

The Difference a Word Makes

Eastern Orthodox

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1. This is the first in a series of four presentations on the Christians you don't know.
2. What we will learn will challenge our understanding of what it means to be Christian.
3. We will learn that not all Christians believe in the Trinity or the doctrine of original sin.
4. We will learn that not all Christians believe people go to heaven or hell when they die.
5. We will see that some Christians believe humans have the ability to become god-like or even to become a god.
6. We will see that some Christians believe that God is ultimately unknowable and some who believe God is just like us, only better.
7. Today, we will look at Eastern Orthodoxy, which claims between 225 and 300 million adherents world-wide and about 1.2 million in the United States, many of them immigrants.
8. Eastern Orthodoxy, sometimes called "Greek Orthodoxy," describes a family of fourteen independent and self-governing churches, all of which share a common history and include in their names the word "Orthodox," which means "correct belief."
9. While the other religious traditions that we will discuss later in this series believe they have restored the original church, Eastern Orthodoxy does not claim to have restored the original church but "**considers itself the continuation of the original and true Church of Christ.**" Rosen, *Religions of America* at 114.

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1. In about 33 A.D., followers of Jesus began forming small congregations, usually meeting in homes, to recreate the Last Supper and celebrate Jesus' resurrection.
2. The first of these congregations, which we now call "churches," formed in Jerusalem, with James, the brother of Jesus, as its leader. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 36.

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1. **“Within an astonishingly short time small Christian communities had sprung up in all the main centres of the Roman Empire and even in places beyond the Roman frontier.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 12.
2. Paul and Barnabas spent a year in Antioch, then part of Syria, where new followers were first called “Christians.” *Acts* 11:19-26.
3. According to tradition, Mark, a disciple of Jesus, recruited followers in Alexandria, Egypt.
4. As the Eastern Orthodox like to point out, the earliest churches were all on the eastern end of the Empire, where everyone spoke Greek.
5. Because of that, the Gospels and the letters of Paul were all written in Greek.
6. At some later time, a group of believers was formed in Rome. *Romans* 1:8.

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1. Following the example of James in Jerusalem, a bishop was appointed in each city to lead the church in the city and its surrounded area.
2. Because of their association with Jesus’ disciples, the most important bishops were in Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. Freeman, *A.D. 381* at 41.
3. The bishop of Rome was considered the most important bishop because of the importance of the city and because Irenaeus had written that Paul and Peter had been the founders of the church in Rome and that all subsequent bishops in Rome had succeeded from the two of them. Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* at 36.
4. The connection of Paul with Rome was later downplayed because of later claims that Paul **“had become the apostle of the heretics.”** Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 63.
5. As a result, Peter began being seen as the first Bishop of Rome.

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1. In 284 A.D., Diocletian became the Emperor in Rome.
2. Best known for his persecution of Christians, Diocletian divided the Empire into eastern and western units, each ruled by a co-emperor with the title “Augustus” and a junior emperor called “Caesar.”

3. Greek was the predominant language in the east and Latin the predominant language in the west.
4. All the important churches other than the one in Rome were in the Eastern Empire.

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1. Constantine, who became Caesar in the west in 307, originally worshipped the sun god.
2. In 312 A.D., Constantine reportedly saw a vision of the cross before a battle against a rival emperor at the Milvian Bridge in Italy and put the sign of the cross on the shields of the soldiers and attributed his victory to Jesus.

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1. In 313 A.D., Constantine, along with the Augustus in the west, signed the Edict of Milan, which provided that **“now every individual still desirous of observing the Christian form of worship should without any interference be allowed to do so.”** Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 322-23.
2. Constantine soon learned that not only language divided the Christians in his Empire – Christians had different views on whether Jesus and God were equal and whether there was a time when Jesus did not exist.
3. The most serious divisions (or at least the ones that Constantine were aware of) were among the Greek-speaking churches of the eastern Empire.

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1. When Constantine’s religious advisor was unable to resolve this difference, Constantine invited about 1800 bishops to his summer palace in Nicaea, in what is now Turkey.
2. About 300 bishops, most of them from the Greek-speaking east, attended this council in 325 A.D., considered to be the First Ecumenical Council.

