

Index of the major Christian denominations

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Catholicism

The term Catholicism first appears in the 2nd century AD to distinguish themselves from other early Christian groups. The term comes from Greek 'katolon' and means 'common'. The term "he katolike ekklesia" thus means "the common church".

Roman Catholicism: The Roman Catholic Church goes back to Christian mythology telling that Saint Peter was given the succession of Jesus, and therefore when he established the diocese of Rome, it became the highest authority. However, as of contemporary history, the Catholic Church was probably formed in the 2nd century AD and formalized with its Constantinian legalization in 313. It focusses on strict hierarchies and authorities, holy sacraments, confession to a priest, and infant baptism.

Greek-Catholics (Catholics of Byzantine Rite): The Byzantine rite was formed in the 4th century in opposition to the Rome-based Church. In the beginning, they used Biblical translations into their respective languages, however, when these languages changed, the church did not reform the Biblical speech, making it in fact liturgical languages. In addition, they use certain amendments and commentaries that were not present in Roman-Catholicism, including different practices of the sacraments. The Belarusian Greek Catholic church already re-united with Rome in 1596, followed by many others, the Greek Catholic Church in Greece reunited in 1829 and the Russian Greek Catholic united with Rome in 1905.

Armenian Catholic: The Armenian Catholic Church is based on the Armenian rite that was formed in the 5th century AD. It reflects the traditions of the Jerusalem liturgy and Syriac-Mesopotamian traditions. Later, the Byzantine rite and the Latin Rite further influenced the Armenian Catholic Church. From its beginning, it formed its liturgy in Armenian language. Since 1742, it is united with Rome.

Ethiopian Catholic: The Catholic Churches of Ethiopia and Eritrea use Alexandrian Rite In Ethiopian Form. It uses Ge'ez language as liturgical language and adopted East African traditions. Sometimes, the

Ethiopian Catholic Church even accepts two forms of celebration for one event: a native variety, and a later imported one (mainly through Arabic translations). The Ethiopian Catholic Church united with Rome in 1846, the Eritrean Catholic Church in 2015 after separating from the Ethiopian Catholic Church.

Coptic Catholic: The Coptic Catholic Church was founded in 451 AD after it separated from the Coptic Orthodox Church. This was done over a dispute over the preference of Miaphysite theology over Monophysite theology. In 1741, they reunited with Rome.

Eastern Syrian-Chaldean Catholic: The East Syriac rite goes back to 431 AD, after the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon refused to condemn Nestorius. As a result, the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon cut itself off from Orthodox Christianity and in 498 they took the title “Patriarch of the East”, establishing themselves as missionary religion throughout the Middle east and East Asia in Catholic tradition. They use the East Syriac dialect as liturgical language and formed churches in India. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Kerala (India) united with Rome in 1663.

Western Syrian-Antiochenian Catholic: The West Syriac Rite originally used the Greek language as liturgical language and later shifted to a Western Syriac dialect. The founding of this church tradition is unknown, but must have been before 450 AD. They later spread eastwards and also reached India where Western Syriac Catholic Churches were founded. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Kerala (India) united with Rome in 1930, the Syriac Catholic Church in Beirut (Lebanon) united in 1781. The Lebanon-based Maronite Church which was probably founded in the early years of the 5th century and had ties to Rome in the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Old Catholics: Mainly organized in the Utrecht Union, Old Catholicism was founded in 1870 as a result of the excommunication of Catholic priests who rejected the First Vatican Council’s decrees. As such, Old Catholicism was formally established in the 1889 Declaration of Utrecht. They reject the papal authority and want to go back to ‘true Catholicism’ as it was present in the early centuries, when Catholicism was established (probably inspired by the 1st and 2nd century AD). Old Catholics have close ties to Lutherans and Anglicans.

Chinese Catholicism: Mainly follows Roman-Catholicism and its sacraments, but rejects the papal authority. Since 1957, they are organized in the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association. Chinese Catholicism is known as Tianzhujiao in Chinese using Chinese as liturgical language. They have no formal contacts to Rome.

Protestants

Protestant churches are denominations which came into being through counter-catholic movements. According to their views, the Catholic church became to 'wordly' and the church has to be restored into its old grounds, same as sciences and arts in Renaissance went back to its Greek and Roman idols. Therefore, the Reformation is actually a church restoration.

