

# DENOMINATIONALISM

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## I. DENOMINATIONALISM DEFINED

### A. WORDS DEFINED:

1. **Denominate:** verb
  - a. From Latin *de nominare*, literally, “to name.”
  - b. To name, to call; to call by a specific or specified name.
  
2. **Denomination:** noun
  - a. From Latin *denominatus*, literally, “named.”
  - b. The name, or a name, of a class of things; result of the act of naming.
  - c. One of a class or kind having a specific name or value.
  - d. That by which anything is denominated, designated, named, or styled.
  - e. A religious group or sect usually including many local churches.
  - f. An appellation, kind, or classification.
  
3. **Denominational:** adjective
  - a. Belonging to, sponsored by, or controlled by, some religious sect or sects.
  - b. Sectarian; a sectarian spirit or policy.
  
4. **Denominationalism:** noun
  - a. Denominational principles or system(s).
  - b. Division into denominations or sects.
  - c. Advocacy of separation into religious denominations.
  - d. Strict adherence or devotion to the interests of a particular denomination or sect (sectarianism).

### B. What is a denomination?

1. By its very definition a denomination is a *specifically named part or faction* of a larger entity; it is a group specifically designated by a particular name to distinguish it from other “kinds” wearing differing names.
  - a. There are denominations within the broad context of all world religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, etc.
  - b. “Christian denomination” – a particular sect, group, or kind of “Christian” within the larger context of Christianity.
  
2. It is a particular “brand” or “kind” – religiously, a denomination is a kind or part of a larger group; it is a subgroup within the context of a larger entity.

## II. DENOMINATIONALISM DESCRIBED

A. There are thousands of denominations within the context of “Christianity” – an explanation, examples, and illustration:

1. **Explanation:** There is the large designation, “Christianity.”
  - a. Then, under the category “Christianity,” there are different “kinds” or “brands” (named and designated – hence, denominated).
  - b. Further, within the context of this “kind” or “brand,” there are often smaller groups (or, subgroups).

2. **Examples:** the broad category “CHRISTIANITY”:

### a. CATHOLIC

- 1) Roman Catholic
  - a) Mainline / Traditional Roman Catholic (Latin rite)
  - b) American Catholic Church
  - c) Eastern Rite Catholic Church (Uniate Churches)
  - d) Reformed Catholic Church
- 2) Orthodox Catholic
  - a) Greek Orthodox
  - b) Russian Orthodox
  - c) Serbian Orthodox
  - d) Others (Albanian, Caraptho-Russian, Antiochian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Syrian, Ukranian, etc.).
- 3) Oriental Catholic
- 4) Old Catholic
- 5) Anglican Catholic
  - a) Anglican Church
  - b) Episcopal Church
    - (1) Evangelical Anglican Church in America
    - (2) Reformed Episcopal Church

### b. PROTESTANT

#### 1) **LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Then, within the larger context of “Lutheran,” there are the *American Association of Lutheran Churches, Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Church of the Lutheran Confession, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran, etc.*

## 2) BAPTIST CHURCH

Then, within the larger context of “Baptist,” there are churches such as *Southern Baptist, American Baptist, Free Will Baptist, United Baptist, United Free Will Baptist, Regular Baptist, Old Regular Baptist, Landmark Baptist, General Baptist, Bethel Baptist, Primitive Baptist, Christian Unity Baptist, Duck River Baptist, German Baptist, Six-Principle Baptist, National Baptist, National Primitive Baptist, North American Baptist, Separate Baptist, Seventh-Day Baptist, Evangelical Baptist, Reformed Baptist, Two-Seed-In-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptist*, and various other independent groups which wear the name “Baptist.”

And within the context of the subgroups above, there are further subgroups (different kinds of “Free Will” or “Primitive” Baptists, for example).

B. An **ILLUSTRATION** of the proliferation of denominations and denominationalism:

**THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH** ... > *gradual departures from the New Testament pattern evolved, which lead to...*

~ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH ... >

~ANGLICAN CHURCH (CHURCH OF ENGLAND) ... >

~METHODIST CHURCH ... >

~HOLINESS MOVEMENT (NAZARENE) ...>

~CHARISMATIC / PENTECOSTALISM ...>

~ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH ...>

~UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH...>

C. How many denominations are there?

1. It really depends on how you count such (for example, is “Baptist” one denomination, or does one count each “kind” of Baptist as a separate denomination?).

2. Estimates: 1300 – 30,000

### III. DENOMINATIONALISM DENOUNCED

A. The whole premise of denominationalism is division:

1. A denomination, by definition and practice, is a “part of the whole” – it is a faction, sect, or portion of the whole.
2. But the whole concept of “factionalism” within the religion of Jesus Christ is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

B. The Bible enjoins UNITY, not division:

1. **THE LORD’S PRAYER:** John 17:20-21
2. **THE APOSTLE’S ADMONITION:** 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-9; Ephesians 4:4-6 ; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 3:16
3. **BIBLE WARNINGS:** Romans 16:17; Galatians 5:20 [variance, strife, seditions, heresies]; Titus 3:10 [“heretick” = “factious man”]
4. **EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY CHURCH:** Acts 2:42, 44; 4:32; Ephesians 2:11-22

C. The New Testament speaks of the church in three senses: *universal, local, assembled.*

1. But most denominations do not claim to be the “whole church,” the universal church.
2. And any denomination is larger than a local church (congregation).
3. Therefore, we are forced to conclude that a denomination *is not the church in any Scriptural sense* at all!

D. Further, a study of denominationalism is a study of doctrines, traditions, and practices contrary to New Testament teaching – the Bible is explicit in warnings against false doctrine:

1. **Warnings against human traditions:** Matthew 15:7-9, 13-14; Mark 7:6-13; Colossians 2:20-22
2. **Warnings against apostasy:** Acts 20:29-30; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:1-5
3. **Warnings against false doctrine:** Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Titus 1:10-14; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 2:14-15

### CONCLUSION:

A. Why study denominationalism, and specific denominational doctrines?

1. That there is much confusion resulting from religious division, no one can deny a knowledge of these matters is essential to avoid such confusion.
2. A study of this subjects helps us to:
  - a. Answer every man concerning what we believe: 1 Peter 3:15; Philippians 1:17
  - b. Know where we have come from, in order that we may correctly know where we are and where we need to go: Jeremiah 6:16
  - c. Be able to separate the truth of God from the traditions of men: Matthew 15:7-9

**B. Why OPPOSE DENOMINATIONALISM?** Denominations are...

1. UNSCRIPTURAL IN ORIGIN (unscriptural places of origin: Isaiah 2:2-3; Acts 2).
2. UNSCRIPTURAL IN FOUNDER (Jesus is the founder of His church: Matthew 16:18).
3. UNSCRIPTURAL IN LEGITIMACY (contrary to warnings against factionalism).
4. UNSCRIPTURAL IN NAME (wearing names not found in the Bible).
5. UNSCRIPTURAL IN DOCTRINE (teaching unbiblical doctrines).
6. It is UNSCRIPTURAL IN PRACTICE (practicing many things for which there is no Bible authority).
7. It is UNSCRIPTURAL IN ORGANIZATION (denominations often have complex ecclesiastical organizations in sharp contrast to the simple New Testament pattern).
8. It is UNSCRIPTURAL IN AIM (denominationalism is destructive to the souls of men – Proverbs 14:12; 28:26; 30:5-6; Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

**C. But isn't ONE CHURCH as good as ANOTHER?**

1. Is one GOD as good as another? Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6
2. Is one CHRIST as good as another? John 8:24; 2 Corinthians 11:4; John 14:6
3. Is one AUTHORITY as good as another? 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 10:17
4. Is one FOUNDER & FOUNDATION as good as another? 1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Matthew 7:24-27
5. Is one HEAD as good as another? Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18
6. Is one WORSHIP as good as another? Matthew 4:10; John 4:23-24
7. Is one DOCTRINE as good as another? 1 Timothy 4:1-4; Titus 2:1
8. Is one WAY as good as another? Matthew 7:13-14; John 10:1
9. Is one BAPTISM as good as another? Ephesians 4:4; Acts 2:38; 8:35-38
10. Is one NAME as good as another? Acts 4:11-12; Romans 16:16

**D. Why is there so much RELIGIOUS DIVISION?** What factors contribute to it?

1. IGNORANCE OF TRUTH: Acts 17:11; John 8:31-32; 2 Corinthians 4:1-4
2. UNWILLINGNESS TO SUBMIT TO GOD: Matthew 7:21-23; John 6:63
3. WRONG VIEW OF THE CHURCH: Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:16; 1 Timothy 3:15
4. PERSONALITY / EGO / EXALTING MEN: 1 Corinthians 1-3
5. HUMAN TRADITION / MAN'S OPINION: Matthew 15:1-9

**E. Let us commit ourselves to UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY** – the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; Hebrews 12:22-23, 27-28).

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**  
Relating to Denominational Doctrines

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1. **ANGLICAN:** English; belong or related to the Church of England (from prefix “anglo” meaning English or England).
  
2. **CATHOLIC:** from Greek, **KATHOLICOS**, meaning “universal; general; all-inclusive.”
  - a. Some use this word of “the Christian church” in general, throughout the world; the church as a whole (“I believe in the catholic church...”).
  - b. Any of the “orthodox Christian churches,” including Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox Catholic, Anglo-Catholic.
  - c. Often used to specifically designate “western Christianity,” that is Roman Catholic (used as a synonym for Roman Catholic).
  
3. **CHARISMATIC:** claiming to have some divinely supplied gift (“charism”) or power, such as speaking in tongues, healing miracles, prophesying, etc.

4. **DENOMINATION:** denominate means literally “to name” – a religious sect, part of the whole.

**NON-DENOMINATIONAL:** “non” is a prefix meaning “not” – it is used to give a negative force; “non-denominational” means “not denominational,” not adhering to a particular denomination; “non” is less emphatic than “un.”

**UNDENOMINATIONAL:** “un” is more emphatic than “non” and indicates a reversal or removal of an action or state; “undenominational” indicates more than simply “not” a denomination, but opposition to denominations and denominationalism themselves.

**INTERDENOMINATIONAL:** the sharing or involvement of various denominations (two or more) with each another; working together of various denominations (usually an “interdenominational church” is a church that unites together people of various denominational affiliations, beliefs, or adherence).

5. **EVANGELICAL:** from word **EVANGELIUM**, meaning “gospels”; the word is used to describe

Protestant churches emphasizing salvation by faith and rejecting sacramentalism and “works salvation.” **EVANGELICALISM**

**6. FUNDAMENTALISM:** “orthodox” religious beliefs based on literal Biblical interpretation; Protestants who were originally designated such because of insistence on the truthfulness of Biblical history and doctrines (“fundamentals”), particularly in reference to Genesis account of creation. **FUNDAMENTALIST**

**7. ORTHODOX**

- a. Adherence to that which is historically, commonly, or traditionally accepted; adherence to established beliefs.
- b. Of or relating to an Orthodox denomination (as Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, etc).  
**ORTHODOXY**

**8. PENTECOSTAL:** from the events recorded on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, at which time the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke in other tongues; Pentecostals are religious people who seek to imitate the events of Acts 2; particular religious denomination.  
**PENTECOSTALISM**

**9. PREMILLENNIALISM:** “pre” means “before”; “millennial” means “1,000 years”; “ism” means a distinctive doctrine or system; premillennialism describes the belief system of those who are awaiting the second coming of Christ, at which time Christ will reign on earth for a literal 1,000 year period.  
Related terms: **RAPTURE, DISPENSATIONALISM**

**10. PROTESTANT:**

- a. Originally the word was used to describe those who protested the Diet of Spires in 1529, which upheld the Diet of Worms against the Reformers (Luther, et al).
- b. Churches that originated as a result of the break with Roman Catholicism in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.
- c. Christians / Churches not belonging to the Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox churches.  
**PROTESTANTISM**

**11. SABBATARIAN:** religious denominations emphasizing the importance of keeping the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath.

**12. SACRED NAME MOVEMENT:** a movement of religious denominations that place great emphasis on a certain name for Deity (“Yahweh,” etc.) and usually consider commonly accepted names (“God,” “Jesus”) as wrong and pagan in origin.

## A BRIEF SURVEY OF CHURCH HISTORY

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH:**

- A. The Promise – Matthew 16:13-18
- B. Its Origin – 33 A. D. , Jerusalem - Acts 2:47
- C. Its Organization –
  - 1. Elders – Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 20:28
  - 2. Deacons – Acts 6: 1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13
  - 3. Evangelists / Preachers – Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:2
  - 4. Teachers – Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:2
  - 5. Each member fulfilling his/her function in the body – Acts 2:41-47; Colossians 1:13
- D. Its Worship – “In spirit and In truth” – John 4:23, 24
  - 1. Teaching / Preaching God’s Word – Acts 2:42
  - 2. Prayer – 1 Thessalonians 5:17
  - 3. Singing – Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16
  - 4. Lord’s Supper on 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Week – Acts 20:7
  - 5. Laying by In Store (giving) – 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2
- E. Its Mission: Save Souls – Ephesians 3:10; 1 Timothy 4:16
- F. Its Rule of Faith & Practice – Word of God – 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Luke 8:11

## I. BEGINNINGS OF APOSTACY

*(Remember that such was foretold: Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7; 2 Peter 2:1, 2; etc.)*

### A. FIRST CENTURY

- 1. Legalism
- 2. Gnosticism
- 3. Asceticism
- 4. Antinomianism

### B. SECOND CENTURY

- 1. Changes in church government
- 2. Rise in the power of Bishops
- 3. This would give rise to a separate priesthood

### C. THIRD CENTURY

- 1. First case of “clinic” baptism (affusion: sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion)
- 2. The first advocates of infant baptism emerge.