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1. With two dissenting votes, the so-called “Council of Nicaea” approved this text, translated here from the original Greek.
2. God and Jesus of the same substance [*homoousios*] and Jesus was involved in the creative process along with God since he had existed as long as God.

3. The last sentence about the Holy Spirit was tacked on “**almost as an afterthought**” because there was no consensus at this time about how the Holy Spirit related to Jesus and God. Armstrong, *A History of God* at 115.

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1. Just before the Council of Nicaea, Constantine had beaten a rival emperor, becoming the unquestioned leader of the entire Roman Empire, east and west.
2. In 330, Constantine moved his capital to the ancient Greek city of Byzantium, which he renamed “Constantinople,” the “City of Constantine.”
3. Constantine wanted this Greek-speaking “new Rome” to be the “**centre of the Christian empire he had in mind,**” but without the pagan practices and monuments of the “old Rome.” Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 18.

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1. In July 381, with the Empire again divided, Eastern Emperor Theodosius summoned about 150 eastern bishops to Constantinople in what became known as the Second Ecumenical Council.
2. The Council at Constantinople, meeting in the church of Holy Irene, put out a modified version of the creed that had been adopted at the Council at Nicaea.

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1. The primary change to the formulation adopted at Nicaea dealt with the Holy Spirit, making it a full member of the Trinity and rejecting the views that the Holy Spirit was not of the same substance as God and Jesus.
2. The added language said: “[We believe] **in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets; And in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church; We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; We wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age.**” Freeman, *A.D. 381* at 206.
3. The Council at Constantinople recognized the importance of Constantinople by assigning the Bishop of Constantinople the second position in the ranking of bishops, “**after Rome and above Alexandria.**” Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 21.

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1. In 410, Visigoths, Christians who rejected the Nicene Creed and its claim that God and Jesus are equal, sacked Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire in the west.

2. The Visigoths had little interest in actually running a civil society, so the Bishop of Rome, commonly known as “the Pope,” essentially took over the operation of civil government in the west.
3. As one author says: “[W]hen the Latin-speaking Roman Empire collapsed in the West in the fifth century, its civil servants promptly transferred to the payroll of the Western Church.” MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 12.

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1. At the same time, the Pope, claiming to be the direct successor of Peter, began claiming sole control over ecclesiastical matters throughout the Empire, east and west.
2. In about 446, Pope Leo the Great claimed that “**Christ conferred on the bishop of Rome a unique, supreme, and universal authority over all Christendom.**” Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 99.

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1. The last Emperor in the west gave up his throne in 476 A.D.
2. Many people in the west believe that the Roman Empire then collapsed.
3. But it was only the Western Empire that collapsed.
4. The Eastern Empire, with its capital in Constantinople, not only survived but flourished for hundreds of years as the Byzantine Empire.
5. Justinian became the Byzantine Emperor in 527.
6. In 532, Justinian ordered the construction of the *Hagia Sophia* (“Holy Wisdom”) on the site of earlier churches in Constantinople.
7. This church serves as a model for many Eastern Orthodox churches today.
8. Christians in the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire rejected completely the claims of the Popes in Rome to speak for all Christians.
9. As one author states: “**The Greeks assigned to the Pope a primacy of honour, but not the universal supremacy which he regarded as his due.**” Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 47.
10. The Eastern Church, within a still-functioning Empire, believed that decisions on spiritual matters must be made by a council representing all the bishops as decisions had been made beginning with the Council of Nicaea called by Emperor Constantine.

11. So, the Eastern and Western Churches developed “**two different conceptions of the visible organization of the Church.**” *Id.*

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1. There were also differences in religious practices between the churches in the east and those in the west.
2. In the west, priests were required to remain celibate, but in the east priests could marry and only bishops had to be celibate.
3. The Western Church used unleavened bread for Communion, but the Eastern Church used leavened bread.
4. The Western Church conducted its services in Latin, while the Eastern Church conducted its services in Greek.
5. The Western Church baptized by sprinkling, while the Eastern Church baptized by triple immersion.
6. The Western Church made the sign of the cross by touching the left shoulder first, while the Eastern Church touched the right shoulder first.
7. But none of those differences was nearly as important as what became known as the “*filioque* controversy,” a dispute over a single word.

