

Greetings! In this edition I'll be looking at some of the key differences in belief of various churches and the Church of Jesus Christ.

If at any time you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please let me know. Your responses to me are confidential unless you request otherwise.

As you know we are not alone in the world of Christian belief, and it benefits us to be aware of how we believe as contrasted with others so that we know how to talk with people about the Gospel of Christ.

To that end I thought I might review some of the beliefs of other churches in certain areas and see where they are in relation to what we believe. Warning - this is a long article. References are included near the end to identify where some of the information used for this article has been collected.

Where possible I have used two or more places to confirm the accuracy of the information even if I only reference one, but to be honest there are a lot of contradictory articles and some frankly very unspecific or, conversely, deeply buried and verbose information provided by some of the authoritative sources. That makes discovering the "official" stance on a given subject rather difficult to nail down.

Presbyterian official sources, for example, are notably very thick in terms of identifying a simple statement of belief about some subjects, if there is anything official to be found. I learned a few things myself along the way that I had not been aware of concerning each of the churches I researched for this article.

For the sake of discussion, I chose these churches to research for this article:

1. Catholic
2. Lutheran
3. Anglican
4. Episcopal
5. Baptist
6. Methodist
7. Presbyterian.

So as you can see, I did not include many of the very popular churches in the USA, such as the Assemblies of God, United Churches of Christ, or various Pentecostal organizations.

In a future article - if anyone is interested - delve into churches and/or cover more doctrinal areas. Let me know if that is the case.

Enjoy!

Priesthood

(note: there is some variance depending on local or denominational specificity)

Catholic: Pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests (a.k.a., "friars"), deacons - must pass a number of educational criteria, applications and interviews before ordination by bishop. Must **not** be married except by papal (the office of the Pope) allowance. Women who take a vow of service and contemplation are called "Nuns" or "Sisters" (depending on the vow they take) and must remain unmarried from the time of their vow until death, but these are not considered as "priesthood."

Lutheran: No pope or cardinals. Bishops, priests and deacons are recognized in the "Priesthood of all believers" - including women, and generally must pass a number of educational criteria, interviews, etc., before ordination. Can be married.

Anglican: Anglican head of church is the current reigning monarch in England, male or female. Bishops, priests/pastors and deacons are recognized priesthood officials, as well as lay ministers.

Episcopal: Distinguished and separate from the Anglican church initially due to the separation occurring at the time of the Revolutionary war. Priesthood ministry is in the form of bishops, priests (elected "rectors" of the local parish/congregation) and deacons - including women, as well as lay ("unordained") members. Must generally complete seminary training such as a 3 year Master's degree in divinity.

Baptist: "Priesthood of all believers" - Elders/pastors/deacons - generally must pass a number of educational/experience criteria, applications, certificates, before ordination. Elders are considered as "overseers" on account of their experience (or age), which is the primary distinction from other offices. Female priesthood is not recognized, though lively/heated discussion is currently underway with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Methodist: Elders, ministers (used instead of "priests"), deacons, though lay "unordained" ministers are also accepted. Generally must have a four year college degree and a Master's of Divinity degree before ordination.

Presbyterian: "Priesthood of all believers" - but two offices recognized are elder and deacon, with the lay ministry being recognized as a secondary priesthood. Elders must be married, as are deacons. Elders and deacons are generally required to have a bachelor's degree and a Master's of Divinity degree, and must be endorsed by and approved by a congregation on three occasions (inquirer, candidate, and ordination phases), must pass ordination exams. Ministers may be male or female.

Baptism

(note: there is some variance depending on local or denominational specificity)

Catholic: Infant baptism allowed, sprinkling preferred. Performed by priests or bishops. Lay (unordained) may baptize in case of emergency.

Lutheran: Infant baptism allowed, sprinkling preferred. Performed by priests, bishops, deacons, or lay (unordained) members.

Anglican: Infant baptism allowed, sprinkling/pouring preferred for infants. Performed by priests, bishops, deacons, or lay (unordained) members in some extreme cases.

Episcopal: Infant baptism allowed, sprinkling preferred. (Parents or Godparents must be present for small children to be baptized). Performed by a priest or bishop, or lay (unordained) person in extreme cases (such as life-threatening circumstances that do not allow for appropriate time.)