D. FOURTH CENTURY

1. First human creed: from council of Nicea, Nicean Creed.
2. These church councils were called to stop what they considered “false doctrine.”

E. FIFTH & SIXTH CENTURY

1. 431: Third Council at Ephesus
2. 451: Fourth Council at Chalcedon
3. 553: Fifth Council at Constantinople
4. Doctrine of Purgatory is being formed.

F. SEVENTH CENTURY

1. Boniface III – proclaims himself as the Bishop of Rome. The first “Universal Bishop” (“POPE”)
2. Thus the development of the papacy is developed.

*\*\* NOTE that these departures were culminating in the formation of what is today  
ROMAN CATHOLICISM.*

<b>II. THE RISE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM</b>
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A. Doctrine peculiar to Roman Catholicism are maturing during this time frame.

1. 728: Merging of church and state; the Pope assume not only religious authority, but governmental and political authority as well.
2. 1000: Doctrine of Transubstantiation.
3. 1015: Doctrine of Celibacy for a separate priesthood.

B. Division in Catholicism.

1. In **1054** there is a final, complete division in Catholicism between East and West over four issues:
  - a. Papal authority.
  - b. “Filioque”
  - c. Unleavened Bread.
  - d. Celibacy.
2. The Eastern Church is what is today the ORTHODOX CATHOLIC CHURCH; the Western church is what is today the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

C. Other departures that continue In Roman Catholicism:

1. 1190: Sale of Indulgences.
2. 1215: Auricular Confession
3. 1311: Pouring of Water instead of immersion in baptism receives official sanction at the Council of Ravenna.

*\*\*NOTE that because of religious and political corruption becoming so prevalent in Catholicism,  
many began to see the need for reformation; this will lead to the  
PROTESTANT REFORMATION.*

### III. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

#### A. Martin Luther of Germany (1483-1546)

1. He was a Roman Catholic who became alarmed at the corruption he saw; in 1517 he nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg, Germany church.
2. In 1519 he debated John Eck and rejected the authority of the hierarchy and church councils for the sole authority of the scriptures.
3. In 1521 at the Diet of Worms, Luther was tried for heresy and convicted; he was excommunicated. The same year he translated the New Testament into German.
4. Three cardinal points of Catholic doctrine with which Luther came to disagree:
  - a. MERITORIOUS WORKS (*Luther: salvation by faith only*)
  - b. SACERDOTAL PRIESTHOOD (*Luther: priesthood of all believers*)
  - c. SEVEN SACRAMENTS and the AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH (*Luther: Bible as only and final authority*)

#### B. Huldreich Zwingli of Switzerland (1484-1531)

1. In 1519 Zwingli, while a priest at Zurich, preached a series of sermons on the books of the Bible.
2. In 1520, his break with Catholicism was complete.
3. What Zwingli taught:
  - a. The church should practice only what the Bible approves (respect the silence of scripture).
  - b. Justification by faith.
  - c. The Lord's Supper is a memorial rather than the literal body and blood of Christ.
  - d. Original sin is wrongs babies can go to heaven without baptism.
  - e. The music of the churches should be acapella (he took instrumental music out of worship)
4. In 1529 Luther and Zwingli met at Marburg, Germany in an effort to unite; they agreed on 14 of the 15 points they discussed, but on the Lord's Supper they could not agree (CONSUBSTANTIATION versus MEMORIAL). Luther refused to fellowship Zwingli over that point.

#### C. John Calvin at Switzerland (1509-1564)

1. Calvin was trained at the University of Paris in theology, law, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, classics.
2. In 1533 he experienced a "sudden conversion"
3. In 1534 he broke with Catholicism, left France and fled, to Basel, Switzerland.
4. In 1536 he published the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (the final edition of 1559 was much larger).
5. This work is a systematic theology of initial Presbyterians.
6. Calvin moved permanently to Geneva, Switzerland in 1541 and became a virtual dictator there (from 1542 to 1546 there were 57 executions and 76 banishments because of "heresy").

7. The FIVE POINT OF CALVINISM:
- a. Total Depravity. **T**
  - b. Unconditional Election. **U**
  - c. Limited Atonement. **L**
  - d. Irresistible Grace. **I**
  - e. Perseverance of the Saints. **P**

<b>IV. THE RISE OF PROTESTANTISM</b>
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- A. From the break with the Roman Catholic Church, the first PROTESTANT CHURCHES began to appear.
- B. The legacy of the Protestant Reformation:

1. 1520: LUTHERAN CHURCH

Though not called Lutheran in Luther’s lifetime, yet those organized around him became this new group. The doctrine was formulated in the Shorter Catechism (1529), the Augsburg Confession (1530), the Smalead Articles of Faith (1537), Formula of Concord (1577).

2. 1525: ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT

This movement began as an opposition to infant baptism (Anabaptist means “rebaptlzer”). From this group would came the Mennonite, Brethren, and Amish churches

3. 1534: CHURCH OF ENGLAND

In this year, King Henry VII of England had broken with the Pope in the “Acts of Supremacy”. The issues were several, not the least of which was Henry’s desire to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn.

4. 1560: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Founded upon the teachings of John Calvin which were further refined and. expanded by John Knox. Also known as Church of Scotland, Dutch Reformed, etc.

5. 1608: BAPTIST CHURCH

The Baptist movement began in Holland under the leadership of John Smyth. A central point was infant baptism versus baptism by immersion of believing adults. The Baptist Churches were first organized in America in 1639 by Roger Williams of Rhode Island.

6. 1740: METHODIST CHURCH

Methodist societies began at Oxford University (England) under the leadership of John & Charles Wesley.

*\*\*NOTE these are just a few of the primary religious bodies to come from the Reformation: there have been hundreds of religious denominations that have grown from Protestantism.*

## V. THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

- A. Many began to see the need for **RESTORATION** rather than simply REFORMATION. The concept was: Roman Catholicism is corrupt; Protestantism is confused and divided; why not just go all the way back to the New Testament only? Let us not be either Catholic nor Protestant, but just Christians. Let us reject human names, creeds, doctrines and practices, and return to the New Testament as the only authority in religion.
- B. Some of the Men:
1. **James O” Kelly** (1735-1826)
    - a. Methodist; he became at odds with his Bishop.
    - b. Renounced human names and human creeds.
  2. **Elias Smith** and **Abner Jones** (1790-1844)
    - a. Baptists; renounced human names to go back to the Bible and the Bible only.
    - b. These two Joined forces in establishing churches free of denominational affiliation.
  3. **Barton W. Stone** (1790-1844)
    - a. Presbyterian; began having serious doubts about the Confession of Faith.
    - b. He withdrew From Presbyterian synod; he and his associates formed, the Springfield Presbytery which they later dissolved.
    - c. Stone preached at Cane Ridge and Concord, Kentucky and succeeded In establishing simply the church of Christ at those locations.
  4. **Thomas Campbell** (1763-1854)
    - a. Preacher in the Seeder branch of Presbyterian Church; through his study of the Bible he found himself: preaching things contrary to Presbyterian doctrine.
    - b. At the home of Abram Altars at the conclusion of his sermon, Campbell stated, “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.”
  5. **Alexander Campbell** (1788- 1866)
    - a. Son of Thomas Campbell: while still in Ireland Alexander began arriving at many of the same conclusions as his father (who had already gone to America): to take the Bible and it only?
    - b. Alexander had also been a Presbyterian minister, but after coming to America and arriving at the conclusion that baptism was immersion, Campbell initially joined the Baptists.
    - c. Soon however, he realized that he should free himself of any denominational affiliation and be only a Christian and member of the New Testament church.

D. Principles of the Restoration Movement:

1. The acknowledgement of the New Testament as the only authority, the only rule of faith and practice; to accept as true only that which the Bible sets forth.
2. Rejection of all human creeds, man-made names, and human traditions and doctrines.
3. The restoration of the church we find in the Bible in work, worship, organization, doctrine, and name.
4. The unity of all believers upon the Bible as the only basis for such unity.

E. The success of the RESTORATION:

1. The movement to restore primitive, New Testament Christianity was extremely successful in these early years (1830's onward).
2. Whole churches were; abandoning denominational names and creeds to take the Bible and the Bible alone!

F. The RESTORATION Ongoing:

1. We must never become at ease in Zion! We must ever vigilantly maintain pure primitive Christianity!
2. As we live in the 21st Century, it is still **"Back to the Bible for it all..."**

THE EVOLUTION OF DENOMINATIONALISM

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH | 1<sup>st</sup> Century →...21<sup>st</sup> Century.....→

...→ ...Apostasy, Departure (Acts 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1-3; etc.)

CATHOLICISM

EASTERN  
Orthodox

WESTERN  
Roman Catholic

ANGLICAN  
Church of England

PROTESTANT REFORMATION

LUTHERAN (1520's)

ANABAPTIST (1520's) → HUTTERITE, MENNONITE, AMISH, etc.

ANGLICAN → Church of England / Protestant Episcopal  
→ METHODIST (mid-1700's)

→ HOLINESS (mid-1800's)  
Church of God, Nazarene, etc.  
→ PENTECOSTAL / CHARISMATIC  
(early 1900's)  
→ Assembly of God, etc.

REFORMED (1560's): → CONGREGATIONAL (Puritans – Pilgrims")  
→ PRESBYTERIAN  
→ Old School, New School  
→ Reformed, Evangelical, United, etc.

BRETHREN (late 1600's) → PIETISM  
→ Evangelical, United Brethren, etc.

BAPTIST (1600's) → American, Southern, etc.

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**MOVEMENTS WITHIN PROTESTANTISM**

- PREMILLENNIALISM (19<sup>TH</sup> century)
- FUNDAMENTALISM (early 1900's)
  - Independent Bible Churches, etc.
- EVANGELICALISM (1900's)
- COMMUNITY CHURCH / MEGACHURCH (late 1900's)

**PECULIAR DOCTRINAL MOVEMENTS:**

- SABBATARIAN (7<sup>th</sup> Day) / ADVENTIST  
Seventh-Day Adventist, Church of God 7<sup>th</sup> Day, etc.
- ONENESS  
United Pentecostal Church  
Church of God in Jesus' Name, Apostolic, etc.

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## IDENTIFYING THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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**INTRODUCTION:** *Jesus promised to build His church: Matthew 16:13-19*

- A. The New Testament church has a pattern by which it may be identified, characterized, and reproduced: 2 Timothy 1:13; Romans 6:16-18; Hebrews 8:5
- B. Consider some IDENTIFYING MARKS of the Lord's Church:

### I. MUST BE IN GOD'S ETERNAL PROPHETIC PLAN

- A. Ephesians 3:10-11
- B. Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:44

### II. MUST HAVE THE RIGHT BUILDER

- A. Matthew 16:18
- B. Acts 2:47

### III. MUST HAVE THE RIGHT FOUNDER & FOUNDATION

- A. 1 Corinthians 3:10-11
- B. Ephesians 2:19-22
- C. Isaiah 28:16
- D. Acts 4:10-11

### IV. MUST HAVE THE RIGHT BEGINNING

- A. Luke 24:46-47, 49
- B. Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-47

### V. MUST BE A SPIRITUAL HOUSE WITH CHRIST AS HEAD

- A. Ephesians 1:22-23
- B. Colossians 1:18
- C. 1 Corinthians 3:9
- D. 1 Timothy 3:15
- E. 1 Peter 2:5

### VI. MUST WEAR A SCRIPTURAL NAME

- A. Acts 4:12
- B. Romans 16:16
- C. Acts 20:28

**VII. MUST BE CHARACTERIZED BY PURITY OF LIFE**

- A. Titus 2:11-14
- B. Ephesians 5:25-27
- C. 2 Corinthians 11:2

**VIII. MUST BE COMPOSED OF ALL THE SAVED**

- A. Acts 2:47
- B. Ephesians 5:23
- C. God's plan of salvation:
  - 1. FAITH: John 8:24
  - 2. REPENTANCE: Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Peter 3:9
  - 3. CONFESSION: Matthew 10:32; Acts 8:37
  - 4. BAPTISM: Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21
  - 5. FAITHFULNESS: Revelation 2:10
  
- C. Jesus = Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him: Hebrews 5:8-9

**CONCLUSION:** Any religious group or church may be compared with the Scriptural marks and characteristics to identify if it is “the Lord’s house” (Matthew 15:13; Psalm 127:1).

## ROMAN CATHOLICISM

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### INTRODUCTION:

The Roman Catholic church is the largest and wealthiest of all religious denominations, with more than 60 million members in the United States in more than 19,000 churches.

Roman Catholicism has traditionally and historically taught that the Roman Catholic Church is the church Jesus founded. Though since the 1960's Second Vatican Council the **RCC (Roman Catholic Church)** has become much more ecumenical and "broad" in its outlook, yet the basic doctrine remains the same: that the RCC is Christ's church, that which God established and which honors Him. Note the following authoritative citations:

***"When was the Catholic Church founded?"***

*The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, about the year 33.*

***Is the Catholic Church then the only true church?***

*Yes, the Catholic Church is not only the oldest Christian church, not only the best church, it is the only church made by Jesus Christ and therefore the only true church"*

*The New Parish Catechism*, Rev. William G. Martin (Fare, Inc., 1973, p. 49).

*"The [Roman Catholic Church is the] sole Church of Christ which our Savior, after his Resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it....This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in...the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him."* ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***  
(Wanderer Press, 1994, section 816, p. 215).

