

Theological differences between Protestant and Orthodox Churches

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The purpose of this paper is NOT to criticize the morality and behavior of any church, as there will always be good and bad individuals everywhere. It is to show how those two groups differ in their THEOLOGICAL positions, and what the Bible has to say about it.

If some doctrines are NOT mentioned in this paper, it is either because they are irrelevant or because they are believed by BOTH groups. For instance there is no need to talk about Jesus, the Trinity, the First Four Ecumenical Councils, original sin, or free will since both groups fully agree with each other.

<u>Orthodox Church (OC)</u>	<u>Protestant churches</u>
The below applies particularly to the Eastern Orthodox Church within the Slavic world.	The Protestants who are described in this article are mostly connected with Charismatics and Pentecostals as well as independent Baptists. The reason for this choice is that they make up 90% of ALL Protestants worldwide today. They are the fastest growing religion of the world, as in one century they grew from nothing to over 500 million today! If they keep their enormous growth by 2045 the world will have more of them than Catholics and Orthodox combined. The bulk of them are concentrated in South and central America, in Africa and Asia. They form as well the majority of churches in Eastern Europe. Some differences exist between them but in general they are united on most of the theological views that are described in this paper.
<u>The Bible is NOT the only authority</u>	<u>The Bible is the only authority</u>
The OC believes that divine authority and the	Protestants reject every tradition or teaching

<p>revelation of the Spirit rests in the “Holy Tradition” of the Church, of which the Bible is the primary, but not the only part.</p> <p>Tradition includes the first seven ecumenical councils, which are acknowledged as normative and, by some, even infallible; patristic writings, especially those of the first four centuries; later councils; the Liturgy; canon law; and icons.</p> <p>In other words they see Scriptures and their traditions as equal sources of God's revelation</p>	<p>that is not strictly in accordance with the Bible. For them the Bible is the only infallible guide and the final authority on absolutely all matters of Christian faith and practice (One of the foundational principles of Protestantism).</p> <p>On that very basis they examine everything through one filter: “Is this teaching or tradition in accordance with the Scriptures?” (Acts 17:11). If it is in contradiction with the Bible, they reject it. This is the reason Protestant oppose many doctrines and traditions of the OC because they see them as being in clear contradiction with the Bible.</p>
<p><u>The Church alone gives the right interpretation for all and it never changes</u></p> <p>1. The Church has defined what Scripture is; it also interprets what its meaning is. No individual has the authority to interpret and decide for himself.</p> <p>2. Interpretation is not a matter of personal opinion. For this reason, Orthodox believers depend upon the interpretation of the Holy Fathers as well as the decisions of Church councils after them (Отцы Церкви or Святые Отцы were teachers and leaders of the early church who defended and developed church doctrines from the second to the 7th century)</p>	<p><u>Every individual is free to interpret the Bible</u></p> <p>1. Protestants insist that the Bible interprets itself, and that God instructs its readers in a direct and individual manner. Individuals are encouraged to study the Bible and think for themselves and not what a church council decides for them.</p> <p>2. The Church Fathers believed that the Scripture could be understood by merely reading it (Eph. 3:3-5). In fact, they even indicated that the Scriptures were so clear that even heretics could understand the Bible with their own human skills (Tertullian, The Flesh of Christ, 20; Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word, 56; Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, Book 1, 35 and Book 7, 16)</p>
<p><u>Apostolic succession</u></p> <p>The OC see itself as the only true continuation of the Church established 2000 years ago by the apostles. The Catholic and Protestant Churches have departed from them and therefore need to come back to the Orthodox fold</p>	<p><u>The true Church has always existed</u></p> <p>There has always been a remnant of true Christians who in every century and in every country sincerely loved God and the truth. Those believers, regardless of their denominational affiliation, have been the visible continuation of the true Church that Christ has established 20 centuries ago.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Does not need any kind of reform</u></p> <p>The OC is the true church; it has already the whole truth and is in no need to be reformed from within.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>A continual restoration</u></p> <p>Protestants believe that we should fully restore all the doctrines and practices of the early church. Although a lot has been already restored in many areas, most Protestants do not make the claim of having reached that final ideal. On the contrary, they are continually open to receive new revelations from the Bible and make according changes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Has very old traditions that have no need to be changed</u></p> <p>The OC claims having centuries-old traditions which reveal its historical continuation with the early Church. For them, such traditions have from the very beginning represented and symbolized doctrinal truths. This is why any slightest change within the church is always met with resistance. For instance, when Patriarch Nikon dared to introduce minor changes in the liturgy in 1666, it split the Orthodox Church and created a large splinter group called the “Old Believers”. They were staunchly opposed to any reform and ended up being harshly persecuted.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Constantly changes to become more biblical</u></p> <p>Protestants churches have the Bible as their only source of authority. If they discover that one of their practices is not in accordance with the Bible, they will remove it. If they find in the Bible something that they did not know before, they will introduce it. If their own church is not willing to make changes to be more biblical, they will not hesitate to start a new church.</p> <p>In other words, they have an attitude to always examine the Bible and constantly make new changes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The Saints are venerated and prayed to</u></p> <p>1. The saints are a special group of holy people who died and act as intercessors between God and men whenever they are invoked in prayer</p> <p>2. For the OC praying to the saints is no different than asking someone here on earth to pray for us.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Only one Mediator between God and men</u></p> <p>For Protestants saints and Christians are one and the same thing. There is no difference.</p> <p>Furthermore, Christ is the only mediator between us and the Father. The Bible never mentions that there are saints praying for us from heaven. Christ and the Holy Spirit are the only ones interceding for us. Teaching that we need human mediators from heaven is saying that Jesus cannot really do this Himself.</p> <p>2. The OC argues that we don't pray to the saints, but instead the saints pray for us. In practice it never happens, as Orthodox</p>

