

" WAS IT INEVITABLE? "

The Schism of the Christian Church East and West Drift Apart.

In the evaluation of why the Unity of Christendom was destroyed by the division between the Eastern Greek and Western Latin Churches, we are faced with the same difficulty as exists when two formerly married individuals separate or get divorced. Just as most marital problems can not be explained simply, in the same fashion the separation of Eastern and Western Christianity can not be dismissed with a few simple answers. The dissolution of a marriage has a multiplicity of causes, usually the result of misunderstanding, suspicion and lack of communication between the two partners. Just as an occasional squabble does not lead to divorce, unless you live in Hollywood, in the same fashion the drifting apart of the Eastern and Western Churches is a long process, with periods of considerable tranquility as well as bitter acrimony and deep hostility. In the case of this separation we can not even be certain which is the point in historical development when the two parties irrevocably enter their separate paths and since the divorce was never really formal, the hope of reconciliation is still there. In retrospect one wonders why our ancestors, both in the Eastern and Western Church did not show greater wisdom, understanding and above all, Christian Charity toward each other.

Why? Because, the problem of the two churches although numerous and often complicated, yet they were not insoluble. To answer therefore the question posed in the title of my little address Was it inevitable? The answer, I feel, is NO it was not inevitable that the Western and Eastern churches should drift apart, yet it is understandable that they did.

Let us, therefore, examine in this brief presentation what factors play a role in this, what I consider to be, a tragic event for all of us.

A few observations, many of them well known to you, have to be made which are essential to the understanding of the ensuing struggle.

1. The Fact that Christianity is basically an Eastern Mediterranean religion as far as its historic roots are concerned. - Long before the West was converted, the east was the center of Christendom and remained the center until the invasion of the Moslems in the seventh century.

Not only was the geographic weight and numerical strength of the Church in the East, but so was its intellectual strength. It is the Hellenized Diaspora Jew ^{St Paul} who lays the groundwork of the philosophic-theologic origins of our Faith. The great Greek scholars of Antioch, Alexandria, Capadocia and other places of learning, precede their western counterparts both in chronology as well as in importance.

While Western churchmen were trying to convert primitive villagers, the Greek Fathers were already formulating elaborate philosophic-theologic concepts about the nature or natures of Christ, the relation between the Holy Spirit and the other two phases of a Trine Deity. It is hardly an accident of history that the first major councils of the Church were held in the East and not the West. The western Church Fathers were late comers!

(2) A second important consideration in our discussion is the fact that the Greeks always considered themselves to be superior to the Latin West. This goes back to the Roman conquest of the Hellenistic world. The Greeks might have lost their political independence and might have been joined into the Roman state, but they always knew that they were far more educated and cultured than the Romans. This feeling that the West is inferior, in fact inhabited by barbaros is and remained a part of the Greek view throughout all the period under discussion. We know that justifiable pride can on occasion be arrogance.

Turning our attention to more specific problems dividing East from West let us examine one of the most troublesome, namely the government and organization of the church, especially the relation of the Patriarchs and the Bishop of Rome.

It was a common belief of Christians that the bishops of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem held a specific, exalted position in the church due to the apostolic foundation of their episcopal sees.

The Romans claimed apostolic foundation of their city basing this on the tradition that the first bishop of Rome was Peter and that his descendants had the special privileges given by Christ to Peter as recorded by St. Matth. XVI, verse 18

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church." - - - - -

Eastern churchmen and Biblical scholars have always wondered about this much quoted statement. It does not occur in Mark nor Luke. Matthew's gospel is based on Mark! Why is this passage missing. The tradition that St. Peter was really the first bishop of Rome does not go further back than 170 AD, i.e. over and 100 yrs after the supposed martyrdom of Peter.

While the East questioned the tradition of Peter's pre-eminent position, the West will express doubts about the rise of the Patriarchal see of Constantinople, pointing out that Byzantium, before the move of the capital there in the 4th century was an insignificant diocese, subject to the metropolitan of Heracleia. The fact that the apostle Andrew founded the Christian community of Byzantium is about as solidly supportable as Peter founding Rome.

The bishops of Rome, particularly from the fifth century on claimed increasing primacy over the whole church, much to the annoyance of the other Patriarchs.

What was the result of the move by Constantine the Great of the capital from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople in 330? How did this effect the relations between East and West? The answer is that the results were considerable.

1. Constantinople, the New Rome, claims parity with Rome.
2. Bishop of Rome claims sovereignty over all of west because of ~~Donation~~ he is the only remnant of Authority.
3. Constantinople's prestige grows, so does Rome's. The influence of Jer. Ant. Alex decrease. (Eventual loss to Muslims.)
4. Donation of Constantine
5. Friction over use of "ecumenical" in describing the Patriarch of Constantinople
 Latins translate it to mean universal
 and protest over and over again.

This points to an important new source of friction Language. As time goes on fewer Greeks speak Latin and even fewer Latins speak Greek. We have the classic breakdown of Communications -

Although these controversies were often fought with bitterness yet they did not cause the break and both sides continued their own practices, performed their services, recognizing that there was only one Holy and Apostolic Church, and one Empire.

