

https://www.khanacademy.org/questions/117-why-did-constantine-move/kafb_3841793

Why did Constantine move the Capital at the peak of Rome's development? It seems like a crazy thing to do. Was Constantine the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire?

Constantine believed that the Roman Empire had become too big and disorganized to be managed as one Empire. So he split it into two halves. The eastern half became the Byzantine Empire. The capital of the eastern portion of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, became Constantinople, while the capital of the western Roman Empire remained Rome.

When Constantine split the Roman Empire it had actually already been in a slow decline for nearly two hundred years, so even though Rome was at its peak in terms of urbanization, the Roman Empire wasn't as economically sound anymore and it had faced significant political instability.

The Byzantine Empire outlasted the rest of the Roman Empire by nearly 1000 years. It didn't collapse until 1453, when it was defeated by the Ottoman Turks. Unlike the in the Roman Empire, Greek was the primary language in the Byzantine Empire.

The western Roman Empire fell in 476 AD. The western Roman Empire had its own emperor separate from the Eastern Roman Empire and its primary language was Latin instead of Greek. It was overrun by numerous Germanic tribes that ended up creating new monarchies. Italy itself fragmented into city-states and the countries that eventually became France, Spain, and England began to take shape. The fall of the Western Roman Empire marks the beginning of what's called the Dark Ages. During the Dark Ages many of the tribes that sacked Rome became Christianized as they formed their own kingdoms that replaced the Roman Empire. The Latin language also died out as a spoken language as early forms of French, Italian, and Spanish formed as spoken languages among commoners.

The Holy Roman Empire is really distinct from the actual Roman Empire that existed until 476. It was initially preceded by the Carolingian Empire, which ruled much of France and Germany. The Carolingians were a dynasty that ruled the Franks, which were a group of people that lived mainly in modern day France. In 800 A.D, the Carolingian king Charlemagne, was crowned by Pope Leo III and it was declared that the Roman Empire had been revived as "the Holy Roman Empire." The Carolingian kingdom eventually fell apart, but the Holy Roman Empire continued when Otto I, who ruled the German Kingdom, was also crowned as "Holy Roman Emperor" in 962 A.D.

Since 962 The Holy Roman Empire continued to exist until 1806. By the time it fell, the Holy Roman Emperor had really been nothing more than a figurehead for over a century. It had a rather complex history that I can't really go into here. It didn't have a specified capital, but it was really centered in modern Germany instead of Rome. For much of its later history in fact, the Holy Roman Empire didn't even include Rome or much of modern Italy. The important point to remember is that it the Holy Roman Empire really isn't a continuation of the Roman Empire since it didn't maintain Roman culture or Roman institutions. I find that the "Holy Roman Emperor" was really only the "Holy Roman Emperor" by name.

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/battle-of-tours>

At the Battle of Tours near Poitiers, France, Frankish leader Charles Martel, a Christian, defeats a large army of Spanish Moors, halting the Muslim advance into Western Europe. Abd-ar-Rahman, the Muslim governor of Cordoba, was killed in the fighting, and the Moors retreated from Gaul, never to return in such force.

Charles was the illegitimate son of Pepin, the powerful mayor of the palace of Austrasia and effective ruler of the Frankish kingdom. After Pepin died in 714 (with no surviving legitimate sons), Charles beat out Pepin's three grandsons in a power struggle and became mayor of the Franks. He expanded the Frankish territory under his control and in 732 repulsed an onslaught by the Muslims.

Victory at Tours ensured the ruling dynasty of Martel's family, the Carolingians. His son Pepin became the first Carolingian king of the Franks, and his grandson Charlemagne carved out a vast empire that stretched across Europe.

Charlemagne Crowned as Holy Roman Emperor

Dan Graves, MSL

<http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/601-900/charlemagne-crowned-as-holy-roman-emperor-11629758.html>



When the people of western Europe awoke on this day, December 26, 800, they had an emperor again. On Christmas Day, as King Charles of France knelt in prayer before the altar of the church of St. Peter's in Rome, Pope Leo III suddenly placed a golden crown on his head.

The Roman people shouted three times, "To Charles Augustus, crowned by God, the great and pacific emperor of the Romans, life and victory!" Charles was revered by the pope and called Emperor and Augustus, after the manner of the leaders of ancient Rome.

What led up to this dramatic event? Three hundred years and more had passed since the collapse of the Roman Empire in western Europe.

Many elements were at work. For one thing, the popes owed the Franks a great debt for their preservation in recent years. Charles Martel had turned back the Muslim invasion of Europe and Peppin had subdued the Lombards. Another reason for the pope to crown Charles was to show Rome's independence from the Greek Empire in Constantinople.

Since the days of Constantine in the fourth century, the eastern part of the Roman Empire had increased in authority and power. In Charles, King of the Franks, the pope had found a new Constantine to head a revived western empire.

To be sure, Charles was an empire-builder. He had become master of the French kingdom in 768 and used his military might to forcibly bring the German tribes under his authority, forcing them to accept baptism and become Christians. His cruelty has been blamed for the Viking invasions which troubled Europe for over a century. His dominion stretched from the Baltic Sea to the British Channel to Rome itself. Charles worked diligently to provide a good, unified organization for his vast empire.

When King Charles returned to France after being crowned emperor, he forced his subjects to take an oath to him as Caesar. He re-established the Roman Empire on a Teutonic base.

The coronation of Charles sparked much debate during the middle ages. At issue was what relationship of church to state. Did the act of crowning the emperor show the pope's superior authority as giver of the empire to King Charles? Charles didn't think so. He continued to rule as the divinely appointed protector of the church, appointing bishops as well as counts to office. He was not only the first, but possibly the greatest of the emperors from the eighth through the nineteenth century. He restored education, improved law, supported the church, backed Alcuin's attempts to produce an accurate Bible and in many other ways did much that was good. In France, his name was blended with his greatness, and he is known as Charlemagne.

