

Compare 12 Major Denominations and Their Beliefs

# Denominations Comparison

Compare Christian Groups

Founder, Date

Membership

View of Scripture

**Catholic Church**  
**Orthodox Churches**  
**Anglican Churches**  
**Lutheran Churches**  
**Presbyterian Churches**  
**Methodist Churches**

View of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit

Salvation and Sacraments

Heaven and Hell

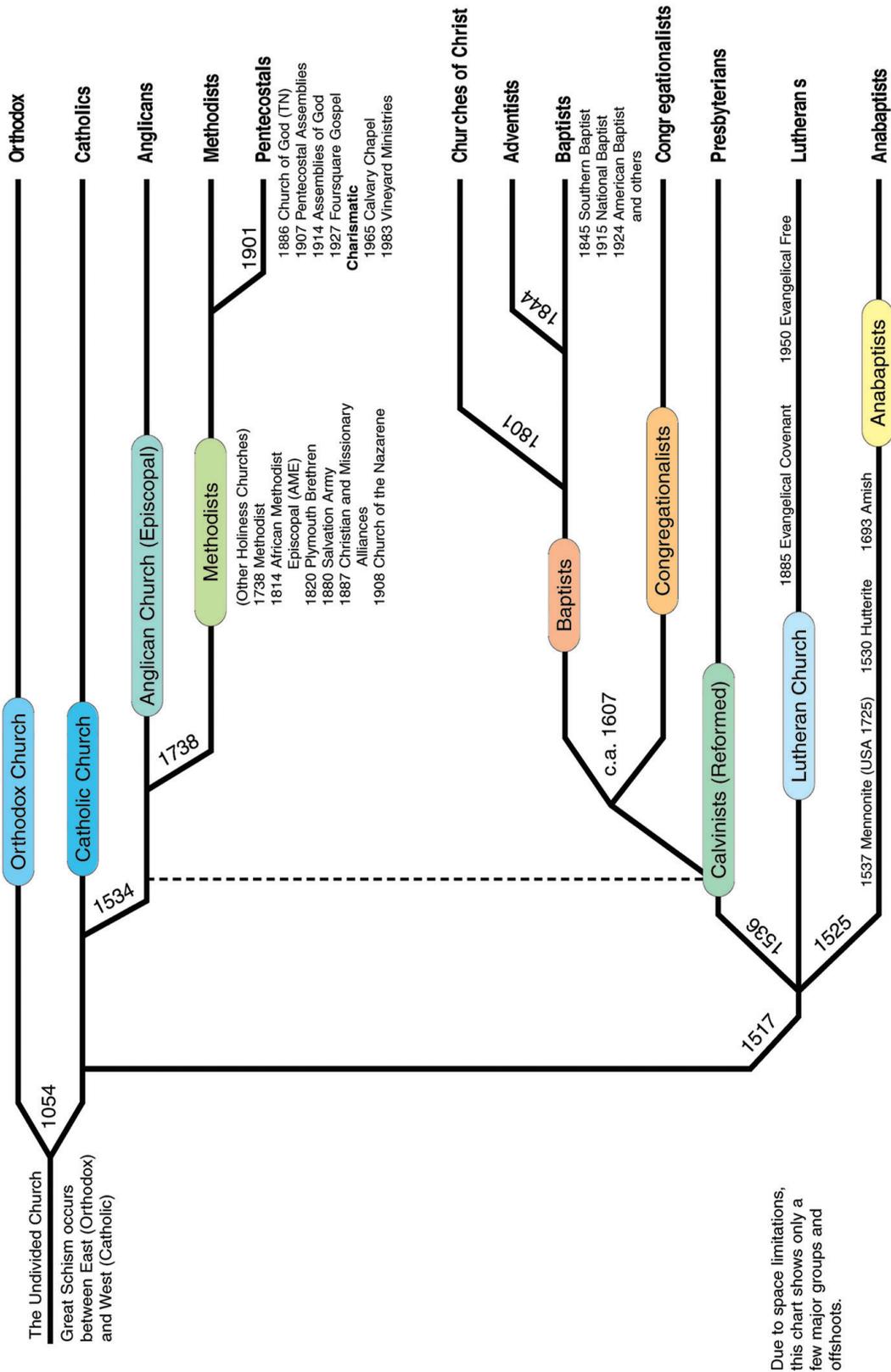
Other Beliefs

Fold-out chart

**Anabaptist Churches**  
**Congregational Churches**  
**Baptist Churches**  
**Churches of Christ**  
**Adventist Churches**  
**Pentecostal Churches**