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1. As we saw earlier, the Second Ecumenical Council, attended only by bishops from the Eastern Empire, modified what became known as the “Nicene Creed” by adding a provision saying that the Holy Spirit “**proceeds from the Father.**”
2. The conclusion that the Holy Spirit had come from the Father was based on *John* 15:26, in which Jesus promised “**the spirit of truth who goes out from the father.**”
3. The word “proceeds” was selected over “begotten,” the word used to describe the relationship of Jesus to God, because Jesus was God’s “**only begotten son.**” *John* 3:16.
4. Augustine of Hippo, a Christian from North Africa, objected to the Nicene Creed’s statement about the Holy Spirit, which he believed detracted from the identity of Jesus and God.
5. In the sixth century, Christians in Spain began adding the Latin word “*filioque*,” meaning “and the son,” to assert that the Holy Spirit “**proceeds from the Father and the Son.**”

6. In 796, a council of western bishops meeting in France approved the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed.
7. **“When the Greek Church heard of this formulation, they were outraged.”** Freeman, *A.D.* 381 at 167.
8. First, the Eastern Church objected to any change in a creed that had not been adopted by an ecumenical council called by the Emperor and considered the change **“a sin against the unity of the Church.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 49.
9. Second, the Eastern Church thought that the idea that the Holy Spirit could proceed from Jesus was **“theologically untrue and a threat to the doctrine of the Trinity.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 42.
10. Eastern Christians believed that the addition of the *filioque* **“made the Trinity too rational” “instead of hinting at the essential incomprehensibility of God.”** Armstrong, *A History of God* at 200.

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1. The controversy over the addition of the *“filioque”* led to two centuries of charges and counter charges.
2. Charlemagne, crowned Emperor of the West in 800 by Pope Leo III, **“reproached [Eastern] Christians for failing to adopt the version of the Nicene Creed that contained the term *filioque*.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 41.
3. Pointing in the other direction, in about 865, Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, **“branded the entire Latin church as heretical for inserting the term *filioque* into the Nicene Creed.”** *Id.* at 42.
4. In 1054, the Pope sent a delegation to Constantinople, with a letter accusing the Eastern Church of omitting the *filioque* from the Nicene Creed and asking that it be restored.
5. This charge obviously ignored the fact that it was the Western Church that had *added* the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed in the first place.
6. When the Patriarch of Constantinople refused to see the Pope’s delegates, they went to the *Hagia Sophia*, the most important church in the east, and laid a papal bull on the altar, excommunicating the Patriarch.
7. The Patriarch responded by excommunicating the delegates.

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1. The ultimate result of these actions was the “Great Schism,” separating the Church now known as the “Roman Catholic Church,” centered in Rome,” from the Eastern Church, centered in Constantinople.
2. **“To the East it was the Western Christians who left, because they abandoned the ancient faith, embracing new ideas like the *filioque* and increased papal authority.”** Matthewes-Green, *Welcome to the Orthodox Church* at 46.
3. As a result, the Eastern Orthodox Church believes **“it alone has maintained an unbroken continuity with the apostolic faith of the New Testament.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 30.
- 4 Eastern Orthodoxy claims **“to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, founded by Jesus Christ in the year of His death, A.D. 33.”** Rosen, *Religions of America* at 112.
5. When Eastern Orthodox Christians recite the Nicene Creed, exactly as it was adopted in 381, they believe the **“one holy, catholic and apostolic Church”** refers only to them.
6. The full name of the Church is therefore “The Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Eastern Church,” which is usually shorted to “Eastern Orthodox” to avoid confusion with Roman Catholicism.
7. Since 1054, there have been efforts to bring the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches back together, but these efforts have failed over the issues that divided them in the first place – papal authority and the *filioque*.

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1. The differences between east and west concerning the *filioque* **“revealed . . . quite different conceptions of God”** that exist today between Eastern Orthodox and western Christians. Armstrong, *A History of God* at 200.
2. Western Christians describe the Trinity as **“God in Three Persons,”** based on the Latin translation of the original Greek.
3. Eastern Christians, both in the ninth century and today, describe the Trinity as **“three persons in one substance or essence.”** Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* at 28.
- 4 The difference between these two formulations is subtle, but fundamental to understanding the differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and the western tradition shared by Roman Catholics and Protestants.

