**CORNMEAL – A Taste of Various Churches**

Jan. 30, 2024

“…preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling” Eph 4:3-4

“…in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, … lovers of pleasure rather lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.” 2 Timothy 3:1-5

So what churches are out there, and what are their distinctive beliefs, that we should preserve unity with, or avoid? Besides Roman Catholic and evangelical, there are almost 580 million who are neither. This comparison is done by an evangelical Christian, and the numbers of followers are only rough estimates.

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| **followers** | **who consider themselves Christian** |
| 84 M | **C**optic (Egypt: some in Sudan and Libya) |
| 200 M | **O**rthodox (Greek, Russian, Serbian, Georgian, Bulgarian, etc.) (5 M U.S.) |
| 1290 M | **R**oman Catholic (55 M U.S.) |
| 0.8 M | **N**estorian (important historically) |
|  | **M**ulti-grain groups |
| 20 M | Seventh-Day Adventists |
| 16+8.3 M | Mormons + Jehovah’s Witnesses |
| 2.7+.25 M | Others include Rev. Moon, Christian Science, Oneness Pentecostals + Amish |
| 600+40 + 2 M | **E**vangelical Protestant / Charismatic + 40M Anglican + Mennonites / Dunkards |
| 0 | **A**nte-Nicene Christians (= Pre-Nicene 325 A.D.) |
| 245 M | **L**iberal Protestant + 45 M Anglican / Episcopalian |

CORNMEAL is mnemonic in English to classify these into a more “digestible” form of eight food groups, some of which are wholesome, some rotten, and some have junk food. Anglicans are split up between evangelicals and liberals. While around 90 M evangelical Catholics span two groups, here they are simply included in Roman Catholics.

After a brief taste of each letter of CORNMEAL, we will then dig in to their similarities and differences.

**Coptic (also called Coptic Orthodox)**

About 84 M Copts live mostly in Egypt, some in Sudan and Libya, and some in North America. Besides the Coptic church are the Syriac, Eritrean, and Malankara Syrian churches.

They were kicked out as heretics at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. persecuted by the Orthodox.

They are monophysites: Trinitarians who say Jesus had only one merged nature: divine and human.

Strict Monophysites said it’s like putting a teaspoonful of Christ’s humanity in the ocean of His divinity.

Miaphysite Monophysites say Christ has one unified nature with two compound parts: divine and human.

Roman Catholic and Coptic churches had a partial reconciliation in 2017. They recognize each other’s baptism, but do not take the Lord’s Supper together.

In the Lord’s Supper they use leavened bread, allow children to partake, all from the same loaf of bread

Heraclas of Alexandria (not Rome) (232-249 A.D.) was the first to be called a Pope.

Their Bible formerly had 1, 2, 3 Maccabees, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Judith, and additions to Daniel and Esther. But under Cyril V (1874-1927) they rejected these.

**Orthodox (also called Eastern Orthodox)**

Orthodox churches are based on original country, with Greek, Russian, and Serbian, and at least 14 others.

Venerating pictures is more important to them than even to Roman Catholics. -except for briefly under Emperor Leo I (the Iconoclast) (754-787 A.D.)

Russian orthodox have Trinity icons; Greek do not.

None venerate statues, whether of saints or Jesus.

Persecuted Jews in 628, and Copts in 527-568, 572.

Their main source of authority is church councils and various church writers interpreting scripture.

Their patriarch is more like a “governor” while the Roman Catholic Pope is more like an “Emperor”.

Unlike Roman Catholic papal infallibility, orthodox freely admit a patriarch could be heretical.

They do not believe we inherit the stain of original sin, so no need for the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary’s Immaculate Conception.

They celebrate Christmas in January.

Priests can be married once, but can never remarry.

They believe in “theosis” or a person’s deification, sharing God’s divinity and joining the godhead, and becoming free from sin.

In the Lord’s Supper they use leavened bread, and allow children to partake. Babies are immersed.

Russian Orthodox believe in baptizing cars also. (But immersion and car baptism don’t go well together!)

**Roman Catholic (Catholic, means Universal)**

About 1,290 million worldwide, 55 million in the U.S.

Around 1 in 5 Americans are ex-Catholic.