**ROSE**  
PUBLISHING

# Family Tree of Denominations



# Helpful Words to Know

**Anabaptist.** Literally, “one who is baptized again.” (1) Groups that baptize believers who were already baptized as infants. Anabaptists deny that they are doing so, since in their view infant baptism is not valid. (2) Specifically, the Anabaptists of Zurich and the church bodies (e.g., Mennonites, Amish) that trace their heritage to them.

**Apocrypha.** Books considered part of the Old Testament in Catholic or Orthodox theology but not in Protestant theology (e.g., 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon). Called *deuterocanonical* in Catholic theology.

**apostolic succession.** The doctrine that there is an unbroken line of succession from the original apostles of Jesus Christ to bishops of today. Only bishops in proper succession may ordain priests authorized to perform the sacraments.

**Arminian.** (1) In the theological tradition of Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), a theologian in early Dutch Calvinism who broke with the Calvinist mainstream on matters pertaining to predestination. (2) Somewhat loosely, any Protestant who rejects the Calvinist view of predestination and related doctrines (especially most Anglicans, Methodists, Churches of Christ, and Pentecostals).

**baptist.** (1) Anyone who holds that only persons giving a credible profession of faith should be baptized. (2) *Capitalized.* A church tradition originating in Puritan England that was congregational and baptist.

**Calvinist.** (1) In the theological tradition of John Calvin (1509-64), particularly in the Reformed and Presbyterian church bodies. (2) Somewhat loosely, any Protestant who holds to the Calvinist view of predestination and related doctrines, including some Baptists and other evangelicals. Conservative Lutherans are closer to Calvinism than to Arminianism, but differ in relatively minor ways. (3) Five points of Calvinism: humans are so sinful that they cannot initiate return to God; God chooses who will be saved; Christ died specifically to save those whom God chose; God infallibly draws to Christ those whom he chooses; they will never fall away.

**canon.** Authoritative list of books belonging in the Bible (or in the Old or New Testament).

**catholic.** Literally, “universal” (1) The faithful church in all its expressions worldwide. (2) *Capitalized.* Having to do with the church body headed by the Pope.

**charismatic.** (1) A generic term for spiritual enablement, as in, *charismatic gifts* (tongues, healings, prophecies, etc.). (2) Church bodies whose members practice speaking in tongues and other charismatic gifts but that do not view tongues as the initial evidence of having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (3) Christians in other denominations who experience charismatic gifts.

**clergy.** Priests, ministers, pastors, and other official church leaders, usually said to be *ordained* (specially recognized as having a spiritual responsibility as a leader in the church). *Antonym:* laity.

**Confession.** (1) A document stating what a particular church body or other group of Christians believe in common, such as the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran) or the Westminster Confession of Faith (Presbyterian). (2) The act of privately telling a priest about one's sins (see *Penance*).

**congregational.** (1) A form of church government in which each local church is self-governing; practiced by many denominational groups. (2) *Capitalized.* A church tradition originating in Puritan England that was congregational in church government but (unlike most others) also accepted infant baptism.

**conservative.** Retaining the theological position enshrined in the church body's historic creeds or confessions. *Antonym:* liberal.

**conversion.** (1) The act of changing from one religion (or none) to a new religion, as in conversion from Buddhism to Christianity. (2) The experience of coming to personal faith in Christ, even if the person was already a member of a Christian church.

**ecumenical.** Literally, “of the world.” (1) Representing the Christian church before the schism between the Eastern and Western churches; especially, the creeds and councils of the first millennium. (2) Seeking to foster institutional cooperation or even unity among all Christian church bodies (or at least among some).

**Eucharist.** Literally, “thanksgiving.” Term of choice in liturgical churches for Communion or the Lord's Supper.

**evangelical.** (1) Conservative Christians, mostly Protestant, who affirm the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible. (2) *Capitalized.* Church bodies in the tradition of Martin Luther (1483-1546), whether or not they are evangelical in the generic sense.