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1. Under the western formulation, God is the union of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and there is nothing more to know about God.
2. As Karen Armstrong writes: “[T]he West began with the notion of God’s unity and then considered the three persons within that unity.” Armstrong, *A History of God* at 200.
3. For western Christians, the unity of these persons is God.
4. To see this idea better, consider that someone says that a jigsaw puzzle is **in** four pieces – when you have seen all four pieces, you can solve the puzzle and be confident there are no more pieces.

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1. Western art reflects this view, showing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with no indication that there is anything more to God.
2. Western Christians often base this view of God on the ideas of Augustine, who thought that people “**should be able to discern a trinity in the depths of our minds.**” Armstrong, *A History of God* at 121.
3. You can see in western art the influence of the *filioque* – God and Jesus are equal and the Holy Spirit is connected to both of them.

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1. Under the eastern formulation, the three persons of the Trinity share the same essence but taken together are not all there is to know about God because the “**essence was not to be understood.**” Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* at 28.
2. As Karen Armstrong writes: “[T]he Greeks had always started with the three [persons] and declared that God’s unity—his essence—was beyond our ken.” Armstrong, *A History of God* at 200.
3. When Eastern Orthodox Christians say there are three pieces of God, God still can’t be known because there are unknown components.

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1. As a result, when Eastern Orthodox Christians picture the Trinity, they picture only angels and never picture the Father, whom they deem beyond description.
2. Eastern Orthodox Christians see the members of the Trinity as illustrating how God acts, not what God is, the difference between the “essence” and the “energies.”
3. For them, **“God is in essence absolutely unknowable.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 65.

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1. Believing that the essence of God is beyond human comprehension, Eastern Orthodox Christians believe **“we cannot know God, only what he is not – not-finite, not created, not visible.”** Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* at 29.
2. For Eastern Orthodox, even souls in heaven do not know God, but can only experience God through his energies.
3. As a result, Eastern Orthodox Christians reject efforts of western Christians such as Thomas Aquinas to **“enthron[e] reason and logic as the final arbiters of all matters of truth”** and to prove the existence of God through logic. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 48.
4. For Eastern Orthodox Christians, God is a perpetual mystery, to be experienced rather than understood, and **“true theology is wedded to actual experience and not relegated solely to the intellect.”** *Id.* at 55.
5. Consequently, **“Orthodoxy seeks to experience and express spiritual truth in the concrete, tangible forms of color and design and in music rather than in books or discourse.”** *Id.* at 73.
6. As one author states, the objective of an Orthodox worship service is **“focused on engaging God directly, worshiping him, rather than learning about him intellectually.”** Matthewes-Green, *Welcome to the Orthodox Church* at 228.
7. Because the objective is to experience God instead of just trying to understand God, **“[i]n the Orthodox liturgical scheme, deliberate attention is given to the employment of all five of the senses.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 74.
8. Eastern Orthodoxy proudly claims to be a church of “smells and bells.”

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1. Incense, appealing to the sense of smell, is associated with the prayers of the saints. *Revelation 8:3-4*.
2. Prayers are lifted to God as the incense wafts toward the heavens.
3. Incense is also used to symbolize the coming kingdom of God.

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1. Prayers and readings from the Bible are chanted by trained cantors, appealing to the sense of sound.
2. Again, the idea is to experience God's word rather than simply hear or understand it.
3. The sense of sound is also addressed through the singing of hymns, usually unaccompanied by any instrumentation.
4. Eastern Orthodox Christians traditionally stand during the entire service as they experience the presence of God, but today may sit during a short sermon, which is probably the least important part of the service.
5. Traditionally, as in Jewish services, men stand on one side and women on the other.

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1. The sense of taste is engaged by the Eucharist, one of the most important of the sacraments, called "mysteries," recognized in Eastern Orthodoxy.
2. Congregants partake of both the wine and the bread, which is leavened.
3. The consecrated bread and wine are served by the priest on a spoon to anyone baptized in the Eastern Orthodox Church.
4. Like Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that **"after consecration the bread and wine become in very truth the Body and Blood of Christ; they are not mere symbols, but the reality."** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 276.
5. But, unlike Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy makes no effort to explain this change and does not accept the Catholic doctrine of "transubstantiation" because it eliminates the essential mystery of the change.

