

# A Study of Denominations

## 2. The Eastern Churches

For the first three hundred years of the church, Christians existed “underground.” In some cases this was literal (the catacombs). Persecution was the biggest threat to the church. The last letters of the New Testament are a testimony to this (See Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation). False teachers existed but persecution seemed to keep this under control. When Constantine became a Christian and then Emperor, much of the persecution ceased, and the church had state support. This was the beginning of the age of creeds – old and new heresies were addressed in public forums for the first time. This continued until the “the great schism,” which occurred in the year A.D. 1054.

### 1. What is meant by “Eastern Orthodoxy”?

Eastern – Christian communities with their own languages that were East of Rome. (Greek, Serbian, Romanian, etc.)

Orthodox – Literally means “right \_\_\_\_\_”



### 2. Immigrants to the United States have established

daughter churches. The largest are the \_\_\_\_\_ Orthodox and the Orthodox Church in America (which has \_\_\_\_\_ roots).

### 3. What happened in A.D. 1054? The Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople mutually \_\_\_\_\_ each other for religious and political reasons.

### 4. What is the source of doctrine for the Eastern Orthodox Churches?

A. Scripture (along with the \_\_\_\_\_ writings)

B. Oral tradition of Christ and His apostles

C. 1 Timothy 3.15 – The church is infallible when the \_\_\_\_\_ speak together.

D. This tradition is revealed in seven \_\_\_\_\_ councils: Nicea (325, 787); Constantinople (381, 553, 681), one at Ephesus (431), and one at Chalcedon (451). Other writings of the church fathers are thought to contain infallible tradition, but there isn't complete consensus about this.

### 5. Specific Differences...

A. *Theosis* “Orthodoxy believes that each Christian is involved in a movement toward God which is known as theosis or deification....Theosis describes the spiritual pilgrimage in which each person becomes ever more perfect, ever more holy, ever more united with God” (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website). See 2 Peter 1.4. See also John 14.16-17.

B. *filioque* In the Nicene Creed we confess... “I believe in the Holy Spirit,... who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.” The Eastern Orthodox Churches strongly oppose the phrase “and the son” asserting that it cannot be proven from Scripture (see Gal 4.6; Rom 8.4; 1 Peter 1.11; John 16.15).

C. *The Sinful Condition of Man* The Eastern Orthodox teach that man fell into sin but not that man is \_\_\_\_\_ in sin. They believe that we have a will that is free to \_\_\_\_\_ with God in bringing about our conversion and justification.

“We believe that a man is justified not simply by faith alone, but by faith which is active through love, that is, through faith and works” (Confession of Dositheus, XIII) See Romans 3.28 and Ephesians 2:8-10.

D. *Sacraments* The Eastern Orthodox believe that the seven sacraments (Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Anointing the Sick) transmit grace that enables Christians to do \_\_\_\_\_ works.

Three of the sacraments are administered at \_\_\_\_\_: Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist (infants receive all three).

\_\_\_\_\_ bread is used in the Eucharist because of a belief that Jesus used it.

The bread is dipped ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) into the wine and is administered with a spoon.

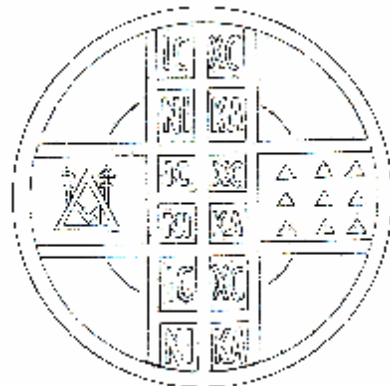
Like Lutherans the Eastern Orthodox believe in the real presence of Christ but they do not commit themselves to the philosophical understanding of the communion according to the Roman Catholic Church.

