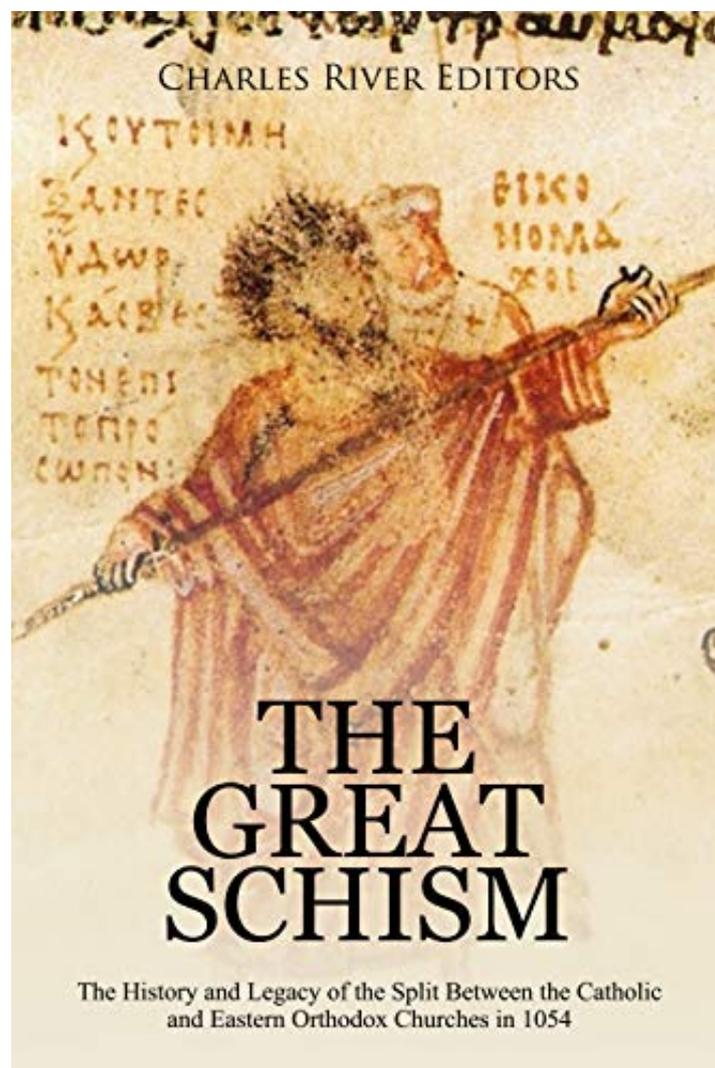


The Great Schism: The History and Legacy of the Split Between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches in 1054

by

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Synopsis

*Includes pictures*Includes excerpts of contemporary medieval sources*Includes a bibliography for further reading*Includes a table of contents

For nearly a thousand years following its foundation, there was only one Christian Church. Centered in the city of Rome, the Church expanded and grew until it became the dominant religion in Europe and beyond. The early growth of the Church had been suppressed by the Romans until the Emperor Constantine became the first to convert the empire to Christianity, and from that point forward, the growth of the Church was inextricably linked with the Roman Empire, the most powerful military, economic, and political force in the ancient world. For almost 600 years, from the defeat of Carthage in the Second Punic War in 201 BCE to around 395 CE, Rome was one of the most important cities in the world, but things were beginning to change around the time Constantine converted the empire. Rome controlled large areas of the world, but by the 4th century the emphasis had shifted from military conquest to the control of lucrative trade routes. The problem was that the city of Rome, isolated in the southern half of the Italian peninsula, was far from these routes, and this compelled Constantine to establish a major Roman city on the site of ancient Byzantium. The new city, Constantinople, was located on a strategic site controlling the narrow straits between the Black Sea and the Aegean, meaning it was firmly astride some of the most important trade routes in the ancient world between Europe and Asia and between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Constantinople became the second most important city of the Roman Empire, thriving in parallel with Rome, but then the empire split into Eastern and Western provinces, with Constantinople the capital of the east and Rome the capital of the west. Control of trade routes made Constantinople increase in power and influence while Rome became less important. However, not all power and influence shifted east, because one important institution remained firmly linked with the city of Rome: the Bishops of the Church. Under the rule of previous emperors, Christian Bishops had not only been formally recognized, but had been given power within the Roman state. The most important of all was "I Sommi Pontefici Romani" the supreme pontiff of Rome. The earliest holders of this title were martyrs and saints of the Church, but by the time of the rise of Constantinople, this role was elected by the other Bishops of the Church. This role would later become known as the Pope (from the Greek word "pappas" meaning "father"), but even before that title was adopted, the Supreme Pontiff in Rome was widely recognized as the leader of the Church. In historical terms, these early leaders of the Church are often referred to as "popes" even though that title was not formally adopted until after the division of the Church. Rome's preeminence was not a situation that was welcomed in Constantinople, now the center of the Byzantine Empire and a thriving and wealthy metropolis. After being sacked by outsiders, Rome had become a virtual ghost town, partially ruined and inhabited by a small number of hardy survivors, yet in center of the crumbling city was the Vatican Borgo, the Palace of the Supreme Pontiff and the heart of the Church. In retrospect, it is easy to see that this was a situation that was bound to lead to conflict and disagreement, with