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<http://www.patheos.com/Library/Eastern-Orthodoxy>

The Eastern Orthodox Church, a branch of Christianity also known as Eastern Orthodoxy, Orthodox Christianity, or the Orthodox Church, identifies its roots in the early Church, particularly as it developed within the Greek-speaking eastern branch of the Roman Empire. The Eastern Orthodox Church accepts the first seven Ecumenical Councils (which were held between 325 and 787 C.E.), and regards itself as the True Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church is organized with an episcopal structure including the Four Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem (the Patriarch of Constantinople is the first of equals) and consecrated bishops (whose lineage is believed to be traced back to Jesus' apostles). Their worship is highly liturgical and extremely iconographic, both of which are central to the Church's life, history, and practice. Their icons, which include depictions of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, biblical scenes, or saints, are believed to create a sense of the presence of God. Eastern Orthodoxy is strongly doctrinal and places great authority in the Bible, the Creeds (Apostles' and Nicene), and the seven ecumenical councils. Like all other Christians, Orthodoxy is Trinitarian, believing that God exists in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Quick Fact Details:

- *Formed:* The exact date of the beginning of the Eastern Orthodox Church is indeterminable. While the belief system recognized as Christianity is in place by the first century, institutional structures developed over time. Nor is it possible to distinguish Orthodoxy as a separate tradition until it can be differentiated from other Christian traditions (most notably, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism). Scholars recognize a variety of significant institutional, theological, and cultural markers in the development of Orthodoxy:
 - 325 – Council of Nicea. The first post-apostolic ecumenical council of the Christian community at which Church leaders formed a creedal statement of belief recognized universally.
 - 380 – Edict of Thessalonica. The Emperor Theodosius I mandates "catholic" (universal, in contrast to the heresies of the time) Christianity to be the legal religion of the Empire.
 - 381 – First Council of Constantinople. This council amended and ratified the Nicene Creed, resulting in the version used by Christian churches around the world.
 - 451 – The Council of Chalcedon. The first division within Christianity triggered by the split between those who adhered to the conclusions of the Council and those who did not (referred to as Oriental Orthodox).
 - 787 – The Second Council of Nicea, often called "The Triumph of Orthodoxy." After many decades of iconoclasm (the rejection and destruction of icons), this council ratified the veneration and use of icons in worship and in private devotion – a uniquely Orthodox practice.
 - 1054 – The Great Schism. Though the Eastern and Western branches of the Church had long been divided over theological, cultural, linguistic, and ecclesiological disputes, the separation was formalized in 1054, thus creating the first large-scale division within Christendom.
- *Sacred Texts:* Eastern Orthodoxy uses the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, which includes the deuterocanonical books that Protestants rejected. Their New Testaments are identical to those of all Christians.
- *Headquarters:* The nature of the Eastern Orthodox Church is conciliar rather than monarchical. That is, the patriarchs all hold equal authority in the Church and there is no centralized headquarters from which jurisdiction is maintained. Because the Ecumenical Patriarch – believed to be the first in honor among Orthodox patriarchs – is the Patriarch of Constantinople, Istanbul may be considered the spiritual center of the Orthodox communities.

Miaphysitism and hypostatic union

<http://www.monachos.net/conversation/topic/4485-miaphysitism-and-hypostatic-union/>

QUESTION - i am wondering, what are the differences between Miaphysitism (of the OOC) and the doctrine of Hypostatic Union (EOC)? according to Wikipedia, Miaphysitism holds that "in the one person of Jesus Christ, Divinity and Humanity are united in one "nature" ("physis"), the two being united without separation, without confusion, and without alteration". Hypostatic Union says that "Jesus Christ, who is identical with the Son, is one person and one hypostasis in two natures: a human and a divine." so what is the difference? i'm not asking to argue that "there really is no difference, so why disagree?" but to ask genuinely what the difference is. one definition says "one nature" and another "two natures", yet both speak of "one Person" and two united aspects of His person. how are these churches understanding the word "nature"?

ANSWER - Both us (the EO) and the miaphysites fully accept the hypostatic union which was a central point in St Cyril's theology at the third ecumenical council. Much of the current dialogue between our two churches says that the christology is basically identical and the issues over the two natures are simply semantic. That what we call hypostasis, the miaphysites called nature (physis). Basically in the 4th century the terminology was still not standardized and the word hypostasis and physis were still used interchangeably.

Now theologically the difference between us and the non-chalcedon churches (miaphysites) is one of emphasis. Those who accept chalcedon believe that the one and same Christ is both human and divine without separation yet the natures remain distinct. Miaphysites would prefer not to use the word 'distinct' at all. They confess 2 natures but prefer to say that Christ is OF two natures and not IN two natures. This is because they don't want to give any ammunition to the nestorian heresy.

To understand even better is to analyze the christology of the Assyrian Church of the East which is nestorian leaning. The Assyrian church has a very similar christology and one may say all three churches are saying the same thing. The difference lies in where the miaphysites won't utilize the word 'distinct', the Assyrians readily admit it, on the other hand the Assyrians put less emphasis on the inseparability of the two natures.

The Assyrian church strictly followed the Antiochan school which emphasized the humanity of Christ and thus distinctions between the human and divine in Christ were pointed out. The miaphysites follow the Alexandrian school exclusively which emphasized the divinity of Christ and the incarnation, thus the deeds of Christ belong to the person and not to a nature. The Orthodox church took both these traditions, using the Alexandrian tradition to battle the extremes of Nestorianism in Ephesus 431 a.d. and took of the Antiochan school to battle the extremes of Eutyches monophysitism in Chalcedon.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-54/eastern-orthodoxy-did-you-know.html>

The Orthodox Church is not a single church but rather a family of 13 "autocephalous," or self-governing, churches. They are united in their understanding of the sacraments, doctrine, liturgy, and church government, but each administers its own affairs.

