

Christian Worldview Traditions Core Knowledge Essay



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Introduction

Christianity is a global worldview centred on Jesus (Christ) and the belief in one God. Christians use the Bible, made up of the Old Testament and New Testament as their sacred text. Many Christians express faith through prayer, worship in a church, and living by Jesus' teachings, such as the Sermon on the mount and the Parable of the Prodigal son. For most Christians, belief that Jesus is the Son of God who came down to earth to save them from their sins is central to faith.

God is understood as trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a core belief affirmed in ancient creeds.

History and origins

Christianity began in the first century CE, and the first followers of Jesus were mainly Jewish. Early followers saw Jesus' life and teachings, death by crucifixion at Golgotha, and resurrection as the turning point of history. The movement spread rapidly, and by the fourth century, groups of Christian leaders such as the Council of Nicaea, crafted shared statements of belief (e.g. the Nicene creed) and churches formed structures led by bishops, priests and other ministers. Over time, differences in language, culture and theology led to distinct branches and many denominations, including Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Church of England, Church in Wales, Church of Scotland, Church of Ireland, Methodist, Baptist, Salvation Army and Quakers (Religious Society of Friends). Ecumenical cooperation between churches is called ecumenical dialogue.

Core beliefs

Most Christians believe that God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent, eternal and both Immanent (active in the world) and beyond it. The creation stories in Genesis describe the six days of creation and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; Christians interpret these narratives in different ways, from literal to metaphorical. The idea of the Fall, where Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, which shows a breakdown of the relationship between God and humans, and explains why humans do wrong (sin), and therefore, the need for salvation and forgiveness. Christians believe that humans are made in the image of God. Christians look to Jesus' life, atonement through the cross, resurrection and ascension, as God's solution to sin, making people "at one" with God. Beliefs about the Kingdom of God, heaven, eschatology, and the final hope vary; some traditions also speak of purgatory.

The person of Jesus and the Trinity

Christians profess that in the incarnation, God "became flesh" in Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem to a woman called Mary, who was told of his birth by an Angel. Jesus was brought up by Mary and Joseph and at the age of around 30, became a teacher and healer, and recruited a group of followers called disciples. He spent his whole life as a

Jew. At the Last Supper, a Passover meal, Jesus shared bread and wine and gave the Lord's Prayer to his disciples and later apostles, shaping Christian worship and ethics grounded in agape (self-giving love). A day after the Last Supper, Jesus was crucified by the Roman rulers of Israel. Christians believe that three days later he was resurrected.

Many call Jesus the Messiah (from Hebrew) or Christ (Greek), or Immanuel ("God with us"). The title Son of God points to Jesus within the trinity alongside the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Practices and rituals

Christian worship ranges from quiet meetings (as in Quakers) to more formal services with set liturgy. Many churches celebrate Holy Communion (Mass, Eucharist, Lord's Supper) with bread and wine. In some denominations, the bread is referred to as the host, which is placed on a paten and wine is given in a chalice at an altar within the sanctuary. For other denominations, Holy communion is held in different ways, for instance, using non-alcoholic wine to remember Jesus' death and resurrection. There are varying views of the role of the bread and the wine during Holy Communion: some speak of Transubstantiation, others of symbolism; some Anglicans speak of consubstantiation.

Entry to the Christian community is marked for some by a Baptism, also known as a Christening, Believer baptism or adult baptism. For babies and infants, this often happens at a font. Later, some traditions mark commitment by confirmation.

Services in many denominations include hymns or songs, readings from the Bible (which in some churches is placed on a lectern), a talk or sermon (sometimes from a pulpit), prayer including intercession, and prayers of Confession.

Some churches feature artefacts and spaces, such as the nave, sanctuary, altar, lectern, pulpit, font, stoup, and symbols like the cross or crucifix. Places of worship for Christians have a many different names, such as a church, chapel, cathedral or a citadel. Some Christians meet in homes or schools which are not purpose-built for worship. Local Christians gather weekly as a congregation.

For some denominations, for example, Roman Catholicism, the act of Reconciliation or confession is also significant. This is where people say sorry for the sins they have committed and experience forgiveness. One way this happens is in a confessional, where a person speaks privately to a Priest. In some churches, for example, Roman Catholic churches, a stoup with Holy water is placed near the door, which people dip their hands in and make the sign of the cross.

Music, symbols and art such as the cross or crucifix, icons and artworks, form part of worship services in different denominations.

