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## ORTHODOXY AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM?

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Most Christians, in attempting to distinguish between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, usually mention the Pope or Purgatory, sometimes the filioque. The differences, however, are far more numerous and quite profound.

### Faith and Reason

Following the Holy Fathers, Orthodoxy uses science and philosophy to defend and explain her Faith. However, unlike Roman Catholicism, she does not build on the **results** of philosophy and science, because human reason cannot lead to a knowledge of God..

### The Development of Doctrine

The Orthodox Church does not endorse the view that the teachings of Christ have changed from time to time; rather that Christianity has remained unaltered from the moment that the Lord delivered the Faith to the Apostles (*Matt. 28: 18-20*).

### God

Roman Catholicism teaches that human reason can prove that God is; and, even infer that He is eternal, infinite, good, bodiless, almighty, all-knowing, etc.

Following the Holy Fathers, Orthodoxy teaches that the knowledge of God is planted in human nature and that is how we know Him to exist.

### Christ

Following the holy Fathers, Orthodoxy teaches that Christ, on the Cross, gave "His life a ransom for many" (*Matt. 20:28*). "For even the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (*Mark 10:45*). The "ransom" is paid to the grave. As the Lord revealed to the Prophet Hosea (*Hosea*

*13:14*), "I will ransom them (us) from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." In a sense, He pays the ransom to the devil who is the keeper of the grave and holds the power of death (*Heb. 2:14*).

According to Roman Catholic theology, God became man in order to satisfy the divine Justice which was offended by the sin of Adam.

### The Church

The Latins teach that the visible head of the Church is the Pope. The Orthodox Church teaches that all bishops are equal. Orthodoxy teaches that every bishop, "the living icon of Christ," and his flock constitute the Church in a certain place; or, as St. Ignatius the God-bearer says, the Church of Christ is in the bishop, his priests and deacons, with the people, surrounding the Eucharist in the true faith. All bishops and their flocks so constituted, together composing the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

### The Holy Canons

A canon is a "rule" or "guide" for governing The Church. Canons were composed by the Apostles, the Fathers, the local or regional and general or ecumenical Councils (in Latin) or Synods (in Greek). Only the bishop, as head of the church, applies them. He may use them "strictly" (*akreveia*) or "leniently" (*economia*). "Strictness" is the norm.

Unlike the Latins, the Orthodox Church does not think of canons as laws, that is, as regulating human relationships or securing human rights; rather, Orthodoxy views canons as the means of forging the "new man" or "new creature" through obedience. They are training in virtue. They are meant to produce holiness.

### The Mysteries

Concerning the Sacraments in general, the Orthodox teach that their material elements (bread, wine, water, chrism, etc.) become grace-filled by the calling of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*). Roman Catholicism believes that the Sacraments are effective on account of the priest who acts "in the person of Christ."

### The Nature of Man

Following the Holy Fathers, the Orthodox Church holds that when Adam sinned against God, he introduced death to the world. Since all men are born of the same human stock as Adam, all men inherit death. Death means that the life of every human being comes to an end (*mortality*); but also that death generates in us the passions (anger, hate, lust, greed, etc.), disease and aging.

Roman Catholicism has ordinarily paid little attention to the Orthodox conception of man as slave to death through his passions as manipulated by the devil. In fact, the devil has been pushed to the background. Thus, the Crucifixion has been understood by the Latins as Christ suffering punishment for the human race ("vicarious atonement"), when, in truth, Christ suffered and died on the Cross to conquer the devil and destroy his power, death.

### Purgatory

Purgatory is a condition of the departed before the final judgment, according to Roman Catholic theology, where those souls destined for heaven (with a few exceptions) must endure a state of purgation, or purification. They must be cleansed of the sins committed on earth. The rest go to hell for eternal punishment.

Moreover, from a "treasury" of merits, or extra grace accumulated by the virtue of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints, "indulgences" may be granted. The grace is applied to those in purgatory in order to shorten their time there.

Orthodoxy teaches instead that, after the soul leaves the body, it journeys to the abode of the dead (Hades). There are exceptions, such as the Theotokos, who was borne by the angels directly into heaven. As for the rest, we must remain in this condition of waiting. Because some have a prevision of the glory to come and others foretaste their suffering, the state of waiting is called "Particular Judgment."

When Christ returns, the soul rejoins its risen body to be judged by Him. The "good and faithful servant" will inherit eternal life, the unfaithful with the unbeliever will spend eternity in hell.

Their sins and their unbelief will torture them as fire.

### The Mother of God

The doctrine of the place and person of the Virgin Mary in the Church is called "mariology." Both Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism believe she is "Mother of God" (Theotokos, Deipare) and "the Ever-Virgin Mary."

However, the Orthodox reject the Roman Catholic "dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary." This dogma holds that from the first instant of her conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary was, by a most singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, preserved from all stain of Original Sin. It is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and steadfastly believed by all the faithful.

Such a theory has no basis in the Scriptures nor the Fathers. It contains many ideas (such as "the merits of Christ") likewise without apostolic foundation. The idea that the Lord and His Saints produced more grace than necessary is false.

The Orthodox does not accept the idea that the Mother of God was born with the (inherited) guilt of Adam; no one is. She did, however, inherit the mortality which comes to all on account of Adam's Fall.

Therefore, there is no need to do what Latin theologians have done. There is no reason to invent a theory to support the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. There is no need to teach that, on account of "the merits of Christ," the Holy Spirit was able to prevent her from inheriting the guilt of Adam. In fact, she was born like every other human being. The Holy Spirit prepared the Virgin Mary for her role as the Mother of God. She was filled with the Uncreated Energy of the Holy Spirit of God in order that she might be a worthy vessel for the birth of Christ. Nevertheless, several of the Fathers observed that before the Resurrection of her Son, she had sinned. St. John Chrysostom mentions the Wedding at Cana where she presumed to instruct Him (*John 2:3-4*). Here was proof of her mortality.

# Orthodox



# And Catholic Differences