Baptist: No infant baptism, full immersion required. Can be performed by any believer.

Methodist: Infant baptism allowed, sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Performed by elders, or ordinary ministers ("priests").

Presbyterian: Infant baptism allowed, sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Performed by ministers only - which in Orthodox Presbyterian churches refers mainly to elders.

Millennial Reign of Christ (1,000 years)

Definition of terms:

Amillennialism - refers to the passage as a symbolic reference to the time when Christ returns. In other words, the church is now reigning and will continue to reign until Christ returns and destroys his enemies; that Christ dwells with his people today through the sacraments.

Premillennialism - refers to Christ returning at the beginning of the 1,000 year time period.

Postmillennialism - refers to Christ returning at the ending of the 1,000 year time period after the church has reigned for a "long period of time".

Catholic:

Amillennialism

Lutheran:

Amillennialism.

Anglican:

Amillennialism.

Episcopal:

Amillennialism.

Baptist:

Pre-millennialism.

Methodist:Amillennialism.

Presbyterian:Amillennialism, Premillennialism and Postmillennialism - depending on denominational differences.

Sacraments

Catholic:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Confession
4. Holy communion
5. Marriage
6. Holy orders (priesthood ordination and tasks)
7. Anointing of the sick

Lutheran:

1. Baptism
2. Communion

Anglican:

1. Baptism
2. Communion (Eucharist) - which also includes the following (not considered sacraments of themselves per se)
 - a. Confirmation
 - b. Ordination
 - c. Marriage
 - d. Reconciliation of the penitent
 - e. Unction of the sick (anointing with oil and/or laying on of hands)

Episcopal:

1. Baptism
2. Eucharist (communion)
3. Confirmation
4. Holy Matrimony
5. Reconciliation of the penitent
6. Unction of the sick (anointing with oil and/or laying on of hands)
7. Ordination

Baptist: (none: see ordinances)

Methodist:

1. Baptism
2. Communion

Presbyterian:

1. Baptism
2. Communion

Ordinances

Catholic: (same as sacraments - see above)

Lutheran: ("Sacraments" and "ordinances" are largely interchangeable terms.)

Anglican: (The term is loosely associated with the sacraments, but also with bylaws of the organization)

Episcopal: (The term ordinances used in conjunction with ecclesiastical functions in the church is a non-sequitur. Ordinances within the church are more comparable to city ordinances - rules of operation - within the church charter. These serve as the bylaws of the organization.)

Baptist:

1. Baptism
2. The Lord's supper

Methodist:

1. Public worship of God
2. The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded
3. The supper of the Lord (a.k.a., the Lord's supper)
4. Family and private prayer
5. Searching the scriptures
6. Fasting or abstinence

Presbyterian:

1. Prayer
2. Singing praises
3. Reading
4. Expounding
5. Preaching the word of God
6. Administering the sacrament of baptism
7. Administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper
8. Public solemn fasting and thanksgiving
9. Catechizing (to instruct systematically especially by questions, answers, and explanations and corrections)
10. Making offerings (oblation) of relief of the poor and other pious uses
11. Exercising discipline
12. Blessing the people

Gifts of the Spirit (many of the responses on this are in the passive, personality or education/experience driven sense, not the active sense of the Holy Ghost imparting a special gift as occasion requires)

Catholic: According to tradition the gifts of the Spirit are these:

1. Wisdom
2. Understanding
3. Counsel
4. Fortitude

5. Knowledge
6. Piety
7. Fear of God

Lutheran: ("In *This We Believe*, a statement of belief of our church body, we maintain: "The Holy Spirit also equips the church with all the spiritual gifts it needs for its well-being (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). During the beginning of the New Testament era, special charismatic gifts were given to the church, such as signs, miracles, and speaking in tongues. These gifts were connected with the ministry of the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12). There is no evidence in Scripture that we today should expect the continuation of such charismatic gifts.")

