

Oriental Orthodox Church

General Information

The "Eastern Church" is a general term for the various ancient Christian communions of the Middle East and Eastern Europe, of which three groups remain today.

The earliest decisive split in Christendom took place in 451 as a result of the Council of Chalcedon, which was called to consider the claims of the Monophysites. The churches that rejected the statement of faith adopted by the council are the Armenian church, the Coptic church of Alexandria, the Ethiopian church, the Syrian church, and the Syrian church in India. Sometimes known as the Oriental Orthodox, these churches today include more than 22 million members.

The largest body, the Orthodox church, is in communion with the ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople (Ýstanbul, Turkey).

A third group of churches is known collectively as Eastern Rite churches, which recognize the authority of the Roman Catholic church.

Oriental Orthodox Church Jacobite Church

General Information

The Jacobite Church is an ancient Christian group, named for James (Iakub) Bar Adai, who, in Syria, led the Monophysite opposition to the affirmation of the two natures of Christ by the Council of Chalcedon (451). Officially persecuted by the Roman Empire, the Monophysites received some sympathy from Empress Theodora, who in 543 arranged for the secret consecration of James as bishop of Edessa and as ecumenical metropolitan. This title implied that he assumed the task of perpetuating an initially illegal Monophysite hierarchy in Syria. Supported by a substantial part of the population, the Jacobite church survived Byzantine persecution, Muslim occupation, and conquest by the Crusaders. During the medieval period, a number of Jacobites became well known in the Muslim world, particularly as medical doctors and historians.

Headed by a patriarch of Antioch, who actually resides in Damascus, Syria, the church is sometimes designated as Syrian Orthodox. The term Jacobite is also applied to the ancient Christian church of Malabâr, in India, which affiliated itself with the Syrian church in the 16th century but is independent today. In Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the Jacobite faithful number approximately 100,000. Small communities have been established in the U.S.

Officially, the Jacobite church, maintaining its opposition to the Council of Chalcedon, confesses the "one divine-human nature" of Christ (Monophysitism). It is separated from both Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy but is in communion with the other Non-Chalcedonian, or Oriental Orthodox, churches - the Armenian, the Coptic, and the Ethiopian. It uses Syriac as its liturgical language and keeps the ancient liturgical tradition of the church of Antioch. Its entire membership speaks Arabic.

Rev. John Meyendorff

Oriental Orthodox Church

Orthodox Church Information

The term *Oriental Orthodox* refers to the churches of Eastern Christian traditions that keep the faith of only the first three Ecumenical Councils of the Orthodox Church - the councils of Nicea I, Constantinople I and Ephesus. The Oriental Orthodox churches rejected the dogmatic definitions of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451).

Thus, despite potentially confusing nomenclature, Oriental Orthodox churches are distinct from the churches that collectively are referred to as *Eastern Orthodoxy*.

The Oriental Orthodox churches came to a parting of the ways with the remainder of Christianity in the 5th century. The separation resulted in part from the Oriental Orthodox churches' refusal to accept the Christological dogmas promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon, which held that Jesus Christ is in two natures - one divine and one human, although these were inseparable. To the hierarchs who would lead the Oriental Orthodox, this was tantamount to accepting Nestorianism. In response, they advocated a formula that stressed unity of the Incarnation over all other considerations, that being "one nature of God the Word Incarnate", "of/from two natures" in and after the union. The Oriental Orthodox churches are therefore often called "Monophysite" churches, although they reject this label, which is associated with Eutychian Monophysitism, preferring the term *non-Chalcedonian* or *Miaphysite* churches. Oriental Orthodox Christians anathematize the Monophysite teachings of Eutyches. They are sometimes also known as *anti-Chalcedonians*.

In the 20th century, a number of dialogues have occurred between the Oriental Orthodox and the Chalcedonian Orthodox which suggest that both communions now share a common Christology with differing terminology. As yet, full communion has not been restored. There have also been some agreed Christological statements issued in conjunction with the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox (Chalcedonian) family (Ecumenical Patriarchate and official representatives of other Eastern Orthodox Churches) [1].

Oriental Orthodox Communion

Churches of the Oriental Orthodox Communion

Autocephalous Churches

Armenia
Alexandria
Ethiopia
Antioch
India
Eritrea

Autonomous Churches

Armenia:
Cilicia
Jerusalem
Constantinople
Alexandria:
Britain
Antioch:
Jacobite Indian

The Oriental Orthodox Communion is a group of churches within Oriental Orthodoxy which are in full communion with each other [2]. The communion includes:

- The Church of Armenia (Armenian Apostolic Church)
- The Church of Antioch (Syriac) (Syriac Orthodox, "Jacobite")
 - Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church, a branch and an integral part of the Syriac Orthodox Church with the Oriental Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch as its supreme head
- The Church of Alexandria (Coptic)
 - The British Orthodox Church, canonically part of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria since 1994
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
- The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church
- The Church of India (Malankara, Indian Orthodox, Orthodox Syrian Church of the East)

Assyrian Church of the East

The Assyrian Church of the East is sometimes considered an Oriental Orthodox Church, although it is not in communion with Oriental Orthodox churches and they have a Nestorian or Nestorian-like Christology that differs from the declaration of the Council of Chalcedon in an opposite way from the Miaphysites. By the time of the Monophysite controversy, the Assyrians had already separated from the Orthodox Church with the Council of Ephesus. The Church follows the East Syrian rite.

Also, see:

[Monophysitism](#)

[Orthodox Church](#)

[Eastern Rite Catholic Churches](#)

[Armenian Church](#)

[Coptic Church](#)

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