6. Although only those baptized in the Orthodox tradition can receive the Eucharist, any Christian can receive a piece of blessed bread at the end of the service that is called the “*antidoron*.”

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1. The sense of touch is engaged often in Eastern Orthodox worship.
2. Congregants entering a church kiss the icons.
3. They may touch the priest’s vestment or kiss his hands and the chalice.
4. Eastern Orthodox Christians see all these touchings as acts of veneration, essential to the overall worship experience.

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1. I saved for last the way Eastern Orthodox worship engages the sense of sight through icons because icons are such an important part of Eastern Orthodoxy and have their own history.
2. As one author recently stated: “**The icon is not only the most obvious but perhaps the most important symbol of the difference between the East and the West.**” Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodoxy* at 80.
3. For Eastern Christians, the icons are more than simply beautiful art – they “**are of equal benefit and mutually revelatory with the written Gospel.**” *Id.*
4. Icons are often called “windows into heaven.”

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1. The use and veneration of icons by the Eastern Church was a source of controversy for 120 years.
2. In 692 A.D, a council in Constantinople summoned by Emperor Justinian II ordered that Jesus be depicted **only** as a human figure and not as the lamb, in order to show His incarnation. Walker, *A History of the Church* at 183.
3. In about 730, Leo III, the Eastern Emperor, changed the official position and ordered that all images of Jesus be replaced by a cross.
4. The stated reason for his decision was that it was impossible to show the divinity of Jesus in a picture, a position that may have been influenced by the Islamic position that any portrayal of God is improper.

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1. Hundreds of icons were destroyed or defaced in the name of these “iconoclasts.”
2. Gregory III, the Pope in Rome, convened a synod to condemn this iconoclasm as heretical and excommunicated its promoters.
3. The supporters of icons, called “iconodules,” argued that showing Jesus as a man showed only his humanity and made no attempt to show his divinity.
4. The iconodules were supported by the monks, who thought icons were essential to teaching Christianity to the illiterate masses.

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1. In 787, Empress Irene, the mother of a young Emperor, shown here on the right, called the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.
2. This council reaffirmed that the use of pictures of Jesus and Mary, as the Mother of God, on walls and panels was consistent with Christian belief.
3. Icons such as this one were restored to eastern churches.

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1. In 815, Eastern Emperor Leo V again ordered that all images of Jesus be replaced by a cross.
2. These crosses in the *Hagia Sophia*, which replaced earlier pictures of Jesus, resulted from that decision.
3. This decision was again rejected by the Pope, who believed it was hypocritical for the Emperor to allow himself to be pictured, but to deny that right to Jesus.

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1. In 843, a council called by the regent for young Eastern Emperor Michael III **“reconfirmed the decision of 787, excommunicated the iconoclasts, and established the first Sunday of Lent as a holy day to celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 85.
2. Since then, icons have been a major feature of Eastern Orthodoxy and it is impossible to imagine an Eastern Orthodox service without them.

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1. Orthodox Christians **“have striven to make their worship in outward splendor and beauty an icon of the great Liturgy in heaven.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 258.
2. The design of Eastern Orthodox churches is intended to enhance the worship experience.
3. Eastern Orthodox churches are typically square, often with four arms suggesting the shape of the Greek cross.
4. Orthodox churches, emulating a design that began with the *Hagia Sophia*, also often include a central dome.
5. St. Isaac’s Cathedral in St. Petersburg, the largest Orthodox church, is typical of that design.

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1. Keeping with the idea that the worship service is to create heaven on earth, the inside of the dome usually is painted with scenes of heaven.
2. This dome in St. Isaac’s has a dove in the center, representing the Holy Spirit, an image Eastern Orthodox believe is only representative of the Holy Spirit in connection with Jesus’s baptism.

