

Types of Churches

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1. In the North American context, seven types of churches have been identified in the church growth literature (Towns, Vaughan, and Seifert, The Complete Book, p. 85):

	Role of Minister	Authorities	Source of Credibility	Source of Movement	Strengths	Social Clientele
Fundamentalist	Leads the church	Jack Hyles, Jerry Falwell, Elmer Towns	Soul winning, purity, organized outreach	Large soul-winning churches, southern revivalism	New churches, evangelism, pioneers new institutions	Generally lower and middle class
Evangelical Bible Church	Teach and shepherd the church	John McArthur, Charles Swindoll, David Hocking	Bible exposition, discipleship	Bible churches, Dallas Theological Seminary	Bible teaching	Middle and upper class
Body Life	Group leader	Ray Stedman, Gene Getz, Laurence O. Richards	Unity of body, body grows by each member ministering to one another	Peninsula Bible Church, Plymouth Brethren	Strength of church is its unity	Middle and upper class (usually academically oriented)
Charismatic Renewal	Personification of experience	Lee Lesback, Ralph Wilkerson	Charismatic experience	Pentecostal churches, Full Gospel Business Men	Power of the Holy Spirit	Generally lower class
Southern Baptist	Pastor/ Preacher	E. S. "Andy" Anderson, Arthur Flake	Total church program of evangelism and nurture	Historic	Well organized church to carry out total program	Diverse
Mainline	Ministers to flock	Lyle Schaller	Nurture, social planning, social action	Historic	Nurture, renewal, social action	Diverse
Fuller Factor	N/A	Donald McGavran, C. Peter Wagner, Win Arn	Scientific Analysis of growth	Donald McGavran, Fuller Theological Seminary	Scientific analysis of home and foreign missions	N/A

2. Selected distinctives of the more quickly growing church types:

Fundamentalist	Evangelical Bible Church	Body Life	Charismatic Renewal	Southern Baptist
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on the pastor as a strong leader. 2. Stress on personal evangelism and individual experience. 3. Personal ethics that magnify purity and separation of the church from carnal influences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preaching the Word is a major emphasis. 2. Focus is to build up the body to do the work through discipleship. 3. Evangelism takes place outside the church. 4. Discovery and use of spiritual gifts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Body life services on Sunday evenings where there is free sharing and focus on the whole body of Christ. 2. Preaching the Word is emphasized. 3. Body grows when every member ministers to others. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit. 2. Tendency to freedom in worship--usually an enjoyable and entertaining experience. 3. Every-member to witness as an overflow of the Spirit's work in him. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aggressive church planting efforts through personal visitation. 2. The total church program is focused around evangelism and nurture of believers.

3. What about in non-Western settings? In Africa, four major types of religious movements are found (adapted from Turner).
- a. Traditional or purely syncretistic movements (e.g. witchcraft eradication, the re-emergence of secret societies, etc.)

- b. Islamic renewal movements (e.g. the Dyula in Bourkino-Fasso, who have combined traditional elements with Islam; see Quimby).
- c. Hebraist, or Old Testamental, religious movements. These have broken with traditional religion but have opted for the OT as their guides rather than the NT. In that sense, they are not truly Christian. There are two forms of this:
 - i. Israelitish movements, which conform closely to the classical religion of Israel. They "reject idolatry and magic, and now feel that the one God of the Scriptures is loving and helpful and speaks to the community through its founder or successor prophets, commanding faith in himself alone, together with various moral reforms". (Turner, "A Typology", p. 8)
 - ii. Judaistic movements, which reflect more a later Jewish mold: conformity to ritual requirements, festivals, laws, taboos, purifications, etc. For example, God's Kingdom Society in Nigeria denies the trinity and places a strong emphasis on a righteousness of works and adheres to the OT more than the NT. Turner calls them an African version of Jehovah's Witnesses (Turner, "A Typology", p. 9).
- d. The independent church movement. Barrett defines "independency" as:

the formation and existence . . . , temporarily or permanently, of any organized religious movement with a distinct name and membership, even as small as a single organized congregation, which claims the title Christian in that it acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord, and which has either separated by secession from a mission church or an existing African independent church, or has been founded outside the mission churches as a new kind of religious entity under African initiative and leadership. (Barrett, Schism and Renewal, p. 50).

The literature gives a range of independent church classifications. We will use the following terms:

- i. **Ethiopian** churches that broke away from the main line church not necessarily to change doctrine, but simply to achieve independence. They first appeared in south Africa and called themselves "Ethiopian" churches (after the ancient African church there). They range in a spectrum from exact copies of their parent churches to more prophetic-healing emphases.
- ii. **Prophet-healing** churches, which place a strong emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit and emphasize the present aspects of salvation (physical deliverance or healing). Other characteristics may include a hierarchical church policy, a strong emphasis on communal life (in the traditional sense), use of culturally relevant aspects in worship, and a strong moralist ethos. In the literature these are also called "Zionist" or *aladura* churches. Within this category there may be other emphases:
 - (1) Prophecy may be the major focus (the Cherubim and Seraphim Societies of Nigeria).
 - (2) Physical healing or deliverance may be the major focus (the Musama Disco Christo Church of Ghana).
 - (3) Messianic churches tend to emphasize the role of their founder, who may be seen as another mediator between God and man.

- (4) Millennialist churches stress the need to repent in view of the imminent return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.