No Roman bishop was called a pope until Julius of Rome in 347 A.D. Siricius c.384-399 was the first call himself a pope.

From 847-859, the false decretals “proved” Peter and his successors being head of all churches. But by 1100 A.D. the decretals were proven to be forgeries.

Persecuted Jews in the west in 554, 561, 582, 628, 638, 646, 847, 1096, 1121, 1146-1148, 1181-1189, 1215, 1306, 1321, 1348, 1478-1834, 1846-1848 A.D.

“Cadaver synod” where Pope Formosus was exhumed and tried and convicted of heresy in 897 A.D.

In the “Great Schism” in 1054 A.D. the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches excommunicated each other. All Catholic churches in Orthodox lands were closed down. Both sides repealed this in 1964.

Eight Crusades 1189-1272 A.D. capture Israel, and one to sack Constantinople.

1487-1545- Crusade against Waldenses.

In 1302 A.D. King Philip of France tortured Pope Boniface VII for heresy. Later, Pope Clement V was France's puppet.

1414-1418 Council of Constance reduced 3 simultaneous popes down to 1 and burned Jan Hus at the stake after Hus was promised safe conduct.

Modern Roman Catholicism has changed; for example, even some atheists and others go to heaven too, according to Pope Francis.

**Nestorians (also called Nestorian Orthodox)**

Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, was a Nicene, Trinitarian excommunicated at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. for two things: denying that Mary was the mother/bearer of God, and saying the Jesus had two separate wills: human and divine.

After Ephesus, Nestorius wrote *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, which is not as extreme as the Council of Ephesus made Nestorius out to be. Nestorius still messed up on the mystery of the incarnation though.

They were persecuted by China and decimated by Mongols and Muslims, especially Tamerlane. In 1498 Portuguese forced Indian Nestorians to become Catholics. Mostly died out by 1200-1400 A.D. Only about 800,000 left today

Nestorians admire Nestorius’s teacher, the Pelagian Theodore of Mopsuestia, whom others reject.

Afterwards they went east and evangelized from Persia to central Asia to China (by 781 A.D.), and even converted a tribe of Mongols (which got wiped out by the other Mongols).

Historically millions lived from eastern Mongolia through China and Central Asia to Syria.

Nestorians were the main ones responsible for the silk road of trade between China and Europe.

They have Psalm 151-155 in their Bibles.

**Multi-grain Groups**

Rather than just one feed, they these groups claim to follow the Bible plus a more modern prophet or leader, such as Joseph Smith, the Watchtower, Ellen G. White, Mary Baker Eddy, Rev. Moon, or others.

The three largest groups here are Seventh Day Adventists (some of whom are evangelical), Mormons, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Various groups considered cults are all included here.

**Evangelicals (also called Conservative Christians)**

Evangelicals value God’s word over tradition.

Roughly 640 million, including about 18 million in mainland China. This includes conservative Protestants, charismatics, Bible churches, and also estimated 40 million conservative Anglicans.

1534 A.D. Henry VIII started the [Anglican] Church of England the Pope refused to annul his marriage.

Lutherans and Calvinists persecuted Anabaptists, each other, and Roman Catholics.

Three distinctives of all evangelicals are:

1) Trusting God’s Word, the Bible, as the highest authority in life

2) Believing and seriously following the New Testament as God and the human writers intended it

3) Salvation by God’s grace alone, not works, through faith alone in Christ alone.

One can think of three types of evangelicals:

a) Fundamentalists - strict rules: no drinking, dancing, blue laws, etc.

b) Regular evangelicals, in various denominations. They have differing views on the age of the earth. Examples are James Dobson and Norm Geisler.

c) Neo-evangelicals, such as C.S. Lewis, Rick Warren. Some believe the Bible is infallible but not inerrant.

**Ante-Nicene Christians (up to 325 A.D.)**

Called by some proto-orthodox, this includes the main orthodox church, Montanists and Novatianists.

Ante-Nicene Christians have aspects of the other groups, though some more than others. Today we have preserved around 5,236 pages of teaching from 88 Pre-Nicene writers. Rather than saying what they believed in a subjective way, let’s use math.