The head of each autocephalous church is called a "patriarch" or "metropolitan." The patriarch of Constantinople (that is, Istanbul, Turkey) is considered the "ecumenical," or universal, patriarch. He enjoys special honor but no power to interfere with the 12 other Orthodox communions.

Many Westerners have been confused about Orthodoxy's distinct identity. In the American armed services, military identification tags of enlisted Orthodox believers once bore the inscription "Protestant."

On the other hand, some western theologians have dismissed Orthodoxy outright. Nineteenth-century church historian Adolf von Harnack wrote, "The Orthodox Church is in her entire structure alien to the gospel and represents a perversion of the Christian religion, its reduction to the level of pagan antiquity."

The Orthodox Church claims to be the one, true church of Christ. Orthodox thinkers debate the spiritual status of Roman Catholics and Protestants, and a few still consider them heretics.

The doctrine of justification by faith is virtually absent from the history and theology of Orthodoxy. Rather, Orthodoxy emphasizes *theosis* (literally, "divinization"), the gradual process by which Christians become more and more like Christ.

The Orthodox have experienced more brutal and lasting persecution than any other Christian body. Under Soviet atheism, for example, communists closed 98 percent of the Orthodox churches in Russia, as well as 1,000 monasteries and 60 seminaries. Between 1917 and the outbreak of World War II, some 50,000 Orthodox priests were martyred.

Orthodox Christians number about 215 million worldwide, with about 5.6 million in the United States. This makes American Orthodoxy about the size of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and the Episcopal Church together.

In the last decade, many Protestants have converted to Orthodoxy. In 1987 former Campus Crusade for Christ staffer Peter Gillquist led 2,000 evangelicals in joining the Antiochian Orthodox Church. Another well-known convert is Franky Schaeffer, son of the late apologist Francis Schaeffer.

Orthodox worship can last two or more hours. Since Orthodox churches do not usually have pews, worshipers variously stand, kneel, and lie prostrate, depending on what the liturgy calls for.

Many Orthodox churches still follow the Julian calendar, authorized by Julius Caesar and used in Europe and the Mediterranean through the Middle Ages. Western churches adhere to the Gregorian calendar, Pope Gregory XIII's 1582 revision of the Julian. Because the Julian calendar now runs 13 days behind the Gregorian, many Orthodox celebrate holy days almost two weeks after the West.

The five largest Orthodox churches in the world are:

- Russian (70 to 100 million)
- Romanian (15 million)
- Greek (13 million)
- Serbian (8 million)
- Bulgarian (8 million)

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[Eastern Orthodoxy](http://www.religionfacts.com/eastern-orthodoxy)

<http://www.religionfacts.com/eastern-orthodoxy>

Eastern Orthodox Christianity, also known as **Eastern Orthodoxy**, began as the eastern half of Christendom, the site of the former Byzantine Empire. Today, the highest concentration of Orthodox Christians remains in the former Byzantine Empire (Greece, Turkey, and nearby countries) and in Russia. But Orthodoxy is found throughout the world, and approximately 225 million people are Orthodox Christians.

Orthodox Christianity has similarities and differences with the two other large branches of the Christian faith, which are Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The three share beliefs on certain core doctrines such as the sinfulness of man, the Trinity, and the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are important theological differences among these groups as well - see links to comparison charts below.

History of Orthodox Christianity

Eastern Orthodoxy arose as a distinct branch of Christianity after the 11th-century "Great Schism" between Eastern and Western Christendom. The separation was not sudden. For

centuries there had been significant religious, cultural, and political differences between the Eastern and Western churches.

Religiously, they had different views on topics such as the use of images (icons), the nature of the Holy Spirit, and the date on which Easter should be celebrated.

Culturally, the Greek East has always tended to be more philosophical, abstract and mystical in its thinking, whereas the Latin West tends toward a more pragmatic and legal-minded approach. (According to an old saying, "the Greeks built metaphysical systems; the Romans built roads.")

The political aspects of the split date back to the Emperor Constantine, who moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople. Upon his death, the empire was divided between his two sons, one of whom ruled the western half of the empire from Rome while the other ruled the eastern region from Constantinople.

These various factors finally came to a head in 1054 AD, when Pope Leo IX excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople (the leader of the Eastern church). In response, the patriarch anathematized (condemned) the Pope, and the Christian church has been divided into West ("Roman Catholic") and East ("Greek Orthodox") ever since.

A glimmer of hope for reconciliation came at the onset of the Crusades later that century, when the West came to the aid of the East against the Turks. But especially after the Fourth Crusade (1200-1204), in which crusaders sacked and occupied Constantinople, the only result was an increase in hostility between the two churches.

However, attempts at reconciliation have been renewed in recent years. In 1964, the Second Vatican Council issued this statement praising its Eastern counterparts:

The Catholic Church values highly the institutions of the Eastern Churches, their liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions, and their ordering of Christian life. For in those churches, which are distinguished by their venerable antiquity, there is clearly evident the tradition which has come from the Apostles through the Fathers and which is part of the divinely revealed, undivided heritage of the Universal Church. {2} On December 7, 1965, the mutual excommunication of 1054 was officially removed by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras.

Distinctive Orthodox Beliefs

Eastern Orthodoxy arose as a distinct branch of Christianity after the 11th-century "Great Schism" between Eastern and Western Christendom. The separation was not sudden. For centuries there had been significant religious, cultural, and political differences between the Eastern and Western churches.