The Christian year and festivals

The rhythm of worship follows seasons and festivals:

- Advent prepares for Christmas, recalling the Nativity with figures such as Mary, Joseph, the Magi, and angelic messages (annunciation). Some churches hold services of nine lessons and carols, crib services and/or Christingle services. In many churches, an Advent wreath is lit on the four Sundays before Christmas. At home, some Christians light an Advent candle, and families may use an Advent Calendar.
- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (after Shrove Tuesday). Towards the end of Lent, Holy week recalls Palm Sunday (with a Palm cross), Maundy Thursday, Good Friday (sometimes marked with stations of the cross or a Passion play), leading to Easter Sunday with sunrise services and a celebration of the resurrection.
- Fifty days later is Pentecost. This marks fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus when the Bible says that the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and they were instructed to go out and share the 'good news' of Jesus. Pentecost is often called the birthday of the church.
- Many churches also hold a harvest festival to thank God for food and creation.

Scriptures and authority

Christians read the Bible to learn about God and to shape life. The Bible is a collection of different books; 66 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament (close in content to the Hebrew Bible) contains different types of writing, for example, prophecy, legal codes, poetry, songs, and historical reports. The New Testament also contains different types of writing, including the gospels which contain teachings (such as parables) and accounts of events, alongside letters to different communities. Both are read privately and in church. Christians interpret the Bible differently. Some take a more literal approach and regard the Bible as the inspired word of God; others read figuratively, and may blend insights from faith, scholarship and science. Prominent voices in scripture include figures such as John the Baptist and Saul/Paul (also called the apostle Paul). Christians seek guidance from scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the church's teaching and tradition.

Diversity within the tradition

Christianity includes many denominations:

- Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian (with strong sacramental and liturgical life; devotion to Mary and the saints is common in Catholicism; Orthodox venerate icons).
- The Church of England, Church in Wales, Church of Scotland, Church of Ireland (the Anglican family), alongside Pentecostal, Orthodox, Methodist and Baptist churches and many others, each with distinct governance and emphases.
- Quakers, the Society of Friends, emphasise silence, conscience and peace.

- Leadership titles vary, vicar, priest, minister, bishop; leaders may serve as evangelists who share the message about Jesus. Despite differences, Christians often work together in ecumenical partnerships.

Key figures and places

- Jesus: born in the first century CE and became a preacher and teacher. He was crucified and Christians believe he was then resurrected. Most Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came down to earth to save them from their sins.
- Paul: known as St Paul. He travelled around the Mediterranean, sharing stories about the life and teachings of Jesus. Much of this is written about in the Acts of the apostles and letters in the New Testament.
- Mary: according to the Bible, Mary is the mother of Jesus. She is particularly significant to Catholic Christians.
- Pope: he is the head of the Roman Catholic church and also acts as the Bishop of Rome. The current Pope, Pope Leo XIV, was elected Pope in May 2025.
- Archbishop of Canterbury: this person is the spiritual leader of the Church of England and the worldwide Anglican communion. Archbishop Dame Sarah Mullaly who became Archbishop in January 2026 is the first woman to hold this position.

Key biblical places include Bethlehem (Jesus' birthplace), the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed, and Golgotha/Calvary where he was crucified. Some travel on Pilgrimage to these places.

Other pilgrimage sites are more important to different denominations. In the United Kingdom, there are several sites of pilgrimage, for example, some go on a pilgrimage to Iona or Lindisfarne, whilst others might travel to Walsingham, where some Christians believe there was a vision of the Virgin Mary.

Further afield Christians, particularly Catholics, visit Lourdes, a site in France where a young girl is thought to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary. It is believed to be a place where the waters have healing powers.

Contemporary expressions

Christians express faith through daily prayer, acts of service, and ethical living, shaped by forgiveness and agape. Many engage in stewardship of the environment, and others serve as neighbours through charity and advocacy.

Worship services, whilst still taking place mainly in traditional buildings, can also be found in, for example, people's houses or public spaces, such as woodland or cafes.

Styles of worship are extremely diverse, ranging from traditional liturgical worship, that has not changed much over time, to modern songs and instruments, call and response singing, or some expressing praise with their whole body.

Miraculous experiences, miracles or healing, are part of some Christians' stories, while others emphasise quiet faithfulness.

Statistics in Britain

Scotland (2022 census): Christian identification (including Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and other Christian) was approximately 39%.

England & Wales (2021 census): people identifying as Christian comprised 46.2% (about 27.5 million).

Key takeaways

- Christianity centres on one God, known in trinity and revealed through Jesus (Christ) and the Holy Spirit.
- The vast majority of Christians believe that Jesus' death and resurrection have rescued them from the consequences of sin, and they have a restored relationship with God.
- The Bible (both the Old Testament and New Testament) guide belief and practice.
- Worship includes Holy Communion (Mass, Eucharist, Lord's Supper), Baptism, prayer, and celebration of the Christian year from advent and Christmas, to Easter and Pentecost.
- For many Christians, their beliefs are expressed through service to others and stewardship.
- Christians belong to many denominations, yet often collaborate in ecumenical work.
- Core ideas include creation, sin, forgiveness, grace, salvation, atonement, resurrection, ascension, the Kingdom of God, and hope for heaven.