If it is true that the Roman Catholic Church is Christ's church, let us not hesitate in recommending that all people should be Roman Catholics. But if the Roman Catholic Church is not Christ's church, but a corruption of and departure from God's truth, let us hasten to advise all people away from and out of it. Honesty and candor demand thorough evaluation and conclusion.

There are several things about which we differ markedly. The perspective of a Bible-believing Christian leads to the unavoidable conclusion that Roman Catholicism is false, a departure from God's original intent. The Roman Catholic Church and church of Christ as revealed in the New Testament cannot both simultaneously be right. Seeking to be as honest as possible, we frankly admit that if Roman Catholicism is true, we are in error; and if what we preach, teach, and practice is true, Roman Catholicism is a false system. We cannot both be right.

So, how shall that question be resolved? The answer will follow.

### I. THE ORIGINS OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

**INTRODUCTION:** The New Testament nowhere speaks "the Roman Catholic Church," nor of the pope, cardinals, Vatican, or many other characteristics of contemporary Catholicism. Numerous Catholic doctrines and practices are very different from the apostolic church we read about in the Bible. So, regarding modern Roman Catholicism, how did it come to be?

- A. **APOSTASY.** In the 1<sup>st</sup> century preachers and writers warned of impending departure from truth; the New Testament is replete with such warnings (*Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-11; James 5:19-20; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 John 9-11; etc.*)
- B. It is easy to conclude that Roman Catholicism as it exists today is markedly different from the New Testament Church.
1. In numerous ways (doctrine, practice, and tradition) Roman Catholicism exemplifies additions to, and subtractions from, the New Testament pattern, and thus is a departure from God's intent.
  2. Note this from a Catholic source:  
*"If it is not identical in belief, government, and etc. with the primitive church, then it is not the Church of Christ"* (*Catholic Facts*, p. 27).
  3. More on this will follow under the heading "Roman Catholicism & New Testament Christianity."
- C. Both New Testament teaching and church history demand the conclusion that Roman Catholicism represents the very departure from God's plan about which Jesus and His apostles warned.

## II. DOCTRINES OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

### A. **AUTHORITY**

1. This is the key difference between Catholicism and New Testament Christianity: authority in religion. Roman Catholicism *does not believe* the written Scripture is the sole, complete, and final authority in Christianity (compare 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
2. **THREE SOURCES OF AUTHORITY:**
  - a. **SCRIPTURE.**
  - b. **SACRED TRADITION**
  - c. The **MAGESTERIUM** (teaching authority of the church – the RCC in its official role, with the Pope and church council).
3. Other considerations:
  - a. "We find God's revelation in Sacred Scripture and tradition" (William G. Martin, *The New Parish Catechism*, 1973, p. 11).
  - b. "The Catholic Church alone is the official interpreter and teacher of Scripture....Tradition is the word of God given by Christ and the Holy Spirit to the apostles and handed down to their successors" (ibid, p. 14).

- c. “Scripture, tradition and the teaching Church function together to bring us God’s revelation” (ibid, p. 14).
4. Note the contrast between this teaching and the teaching of Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 8:20; John 10:35; 14:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 12:13; etc.
  - a. God has all authority – by its very nature, His Word (Scripture) bears the weight of His authority, and thus must be neither ignored nor altered.
  - b. It is incumbent upon the Roman Catholic to “prove” other sources of authority in addition to the written Word.
  - c. The appeal *in* Scripture was *to* Scripture (see Matthew 21:42; John 2:22; 17:17; Acts 17:2-3, 11; Romans 4:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2:2; 2 Peter 1:17-19).
  - d. God’s Word is settled and unchangeable: Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:21; etc.

## B. THE PAPACY

1. The Pope is the Bishop of Rome, Chief Shepherd of God’s flock, the visible head of the Church, the Vicar (representative) of Christ on earth.
2. Roman Catholic doctrine states that the first Pope was Peter (Matthew 16:18-19), and that his authority continued through successors (other Popes that succeed each other).
3. **APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION:** Just as an individual pope is the successor to the apostle Peter, so bishops of the RCC are successors of the other apostles.
4. **PAPAL INFALLIBILITY:** When the Pope rules in his official capacity (*ex cathedra* – “from the chair”) he is infallible in his pronouncement (God will not allow him to err).
5. *“The Pope is the real representative of Christ on this earth. He is the highest teaching authority on religion. The Pope is the highest ruling authority on religion. He has the highest authority over Christ’s Sacraments and the other means of grace that Christ has given the church....The Pope is the chief or head bishop in the Catholic Church, the ruler of the entire Church, the successor of St. Peter, the very Vicar of Christ Himself”* (ibid, pp. 55, 99).

## C. THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

In Roman Catholicism there are Seven Sacraments which are considered God’s “means of grace” to man; they are channels bringing God’s grace to man. Ordained priests are the ones who are enabled to administer the sacraments (except in extreme or emergency situations).

1. **BAPTISM:** this is generally done to infants by pouring of water, and is considered to be for the remission of original sin (sin man inherits from Adam); there is also “baptism of blood,” “baptism of desire,” and “conditional baptism.”

2. **HOLY COMMUNION:** also called Eucharist, this involves the “sacrifice of the Mass” – in each Mass, Jesus Christ is believed to be offered (sacrificed) again, and actually present in the bread and wine (“real presence” – see Transubstantiation below).
3. **CONFIRMATION:** a sacrament, usually done by a Bishop and administered to adolescents, which is to strengthen one to live a mature spiritual life; the Bishop lays on hands, and signs each with Holy Chrism (holy oil), and imparts the Holy Spirit.
4. **PENANCE:** the power possessed by Catholic bishops and priest to forgive sins through confession accompanied by acts of penitence; there are mortal sins (grievous, more serious sins which endanger the soul) and venial sins (lesser sins which weaken the soul); one must have sorrow (contrition), confess to a priest (“going to confession”), receive an assessment of penalty, and then receive pronouncement of absolution (forgiveness) by the priest.
5. **HOLY ORDERS:** the ordination of a male to the priesthood wherein the “priestly powers” of Jesus Christ are given for such functions as offering Christ in mass, forgiving sins, other sacramental functions, and blessing and sanctifying (holy orders also includes ordaining males to offices of bishop and deacon); in the RCC, priests practice celibacy, there are different kinds of “religious” (diocesan priests; priests belonging to a religious order; brothers; nuns, called sisters).
6. **MATRIMONY:** the sacrament of marriage which should be performed by a priest; the purposes of marriage are mutual love and childbearing; a “mixed marriage” is a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic; divorce is forbidden (unless the marriage is “annulled” by the Church).
7. **ANNOINTING OF THE SICK:** a sacrament to strengthen the ill and dying, to restore bodily health when one is seriously ill or prepare one for death; used to be known as “Extreme Unction” or “Last Rites.”

#### **D. PECULIAR CATHOLIC DOCTRINES:**

1. **ORIGINAL SIN:** the belief that man inherits sin from Adam (that one is born with original sin – this is called “a state of privation of grace”).
2. **TRANSUBSTANTIATION:** in the Mass, the priest has power to transform bread and wine into the actual, literal body of Christ; this is also the reason Catholics kneel down (genuflect) when entering their church building, for Christ (in the host) is actually, literally present; transubstantiation denies the memorial purpose of the Lord’s Supper and symbolism involved (Luke 22:19), makes cannibals of Christians (John 6:53), and makes idolaters of participants by making bread into a god (1 John 5:21; Romans 1:25).

3. **SACRAMENTALS:** these are prayers or blessings pronounced upon persons or things, and include such things as consecration, making the sign of the cross, holy water, blessed candles, statues, crucifixes, and rosaries.
4. **PURGATORY:** a place after death, between heaven and hell, in which one can atone for sins not forgiven; it is a place of purification to make one worthy of heaven.
5. **MARY**
  - a. Mary the mother of Jesus occupies a unique place in Catholicism (both western and eastern); she is considered “the mother of God,” prayers are made to her, and she can mediate to God on behalf of sinner.
  - b. **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:** that Mary was conceived without original sin
  - c. **BODILY ASSUMPTION:** that Mary was not allowed to decompose after her death, but was assumed bodily into Heaven by God.
6. **PRAYERS**
  - a. Catholics are known for reciting prayers (such as the “Gloria Patri,” “Our Father” and “Hail Mary”) and offering long repetitions.
  - b. Previously, indulgences were promised for such recitation of prayers.
  - c. Note Jesus’ warning in Matthew 6:7
7. **MERITORIOUS WORKS:** good works that merit, or earn, salvation; good works that bind God to reward the doer.
8. **INDULGENCES:** the removal of temporal punishments due for sin (either partial or plenary) granted by the Church.

### III. ROMAN CATHOLICISM & NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

- A. Roman Catholicism, as already noted, represents a departure from the New Testament pattern, as it teaches and practices many things for which there is no Biblical admonition, example, or authority. The RCC exemplifies veering from God’s way by adding many unbiblical and anti-biblical practices across the centuries. Note these gradual departures:
  1. 4<sup>th</sup> century: prayers for the dead, veneration of angels and “saints,” the development of the Mass as a sacrifice of Christ.
  2. 5<sup>th</sup> century: beginning of the exaltation of Mary; the term “Mother of God” first used at the Council of Ephesus, 431 AD
  3. 6<sup>th</sup> century: “Extreme Unction” (what is today “anointing of the sick”); purgatory.
  4. 7<sup>th</sup> century: prayers to Mary, angels, and “saints”; development of the Papacy, with Boniface III assuming title “Universal Bishop.”

5. 8<sup>th</sup> century: rise of Papacy's involvement in governmental affairs; use of images and relics.
6. 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries: "College of Cardinals" established; canonization of saints (first by Pope John XV); continued development of the Mass.
7. 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries: priestly celibacy; rosary; beginning of the Inquisition (instituted by the Council of Verona, 1184 AD); beginning of the sale of indulgences.
8. 13<sup>th</sup> century: development of the doctrine of transubstantiation (proclaimed by Pope Innocent III); confession of sins to a priest; adoration of the host (wafer used in communion).
9. 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries: doctrine of Purgatory proclaimed by the Council of Florence (1439 AD); seven sacraments professed.
10. 16<sup>th</sup> centuries: declaration of the authority of tradition as equally authoritative with Scripture (Council of Trent, 1545 AD); apocryphal books added to the Bible (Council of Trent, 1546 AD).
11. Immaculate Conception of Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX, 1854 AD
12. Infallibility of the Pope, proclaimed by the Vatican Council, 1870 AD.
13. Bodily Assumption of Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII, 1950 AD

**B. DOCTRINES & PRACTICES** of Roman Catholicism not found in Scripture:

The above, and including CARDINAL, ARCHBISHOP, DIOCESE, ARCHDIOCESE, CLERGY, HOLY DAYS, ROSARY, MONKS, NUNS, FRIARS, ORDERS, SEPARATE PRIESTHOOD & PRIESTLY POWERS, HABITS & VESTMENTS, SACRAMENTALS, POPE, ANTIPOPE, MASS, CANON, MORTAL SIN, VENIAL SIN, DOGMA, LENT, LIMBO, RELICS, ABLUTION, MARY MOTHER OF GOD, INDULGENCES, MONASTERIES, VATICAN, SEVEN SACRAMENTS, SCAPULAR, NOVENAS, ALLOCUTION, CROSIER, PAPAL INFALLIBILITY, BEATIFICATION, APOSTOLIC BULL, STIGMATA, LITURGICAL YEAR, CASSOCK, CLOISTER, CURIA, COLLEGE OF CARDINALS, INDULT, SUPEREROGATION, ABBOT, ABBEY, ASPERGILLUM, CHANCELLOR, FORUM, HYPERDULIA, INCARDINATION, STATUES, ORIGINAL SIN, INTERDICT, INTINCTION, CONCORDAT, CONCELEBRATION, ADVENT, ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

1. Roman Catholicism has changed from the New Testament pattern regarding *names, creeds, organization, worship, authority, salvation, etc.*
2. Roman Catholicism is not New Testament Christianity doctrinally, practically, prophetically, or historically.

- C. **WARNINGS of Jesus & apostles regarding “traditions of men”:** Matthew 15:7-9, 13; Mark 7:6-13; Colossians 2:8
- D. **WARNINGS of the Bible regarding adding to or taking from God’s Word:** Proverbs 30:5-6; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19

**E. FRUITS OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM:**

Protestant Loraine Boettner in his book *Roman Catholicism* makes some interesting, vital observations regarding the fruits of Roman Catholicism in nations and among peoples where it has long had influence, observations that should be contemplated carefully:

“It is clear beyond possibility of doubt that the Roman Catholic religion as now practiced is the outgrowth of centuries of error. Human inventions have been substituted for Bible truth and practice. Intolerance and arrogance have replaced the love and kindness and tolerance that were the distinguishing qualities of the first century Christians, so that now in Roman Catholic countries Protestants and others who are sincere believers in Christ but who do not acknowledge the authority of the pope are subject to all kinds of restrictions and in some cases even forbidden to practice their religion....

It is a fact beyond challenge that the Protestant countries of Europe and the Americas have been comparatively strong, progressive, enlightened, and free, while the Roman Catholic countries have remained relatively stationary or have stagnated and have had to be aided economically and politically by the Protestant nations....The lesson of history is that Romanism means the loss of religious liberty and the arrest of national progress. If after living in the United States one who was not aware of the contrast between Protestant and Roman Catholic cultures were to visit some Roman Catholic countries in Europe or Latin America...it would make him sick at heart the see the ignorance, poverty, superstition, illiteracy, suppression of religious freedom, and legalized prostitution which particularly in Latin America is found in practically every town of any size...characteristics of heathenism, characteristics of Romanism....