As in all of Christianity, doctrine is important in Eastern Orthodoxy. Orthodox Christians attach great importance to the Bible, the conclusions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and right ("orthodox") belief. However, the Eastern Churches approach religious truth differently than the Western Churches. For Orthodox Christians, truth must be experienced personally. There is less focus on the exact definition of religious truth and more on the practical and personal experience of truth in the life of the individual and the church.

Precise theological definition, when it occurs, is for the purpose of excluding error. This emphasis on personal experience of truth flows into Orthodox theology, which has a rich heritage. Especially in the first millennium of Christian history, the Eastern Church produced significant theological and philosophical thought.

In the Western churches, both Catholic and Protestant, sin, grace, and salvation are seen primarily in legal terms. God gave humans freedom, they misused it and broke God's commandments, and now deserve punishment. God's grace results in forgiveness of the transgression and freedom from bondage and punishment. The Eastern churches see the matter in a different way. For Orthodox theologians, humans were created in the image of God and made to participate fully in the divine life. The full communion with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed meant complete freedom and true humanity, for humans are most human when they are completely united with God.

The result of sin, then, was a blurring of the image of God and a barrier between God and man. The situation in which mankind has been ever since is an unnatural, less human state, which ends in the most unnatural aspect: death. Salvation, then, is a process not of justification or legal pardon, but of reestablishing man's communion with God. This process of repairing the unity of human and divine is sometimes called "deification." This term does not mean that humans become gods but that humans join fully with God's divine life.

The Eastern Orthodox view of the Trinity also differs somewhat from that of the Christian West. In its Christology, Orthodoxy tends to emphasize the divine, preexistent nature of Christ, whereas the West focuses more on his human nature. However, both East and West affirm Christ's full humanity and full divinity as defined by the ecumenical councils. In fact, Christ's humanity is also central to the Orthodox faith, in the doctrine that the divine became human so that humanity might be raised up to the divine life.

The process of being reunited to God, made possible by Christ, is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit plays a central role in Orthodox worship: the liturgy usually begins with a prayer to the Spirit and invocations made prior to sacraments are addressed to the Spirit.

It is in the view of the Holy Spirit that Orthodox theology differs from Western theology, and although the difference might now seem rather technical and abstract, it was a major contributor to the parting of East from West in the 11th century. This dispute is known as the Filioque Controversy, as it centers on the Latin word filioque ("and from the Son"), which was

added to the Nicene Creed in Spain in the 6th century. The original creed proclaimed only that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father."

The purpose of the addition was to reaffirm the divinity of the Son, but Eastern theologians objected both to the unilateral editing of a creed produced by an ecumenical council and to the edit itself. For Eastern Christians, both the Spirit and the Son have their origin in the Father.

Organization and Religious Authority

The Orthodox Church is organized into several regional, autocephalous (governed by their own head bishops) churches. The Patriarch of Constantinople has the honor of primacy, but does not carry the same authority as the Pope does in Catholicism. Major Orthodox churches include the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Church of Alexandria, the Church of Jerusalem, and the Orthodox Church in America.

The religious authority for Orthodox Christianity is not the Pope as in Catholicism, nor the individual Christian with his Bible as in Protestantism, but the scriptures as interpreted by the seven ecumenical councils of the church.

Orthodoxy also relies heavily on the writings of early Greek fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great. Although some Orthodox confessions of faith were produced in the 17th century as counterparts to those of the Reformation, these are regarded as having only historical significance.

Orthodox Worship and Religious Practices

Orthodox worship is highly liturgical and is central to the history and life of the church:

By its theological richness, spiritual significance, and variety, the worship of the Orthodox Church represents one of the most significant factors in this church's continuity and identity. It helps to account for the survival of Christianity during the many centuries of Muslim rule in the Middle East and the Balkans when the liturgy was the only source of religious knowledge or experience. {1}

Question: "What is Coptic Christianity, and what do Coptic Christians believe?"

<https://gotquestions.org/Coptic-Christianity.html>

Answer: "Coptic" means "Egyptian," and Christians living in Egypt identify themselves as Coptic Christians. As a denomination they originated in the city of Alexandria, one of the most faithful, respected, and fruitful cities during the Apostolic Period. Proudly, the Coptic Christians acknowledge and herald John Mark, (author of the Gospel of Mark), as their founder and first bishop sometime between A.D. 42 - A.D. 62. The Coptic Church was actually involved in the very first major split in the Church, well before there was such a thing as "Roman" Catholicism, and it was also well before the East/West split.

Prior to the "Great" East/West Schism of A.D. 1054, the Coptics were separated from the rest by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The council met to discuss the Incarnation of Christ and declared that Christ was "one hypostasis in two natures" (i.e., one person who shares two distinct natures). This became standard orthodoxy for Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches from then on. The Coptic understanding is that Christ is one nature from two natures: "the Logos Incarnate." In this understanding, Christ is from, not in, two natures: full humanity and full divinity. Some in the Coptic Orthodox Church believe that their position was misunderstood at the Council of Chalcedon and take great pains to ensure that they are not seen as Monophysitic (denying the two natures of Christ), but rather "Miaphysitic" (believing in one composite/conjoined nature from two). Some believe that perhaps the council understood the church correctly, but wanted to exile the church for its refusal to take part in politics or due to the rivalry between the bishops of Alexandria and Rome. To this day, 95 percent of Christians in Alexandria are members of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The tradition says that when John Mark arrived on a missionary journey to Egypt, the Coptic form of religion of that day was god-centered worship, but focused upon the pyramids. However, John Mark and the Gospel message were well received by the Coptic people as they also believed in "eternal life." The Coptic people, under Roman rule and societal influence, consisted of Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians; therefore, Christianity had to take into account the different cultural, language, and religious backgrounds when evangelizing and in establishing its church. The Coptic Christians were originally well founded in theology, and other churches in cities throughout the Roman Empire looked up to them with great admiration and respect, willingly following their lead in doctrinal like-mindedness and unity.

