



ORIENTAL ORTHODOXY 101



Questions & Answers on
Orthodoxy

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WHO ARE THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES?

Oriental Churches refer to a group of churches in Eastern traditions, distinct from the Eastern Orthodox Church. These churches are known for their ancient origins and are predominantly found in the Middle East, Northeast Africa, and India. They are characterized by their unique liturgical practices, theological perspectives, and historical development. Notably, the Oriental Orthodox Churches adhere to Miaphysitism, a Christological doctrine different from the definitions of Chalcedonian Christianity (which includes most Western and Eastern Orthodox Churches). This doctrine emphasizes the unified divine and human nature in the single person of Christ. The Oriental Orthodox Churches include the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.



“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

1 JOHN 1:7



WHAT IS THE NICENE CREED & WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The Nicene Creed, originating from the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD and later expanding at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, stands as a cornerstone of Christian doctrinal statements. It was formulated to address the Arian controversy, which questioned the divinity of Jesus Christ. The creed serves as a unified statement of faith for Christians, affirming the belief in the Holy Trinity - God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. It declares the full divinity and humanity of Jesus, detailing His incarnation, Crucifixion, and ascension. This creed is significant for its role in defining the Orthodox Christian understanding of the Holy Trinity and the nature of Jesus Christ, thus shaping the theological landscape of mains.

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF EACH ORIENTAL CHURCH?

- The Coptic Orthodox Church: founded in Egypt in the 1st century AD, traces its origins to Saint Mark the Evangelist, developed a distinctive Christian tradition in the Nile Valley, with unique theological and liturgical practices. The Church played a significant role in early Christian theological development but later separated from mainstream Christianity following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD over Christological differences.
- The Syriac Orthodox Church: originated in the early Christian communities of the Middle East, particularly in what is now Syria and Turkey, has roots that go back to 1st century AD. It developed around Antioch and has been influential in the spread of Christianity in the East. The Syriac tradition is known for its rich liturgical heritage and its use of the Syriac language, a dialect of Aramaic.
- The Armenian Apostolic Church: established in Armenia in the early 4th century AD, is considered the world's first state church, with Armenia being the first nation to adopt Christianity as its state religion in 301 AD. Founded by St. Gregory the Illuminator and deeply influenced by its unique cultural and political circumstances, the Armenian Church has a rich liturgical and cultural tradition.
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: one of the oldest Christian traditions, was officially established in the 4th century AD, though Christianity had been in Ethiopia since the 1st century. Its formation is linked to the missionary work of St. Frumentius. The church has a distinct liturgical language (Ge'ez) and a unique blend of Jewish and Christian practices.

- The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church: emerged from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. It became an autonomous body in 1993, following Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia. Its traditions and practices are largely derived from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with whom it shares a common heritage.
- Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church: based in India, it traces its origins to the missionary work of St. Thomas the Apostle in the 1st century AD. The church has undergone various historical transformations and divisions but retains a unique identity with its Syriac liturgical and theological traditions.