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The Reasons for friction between the Eastern and Western part of Christendom continue to grow.

With the coming of the Germanic invasions (late fourth, fifth cent.) the Latin West will change its complexion in a dramatic manner. The Empire made great by Roman arms, and made cultured by the Hellenistic mind was being assaulted by Germanic nations who had lived on the Danube - Rhine frontier for centuries. Although the East is able to weather the storm, the West falls and a number of Germanic successor states take the place of the Latin Western Empire. While the Greeks did not have a high opinion of the Romans, their view of the Germanic successors was ~~even~~ ^{less} ~~the~~ complementary. - After the conquest of the West by the Germanic tribes, there begins the long and slow process of their Christianization, and civilization. This is a fusion of Latin, W. Christian and Germanic institutions and will result in what we call our Western European Cultural heritage.

It is interesting to note that the Germanic nations still vaguely felt a kinship to the idea of the once great empire and some Germanic kings looked upon Byzantium as their nominal or theoretical leader. The concept of one Mediterranean, Christian world was still alive even after the arrival of the Germanic nations and diplomatic as well as economic activity continues to flow between East and West, mainly by the marvelous "highway" provided by the Mediterranean.

This unity of the Greco-Roman world will be (7) destroyed by the appearance of the Moslems in the seventh century. The old, eastern centers of Christianity fall to the invaders, (Jer. Antioch, Alex.) — in the early eighth century Constantinople is under siege, Moslem riders are within ~~the~~ a 100 mile radius of Paris, having overrun Spain — S. France. The results in Byz. Western relations of this event will be significant:

1. Break up of Unity of Med. World.
2. Division of the West into 3 spheres.
3. Disruption of comm. + Trade betw. E-W
4. Increased isolation of both regions.
5. Loss of territory by Byz. to Moslems.
6. The constant threat of Islam on the E. Empire ~~and the falling of Persia sees into their hands.~~ — Now there is only Constantinople — Rome!

Instead of binding the Eastern + Western Christians together against the common enemy of Islam, new problems arise to divide the Greek — Latin Church. (Although west is ruled by German kings, the Western Church was still able to force the Latin Liturgy on them.)

What are these problems?

1. The Problem of Iconoclasm

The very capable emperor Leo III (717-740) undertakes the destruction of images, icons.

(Possible influence of Moslem prohibitions)

Rome voices opposition — Pope Gregory II condemns iconoclasm, his successor Greg. III excommunicates image breakers.

Thus we have again a controversy of E-W.

West. Church position: images are didactic tools

The policies of the iconoclast emperors (8) will be unpopular within the Eastern church ~~and~~ will result in eventual restoration of the icons.

2. Taking advantage of the iconoclastic controversy in Byz., of a woman Irene on the throne, a Frankish, (Germanic) king, Charles, subsequently called Charlemagne has himself crowned Emperor in Rome on Christmas 800 AD. The unity of one Christian empire is broken! Now there are two Emperors, two Empires and Constantinople protests: Einhard "He bore very patiently with the jealousy which the [Eastern] Roman emperors showed upon his assuming [these] titles, for they took this step very ill."

3. Hardly had ^{the furor over Charlemagne's election +} the iconoclastic controversy died down and formal peace restored in 843, when a new schism erupted.

Pope Nicolas I got involved in a dispute with the patriarch of Constantinople, the very learned scholar Photios. The pope condemned what he considered "irregularities" in the Eastern church such as clerical marriage, the use of leavened bread, etc... Photios calls a council in Constantinople and condemned the Roman usages, which he considered to be "irregular" i.e. eating egg in Lent,

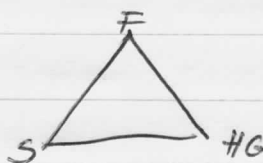
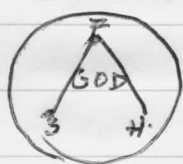
using unleavened bread in Mass, shaving the faces of priests. But above all a problem shows up which is of theological nature and has caused bitterness before and will be the stumbling block to unity to this day.

The Filioque controversy. - Procession of Holy Ghost.

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life"

Nicea - Const. Creed. do not contain the words: ~~words~~ → who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Addition in the West - mainly in Spain of the filioque. (Arianism)



The two churches excommunicate each other ^{in 867} over these charges and counter-charges. Peace is not restored until 898.

④ Another source of friction between Eastern + Western Church was the rivalry for converts in the Slavic area.

Competition for converts - work of Cyril + Methodius in Moravia. - Western expansion into these regions -

Arrival of Hungarians - wedge between E-W.

N. Slavs Latin, S. Slavs Eastern -

Great success of the Greeks in Prussia.

What is readily evident from all this, is that friction was plentiful and excommunications flew rather freely, but peace was somewhat restored and the unity of the Church, though a little tattered was still maintained until 1054.

The "Schism of 1054" which is usually called the breaking point between the Western + Eastern Church, is unfortunately the result of arrogance, ill temper, and stupidity. Looking back almost a thousand years we are amazed how it could ever have happened.