It is interesting to note that when the Coptics were under the rule of the Roman Empire, they suffered severe persecution and death for their steadfast faith and beliefs in Christ while refusing to worship emperors. However, by A.D. 641, yet another tribulation began when the Arab conquest took place, overthrowing the Romans' rule in Egypt and, at first, relieving the

Coptic Church from persecution. What appeared to be their liberty and freedom became yet again bondage. The societal strength and control of the Arabs caused the Coptics to endure a major language and culture change as well as confront the Islamic faith. Unfortunately, over the centuries, Christianity lost foothold and most Coptics converted to Islam.

Today, there is a small population of Coptic Christians remaining in Alexandria, but most are located elsewhere. Estimates of the current population of the Coptic Church range from 10 million to 60 million members worldwide. Theologically, Coptic Christianity is very similar to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. They profess to be genuine followers of Jesus Christ and a part of His worldwide Church. But, as with Catholicism, they tend to emphasize meritorious works in salvation along with liturgical ritual rather than salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Who Are the Copts?

Egypt's embattled Christians find common identity across denominational lines.

Jayson Casper in Cairo/ June 15, 2012

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/juneweb-only/who-are-copts.html>

"However, defining the Copts concretely is more difficult, explains Mark Nygard, director of graduate studies at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (founded in 1863 by American Presbyterian missionaries).

"Copts are the historical Orthodox Church of Egypt. It is a fuzzy term, but strictly speaking it refers to those under the pope's authority," he said.

The long-standing Pope Shenouda III, who died in March, was the 117th apostolic successor of Mark the Apostle, believed to have established the church in Alexandria where he died as a martyr in the first century.

As Alexandria became a leading Christian city, it vied with Rome for ecclesiastic and theological leadership until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 divided the Christian church into East and West over the definition of Christology.

Coptic Orthodox were rejected as "Monophysites" – believers in Christ's one nature to the point of denying his humanity. Two centuries later, Islamic invasions isolated Egypt from Christendom, and the Coptic Orthodox faded from Western consciousness until the colonial era, when Egypt opened to both Protestant and Catholic missionaries. Today a sizeable Coptic diaspora exists in the West, including about 200,000 Coptic Christians in the United States.

Atef Gendy has inherited the Protestant legacy, serving as president of the evangelical seminary. He elaborates on the "fuzziness" of his colleague Nygard's definition.

"The accurate definition of *Coptic* is the ethnic identity of Christians of Egypt, but the common understanding is of the Orthodox, due to their status as the oldest church."

Question: "What is the Russian Orthodox Church?"
<https://gotquestions.org/Russian-Orthodox-Church.html>

Answer: According to tradition, the Russian Orthodox Church is what came of a community of believers founded by the apostle Andrew, who visited Scythia and Greece, along the northern part of the Black Sea. According to the tradition, while on his missionary journeys, Andrew eventually reached Kiev, the current home of St. Andrew's Cathedral. Later, Princess Olga of Kiev converted to Christianity, and eventually her grandson, Vladimir the Great, made Byzantine Rite Christianity the official religion in Kiev. This marked the birth of what became the Russian Orthodox Church, part of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Like other Orthodox churches, the Russian Orthodox Church is trinitarian, believes the Bible to be the Word of God, and teaches that Jesus is God the Son. In these matters, the Russian Orthodox Church aligns with Scripture. However, their doctrine has much more in common with Roman Catholicism than with evangelical Christianity. Russian Orthodox services are liturgical and filled with symbolism. Mary has a special place in Russian Orthodoxy as the Mother of God. The Russian Orthodox Church promotes the use of icons (sacred images) and teaches that salvation is conferred through the observance of the sacraments—the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone is not taught in Russian Orthodoxy. Members of the Russian Orthodox Church regard the decisions of their church councils to be infallible.

Count Leo Tolstoy, author of novels such as *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, was baptized (as an infant) into the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1880, Tolstoy raised the church's ire by publishing *Critique of Dogmatic Theology*. The church excommunicated Tolstoy in 1901, blacklisted his books, and decreed that no candles could ever be burned for Tolstoy within any of its churches.

The word *orthodox* refers to adherence to a set of beliefs as they were originally set forth. Orthodox churches, including the Eastern, Oriental, Celtic, Polish, and other types of Orthodoxy, claim to adhere to the Christian faith as it was practiced by the early church. However, the biblical descriptions of the early church bear little resemblance in belief or practice to Orthodox Churches or any of the other high church orders.

The Russian Orthodox Church is one of the autocephalous (self-governing) Eastern Orthodox churches. Being the head of a self-governing body, the bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church does not report to a bishop higher than himself. There is no pope in Russian Orthodoxy. While the minimization of bureaucracy is commendable, the fact remains that the Russian Orthodox Church, like all other churches of this type, depends on a wide and many-faceted power structure consisting of bishops, monks, priests, archbishops, cardinals, nuns and so on. In contrast, the early church, in obedience to Christ's teachings, considered themselves all brothers

and sisters and did not hold any one man above another, because God was their Father and Teacher (see Matthew 23:8–10).