[www.historycart.com/Whatearlychristianstaught.doc](http://www.historycart.com/Whatearlychristianstaught.doc)x

(or .html) gives a list of a consensus of at least 1,188 teachings that four or more Pre-Nicene writers taught and none denied. Of these only 5 would be considered as errors by all Christians today, and only 33 would be disputed by various churches.

If you put an “average” person of each of the “CORNEA” groups in a room together, the Ante-Nicene Christian would be closer to each of them than they would be to each other.

However, after 325 A.D. the Christian Church changed greatly, as the powerful, official religion of Rome

For example, in 346/348 A.D. Formicus Maternus was the first to write Christians should persecute others.

**“Liberal Christians”**

Liberal here refers to theologically liberal, not politics.

Some say only follow the parts of the Bible that you agree with. Some reject Revelation.

Some deny Jesus died for our sins, some deny that Jesus physically rose from the dead. But there are different degrees of liberals. Some affirm those.

Some deny the virgin birth, others deny all miracles.

Some say homosexuality is a sin; some do not.

Most deny that Jesus is the only way.

About 293 million, including 23 million in the Three-self churches in China. 45 million liberal Episcopalians/Anglicans are also included here.

**All CORNE groups agree on the Nicene Creed**

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down [from heaven] and was incarnate and made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost. And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence [from the Father] or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion –all that to say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.” (quoted from the *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Second Series* vol.14 p.3)

**CORNEA: liberals, multi-grains have mixed views**

The 66 books of the Protestant Bible are all true; scripture should be an authority in our lives

Jesus superseded the Old Testament law

There Only One God, in Trinity

God is almighty, all-knowing, holy, pure, eternal, loving, just, gracious, merciful, but has wrath too.

Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% man.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Word of God, was the same substance as the Father.

Jesus Christ had a distinct existence from eternity past, but was born of the virgin Mary.

Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross for our sins

The miracles in the Bible all occurred

Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven

The Holy Spirit, part of the Trinity, lives in Christians

Heaven and Hell, Christ Judgment, Angels, Demons, Satan is a personal being

**CORNEA: Experience and Practice**

Christians often suffer persecution or martyrdom

We are born with a sinful nature (many Church of Christ disagree)

Faith, hope, love, prayer and obedience are important

Love others, don’t worship other gods, murder, steal, lie, commit adultery, commit homosexuality

Help the poor. Don’t covet or be proud.

They generally worship on Sunday

Calling ourselves Christians. Have unity with other genuine believers, but separate from heretics.

No way to heaven except through Christ. The gospel should be preached to others. (Evangelicals often make this more of a priority than other groups.)

**Various groups believe**

COREL: Jesus Christ has only one will

CORNA: there is a big distinction between clergy and laity (Evangelicals have many “tentmakers”)

CORNeA: Christ died for all (Calvinists deny this)

CORNeA: Infant baptism (Evangelicals differ on this)

CORNeA: You can lose your salvation (Evangelicals differ on this)

CORNE: think highly of Athanasius of Alexandria and John Chrysostom

CORNe: It is best to partake of the Lord’s Supper every week. (Evangelicals differ on this)

ORNE: Jesus Christ has two distinct natures: divine and human (Copts do not agree on the distinct part)

COR: Mary was the mother/bearer of God

ON: No sinful stain (or guilt) inherited from Adam

**OR: Orthodox and Roman Catholics**

Hold to the Roman Catholic/Anglican Apocrypha (plus Orthodox have additional writings too.)

The Bible has some errors (This conclusion is unavoidable if you believe the apocrypha)

Mary was the bearer of God, and always a virgin.

Greek Orthodox put more weight to the seven ecumenical councils than Roman Catholics do

Baptism washes away original sin (Roman Catholicism) or ancestral sin (Orthodox)

Bread and wine are no longer that but changed to the real body and blood of Jesus (Lutherans believe in consubstantiation: it changes to the body and blood but still remains bread and wine too)

**OEA: Orthodox, Evangelicals, and Ante-Nicene**

Never believed in limbo. (Roman Catholics abolished this place for those who never heard in 2007.)

