

Christianity Classified

An editorial on Christian Religions: grouping them into 3 categories

In the Book of Acts, chapter 11, verse 26, of the New Testament of the Bible, we read:

“And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

What is a Christian?

The disciples, or followers of Christ, were therefore first designated Christians at this time in Antioch: obviously the word, Christian, being a derivative from the word Christ, whom they followed. Being Christian appears to at least mean that they believed Jesus of Nazareth, was indeed the Christ, or the Savior who was prophesied to come into the world. The origin of the term Christian does not seem to suggest any further requirement, however.

Any religion that believes Jesus of Nazareth to be Jesus Christ, the only name that brings salvation, qualifies as much today, to be called Christians, as members of Jesus Christ’s original church did. It is important to reference the scripture again when noting that it was an established practice of the disciples of Jesus to assemble with the church; therefore, specifically stating that church was actually founded. Nearly 2,000 years later instead of one Christian church there are many Christian churches.

3 Types of Christian Religions/Churches

It is easier to quantify the various faiths, knowing that all Christian religions can be classified into three groups. If you believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior, then you belong to one of these groups. Forgive me if I don’t mention the church you are specifically a part of. I will at least give one comparative example from each of the groups. Just as the disciples acted for and in behalf of Jesus Christ in administering to His church after His death, the question is which of the Christian churches does Jesus Christ authorize today.

Group 1: Sustained Truth

Catholicism claims that authority was passed down from Jesus Christ throughout time. It claims that the Pope is authorized in the same way that Peter was given authority to lead the Church. There is debatably a large gap in the record of who would have had authority between Peter and the first Pope. Catholics believe that truths were also passed down undefiled—even throughout a long period of illiteracy—known as the Dark Ages. Religions in this category emphasize the need to maintain the truths (as given by Jesus Christ, the Savior, himself), because even though the Pope purports to speak in place of Jesus, revealed truths of Jesus actual words—in addition to what is known to be said of him in times past—is not necessary with sustained truth. To my knowledge, only branches of Catholicism claim to have retained all authority and all truth.

Group 2: Reformed Truth

Most churches and religions are Protestant, meaning they broke away from the first group (or Catholicism). Their claim is that Catholicism lost truths, and that it did not have the authority from Jesus Christ to lead His church. Many Reformers even lost their lives trying to recover—for fellow Christians—truths they knew had been lost. Puritans were persons of many beliefs who wanted an even more pure religion than reformers were ever able to attain to. But without authority to set up Christ's church, who is to say whether God favors the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) more than Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Evangelicals and/or others. It is more likely that every church has some truth, but that no one church, which rose from the reformation, was able to regain all truths, much less the authority from Jesus Christ to be the second coming of His church in its fullness. Nor do these religions claim to have been authorized, but rather acknowledge the Apostasy (the Dark Ages), or the great falling away, that was prophesied of in the Bible: and Reformers just did their best to get as many truths back as they could. The good news is that if Jesus is the Christ, then He lives, and will come again, and any Christian faith at least points its members to receive Him and His gospel the best that they know how, for when He does come again.

Group 3: Restored Truth

The last group claims that Jesus has restored His authority, His truth, and His church. While it is important for this group that other Christian faiths recognize how it also accepts Jesus as the Christ (and is Christian), it is more important to its founding that it is always accepted by Jesus Christ as His. There may be other churches with the claim that Jesus has restored His gospel directly to such church, but the only church that comes to mind is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Just as God chose Prophets to lead His church when Jesus was not on the Earth before, the claim here is that Prophets have been chosen again and given the priesthood of God to lead His church today. With the restoration of priesthood authority came the restoration of revealed truths. Mormons believe in both the New and the Old Testaments of the Bible. They also believe another testament of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is found in the Book of Mormon: a scriptural account said to have come from part of the Lost Tribe's of Israel that were scattered upon the face of the Earth, according to the Bible. The purpose of another testament (and scriptural account) would not be to take away from the Bible, but to support the Bible (and one interpretation of it), just in case many various interpretations of the Bible ever got confused and possibly even divided the Lord's people (which happened, as evidenced by the many churches in the other categories)

Nothing but the truth

Logic only goes so far in discovering what category and Christian church, if any, could possibly have God's whole truth. In order to understand truth of a spiritual nature it must be discerned by developing a sense of the Spirit. Is anyone so far removed from their conscience so as to not even recognize the feelings distinguishing between good and evil? I doubt it. As long as a person is living as close to what they know to be right in their heart and in their mind, that person can come to know more truth by the light of Christ they have been given. The way that a person comes to know that Jesus is the Christ is through reading the scriptures and through prayer (and

then living accordingly helps).

All truths that are of Jesus Christ can be tested in the same way, because they will result in the same feeling. If God has revealed to you that Jesus is the Christ and that the Bible is true, who is anyone to discount your belief in that? But you still have not narrowed the field down. Every Christian religion believes that, but realize that no more than one religion can be right (or fully in line with God's ways), and with how each religion contradicts another in some way, no two differing faiths can both be right. God does not contradict himself. He has one truth. He has one church.

The test I would suggest for Christians is to give the Book of Mormon the same chance you gave the Bible (For non-Christians—give Christ a chance, first. Pray, and see if He does not answer your life for the better [then live according to His word, and this is joy].). Ask God if it is not true. If after sincere study and prayer you find that the books of scripture in the Book of Mormon aren't as true as the Bible, then at least you have narrowed the field of religions down by one faith (and maybe by one whole category [that of God restoring His truth]). But if you find that Jesus the Christ in the Bible is the same found in the Book of Mormon testament, then you have narrowed the field of religions down to one.

I don't know how to put the other religions to the test, if the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not the one church authorized by Jesus Christ to represent Him and His truths. I haven't had to worry about it. Every church out there has truths, but I'm glad that I don't have to sort through them all to find out what truths were retained, or reformed correctly, when instead I rely on my surety that I've found complete truth from one source. I know Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, whose birth and life was recorded in the Bible, and I know He is the same Savior of the people who lived elsewhere during that time. Jesus Christ is the Savior of people before, during and since His ministry. He is the Savior of us all. From two witnesses of both the Bible and the Book of Mormon comes a firm and full belief in Jesus Christ, the entire essence of what is my Christianity.