<p>3. Dead saints are a channel of communication between the living and the dead. In fact, during the liturgy, the living are worshipping together with the dead who are in heaven</p> <p>4. OC argues that saints are not worshiped, but only venerated. For them worship is a total giving over of the self to be united with God, while veneration is showing delight for what God has done. It is admitted that there can be confusion because one may worship what another one venerates.</p>	<p>believers always pray directly to the saints, asking them to do specific things for them. For Protestants this is idolatry: we should never pray to people but to God alone.</p> <p>3. The “good” dead are happily resting in the Sheol and do not want to be called as it disturbs them (1 Sam. 28:15). The bad ones, on the contrary, want to come back and manipulate us to do things according to their evil plans. Since we cannot make a difference between the good dead (for instance the saints) and the bad ones, we should never have any kind of communication with the dead (Deut. 18:11).</p> <p>4. For Protestants there is no difference between worship and veneration. For instance falling at the feet of men or angels is seen as an act of worship. (Acts 10:26, Rev. 19:10, 22:9). In fact in the New Testament, the Greek word for worship means literally “kissing”. In other words any honorific bowing and kissing of the icons of saints is a form of worship and it is condemned by the Bible.</p>
<p><u>Prayer and good deeds for the departed</u></p> <p>OC believes that after death there is an intermediate period of temporal pain in which penance for sins is carried out by those destined for heaven; Their full blessedness, even for the saints, will only be achieved until after Christ's final judgment. It further believes, according to the Synod of Jerusalem from 1672, that “some souls depart into Hades and there endure the punishment due to the sins they have committed. But they are aware of their future release from there, and are delivered by the Supreme Goodness, through the prayers of the Priests, and the good works which the relatives of each do for</p>	<p><u>Everything is fully decided on this side</u></p> <p>Protestants believe that the fate of the dead is decided as soon as they die.</p> <p>The story of Luke 16:19–31 clearly shows that all dead are immediately transferred to an intermediate place called Sheol or Hades. There is a separation between them.</p> <p>On one side, the righteous are happy and do not need any help. On the other side, the wicked suffer in torment and there is nothing that can be done for them. The separation is already made and cannot be crossed. It is too late.</p> <p>In other words, if a person died with the faith</p>

<p>their Departed.”</p> <p>In other words, according to this belief, the behavior of the relatives and the prayers of the priests can redeem a departed soul</p>	<p>that God has forgiven him all his sins, there is no need to pray for that person. He is saved and absolutely safe. If that person did not want to believe this, there is nothing that can be done for him.</p>
<p><u>Mary had no sin, no other children and she ascended to heaven</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. She was cleansed from sin at the Annunciation, but not at her birth. 2. She had no other children after the birth of Jesus. 3. She experienced physical death and was raised by Jesus. 4. She enjoys now the fullness of heavenly bliss that the other saints will experience only after the Last Judgment. 5. She is the primary intercessor before the judgment seat of Christ, the renewal of the whole race, the one who reconciles us to God. (Festal Prayers from the liturgical guide) 6. Mary's intercession is invoked because she 	<p><u>Mary sinned, she had other children, and never ascended to heaven</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nowhere does the Bible shows that Mary became sinless at a certain point. Instead, the Bible clearly says that ALL have sinned (Rom.3:23) and that the only sinless person on earth is Jesus. Furthermore, if Mary never sinned afterwards, as the OC claims, then she has no further need to be forgiven and therefore what Jesus did on the cross is useless for her. 2. The Bible gives plenty of evidences that she had other children since Jesus had many brothers and sisters (Matt. 12: 46-50 and 13: 55-56, John 2:12 and 7:1, Acts 1:14, Gal. 1:19 & 1 Cor. 9:5) 3. Neither the Bible nor History gives an account that she was brought up to heaven after her death. This is a pure invention 4. Heaven cannot start before the final judgment. Every human being must first compare before God's Judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10) and there is no exception for anyone, unless we consider that Mary is not a human being. In other words saying that she is already in heaven is a pure invention that has nothing to do with the Bible. 5. She has absolutely no authority to intercede, renew or reconcile us to God. Only Christ can do this. 6. The OC argues that we don't pray to Mary

<p>was closer to the Savior than anyone else and is, therefore, the representative of fallen humanity</p>	<p>but instead she prays for us. In practice it never happens, as Orthodox people always <u>pray directly to her</u>. For Protestants, this is a blasphemy: we should never pray to a human being, but to God alone. Furthermore, presenting Jesus as depending on Mary's intercession is an insult to His person. Christ does not need anyone between Him and human beings. He is the only mediator between God and men (1 Tim.2:5).</p>
<p>7. She is to be venerated</p>	<p>7. The OC tries to avoid this issue by playing on words and saying that she is not worshiped but only venerated. The reality of what is happening in every OC church is completely different. She is worshiped, her icons are kissed, which is already a form of worship (In the New Testament, the Greek word for worship means literally kissing). Everywhere she receives affection, glory and honor.</p> <p>Protestants respect her example, but nothing more. We are never instructed to revere, pray to, rely on, or "idolize" anyone other than God. We are to worship God alone and no one else.</p>
<p>8. She is above all other saints as she is the "Theotokos", the "Mother of God"</p>	<p>8. Mary never received from Christ a preferential treatment above any other human being. In fact, Jesus disregarded her as a mother by saying that anyone who obeys God IS his mother! (Luke 8:19-21). In the NT, as soon as Christ come on the stage, she remains invisible and in his shadow. In the OC it is just the opposite. Every icon of Mary symbolically shows the dominating role she has been attributed: she is big while Jesus is small and weak. She is the Queen of Heaven, the Seat of Wisdom, and even the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>For centuries humans have always had a need to worship a life giving goddess, whether it is</p>