1. Administration
2. Discernment
3. Encouragement
4. Evangelism
5. Faith
6. Giving
7. Helps
8. Hospitality
9. Intercession
10. Knowledge
11. Leadership
12. Mercy
13. Prophecy
14. Shepherding
15. Teaching
16. Wisdom

Anglican:

1. Administration
2. Apostleship
3. Discernment
4. Evangelism
5. Exhortation
6. Faith
7. Giving
8. Healing
9. Interpretation
10. Leadership
11. Mercy
12. Pastor/Shepherd
13. Prophecy
14. Service
15. Teaching
16. Wisdom

Episcopal:

1. Wisdom
2. Understanding
3. Counsel
4. Fortitude
5. Knowledge
6. Piety
7. Fear of the Lord

Baptist:

1. Administration
2. Evangelism
3. Exhortation
4. Giving
5. Mercy-Showing
6. Prophecy
7. Serving
8. Shepherding
9. Teaching

Methodist:

1. Administration
2. Apostleship
3. Compassion
4. Discernment
5. Evangelism
6. Exhortation
7. Faith
8. Giving
9. Healing
10. Helping
11. Interpretation of tongues
12. Knowledge
13. Leadership
14. Miracles
15. Prophecy
16. Servanthood
17. Shepherding
18. Teaching
19. Tongues
20. Wisdom

Presbyterian:

1. Administration
2. Apostleship
3. Discernment

4. Evangelism
5. Exhortation
6. Faith
7. Giving
8. Knowledge
9. Leadership
10. Mercy
11. Pastoring
12. Prophecy
13. Serving
14. Teaching
15. Wisdom

Creeds:

4 Creeds are referenced below. These include the following:

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church, (catholic meaning "universal" and not the Holy Roman church)
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene creed (adopted A.D. 325; revised at Constantinople, A.D. 381)

I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men

and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Athanasian creed

Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith:

Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one: the Glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Spirit.

The Father uncreated: the Son uncreated: and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

The Father incomprehensible: the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Spirit eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

And also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated: and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Spirit Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty.

So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Spirit is God.

And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Spirit Lord.

And yet not three Lords: but one Lord:

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord:

So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten.

The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Spirit, not

three Holy Spirits.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.

So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God, of the Substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born into the world.

Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood.

Who although He be God and Man; yet He is not two, but one Christ.

One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God.

One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ;

Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell: rose again the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father God Almighty.

From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;

And shall give account for their own works.

And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he can not be saved.

The Creed of Chalcedon (adopted A.D. 451)

We then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers handed down to us.

Catholic:

1. The Apostles' Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. The Athanasian creed:
4. The Creed of Chalcedon (adopted A.D. 451)

Lutheran:

1. The Apostles' Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. The Athanasian Creed

Anglican:

1. The Apostles' Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. The Athanasian Creed

Episcopal:

1. The Apostles' Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. The Athanasian Creed

Baptist: (Unofficially supporting the following:)

1. The Apostles' Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. Typical reference to Baptist theology is "No creed but the Bible!"

Methodist:

1. The Apostles' Creed

Presbyterian:

1. The Apostles' Creed

Is the Devil a real being?**Catholic:**

Yes

Lutheran:

Yes

Anglican:

No

Episcopal:

Yes

Baptist:

Yes and No (statistically no, but doctrinally yes)

Methodist:

No official doctrine

Presbyterian:

Unclear

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Baptist

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<https://www.pcahistory.org/bco/fog/04/04.html#:~:text=The%20ordinances%20established%20by%20Christ%2C%20the%20Head%2C%20in%20the%20Congregation,of%20the%20poor%2C%20and%20for>

<https://www.pcahistory.org/bco/fog/04/04.html#:~:text=The%20ordinances%20established%20by%20Christ%2C%20the%20Head%2C%20in%20the%20Congregation,of%20the%20poor%2C%20and%20for>

For comparison, the Church of Jesus Christ generally accepts these responses to the corresponding subjects:

Priesthood

Priesthood is recognized as a calling from God, and is not an institutional creation. The various priesthood offices have different responsibilities, but generally include these offices by name:

1. Deacon
2. Teacher
3. Priest
4. Elder
5. Seventy
6. High Priest
7. Patriarch/Evangelist
8. Bishop
9. Apostle

1 & 2 are the only priesthood offices not authorized to perform or administer the sacraments, while 4-9 are the only priesthood permitted to lay on hands for bestowing the Holy Ghost or for giving blessings.

