

Eastern vs. Oriental Orthodox Churches



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Christian Denominations

- Today, churches may be classified in one of four major groups:
 - 1- The Orthodox Church
 - Eastern, Oriental
 - 2- The Catholic Church
 - 3- The Protestant (reformation) churches
 - Baptist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Anglican
 - 4- The Cults
 - Based on wrong interpretation of the Scriptures
 - Jehovah's Witness, Mormons

Time Line History of Church Denominations

- 33 Pentecost
- 325 The first Ecumenical Council of Nicea
- 381 The second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople
- 431 The third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus
- 451 Chalcedon

Oriental Orthodox Churches

Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches

1054

Eastern Orthodox Churches

Catholic Church

Protestant Churches

1521



The First Ecumenical Council of Nicea 325

- Reason
 - Heresy of Arius
 - Denied the divinity of Christ, considered Him a creature and unequal to the Father
- Heroes
 - Pope Alexandros, Saint Athanasius
- Outcomes
 - The first part of the Creed



The Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople 381

- Reason
 - Heresy of Macedonius
 - Denied the divinity of The Holy Spirit
- Hero
 - Pope Timotheos
- Outcomes
 - The second part of the Creed



The Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus 431

- Reason

- Heresy of Nestorius

- Believed that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a mere human, and that later on divinity descended upon this human and filled him

- Hero

- Pope Cyril (Kyrillos)

- Had expressed the nature of Christ as God and man united in One nature made of two (divine and human natures) without mingling, separation or confusion.

- Outcomes

- The introduction of the Creed



The Chalcedon Council 451

- Reason
 - Heresy of Eutychus
 - He claimed that the human nature was absorbed and dissolved in the divine nature like a drop of vinegar in the ocean
- This council is not considered as an ecumenical council
 - Because the council excommunicated Pope Dioscurus, the Bishop of Alexandria, based on administrative grounds and not based on dogmatic errors.
- Although St. Dioscurus never accepted the doctrine of Eutyches, he has been labeled as Monophysite and hence, all the non-Chalcedonian churches (the churches which did not accept the Chalcedon Council) are considered to be Monophysites.
- The result of the Chalcedonian council is that there were two groups of churches, Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian



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- The Chalcedonian churches continued together and conducting another four councils considered ecumenical by them until the year 1054 A.D. when the Roman church decided to alter the Creed by introducing
 - Filioque (the son) → the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.
- Thus, in 1054 A.D. the names “Catholic” and “Orthodox” were officially used to differentiate between the Roman Catholic Church and the others.
- In recent times, it is generally acknowledged that the non-Chalcedonian and the Orthodox are both confessing the same faith and traditions, except of the Chalcedonian council
 - Both groups may be called Orthodox
- To distinguish between the two groups, one is called *the Oriental Orthodox Churches* (non-Chalcedonian) and the other is called *the Eastern Orthodox Churches* (east of Rome).



Eastern vs. Oriental Orthodox Churches

- The Oriental Orthodox family of churches includes (7 Churches)
 - Alexandria (under the leadership of H.H. Pope Shenouda III since 1971),
 - Ethiopia, Eretria, Antioch (currently under the leadership of Mar Ignatius Zaka Awas I), India (Malankara),
 - Armenia (Etchmiadzin and Antelias)
- The Eastern Orthodox family of churches (Byzantines) includes
 - Constantinople, Alexandria (Malachite),
 - Antioch (Malachite), Jerusalem, Russia,
 - Greece, Romania, and most European countries east of Rome.
- The two families share the same faith and doctrine, even the one about the nature of Christ, which caused the division at the council of Chalcedon.
- In 1964, a dialogue between the two families took place and continued until a theological declaration was signed by both families in 1989 at the Monastery of St. Bishoy in the desert of Egypt, based on the teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria.



Nature of Jesus Christ

- “His divinity parted not from His humanity for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye” - Divine Liturgy
- **The stories of the Widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17) and Lazarus (John 11:17-44) show the humanity and divinity of Christ**
 - *In both of these stories, we get the chance to thoroughly see the humanity and divinity of Christ.*
 - *Christ’s humanity is apparent as we see his loving compassion on the widow and His love for Lazarus, for the Lord wept.*
 - *The Divinity of Christ is also apparent as He raises the widow’s son and Lazarus from the dead.*