E. *Absolution* The Eastern Orthodox do not teach that Christians must make \_\_\_\_\_ for sins.

F. *Church* The essential aspect of the church is the \_\_\_\_\_. “The bishop stands in uninterrupted apostolic succession, a living image of God on earth” (Dositheus X). They believe that they are the only true church and that all outside this communion, although they may have saving grace, are not part of the church.

G. *Worship* The Eastern Orthodox liturgy has continued without change from the early centuries of the Christian church. The worship is extremely elaborate and symbolic.

H. *Adoration of Saints* Prayers are made to saints asking for blessings on their efforts toward justification. Icons are considered valuable aids in prayers to saints.



## A Study of Denominations

### 2. The Eastern Churches - Answers

For the first three hundred years of the church, Christians existed “underground.” In some cases this was literal (the catacombs). Persecution was the biggest threat to the church. The last letters of the New Testament are a testimony to this (See Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation). False teachers existed but persecution seemed to keep this under control. When Constantine became a Christian and then Emperor, much of the persecution ceased, and the church had state support. This was the beginning of the age of creeds – old and new heresies were addressed in public forums for the first time. This continued until the “the great schism,” which occurred in the year A.D. 1054.

#### 1. What is meant by “Eastern Orthodoxy”?

Eastern – Christian communities with their own languages that were East of Rome. (Greek, Serbian, Romanian, etc.)

Orthodox – Literally means “right **glory**”



2. Immigrants to the United States have established daughter churches. The largest are the **Greek** Orthodox and the Orthodox Church in America (which has **Russian** roots).
3. What happened in A.D. 1054? The Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople mutually **excommunicated** each other for religious and political reasons.
4. What is the source of doctrine for the Eastern Orthodox Churches?
  - A. Scripture (along with the **apocryphal** writings)
  - B. Oral tradition of Christ and His apostles
  - C. 1 Timothy 3.15 – The church is infallible when the **bishops** speak together.
  - D. This tradition is revealed in seven **ecumenical** councils: Nicea (325, 787); Constantinople (381, 553, 681), one at Ephesus (431), and one at Chalcedon (451). Other writings of the church fathers are thought to contain infallible tradition, but there isn't complete consensus about this.
5. Specific Differences...
  - A. *Theosis* “Orthodoxy believes that each Christian is involved in a movement toward God which is known as theosis or deification....Theosis describes the spiritual pilgrimage in which each person becomes ever more perfect, ever more holy, ever more united with God” (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website). See 2 Peter 1.4. See also John 14.16-17.

- B. *filioque* In the Nicene Creed we confess... “I believe in the Holy Spirit,... who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.” The Eastern Orthodox Churches strongly oppose the phrase “and the son” asserting that it cannot be proven from Scripture (see Gal 4.6; Rom 8.4; 1 Peter 1.11; John 16.15).
- C. *The Sinful Condition of Man* The Eastern Orthodox teach that man fell into sin but not that man is **dead** in sin. They believe that we have a will that is free to **cooperate** with God in bringing about our conversion and justification.

“We believe that a man is justified not simply by faith alone, but by faith which is active through love, that is, through faith and works” (Confession of Dositheus, XIII) See Romans 3.28 and Ephesians 2:8-10.

- D. *Sacraments* The Eastern Orthodox believe that the seven sacraments (Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Anointing the Sick) transmit grace that enables Christians to do **meritorious** works.

Three of the sacraments are administered at **once**: Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist (infants receive all three).

**Leavened** bread is used in the Eucharist because of a belief that Jesus used it.

The bread is dipped (**intinction**) into the wine and is administered with a spoon.

Like Lutherans the Eastern Orthodox believe in the real presence of Christ but they do not commit themselves to the philosophical understanding of the communion according to the Roman Catholic Church.

- E. *Absolution* The Eastern Orthodox do not teach that Christians must make **restitution** for sins.
- F. *Church* The essential aspect of the church is the **bishop**. “The bishop stands in uninterrupted apostolic succession, a living image of God on earth” (Dositheus X). They believe that they are the only true church and that all outside this communion, although they may have saving grace, are not part of the church.

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