



## 10th discussion for “Family Night” 02/09

### “History of the Church”

#### Part 2

325 AD- 1054 AD

AD 325 The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, convened as a response to the Arian controversy, establishes the Nicene Creed, declaring the belief of Orthodox Trinitarian Christians in the Holy Trinity.

#### First Council of Nicaea

The First Council of Nicaea was held in Nicaea in Bithynia (present-day Iznik in Turkey) and convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in 325 AD. The Eastern bishops formed the great majority. It is believed to have been the First Ecumenical (worldwide but generally is assumed to be limited to the Roman Empire) council of the Christian Church. Most significantly, it resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine, called the Nicene Creed. The intent being to define unity of beliefs for the whole of Christendom.

The purpose of the council was to resolve disagreements arising from within the Church of Alexandria. St. Alexander of Alexandria and Athanasius took the first position; the popular presbyter Arius, from whom the term Arian controversy comes, took the second. The council decided against the Arians overwhelmingly.

Another result of the council was an agreement on when to celebrate the Resurrection, the most important feast of the ecclesiastical calendar. The council decided in favor of celebrating the resurrection on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox, independently of the Hebrew Calendar (Easter controversy). It authorized the Bishop of Alexandria (presumably using the Alexandrian calendar) to announce annually the exact date to his fellow bishops.

- AD 326 Pope Sylvester I consecrates the Basilica of St. Peter built by Constantine the Great over the tomb of the Apostle.
- AD 330 Constantinople solemnly inaugurated. Constantine moves the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, renaming it New Rome.
- AD 380 Emperor Theodosius I issues an edict, De Fide Catolica, in Thessalonica, published in Constantinople, declaring Catholic Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire( Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the Byzantine Empire).
- AD 381 The First Council of Constantinople declared that "The Bishop of Constantinople shall have the primacy of honor after the Bishop of Rome, because it is New Rome (canon iii). The Patriarchs refused to confirm this canon.
- AD 431 The Council of Ephesus rejected the teaching of Nestorius and affirmed the one person of Christ, proclaiming Mary “Mother of God.”
- AD 451 The Council of Chalcedon, a city of Bithynia in Asia Minor, established Constantinople as a patriarchate with ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Asia Minor (the dioceses of Asiane and Pontus)



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and Thrace as well as over the barbaric territories, non-converted lands outside the defined area of the Western Patriarchate (Rome) and the other three patriarchates, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, gave it appellate jurisdiction extraterritorially over canon law decisions by the other patriarchs, and granted it honors equal to those belonging to the first Christian see (Rome), in terms of primacy, though allowing Rome to retain its seniority (canon xxviii). Pope Leo I refused to accept this canon, on the basis that it was made in the absence of his legates.

The Council re-asserted the dogma of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God and excommunicated Eutyches, leading to the miaphysite schism of the non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox churches (Syriac Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox and others).

- AD 589 The Third Council of Toledo re-asserted Jesus as True God and True Man by adding to the Nicene-Constantinople Creed the phrase that is called the "Filioque" (Latin meaning: "and from the Son"), since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as the Scripture tells us.
- AD 711 Muslim armies invade Spain.
- AD 732 Muslim advance into Western Europe.
- AD 787 Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea resolved Iconoclasm.

Iconoclasm (Eikonoklasmos, "Image-breaking") is the name of the heresy that in the eighth and ninth centuries disturbed the peace of the Eastern Church by rejecting the use of images in churches. Heresy caused the last of the many breaches with Rome that prepared the way for the schism of Photius.

The Council pronounced that "images of Christ, the Virgin Mother of God, and other saints are to be held and kept especially in churches, and due honor and reverence are to be paid to them, not that any divinity or power is thought to be in them for the sake of which they may be worshipped, or that anything can be asked of them, or that any trust may be put in images, but because the honor shown to them is referred to the prototypes which they represent, so that by kissing or kneeling before images, we adore Christ and honor the saints whose likeness they bear."

- AD 1054 East-West Schism (is a break in the Church's authority, structure and communion)

The East-West Schism, or the Great Schism, divided medieval Mediterranean Christendom into Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) branches, which later became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, respectively. Relations between East and West had long been embittered by political and ecclesiastical differences and theological disputes. Pope Leo IX and Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius heightened the conflict by suppressing Greek and Latin in their respective domains.

Michael I Cerularius (AD 1000-1059), also known as Michael Keroularios or Patriarch Michael I, was the Patriarch of Constantinople from 1043 to 1059.

Born in Constantinople, he is noted for disputing with Pope Leo IX over church practices where the Roman Church differed from Constantinople, especially the use of unleavened bread in the



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Eucharist. In 1054, It can be argued that the Patriarch's letter to Pope Leo IX initiated the events which followed because it claimed the title "ecumenical patriarch" and addressed Pope Leo as "brother" rather than "father." Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida on a legatine mission to treat with the Patriarch. Cerularius refused to meet with Cardinal Humbert and kept him waiting with no audience for months. Thus, Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida delivered a notice of excommunication against Patriarch Michael on July 16, 1054, despite the death of Pope Leo three months prior and thus the invalidity of the excommunication. [Many accounts refer to this as a bull of excommunication but it is not a bull unless it is signed by a pope and Pope Leo had not seen it or signed it.] Michael in turn excommunicated the cardinal and the Pope and subsequently removed the pope's name from the diptychs starting the East-West Schism. This schism led to the end of the alliance between the Emperor and the Papacy, and caused later Popes to ally with the Normans against the Empire. Patriarch Michael closed the Latin churches in his area which, of course, exacerbated the schism.

Michael also quarrelled with Emperor Isaac I Comnenus who he himself had put on the throne as a puppet (Michael went so far as to wear the purple shoes ceremonially reserved for the Emperor) over confiscation of church property. Michael was so infuriated that he planned a rebellion to overthrow the Emperor and claim the Imperial Throne for himself. He started wearing the Imperial Regalia publicly and called for popular uprising in his sermons when he died suddenly in 1059, though there was no suspicion that he was murdered. The Emperor claimed that he was punished by God for trying to usurp his temporal powers.

What about the mutual excommunications? The Western legate's acts are of doubtful validity because Leo had died, while Cerularius' excommunication applied only to the legates personally. Still, the Church split along doctrinal, theological, linguistic, political, and geographical lines, and the fundamental breach has never been healed. Western cruelty during the Crusades, the capture and sack of Constantinople in 1204, and the imposition of Latin Patriarchs made reconciliation more difficult. This included the taking of many precious religious artifacts and the destruction of the Library of Constantinople. On paper, the two churches actually reunited in 1274 (by the Second Council of Lyon) and in 1439 (by the Council of Florence), but in each case the councils were repudiated by the Orthodox as a whole, on the grounds that the hierarchs had overstepped their authority in consenting to reunification. In 1484, 31 years after the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks, a Synod of Constantinople repudiated the Union of Florence, making the breach between the Patriarchate of the West and the Patriarchate of Constantinople final.[1]

In 1965, Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagora, nullified the anathemas of 1054 when they met in the Second Vatican Council. Although the excommunication delivered by Cardinal Humbert was invalid anyway, this gesture represented a significant step towards restoring communion between Rome and Constantinople. Further attempts to reconcile the two bodies are ongoing.



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Please join us for the next “Family Night” discussion, which will continue Part - 2 .

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Resources:

Wikipedia- Encyclopedia

World Religions, by Benson Y. Landis

Compton’s Interactive Encyclopedia

The World Book Encyclopedia

Macmillan Concise Dictionary of the World History

The Encarta Encyclopedia