

I. Eastern Orthodoxy Christianity

A. Self-perception and values:

1. Orthodox – the faith of the founders of Christianity which has remained unchanged from time of Christ (Spickard, 102).
2. Early church was local church which made decisions through councils (first council at Jerusalem in Acts 15).
3. No separation of church and state. Two authorities – emperor and bishop. Emperors appointed bishops at Constantinople.
4. Focus – backward looking, decisions based on precedent and attempt to link themselves to apostles, patriarchs, and councils.
5. Emphasis on mystical and ritual aspects of worship vs. western emphasis on rationalism as basis of faith.

B. Calls itself Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils

1. Nicaea 325 AD – Arian controversy/Trinity
2. Constantinople 381 AD – clarification of doctrine of Trinity.
3. Ephesus 431 AD – christological/nature of Christ
4. Chalcedon 451 – christological (dual nature of Christ)
5. Constantinople 553 – christological
6. Constantinople 681 – rejection of monophysitism/ single nature of Christ, split of 5 groups now called monophysite churches.
7. Nicaea 787 – Iconoclastic controversy – restored veneration of icons.

II. The Iconoclastic Controversy – 726 – 843 AD

A. Ideological background:

1. *Caesaropapism* – (Byzantine imperial ideology) idea initiated in Eusebius of Caesarea which became traditional view of emperor's relationship with the church – emperor viewed as living icon of Christ. Emperor reproduces on earth God's rule in heaven. "Just as God regulates the cosmic order, so the emperor regulates the social order." (Eusebius in Ware, 134). Emperor had civil responsibilities as well as religious and society was seen as integrated whole.

2. Practical implications:
 - a. Emperor appointed and deposed patriarch with assistance of church council.
 - b. Emperor called church councils and presided over them (or appointed his own representative)
 - c. Emperor determined agenda to be discussed by bishops in council.

B. Historical background of controversy

1. Possible influence of iconoclasm from Islam, emphasized 2nd commandment – “no graven images”. Icons – visual representations of Christ, Virgin Mary, angels, or saints usually as painted wood, mosaic, or fresco, seldom statues.
2. Emperor Leo III (Isaurus) 726 – issued edict against icons. In 730, John of Damascus wrote in defense of icons. In 754 Emperor Constantine V called council forbidding use of images. Gonzalez thinks emperor wanted to curb power of monks who were in favor of images (p. 260). 7th Ecumenical Council of 787 – restored icons under Empress Irene. 815-842 AD – Second period of iconoclasm. 843 AD – “Triumph of Orthodoxy” – restoration of veneration of icons by Empress Theodora, viewed it as true profession of apostolic Christian faith.
3. Iconoclastic emperors taxed owners of images and the artists who created them. Army and secret police enforced their policy, speakers on both sides of issues whipped up passions of the masses, and pamphlet writers wrote diatribes on both sides of issue.

C. View of iconodules (supporters of icons):

1. Saw this as continuation of earlier christological debates.
2. Since Christ took a real human body, it is essential to portray his face in line and color. To reject icons is to doubt fullness of Christ’s human nature. Icons guarantee reality of incarnation of Christ.
3. Iconodules defend veneration of icons by distinguishing between worship (*latreia*) given only to God and honor/veneration (*douleia*) given to icons. (Note: Spickard, 103 uses word “worship”, misleading, venerate/honor better)
4. Theology and purpose of veneration of icons:

- a. Icons function as teaching tools, especially for illiterate
 - b. Icons reveal the spirit-bearing potential of material things (God may be worshipped not just through words but through material objects) (Ex: *Passion of the Christ*)
 - c. Icons seen as triggers for spiritual emotions/worship.
 - d. Icons make explicit innate holiness of material world (avoids Manicheism).
 - e. Iconodules view God as the first maker of images when he created humans in his own image
- III. Breach between East and West (Schism between Roman Catholic & Orthodox churches)
- A. Photian schism 863-7 AD: Pope Nicolas I of Rome at odds with Patriarch Photius, both competed to evangelize Slavs. Photius rejected Latin method of liturgy (such as Eucharist with unleavened bread) in Roman Catholic churches in his region and Latin theology of procession of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. 1054 schism – Pope Leo IX and Patriarch Michael Cerularius – rivalry between Roman Catholic see & Orthodox see. Patriarch Cerularius closed Latin churches in his region after Italians forced Greek Christians in their region to observe Latin mass. Conflict between Cardinal Humbert, the pope's legate and the Patriarch resulted in their mutually anathematize.
 - C. Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople in 1204.
 - D. Ideological/theological differences:
 1. Procession of the Holy Spirit – Nicene Creed (325) said the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father; Latin church added *filioque* into the creed indicating the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. Orthodox feel westerners devalue Holy Spirit, overstressing unity at expense of diversity of persons of Trinity.
 2. Authority of the pope – Orthodox view him as first among equals, but reject papal infallibility.
 3. Other differences: rules of fasting, western use of unleavened bread in eucharist, west required celibacy of clergy while east didn't, divorce forbidden by west, but allowed in certain conditions by east, east rejected western teachings on purgatory and indulgences.

Further Reading:

Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1984, 1985, repr. 1999, 251-265.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons*. The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, Bollingen Series 35.36. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 7-39.

Spickard, Paul A. and Kevin M. Cragg. *A Global History of Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: 1994, repr. 2003, 102-113.

Sahas, Daniel J. *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth Century Iconoclasm*. Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations 4. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.

Ware, Kallistos. "Eastern Christendom," in *The Oxford History of Christianity*, edited by John McManners. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993: 131-166.