	<p>Astarte, Isis, Artemis or Parvati, and Orthodox have found this in Mary. Protestants only worship God the Father and not God the Mother! The Mary of the OC is a pure human invention that cannot be found anywhere in the Bible, nor even in the patristic literature! (which the OC regards as a source of authority)</p>
<p><u>Icon are venerated</u></p> <p>Orthodoxy is a thoroughly aesthetic tradition, as attested by the central role played by icons. Orthodox churches are full of them. Worshipers prostrate themselves before them and kiss them. The priest censes them and elevates them in processions. Icons play a role of teaching and speaking, and they can be used for receiving healing and blessings. They are a meeting point between the living and the dead.</p> <p>The OC argues that they are only objects of "veneration" (deep respect) and not of "worship", because God is not in the icon itself</p>	<p><u>Images are not bound to religious rituals</u></p> <p>Protestants have nothing against religious images, but against the religious rituals that are connected with them. Artistic pictures or statues are not a problem in themselves, but they become one when we treat them with honor (2 Kings 18:4). The warning of the second commandment is not against pictures, but to "not bow down to them nor serve them" (Ex. 20:5).</p> <p>In other words, to have an icon is not a problem in itself, but as soon as we kiss, serve and bow down to them, as Orthodox do, then it becomes an object of idolatry, which is a transgression of the second commandment</p>
<p><u>Grace is a power</u></p> <p>According to the theology of Gregory Palamas (Григорий Палама), people are united to God through a participation in the Divine energies. Grace is a divine energy or power that is transmitted to penitents, enabling them to return to the pathway of fellowship with God. Grace is almost described as a substance: the grace that resides in icons and that permitted great saints to have fellowship with God is available to us whenever we worship through icons. Grace is not an attitude of God toward sinners but, rather, a power or energy which when transmitted to us enables us to gain</p>	<p><u>Grace is God's attitude towards us</u></p> <p>For Protestants grace involves the attitude of God toward us. God looks at us, He sees what we deserve, but because of His graciousness, He does not give us the punishment and hell which we deserve, but instead makes us His children. Grace reflects the fact that salvation is an unmerited, free gift that does not depend on our good behavior.</p>

fellowship with Him.	
<p><u>Salvation is through what we do with God</u></p> <p>Salvation is "faith working through love" and should be seen as a lifelong process. To be saved, or rather being saved, man must work together with God in a synergy whereby his entire being, including his will, effort and actions, are perfectly conformed with, and united to, the divine.</p> <p>This is achieved through living a holy life and seeking to draw closer to God. This process of "deification" (Обожение) is called "theosis" (теозис) or union with God. "God became man so that we might become like Him". Some of the greatest saints have achieved, in this life, a measure of this process, but it is only final when an individual leaves this world. The individual who achieves theosis never realizes his accomplishment, as his perfect humility keeps him blind to pride.</p> <p>The path to deification includes asceticism, prayer, contemplation, good works and patient suffering of various griefs. We are helped along the way by icons, relics, saints, and above all by the Virgin Mary.</p> <p>Additionally, theosis cannot be separated from practicing the sacraments of the OC. This implies that it is impossible for someone to be saved outside of the OC.</p>	<p><u>Salvation is through what Christ did for us</u></p> <p>Protestants have two fundamental differences with the OC in how they view salvation.</p> <p>The first difference is in the timing. Protestants do not believe that God will save us after we die. Salvation happens as soon as we accept God's offer, and this happens in this life. (See below what it takes to become a Christian)</p> <p>The second difference is in the motivation. Protestants do not receive the grace of God by performing rituals, good works, asceticism or meditation. For them salvation is offered when we believe that on the cross Jesus already forgave all our sins and made us perfectly pure and righteous in the eyes of God.</p> <p>Protestants agree with the OC that the goal of life is to become like Christ, (what the OC defines as "theosis") but this is not done so as to obtain salvation, but rather as an expression that we are already saved. It is because we believe that Christ has already paid the full price of our salvation now that we want to become like Him. In simple terms, it is because we are saved that we want to change, and not - we change so that we will be saved.</p>
<p><u>Becoming an Orthodox through a process of initiation and rituals</u></p> <p>If you were baptized as a child and have kept on practicing your faith than you are an orthodox believer. If you never got baptized or departed from this and want to come back, then these are the necessary steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly attend all church services in order 	<p><u>Becoming a Christian through faith and a radical conversion</u></p> <p>Protestants believe that one only becomes a Christian in fulfilling the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Believe in Jesus and in the fact that he has already forgiven all your sins on the cross. He offers you his salvation not because you prove yourself worthy to him but because you