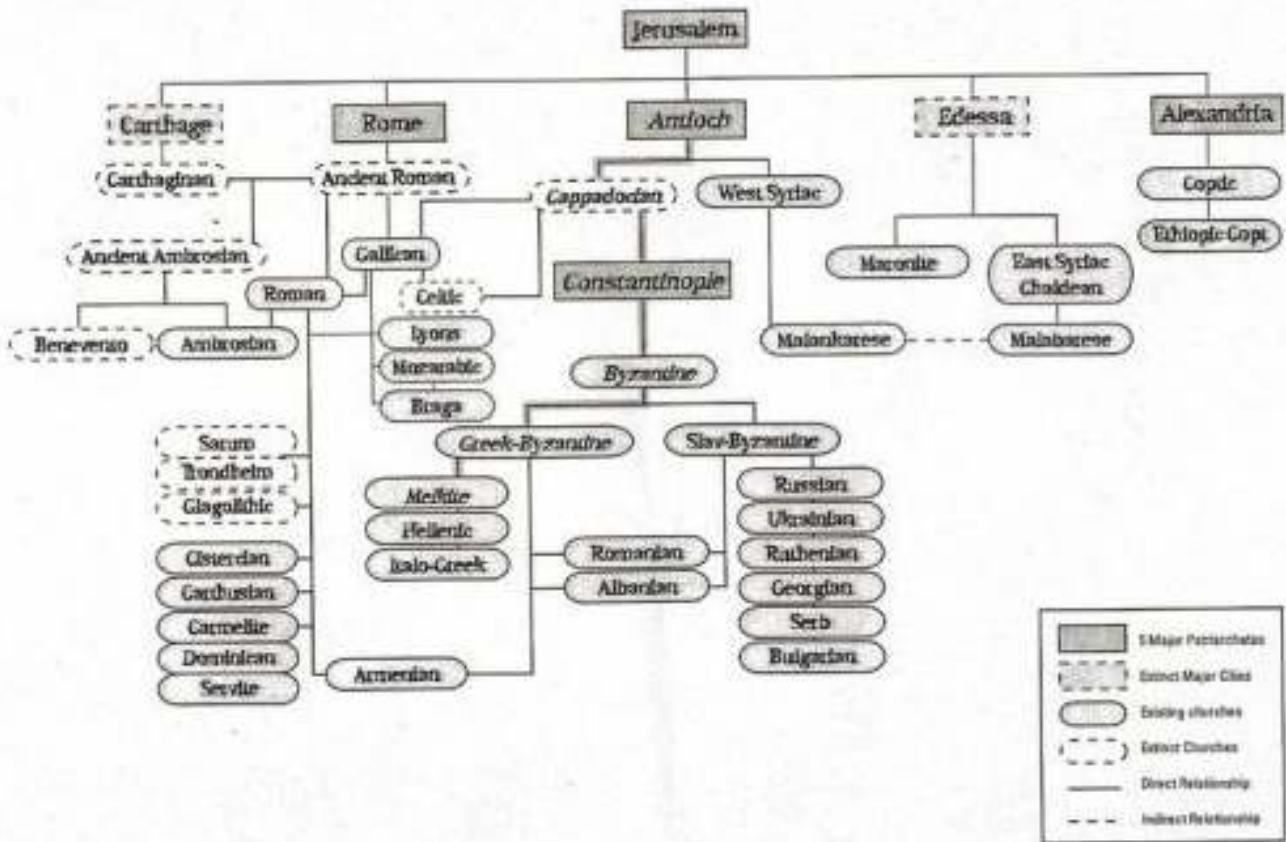
The Russian Orthodox Church claims exclusive jurisdiction over any Christian living within the former republics of the USSR. The Russian Orthodox Church is not to be confused with the Orthodox Church in America or the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, an institution created in the 1920s by communities of Christians who wished to disassociate themselves from communism. In any case, it is clear that the Russian Orthodox Church is largely a socio-political, rather than spiritual, institution. The body of Christ is a spiritual brotherhood of believers and is not limited by borders or nationalities or political beliefs, nor does it hold physical jurisdiction or control over any man (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 3:6; 4:12; 5:23; Colossians 1:24). With Christ as its head, the Church spans ages, crosses borders, defies human control, and thrives despite persecution. There are undoubtedly members of the body of Christ who are also members of the Russian Orthodox Church, but religious institutions are not to be confused with Christ's body or followed as if they held His authority.

There are currently 23 *sui juris* churches that make up the Catholic Church. They include:

1. Latin Catholic church
2. Coptic Catholic church
3. Ethiopian Catholic church
4. Maronite church
5. Syriac (Syrian) Catholic church
6. Syro-Malankara Catholic church
7. Armenian Catholic church
8. Chaldean Catholic church
9. Syro-Malabar church
10. Albanian Greek Catholic church
11. Belarusian Greek Catholic church
12. Bulgarian Greek Catholic church
13. Byzantine church of the Eparchy of Krizevci
14. Greek Byzantine Catholic church
15. Hungarian Greek Catholic church
16. Italo-Albanian Catholic church
17. Macedonian Greek Catholic church
18. Melkite Greek Catholic church
19. Romanian church United with Rome
20. Russian Catholic church
21. Ruthenian Catholic church
22. Slovak Greek Catholic Church
23. Ukrainian Greek Catholic church

22 of these 23 churches are Eastern churches; only the Latin church is Western. But the primary reason most people don't know about all these Eastern churches is that the Latin Catholic church makes up 98% of all Catholics worldwide.

Liturgical Genealogy of the Holy Churches of God



Another thing that people often confuse is the difference between a “rite” and a “church”. The churches above are NOT rites; instead they each practice a rite. A rite is a liturgical patrimony: it is the way in which a church worships. There are primarily six different rites within the Catholic church (with many variations within the different churches). They are:

1. Alexandrian
2. Antiochian
3. Armenian
4. Byzantine
5. Chaldean
6. Latin

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

<http://www.antiochian.org/674>

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 Son of God, the Only-begotten, Begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, True God of True God, Begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made:

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man;

And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;

And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets;

And I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.