Lutheranism: Lutherans denominations traditionally see the Old and New Testament as the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. As such, according to Martin Luther, the Holy Scripture is the final authority and stands above all human-beings as it is the 'Word of God'. As such, it is the only reliable source for faith and its daily practice. Some more liberal Lutherans especially in Europe regard the Bible to be the 'Word of God', but advocate that the Bible is not to be taken literally. Unlike medieval and Renaissance Catholicism, Lutherans advocated that the Bible shall not only be accessible to priests and higher classes, but every believer or even plain hearer shall have access to the word of God in his language to be able to live truly after its words. According to orthodox Lutherans, the Holy Spirit is inherited in the Holy Scriptures and as such, it does not only produce faith and obedience, but also a living agreement. In addition, Lutherans think that everything one has to know to receive salvation is stated in the Bible and therefore they reject any authorities, new revelations or other accesses to religion, including the Pope.

Laestadianism/Apostolic Lutheranism: founded in Finland in the 19th century as restoration of traditional Lutheranism. They strictly differentiate between true believers who are prove of the living faith and false Christians, who have become astray in their practice. Unlike in classical Lutheranism, every believer can testify that the other person's sins are forgiven. Therefore, Laestadians often search other believers to confess their sins to each other. In classical Lutheranism, one confesses the sins during a silent moment during church service to get God's absolution.

Calvinism: Like Lutherans, Calvinists believe that the Bible reveals the 'Word of God'. As such, humans-beings cannot know anything about God except for what is stated in the Bible. To know the 'Word of God', God sent his messenger Jesus on earth who served as mediator between God and the people. Despite that, God's action can be seen for everyone as He constantly works on the world and might punish people for their sins right on the Earth. In addition, covenantal ideas remain primarily. Furthermore, orthodox Calvinists believe in the 'double predestination', which means that God himself choses who will be blessed and who will end in damnation and everything is predestined on God's will.

Reformed Calvinists disagree on this however, as God has given a free will and leaves it open for everyone to seek salvation. However, every human is consisted to sins by nature.

Anabaptisms: Anabaptists goes back to Balthasar Hubmaier and Thomas Müntzer. Traditionally – and in Catholic and Lutheran Churches until today – newborn children were immediately baptized without being asked. As such, the faith is not really established. Anabaptists claim that one shall voluntarily and by free will baptize and follow God’s teaching and as such, they made baptizations of adults who were already baptized as child. Opponents therefore called them ‘anabaptists’ meaning ‘re-baptization’. Traditional Anabaptists groups were the ‘Swiss Brethren’ around Zwingli and Manz who wanted to re-install the truth community as written in the Bible and advocated humanism, asceticism, and intensive Bible study. The Hutterer from nowadays Western Czechia had common goals with the Swiss brothers and the Western German Amish. The Mennonites in Central and Southern Germany around Müntzer and Hubmaier advocated an apocalyptic and spiritual worldview. Northern German Mennonites additionally supported an oligarchy of the elders and a pure form of Christianity, which was taught by Melchior Hofmann. Many of the latter group immigrated to Russia.

Baptists: Infant baptism is rejected and only believers shall receive baptism. All Baptists shall advertise Christianity and its pure forms, but no one shall be forced and everyone shall have freedom of conscience. They advertise universal priest hood, which means that every believer can take the role of the priest and his exercises which means that there is no high authority.

Baptist churches include:

Southern Baptists: The Southern Baptists affirm the autonomy of the local church in which laypersons have the same right as ordained ministers and fulfill all duties of priesthood as well as having the right for interpreting the Bible and communicate directly with God. Women are of equal value to men, but not allowed to serve as priests. A family has to consist of a man and a woman who share their intimacy only within marriage, while extramarital intimacy is strictly prohibited.

Northern Baptists: Unlike the Southern Baptists, the Northern Baptists, also simply referred to as American Baptists, are somewhat more liberal. American Baptists encourage women to hold high positions within the church, they more accepting of same-same relationships – but do not fully endorse them, and have a slightly different manner in which they understand salvation – one does not necessarily need to directly accept Christ.

