a human being who was purified and subsequently gave human flesh to the Son of God. She is, therefore, called All-Holy (Panagia) because she was chosen to become the Mother of God, a unique vessel of Divine Grace.

For the Orthodox World she will always remain the All-Holy (Panagia), the most perfect human being, commanding our respect, our love and our devotion. We will always refer to her as Mother, as Mediatrix, as Purity itself, as the Ever-Virgin, as Bride Unwedded. Only a person possessing such tributes could ever house the Eternal

Word and Son of God. We neither worship nor deify her. However, since she is the Mother of Christ, we beseech her to help us in times of affliction and trial. As the Mother of Christ she is in a position to pray for our salvation, for she is closest to the Lord.

C. PURGATORY

Another dogmatic difference is the doctrine of Purgatory. The Western Church teaches that after death those who have not repented for their sins are condemned to eternal hell. On this point we agree. However, we disagree with its teaching on Purgatory, a state or place entered by those who have not satisfied for their venial, or lesser sins while on earth to be cleansed by some form of punishment (many theologians say by fire) before entering Paradise.

The Greek Orthodox Church does not accept this doctrine because there is no Scriptural foundation whatsoever for it, nor does Sacred Tradition mention it. The Greek Orthodox Church believes that after death the Soul enters what is called the intermediate or transitional stage. While in this stage, the Soul, if destined for Paradise, foretastes its happiness as it awaits the Final Judgment. If the Soul is destined for hell, then it foretastes the suffering which it will receive in full at the Final Judgment.

Our prayers, which are offered for the departed, are expressions of love, devotion and a continuous association with them. Through these pray-

ers, we beseech merciful God to forgive our departed brothers so that on Judgment Day their state may improve. The Holy Scriptures make mention of this. Our Lord gives the Apostles the right to forgive sins (Matthew 18, 18):

"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

With this brief exposition we put aside the dogmatic differences and proceed to the liturgical.

II. LITURGICAL DIFFERENCES

These consist of differences in the ritual and order of prayer.

A. THE INVOCATION (EPIKLESIS)*

The Divine Liturgy of the Western Church has no Invocation, whereas the Liturgy of the Eastern Church includes the Invocation as follows:

"Again we offer to Thee this reasonable and bloodless Sacrifice, and we ask and pray and supplicate: send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here presented. And make this Bread the Precious Body of Thy Christ. And that which is in this Cup, the Precious Blood of Thy Christ, changing (Them) by Thy Holy Spirit, Amen, Amen. So that They may be to

* EPIKLESIS is the prayer in the Liturgy that follows the words of the Lord "Take, eat" and "Drink ye all of it."

those that receive Them for the purification of the soul, for the remission of sins, for the fellowship of Thy Holy Spirit, for the fulfilment of the Kingdom of Heaven, and for boldness to approach Thee, neither unto judgment nor unto condemnation. Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable Service for those who have departed in the Faith, Forefathers, Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, Ascetics, and every righteous spirit in faith made perfect."

With this prayer, the celebrant invokes the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine so that they may be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Invocation, which ends with the call to the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, is found in all the ancient liturgies. Moreover, each of the Holy Sacraments includes a prayer of Invocation, without which the Sacrament is not complete.

The Western Church omits the Invocation and makes use only of the words of the Lord: "Take, eat" and "Drink ye all of it." This creates a difficulty in our accepting that the Roman Catholic Church's Liturgy is actually complete.

With the words of the Lord in mind, serving as a historical background, we offer the "Holy Gifts" and with the "Invocation" we entreat the Holy Spirit to change the Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Roman Church condemns the Eastern Or-

thodox Church because it includes the Invocation in the Liturgy, something practiced by the first Christians as well as the Fathers of the Undivided Church. This condemnation by the Roman Church is evidenced by a letter of Pope Pius VII to a Uniate Patriarch of the Melchites dated May, 1822, in which he terms the Invocation superfluous.

Roman Catholics are aware of the fact that the Invocation appears in all the ancient Liturgies, yet, inasmuch as they accept the Pope as infallible in matters of faith, they cannot agree with the first Christians; thus the Saints who introduced the Invocation erred and the Pope alone is correct.

B. THE USE OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IN THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

During the first eight centuries the Roman Church performed the Holy Eucharist with leavened bread, a practice which the Eastern Church still maintains. Since the eighth century, however, the Western Church has used unleavened bread in the performance of the Holy Eucharist. This practice is contrary to Holy Scripture, which tells us, be it indirectly, that our Lord performed the Eucharist with leavened bread. The Four Evangelists mention that our Lord ate the Last Supper on the Thursday before the Jewish Passover. We know that the Jews use unleavened bread *only* during the week of the Passover. Therefore, our Lord used *leavened* bread during the Last Supper.