**Friends.** The proper name for Quakers, a movement founded by George Fox (1624-91).

**hell.** (1) *Capitalized.* In Christian theology, the final state of the wicked, that is, of the devil, all fallen angels, and all human beings not redeemed by Christ. (2) In the King James Version of the Bible, “hell” translates both the Greek *Gehenna* (which does refer to the final state of the wicked) and the Greek *Hades* (which refers to the temporary waiting place of all departed human beings between their death and resurrection).

**holiness.** (1) God's attribute of sinless perfection, of being beyond and above all impurity or evil an attribute that human beings are meant to have but do not because of sin. (2) *Capitalized.* The Christian tradition, stemming from John Wesley, which believes that Christians need a distinct work or effect of God's grace in their lives that makes them personally holy and ready for Christian love and service; or, any of the several denominations in that tradition (e.g., Christian & Missionary Alliance, Nazarenes, Salvation Army).

**immersion.** A form of baptism in which a person is completely submerged under water; nearly always practiced in Baptist churches.

**immortality.** A state in which a person is unable to die, certain to live forever.

**incarnate, Incarnation.** Literally, “in the flesh.” The doctrine that Jesus, who was God the Son, “became flesh” (John 1:14), that is, became a fully human being, while still being also fully God.

**inerrant.** Without error; used by evangelicals with reference to the complete trustworthiness of the Bible in all matters on which it speaks.

**infallible.** Without error, sometimes understood comprehensively (as in *inerrant*) and sometimes viewed as limited to certain areas or subjects (especially faith and morals). Applied in Catholic theology to the pope in certain specific pronouncements, and applied in conservative Catholic and Protestant theology alike to the Bible.

**laity.** All church members not holding official church leadership offices. *Antonym:* clergy.

**liberal.** Theological views that deny the infallibility of the Bible and that question, in varying degrees, the traditional doctrines held in common by most Christians prior to the modern era (such as the Virgin Birth or the Trinity). *Antonym:* conservative.

**liturgical, liturgy.** A form of corporate worship in which the priest or minister leads the congregation in readings and prayers from a prescribed text (called the *liturgy*).

**mainline.** A Protestant denomination generally originating before 1900 (though it may have undergone recent mergers), from which theologically conservative congregations have separated (e.g., the United Methodist Church).

**new covenant.** The relationship binding believers in Christ to him that in some way superseded the “old covenant” that God had made with Israel through Moses (see 2 Corinthians 3), into which a person enters in baptism and which is celebrated in the Lord’s Supper.

**ordinance.** Term of choice primarily in non-liturgical churches for baptism and the Lord’s Supper; is understood to mean that the rite is a symbol of God’s grace already present in the believer. See *sacrament*.

**orthodox.** (1) Adhering to the essentials of the Christian faith, especially as articulated in the early creeds; in this sense the “orthodox” include conservative Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox. (2) *Capitalized.* Having to do with the association of church bodies of Eastern Europe and the Middle East that became divided from Rome and the churches aligned with it in Western Europe in the “Great Schism” of 1054.

**patriarch.** In the Orthodox Churches, the bishop recognized as the leader of all Orthodox bishops under his jurisdiction (usually a nation or ethnic group, such as Greeks, Armenians, or Russians).

**Penance.** The Catholic sacrament in which a person confesses his sins to a priest and is given assurance of forgiveness.

**pope.** The title, meaning “Father,” referring to the Bishop of Rome (head of the Roman Catholic Church).

**predestination.** A term used by Paul of God’s prior decision that determines who is saved. Calvinists hold that God predestines individuals and on that basis brings them to faith; Arminians and most other Christian bodies hold that God predetermines that those who believe will be saved, but does not predetermine who will believe.

**Protestant Reformation.** The movement originally calling for reform of the doctrines, preaching, and rites of the Catholic Church, ignited by the work of Martin Luther, and which resulted in the secession of many churches from the Catholic Church. All of the church bodies profiled in the chart are Protestant except for the Catholic and Orthodox churches (although the Anglican Church also regards itself as Catholic).

**Purgatory.** A state or place to which believers go after death to have any remaining sin or impurity purged or removed before going to heaven. In the Catholic Church this is generally regarded as a place of temporal punishment; it is not so regarded in the Orthodox and Anglican churches. Most Protestants do not believe in Purgatory but rather in an immediate purgation of sin at death.