Candidates for ordination to the priesthood are not decided based on approval of educational or academic merits, but on the spiritual manifestation of a calling evidenced to one or more other priesthood members.

Authority to perform in the priesthood office is only administratively approved by a congregation, to accept ministry from the priesthood member. Ordination is performed by one currently holding an office that is given authority to perform this ordinance through the laying on of hands.

Priesthood may only be held by men; women are not permitted to "rule" in the church in this manner.

Individuals that are practitioners of LGBTQ+ lifestyles are excluded from priesthood, and may be expelled from the church as members as this is a lifestyle contradictory to scriptural admonitions.

Baptism

There are two baptisms referred to in scripture: Baptism by water, and baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost. These are separate but equally important baptisms, and must be performed in this order: water baptism first, baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost second. Baptism by water is by total immersion by authorized priesthood members not including Deacons or Teachers.

Baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost is performed by the laying on of hands of any priesthood member not including Deacons, Teachers, or Priests.

Infant baptism is not allowed. Children no younger than 8 years old may be baptized, but they must choose to be baptized - parents or guardians may not make the decision for their child.

Baptism by water is for the remission of sins and for the fulfillment of the commandments

Baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost is for the confirmation of the baptismal covenant and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost.

Millennial Reign of Christ (1,000 years)

The general belief in the church is that Christ will physically reign on earth for a period of a thousand years. This is not a doctrine as such, but a well-recognized truth in the scriptures. This indicates that Jesus Christ will be present on the earth at the beginning of the 1,000 year reign.

Sacraments

The term "sacrament" refers to something that is holy or "sacred" and as such the sacraments recognized in the church often go hand-in-hand with ordinances, which are commandments given for the church members to perform. In the literal sense, then, the church recognizes a single sacrament, while participating in sacramental activities in the form of ordinances.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper is the use of bread and wine (usually grape juice) to represent - and not to physically be transfigured into - the broken body and blood of Jesus which he endured when he was crucified for our sins. As such, the bread and wine are referred to as the "emblems" - or representative objects - of the Lord's body and blood.

The bread and wine are individually consecrated for their use as emblems of the Lord's broken body and spilt blood by the reading of a prayer for each by one having priesthood authority to administer this sacrament. Baptism by water by one having authority is a pre-requisite for partaking of these sacramental emblems.

Ordinances

Ordinances are commandments given to be performed by priesthood for individuals on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ordinances recognized within the church include the following:

1. Baptism by water
2. Baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost
3. Administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper
4. Laying on of hands for ordination to the priesthood
5. Laying on hands for the blessing of children
6. Laying on hands for administration to the sick
7. Performing marriages
8. Laying on of hands for the blessing of mature individuals (young adults or adults). This is generally performed by high priests, patriarch/evangelists, or apostles.

Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts referenced by Paul and others in the New Testament, as well as those mentioned in the Book of Mormon, are all considered to be available at any given time. While some gifts may be natural abilities provided by God from an early age, or by the accumulation of experience, others are distinctively provided without prior preparation or study as the Lord sees fit. The lists provided in the New Testament and Book of Mormon are not intended to be complete, but a representative list referring to any action the Lord may take for the benefit of his people or kingdom.

As provided in the New Testament, this include, but are not limited to the following:

1 Corinthians 12:

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Creeds:

The Church of Jesus Christ has never bound itself to the limits of creedal statements of belief, as these are restrictive and unproductive. Creeds often include an element of oath, which is in contradiction to the commandments given by God, which forbids the usage of oaths.

Is the Devil a real being?

Yes, as evidenced in the scriptures, which are very clear about this. While some churches may believe merely in the existence of evil as a concept or practice, the scriptures declare that a real being communicated with Adam and Eve to tempt them to commit sin, and subsequently has done so since that time throughout history.

There are many other churches, and many other subjects that could be discussed, so this serves as only an introduction to the many varied beliefs that exist in other churches.

Jared