In addition, the Sacrament of Holy Communion was instituted for all, Jews as well as non-Jews. It is performed not exclusively during Pascha, but on every day of the year. It is only natural, therefore, that the Holy Eucharist be performed with leavened bread which is used by all, and not with unleavened bread which is used only by the Jews during the Passover. For these reasons our Church has always performed the Holy Eucharist with leavened bread.

C. HOLY COMMUNION

Another liturgical difference between the two Churches is the fact that the Western Church does not administer Holy Communion to its followers as does our Church and as Holy Scripture decrees. Roman Catholics receive only the Body of Christ. The Blood is reserved as a special privilege for the clergy. This practice is contrary to Holy Scripture, which says:

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and *drink his blood*, ye have no life in you." (John 6, 53)

This custom of not offering the Blood of Christ to the laity originated in the Roman Catholic Church during the twelfth century. Most likely it was adopted to make the distinction between the priesthood and laity more apparent. In order to justify this mistake, the Western Church invented the term "Concomitantia." According to this theory the Blood of Christ necessarily exists in His Body. If this be so, why is the Holy Eucharist

performed with bread *and* wine? For in accordance with the meaning of the term "Concomitantia," bread should suffice for the performance of the Holy Eucharist. That the teaching which is derived from this term is false is proven by our Lord Himself, Who states plainly, "Except ye drink my blood . . ." Christ Himself decreed that the Holy Eucharist be given under both species — Body and Blood. Any diversion from this decree must be considered a sacrilege. Thus did Pope Gelasius characterize the act of not imparting the Body of Christ to Christians when it was practiced by the heretic Manichaeans.

D. ASPERSION (SPRINKLING)

Another liturgical difference is found in the sacrament of Baptism. The word "baptize" means to immerse something in water. The Undivided Church performed baptism by triple immersion in water. Holy Scripture mentions immersion in passages relating to the baptism of Christ. All the ecclesiastical writers of the Church recognize but one method of baptism — triple immersion in the name of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. In the Roman Church, however, baptism is performed by sprinkling. This practice was originated by the Roman Church in the fourteenth century. Many reasons were given in support of baptism by sprinkling. None, however, justifies such an innovation in a sacrament which is basic for the salvation of souls.

E. HOLY UNCTION

From the twelfth century the Roman Church has administered the sacrament of Holy Unction only to persons who are in danger of death. This constitutes another liturgical difference between the Roman and Orthodox Churches. This practice, like most other innovations of the Roman Church, is contrary to Holy Scripture. The Apostle James in his epistle recommends Holy Unction for all sick persons who seek to regain their bodily and spiritual health. For this reason, our Church administers Holy Unction not only to the dying, but to persons who are sick bodily or spiritually and who desire to regain the well-being of their body and soul through the grace imparted by the Sacrament. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James 5, 14-15)

III. ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFERENCES

A. THE ADMINISTRATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH

By administration we mean the system of government used by the Church. First, let us consider how the Undivided Church was governed.

According to the New Testament, after the

Ascension of Christ, the Apostles imparted the Grace of the Holy Spirit to others by the laying on of hands. In that way they ordained Deacons, Priests and Bishops whose task it was to govern the Church, that is, to preach the Word of God, to perform the Holy Sacraments, to offer prayer and to have the power and authority of remitting sin.

This administrative body, with the three orders of the priesthood, exists in both Churches today, since the Churches were from the beginning one and the same. In conformance with the tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, this clerical body was called "The Shepherding Church" to distinguish it from "The Shepherded Church," i.e. the Christian laity from whom the Apostles chose the bishops, priests and deacons. This clerical body represents the Church and is the instrument through which the infallible teaching of the Church is expressed by the Ecumenical Councils as defined by Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

There were seven Ecumenical Councils which convened to define the doctrines of the Church on the basis of Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The Western Church accepts these seven Councils.

The order of these Ecumenical Councils is as follows:

FIRST:

Place: Nicaea

Date: A.D. 325

No. of Representatives: 318

Result: The condemnation of the heretic Arius. Arius taught that if the Son is a real Son, then a Father must exist before a Son; therefore, the Divine Father must have existed before the Divine Son; therefore, there was a time when the Son did not exist; therefore, He is a creature, the greatest and eldest in the world and Himself a God, but still created.