I look for the Resurrection of the dead,

And the Life of the age to come. Amen.

Introduction: What Is The Greek Orthodox Church?

<http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8032>

Volumes have been written on the inexhaustible treasures of our Greek Orthodox heritage. It is not the purpose of this guidebook to instruct its readers in Orthodox theology or Church history. However, it is important to understand that everything we do is based upon the premise that the Orthodox Faith is founded upon the teachings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, now and always.

A few of the fundamental tenets upon which our Holy Orthodox Church functions are as follows:

1. The Orthodox Church has two great sources of authority:

Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition

Holy Scripture comprises the writings of both the New and the Old Testaments. The New Testament reveals the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ, and His sacred teachings that we are charged to follow. The Old Testament is a history of the Hebrew people. It contains, among other sacred writings, the prophecies and the writings of the Prophets that foretold the coming of the Messiah. It therefore serves as an introduction to the revelation and the saving message of the New Testament.

Holy Tradition, of which Holy Scripture is a part, includes the writings, teachings, and acts of the apostles, saints, martyrs, and fathers of the Church, and her liturgical and sacramental traditions throughout the ages, the oral tradition of the early Church, and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. All of this collective wisdom and experience through the centuries are combined to form this second great source of sacred authority.

2. The Creed

The Creed contains the Church's basic summary of doctrinal truths to which we adhere as Orthodox Christians. It consists of the twelve articles of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, or the "Pistevo," which is recited at each Divine Liturgy.

3. The Sacraments

The Sacraments are seven in number. They are the visible means by which the invisible Grace of the Holy Spirit is imparted to us. Four Sacraments are obligatory:

1. Baptism,
2. Chrismation (anointment with holy oil),
3. Confession, and
4. Holy Communion.

Three are optional:

1. Matrimony,
2. Holy Orders (Ordination), and
3. Unction (anointment of the sick).

4. *The Church Calendar*

The Church Calendar begins on September 1st and ends on August 31st. Each day is sacred for the Orthodox Christian. The Church venerates at least one saint or sacred event in the life of the Church every day of the year. There are, however, several major feast days observed annually, and of these, Easter, or Pascha, is the most important.

5. *The Divine Liturgy*

The central worship service of the Church is the Divine Liturgy, which is celebrated each Sunday morning and on all holy days. The Liturgy is also the means by which we achieve union with Jesus Christ and unity with each other through the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

6. *Ecumenism*

While the Orthodox Church considers herself the Mother Church of Christendom, she cooperates with other churches in programs of educational, philanthropic, and social endeavors insofar as this is consistent with her theology. Orthodoxy has become a major force in the universal ecumenical movement of which she was a prime mover through the encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople in 1920.

7. *The Major Feast days*

Nativity of the Theotokos	September 8
Exaltation of the Holy Cross	September 14
Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple	November 21
Christmas (Nativity of Jesus Christ)	December 25
Epiphany (Baptism of Christ)	January 6
Presentation of Christ in the Temple	February 2
Annunciation (<i>Evangelismos</i>)	March 25
EASTER (<i>Pascha</i>)	(Varies from year to year)
Ascension	(40 Days after Easter)
Pentecost	(50 Days after Easter)
Transfiguration of Christ	August 6
Dormition of the Theotokos (<i>Kimissis</i>)	August 15

At the center of the life of the Church is the *Holy Eucharist*, which is the principal celebration of our faith and the means through which we participate in the very life of the Holy Trinity. The major Sacraments are closely related to the Eucharist, and they bear witness to the continuing presence of Christ in the lives of His people.

Besides the Eucharist and the major *SACRAMENTS*, the Orthodox Church has a number of Special Services and Blessings which are associated with the needs, events, and tasks of human life. In celebrating these various Services and Blessings, the *Church* is constantly bearing witness to the presence and action of God in our lives. Our God is one who loves us, cares for us, and is near to us. The *liturgical Services* and Blessings also serve to remind us that all of life is important,

and that the many events and gifts of life can be directed toward God and receive their fulfillment in Him.

The Special Services are often referred to as non-sacramental Services in the sense that they are events of community worship which are not usually counted among the major Sacraments. However, they clearly have a sacramental quality in the sense that they reveal the presence of the Holy Trinity. Many of these Services, such as the Funeral, the Blessing of Water, and the Entrance into Monastic Life, just to name a few, are very significant to the life of the Church. The various Blessings are brief ceremonies which are occasional and do not necessarily involve directly the entire parish community.

The Church blesses individuals, events such as trips, and objects such as icons, churches, flowers, fields, animals, and food. In so doing, the Church is not only expressing our thanksgiving, but also affirming that no gift, event, or human responsibility is secular or detached from God. For the Orthodox Christian, all good things have God as their origin and goal. Nothing is outside of God's love and concern.

FUNERAL SERVICE

The death of a Christian affects not only the family, but also the entire Church, for we are all part of the Body of Christ. The Orthodox Funeral Service, which expresses this fact, is not to be seen primarily as an opportunity to extol, in a sentimental way, the virtues of an individual. Rather, the various prayers and hymns emphasize the harsh reality of death, as well as the victorious Resurrection of Christ through which the power of death is conquered. The Funeral Service comforts those who mourn; it is also the means through which the Church prays for one of its members who has died in the faith of Christ. Orthodoxy views the end of physical existence only as the termination of one stage of life. God's love is stronger than death, and the Resurrection of Christ bears witness to this power.