<p>to help you make the final decision whether to convert.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Attend the instructional classes 3. Meet with a priest to discuss your spiritual journey. 4. Become baptized into the Orthodox church, followed by Chrismation (oil anointing). If you were previously baptized under the Holy Trinity and have documented proof, you do not need to be baptized again. 5. Participate in the Holy Confession, in order to forgive and be forgiven 6. Choose a spiritual name after a saint. 7. Ask someone to become your godparent or sponsor. 	<p>understand and accept his free and unconditional grace</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Repent from any sins that you are aware of, in other words make a radical transformation of your lifestyle and make Jesus the Lord of your life. If you understand God's unconditional grace, you will gladly want to change because you are thankful for what He did for you. 3. Be baptized in full immersion in water as an expression of faith that you have buried your old life with Christ and started a new one with Him. <p>The above steps cannot be taken by an infant, which is why Protestants do not recognize infant baptism or anyone that has not fulfilled the above conditions.</p>
<p><u>Eucharist is a mystery that bring forgiveness</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Eucharist or "Divine Liturgy" is a propitiatory sacrifice, offered on behalf of both the living and the dead. This sacrifice is not a mere figure or symbol but a true sacrifice. It makes present Christ's sacrifice and therefore forgiveness of sins is obtained through it. During the Eucharist believers partake mystically of Christ's body and blood and through it receive his life and strength. 2. During the Eucharist, the Priest calls down the Holy Spirit (in Greek: epiklesis) upon the gifts (the bread and the wine). They then change into the actual and genuine body and blood of Christ. The outward appearance remains the same, but the substance changes. The precise way in which this transformation happens is a divine mystery. It defies analysis 	<p><u>The Lord's supper is a reminder</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For Protestants, the Lord's supper is a reminder of what Christ already accomplished on the cross. It is an expression of gratitude that all our sins have been fully forgiven. For them, the very idea of an ongoing repeated sacrifice is completely opposed to the New Testament. Christ finished the work of salvation on the cross (John 19:30). He wishes us to remember Him, not to sacrifice Him. Hebrews Ch. 10 makes it very clear that the sacrifice of Christ was "once for all" — never to be repeated or continued in any form 2. For Protectants the bread and wine are simply symbols, they obviously do not change substance, however you want to see them. This is attested by the fact that Jesus still called the cup the "fruit of the vine" after he had called it the blood of his covenant (Mt 26:29). In the same way Paul, still called the loaf "bread" (1 Cor. 11:26-27). The very idea of

<p>and explanation in purely rational and logical terms</p> <p>3. The Eucharistic bread is dipped into the wine and they are both given in one step on a communion spoon.</p> <p>4. Complex calendar of fasting must be kept to partake weekly. Must fast the entire weeks of the four Lents.</p> <p>5. It is a very individualistic and personal experience in order to meet Christ.</p>	<p>a “transubstantiation” cannot be found neither in the Bible nor in the patristic literature of the first two centuries.</p> <p>3. The Lord’s supper goes in two separate sequences, first the bread is offered, then the juice, following the Bible pattern.</p> <p>4. No fasting is needed for the Lord’s supper.</p> <p>5. For Protestants it is far more than a personal communion with God, it is an expression that we form one united body (1 Cor.11:29).</p>
<p><u>The main and almost sole purpose of the Sunday gathering-The Eucharist</u></p> <p>The main purpose of a Sunday gathering is to have a communal experience of the 'Divine Liturgy'. A few Bible passages are read, mostly from the Gospel, but not with the purpose of giving practical applications. The worship is determined by exact liturgical rules.</p>	<p><u>The two purposes of the Sunday gathering-Bible knowledge and emotional worship</u></p> <p>The first purpose of all Protestant meetings is to hear the Bible being preached and explained. Often Bible classes will precede or follow the worship service. It explains why Protestants have a good knowledge of the Scriptures.</p> <p>The second purpose is to experience the presence of God through an emotional worship. It is central to all protestant churches.</p> <p>Additionally, many churches will take the Lord’s supper and have their members praying for another</p>
<p><u>Limited fellowship and sense of community</u></p> <p>The OC has the right and biblical concept of “sobornost” (putting the group above the individuals) but in practice it is difficult. The reason for this is that the primary purpose of the Sunday gatherings is not to build deep and loyal relationships between believers but to experience the liturgy. Usually, when the service is finished, most people leave so that</p>	<p><u>Gatherings and church structure are aimed at building strong and loyal relationships</u></p> <p>For Protestants, the Church is not a building but a group of people. This is why their meetings are intentionally structured so that people can build relationships. In smaller churches, the active participation of many members during the worship service reinforces this sense of community. Many</p>

