



Our lesson slides contain the visual elements, such as historical images or timelines, associated with rich explanations. This document provides the verbal explanation that accompanies these visual elements - otherwise known as a narrative. The narrative and slides are matched via this icon:



Differences in geography



Christianity was the main religion in the Roman Empire by the 5th century, despite the fact that the Empire had become so big that it was necessary to split it into two halves to manage it. In 476 CE, the Western Roman Empire collapsed, leaving just the Eastern Roman Empire intact. Christianity continued to be the main religion in all the regions of the former Roman Empire. In what used to be the Western Roman Empire, the most important bishop was the bishop of Rome, also known as the pope. In the Eastern Roman Empire there were several important bishops, known as patriarchs, because there were a greater number of important cities, such as Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem.

In the Eastern Roman Empire the patriarchs continued to practise Christianity as they had always done: by working together to lead the **Church**. They were able to do this because the empire they lived in remained mostly stable. In what had been the Western Roman Empire, the pope in Rome became isolated from the patriarchs and instead worked hard to lead the **Church** in Western Europe by himself. Barbarian tribes established kingdoms of their own and many converted to Christianity in order to gain legitimacy, which provided the pope with more authority to control the **Church** in these new kingdoms. The pope in Rome had to act almost as a king himself in order to control the **Church** in Western Europe, whereas the patriarchs worked as a group with no one member having complete authority over the rest. Eventually, this led to the pope and the patriarchs arguing over whether the pope controlled the **Church** in Western Europe or everywhere, including in the East.

In the 7th century, Muslims conquered a great deal of the Eastern Roman Empire, including Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch. This meant that only the Patriarch of Constantinople was left in the Eastern **Church**. This intensified the argument over who had more power between the pope in Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople.



As the Western Roman Empire became just a memory, the main language used in the **Church** services of the Eastern Roman Empire switched to Greek, while the **Church** services of Western Europe continued to be spoken in Latin. Eventually, the number of people who could speak both languages decreased, which meant that **Church** leaders from East and West could not communicate effectively with each other.

Differences in belief



As the Eastern and Western **Churches** became increasingly isolated from each other, differences began to emerge in belief and **liturgy**. For example, the Western **Church** used unleavened bread for the Eucharist, whereas the Eastern **Church** used leavened bread and dipped it into wine. The Eastern **Church** also allowed priests to marry, whereas the Western **Church** forbade it. The most damaging difference in belief and **liturgy** though was just one word: 'filioque'. This word, which means 'and the Son', had been inserted into the Nicene Creed (Christianity's statement of belief) by the Western **Church** to explain their belief that the **Holy Spirit** came from both God and Jesus, which differed from the original Creed created in the East, which only named God as the originator of the **Holy Spirit**. This difference infuriated the Eastern Church.

Why did the split happen in 1054?



On 16th July 1054, delegates from the pope strode into the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople whilst a service was taking place and dramatically placed a letter on the main altar. This letter excommunicated (excluded from the **Church**) the patriarch, Michael Cerularius. Furious, the patriarch excommunicated the delegates in return. This event marked the Great **Schism**, the permanent split between the Western Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian **Churches**.

Two years prior to this, Patriarch Michael Cerularius had closed any churches in Constantinople that followed Western **liturgy** and written an angry letter to Pope Leo IX criticising Western belief and **liturgy**. In response, Pope Leo IX wrote an angry reply and sent delegates to take it to the patriarch in 1054. The patriarch was rude to the delegates, which led to the mutual excommunications. The split in the **Church** had been coming long before this event, however. The isolation between East and West, arguments over power, the differences in language, belief and **liturgy**, had caused cracks to appear long before 1054. The **Church** had experienced arguments which had temporarily split the **Church** before, known as 'little **schisms**', the earliest of which had happened as far back as the



3rd century. However, by the 11th century the differences between East and West were too great to mend, leading to a change in the **Church** which has lasted until the present day.

