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Christian History Made Easy (Rose Bible Basics)

15. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy: Names, Structure, Authority, and Timeline

This chapter compares the two oldest branches of Christianity, laying out what each is called, how it is governed, and where it locates authority. It closes with a timeline of East-West relations from the 2nd to the 13th century.

Key takeaways

- "Catholic" means universal; the pope (bishop of Rome) leads all churches, with bishops, archbishops, and (since 1150) cardinals under him.
- "Orthodoxy" means correct belief/worship; it is several self-ruling churches led by patriarchs, with Constantinople's patriarch honored but holding little wider authority.
- Both root authority in Scripture plus the early church councils and fathers, but Catholics add the pope and ongoing tradition while Orthodox stop at the first seven councils.
- The timeline traces a slow split: Easter disputes (196), shared Nicene Creed (362), the 1054 mutual exclusion, and Crusaders sacking Constantinople (1204).