no real community is built. This is particularly true in cities, but obviously less the case in very small towns or villages where most people know each other.	churches have small groups that meet in homes during the week. This results in a mutual solidarity that allows people to strongly help each other.
<u>Liturgy leaves little room for strong emotions</u> The service is fixed according to strict rules which leave little room for spontaneous expressions of emotional worship.	<u>Worship services can be very emotional</u> In many churches it is not uncommon to see people lifting up their arms in praise or fall on their knees to worship. Some may cry, others laugh or shout praises. Some may even dance. In other words, protestants do not exclude spontaneous emotions of worship during their services.
<u>Music according to Byzantine Rite</u> The liturgical music is fixed according to century old traditions of the Byzantine Rite. It is mostly accapela (no instruments of music are used) and usually only a choir sings, instead of the whole church	<u>Any kind of music can be used</u> There is full freedom to create and use any kind of music, but usually most churches tend to use creative and contemporary songs. Any kind of instrument of music can be used. The whole church is expected to sing
<u>Liturgy led only by the clergy and limited to a few men</u> The liturgy is centered and limited to what a priest does with the help of one of more deacons. Clergy and laity are defined, such that only men who are part of the clergy can perform the liturgy.	<u>Worship in which all can take an active role</u> For Protestants there is no separation between clergy and laity. For them every Christian is a priest before God, whether he is a man or a woman. This implies as well that everyone can have a part in the worship service to teach or pray for others
<u>Beauty in church buildings</u> Vladimir the Great chose Byzantine Christianity mostly because of its impressive beauty that appealed to every sense. From golden cupolas, incense or icons, everything is in the appearances. Because of this, it would be unconceivable for Orthodox believers to meet in a simple room devoid of religious decoration. However poor they are, people will invest large amount of money to build beautiful and impressive church buildings.	<u>Beauty in people</u> For Protestants the primary purpose of a church building is just to meet, not necessarily to impress the eyes. Functionality always takes precedence over beauty. For them the Church is never a building but a group of people. This is why they will prefer investing most of their money in converting people and taking care of their physical needs, rather than building beautiful and costly buildings.

<p><u>Hierarchical structure</u></p> <p>The OC has a loose pyramidal hierarchy of authority. On the top are Patriarchs, the heads of a national church, who are all equals with the other Patriarchs, than below them are Archbishops and Metropolitans, Bishops who preside over a diocese, and finally there are the priests and deacons. In-between are all kinds of sub-roles or honorary functions, as well as many forms of monastic orders.</p>	<p><u>No hierarchical structure</u></p> <p>The vast majority of Protestants favor the full autonomy of the local church and usually resist all forms of hierarchical structure (in other words a church chooses its own local leaders and does not allows anybody above them to dictate their internal policy). Many believe that the only ministries the Church should have today are the ones mentioned in the early church (prophets, evangelists, teachers, pastors, deacons, etc...)</p>
<p><u>A men's world</u></p> <p>With the exception of the deaconess, and some singing in choirs, all the ministries of the OC are for men. The whole liturgy is mostly only led by men.</p>	<p><u>Woman can speak and have responsibilities</u></p> <p>A century ago, Protestants discovered that the New Testament gives to women the freedom to openly speak, pray and prophesy during the worship services. This was revolutionary back then and tremendously helped the growth of their movement. Very few Protestant churches will allow one woman to lead a whole group of men, but most of them will have a structure in which women can share leadership responsibilities with men.</p>
<p><u>Celibacy imposed on some ministries</u></p> <p>Bishops must be celibate. Priests and deacons may marry before ordination, but not after. If a priest becomes widower, he must remain single.</p>	<p><u>No celibacy imposed on anyone</u></p> <p>Celibacy is a free choice and is not imposed on any ministry in the church. In fact the opposite is true: if one wants to become an elder/pastor, he must be married! (1 Tim. 3)</p>
<p><u>Baptizing children</u></p> <p>Baptize children usually between 4 and 12 months.</p>	<p><u>Not baptizing children</u></p> <p>Each individual must first make a conscious decision to follow Christ and repent from his sins before he is baptized. This is something infants cannot do and this is why Protestants do not baptize them and do not recognize infant baptism.</p>
<p><u>Different forms of baptism, triple immersion</u></p> <p>Prefer immersion as the proper mode of</p>	<p><u>Full immersion, one time</u></p> <p>Protestants baptize by full immersion one</p>

baptism, although acknowledge the validity of aspersion in the Triune name. The Orthodox baptize by triple immersion	time and in the Triune name
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>7 sacraments</u></p> <p>There are at least seven Sacraments (known as 'Mysteries' in Orthodoxy): Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Holy Unction, Marriage (Holy Matrimony) and Penance (Confession). The list is not fixed.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>No sacraments</u></p> <p>Protestants baptize people, they get people married, they confess sins and take the Lords' supper, but they do not give to any of those practices a more special and spiritual meaning. On the contrary, they consider that everything a Christian does in life is holy and sacred</p>
<p><u>Confession is to a priest and remains secret</u></p> <p>Confession is a sacrament and is addressed to a priest who has the authority from God to forgive a repentant person. It remains an unbreakable secret between him and that person. As a result, the priest is limited in any kind of practical help he could provide after the confession because people may find out which sin was committed.</p>	<p><u>Confession is to anyone and followed by help</u></p> <p>Protestants can confess their sins to any Christian they trust because forgiveness is not bound to one particular person. Only God has the authority to forgive us. Confession should always be followed by prayers and the concrete help of other Christian friends. If we do not want to make ourselves accountable and change, as James 5:16 shows it, than our confession is useless, and we deceive ourselves.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Wealth is not intentionally encouraged</u></p> <p>The OC does not educate, encourage and empower people to become financially prosperous. The Church is to withdraw from the world, so it tends to regard poverty as a virtue and wealth as a danger. It is difficult for the OC to see someone being at the same time very spiritual and very rich. The overall consequence of such a view is that nations like Russia and Ukraine are not thriving economically. The same can be said of most Orthodox nations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Wealth is good and is encouraged</u></p> <p>Protestants educate, encourage and empower people to become financially prosperous. They view wealth, banking and doing business in a positive light and poverty as a curse. The consequence of such a view is that in every country where protestants have or had a strong influence, there is economic prosperity. (If you compare the North of Europe, which for centuries was under protestant influence, you see economic prosperity, whereas the South of Europe, which was under the Catholic influence (which has the same view on money as the OC), you can see far less prosperity. The same difference can be seen between North America and South America or it explains why South Korea has had such an</p>