The Roman concept of sin is quite different from that of Protestantism. Rome does not demand reform in her people. As long as they acknowledge the church and meet the external requirements they are allowed to do about as they please. In our country witness the many corrupt politicians and gangsters in our cities in recent years who have been members of that church and who have remained in good standing while continuing their evil course over long periods of time....

The kind of society that Roman Catholicism has produced in other countries where it has been dominant should serve as a fair warning as to what we can expect when it becomes dominant here....”

(Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp. 9, 13, 16-18, 460).

**F. CONTRADICTIONS between Roman Catholicism and the Bible:**

<u>ROMAN CATHOLICISM</u>	<u>NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY</u>
1. Church built on Peter	1. Church built on Christ: Matthew 16:18
2. Peter superior	2. Apostles equal: Ephesians 2:19-20
3. Call priest “father”	3. Call no man father: Matthew 23:9
4. Saints = inhabitants of heaven	4. Saints = all Christians: Romans 1:7
5. Authority = Bible + tradition	5. Authority = Bible only: 2 Timothy 3:16-17
6. Pouring for baptism	6. Baptism = immersion: Romans 6:4; Acts 8
7. Baptize infants	7. Baptize believers: Mark 16:16
8. Daily Mass	8. Lord’s Supper – 1 <sup>st</sup> day of week: Acts 20:7
9. Separate priesthood	9. All Christian’s priests: 1 Peter 2:9
10. Pope = Head of Church	10. Christ = Head of Church: Colossians 1:18
11. Additions to Scripture	11. Do not add: Revelation 22:18-19
12. Confession to priest	12. Confession to God: 1 John 1:7-10
13. Cleansing after death	13. After death, too late: Luke 16:19-31
14. Praying to Mary	14. Pray to the Father: Matthew 6:9
15. Mary, saints mediators	15. One Mediator = Christ: 1 Timothy 2:5

## ORTHODOX CATHOLIC CHURCH

There are more than 200 million members of Orthodox Catholic Churches in the world (with more than 4 million in the United States). These people see themselves as the continuation of Christianity directly descending from Christ and the apostles, the Orthodox Church as the “Mother Church” of all Christianity, and themselves as “keepers of the original Christian faith.” Though deeply affected by historical events across the centuries, sometimes very negatively, they yet remain committed to long-held traditions and historic practices and creeds. Though there are close similarities to Roman Catholicism, yet there are decided differences.

Most Orthodox families in the United States came here as immigrants in the late 1800’s, and held closely to their ethnic identity and heritage, making Orthodoxy unknown and mysterious to most Americans.

### DEFINITIONS:

Many people refer to this denomination as “Greek Orthodox Church” (or some variation of “...Orthodox”) and it considers itself “catholic” (“universal”). Consider some definitions:

1. **GREEK**: The term “Greek” is often used to describe this church because of the connection between the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, and this church’s self-described connection to the New Testament era. It doesn’t necessarily mean the members are of Greek ancestry or heritage (though they may be).
2. **ORTHODOX**: The word “orthodox” derives from “**orthos**” (meaning “correct”) and “**doxa**” (meaning “belief” or “glory”), and signifies that members of this church consider themselves believing and worshipping God correctly after the ancient order. They believe their church is the continuation of 1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity and apostolic succession.
3. **CATHOLIC**: means “**universal**,” and is used to describe the Orthodox churches.

### HISTORY & CONTEMPORARY STANDING:

As people began to depart from the New Testament pattern for church organization, bishops in five cities (who came to be called “patriarchs”) rose to prominence over regions of believers: *Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem*. In time, Rome came to dominant believers in the west, and Constantinople dominated believers in the east, division beginning as far back as 330 AD when Constantine moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium. A rupture between the two was inevitable, not only because of geographic and cultural dissimilarities, but also because of differing ecclesiastical styles and the doctrinal disagreements that arose. Several “church councils” were convened to deal with doctrinal and practical questions, such as the **Council of Tyre** (335), **1<sup>st</sup> Council of Constantinople** (381), the **Council of Ephesus** (called the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ecumenical Council, 431), the **Council of Chalcedon** (451). But by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, after the **7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council** in 787 AD, the basic unity between western and eastern Catholicism had begun to disintegrate.

The year **1054 AD** is a significant date in church history, when that which had become the “Catholic Church” divided and became two distinct branches: *western Europe* (Roman Catholic)

and *eastern Europe* (Orthodox Catholic). Leaders of the two groups, the bishop of Constantinople and the bishop of Rome, mutually excommunicated each other, a division that has come to be called the “East-West Schism.” Though several doctrinal issues divided the two groups (including the very contentious addition of the words “of the Son,” called “filioque” to the Nicene Creed by the Roman bishop in reference to the procession of the Holy Spirit), central was the authority of the bishop of Rome, whether he was “universal head” of the church (and the issue of authority in religion remains a contention between the two). Also, the Eastern church was Greek in language and culture and intricately connected to the Byzantine Empire (the Roman empire in the east), while the Western church was Latin in language and culture. The cathedral built at Constantinople became the central point to the Orthodox Church, the bishop there retaining a “primacy of honor” (though not of jurisdiction) among the churches.

As the Byzantine Empire expanded to the west and north, many peoples of what became Bulgaria, Russia, and Serbia were converted by Orthodox missionaries. Much of this same geographic area came to be greatly affected by the spread of Islam, the lands and peoples coming under Muslim control, and three of the ancient patriarchal bishops were conquered by Muslim armies (Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria) and separated from Constantinople, which itself was conquered in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade.

In 1453 Muslim Turks captured Constantinople and effectively put an end to the Byzantine Empire. The cathedral there was converted to a mosque and Orthodox leaders were forced to give allegiance to Muslim leaders.

During a long, difficult struggle, Moscow eventually rose in prominence among Orthodox believers, but the Russian revolution of 1917 (which ushered Communism into governmental power) had a profound negative effect on these churches. Throughout its history, the Orthodox Church has been profoundly affected by national and political movements, struggles, and wars, between Turkish, Arabian, and Western armies. It can be generally stated that the Orthodox Church became the faith of Middle Eastern and Slavic European people, while the Roman Church became the faith of western Europe and the new world, giving birth to the Protestant Reformation in western Europe.

The Orthodox Church sees itself as a **continuation of apostolic Christianity**, and would view Roman Catholicism as a departure from the New Testament order (or, original Christianity). A pamphlet states, “*The Eastern Orthodox Church dates its existence from the time of Christ and the Apostles....Thus, the Orthodox Church is apostolic because she teaches that the apostles taught and can trace her existence historically through the ordination of the bishops directly back to the apostles, and through them, to Christ. We call this ‘Apostolic Succession.’ It is a guarantee that the Orthodox Church is genuine. It was founded by Christ through the apostles and can prove it historically....Thus, the Orthodox Church is the legitimate and historical continuation of the early church*” (pamphlet, “*The Eastern Orthodox Church: Who Are We?*” by Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris, 1977, Light and Life Publishing Co.).

## DOCTRINE:

1. Orthodox doctrine is very similar to Roman Catholicism, with noted differentiations:
  - a. Rejection of the office of the papacy (the pope), the “treasury of merit” and the doctrine concerning indulgences.
  - b. Mary is called the “bearer of God” (but without the doctrines of the immaculate conception or her bodily assumption).

- c. **MYSTERIES:** The Orthodox usually refer to “sacraments” as “mysteries”:
    - (1) **Baptism**
    - (2) **Confirmation** (called “Sacrament of Chrismation”)
    - (3) **Holy Eucharist** (known as “the Divine Liturgy”)
    - (4) **Penance**
    - (5) **Holy Unction**
    - (6) **Holy Orders**
    - (7) **Marriage**and possibly others, depending on how these “mysteries” are defined; sacraments are defined as “visible signs of an invisible Divine Grace.”
  - d. **ICONS:** religious pictures of Christ, apostles, and saints, used instead of statues.
2. What Orthodox Catholics believe:
- a. That there is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - b. That baptism is a *three-fold immersion* of infants (but can be for adults); both confirmation and reception of “Holy Communion” occur at baptism (to infants).
  - c. That salvation is not only “from sin” but also “for participation in the life of God” – there is emphasis on developing a certain style of life and living, of achieving unity with God.
  - d. That the Orthodox church is both “changeless” *and* a “living continuity with the church of the early apostles.”
3. Orthodox distinctions:
- a. The **NICENE CREED** is central to the Orthodox faith.

**NICENE CREED:** Text used by Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;  
And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father;  
And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen.

- b. **HOLY EUCHARIST** (communion) is the focal point of Orthodox worship, and belief in the bread and wine as the actual body and blood (presence) of Christ (without using the Roman Catholic definition of transubstantiation).
- c. **SACRED TRADITION:** by which is meant “a living connection with the entire past experience of the church, nineteen centuries of it during which the Holy Spirit has been protecting and defining and proclaiming the truth of Christ through the Church” (pamphlet, “*The Eastern Orthodox Church*”).
- d. So, doctrine in Orthodoxy is based on *the Bible, sacred tradition*, and the *decrees of the seven Ecumenical Councils*.

### WORSHIP:

1. Orthodox worship is a **liturgy** (a prescribed ritual service or form for public worship) and is very elaborate and ritualistic.
2. Worship services are characterized by the use of **icons, vestments, incense, candles, communion, ritual, and Orthodox music** (traditionally acapella chanting or singing – the human voice is considered “God’s greatest instrument,” and “organ music” is seen as an innovation of Rome).
3. Each part of the liturgy has great symbolic significance.
4. Numerous religious “holy days” are observed (as in Roman Catholicism).

### ORGANIZATION:

1. **HIERARCHY.** There is no single central authority (like the Vatican); rather there are numerous national bodies with independent hierarchies in communion with one another. These independent patriarchies are called “autocephalous hierarchs” and are referred to as “an oligarchy of patriarchs.”
2. **HEAD.** There is no “pope” in Orthodoxy; however, spiritual preeminence over the churches resides in the “Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople” who is called the “*primus inter pares*,” or “first among equals”; all bishops are equal, but the bishop of Constantinople is slightly above all others, having a “primacy of honor” (though not of jurisdiction).
3. **BISHOPS.** There is, like Roman Catholicism, a one-man Bishop system (a local bishop’s authority or jurisdiction is called a SEE) over a large geographic area organized into Synods (ecclesiastical church councils).
4. **ECUMENICAL COUNCIL:** the highest council of church polity, involving the whole church; when a decision is made in such a council, it is considered infallible and bound upon all members.
5. Though national churches are independent and self-governing, administratively independent of each other, the churches making up the larger family of “Orthodox Churches” have a degree of unity among themselves based on shared doctrines, traditions, and worship practices; offices include archbishop, metropolitan, and patriarch.

GROUPS WITHIN ORTHODOXY (in the United States):

A. There are several “kinds” of Orthodox Churches:

1. Those who accept the statements of the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD).
2. Those who do not accept those statements, called “non-Chalcedonian” or “Oriental Orthodox” and include the *Armenian Church, the Coptic Church, the Ethiopian Church, the Eritrean Church, the Syrian Church of Antioch, and the Syrian Indian Church of South India.*
3. Those Orthodox Churches which are in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, called **UNIATE CHURCHES**.

B. Some Orthodox Churches in America:

1. **GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA** (almost 2 million members).
2. **ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA (RUSSIAN ORTHODOX)** (900,000 members).
3. **ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH** (775,000 members).
4. **COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH** (300,000 members).
5. **BULGARIAN EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH** (70,000 members).
6. **SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH** (65,000 members).
7. **ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH** (40,000 members).
8. Smaller groups:  
**APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST**  
**APOSTOLIC EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
**ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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# THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

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## INTRODUCTION:

A. Numerous existing denominations owe their origin to the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

B. Some definitions:

1. **PROTESTANT** = from Latin “protestari” meaning “to publicly declare,” referring to the letter by Lutheran leaders against the Diet of Speyer in 1529 (which Diet reaffirmed the edict of the Diet of Worms banning Luther’s writings).
2. **REFORMATION**: the initial emphasis of the leaders was “reformation” (not abandonment) of the existing Roman Catholic church; departure was forced upon these leaders by the Roman hierarchy.

C. General Characteristics:

1. Churches called “Protestant” (called “Evangelical” in Europe) are a form of “Christian” faith and practice originating in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in opposition to Roman Catholicism.
2. The three fundamental principles of Protestantism:
  - a. Supremacy of Scripture (“**sola scriptura**”).
  - b. Salvation by faith (“**sola fide**”).
  - c. Priesthood of all believers.

D. Differing “branches”:

1. Some broadly classify “Christianity” as existing in one of three forms: **Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism**; but this generalization is much too broad and is doctrinally imprecise.
2. Some Anglican leaders do not consider themselves Protestant, counting the English Reformation different in essence from the German Reformation or Swiss Reformation, and view the Anglican church as a “middle ground” between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism; others would classify Episcopalianism as Protestant.
3. There is a difference historically and doctrinally between “Reformation” and “Restoration” in practice and in aim.
4. Some groups have sought to be identified with Protestantism (such as the Mormon Church) to gain credibility and respectability, but they are not Protestants (historically or theologically).

E. STATUS:

1. There are several thousand denominations that compose the broad word “Protestant.”
2. There are some 500 million Protestants worldwide (including 170 million in North America).

## I. THE PRE-REFORMATION

A. Prior to the Reformation in Europe was the **RENAISSANCE** (approx. 1300-1500 AD):

1. It began in Italy and spread throughout Europe, influenced by such leaders as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Marsilio Ficino, Lorenzo Valla, Erasmus, Jacques LeFevre, and others.