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1. The basic organization of the inside of Eastern Orthodox churches is standard throughout the world.
2. At the east side of the church is the iconostasis, a screen that separates the congregation from the altar where the elements of the Eucharist are consecrated.
3. With a few exceptions, only the priest is allowed behind the screen, but the altar may be visible during some parts of the service.
4. This iconostasis is in the Church of St. George in Ezra, Syria, one of the oldest churches in the world.
5. The two essential icons on the iconostasis are always arranged the same way.
6. An icon of Jesus is always just to the right of the center of the screen that includes a door for entering the altar.
7. Jesus is shown holding the Bible and raising his right hand in blessing.

8. To the left of the door, on the right side of Jesus, is always a picture of Mary holding the infant Jesus.
9. Like Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate Mary as *Theotokos*, the Mother of God.
10. They also accept her perpetual virginity.
11. But Eastern Orthodox Christians reject the Roman Catholic idea that Mary was immaculately conceived.

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1. To the left of Mary is usually an icon representing the person or image after whom the church was named.
2. Here, we see the icon of St. George next to Mary.

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1. In the much more ornate St. Isaac's Cathedral, we see the same organization of the icons on the iconostasis.
2. The icon of Jesus is to the right of the stained glass image of Jesus, which is not standard.
3. The icon of Mary is to the left.
4. Above them both is the Last Supper, which is often in this location.

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1. At baptism, Eastern Orthodox are given the name of a saint and that saint's feast day may be **"far more important than one's birthday."** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 249.
2. Eastern Orthodox pray to their saints and the icon of the saint can be seen as a way to connect more closely to the saint, each of whom has an icon.
3. As one author writes: **"These ever-present icons act as a meeting point between the living members of the Church and those who have gone before."** *Id.* at 249.
4. Another says that icons represent a connection **"between God and human kind, between heaven and earth, between the saints and the realm of human affairs."** Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* at 115.

5. For Eastern Orthodox, the “communion of saints” of the Apostle’s Creed is a real linking of the living and the dead.

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1. Although the most important theological difference between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and western Christians, including both Roman Catholics and Protestants, is probably the idea that God is a mystery, to be experienced rather than simply being understood, there are other important differences.

2. One of the most important is the interpretation of the fall of Adam.

3. Eastern Orthodoxy rejects the belief of most western Christians, based on the teachings of Augustine, that all humans have inherited Adam’s sin and are born sinful.

4. As one author states: **“Orthodox have never held (as Augustine and many others in the west have done) that unbaptized babies, because tainted with original guilt, are consigned by the just God to the everlasting flames of hell.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 218.

5. As a result, humans **“are only guilty in so far as by their own free choice they imitate Adam.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 218.

6. Because Eastern Orthodox Christians reject the western conception of original sin, the doctrine of **“justification by faith”** that is so important to Protestants is **“almost totally absent from Eastern thought.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 123.

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1. Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that **“[r]ather than guilt, in Adam we have inherited death, mortality, and corruption.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 132.

2. Because Eastern Orthodoxy interprets the fall of Adam differently from Roman Catholics and most Protestants, it also interprets the crucifixion of Jesus differently.

3. Eastern Orthodox theology rejects the idea, fundamental to many Protestants and Roman Catholics, that **“Christ died for our sins.”**

4. As one Orthodox writer recently wrote: **“For their part, lifelong Orthodox are often astonished to learn that anyone believes that [Jesus had to die on the cross] before the Father could forgive us. They assume that he simply forgives us, as the father of the Prodigal son forgave his son.”** Mathews-Green, *Welcome to the Orthodox Church* at 89.

5. For Orthodox Christians, Jesus' death is not alone the basis for salvation, but was required before he could be resurrected and overcome death that had become the lot of humanity because of the sins of Adam.

6. As one author states: **“The Crucifixion is not separated from the Resurrection, for both are but a single action. [For Orthodox Christians,] Calvary is always seen in light of the empty tomb; the cross is an emblem of victory.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 221.

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1. For Eastern Orthodox Christians, **“the resurrection is seen as the conquest of Christ over *death*, and so it is death, rather than sin, that is central to the Orthodox understanding of the consequences of Adam's disobedience.”** Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* at 70.

2. Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that until Jesus died on the cross, at least most dead were trapped by Satan in Hades, the underground abode of the dead, and had no chance to experience God.

