

Church History - Early Middle Ages (Part 4)

The Great Schism

The Great Schism - The official separation of the Orthodox (Eastern) and Catholic (Western) churches in 1054.

A Growing Divide

- Division over Politics and Power
 - Who had the ultimate power and final say over matters of the Church?
The Patriarch of Constantinople or the Bishop of Rome?
 - “We do not deny to the Roman Church the primacy amongst the five sister Patriarchates. ... But she has separated herself from us by her own deeds, when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office.” - Eastern Archbishop
 - Which political ruler/emperor was in charge?
- Distance and Language Barriers (Greek vs. Latin)
- Theological Differences
 - Theological Method
 - Worship and Liturgical Practices
 - Specific Doctrinal Differences
 - The Western Church tended to emphasize the unity of the Trinity while the Eastern Church emphasized the threeness of the Trinity.
 - *Filioque* - “and the Son.” This word/phrase was added to the Nicene Creed by the Western church at the Council of Toledo in 598. They thought this addition was needed to clarify that the Spirit was sent by the Father “and the Son” (Jn. 16:7). The Eastern church didn’t agree with this addition and believed the Western church had overstepped its bounds in making this decision unilaterally.
 - By 1009, the patriarchs of Constantinople no longer included the Roman bishop on the list of leaders they believed were doctrinally sound.

The Final Straw

- The early part of the eleventh century brought reform to the Western church, particularly under the rule of Henry III.
 - Henry was personally pious and wanted to see the papacy reformed.

- He appointed Pope Leo IX and together they helped restore dignity to the papacy.
- Henry III, Leo IX, and the Eastern emperor, Constantine IX, entered into negotiations to resist Norman knights who were invading southern Italy. Negotiations fell apart as each side demanded authority over the churches in their regions.
- Leo was captured by Norman troops in 1053. Cardinal Humbert was sent to Constantinople to meet with Patriarch Cerularius to revisit negotiations. Leo died unexpectedly as soon as this meeting began.
 - Humbert delivered a letter that said, "... as a hinge, remaining unmoved opens and shuts a door, so Peter and his successors [at Rome] have an unfettered jurisdiction over the whole Church, since no one ought to interfere with their position, because the highest See is judged by none."
 - Cerularius rejected the letter and questioned if Humbert was qualified to deliver it with the passing of the pope.
 - The offended Humbert entered the great church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) and placed on the altar a bull excommunicating Cerularius. Soon after, Cerularius excommunicated the papal legation.

The Schism Sealed and Reconciliation Attempts

- The crusading movement began at the end of the eleventh century and the damage done by the Crusades sealed the schism.
- 1274 – A reunion council met in Lyons, France. Agreements were reached about church practice and the creed, but were ultimately rejected.
- 1438-39 – Another council was held in Florence, Italy. After months of debate, reconciliation seemed within reach, but was ultimately rejected.
 - Constantine XI was the Eastern emperor during this time and supported East–West reconciliation.
 - The Turks attacked Constantinople in April 1453 and this crisis brought all Christians in the city together. There was a united service of Orthodox and Catholic Christians in the Hagia Sophia. On that day, Constantine was killed and the Turks captured the city and transformed Hagia Sophia into a mosque.
- 1965 – Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I met and issued a joint statement that recognized the scars of the past and spoke to beginning the process of healing.