2. **Characteristics of the Renaissance:**

- a. *Revival of classical learning (Greek, Latin) and research (with emphasis on critical scholarship and the use of the scientific method).*
- b. *New secular authors rose in influence (in contrast to the previous hold of the church hierarchy on the minds of people).*
- c. *Wide distribution of printed material with the invention of the printing press (during this time the Bible, in various languages, was profusely published).*
- d. *A renewed emphasis on the dignity of man.*

B. Influential leaders during this time who paved the way for the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation:

1. **WILLIAM OF OCCAM** (1300-49)

- a. An influential thinker, Occam taught the Pope was not infallible and should be subordinate to the state (civil government).
- b. He believed the Bible was the only infallible authority for the church.

2. **JOHN WYCLIFFE** (1320-84).

- a. Wycliffe, called “The Morning Star of the Reformation,” was an Englishman who advocated a return to the New Testament for authority, opposing *the Pope, the papal system, transubstantiation, the use of images and relics, indulgences, monasticism, purgatory, and other innovations* as unscriptural.
- b. His followers were called **Lollards**.
- c. In 1380 he translated the first complete Bible into English, desiring the Bible to be put into public use.
- d. Wycliffe died in 1384, and years after his death he was condemned by the Roman church as an heretic, his bones were exhumed and burned, and his ashes were scattered in the Severn River in 1428 on Papal order.

3. **JOHN HUSS** (1373-1415).

- a. University professor Huss, in continental Europe, was greatly influenced by the thinking of Wycliffe, and came to oppose indulgences and other innovations.
- b. Huss encouraged the study of Scripture.
- c. He was excommunicated by the Pope, imprisoned, and burned at the stake in 1415; his followers were divided into two groups, **Taborites** and **Utraquists**.

4. **GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA** (1452-98).

- a. An Italian monk, Savonarola began preaching sermons only from the Bible, and became a very popular preacher.
- b. He predicted the corrupt church would have to be purified, and attacked the wickedness of church leaders.

- c. Though not intending to leave the Catholic church, he was put under papal ban in 1497, eventually imprisoned, tortured, hung and burned in 1498.

5. **DESIDERIUS ERASMUS** (1466-1536).

- a. Erasmus was a Dutch scholar who edited a series of studies on the church fathers (which historically demonstrated the departure from the New Testament pattern by the Roman church over the intervening years).
- b. He also edited the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament, which enhanced scholars' studies and also pointed out the inadequacies of the Latin Vulgate Bible, used by the Roman church.
- c. Erasmus' work greatly influenced and aided Martin Luther.

C. The decline of papal Influence and the coming of reform:

1. By the early 1300's, the formerly extremely strong office of Pope had begun to decline in influence because of the numerous corruptions for which many called for reform.
2. The papal bull **Unum Sanctum** was issued in 1302, claiming that the Pope had authority over the civil state (the king), but that only God had authority over the pope; certain governmental authorities rose in opposition to this position.
3. The papacy came to be dominated by France (instead of Italy) during the period 1309-77, called the "**Babylonian Captivity**" of the church.
4. Numerous competing popes sought to reign, including at one point three simultaneously (Benedict VIII, Gregory XII, and Alexander V); others rose and fell, and these competing factions weakened the office itself.
5. Corruptions, competition, and confusion continued and those, along with the influence of the Renaissance sweeping Europe (see above), necessitated and motivated reform.

## II. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

A. **CAUSES:** The *immediate cause* of the Reformation was Pope Leo X authorizing the sale of indulgences in Germany (for the purpose of paying for construction of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome), about which a German priest, Martin Luther, would object.

1. Though others had previously objected to moral corruption and papal power, time and events were finally ripe for Luther's reform: church offices were bought and sold (the practice is called "simony"), dispensations for sin were bargained for and bartered (the sale of indulgences was an extraordinarily rich source of church revenue, the hierarchy even drawing on the "treasury of merit" – the selling of the "goodness of departed saints" for the benefit of sinners on earth), often priests lived in flagrant sin with concubines, and a new intellectual freedom caused many to question such violations.
2. To summarize causes of the Reformation:
  - a. *The sale of indulgences and the relic trade (hagiolatry).*
  - b. *The corruption of the church hierarchy, including buying and selling offices.*
  - c. *Rising nationalism.*
  - d. *Intellectual pursuits motivated by the Renaissance.*

**B. MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546).**

1. Luther was a German Roman Catholic priest and monk who became alarmed at the obvious corruptions, and in 1517 he nailed 95 Theses intended for religious debate on the door of the Wittenberg church building.
2. In 1519, Luther debated John Eck, rejecting the authority of the church hierarchy and councils, calling for the authority of Scripture alone.
3. In 1521 at the Diet of Worms, Luther was tried for heresy, convicted, and excommunicated.
4. The same year he translated the New Testament into German.
5. Luther's points of disagreement with Catholicism:
  - a. MERITORIOUS WORKS (Luther: salvation by "faith only").
  - b. SACRODOTAL PRIESTHOOD (Luther: priesthood of all believers).
  - c. SACRAMENTS & AUTHORITY (Luther: change in sacraments; the Bible as the only religious authority with the right of individuals to study and interpret it).
6. Luther died February 18, 1546, had filled Germany with his writings.

**C. HULDREICH ZWINGLI (1484-1531).**

1. Zwingli, of Switzerland, was a Roman Catholic priest who preached a series of sermons on the books of the Bible in 1519, which initiated his break with Catholicism which culminated in 1520.
2. Zwingli's teachings and practices:
  - a. *The church should practice only what the Bible approves (Zwingli's principle respected the silence of Scripture).*
  - b. *Justification by faith.*
  - c. *The Lord's Supper as a memorial rather than literal body and blood.*
  - d. *Denial of original sin, and belief that unbaptized babies can go to heaven.*
  - e. *Acapella music in worship (he took out instruments, as well as other literal, physical "aids" to worship such as statues, images, relics, etc.).*
3. In 1529 Luther and Zwingli met at Marburg, Germany, in an effort to unite, and agreed on 14 of 15 points (the disagreement was regarding the Lord's Supper, Luther holding to a modified Catholic viewpoint – consubstantiation – and refusing to fellowship Zwingli in Zwingli's "memorial" position).

**D. JOHN CALVIN (1509-64).**

1. Calvin, trained at the University of Paris in theology, law, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, experienced a "sudden conversion" in 1533, and by 1534 had broken with Catholicism, left France, and fled to Basel, Switzerland.
2. In 1536 he first published *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (which was revised and greatly enlarged by 1559), a work of systematic theology that was the beginning of Presbyterianism as a religious system.

3. In 1541 Calvin moved permanently to Geneva, Switzerland and set himself up as religious and political leader (becoming a virtual dictator; executions and banishments for “heresy” were frequent in the early years).
4. The **FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM** (“T – U – L – I – P”):
  - a. *Total depravity.*
  - b. *Unconditional election.*
  - c. *Limited atonement.*
  - d. *Irresistible grace.*
  - e. *Perseverance of the saints.*

### III. THE RISE OF PROTESTANTISM

A. From the initial breaks with Catholicism, the first Protestant Churches began to appear.

B. The LEGACY of the PROTESTANT REFORMATION:

1. 1520’s: **LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Though not called “Lutheran” in Luther’s lifetime, those organized around him who constituted this new group that would be called such based their doctrinal formulation on the Shorter Catechism (1529), the Augsburg Confession (1530), Smalead Articles of Faith (1537), and the Formula of Concord (1577).

2. 1520’s-30’s: **ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT**

This movement arose in opposition to infant baptism (“Anabaptist” means “re-baptizer”) and from this group would come the Brethren churches, Mennonites, Amish, and others (the movement also is known as Pietism).

3. 1530’s: **ANGLICAN MOVEMENT**

In 1534 English King Henry VIII broke with the Pope in the “*Act of Supremacy*” over several issues, not the least of which was Henry’s desire to divorce wife Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. From this movement would come the Church of England, Anglican, and Episcopal churches.

4. 1560’s: **PRESBYTERIANISM**

Founded on the teachings of John Calvin which were further refined and expanded by John Knox, this movement produced the Reformed, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches.

5. Early 1600’s: **BAPTIST CHURCH**

The Baptist movement began in Holland under the leadership of John Smyth, and a central point was baptism by immersion for believing adults. The first Baptist churches in America were organized by Roger Williams in Rhode Island, 1639.

6. 1740’s: **METHODIST CHURCH**

Methodist “societies” began at Oxford University under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley (Anglicans) and evolved into the various Methodist denominations.

## IV. PROTESTANT OVERVIEW

A. Though many specific groups have evolved with particular, unique characteristics, there are some generalizations we can make in considering Protestantism:

### B. FOUR DISTINCT 'STREAMS' OF PROTESTANTISM:

#### 1. MAINLINE PROTESTANTS

These are groups with historic ties to the European Reformation, and would include Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and later Holiness (and Pentecostal / Charismatic) and Adventists groups.

#### 2. ANABAPTIST

This movement, known as the “Radical Reformation,” produced such groups as the Brethren churches, Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish, Quakers, and others.

#### 3. NON-TRINITARIAN / SABBATARIAN / SACRED NAME

These groups have historic ties to Mainline Protestants, with certain doctrinal distinctions (such as denying the Trinity, baptizing in Jesus’ name only, emphasis on Saturday Sabbath observance, emphasis on particular “original” names for Deity, and others).

#### 4. INDEPENDENT

These are churches that are Protestant in doctrine and practice, but “independent” in organization and affiliation, and often “fundamentalist” (such as “Independent Baptist,” Community churches, etc); sometimes these groups demonstrate an amalgamation of various doctrines and practices.

## CONCLUSION:

A. What may we say of the Protestant Reformation?

1. That the Roman Catholic Church had departed from the New Testament pattern in obvious and historic ways is scripturally and historically indisputable;
2. That the Protestant Reformation had noble goals of reforming existing abuses, corruptions, and departures is also true;
3. But the result of Protestantism has been the proliferation of denominationalism, which is based on division (see John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13) and produces confusion.

B. **OUR GOAL:** instead of reformation of the existing order, the plea of churches of Christ is for **RESTORATION** of the original order!

1. Not the avocation of Catholicism (neither western nor eastern) nor Protestantism (whether German, English, or Swiss).
2. But our aim: to go back to the New Testament alone and be today what followers of Christ were in the 1<sup>st</sup> century: simply and only Christians, and members of Christ’s church (Matthew 16:13-19; Acts 2:47; 11:26).

## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

**ORIGIN:** Martin Luther, Germany, 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation.

**STATUS:** about 8,000,000 people in the U.S. would identify themselves as Lutherans.

**DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES:**

1. Justification by faith through grace alone.
2. Bible = inspired Word of God, standard of faith and practice.
3. Confidence in Three Creeds: Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed.
4. Augsburg Confession – a statement of faith written in 1530 by Philip Melanchthon which Lutherans hold to be a correct doctrinal statement of Christianity.
5. Other Lutheran representations of Christianity are Luther's Two Catechisms (Large & Small); Schmalkald Articles of Faith (Luther, 1537); Formula of Concord.
6. Belief in TOTAL DEPRAVITY (that man is born with original sin).
7. BAPTISM: infant baptism by sprinkling or pouring (affusion) is practiced (immersion is allowed); baptism is considered "regenerative," a "channel of grace" through which God grants forgiveness and empowering grace.
8. LORD'S SUPPER: Lutheran theology falls somewhere between transubstantiation and memorial: the "real body and blood" (real presence) of Christ is believed supernaturally present in the bread and wine (called "consubstantiation"), but it is so because of the faith of the individual not the power of a priest (holy orders); it is also considered a sacrament, and thereby a "channel of grace" from God.
9. Lutherans observe many "holy days" (Lent, Easter, etc.).
10. Belief that "Christianity" is made up of many "branches" (churches / denominations), the Roman Catholic being the "mother church" of the Lutheran Church, the Lutheran being the "mother church" of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, etc.
11. That the TEN COMMANDMENTS are binding today, and Sunday is the "Christian Sabbath."

**GOVERNMENT:** Local Synods (conferences or districts) meet in National Synods which guide the denomination; locally, a church is governed by a Council consisting of Pastor and elected “lay” officers.

**MAJOR U.S. LUTHERAN BODIES:**

**1. EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA).**

- a. Founded: 1988 (merger of American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in America, Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches).
- b. Membership: 5+ million, 10,770+ churches.
- c. This is the more “liberal” of major Lutheran churches.
- d. Between 997-99, established “full communion” with the Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Moravian Church.

**2. LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD**

- a. Founded: 1847
- b. Membership: 2 ½ + million; 6,000+ churches
- c. This is the more “conservative” of the major Lutheran bodies, stressing the inerrancy of Scripture and the historic Lutheran creeds and confessions.

**3. WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD**

- a. Founded: 1850
- b. Membership: 400,000+; almost 2,000 churches
- c. Conservative regarding inspiration of Scripture.

**OTHER U. S. LUTHERAN BODIES** (all less than 25,000 members):

1. AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES (15,000 members)
2. APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (9,000 members)
3. ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS (36,000 members)
4. CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN BRETHREN OF AMERICA (13,000 members)
5. CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION (8,000 members)
6. EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD (21,000 members)
7. LATVIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (13,000 members)

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## PRESBYTERIAN, REFORMED, & CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** Swiss Reformation & John Calvin (1509-64); Dutch Reformation; Separatism in England (Puritan – Pilgrim).

