

Orthodoxy vs. Catholicism

Introduction

- In the Creed, which we repeat frequently in our daily prayers, we say “We believe ... and in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins, ...”.

Introduction

- Today churches may be classified in one of four major groups:
 - The Orthodox Church.
 - The Catholic Church.
 - The Protestant (Reformation) churches.
 - The Cults

Introduction

- The Orthodox Church is unfortunately divided into two major families of Churches known as the Eastern versus the Oriental Orthodox Churches.
- The Catholic Church, although it sounds like one universal Church, we find that it contains variety of ethnic churches with differences in the way the faith is expressed, such as the Roman, the Greek, the Coptic, the Maronite Catholic churches, and so on.

Introduction

- The Protestants, although started as a trial to reform the Catholic Church, it has divided on itself to over 300 denominational and non-denominational churches such as the Lutheran, the Baptist, the Assembly of God, ...

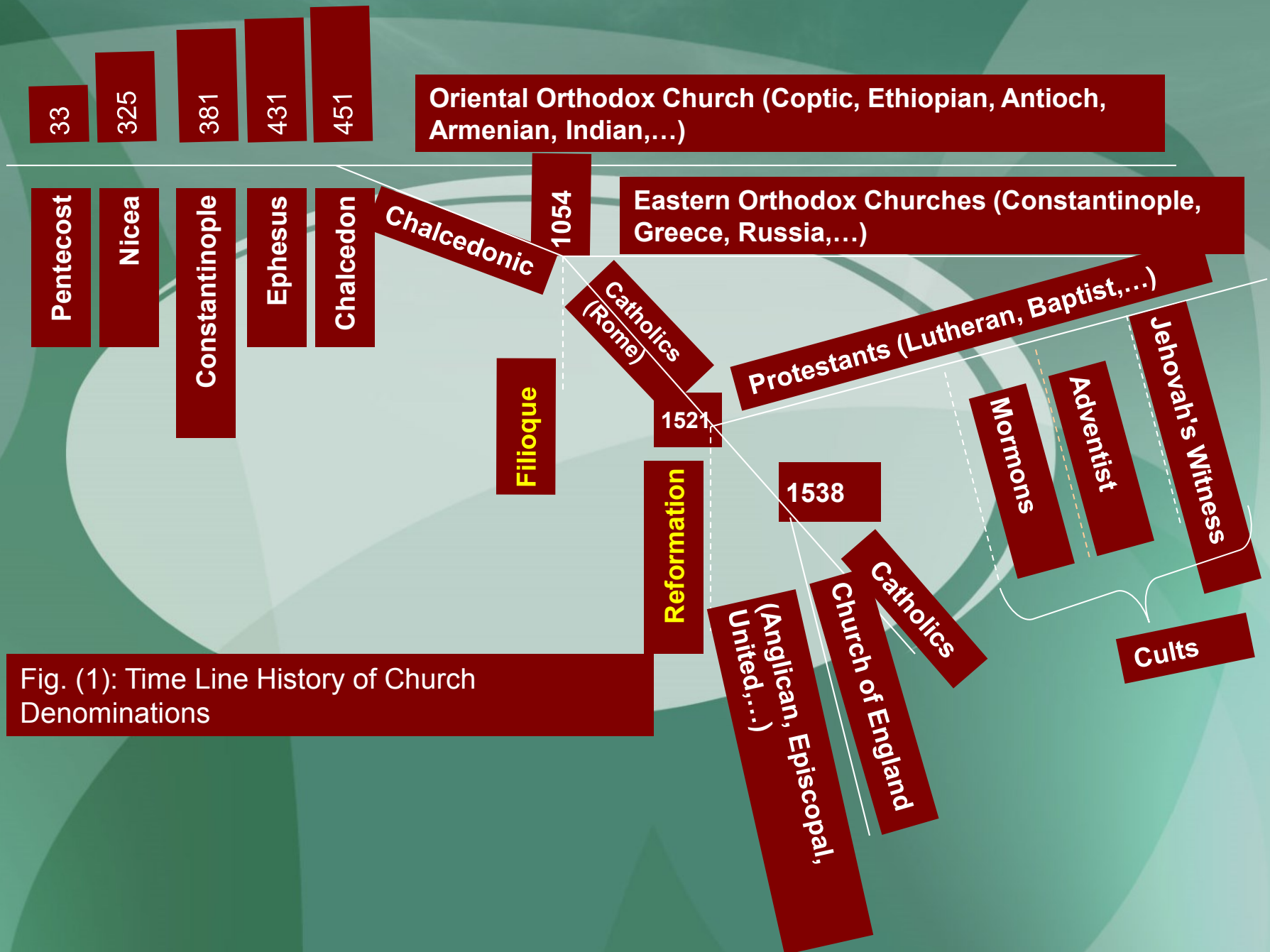


Fig. (1): Time Line History of Church Denominations

Background

- Historically, the Church of Rome enjoyed communion with the Orthodox Church.
- In 1054 a schism between Rome and the other patriarchal sees resulted from widening differences between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism.
- The cause of the schism was initially a dispute over papal authority and the soundness of theology surrounding the term filioque, a word which was added by the Western churches to the Creed without the consent of the Orthodox bishops.
- Nevertheless, the effects of the schism were not immediately felt everywhere, and it was only over time that the current complete lack of communion between the Orthodox and Roman Catholics became widespread.

Major Differences

- Filioque
- Immaculate Conception of St. Mary
- Role of the Pope
- Purgatory
- Celibacy of Priests
- Development of Doctrine

Filioque

- Filioque is a Latin word meaning "and the Son" which was added to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Church of Rome in the 11th century. Roman Catholicism teaches that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son" (filioque).
- Thus, the Latins added words to the Nicene Creed:
"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son..."
- Apostolic Tradition has always taught that God the Father is the single Source ("monarchy") of the Son and the Spirit.

Filioque objections

- It is contrary to Scripture - John 15:26: "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." Thus, Christ never describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from himself, but only mentions the Spirit's procession in terms of the Father.