	economic miracle (over 20% of its people today are strong committed Protestants)
<p align="center"><u>Greek Mysticism</u></p> <p>Culturally, the Greek East has always tended to be more philosophical, abstract and mystical in its thinking, whereas the Latin West tends toward a more pragmatic and legal-minded approach. (According to an old saying, "the Greeks built metaphysical systems; the Romans built roads.")</p> <p>This cultural influence from the Byzantine-Greek world explains why the OC tends to be so mystical and detached from this world. For them, there should always be room for mystery when speaking of God, as He cannot be known intellectually but only experientially.</p> <p>This explains as well why so much of the Russian culture is mystical and so easily superstitious.</p>	<p align="center"><u>Jewish pragmatism</u></p> <p>Protestants have a very pragmatic religion because they read the Bible far more from a Jewish perceptive than a Greek one. Together with the Jews they do not see very much God in mystical or metaphysical ways, but far more in practical ways. This life is more important than the next one. True spirituality is always revealed in tangible ways. To be blessed most certainly includes wealth and influencing the world. The Jesus of the Protestants is One who fed and healed multitudes, showing that God is deeply concerned with our physical needs. Such a strong Jewish perspective explains much of their pragmatism.</p>
<p align="center"><u>Few miracles happening</u></p> <p>In theory, throughout its history, the OC always had a mystical openness toward any supernatural manifestations, far more than the Catholic Church. In practice, accounts of miracles have been few and limited to a few saints.</p> <p>If there are miracles today they are not the extraordinary healings that are described in the book of Acts, but miracles with icons, unusual expressions of light or exorcisms.</p>	<p align="center"><u>Expects miracles and has many happening</u></p> <p>Protestants are not only very pragmatic, but miracles oriented! At the turn of the 20th century, Protestants had a major change with the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. Such churches believe that every single miracle and supernatural manifestations mentioned in the Bible should all be happening today. They believe that all Christians can practice them today (healings, prophecy, casting out demons, etc...) As a result, it is normal for such churches to expect miracles to happen regularly and it explains their phenomenal growth all over the world. (In one century they grew from nothing to over 500 million today!) They form 90% of all Protestants today.</p>
<u>No baptism of the Holy Spirit</u>	<u>Baptism of the Holy Spirit</u>

<p>Orthodox Churches believe that baptism in the Holy Spirit is conferred with water baptism. The individual is anointed with oil (Миро) immediately after baptism.</p>	<p>Pentecostal and charismatic Christians believe that all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. However, they believe as well that the experience called "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is a separate and distinct experience occurring sometimes after regeneration. It is an empowering experience, equipping Spirit-filled believers for witness and ministry. It initiates the believer in the use of all the supernatural gifts mentioned in the New Testament (healing, miracles, prophecy, etc...). This doctrine explains much of the boldness and power of the Protestants, and why they had such a phenomenal growth until now</p>
<p><u>Mystery- accept suffering = fatalism</u></p> <p>Orthodoxy is fundamentally a religion of mysteries. God and suffering do not always need to be explained, they must be accepted because of the cross. Sickness and hardships are part of living in a sinful world and we have to humbly accept them and transform them into a way of salvation for oneself and others.</p>	<p><u>All things can be changed = Optimism</u></p> <p>Protestants boldly proclaim that all things are possible and that miracles and healings should always be expected. They refuse a passive and resigned view of life, one in which we have to patiently suffer until we die and finally go to heaven. For them heaven starts here and now, and their religion is to demonstrate this in a tangible and supernatural way.</p>
<p><u>At times anti-Semitic</u></p> <p>The OC never had the level of anti-Semitism that strongly characterized the Catholic church in the past. But at the same time it never openly and officially criticized the pogroms and the anti-Semitic attitude of most tsars. At times it even defended them. Until today it never had a clear and official position to defend and bless Jews as the "chosen people". It has not taken an active role in promoting the interests of Jews or Israel.</p>	<p><u>Protects Jews and blesses Israel</u></p> <p>Most Protestants are well known to openly supporting Israel and anything that blesses and protects Jews. Many of their organizations are financing the return of Jews to Israel, as they see a connection between this and the coming of the Lord. Some even build places of refuge in case of future anti-Semitic persecutions. With that attitude, many believe as well that the Church should restore all the Jewish roots of our Judeo-Christian faith.</p>
<p><u>No collaboration with other denominations</u></p> <p>The OC views Protestant proselytism as an aggression on his own religious territory. Consider itself as the only one true Church and</p>	<p><u>Open to work with other denominations</u></p> <p>Protestants allow a great religious diversity and they are open to work with other denominations, even with those with whom</p>