The Orthodox Funeral consists of three Services. First, there is a Vigil Service after death, which is usually conducted at the time of the wake. This service is called the Trisagion Service. The Church prays to Christ "to give rest with the Saints to the soul of Your servant where there is neither pain, grief, nor sighing but life everlasting." While the Church prays for the soul of the deceased, great respect is paid to the body. Orthodoxy believes the body of the Christian is sacred since it was the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The body will share also in the final restoration of all creation. The Funeral Service is continued at the Church, where the body is brought on the day of burial. Ideally, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. After the Funeral Service, the congregation offers its Farewell to the deceased. The Trisagion Service is repeated at the graveside.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Death alters but does not destroy the bond of love and faith which exists among all the members of the Church. Orthodoxy believes that through our prayers, those "who have fallen asleep in the faith and the hope of the Resurrection" continue to have opportunity to grow closer to God. Therefore, the Church prays constantly for her members who have died in Christ. We place our trust in the love of God and the power of mutual love and forgiveness. We pray that God will forgive the sins of the faithful departed, and that He will receive them into the company of Saints in the heavenly Kingdom.

The Orthodox Church remembers the departed in the prayers of every Divine Liturgy. Besides this, there is a Memorial Service in which the Church also remembers the dead. According to tradition, the Memorial Service is offered on the third, ninth, and fortieth day after a death, as well as on the yearly anniversary of the death. In addition to these times, the Memorial Service is always offered for all the faithful departed on four "Saturdays of the souls." These are the two Saturdays preceding Great Lent, the first Saturday of Great Lent, and, the Saturday before Pentecost. In the United States, the Service is also offered on Memorial Day. When the Memorial Service is offered, it is customary for the family of the deceased to bring a dish of boiled wheat to the Church. The boiled wheat is placed on a table in the center of the nave during the Service. The wheat, known as kollyva, is a symbol of the Resurrection. When speaking of the Resurrection, our Lord said: "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)

THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATER: MEGAS AGIASMOS

Epiphany, one of the oldest and most important Feast days of the Orthodox Church, commemorates the manifestation of the Holy Trinity which took place at the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River. Recognizing rich meaning in this event, Orthodoxy believes that when Christ was baptized, it not only marked the beginning of His public ministry and revealed the Trinity, but also signified that the entire creation is destined to share in the glory of redemption in Christ. While Christ entered into the Jordan to be baptized, two things were happening: He was identifying Himself with the people He had come to save, and He was identifying Himself with the whole of Creation, which was represented by water. Through His baptism, the Lord revealed the value of the created world and He redirected it toward its Creator. Creation is good and it belongs to God.

The Great Blessing of Water is held on the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany and on the day itself, following the Divine Liturgy. The Blessing not only remembers the event of Our Lord's baptism and the revelation of the Holy Trinity but also expresses Orthodoxy's belief that creation is sanctified through Christ. The Blessing affirms that humanity and the created world, of which we are a part, were created to be filled with the sanctifying presence of God. After the solemn blessing, the Holy Water is distributed to the faithful and is used to bless homes during the Epiphany season. When the faithful drink the "Epiphany Water," we are reminded of our own baptism. When the Church blesses an individual, or object, or event with the water, we are affirming that those baptized, their surroundings, and their responsibilities are sanctified through Christ and brought into the Kingdom of the Father through the Spirit.

In addition to the Great Blessing of Water, there is a Lesser Blessing of Water service which can take place at any time. Usually, it is celebrated when a home is blessed, on the first day of the month, the beginning of the school year, and beginning of new responsibilities.

THE BLESSING OF BREAD ARTOKLASIA

The Blessing of Five Loaves of Bread is a brief service of thanksgiving through which we express our gratitude for all the blessings of life. Oil, wine, wheat, and the loaves of bread which are used in the service, are viewed as the most basic elements necessary for life. The Blessing reminds us of the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fish by which Christ fed the multitude. This Blessing is usually offered during Vespers or after the Divine Liturgy on Feast days and other special occasions. After the Service, the bread is cut and distributed to the congregation.

AKATHIST HYMN

The Orthodox Church worships God alone. Yet, she does offer veneration to individuals who have been important human instruments of God in the history of salvation. Among those so venerated is Mary, the Mother of God, the Theotokos. The Orthodox Church greatly honors Mary because she was chosen to give birth to the Son of God. As one of the hymns declares:

"By singing praise to your maternity, we exalt you as a spiritual temple, Theotokos. For the One Who dwelt within your womb, the Lord who holds all things in his hands, sanctified you, glorified you, and taught all to sing to you ..."

The most beautiful and poetic service of the Orthodox Church in honor of Mary, the Theotokos, is the Akathist Hymn. The word "akathist" means "without sitting." The congregation stands throughout the Service out of respect for Mary and her unique role in our salvation in Christ. The Akathist Hymn is chanted in four parts during the first four Fridays of Great Lent. On the fifth Friday, the entire Service is chanted.

THE SERVICE OF SUPPLICATION: PARAKLISIS

The Service of Supplication, which is also known as *Paraklisis*, is one offered especially at times of sickness, temptation, or discouragement. The various prayers ask the Lord for guidance, personal strength, and healing. Many of the hymns and prayers are directed toward Mary, the Theotokos, and they ask for her assistance. Orthodoxy affirms that each of us, with Mary, the Saints, and the faithful departed, is united in a bond of faith and love in Christ. Therefore, just as in this life we can turn to each other for prayer, the Church believes that we can also turn to Mary - the human being closest to God - and ask her to pray to God for us. This belief is expressed in the hymn which says:

"O never failing protectress of Christians and their ever-present intercessor before the Creator; despise not the petitions of sinners who have recourse to you, by your goodness extend your help to us who call upon you with confidence. Hasten, O Theotokos, to intercede for us, O you who have always protected those who honor you."

There are two forms of the Service of Supplication: the Great and the Small. It is the Small Service of Supplication which is more brief and the one most frequently offered. Both forms of the Service are offered during the first fourteen days of August which precede the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos celebrated on August 15th.