

History

Lesson 4 of an enquiry of 4 lessons

The Schism of 1054

Enquiry: How powerful was the Pope?

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The Roots of the Schism

In 1054, the tensions between Constantinople and Rome had been building for centuries. The Eastern Church spoke Greek and the Western Church spoke Latin. This language barrier made it difficult for the two sides to communicate (talk to) one another. Perhaps this was a good thing; when East and West did talk, their small differences became big problems.

The East saw the West's **filioque** and use of unleavened bread as **innovations**. Similarly, the West saw the East's holy fools, dendrites and stylities as innovations. Neither side understood the other's point of view.



The Norman threat

By 1054, the **Normans** - who would invade England in 1066 - were threatening the pope's lands in Italy and lands belonging to the Eastern Church. Pope Leo IX realised that an alliance with the Patriarch of Constantinople may be the only way to save Rome from Norman rule.

To secure the **alliance** between East and West, the pope sent a man called Cardinal Humbert to Constantinople. Humbert was supposed to make friends with Cerularius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. There was just one problem. Humbert hated the Eastern Church.



The Schism of 1054

In fact, Cardinal Humbert and Cerularius hated each other. Months passed in 1054 and they failed to meet face to face. Cerularius criticised the Western Church's *filioque* and use of unleavened bread. Humbert attacked the Eastern Church's ideas. Neither man was very good at compromising.

Eventually, tensions boiled over. One morning, Cardinal Humbert marched uninvited into the **Hagia Sophia** in the middle of a service. He slammed a papal bull of **excommunication** down on the altar and stormed out. As he left, he symbolically shook the dust of Eastern Christianity from his boots.



After the Schism

Cerularius responded by excommunicating Leo IX and Cardinal Humbert. The break between the Eastern and Western Churches was confirmed in 1054. While they did speak occasionally in the coming years (such as at the Council of Bari in 1098), the relationship was always very distant. Clearly, the Schism of 1054 shows that medieval popes were not 'all powerful'. The Schism saw Leo IX excommunicated from his own church.



Glossary

Filioque - the word that the Western Church added to the Nicene Creed.

Innovation - changes to the original way of doing things. In the medieval Church, innovation was seen as wrong.

Normans - people from Normandy who conquered lots of 11th century Europe.

Alliance - when two or more groups of people work together and agree to protect each other.

Hagia Sophia - the huge church that Justinian built in Constantinople.

Excommunication - officially removing someone from the Christian Church.



Comprehension Questions

1. Why were there tensions between the Eastern and Western Churches in 1054?
2. Why did the pope want an alliance with Constantinople in 1054?
3. Who did the pope send to Constantinople to negotiate this alliance?
4. What did Humbert do when he marched into the Hagia Sophia in 1054?
5. What does the Schism of 1054 suggest about the power of medieval popes?

