Images and Divisions

Tracing two conflicts in Christian history

AWH.C.10.1 "Explain the origins of iconoclasm and the schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism in 1054."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline reasons people opposed or defended icons, circle differences that divided eastern and western churches, and number the two actions taken in 1054 in order.

From Broken Images to a Divided Church

1 Imagine entering a church in the Byzantine Empire and finding a painted saint's face scraped away. In the eighth century, some Christians feared that honoring religious images violated the biblical ban on idols. Emperor Leo III opposed icons, and later emperors ordered many images removed. Supporters of icons argued that they honored the holy people shown, not the wood or paint; they also said images were fitting because Jesus had taken human form. The dispute became known as iconoclasm, or the rejection of religious images. After periods of changing imperial policy, a church council restored the public use of icons in 843.

2 The argument over icons did not itself cause the later split between eastern and western churches. Over centuries, however, different languages and political centers made disputes harder to settle. Eastern Christians generally used Greek and looked to the emperor in Constantinople for political leadership. Western Christians generally used Latin and increasingly looked to the pope in Rome for religious leadership. Church leaders disagreed about whether the pope held authority over the entire church or only a special place of honor among bishops. They also disagreed over the West's addition of the phrase “and the Son” to the creed's statement about the Holy Spirit.

3 In 1054, a papal delegation traveled to Constantinople amid fresh tension over church customs and authority. Its leader, Cardinal Humbert, placed a decree of excommunication against Patriarch Michael Cerularius on the altar of Hagia Sophia. The patriarch and a church council then condemned the delegation. Neither action instantly ended all contact between eastern and western Christians, but the clash became a landmark in the schism, a lasting break between churches now called Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic. The dispute over images had ended earlier, while arguments about papal authority, the creed, and worship practices continued to divide the churches.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did some Christians oppose icons, and how did supporters defend them?

2. How did different centers of leadership contribute to the split between eastern and western churches?

3. Besides the pope's authority, what disagreement about the creed divided eastern and western church leaders?

4. How did the actions taken in 1054 mark a schism without instantly ending all contact?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are writing a museum label for two artifacts: a damaged icon and a decree dated 1054. In 5 or 6 sentences, explain the different conflict each artifact represents, identify one larger issue they share, and clarify whether iconoclasm itself caused the schism.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.10.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline reasons people opposed or defended icons, circle differences that divided eastern and western churches, and number the two actions taken in 1054 in order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did some Christians oppose icons, and how did supporters defend them?	**Opponents feared that honoring icons violated the biblical ban on idols. Supporters said they honored the people shown rather than the materials and that Jesus's human form made images fitting.**
2	How did different centers of leadership contribute to the split between eastern and western churches?	**Eastern Christians looked to Constantinople for political leadership, while western Christians looked increasingly to Rome's pope for religious leadership. Church leaders disputed how much authority the pope held over all Christians.**
3	Besides the pope's authority, what disagreement about the creed divided eastern and western church leaders?	**They disagreed over the West's addition of "and the Son" to the creed's statement about the Holy Spirit.**
4	How did the actions taken in 1054 mark a schism without instantly ending all contact?	**Cardinal Humbert condemned the patriarch of Constantinople, and the patriarch and a council condemned the delegation. These actions marked a lasting break, although contact between the churches continued.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The damaged icon points to an eighth-century debate over whether honoring images of holy people violated the ban on idols. Icon defenders said they honored the people shown, not the materials, and that Jesus's human form made images fitting. The 1054 decree points to a different conflict over church authority, beliefs, and customs. Papal representatives condemned the patriarch of Constantinople, and his council condemned the delegation in return. Both objects show Christians debating who could decide proper religious practice, but iconoclasm had ended long before 1054 and did not by itself cause the schism.

Accept explanations that distinguish the earlier icon dispute from the disputes behind the 1054 schism. Students may describe shared concerns about religious practice or church authority, but should not claim iconoclasm directly caused the schism.