American Black Baptists: Usually defines those congregations that are made up exclusively of African Americans. But in most cases these congregations are part of denominations that are mostly made up of White Americans. There is no actual common doctrinal core; rather certain similarities that can be observed among rather come from the cultural backgrounds that the believers share. Besides Black American Baptist congregations, we also have Black Americans that are part of some other Protestant denominations, mainly Methodist, Pentecostal, and Seventh - day Adventist.

Native American Baptist Churches: Baptist churches in which Native Americans make up the majority, they are also referred to as “Indian Baptists Churches”. Native American Baptist congregations can be particularly found within reservations.

Regular Baptists: Their doctrine is more in closely related to that of the English Baptists. Unlike other Baptist groups, their doctrine is rather Calvinistic. They can be found in the southern United States and Canada.

Old Regular Baptists: There is a wide range in Old Regular baptism concerning determination. While some advertise the free will of human-beings, others preach absolute predestination. They organize local associations which they call “fellowships” in which they communicate to one another. Preachers are not trained as they are called by God and do not get paid for their service. The process of conversion is very long and begins with the awakening of sinning, through a period of conviction and travail of the soul, and finally leads to repentance and belief.

Primitive Baptists: Their theology is Calvinistic, they believe in limited atonement, the total depravity of men, irresistible grace, and preservation and perseverance. They still practice feet washing, this is done in a symbolic manner, thus remembering the way in which Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. All of the clergy of the Primitive Baptists is elected from the members of the congregation, their clergymen are self-taught.

General Baptists: Rejecting Calvinist teachings; believing in unlimited atonement. Their theology is Arminianist, this sets them apart from Reformed Baptists which share some common ground with the Reformed Churches present in Europe.

Particular Baptists: They trace their origins to 17th century England; they hold some Calvinist beliefs, such as limited atonement. They were among the first Baptists to arrive in what is today

the United States. As time passed, some Particular Baptists started to shift towards a hyper-Calvinistic theology; this shift marked the group's period of decline.

Unitarian Baptists: They hold a few key-doctrines that are common to all Baptists, mainly the rejection of infant baptism, but they also reject that tridimensional nature of God, holding the belief that there is a single God – the Father.

Progressive Baptists: Those Baptists that self-identify as progressive are usually more inclined towards accepting social innovations, they generally share a liberal mindset – most often favor the political left. They strongly emphasize the Church's role in bettering the lives of people that belong to vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled, autism, orphans, and homeless). LGBTQA+ people can usually find a safe place within progressive Baptists congregations; their members usually militate for the fundamental rights and freedoms of same-sex couples.

Methodism: Methodism emphasizes on an absolute free will and rejects predestination. However, salvation cannot be earned but is a work fully made by God and in His hands. For them, Jesus died for everyone (unlimited atonement). In addition, one cannot turn to God and believe in His authority unless God has first drawn a person and implanted the desire in his or her heart. However, only those who find the true way of belief will be saved.

Presbyterian: Presbyterian churches originally come from Scotland have a large influence from Calvinism in the variant of Knox and Melville. Traditionally, they form assemblies of elders who held authority. They emphasize on infant baptism and on the community and therefore, unlike Baptists or Anabaptists, not on individuals. Most Presbyterian churches keep in charge the 1648 Westminster Confession of Faith and its 33 paragraphs.

Anglican: Anglicanism is synonymous with the Church of England, its history goes back to the 16th century when under King Henry VIII the Catholic Church of England broke ties with Rome. Besides things that are more related to the spectacle of political power, the Church of England made a series of changes that can be noted up to this day. The Book of Common Prayer is used in the Anglican Communion. Communion is being taken in a symbolic manner, Anglicans do not believe in transubstantiation. There are two traditions that are present within the Church of England: High Church puts more emphasis on the "traditional" practices of the Church, mainly the Catholic elements that were kept after the Reformation – there is not a great deal of distinction between a high church and a Roman Catholic mass. Low Church stresses the protestant heritage of the Church of England. The Oxford Movement militated

for the reintroduction of some older Christian practices within the Church of England, that were in use in the pre-Reformation era.

Episcopal Church (United States): Name attributed to the Church of England in the United States. Episcopalians are the most strongly represented religious group among the presidents of the United States.