SECOND:

Place: Constantinople

Date: A.D. 381

No. of Representatives: 186

Result: The condemnation of the heretic Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople. Macedonius denied the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

THIRD:

Place: Ephesus

Date: A.D. 431

No. of Representatives: 200

Result: The condemnation of the heretic Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople. Nestorius preached that the Man Christ was not God; that God only dwelt in Him as in a temple; and that He became God by degrees. In other words, he taught that there were two persons in Christ, the one human and the other divine. Logically, he

had to deny that Mary is the Mother of God. He said she should be called Christotokos (Mother of Christ), but not Theotokos (Mother of God).

FOURTH:

Place: Chalcedon

Date: A.D. 451

No. of Representatives: 630

Result: The condemnation of the heretic monophysite Eutyches. Eutyches denied that Christ had a true human nature. The Human Nature, he maintained, was absorbed by the Divine Nature as a drop of wine in an ocean; hence, Christ had only His Divine Nature. This heresy is called Monophysism, from the Greek mono (one) and physis (nature).

FIFTH:

Place: Constantinople

Date: A.D. 553

No. of Representatives: 164

Result: The condemnation of the "Three Chapters." This Council anathematized three things: The person and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia; the writings of Theodoret of Cyrillus against St. Cyril; and the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Moris, Bishop of Hardashir in Persia. At the Council of Chalcedon, Theodoret of Cyrillus and Ibas of Edessa had been restored to their sees, but they had actually been Nestorians and were therefore condemned together with Theodore of Mopsuestia,

the teacher of Nestorius and the spiritual father of Nestorianism.

SIXTH:

Place: Constantinople

Date: A.D. 680

No. of Representatives: 160

Result: The condemnation of the heresy of the Monotheletes among whom Honorius, Pope of Rome, was included. Yet, this Pope was recognized a posteriori as infallible by the Roman Church. Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, thought that by declaring that there was only *one will* (Monotheletism) in Christ, the Syrians and Egyptians, who were monophysites, would give up their schism. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, opposed this teaching as heretical and rightly maintained that it was nothing but disguised Monophysism.

SEVENTH:

Place: Nicaea

Date: A.D. 787

No. of Representatives: 368

Result: It was determined that we do not worship Icons, but venerate them. The Council declared:

"The figure of the cross and holy images, whether made in colors or of stone, or of any other material, are to be retained. They are not to become objects of adoration in the proper sense, which is given to God alone, but they are useful

because they raise the mind of the congregation to the objects which they represent. It is right to salute, honor and venerate them, to burn candles and incense before them, not only because this is in accordance with the tradition of the Church, but also because such honor is really given to God and His Saints, of whom the images are intended to remind us."

At these Ecumenical Councils the Bishops of the entire Church convened and discussed, decided, defined and presented the teachings of the Church. These teachings, after having been found to be in accord with Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition, were infallible and were so pronounced. From the beginning, therefore, the body which determined and defined Christian Doctrine was the Ecumenical Council, which was guided by the Holy Spirit.

B. THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF THE CHURCH

To this day the seven Ecumenical Councils are accepted by the Western Church, with the exception of a few canons of the Councils which conflict with the administrative system of the Western Church, which is dictatorial or totalitarian in nature.

What was the system of the Undivided Church? The Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, were always equal among themselves, having the same spiritual authority and prestige. Being equal among themselves, they respected one another and never interfered in matters of districts belonging to other Bishops. Later, for administrative and politi-

cal reasons, some of the Bishops received titles and were named Metropolitans, Archbishops, or Patriarchs. Each had his own district, his auxiliary bishops, his priests and deacons. In this manner, the entire Church was divided into the following districts: That of Rome, of Constantinople, of Alexandria, of Antioch and of Jerusalem. Each district was independent of the other from an administrative point of view. This was a democratic form of government.

The Bishops of each district recognized the Bishop who had his seat in the capital of the district as their leader. For example, the Bishops who were in the district of Alexandria recognized the Bishop of Alexandria, who was named Archbishop and Patriarch, as their leader. Incidentally, he initially had the title "Pope." Essentially, as is the case in our Church today, the patriarchs did not differ from other bishops.

These bishops presided only as a matter of honor, because they had their seats in cities where political power was centered, or because these cities were large centers of commerce or were connected with the history of Christianity.

This system has remained unchanged in the Orthodox Church. Take as an example the Church of Antioch or the Church of Serbia. Both of these are Orthodox Churches, but administratively they are independent. They have their own bishops who elect a president whom they call Archbishop or Patriarch. Moreover, they have their own synods and are autonomous.