Nature of Jesus Christ

- The phrase “**Son of Man**” indicates the human nature of Christ, just as “**Son of God**” indicates His divine nature.
 - **John 3:13** “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven-the **Son of Man**”
 - **Matt 9:6** “But so that you may know that the **Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins”
 - **Matt 16:27** “For the **Son of Man** is going to come in His Father’s glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done”
- *In the above verses, it is evident that although the phrase “**Son of Man**” indicates the human nature of Christ, just as “**Son of God**” indicates His divine nature, our Lord Jesus used the phrase “**Son of Man**” in many instances where He was discussing divine things, proving one nature!!*



Nature of Jesus Christ

- **Without mingling, confusion, or alteration**
 - *Unity of the natures does not mean that the two natures were mixed. No change occurred in the divine nature or the human nature due to their unity.*
 - *For example, when we talk about igniting iron, we heat iron using fire, but the iron still retains all the properties of iron, and the fire retains all the properties of fire, yet they are one!!*



The Agreed Statement (Theological Declaration)

- The following are the main points mentioned in the agreed statement between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches
- (1) Both families agree in condemning the Eutychian heresy
 - Both families confess that the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, only begotten of the Father before the ages and consubstantial with Him, was incarnate and was born from the Virgin Mary Theotokos; fully consubstantial with us, perfect man with soul, body and mind;
 - He was crucified, died, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to the Heavenly Father, where He sits on the right hand of the Father as Lord of all Creation.
 - At Pentecost, by the coming of the Holy Spirit He manifested the Church as His Body. We look forward to His coming again in the fullness of His glory, according to the Scriptures.



The Agreed Statement between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

- (2) Both families condemn the Nestorian heresy and the crypto-Nestorianism of Theodoret of Cyrus.
- They agree that it is not sufficient merely to say that Christ is consubstantial both with His Father and with us, by nature God and by nature man;
 - it is necessary to affirm also that the Logos, Who is by nature God, became by nature Man, by His Incarnation in the fullness of time.
- (3) Both families agree that the Hypostasis of the Logos became composite by uniting to His divine uncreated nature with its natural will and energy, which He has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created human nature, which He assumed at the Incarnation and made His own, with its natural will and energy.



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- (4) Both families agree that the natures with their proper energies and wills are united hypostatically and naturally without confusion, without change, without division and without separation, and that they are distinguished in thought alone.
- (5) Both families agree that He, Who wills and acts, is always the one Hypostasis of the Logos incarnate.
- (6) Both families agree in rejecting interpretations of Councils which do not fully agree with the Horos of the Third Ecumenical Council and the letter (433) of Cyril of Alexandria to John of Antioch.



The Agreed Statement between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

- (7) The Orthodox agree that the Oriental Orthodox will continue to maintain their traditional Cyrillian terminology of "**one nature of the incarnate Logos**", since they acknowledge the double consubstantiality of the Logos which Eutyches denied.
- (8) Both families accept the first three Ecumenical Councils, which form our common heritage.
- In relation to the four later Councils of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox state that for them the above points 1-7 are the teachings also of the four later Councils of the Orthodox Church, while the Oriental Orthodox consider this statement of the Orthodox as their interpretation.
 - With this understanding, the Oriental Orthodox respond to it positively.



The Agreed Statement between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

(9) In the light of our Agreed Statement on Christology as well as of the above common affirmations, we have now clearly understood that both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, though they have used Christological terms in different ways.

- It is this common faith and continuous loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition that should be the basis for our unity and communion.

(10) Both families agree that all the anathemas and condemnations of the past which now divide us should be lifted by the Churches in order that the last obstacle to the full unity and communion of our two families can be removed by the grace and power of God.

- Both families agree that the lifting of anathemas and condemnations will be consummated on the basis that the Councils and Fathers previously anathematized or condemned are not heretical.



The Agreed Statement between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

- Although the Coptic Orthodox Church, and most of the Oriental Orthodox churches have accepted this declaration by their holy synods, not all the Eastern Orthodox churches have approved it by their holy synods yet.
- Thus, the full union of the two families did not take place yet. Only baptism has been accepted based on the 1989 declaration of the one faith. Thus, we in the Coptic Orthodox church accept the baptism of the Eastern churches, but not the same with respect to the other sacraments.



Eastern vs. Oriental Orthodox Churches

- Some practices of the Eastern churches which need some more discussion with the Oriental churches are:
 - The acceptance of any Christian baptism
 - Performing marriages between couples of which one partner is Orthodox and the other is not, but still a Christian.
 - Fasting before partaking in the Holy Communion is only three hours.



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