as such will not collaborate with other Christian faiths, unless it directly serves its own interests.	they might have strong differences.
<p><u>Persecutes anyone that does not believe the same and easily uses violence to this end</u></p> <p>The OC has absolutely zero tolerance for religious differences, even in its own midst! For 3 centuries the OC anathematized and persecuted millions of Orthodox believers, (called the “Old believers”) because they did not accept a few minor variations in the liturgy and wanted less control from the State and the Episcopate. Thousands of them were killed, burnt at the stake, tortured and fled Russia altogether. They were treated as illegal citizens until 1905, and the Anathema against them was only lifted in 1971!</p> <p>They not only treated their own people in this brutal way, but used their alliance with the Tsarist regime to persecute all other religious minorities (Stundists, Doukhobors, Evangelical Baptists, etc...).</p> <p>The same attitude is seen again today. Wherever the OC has strong ties with the local government, they will use this alliance to harm or eliminate any protestant influence.</p>	<p><u>Tolerance for all religions and only use words and love to persuade others</u></p> <p>Protestants are known for their religious tolerance and diversity, which is the reason why they have so many different denominations. Protestants will easily try to debate and convince other churches to believe in their own doctrines, but they will not use violence or persecute them. Even in countries where they are the dominant religion, they will not appeal to the government to eliminate or repress other religious minorities.</p>
<p><u>The Old Believers “anomaly”</u></p> <p>This orthodox sect separated from the OC in 1666 and with time they became significantly richer and more influential than all other Orthodox believers. Why? They all helped each other as they were persecuted by society and the official Orthodox Church, they had high morals (condemnation of drinking, smoking, debts, etc...). Most of them had non-hierarchical, autonomous congregations with a self-elected local government. Some sub-groups did not have sacraments other than full</p>	<p><u>The protestant parallel</u></p> <p>Everything positive that one may see in the “Old Believers”, the Protestants always had it and still have it today! Just like them, they feel their strong difference with the outside world, they refuse to compromise with a dead religion and the government, and they have high morals. They help the poor and minorities, build strong self-governed communities and grow in amazing numbers.</p> <p>The history of all the Protestant groups in past</p>

<p>immersion baptism, and most women could read and were educated. They all felt that they did not belong to the outside world. By the turn of the 20th century, after 3 centuries, they had grown to be 15-20% of the Russian population!</p>	<p>times, like for instance the Huguenots, who were harshly persecuted by the French government and the Catholic Church, shows the same pattern of moral and social strength. We see the same parallel today with the growing protestant church in China</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Church and State together</u> => <u>political and religious freedom limited</u></p> <p>The political marriage of the OC started right away when Vladimir the Great adopted the Byzantine model where the Church and the State were strongly intertwined. Ever since Constantinople fell, the OC never lost its aspiration to have some kind of theocracy in which Moscow would be the "third Rome". Since Peter the Great that political marriage has never gone so well, as each side has always tried to exploit the other. All tsars used the Church for their own political purposes (unity of the empire, campaigns of Russification, spying on political dissidents, etc...). But at the same time, the Church was able to use the government for their own interests (levying taxes on peasants, State protection, opposing other religious groups, etc...)</p> <p>It comes to no surprise that such an alliance led the Bolsheviks to harshly persecute the OC. Contrary to what many people think, the Communists did not persecute the OC because of their faith, but because of their connection with the Tsarist regime. The proof of this is that from 1917 until the purges of Stalin, Evangelical Christians were not persecuted. On the contrary, they enjoyed a long decade of freedom and strong numerical growth.</p> <p>Since 1991, the OC has renewed its alliance</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Church and State fully separated</u> => <u>religious tolerance and democracy</u></p> <p>Throughout history Protestants have often experienced persecution from governments that favored only one religion. As a result they tend to see any religious marriage between the Church and the State as "the Great Prostitute ridding the Beast". The New Testament tells us not to mix up politics with religion. "Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)</p> <p>In fact, history demonstrates why such an alliance is not beneficial to both sides: Once the Church was given political power around the 4th century, it started to look like a "Christianized" version of the kingdoms of the world, often relying on political and military power to advance its own interest.</p> <p>Of course Christians are called to assume responsibility for poverty, side with the oppressed, and fight injustice as well as all other social ills. But the way followers of Jesus are to do this is not by making political alliances with the government. They are to do it the way Jesus did it—by evangelizing, and by sacrificing their time and resources on behalf of others.</p> <p>This attitude explains why nations that</p>

<p>with the State so that they could build church buildings and oppose Protestant groups. It must be said however that not all orthodox believers see this political association favorably, particularly when Church leaders used to be former KGB agents (like Kirill 1) or when corrupted politicians use the OC for their own political agenda.</p>	<p>experienced the strong influence of Protestants have a strong economic prosperity, a lot of religious tolerance and political freedom.</p> <p>In other words, the Bible and history teach us that it is much better to keep our kingdoms well separated.</p>
<p><u>"Born Slavic, born Orthodox"</u></p> <p>The OC teaches people that being Russian, Byelorussian or Ukrainian is to be Orthodox. The main reason is that the Russian Church is the only national symbol which has survived through the centuries of Russian history. If one abandons his orthodox faith, he is betraying his nation, history and culture.</p>	<p><u>A faith that transcends nationalities</u></p> <p>Protestants are not bound to a specific nation or culture. True Christians are supposed to be "sojourners" and pilgrims on the earth, giving their allegiance to no particular country. It does not mean that they cannot be patriots who deeply love their country, but their loyalty is first to the kingdom of heaven.</p>
<p><u>Little numerical growth</u></p> <p>Because of its ethnocentric approach (the church being mostly limited to a certain culture), the OC does not have a strong emphasis on evangelism and missions. In its long history it never converted any large percentages of people in any nation. In the last 100 years, unlike Protestants, it did not really grow. In fact, secularism and communism diminished their numbers.</p>	<p><u>Phenomenal numerical growth</u></p> <p>Protestants are the fastest growing religion in the world. In one century they grew from nothing to over 500 million today! They grow by conversions so that nations that had no Protestants a few decades ago have now a large percentage of them (For instance, Latin America had 1% of Protestants in 1930 and today has over 20%. The same can be said of Africa from 2 to 27% or Asia from 0,5 to 5,5% (Korea grew from 1 to 20% or China to 10%!)</p>
<p><u>Nominal faith => weak moral influence on the society => no social transformation</u></p> <p>Most people in Russia or Ukraine would call themselves Orthodox Christians, but most of them only have a nominal faith, such that they attend church only 2-3 times a year, on important religious holidays. This is particularly true in cities. Few attend services every week. Few of them had a living encounter with Christ that radically changed their lifestyle and forced them to change their</p>	<p><u>Faith and strong commitment => strong moral influence => social transformation</u></p> <p>Protestants do not have a nominal faith. For them their faith is a lifestyle that affects every aspect of their lives. They attend their church at least 1 to 2 times a week, which allows them to build strong communities. This in turn has major social consequences. Take for instance the countries of Northern Europe, which were for a long time under a Protestant influence, and compare it to Southern Europe,</p>