Filioque objections

- The filioque distorts Orthodox Triadology by making the Spirit a subordinate member of the Trinity.
- Traditional Triadology consists in the notion that for any given trait, it must be either common to all Persons of the Trinity or unique to one of them.
- Thus, Fatherhood is unique to the Father, while begottenness is unique to the Son, and procession unique to the Spirit.
- Godhood, however, is common to all, as is eternality, uncreatedness, and so forth.
- Positing that something can be shared by two Persons (i.e., being the source of the Spirit's procession) but not the other is to elevate those two Persons at the expense of the other. Thus, the balance of unity and diversity is destroyed.

Immaculate Conception of St. Mary

- Both Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism believe she is "Mother of God" (Theotokos, Deipare) and "the Ever-Virgin Mary."
- Both also believe in the intercessions of the Virgin Mary and all the Saints. Such intercessions reflect the unity of the Church in heaven and the Church on earth.
- Catholics, however, believe that St. Mary was born without original sin

Immaculate Conception of St. Mary

- The Catholic Pope Pius IX, on the 8th of December 1854: “the first instant of her conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary was, by a most singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, preserved from all stain of Original Sin. It is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and steadfastly believed by all the faithful” (from the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*).

Immaculate Conception objections

- The Orthodox Church does not accept the idea that the Mother of God was born with the (inherited) guilt of Adam; no one is.
- She inherited the mortality which comes to all on account of Adam's Fall.
- "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47).

Role of the Pope

- The Latins teach that the visible head of the Church is the Pope, the successor to St. Peter, who was appointed to that sacred position by the Lord Himself with the words, "...you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church..." (Matt. 16:18).
- The Pope is, then, "the Bishop of the Catholic Church," her teacher, the vicar (agent, deputy) of Christ on earth.

Role of the Pope

- He is the interpreter of the Christian Tradition. When he speaks for the whole Church (ex cathedra), the Holy Spirit does not permit him to err.
- He is, therefore, infallible on matters of morals and doctrine. Other bishops are his lieutenants. He is the symbol of the episcopate's unity.