**CHURCHES FROM THIS BACKGROUND:** Presbyterian, Reformed, Congregational (English Puritan movement).

### **SOME DEFINITIONS:**

1. “**Reformed**” = churches of the Protestant Reformation which were Calvinistic (instead of Lutheran) in doctrine.
2. “**Presbyterian**” = churches of the Protestant Reformation which were “Reformed” in theology (Calvinistic) and emphasizing church government by “presbyters” (“elders”).
3. “**Congregational**” = churches of the Reformed movement emphasizing each church as self-governing.

### **DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS OF FAITH:**

1. Belgic Confession (1561)
2. Heidelberg Catechism (1563)
3. Synod of Dort (1618)
4. Westminster Confession of Faith (1648)

### **DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES:**

1. Calvinism (to varying degrees: TULIP; emphasis on unconditional election, predestination and foreordination among certain of these bodies).
2. God’s sovereignty over human beings (essential to Calvinism!).
3. Salvation through Christ by faith alone.
4. These groups are mixed theologically (liberal vs. conservative) on traditional doctrines (virgin birth, inspiration of Scripture, resurrection of Christ, etc).
5. The Reformed tradition places more emphasis on preaching and Bible study than sacramentalism.

### **COMMON PRACTICES:**

1. Infant baptism by sprinkling or pouring (replacing the Old Testament circumcision).
2. Annual observance of Lord’s Supper.
3. Most of these groups allow women ministers (and elders and deacons).

### **CHURCH GOVERNMENT:**

1. CONGREGATIONALIST: local congregation has final authority
2. PRESBYTERIAN & REFORMED: a council of religious leaders (elders, deacons, ministers – “presbyters” – called a consistory, session, or council) exercises authority within a certain geographical area; The General Assembly (or Synod) meets annually.
3. The difference in emphasis was a difference between rule by local churches instead of rule by episcopacy (bishops).

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

### 1. **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)**

- a. Founded: 1983 (union of Presbyterian Church US and United Presbyterian Church; historical roots to 1788 Presbyterian General Assembly).
- b. Membership: about 3.4 million
- c. Doctrinal statement: Westminster Confession of Faith

### 2. **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

- a. Founded: 1973 (a group of more conservative Presbyterians who withdrew from the southern Presbyterian Church and others to form this denomination).
- b. Membership: 300,000+
- c. Doctrinal statement: Westminster Confession of Faith
- d. Doctrinal emphasis: inspiration of Scripture, total depravity, salvation by grace, Christ's death only for the elect, perseverance of the saints.

### 3. **Other Presbyterian Denominations:**

#### a. **ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

(founded 1782 from Scottish Seceder heritage; 35,000 members, mostly in the South).

#### b. **BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

(founded 1938; 10,000 members; a "conservative fundamentalist" group, rejecting modernism).

#### c. **CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

(founded 1810; 86,000 members, mostly in the South and West; theologically between Calvinism and Arminianism).

#### d. **CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

(founded 1874; 15,000 members, predominantly black).

#### e. **EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

(founded 1981; 69,000 members; a conservative Presbyterian denomination, calling itself "Presbyterian in government, Reformed in theology, Evangelical in spirit"; allows individual congregations authority to decide certain matters, like women clergy).

#### f. **KOREAN-AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

(founded 1976; 55,000 members; conservative Presbyterian denomination established among Korean immigrants).

#### g. **ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

(founded 1936; 26,000 members; strong emphasis on inspiration of Scripture and fundamental doctrines).

**h. REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

(founded 1809 with roots in Scottish Presbyterianism; 6,000 members; emphasis on inerrancy of Scripture, sovereignty of God; psalm-singing and no instrumental music in worship; nonparticipation in civil government).

REFORMED CHURCHES

1. **CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA**  
(founded 1857 of Dutch descent; 190,000+ members, mostly in the Midwest).
2. **NETHERLANDS REFORMED CONGREGATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA**  
(founded 1907; 9,000 members).
3. **PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES IN AMERICA**  
(founded 1926; 7,000 members; God's grace is available only for the elect).
4. **REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
(founded 1792; 280,000 members; theologically liberal; prominent preachers include Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller).

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

1. **CONSERVATIVE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE**  
(founded 1948; 40,000 members; a conservative movement emphasizing infallibility of Scripture and traditional doctrines).
2. **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**  
(founded 1955; 70,000 members; no church authority or required creed).
3. **UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
(founded 1957; 1,330,000 members; union of denominations – Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical & Reformed Church; theologically very liberal; also has become very involved in promoting a liberal social agenda, such as peace movement, women's "liberation," gay rights, etc.; *not to be confused with church of Christ!* ).

## ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT

**DEFINITION:** Anabaptist means “rebaptizer.”

**HISTORY & ORIGIN:**

1. This movement began in the 1520’s in Central Europe as part of the Protestant Reformation, but also a reaction against it, feeling that the movement lead by Luther and Calvin had not gone “far enough” in rejecting Catholicism.
2. This movement came to be known as the **RADICAL REFORMATION**, and the first church was organized in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525, as a disagreement with Ulrich Zwingli (there are actually several theories of origination of the Anabaptist movement).
3. An early and very influential leader was **MENNO SIMONS** (1496-1561), a former Roman Catholic priest who became so influential that a segment of the movement took his name (Mennonites).
4. The emphasis of this movement was on “godly living” based on Jesus’ principles (such as enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere).
5. Because of the unconventional teachings and lifestyle of these people, they were persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants.
6. Total worldwide membership of related churches stand at about 2,000,000.

**BASIC BELIEFS & TEACHINGS:**

1. Doctrine is based on the *Confession of Faith* (Dordrecht, Holland, 1632).
2. Basic doctrinal beliefs and practices:
  - a. Faith in God as Creator and Jesus Christ as Son of God.
  - b. Repentance and conversion, then a life of obedience to Christ’s law in the gospel.
  - c. The Bible as the sole (only) rule of faith and practice.
  - d. Priesthood of all believers.
  - e. Baptism by pouring (but not for infants).
  - f. Lord’s Supper a memorial (usually twice each year).
  - g. Many practice foot-washing and the “holy kiss” (kiss of peace).
  - h. Obedience to civil authority, but non-involvement in civil government.
  - i. Pacifism (non-violence), opposition to “secret societies” and oath taking.
  - j. Eternal reward and punishment.

**GOVERNMENT**

1. Each church is autonomous, but there are often regional and state-wide conferences.
2. Bishops (also called elders) control local groups and members.

## CHURCHES:

MENNONITES
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### **1. MENNONITE CHURCH USA**

- a. Founded: 1525
- b. Membership: 112,000
- c. Basic Anabaptist doctrine is taught.
- d. This is a more “liberal” Mennonite group (regarding clothing and lifestyle), and is the largest – each time division has come over “tradition,” those holding to the traditional, conservative practices are the smaller faction (seeking to preserve their heritage).

### **2. GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES**

- a. Founded: 1860’s
- b. Membership: 82,000
- c. Origin: Dutch, German, and Russian in background; founded by those seeking more emphasis on prayer and Bible study.

### **3. MISSIONARY CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1969
- b. Membership: 46,000
- c. This church represents the merger of two groups with Mennonite Association, the Missionary Church Association and the United Missionary Church.
- d. The doctrine is Anabaptist.

### **4. OLD ORDER (WISLER) MENNONITE CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1872
- b. Membership: 17,000
- c. This church was named for Jacob Wisler, an Indiana Mennonite bishop who led a separation from the Mennonites in 1872 to protest the use of the English language in worship services.
- d. This group stresses separation from the world, limited use of modern technology, and old-style clothing.

### **5. CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST, MENNONITE**

- a. Founded: 1859
- b. Membership: 13,000
- c. This church resulted from the work of John Holdeman (1832-1900), an Ohio Mennonite who thought his brethren were drifting from the practices of their ancestors, and who emphasized the new birth, ministry of the Holy Spirit, and strict separation from the world..
- d. Men wear beards and no ties; women must wear full-length dresses and cover their heads; non-conformity in dress is stressed, including no jewelry permitted.

**6. CONSERVATIVE MENNONITE CONFERENCE**

- a. Founded: 1910
- b. Membership: 11,000
- c. This movement was a compromise between the conservative Old Order Amish Mennonites and the prevailing modernism of contemporary Mennonites.

**7. FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL BIBLE CHURCHES**

- a. Founded: 1865
- b. Membership: 11,000
- c. This church originated in Indiana, and continues to stress separation from the world, non-conformity, and pacifism.

**8. BEACHY AMISH MENNONITE CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1927
- b. Membership: 9,000
- c. This church resulted from a separation from the Old Order Amish, and though they have many similarities, they are not quite as strict.

<b>OLD-ORDER AMISH</b>
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- 1. The Old-Order (*Ordnung*) Amish is part of the Anabaptist movement, resulting from a division in the Anabaptist movement during the years 1693-97, was named for **JACOB AMMAN** (1656-1730), a Swiss Mennonite bishop who insisted on strict adherence to the Mennonite confession of faith, and particularly emphasized removal of wayward members (shunning, called *Meidung*); the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2. There are many different groups (organized in about 900 different “districts”) of Amish throughout the US, distinguished by certain particulars.
- 3. Amish are noted for their austere dress, and avoidance of modern things; men wear untrimmed beards (but not moustaches); women wear head coverings and long dresses.
- 4. The Amish have no church buildings, but meet in homes: hymns are sung (unaccompanied by instrumental music), preaching, and prayer.
- 5. **DOCTRINE & PRACTICE:** belief in the Bible as the Word of God; sinful nature of man; atonement through Christ; baptism of adult believers; separation and non-conformity (avoidance of modern things, such as electricity, indoor plumbing, automobiles, telephones, etc);
- 6. There are some 150,000 Old-Order Amish in the US in some 22 states, concentrated in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana.

## BRUDERHOF CHURCH

1. This is an Anabaptist communal group founded by Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935) in Germany, founded in 1920 (came to the US in 1954).
2. The communal lifestyle is based on God's rule in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and Christ's coming kingdom.
3. There are 13 communities in the US, with a membership of about 2,000.
4. DOCTRINE & PRACTICES: use of the Apostle's Creed; baptism of adult believers; church discipline; other traditional Anabaptist characteristics.
5. These believers stress the sanctity of life, opposing every form of killing, stress peace and justice, and uphold a strict moral standard.

## HUTTERITE BRETHREN

1. This movement came directly out of the Anabaptist movement, without being connected to the Mennonites, and named for founder Jacob Hutter (16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist).
2. They are a communal group, stressing community ownership.
3. They seek to live according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and stress non-violence, New Testament fellowship, non-conformity to the world, and traditional dress.

## PIETIST MOVEMENT

**DEFINITION:** These are churches that came from a religious reform movement in 17<sup>th</sup> century Germany that came to greatly influence the Wesley's and early Methodism, and today exist in the various "Brethren" churches.

### **HISTORY:**

1. **Philipp Jakob Spener** (1635-1705) was a religious writer who called for a religious reform of the churches influenced by Luther, a "completion" of the Reformation in moral and spiritual ways (added to the doctrinal achievements of Luther).
2. Spener proposed that small groups meet for study, prayer, and mutual edification to promote a "religion of the heart," whose emphasis is more upon manner of life than doctrinal standards.
3. German reformer and preacher **Philip Otterbein** (1726-1813) came to America, and through his influence began the United Brethren Church (which would merge with the Methodist Church in 1968 to become the United Methodist Church).
4. Many of the Pietist groups use the word "Brethren" in their name, emphasizing brotherly relationship rather than doctrinal standards.
5. When this movement came to America in the 1740's, it was influential in helping motivate what came to be called the **First Great Awakening**.

### **DOCTRINES & PRACTICE**

1. The emphasis in this movement is on a literal interpretation of the New Testament in daily life, but mainline Protestant doctrines are believed (Trinity, Deity of Christ, etc.).
2. The Lord's Supper is considered a "love feast" and is accompanied by foot washing.
3. Generally, members of this group seek to live a simple life and separation from the world (including refusing to take oaths, engage in carnal warfare, or be involved in lawsuits), and emphasize "personal faith in Christ," prayer, Bible study, and service to others.
4. Plain attire is advocated, as well as the veiling of women during prayer.
5. Some of this group were known as "**Dunkers**" (from the German word "to immerse") and practiced a three-fold immersion, face-forward.

<b>CHURCHES</b>
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**1. CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN**

- a. Founded: 1708
- b. Membership: 138,000
- c. This group has historic connections to both the Anabaptist and Pietist movements, and since the mid-twentieth century began to emphasize ecumenicalism.
- d. They practice threefold immersion of believers, love feast and footwashing in connection with the Lord's Supper, and laying on of hands.
- e. The requirement for "plain dress" was discarded in 1911.

**2. EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA**

- a. Founded: 1950
- b. Membership: 330,000
- c. This group began as a merger of several Swedish Pietistic denominations.
- d. "Free" (as the word is used in connection with this movement) indicates a congregational form of government where local churches hold title to property and govern themselves.

**3. EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1885
- b. Membership: 107,000
- c. This church grew out of the Pietist movement, but is not connected with Brethren Churches (it practices both infant and adult baptism).
- d. This is also considered one of the "free" churches.

**4. FELLOWSHIP OF GRACE BRETHREN CHURCHES**

- a. Founded: 1939
- b. Membership: 30,000
- c. This group divided from the Brethren Church (Ashland, Ohio) and is a conservative Brethren denomination.
- d. Distinctions include refraining from worldly amusements, anointing the sick with oil, and three-fold, face-forward baptism of adult believers

**5. CHURCH OF THE UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST**

- a. Founded: 1800
- b. Membership: 22,000
- c. This group grew out of German-American revivalism.

