

World Religions - Episcopalians

Overview

We continue our study of the world religions with a review of the Episcopalians. An Episcopalian is a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church – in the United States. They are among several self-governing churches within the Anglican community.

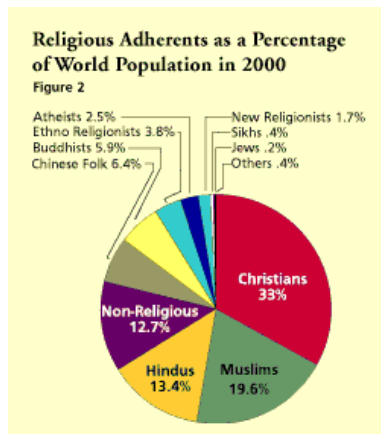
They are called Anglican because the Church of England was directly or indirectly the “mother” of them all. They have a common ancestry and generally are in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury – with common beliefs and prayer books. This communion has fell under some tension in recent years as the American Episcopal Church has deviated from orthodox values such as ordination of women and gay people.

They are also called Episcopalian because they place an emphasis upon unity. The Greek word *episkopos* translates to “overseer” which has become Bishop in English.

A comparison with Catholics

As in other documents which I have prepared for world religions I make a comparison with key tenets of Catholicism.

❖ **Founding & Spiritual Leaders:** I add the Episcopalian Churches to this category because they consider themselves to be both Catholic and Protestant. Their roots are from the Church of England or the Anglican Church. Under Henry VIII, the church split from Rome in 1534 – but they



do not feel that the annulment issue was a primary cause for the split. History shows that the Episcopal Church actually formed out of the Methodist church in 1784. Anglicans are governed differently in other countries but do have a parish concept similar to that of Catholics which are governed by “conventions”.

- ❖ **Beliefs of God:** Same as for Roman Catholics.
- ❖ **Eucharist/Lord’s Supper:** Episcopalians often refer this as the Lord’s Supper and it is not always central in the Sunday worship. Belief is optional and many people do not believe in the True Presence.
- ❖ **Apostolic succession:** The Apostolic succession has been broken and Episcopalian priests can marry if they wish. Woman and people of homosexual status have been ordained.
- ❖ **Creed and Doctrines:** The Creed is the same as for Roman Catholics. Their baptism is considered viable.
- ❖ **Afterlife:** The beliefs are similar to Catholics but Episcopalians do not believe in a physical heaven or hell – but more as states of being. They do not recognize Purgatory while admitting that some period of cleansing is needed to enter heaven.
- ❖ **Deposit of Faith:** Episcopalians recognize the bible as a great source but do not consider it inerrant – and the bible is thought to be a sacred for its general inspiration.
- ❖ **What distinguishes Catholics from this faith:** Allegiance to the Pope is not recognized in addition to the other issues mentioned. The issues of woman and homosexual priests make them in dire conflict with true Catholicism and we are not in communion with them. Confession is optional.