

Christian Theology

Distinctions among Christians

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Christians, like ice cream and automobiles, come in all sorts of flavors and varieties. During the 2,000 year history of the Christian faith, many well-intentioned (and many not-so-well-intentioned) believers have separated from other believers for one reason or another. Often, these separations are due to differences in belief and/or practice, such as predestination, biblical inerrancy, and baptism. Also, over the span of time, dozens of Bible translations have been produced, and occasionally Christian groups see themselves as distinguished from other groups because they adhere to specific biblical translations.

Our objective over the next several weeks is to outline some of these dividing lines so that we might:

- a) understand our own tradition more clearly,
- b) appreciate the diversity within our own congregation, and
- c) Value the beliefs and practices of other Christian groups, if and when appropriate.

We will begin this series by learning about Bible translations.

- Every Bible in existence is a translation.
- The Bible has always been translated into the language of the people.

- By 300 B.C., the Old Testament had been translated from Hebrew into Greek. This version is called the Septuagint. The New Testament, written in full by A.D. 100, was written in the same language, the trade language of the day.
- Around A.D. 400, a priest named Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, the people's language. This version is called the Vulgate, and it was used for centuries.
- Parts of the Bible were first translated into English during the Middle Ages (perhaps from A.D. 700 onward). The first full Bible in this language was completed by John Wycliffe by A.D. 1400.
- A major translation of the Bible into German was completed by Martin Luther in A.D. 1522.
- William Tyndale was inspired by Luther's work to translate the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into English, which he (mostly) did in the A.D. 1520s and 1530s.
- The Authorized Version (we call it the King James Version) was published in A.D. 1611 by the Church of England. This translation generally dominated the scene for a couple of centuries, until many new English translations began to appear in the A.D. 1800s and (especially) 1900s.