the Greek-speaking Eastern Orthodox Church centered in Constantinople and being governed by Latin-speaking popes in a faraway city. Moreover, there had already been theological disputes as far back as Constantine's time, which had led to the famous Council of Nicaea in the 4th century CE. This book chronicles the events that led to the schism, the key figures that played a hand in the confusion, and how the contentious issues were finally resolved.

What people say about this book

DD Gott - Donadees Corner, "History at it's finest.. History at it's finest.I love history and Charles River Editors make it so easy to keep you informed! As I have aged I find that I have forgotten many things and this is a quick way to refresh my knowledge. The world is so big and so much has happened in it, no education no matter how good could cover all of it! Thank you, guys! Quick and easy learning for every age. History at it's finest."

that guy, "Well written overview. This is a brief read. However, the volume does a good job at providing relevant background to appreciate how the schism came about. The basic differences between the Roman catholic and eastern orthodox branches of Christianity, and their relations to the imperial powers, are presented and discussed vis-a-vis the main focus. This book(let) would be a great resource for a high school level paper/presentation on the topic, but will leave a more experienced reader slightly wanting."

Dennis Dow, "Excellent so far. The author is providing a balanced view of the conflicts between East and West. I wish there were more but that was my error in expectations."

John Hartle, "A bit of weird religious history. The Schism is interesting to me. Book gives a lot of background leading up to 1052. Is it all a misunderstanding or a translation problem from Greek to Latin? Anyway the book gives you information on the Church(es), I found very interesting."

Luis Lopez, "Good introduction. It came fast and it's a good introduction to the Great Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Church."

JJares, "A Good Overview of What Led to the Schism of 1054. This book takes the long way around explaining the Schism; meaning that Charles Rivers explains how the Catholic Church was split along political lines (The Roman Empire with Rome at its head and The Byzantine Empire with Constantinople as the capital). With so much landmass and so many people in the Roman Empire, it was difficult to keep the operation running smoothly. Thus, two capitals were initiated. It worked for a time politically and religiously. However, it became cumbersome to ask Rome's opinion of all religious questions. A basic issue was that the western part of the empire used Latin for communication while the eastern empire used Greek. In the west, the papal authority eventually oversaw the emperors and kings of the areas. However, in the east, the Church only dealt with religious issues, not politics. As Constantinople was a much richer area, they became less willing to be subordinate to Rome. But the cracks started to emerge when Pope Nicholas I interfered with the establishment of a Patriarch of Constantinople (leader of the Eastern Church) in the 820s (CE). It was called the Photian Schism and lasted for about 4 years. In the Nicene Creed, the Roman Church recognized that the Holy Spirit comes from both God, the Father, and Jesus, the Son. In the Eastern Church, they believed and believe that the Holy

Spirit comes from God, the Father. Period. Interestingly, over the years, the Eastern Church looked to transition back to earlier forms of their religion, while the Western Church looked to reform their practices (adding new ways of doing things). This made the two churches less able to meet in the middle. But Humbert's ex-communication of the Eastern Church was the final straw. This book makes the point that the schism was based on the intolerance of each other's cultural values. They saw their own cultural values as 'the only true one.' (location 828) Fortunately, this book addressed the issue of the Crusades and their effects on the Schism. It only made things worse. The author also introduced the papacy of John the 23rd, as a man trying to reduce the hostilities between the two largest sections of the Christian Church. I really liked the summary the author wrote about hope for the future."

Sujit Chacko, "A good book on East West schism. The topic of East West schism is so diverse and information is so scattered that it becomes a little difficult to understand about the schism in entirety. The author has done a good job by combining all the factors in one book and letting readers know it clearly."

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