<p>characters. Few try to evangelize and convert others to Jesus. In this way, we can observe in Orthodox nations the same reality as in Catholic countries: a nominal faith has no real influence on the society, because it does not radically transform individuals.</p> <p>As a result, nations like Russia or Ukraine have never experienced the same kind of social and moral changes that one can observe in Protestant countries. Corruption and all kinds of social, moral and spiritual problems still prevail to this day, even after 1000 years of Orthodox presence.</p>	<p>which had a Catholic or Orthodox influence, and the social differences are noticeable: there is a higher work ethic and economic prosperity in the North, and far more corruption and socio-political problems in the South. Again, the very same differences can be observed between the nations of North America that were under Protestant influence, and the ones from South America which were under Catholic influence. Wherever Protestant become the majority, you can always observe huge social and economic improvements. (Take for instance Brazil and Korea, which have more 20% of Protestants: they have experienced a strong economic growth in the last 2 decades.)</p>
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Summary:

There are huge differences between the 2 churches. The most notable are the following:

Traditions that obscure and nullify the Bible	The Bible is the ONLY authority
The Church alone give the right interpretation	Believers are to interpret for themselves
Worship of Mary, saints and icons	Worship of God alone
Spiritual connection with the dead	Connection with the living-no ties with death
Never changes anything in doctrine and liturgy	Constantly questions and improves itself
Saved later if you make every effort to change	Saved now because of His unconditional grace
Prayers + good behavior can save after death	Only saved by our own faith before death
Grace is a divine energy or power	Grace is God's unconditional love for all
Orthodox by keeping all the rituals	Christian through a radical change of your life
Baptizing children who understand nothing	Baptizing adults who fully understand
Worship service: Only the clergy participates	Worship service: all can participate
Worship service: women mostly excluded	Worship service: women fully active
Worship service: liturgy fixed, no flexibility	Worship service: flexible-meant to meet needs

Worship service: main goal = the Liturgy	Worship service: main goal = Bible knowledge
Superficial relationships, little solidarity	Deep loyal relationships, strong community
Hierarchy, local churches under authority	No hierarchy, local churches fully autonomous
Division between clergy and laity	All are equals, no division clergy/ laity
Monasticism and withdrawal from the world	Fully involved in the world to transform it
Wealth discouraged, poverty a virtue	Positive, pragmatic attitude towards money
Hardly any miracles happening	Lots of miracles, healings and supernatural
Hardly any numerical growth	Phenomenal growth, soon largest in the world
Nominal commitment=no influence on society	Strong commitment = social transformation
Greek, mystical and mysterious	Jewish, pragmatic and down to earth
Fatalism and resignation	Optimism and determination to change things
At times anti-Semitic	Protects Jews and blesses Israel
Unhealthy alliance of Church and government	Fully separated from the State
Church and nation = one and the same	Church above and independent from nation
Persecutes competing religious minorities	Religious tolerance and diversity

CONCLUSION:

It is an undeniable fact that in virtually every country where Protestants had a strong and long lasting influence, you have some of the best socio-economic conditions in the world (countries in Northern Europe, North America or Australia). Now, this cannot be said of any “orthodox” country in the world, as most of them still experience huge social, political and economic problems, even after 1000 years of orthodox influence. So why do we have such strong differences between those 2 faiths?

The answer is simple: a tree is always recognized by its fruits. Whatever people choose to believe, that is what they will eventually become. Whatever religion a nation chooses, that is what they will become.

- Either we choose a religion that teaches people to accept suffering, poverty and political oppression with fatalism and resignation, or we have a positive faith that radically transforms life.

- Either we have a spirituality that leads us to withdraw from this world or we have a faith that improves the world every single day.
- Either we see the church as a beautiful building with many rituals, or we see the church as a community of people who should help and love each other to death.
- Either we believe that Jesus already forgave all our sins so that we can live a life free from sin and guilt, or we have this false hope that maybe after death God will redeem us.
- Either we try hard to please God with all our own human efforts or we live with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit within us.
- Either we see God having mysterious plans of ongoing sufferings, or we see Him having very positive plans to give us peace, hope and a future for every day of our life.
- Either we believe He wants us to live a life of ongoing tragedies, financial hardships and sicknesses or he wants to bless us, heal us and set us free.
- Either we see God as someone we must please with all kinds of human and religious conditions so that He will better love us, or we see him as a Father who already loves us unconditionally just as we are.
- Either we choose a God that sees us as His slaves or we see a heavenly Father who sees us as worthy and perfectly loved children.

What we choose makes all the difference for us and our country. What will YOU choose?