Christ died once for all; is no (re-)sacrifice of the mass

Do not believe in purgatory, a fiery place of purging

Reject Mary as co-mediator or co-redeemer with Christ

**Who today is most like the Ante-Nicene Christians?**

This is a difficult question to answer definitively, but we can see several points.

a) Ante-Christians lived by scripture, believed it, and would rather die than surrender it to the authorities. [www.historycart.com/WhatEarlyChristiansTaught.html](http://www.historycart.com/WhatEarlyChristiansTaught.html) (or .doc) lists what they taught. These make “liberal Christians” farther from Ante-Nicene Christians than the “CORNE” groups.

b) Ante-Nicene Christians did not take up questions of Christ’s nature and will in the mystery of the incarnation, so that would start Nestorians and Copts on equal footing with the other three groups.

c) Ante-Nicene Christians can be thought of as what is common to CORNE without venerating any pictures, statues, a Roman pope or cardinals, or prayers to any but God

d) Like evangelicals, Ante-Nicene believers esteemed scripture as their highest authority, but they did not believe *sola scriptura* as their only authority. They did not have altar calls, but some had catechumen classes of up to two years.

e) Unlike evangelicals, Ante-Nicene Christians did not teach salvation by grace alone through faith alone. A majority believed some apocryphal books, baptismal regeneration, and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

f) Unlike all groups today, many (but not all) Ante-Nicene Christians liked Origen’s teaching. Origen was over-allegorical, taught pre-existence of souls, and eventual redemption of all, even demons.

g) Many of the 30 or so groups called Gnostics were farther from Ante-Nicene Christians than Judaism, or modern Baha’is, Mormons, or Christian Science.

**Summary**

CORNMEAL is an acronym cooked up to see the main ingredients of different churches. Though this might be a bit corny, like Micah 1:10-15, there is a serious point here. It is important to understand what people believe. Many times when it is said “Protestants believe this” it is rarely all of them. When it is said “evangelicals believe this” often it is not just evangelicals, but Ante-Nicene Christians and others too. But after stewing on the eight groups you can boil most of the differences down to one question: what is your primary source of authority? Is it one particular set of fallible men, or another set of fallible men, or is it the Bible? You should consider your spiritual diet more important than your physical one. Get rid of the spoiled food and junk food, and have the food God provided.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

“But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity *of devotion* to Christ.” 2 Cor 11:3

While the Multi-grain groups typically have a prophet almost as high, or higher than scripture, some of the other groups seek to honor the gem of scripture by enclosing it with a place setting of tradition. But the setting is continually added to, until God’s Word is not so much denied as it is smothered. Rather than placing a very large, fancy Bible at the front of a church, or on a coffee table in our home, evangelicals are more likely to place a Bible in our hands. Our primary love to should not be to saints and tradition, or to just God’s Word either, but to God, who spoke by His Word.

Jesus said to the Ephesian church, “But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.” Rev 2:4

All verses quoted from the NASB.

[https://www.HistoryCart.com/Cornmeal.doc](https://www.HistoryCart.com/Cornmeal.doc(and .html) (& .html)

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<http://www.ChristianTruth.com>

<http://www.churchofchrist-tl.org/basicbeliefs.html>

<http://www.ChurchSociety.org>

<http://www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/>

<http://www.copticchurch.net/>

<http://www.CWRC-RZ.org>

<http://www.ExAdventist.com>

<https://www.gotquestions.org>

<http://www.GospelCom.net/apologia>

<http://www.GospelCom.net/rzim>

<http://www.GreatControversyExposed.com>

<https://www.HistoryCart.com>

<http://www.Jude3.net>

<http://www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com>

<http://www.LHVM.org> - Living Hope Ministries

<http://www.mcu.edu/library>

<http://www.MeeknessAndTruth.org>

<https://mospat.ru/en/> - Russian Orthodox Church

<http://www.MTC.org>

<http://www.nestorian.org/nestorian_church.html>

<https://Orthodoxwiki.org>

<http://www.Pilgrimpub.org>

<http://www.RethinkingAdventism.com>

<http://www.StPhilopateerDallas.org/> (Coptic Church)

<http://www.TheBaptistPage.net>

<https://www.TheBereanCall.org/content/whats-wrong-candles-incense-and-icons>

<http://www.TruthOrFables.com>

<http://www.Vatican.va/archive/index.htm>

<http://www.Watchman.org>

<https://www.Wikipedia.org>

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