Should any question on dogma arise or should any bishop, presbyter or deacon preach anything opposed to the teachings of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, then a synod may be convoked by the Patriarch of Constantinople at which all the churches are represented. This synod makes the final decision.

C. THE PAPAL SYSTEM

In the Western Church a certain trend was cultivated by the Bishops of Rome, a trend which led to the submission of all the district bishops to the Pope of Rome. Gradually, that trend prevailed so that today the other bishops of the Roman Church are not equal to the Pope, but are merely his representatives. He is the Supreme Pontiff (Pontifex Maximus) and the others are his instruments and are inferior to him, both spiritually and judicially.

The reason for this superiority is explained thus: "He is the successor of the Apostle Peter and for that reason all other bishops must be his inferiors; he alone should be vested with spiritual and temporal authority."

But were not the Apostles equal? If Peter was superior to the others, why did Paul point out Peter's mistakes in his epistle to the Galatians? (Galatians 2, 11-14). If Peter was superior, why didn't the bishops of the entire Church subject themselves to the Bishop of Rome? And why shouldn't the Bishop of Rome alone consider himself the successor of Peter? According to history,

Peter was the first Bishop of Antioch. St. Jerome is one of the historical sources proving the Episcopacy of St. Peter in Antioch. Which of the two shall we recognize as successor of Peter? History shows that the Bishop of Antioch has precedence in this claim.

Furthermore, why didn't the Ecumenical Councils declare themselves on this matter? Why didn't the Fathers of the Church accept the decisions of the Bishop of Rome and stop convoking Ecumenical Councils? For the obvious reason that the Ancient Church did not recognize such petty ambitions and visions of grandeur as did the Bishop of Rome, who today is called Supreme Pontiff, a Pagan Roman religious title. The Bishop of Rome was declared "Vicar of Christ on Earth" and "Head of the Church," by Roman Catholic councils. Yet he claims to be superior to these councils, for that is what the teaching of his primacy and infallibility implies.

D. THE LEADER OF THE CHURCH

A teaching of the Church which has never changed is: The Church has no visible head, but only the Invisible One, Christ Himself; therefore, the body of its Bishops is the only one which represents the Lord, just as the Apostles did. It was not Peter alone who received power to remit or not remit sin, but the other Apostles as well. Consequently, it was not only Peter who represented Christ, but also the other Apostles. The primacy of the Pope, therefore, served as a wedge to widen

the gap between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Against these theories of the West, our Church protested through her Bishops. It can be said that the main cause of the schism which divided Christianity was precisely the aspiration of the Pope of Rome to be foremost; that is, the "Primacy of the Pope." Such an ambition was most severely condemned by Christ.

E. THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE

After the separation of the two Churches in 1054, the Bishops of Rome finally became free of our Church, which had previously held their recurring ambitions in check. This left the Western Church free to put other innovations into effect. One of these was the proclamation of the Infallibility of the Pope by decision of the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Church in 1870. The Church, as a whole, always recognized the General Councils as infallible. Now the Bishop of Rome was placed above the Councils, proclaimed infallible when speaking *ex cathedra* as the Shepherd in matters of faith and morals.

This dogma is strange. It is left to the judgment of each individual to examine it. He will see that from a logical viewpoint this doctrine is unsound and devoid of a scriptural or traditional basis. The Council of the Roman Church which convened at the Vatican in 1870 presents the Bishops of Rome as equal to Christ. The minutes of this Synod read: "Jesus Christ has three existences. His personal

existence which Arius denied; His mystical existence in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist which Calvin denied; and His other existence, which completes the two, and through which He lives constantly, namely His authority in the person of His Vicar on Earth. The Council, maintaining this third existence, assures the world that it possesses Jesus Christ."

MATRIMONY

Supplementing the administrative differences, we add that in the Roman Catholic Church marriage is prohibited in all ranks of the Priesthood. Our Church, bearing in mind the First General Council at Nicaea in 325 and the Sixth at Constantinople in 680, permits marriage for priests and deacons before ordination. However, she chooses her bishops from the celibate clergy.

These, briefly, are the Dogmatic, Liturgical and Administrative differences between the Christian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Of these, perhaps the most serious are the Primacy and Infallibility of the Pope. These two differences continually widen the gap of separation and they will keep us apart until the day when the light of Orthodoxy will prevail in order that the words of our Lord, ". . . and there will be one fold, one shepherd," might be realized.

May our Lord Jesus Christ hasten the coming of that day.