

Eastern orthodox christianity and roman catholic christianity religion essay



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Until 1054 AD Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism were branches of the same body - the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This date marks an important moment in the history of all Christian denominations. It designates the very first major division in Christianity and the beginning of "denominations." Disagreement between these two branches of Christendom had long existed, but the gap between the Roman and Eastern churches increased throughout the first millennium.

In 1054 AD, a formal split occurred when Pope Leo IX, leader of the Roman branch, excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius. He was the leader of the Eastern branch. Michael Cerularius, in return, condemned the Pope in mutual excommunication. Two primary disputes at the time were Rome's claim to a universal papal supremacy and the adding of the filioque to the Nicene Creed.

To the present date, the Eastern and Western churches remain divided and separate. However, in 1965, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras agreed to formally remove the mutual excommunication of 1054.

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The Difference between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholic Christianity

The Pope

The main difference between Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity has to do with the recognition of the Pope. Roman Catholics recognize the Pope as infallible. The Pope has supreme authority over all

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churches, and he can usurp the power of a lower ranking church leader, such as a priest, bishop, or cardinal (O'Conner, 1997).

The Eastern Orthodox also has various bishops with one being the highest bishop, called the "first among equals", but the Eastern Orthodox Church does not believe the highest ranking bishop, or archbishop, to be infallible, nor do they grant him with supreme authority over all churches (Collins & Price, 1999).

Purgatory

Another main difference is in the teaching of Purgatory. According to Roman Catholic theology, those souls destined for heaven must endure a state of purification. They must be cleansed of sins committed on earth. The rest go to hell for eternal punishment. Also from a form of merits or extra grace accumulated by the virtue of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints, indulgencies may be granted. The grace is applied to those in purgatory in order to shorten their time there (O'Conner, 1997).

Eastern Orthodoxy teaches that after the soul leaves the body, it journeys to the abode of the dead (Hades). The soul will remain in this condition of waiting. Because some have a prevision of the glory to come and others a foretaste of their suffering, the state of waiting is called "Particular Judgment". When Christ returns, the soul rejoins its risen body to be judged by Him, and the good and faithful servant will inherit life. The unfaithful will spend eternity in hell. Their sins and their unbelief will torture them as fire (Chadwick, 1995).

Religious Differences 4

Doctrinal Development

In reference to Doctrine, in order to justify new doctrine, Roman Catholicism developed the theory of “ Doctrinal Development”. Roman Catholicism presents this theology as growing in stages to higher and more clearly defined levels of knowledge. It teaches the idea that Christ gave us an original deposit of faith, and a seed which grows and matures over the centuries. They believe that tradition is just as important as the Bible (O’Conner, 1997).

Eastern Orthodoxy does not endorse the view that the teachings of Christ have changed from time to time. They believe that Christianity has remained unaltered from the moment that the Lord delivered the Faith to the Apostles (Mat. 28: 18-20). Eastern Orthodox of the twenty first century believes precisely what was believed in the first century.

Nicene Creed

A major disagreement between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism centers around the adding of the “ filioque” to the Nicene Creed. This particular conflict is also known as the “ Filioque Controversy.” In Latin, this word means “ and from the Son.” It had been inserted into the Nicene Creed, changing the phrase pertaining to the origin of the Holy Spirit from “ who proceeds from the Father” to “ who proceeds from the Father and the Son” (Collins & Price, 1997, p. 27). Roman Catholicism made this change on the authority of the Pope. Eastern Orthodoxy believed this spurned the Apostolic

Tradition which always taught that God the Father is the single Source of the Son and the Spirit (Collins & Price, 1997).

Conclusion

There are many other differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. There are differences in how faith is taught, the essence of God, the work of Christ, the Holy Canons, the mysteries, the nature of man, and the Virgin Mary. One more would be the icons of Orthodox worship, and the statues of Catholic worship.

It should also be noted that while there are many differences between Eastern Orthodoxy

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and Roman Catholicism, there are also many similarities between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism that should be studied as well.

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