**6. EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1900
- b. Membership: 20,000

**7. BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1778
- b. Membership: 20,000
- c. This group came from the “River Brethren” and has connections with Mennonites, in fact has roots in the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan Holiness movements.

**8. BRETHREN CHURCH (Ashland, Ohio)**

- a. Founded: 1882
- b. Membership: 10,000
- c. This group divided from the Church of the Brethren, and represented a more “progressive” attitude in its day.
- d. Doctrinally, this church has sought to balance both Calvinistic and Arminian theologies.

**9. OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN**

- a. Founded: 1881
- b. Membership: 6,200
- c. This group split from the Church of the Brethren, not considering that church conservative enough; this new group stressed the “old order and traditions.”

**10. SCHWEKFELDER CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1782
- b. Membership: 3,000
- c. This group has much in common with the Pietist movement (though it predates the Protestant Reformation), and was named for **Caspar Schwenkfeld von Ossig** (1418-1561).
- d. This group is noted for its unique interpretation of the Lord’s Supper (“partaking of Christ as food for the soul”), and emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit among members instead of literal interpretations of Scripture or doctrinal stricture; this movement presented a “mystical” approach to religion (and rejected all forms of the “visible church” including baptism and any other sacraments).
- e. They believe Christ’s divinity was “progressive.”

**11. MORAVIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (aka Unitas Fratrum, “Unity of the Brethren”)**

- a. Founded: 1458
- b. Membership: 52,000
- c. This is another group with strong ties to Pietism that predates the Protestant Reformation, tracing its roots back to reformer and martyr **John Hus** (1372-1415).
- d. They emphasized “heart religion” and had a major influence on **John Wesley**.
- e. They also practice infant baptism.

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## ANGLICAN MOVEMENT

### **ORIGIN:** 1530's in England

The English Monarch, **King Henry VIII** (ruled from 1509 to 1547) was in a dispute with the Pope at Rome: King Henry wanted an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon that he might be free to marry an Irish beauty named Anne Boleyn. The Pope refused to grant the request, so Henry persuaded the English parliament to officially sever ties with the Roman See, make the Church of England a separate body, and make King Henry the Head of the church.

During this time, **Thomas Cranmer** began writings that would become official guides regarding the doctrine and practices of the Church of England, the Book of Homilies and the Forty-Two Articles (later reduced to the Thirty-Nine Articles and incorporated into the Common Book of Prayer). Henry's successors, **Edward VI** and **Elizabeth I**, directed the Church more toward the Protestant Reformers, making the church more Protestant in doctrine and practice. Is the Anglican Church Catholic or Protestant? It depends on who you ask!

The Church of England was established in America by English colonists under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London, but tensions created by the American Revolution ultimately severed English ties and caused the church to be known in the US under the broad term Episcopal Church (for years officially the "Protestant Episcopal Church," a name adopted at Annapolis, Maryland in 1783). This church has been highly influential in American life and government, the first Anglican Church being organized at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607, with early churches established in Boston (1689), Philadelphia (1695) and New York (1697).

**DOCTRINE:** Officially, the *Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, The Thirty-Nine Articles*.

**GOVERNMENT:** the church is overseen by Bishops (from the Greek word "*episkopos*" – a system of government inherited from Roman Catholicism).

1. The Archbishop of Canterbury.
2. A diocesan form of church government and organization are practiced (though there are no archbishops or archdiocese).
3. Local church is called a "parish," overseen by the Minister (called "Rector") and Ministers are also called "Priests" and "Fathers."

### **TEACHINGS & PRACTICES**

1. Acknowledges the Bible as the Word of God;
2. Two sacraments: Baptism (which accomplished regeneration, and can be done either by pouring or immersion for children or adults);
3. Confirmation of baptized children by a Bishop;
4. Real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper (though not called transubstantiation);
5. Belief in apostolic succession;

**VARIATIONS:** the broad term "Episcopal Church" encompasses several specific variations of the terminology (as well as specific denominations – see below):

1. **HIGH CHURCH EPISCOPALIAN:** characterized by elaborate ritual and ceremony.
2. **LOW CHURCH EPISCOPALIAN:** less ritualistic and more evangelical.

3. **ANGLO-CATHOLICS:** stress the “catholicity” of the church (with more emphasis on the older connection with medieval Catholicism).

<b>CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES</b>
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**1. EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1789
- b. Membership: 2,300,000
- c. This church was known formerly as the **PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA**, and was part of the worldwide fellowship of Anglican Churches.
- d. This is the “mainline” manifestation of Anglicanism in the US, and is the denomination that has been greatly embroiled in controversy in recent years (regarding adopting a new Book of Common prayer, the role of women, and the ordination of practicing homosexuals and same-sex unions).

**2. EVANGELICAL ANGLICAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

- a. Founded: 1986
- b. Membership:
- c. This is a more liberal group than the mainstream.

**3. ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

- a. Founded: late 1970’s
- b. Membership: 75,000
- c. In 1977 an international congress of some 2,000 Anglican bishops met in St. Louis, MO, to “take actions necessary to establish an orthodox jurisdiction in which traditional Anglicanism would be maintained....”
- d. These churches are more conservative, opposing changes to Episcopal tradition, and upholding the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, and consider themselves traditional Anglican Catholics.

**4. COMMUNION OF THE EVANGELICAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1995
- b. Membership
- c. These churches are charismatic Episcopalians (as are also the **INTERNATIONAL COMMUNION OF THE CHARISMATIC EPISCOPAL CHURCH**).

**5. REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

- a. Founded: 1873
- b. Membership: 6,000 – 10,000
- c. This church was begun by Bishop George D. Cummins in the 1870’s (because of division resulting over the Tractarian Movement), and represented a liberal, ecumenical movement – an effort to unite Episcopalians with other Protestants.

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## THE WESLEYAN MOVEMENT & METHODISM

### **ORIGIN:** 1730's, England

The movement that produced the Methodist Church began as a **pietist** movement within the Church of England at Oxford University. In 1729 a small group of Oxford students began gathering for Bible study and prayer. Three prominent members of the group were brothers **John Wesley** and **Charles Wesley**, and **George Whitefield**. Theirs was a very methodical approach to religion, stressing the steps of justification, then sanctification, then holiness in life and spiritual growth. These students were initially jeered and ridiculed, but began a movement that would have world-wide implications.

In 1736 the Wesley's came to the North American colony of Georgia. While traveling there, John met some **Moravians**, with whom he was deeply impressed by their piety and humility, and returned to England, no longer satisfied with the reserved, stoic Church of England. Such began the "**Wesleyan Holiness**" movement in England. John and Charles began preaching in open places (pulpits in the Church of England having been closed to them), writing hymns, and quickly receiving converts. The first "Methodist Society" was organized in London in 1739-40, and more than 25,000 people were identified as "Methodists" by 1767. When imported to America, the Wesleyan-Methodist moved prospered rapidly, even during the American Revolution (when other churches declined).

The issues dividing North and South would also divide the Methodist movement in America, with separate Negro Methodist churches, and geographical Methodist churches, evolving.

Today the Methodist Church, originally stressing holiness and humility, has been profoundly affected by general religious liberalism, and is far-removed from its heritage and roots.

Historically, Methodism derived from Anglicanism and Pietism, and then gave birth to the Holiness Movement and the churches that would evolve from it.

### **DOCTRINE:** basic Arminian Protestant beliefs – "Methodist Discipline"

1. Sinfulness of man; fall and need of conversion;
2. Justification by faith only;
3. Two sacraments: **baptism** (usually by sprinkling, for either infants or adults) and **communion**
4. Worship: based on a modified English prayer book.
5. The belief that the Methodist Church is but one of many branches of Christ's church.
5. A great degree of "tolerance" is permitted today regarding doctrinal matters.

### **GOVERNMENT:**

1. Local churches are called "charges," and ministers are appointed to serve by a regional Bishop.
2. Annual Conferences govern the churches; churches are organized in Districts; and every four years a General Conference gathers, which is the lawmaking body of the church.
3. Local ministers are "Pastors" (or some variation – a specific hierarchy is in place).

## CHURCHES

### 1. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

- a. Founded: 1968 (merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church – which came about as a result of a merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, in 1939).
- b. Membership: 8,000,000
- c. Traditional Methodist doctrine (very liberally interpreted) and a strong emphasis on “social issues” (which have come to include discussions about homosexuality).

### 2. AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH (A.M.E. Church)

- a. Founded: 1814
- b. Membership: 1,800,000
- c. This church was founded by Richard Allen (1760-1831), a former Delaware slave, in Philadelphia; Allen had been attending a segregated Methodist Church; when this segregation continued and was supported by the leadership, Allen led the black members out to form this new church.

### 3. AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

- a. Founded: 1821
- b. Membership: 1,400,000 (BLACK)
- c. This group founded as a reaction against racial discrimination at the John Street Methodist Church in New York City.

### 4. CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- a. Founded: 1870
- b. Membership: 780,000 (BLACK)
- c. This church was originally the COLORED METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, which resulted from an amiable separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1866.

### SOME OTHER METHODIST CHURCHES:

**CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH  
EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA  
KOREAN METHODIST CHURCH  
PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHURCH, USA  
SALVATION ARMY  
SOUTHERN METHODIST CHURCH  
VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA, INC.**

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# THE BAPTIST CHURCH

## ORIGIN & HISTORY

*Baptists (including all various groups) represent the largest of all Protestant Churches. The various “branches” which today compose the Baptist Church can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation and were influenced by Puritans and Congregationalists.*

- A. The first Baptist Church was formed by **John Smythe** among English believers in Holland, 1609, and the initial distinctive doctrine was *adult believer’s baptism by immersion*.
  - 1. The first Baptist Church in England was founded in 1612 by **Thomas Helwys** (a member of Smythe’s church), and by 1630 there were seven congregations in London.
  - 2. In 1689 a **Confession of Faith** was formally adopted by those congregations identifying themselves as Baptist Churches.
  
- B. The Baptist movement grew and developed.
  - 1. The original Baptists rejected the Puritan’s view of sacraments, and the Catholic views of Episcopal authority (and accepted the Congregational view of church organization and government).
  - 2. In the United States, Baptist Churches grew out of English Puritans who stressed the need for further reform (and were called “Separatists”), and the belief that the church must be composed of responsible, regenerated members (in contrast to infant membership).
  - 3. In 1631 **Roger Williams** came to America as a Separatist minister and eventually became a Baptist, organizing the first Baptist church at Providence, Rhode Island about 1638-39.
  - 4. During the **FIRST GREAT AWAKENING** (1740’s) the Baptist movement grew rapidly, but a division arose between the **OLD LIGHTS** (called “Regulars,” and emphasizing Calvinism) and the **NEW LIGHTS** (who supported Revivalism and insisted on a “new birth” emotional experience).

## BASIC DOCTRINAL BELIEFS:

- A. Belief in many fundamental doctrines of Christianity (Godhead, inspiration of Scripture, virgin birth, deity of Christ, bodily resurrection, priesthood of all believers, future reward and punishment).
  
- B. Other doctrinal and practical characteristics:
  - 1. Belief in salvation by grace through faith (excluding the necessity of baptism) because of man’s total depravity; man must be operated upon by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

2. Baptism by immersion is necessary for membership in a local Baptist church, is considered an ordinance and a public affirmation of faith and salvation, but is not considered for the remission of sins (or necessary for salvation).
3. Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742), or some variation thereof, is generally accepted among Baptists (this confession came from the London Confession of Faith of 1677, 1689).
4. Most Baptist groups are organized into “associations” of local churches in fellowship (“correspondence”) with each other.
5. Baptists have historically stressed congregational independence, and the separation of church and state (rejecting the “state church” system of Europe).

**DOCTRINAL & PRACTICAL VARIATIONS AMONG BAPTIST DENOMINATIONS:**

- A. **PREMILLENNIALISM:** Most Baptist (mainline) are Premillennial, but some are not.
- B. **CALVINISM:**
  1. **PARTICULAR BAPTIST:** those who accepted predestination, and believe Christ died only for the elect (Calvinistic, to varying degrees); anti-evangelistic..
  2. **GENERAL BAPTIST:** those who believe Christ died for all and emphasize free-will (often called “Free Will Baptist”); evangelistic.
- C. **FOOTWASHING:** some Baptists practice this (considering it an “ordinance,” along with baptism and the Lord’s Supper), and some do not.

**MAJOR BAPTIST DENOMINATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES:**

**A. SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION**

1. Founded: 1845
2. Membership: 16,000,000
3. This is the largest non-Catholic denomination in the US;

**B. AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA**

1. Founded: 1814
2. Membership: 1,500,000
3. This group has been formerly and variously known as the Northern Baptist Convention (1907) and the American Baptist Convention (1950).
4. This group is more liberal theologically than the Southern Baptist Convention.

**BLACK BAPTIST DENOMINATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES:**

**A. NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION OF THE USA, Inc.**

1. Founded: 1895
2. Membership: 6,000,000

**B. NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION OF AMERICA**

1. Founded: 1895
2. Membership: 1,700,000
3. Headquarters: Dallas, TX

**C. NATIONAL BAPTIST EVANGELICAL LIFE AND SOUL SAVING ASSEMBLY OF THE U.S.A. (1936).**

**D. NATIONAL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CONVENTION OF AMERICA**

1. Founded: 1988
2. Membership: perhaps more than 1 million (statistics not kept).

**E. PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION**

1. Founded: 1961
2. Membership: 2,500,000
3. This group broke from the National Baptist Convention USA Inc to support the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King; works actively in civil rights, social and political issues.