**Puritan.** English Protestants who embraced Reformed (Calvinist) theology and wanted to purify the Church of England from supposed corruption, especially ornate church decor and priestly garments.

**sacrament.** Term of choice primarily in liturgical churches for baptism and the Lord’s Supper (and, for Catholics, five other rites); is understood to mean that the rite is in some way a means by which God extends his grace. See *ordinance*.

**sanctification.** (1) Being set apart, or consecrated, to God. (2) The work of the Holy Spirit by which a believer is made holy in character.

**virgin birth.** The miracle by which Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, without being impregnated by a man.

## Other Significant Church Bodies

There are many other Christian denominations that are not mentioned in this pamphlet. The following are some of the better known or more influential of these denominations.

### **Calvary Chapel**

Roughly 500,000, mostly in the USA. Started by Chuck Smith in California as an independent charismatic church oriented to youth. Staunchly evangelical.

### **Christian and Missionary Alliance**

About 430,000 in the USA; 6 million worldwide. Founded by A. B. Simpson, a faith-healing evangelist of the late nineteenth century, it is an evangelical denomination in the Holiness tradition, emphasizing personal piety and evangelism.

### **Church of God (Cleveland, TN)**

About 1 million in the USA; 7 million members worldwide and growing rapidly. The largest of the Pentecostal "Church of God" bodies.

### **Church of the Nazarene**

Roughly 650,000 in the USA; 2.2 million worldwide. A Holiness church body founded in Texas in 1908.

### **Evangelical Covenant Church (100,000 USA)**

### **Evangelical Free Church of America (350,000)**

Two evangelical denominations in the USA with origins in the Free-Church tradition (which broke with the national Lutheran church bodies) of Scandinavia.

### **International Church of the Foursquare Gospel**

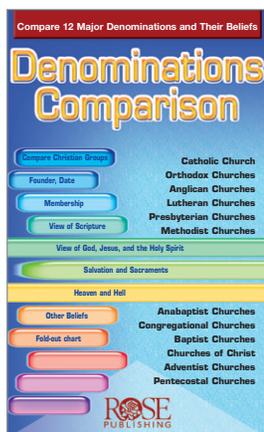
Over 350,000 in the USA; about 4–8 million worldwide. A Pentecostal church body, founded by Aimee Semple McPherson, one of America's most well-known women evangelists, and emphasizing physical as well as spiritual healing.

### **Salvation Army**

About 450,000 in the USA. A Holiness church founded in 1878 by William Booth, a former Methodist preacher, and his wife Catherine Booth. It is best known for its ministries to the poor.

### **Vineyard Ministries International**

Perhaps 190,000 in the USA (over 1,500 churches worldwide). Charismatic church body that started in 1974 with a single church; in 1982 a Calvary Chapel headed by John Wimber, whose ministry focused on praying for signs and wonders, became a Vineyard, after which Vineyard Ministries International (1983) began growing quickly throughout the world.

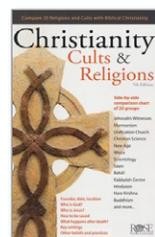


## Denominations Comparison, Pamphlet

This pamphlet is an excellent source for pastors and teachers who want to present denominational beliefs in a concise and focused manner. The full color pamphlet compares 12 Christian denominations and what they believe on different topics. It includes a “Family Tree of Denominations” which shows the roots of today’s denominations and when they organized—first covering the six liturgical denominations followed by the six non-liturgical denominations.

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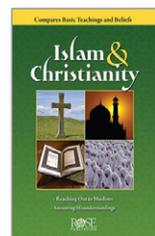


## Christianity, Cults & Religions, Pamphlet

From Muslims to Mormons, there are over 77 million people in America who do not believe in biblical Christianity, according to a recent PEW Report. Now you can easily compare their beliefs to Christianity with this quick-reference pamphlet! **Over 1 million copies sold!**

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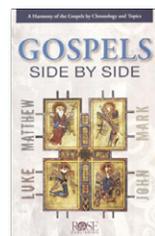
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## Islam & Christianity, Pamphlet

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## Gospels Side by Side, Pamphlet

The Bible gives us four biographers for Jesus’ life: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. See Jesus from four different points of view and learn how their views unite to flesh out a portrait of God. Consult this concise chart to find out where there are four Gospels instead of just one, why three Gospels are similar, but the fourth is very different.

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