Pentecostals: Protestant groups that trace their roots to the early 20th century, having the Azusa Street Revival as the birthplace of their church. Pentecostals usually put a great deal of emphasis on the works of the Holy Spirit, and subsequently on the way in which its works impact Christians in day-to-day life. Speaking in tongues is also a common characteristic but is not practiced in all Pentecostal congregation. Pentecostal services are well-known for their intensity, the usage of music combined with testimonies from the members along with group singing create a unique experience. Pentecostalism has a lot of adherences in the United States, Brazil, Europe and Africa. African Pentecostals often mix in indigenous spiritual beliefs in their practices.

Classic Pentecostal: Term usually applied to those groups that directly trace their origin to the Azusa Street Revival that took place in the early 20th century. They put less emphasis on speaking in tongues or spiritual healing; these rather being innovation that latter appeared within the Pentecostal movement. There is more interest toward the works of the Holy Spirit, social work, and bridging ethnic and racial divisions among Christians.

Charismatics: The Charismatic movement is a latter development of Pentecostalism; it usually stresses the role of faith and the works of the Holy Spirit in day-to-day life. Prosperity theology and faith healing are important elements that are to be found within this movement. The Charismatic Movement is trans-denominational; various aspects related to the movement being adopted by non-Pentecostal groups, this can be seen especially among some Roman Catholics.

Assemblies of God

Church of Christ: The church is part of the Restoration Movement, which seeks to bring back practices that were present in the Early Christian Church. Infant baptism is not practiced; they observe the Lord's Supper of Sunday.

Nondenominational: Term used mainly to define those independent Protestant churches that are not officially affiliated with any particular denomination. Many times the beliefs that the members of such

churches adhere to may be a mix from various traditions. In some cases, nondenominational churches adhere to a very well defined theology, but it is not affiliated to any officially registered denomination or union.

Unitarians: Some are part of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. They are mostly found in England and Ireland, England in particular also has a historic community of Unitarian Christians.

Unitarian Universalist (Christians): Christians with views that are more or less in tune with classical Unitarianism, mostly resembling the European tradition, that are part of Unitarian Universalist congregations. Unitarian Universalist congregations are interreligious bodies of believers which reunite Christians, Atheists, Jews, Muslim and Buddhists, as well as members of various indigenous and earth-based religions.

Church of the Nazarene: It is a Christian group, which is often considered a cult by many, having members scattered across the world. Its history dates back to the Holiness Movement of the 19th century. Nazarenes are known for their very strict moral code, their lack of involvement in armed conflicts, living segregated lives and for breaking ties with members that were excluded from the group.

Christian Orthodox Churches

They mainly trace their practices, rituals, dogma and sacred art to the form of Christianity that gradually developed in the Eastern corner of the Mediterranean. Nowadays, Orthodox Christianity is mainly represented by several autocephalous churches from Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Middle East and Africa, which all share a common core when it comes to doctrine, but there are some differences that are rather related to aspect concerning the manner in which certain rituals are performed and the way in which sacred art evolved from one region to the other. A few common beliefs that all Orthodox Christians agree on is that their church is Apostolic in nature, the belief in the Trinity, that Holy Spirit only proceeds from the Father, the rejection of Purgatory, rejection of Papal supremacy and infallibility, not using unleavened bread during the Eucharist, belief in Mary's perpetual virginity, while the Immaculate Conception is rejected.

Russian Orthodox: It is a general term that is used to define all Orthodox Christians that are part of various parishes where the services are conducted in Russian. Besides this, we can have a great deal of

diversity within this group, some being what we usually refer to as “*New Rite*” while others are “*Old Rite*”. The first group follows the reforms made by Patriarch Nikon in the 17th century, thus being more in line with the Church of Constantinople, while the second group rejects the reform keeping untouched the practices that were in place before the reform took place.

Romanian Orthodox: Those Christians that are part of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the services are conducted in Romanian. Its roots can be traced to the days in which the Bulgarian Empire ruled what is now modern-day Romania, it was officially organized as an autocephalous church in 1872, it was officially recognized in 1885.

Old Rite Orthodox Church in Romania: Dates back to 1923, it broke away from the Romanian Orthodox Church over an ongoing dispute that revolved over the ecclesiastical calendar. Unlike the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Old Rite Orthodox Church from Romania, also referred to as the Eastern Orthodox Church (*Biserica Ortodoxă Răsăriteană*), uses the Julian calendar, thus all holidays are celebrated thirteen behind the Romanian Orthodox Church. By comparison, the Eastern Orthodox Church is more conservative than the Romanian Orthodox Church, being very skeptic when it comes to endorse certain social issues (e.g. vaccines, LGBT rights, role of science in society). It also drastically opposes any form of ecumenism, considering that most of Christendom is morally corrupt and set on the path to eternal damnation.