Role of the Pope objections

- The Orthodox church does not elevate the Pope to an infallible state. He is subject to mistake and err just as any other human is.
- The Orthodox Church teaches that all bishops are equal. To be sure, there are different ranks of bishops (patriarch, archbishop, metropolitan, bishop); nevertheless, a bishop is a bishop. Such differences apply to the administration of a church or group of churches, not to the nature of the bishop.

Role of the Pope objections

- Orthodoxy teaches that every bishop, "the living icon of Christ," and his flock constitute the Church in a certain place; or, as St. Ignatius the God-bearer says, the Church of Christ is in the bishop, his priests and deacons, with the people, surrounding the Eucharist in the true faith. All bishops and their flocks so constituted, together composing the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Purgatory

- From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:
"All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but, after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned" (cf. No. 1030-32).

Purgatory

- Catholics use this verse to support their belief in Purgatory:

2 Mac 12:44-46 - for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.

Purgatory

- They also quote the words of Jesus Christ, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matt 12:32)

Purgatory objections

- The quote from the book of Maccabees and our Savior's words can only prove that some sins will be forgiven after death; but whether by means of punishment by fire, or by other means, nothing is known for certain.
- What has forgiveness of sins to do with punishment by fire and tortures?
- Only one of these two things can happen: either punishment or forgiveness, but not both at once.

Purgatory objections

- In his book entitled 'Why Do We Reject Purgatory?', Pope Shenouda III refers to 1 Thess 4:16,17, "And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord", in which St. Paul describes the Last Day saying that those faithful who are still alive will meet the Lord with those who rise from the dead and then remain with Him always.
- He then asks the question, "Are these faithful (alive on the Last Day) exempt from Purgatory? Or is God showing partiality towards them?"

Celibacy of Priests

- Catholics require their priests to lead a celibate life, although they have ordained hundreds of married converts as priests.
- One argument made for celibacy has been that the commitment to celibacy frees someone to love all people in a way that the commitment to marriage does not.

Celibacy of Priests objections

- The Orthodox Church does not deny a celibate priesthood, that is why priest-monks exist. Only celibacy is voluntary and not imposed
- Most married priests understand family problems far better than celibate priests.
- Where priests are not married, there are no wives to give support. A married priest is someone who shows his intimate connection with the people of God and their daily life.

Development of Doctrine

- Roman Catholicism, in order to justify new doctrine, erected in the last century, a theory of "doctrinal development."
- Following the philosophical spirit of the time, Roman Catholic theologians began to define and teach the idea that Christ only gave us an "original deposit" of faith, a "seed," which grew and matured through the centuries.
- The Holy Spirit, they said, amplified the Christian Faith as the Church moved into new circumstances and acquired other needs.

Development of Doctrine

- Consequently, Roman Catholicism, pictures its theology as growing in stages, to higher and more clearly defined levels of knowledge.
- The teachings of the Fathers, as important as they are, belong to a stage or level below the theology of the Latin Middle Ages (Scholasticism), and that theology lower than the new ideas which have come after it, such as Vatican II.

Development of Doctrine

- All the stages are useful, all are resources; and the theologian may appeal to the Fathers, for example, but they may also be contradicted by something else, something higher or newer.
- On this basis, theories such as the dogmas of "papal infallibility" and "the immaculate conception" of the Virgin Mary are justifiably presented to the Faithful

Development of Doctrine objections

- The Orthodox Church does not endorse the view that the teachings of Christ have changed from time to time; rather that Christianity has remained unaltered from the moment that the Lord delivered the Faith to the Apostles (Matt. 28: 18-20).
- She affirms that "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) is now what it was in the beginning. Orthodox of the twentieth century believe precisely what was believed by Orthodox of the first, the fifth, the tenth, the fifteenth centuries.

Development of Doctrine objections

- To be sure, Orthodoxy recognizes external changes (e.g., vestments of clergy, monastic habits, new feasts, canons of ecumenical and regional councils, etc.), but nothing has been added or subtracted from her Faith.
- The external changes have a single purpose: To express that Faith under new circumstances; nevertheless, there has always been "one faith, one Lord, one baptism" (Eph. 4: 4).