In 1054 Byzantium + Rome had everything to gain from cooperation and had no real cause for schism. Both the Papacy and the Emperor Constantine IX were fearful of the increasing power of the Norsemen in S. Italy which threatened both the Papal States as well as Byzantine possessions in South Italy. The pope of this time was Leo IX, the first of a series of reform popes. The emperor had appointed a capable administrator, Michael ~~the~~ Keroularios, an extremely ambitious man. ^{ex Patmarch of Constantinople} Keroularios sees himself of the defender of Eastern Church rites everywhere, orders Roman ritual churches in Const. to conform to Greek liturgy and proceeds to bring up the old charges of irregularities against the Roman Church: fasting on Sabbath, celibacy, unleavened bread etc.... Pope Leo hearing of these accusations was annoyed, however his chief papal secretary Humbert, Cardinal of Silva Candida became livid. (Note neither Card. Humb. or Leo knew Greek - they only had translations of the accusat.

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Leo instructed Humbert to draw up a reply to the accusation of the Byz. Patriarch. In the letter ~~replied to~~ Keroularios is simply addressed as bishop not patriarch. He is chastized for having called himself "ecumenical patriarch" - he is told to revere Rome as he would honor his mother.

Keroularios, realizing that the threat of the Normans made open hostilities unwise, replied to the pope in conciliatory tones. He did however use the term "ecum. patr" when referring to himself, and horror of horrors! - he called the pope as "Brother", instead of Father, which was proper protocol.

At this critical point the pope Leo IX fell ill and thus any restraint on Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida was removed. Humbert decided to go to Constantinople himself and along with two other illustrious men set out for Greece. Humbert wrote a most uncharitable letter to the Patriarch and when they met threw it at Keroularios. Condemns him for use of "ecum. Patr." attacks Greek use of leavened bread, and said that any church not accepting the authority of Rome is "nothing but a synagogue of Satan". Even the election of Keroularios was questioned. Cardinal Humbert, in the name of the pope, asked the Patriarch to repent!

While all this is going on Pope Leo IX died on April 15, 1054, thus Cardinal Humbert's position as his legate ends. But the arrogance of Humbert knew no bounds. He attacks the Greeks with even more charges: adding warm water to the Communion

wine. Feeling confident Cardinal Humbert (12) raises the Filioque question again, rants and raves against the Eastern Church. Keroularios, wisely ignored these outbursts which irritated the Cardinal even more. Humbert wanted a humble submission, when this did not occur he proceeded on his own to do one of the most illconceived acts in Christian history. On Saturday July 16, 1054, at the beginning of Div. Liturgy, Cardinal Humbert and his two followers burst into the Church of Hagia Sophia and put on the high altar a bull of excommunication of Michael Keroularios and all his followers. and Anathemized them. Humbert + his colleagues then stomped out and shook from their feet the dust of that "heretical place".

Hearing what happened the inhabitants of the capital rioted, The Western envoys left the city in haste. On Sunday July 24, 1054 a church synod put an anathema on the Latin envoys and their sympathizers.

It is under these curious, infuriating circumstances that the split between the E. - W. occurred.

Note: Excom. only of Keroularios + followers and Latin envoy + followers. Yet the split lasted and still lasts. Reason for continued split:

The bitter taste left by Crusade Particularly Fourth Crusade, siege of Constantinople in 1204, massacre of Greeks, desecration of Hagia Sophia - Church vessels used to get drunk, prostitute in the chair of the Patriarch.

A Byzantine historian remarked: "Even the
Mostems would have been more merciful." (13)

At least 30 attempts are made for reconciliation
between 1054 and 1453, when the city fell to the
Turks. The most famous and serious effort
was at the Council of Florence in 1439.

Attended by John VIII, Emperor and Pope Eugenius IV.

An Act of Union results after lengthy dialogue
between Latin + Greek scholars (Filioque still a
problem). When the Greek delegation returned
to Constantinople after the signing of the Act of
Union, the document was rejected as a "selling out"
to Rome.

The Last Emperor of Byzantium Constantine XI
Palaeologos, in a desperate attempt to secure
aid from the West against the Turk, who were
at the gates, had the Act of Union formally proclaimed
in 1452 in Hagia Sophia, in his presence, in
the company of the papal legate, but in the absence
of the patriarch. - Opposition mounts - center of it is
a Holy man Gennadius II. He questioned why
anybody would put their trust in the Italians
rather than God.

Since the fateful day when the Act of
Union was read in Hagia Sophia with Roman
+ Greek priest concelebrating, few Greek worshippers
entered the Church.

The Union was never accepted, the help from
the West which was promised at the Council of
Florence never came and Constantine XI
died with his people in the ruins of Constantinople
in 1453.

A touching and fitting note ends our discourse. In Dec. of 1965 during the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople mutually revoked the excommunications of 1054 and the two men embraced warmly.

It is the folly of men which has separated us. True Christian love and the work of the Holy Spirit (whether through the Father or the Son) should again bring us together. This evening is an indication what men of good will can do!