3. Taking literally the idea, recited in the Apostle's Creed, that Jesus **“descended to Hell”** after his crucifixion, Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that once there he was able to free the dead for eternal life with God.

4. As one author writes: **“Christ went into Hades in the guise of a corpse—but, once there, he revealed his divinity. He flooded the darkness with his light and power, vanquishing the evil one and setting the captives free.”** Mathewes-Green, *Welcome to the Orthodox Church* at 34.

5. That idea, fundamental to Orthodox theology, is illustrated in this famous fourteenth century fresco in the Church of Christ the Savior in Chora, near Istanbul.

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1. Variations of the Chora fresco, called *“Anastasis”* or Resurrection, are common in Eastern Orthodox churches.

2. The resurrected Jesus is standing on the broken gates of Hades and pulling Adam and Eve from their graves as King David, King Solomon, John the Baptist and others look on.

3. Once free from Satan, the resurrected dead can now enjoy eternal life with God.

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1. Like most Christians, Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus will return, at which time the souls of the dead will be rejoined with their bodies and there will be a Final Judgment of the resurrected bodies, after which they will go their eternal destinations.
2. But, like other Christians, Eastern Orthodox Christians have varied beliefs about what happens to the souls of the dead in the meantime.
3. Most Orthodox Christians do not accept the Roman Catholic idea that the souls of the dead remain in Purgatory awaiting the return of Jesus. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 248.
4. But many Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that the soul waits for the Final Judgment in some **“intermediate state, neither heaven nor hell.”** Louth, *Introducing Orthodox Theology* at 155.
5. A common belief is that the soul after death undergoes a “particular judgment” it is **“assigned to an intermediate state, a state of waiting in Paradise or Hades, provisional in comparison with heaven or hell, that await the decisions of the final judgment.”** *Id.* at 151.
6. Unlike the eternal condition after the Final Judgment, some Eastern Orthodox believe the soul can be moved from its initial state by prayers and actions of the soul.

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1. Exactly how the soul is assigned to its intermediate state is a subject of considerable conjecture, with no single answer acceptable to all Orthodox believers.
2. One theological opinion, which **“is often taken fairly literally by Orthodox believers, and not only at the popular level,”** involves so-called **“toll houses”** visited by the soul after death. Louth, *Introducing Orthodox Theology* at 150-51.
3. At each of 20 toll houses, the soul is examined about its earthly sins, ranging from laziness and magic to theft and murder.
4. At each stop, the soul is accused by devils and supported by angels.
5. After the last toll house the devils and angels **“between them determine the soul’s fate.”** *Id.* at 150.
6. Even those who do not take the toll houses literally believe they represent **“what is required for someone to pass from the sin and temptation of this world to the holy presence of God.”** *Id.*

Slide 48

1. For Eastern Orthodox Christians, it is not necessary to wait for death to begin coming into a union with God.
2. They believe that becoming one with God, a process they call “*theosis*” or “deification” or “divination” should have **“a very sure and certain beginning . . . in the present age.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 135.
3. As one author explains: **“Certainly, we shall only be fully deified at the Last Days, but for each of us the process of divination must begin here and now in this present life.”** Ware, *The Orthodox Church* at 229.
4. He then explains the process: **“If someone asks ‘How can I become god?’ the answer is very simple: go to church, receive the sacraments regularly, pray to God ‘in spirit and in truth,’ read the Gospels, follow the commandments.”** *Id.* at 230.
5. Eastern Orthodox Christians see *theosis* as the central objective of human existence.
6. As one author states: **“It is not too much to say that the divinization of humanity is the central theme, chief aim, basic purpose, or primary religious ideal of Orthodoxy. Theosis is the ultimate goal towards which all people should strive.”** Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* at 120.

Slide 49

1. Next week we will look at Christian traditions that have come to almost opposite conclusions from Eastern Orthodox about the worship of God.
2. Unlike Eastern Orthodox Christians, whose worship seeks to be as esthetically pleasing and beautiful as possible, the Mennonites and Amish seek to worship God through drabness and simplicity.
3. We will seek to determine the origins of those beliefs and how believers seek to stay apart from what they perceive to be a sinful world.

Resources:

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