Old Rite Russian Orthodox Church in Romania: It is entirely made up of believers that belong to an ethnic Russian-speaking group known as *Lipoveni* (Old Believers), they mainly inhabit Romania’s Danube Delta and a middle portion of the Prut Valley. Church services are conducted in Old Church Slavonic; the Julian calendar is used instead of the Gregorian one.

Coptic Orthodox Christians: Those Orthodox Christians that are part of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, they are mostly found in Egypt, they follow the Alexandrian Rite. The liturgical language is Coptic, an Afro-Asiatic language which is a latter development of the language of the Egyptians. There are some slight differences when it comes to the Coptic Church’s position on the Nature of Christ.

Old Believers: Collective name attributed to all Orthodox Christians that do not follow the reforms of Patriarch Nikon. But this term can be used vastly differently depending on various places; many times, “Old Believer” is used in English writings to refer to Old Russian Believers, other times it can be used to denote any Orthodox Christian that observes the Julian calendar. It is important to remark the fact that not all Orthodox Christians that observe the Julian calendar have the same religious practices as the “Old

Believers”, this is why “Old Believers” is still mainly attributed to unreformed Orthodox Christians that trace their roots to Russia.

Georgian Orthodox: Its members are represented by the majority of people from the Republic of Georgia, country situated in the Southern Caucasus, at the cross point between Asia and Europe. It is an autocephalous church, in full communion with the other churches that form the eastern branch of Orthodox Christianity, it acknowledges the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Saint Nino is responsible for the conversion of the ancestors of modern-day Georgians to Christianity in 4th or 5th century and therefore is much older than most other Orthodox churches. It is one of the few rare cases when the patron saint of an Orthodox country is a woman.

Albanian Orthodox: Orthodox Christians of Albanian ancestry, they are mainly found in the southern part of Albania, and the proximity of Athens in Greece, where they are usually referred to “Arvanites”. Albania is mostly dominated by Muslim groups, some of which are not particularly involved with Islam on a daily basis, the northern part of the country is dominated by Albanians of Roman Catholic faith.

Ethiopian Orthodox: It is one of the few pre-colonial churches from Sub-Saharan Africa; it is part of the oriental branch of Orthodox Christianity. It is in communion with the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. There are some particular aspects that set it aside from the Eastern Churches, one of them is the fact that the rite of exorcism has a better defined status within the Ethiopian Church, in the Eastern Churches it is less of a coherent practice. The sacred art of the Ethiopian Church also sets it apart from other Orthodox churches.

Sacred Name Churches

Sacred Name Churches have in common that they see the modern development of Christianity getting apart from the true Bible and therefore, they go back to the Bible by seeing the Hebrew Bible as authority. They also insist on calling the Lord “Yahweh” and Jesus “Yashua” as they see a falsification of the names given in Western Bibles. Many Sacred name group celebrate Jewish holidays and reject Christmas and Easter as pagan festivals, but unlike Judaism, they accept the authenticity of the New Testament. Even though the New Testament was written in Greek, they prefer the Hebrew version, since Hebrew is the holy language. In addition, they reject the trinity. One of the most famous sacred names churches are the Seventh Day Adventists.

Assemblies of Yahweh: It is a sacred name church which rejects the sacred name movement as disorganization. They celebrate the Sabbath from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown and see the

Bible as infallible source for salvation. The Assemblies of Yahweh emphasize on a life in harmony and reject animal sacrifices, meal, and drink offerings.

Other Christians

Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science): Mary Baker Eddy is its founder, being one of the few religious organizations that were founded by a woman. Christian Scientists put great deal of stress on faith healing. Outsiders are often accusing them that they are reluctant to use modern medicine for healing life-threatening illnesses. Christian Science practitioners are members of the Church that visit the sick in order to improve their condition; these practitioners do not have any medical or nursing studies. Strong criticism came from the outside world in regards to some of the practices that are encouraged by the Church.