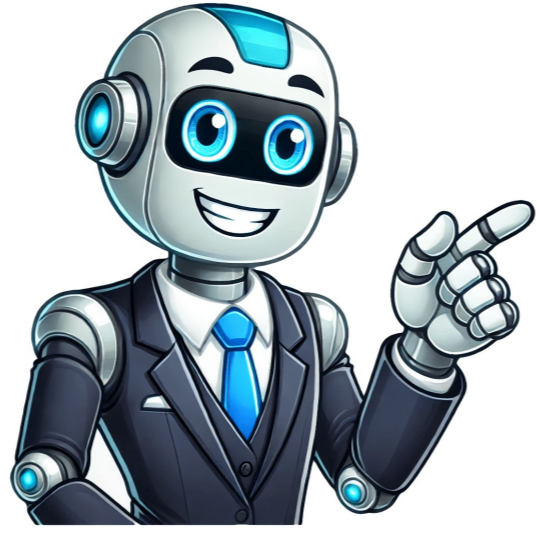


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not an indefinite number of parochial, congregational or national churches, constituting, as it were, so many ecclesiastical individuals, but one great spiritual republic of which these various organizations form a part.[g] although they each have several different opinions. This was markedly far-removed from the traditional and historic Catholic understanding that the Catholic Church was the one true Church of Christ.[r] Yet, in the Protestant understanding, the visible church is not a genus, so to speak, with so many species under it.[s] In order to justify their departure[u] from the Catholic Church, Protestants often posited a new argument, [u] saying that there was no real visible Church with divine authority, only a spiritual, invisible, and hidden church—this notion began in the early days of the Protestant Reformation. Wherever the Magisterial Reformation, which received support from the ruling authorities, took place, the result was a reformed national Protestant church envisioned to be a part of the whole invisible church, but disagreeing, in certain important points of doctrine and doctrine-linked practice, with what had until then been considered the normative reference point on such matters,[v] namely the Papacy and central authority of the Catholic Church. The Reformed churches thus believed in some form of Catholicity, founded on their doctrines of the five solas and a visible ecclesiastical organization based on the 14th- and 15th-century Conciliar movement, rejecting the papacy and papal infallibility in favor of ecumenical councils, but rejecting the latest ecumenical council, the Council of Trent.[w] Religious unity therefore became not one of doctrine and identity but one of invisible character, wherein the unity was one of faith in Jesus Christ, not common identity, doctrine, belief, and collaborative action. There are Protestants.[x] especially of the Reformed tradition, that either reject or downplay the designation Protestant because of the negative idea that the word invokes in addition to its primary meaning, preferring the designation Reformed, Evangelical or even Reformed Catholic expressive of what they call a Reformed Catholicity and defending their arguments from the traditional Protestant confessions.[263] Main article: Christian ecumenism The Marburg Colloquy (1529) was an early attempt at uniting Luther and Zwingli. It failed as both reformers and their delegations could not agree on the sacrament of the Eucharist. Similar discussions were held in 1586 during the Colloquy of Montbéliard and from 1661 to 1663 during the Syncretistic controversy. Anonymous woodcut, 1557.The Edinburgh Missionary Conference is considered the symbolic starting point of the contemporary ecumenical movement.[264] The ecumenical movement has had an influence on mainline churches, beginning at least in 1910 with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Its origins lay in the recognition of the need for cooperation on the mission field in Africa, Asia and Oceania. Since 1948, the World Council of Churches has been influential, but ineffective in creating a united church. There are also ecumenical bodies at regional, national and local levels across the globe, but schisms still far outnumber unifications. One, but not the only expression of the ecumenical movement, has been the move to form united churches, such as the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the US-based United Church of Christ, the United Church of Canada, the Uniting Church in Australia and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines which have rapidly declining memberships. There has been a strong engagement of Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement, though the reaction of individual Orthodox theologians has ranged from tentative approval of the aim of Christian unity to outright condemnation of the perceived effect of watering down Orthodox doctrine.[265] A Protestant baptism is held to be valid by the Catholic Church if given with the trinitarian formula and with the intent to baptize. However, as the ordination of Protestant ministers is not recognized due to the lack of apostolic succession and the disunity from Catholic Church, all other sacraments (except marriage) performed by Protestant denominations and ministers are not recognized as valid. Therefore, Protestants desiring full communion with the Catholic Church are not re-baptized (although they are confirmed) and Protestant ministers who become Catholics may be ordained to the priesthood after a period of study. In 1999, the representatives of Lutheran World Federation and Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, apparently resolving the conflict over the nature of justification which was at the root of the Protestant Reformation, although Confessional Lutherans reject this statement.[266] This is understandable, since there is no compelling authority within them. On 18 July 2006, delegates to the World Methodist Conference voted unanimously to adopt the Joint Declaration.[267][268] Main article: Protestantism by country See also: Christianity by country St. Peter's Church in Bermuda, built in 1612, is the oldest surviving Protestant church in the "New World", including the Americas and certain Atlantic Ocean islands. It was the first of nine Parish churches established in Bermuda by the Church of England. Bermuda also has the oldest Presbyterian church outside the British Isles, the Church of Scotland's Christ Church (1719). As of 2025, there are more than 1 billion Protestants worldwide.[269][270][14][20][8][271][272][273][274][y] among approximately 2.4 billion Christians.[20][276][277][z] In 2010, a total of more than 800 million included 300 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, 260 million in the Americas, 140 million in the Asia-Pacific region, 100 million in Europe and 2 million in Middle East-North Africa.[14] Protestants account for nearly forty percent of Christians worldwide, and are more than one tenth of the total human population.[14] Various estimates put the percentage of Protestants in relation to the total number of world's Christians at 33%.[271] 36%.[278] 36.7%.[14] and 40%.[8] while in relation to the world's population at 11.6%[14] and 13%.[274] In European countries which were most profoundly influenced by the Reformation, Protestantism still remains the most practiced religion.[271] These include the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom.[271][279] In other historical Protestant strongholds such as Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Latvia, and Estonia, it remains one of the most popular religions.[280] Although what is now the Czech Republic was the site of one of the most significant pre-reformation movements,[281] there is only a small Protestant population today.[282][283] mainly due to historical reasons like persecution of Protestants by the Catholic Habsburgs,[284] restrictions during the Communist rule, and also the ongoing secularization.[281] Over the last several decades, religious practice has been declining as secularization has increased.[271][285] According to a 2019 study about Religiosity in the European Union in 2019 by Eurobarometer, Protestants made up 9% of the EU population.[286] According to Pew Research Center, Protestants constituted nearly one fifth (or 18%) of the continent's Christian population in 2010.[14] Clarke and Beyer estimate that Protestants constituted 15% of all Europeans in 2009, while Noll claims that fewer than 12% of them lived in Europe in 2010.[271][273] Changes in worldwide Protestantism over the last century have been significant.[8][273][287] Since 1900, Protestantism has spread rapidly in Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America.[25][274][287] That caused Protestantism to be called a primarily non-Western religion.[273][287] Much of the growth has occurred after World War II, when decolonization of Africa and abolition of various restrictions against Protestants in Latin American countries occurred.[274] According to one source, Protestants constituted respectively 2.5%, 2%, 0.5% of Latin Americans, Africans and Asians.[274] In 2000, percentage of Protestants on mentioned continents was 17%, more than 27% and 6%, respectively.[274] According to Mark A. Noll, 79% of Anglicans lived in the United Kingdom in 1910, while most of the remainder was found in the United States and across the British Commonwealth.[273] By 2010, 59% of Anglicans were found in Africa.[273] In 2010, more Protestants lived in India than in the UK or Germany, while Protestants in Brazil were as numerous as those in the UK and Germany combined.[273] Almost as many lived in each of Nigeria and China as in all of Europe.[273] China is home to world's largest Protestant minority.[14][aa] Protestantism is growing in Africa,[25][288][289] Asia,[25][289][290] Latin America,[289][291] and Oceania,[25][287] while declining in Anglo America[287][292] and Europe.[271][293] with some exceptions such as France.[294] where it was driven underground from the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes until shortly before the French Revolution, but its adherents are now claimed to be stable in number or even growing slightly.[294] According to some, Russia is another country to see a Protestant revival.[295][296][297] In 2010, the largest Protestant denominational families were historically Pentecostal denominations (11%), Anglican (11%), Lutheran (10%), Baptist (9%), United and uniting churches (unions of different denominations) (7%), Presbyterian or Reformed (7%), Methodist (3%), Adventist (3%), Congregationalist (1%), Brethren (1%), The Salvation Army (