**F. UNITED AMERICAN FREE WILL BAPTISTS**

1. Founded: 1901
2. Membership: 50,000
3. This is a black Free-Will Baptist group.

**OTHER BAPTIST DENOMINATIONS & ASSOCIATIONS IN THE U.S.**

**A. PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS**

1. **PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS** (1827 – membership: 49,000 – no missionary societies, strongly Calvinistic: only the elect will be saved – considered by many the “strictest and most exclusive of all Baptist churches).
  - a. **OLD-LINE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS**
  - b. **PREDESTINARIAN PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS** (called “Absoluters” because of their stress on predestination).
  - c. **UNIVERSALIST PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS** (called “No-Hellers”).
  - d. **PROGRESSIVE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS** (strict predestination, but allowing Sunday schools, musical instruments in worship, even some small missions).
2. **NATIONAL PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CONVENTION, USA (1907)**

**B. FREE WILL BAPTISTS:**

**1. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS**

- a. Founded: 1935
- b. Membership: 199,000
- c. This is a Free Will Baptist group, stressing free grace, free salvation, and free will; that Christ died for all, God calls all to repentance, and whosoever will can be saved.

**2. GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL BAPTISTS (Free-Will Baptists).**

- a. Founded: 1870
- b. Membership: 75,000
- c. This is an Arminian Baptist group, believing in man's free will to choose salvation, which comes by repentance and faith, and that believers must persevere.

**3. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS (1727)**

**4. ORIGINAL FREE WILL BAPTIST CONVENTION (1912–membership: 37,000).**

**C. ALLIANCE OF BAPTIST CHURCHES (1987 – membership 62,000; this group separated from the Southern Baptist Convention and is more theologically liberal than it).**

**D. AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION (1905 – membership: 275,000 – this group believes the Great Commission and authority to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper was given only to local congregations – thus they believe there is no church authority higher than the local church).**

**E. BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL (1950 – membership: 525,000 – this is an organization of independent Baptists, strongly fundamentalist and premillennial, and advocate a strict lifestyle – they maintain that Jesus was a Baptist).**

**F. BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE (1852 – membership: 145,000 – conservative).**

**G. BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION (1950 – membership: 234,000 – strongly missionary, fundamentalist, believing in the historic succession of independent Baptist churches from the time of Christ).**

**H. CONSERVATIVE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (1947 – membership: 210,000 – theologically conservative).**

**I. COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP (1991 – this was a division of “moderates” from the more conservative Southern Baptists).**

- J. **DUCK RIVER (AND KINDRED) ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS** (1826 – membership: 11,000 – moderately Calvinistic).
- K. **GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES** (1932 – membership: 130,000 – this group divided from the American Baptist Convention, protesting “modernism,” and stressing congregational independence; premillennial).
- L. **LANDMARK BAPTISTS** (originating with the writings of J. M. Pendleton and J. R. Graves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century).  
**INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN LANDMARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION** (1951 – membership: 14,200 – this group came from the “Landmark Baptist” movement, which stressed the local church as the only church organization, and argued that the Baptist Church continues in an unbroken line from the days of Jesus – this Baptist Church views itself as the only true church; one must be baptized by a “New Testament” (Landmark Baptist) church for baptism to be valid).
- M. **NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE** (1865 – membership: 47,000 – a group organized by German Baptists who settled originally in New Jersey and Pennsylvania).
- N. **OLD MISSIONARY BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS** (19<sup>TH</sup> century)
- O. **OLD REGULAR BAPTISTS** (1825 – membership: 15,000; found mostly in eastern Kentucky and western Virginia)
- P. **REFORMED BAPTISTS** (1950’s – membership: 90,000 – this group is very Calvinistic).
- Q. **SABBATARIAN (SEVENTH-DAY) BAPTISTS**  
**SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE** (1802 – membership: 4,000 – these withdrew from other Baptists in the late 1600’s to keep the seventh-day Sabbath).
- R. **SEPARATE BAPTISTS IN CHRIST** (1870’s – membership: 8,000 – this group is not Calvinistic, originating from those who rejected the merger of Separate and Regular Baptists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century).
- S. **SOVEREIGN GRACE BAPTISTS** (founded 1954 in Ashland, KY – membership: 5,000 – this is a neo-Calvinistic Baptist group).
- T. **UNITED BAPTISTS** (late 18<sup>th</sup> century – membership: 54,000 – some of these are Arminian, some Calvinistic – some have Sunday school and musical instruments, most do not – they are found mostly in eastern Kentucky).

## The HOLINESS MOVEMENT & PENTECOSTAL / CHARISMATIC CHURCHES

### SOME DEFINITIONS:

1. **HOLINESS:** churches that stress “holiness” in Christian living.
2. **PENTECOSTAL:** churches that stress the “events of Pentecost” (Acts 2), especially “speaking in tongues,” and other supernatural miraculous gifts, including “baptism of the Holy Ghost.”
3. **CHARISMATIC:** from Greek, **CHARISMA** = “divine power” – a movement that claims to have 1<sup>st</sup> century miraculous power working today (such as miracles, prophecy, tongues, etc).
4. **SANCTIFICATION:** a religious experience, separate and apart from salvation, in which a saved believer becomes “sanctified,” more dedicated to God.

## THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT

The **Holiness Movement** grew out of the Methodist Church in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of an emphasis on **sanctification** and **perfectionism** (stressing “**holiness**” in daily living, usually involving renouncing “worldly” things and associations, such as dancing, smoking, popular entertainment, alcohol, gambling, etc.) which necessitated a **strict code of personal conduct**. This movement renewed an interest in John Wesley (1703-91), who taught one can grow in the Christian life until one attains, with God’s help, **perfection** (which he called “sanctification”). Leaders included Charles G. Finney, Timothy Merritt, Walter and Phoebe Palmer, and Catherine Booth (co-founder of the Salvation Army). This “sanctification” was often called “baptism of the Holy Ghost” (but did not include speaking in tongues until the Pentecostal movement, who redefined it).

Unable to remain within Methodism, those with this renewed interest eventually departed the Methodist Church, and new denominations resulted. The **Pentecostal Movement**, emphasizing miraculous gifts such as tongues, miracle working, and so forth, came from the Holiness Movement after 1900, but is not the same. The Holiness Churches are generally not Pentecostal, though most Pentecostals would consider themselves “Holiness.”

### MAJOR DENOMINATIONS:

#### **CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE**

1. Founded: 1887
2. Membership 389,000
3. This group came from a merger of two religious societies: fundamentalist in doctrine, stressing a supernatural religious experience and sanctification); premillennial.
4. When the Assemblies of God denomination was founded, many came from this denomination.

**CHURCH OF GOD (ANDERSON, INDIANA)**

1. Founded: 1881
2. Membership: 246,000
3. Basic fundamental in doctrine are believed; personal experience of holiness; footwashing is practiced; amillennial.

**CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

1. Founded: 1908 (a leading founder was Phineas F. Bresee, 1838-1916).
2. Membership: 640,000
3. One of the largest Holiness groups; Wesleyan in doctrine and practice; believer's sanctification is called a "second work of grace" in which one saved returns to the altar for the experience, to allow God to "sweep your heart clean."
4. Baptism is done by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, for adults or young children.
5. International Center is located in Kansas City, Missouri

**WESLEYAN CHURCH**

1. Founded: 1843
2. Membership: 123,000
3. This denomination resulted from a 1968 merger of the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church; promotes doctrine of sanctification.

**SMALLER DENOMINATIONS:**

**APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OF AMERICA** (1800's - membership: 12,000)

**APOSTOLIC OVERCOMING HOLY CHURCH OF GOD** (1916 – membership: 10,000)

**CHURCH OF GOD (HOLINESS)** (1886 – membership: 8,000)

**CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN UNION** (1909 – membership: 11,500 – headquarters in Circleville, Ohio).

**FREE METHODIST CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA** (1860 – membership: 72,000 – founded as an Abolitionist Society).

**NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA** (1862 – membership: 37,000; originated in England; sought to reinstitute the Twelve Apostles of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church – today they have "living apostles" in addition to the Bible; baptism for adults and children, communion, and "holy sealing" (reception of Holy Spirit).

**Others:**

**Allegheny Wesleyan Methodist Connection  
Associated Churches of Christ (Holiness)  
Bible Holiness Church  
Bible Missionary Church**

**Church of God (Sanctified)  
God's Missionary Church  
Missionary Church, Inc.  
Pilgrim Holiness Church**

## THE PENTECOSTAL / CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT CHURCHES

Pentecostalism is an American religious movement that evolved from the Holiness Churches just after the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (as a revitalization of the Holiness Movement). Two key figures leading this movement were Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929) and William Seymour (1870-1922), who both were convinced that **gifts of the Holy Spirit** extant in the 1<sup>st</sup> century church were still available today, particularly speaking in tongues. Seymour led what came to be called the “Azusa Street Revival” in Los Angeles, California, in 1906, which lasted several months; many experienced a “**baptism of the Holy Ghost,**” along with miraculous manifestations (such as **healing** and **tongues**) and numerous visitors carried these experiences from California back to their home states. The movement advocates came to be called “**Pentecostal**” from the similarity of the events with Pentecost in Acts 2.

Pentecostal churches are generally theologically conservative, having been greatly influenced by the Fundamentalist Movement of the 1920’s, and place special emphasis on spiritual gifts (as in 1 Corinthians 12). Pentecostal practices have also greatly affected mainline denominations, including even Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, in what came to be called the “**Charismatic Renewal.**”

Most Pentecostal denominations practice baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Supper. Women have often been leaders in the movement, and most Pentecostal denominations make no distinctions regarding leadership roles for men and women, allowing women preachers and pastors.

### MAJOR DENOMINATIONS

#### **ASSEMBLY OF GOD**

1. Founded: 1914
2. Membership: 2,600,000
3. This denomination resulted from groups joining together at Hot Springs, AR, in 1914; fundamentalist; stresses “baptism in the Holy Ghost” which is evidenced by speaking in tongues; headquarters Springfield, MO; the largest white Pentecostal body (existing in some 200 countries); premillennial.

#### **BIBLE WAY CHURCH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WORLD WIDE, INC.**

1. Founded: 1957
2. Membership: 300,000
3. Black Pentecostal movement; baptism by immersion; baptism in Holy Ghost necessary for “second birth”; premillennial.

#### **CHURCH OF GOD (CLEVELAND, TN)**

1. Founded: 1886 (Richard Spurling, son R. G. Spurling)
2. Membership: 944,000
3. Claims to be the oldest Pentecostal denomination; it began as a Holiness Church, and became Pentecostal in 1908; basic Protestant doctrine, with emphasis on sanctification, baptism in the Holy Ghost, and speaking in tongues; premillennial.

**CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST**

1. Founded: 1897 (Charles H. Mason & Charles P. Jones)
2. Membership: 5,500,000
3. The largest black Pentecostal denomination; stresses regeneration, justification, sanctification, speaking in tongues, gift of healing as evidence of Holy Ghost baptism.

**CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY**

1. Founded: 1923 (A. J. Tomlinson, who was removed from the Cleveland, TN group)
2. Membership: 75,000
3. Basic Protestant doctrine; baptism of Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in tongues; sanctification by blood of Christ makes personal holiness possible; stresses ultimate unity of believers, regardless of social or racial distinctions; premillennial.

**FULL GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES AND MINISTERS, INTERNATIONAL**

1. Founded: 1962 (by healing evangelists Gordon and Freda Lindsay)
2. Membership: 326,000
3. Resulted from a meeting in Dallas, TX to “support, encourage, and promote apostolic, Pentecostal ministry.”
4. Basic Protestant doctrine; strong emphasis on baptism in Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues.

**INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL**

1. Founded: 1927
2. Membership: 305,000
3. This church was founded through the work of famous woman preacher, Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944) in Los Angeles.
4. “Foursquare” refers to salvation, baptism in the Holy Ghost, divine healing, and the second coming of Christ.

**INTERNATIONAL PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS CHURCH**

1. Founded: 1911 (North Carolina, through the influence of G. B. Cashwell, who had participated in the Azusa Street revival).
2. Membership: 213,000
3. Emphasis on “two works of grace”: justification and sanctification; Holy Ghost baptism, evidenced by speaking in tongues.

**PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF THE WORLD, INC**

1. Founded: 1907
2. Membership: 1,500,000
3. Non-trinitarian (oneness); black.

**PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD**

1. Founded: 1919 (Chicago, IL)
2. Membership: 104,000

### **UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH INTERNATIONAL**

1. Founded: 1945
2. Membership: 500,000
3. Non-trinitarian (oneness); baptism “in Jesus’ name only” for the remission of sins; baptism in Holy Ghost evidenced by speaking in tongues necessary for salvation.

### **VINEYARD CHURCHES ASSOCIATION**

1. Founded: 1983 (Ken & Joanie Gulliksen; John Wimber)
2. Membership: 100,000
3. Movement began in California in the 1970’s; emphasized speaking in tongues, healing, exorcisms, and prophesying; rock music and miracles are used to attract followers.

### SMALLER DENOMINATIONS

**APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION CHURCH OF GOD** (1906; membership: 10,000)

**ASSEMBLIES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST** (1952; 413 churches)

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA, GENERAL COUNCIL** (1948; membership: 7,000)

**CHURCH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH, INC** (1919; membership: 30,000; non-Trinitarian)

**CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, CHRISTIAN WORKERS FOR FELLOWSHIP** (1889; membership 20,000; black)

**CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH, INC.** (1903; membership: 2,000; founded by a woman, Mary Lena Lewis-Tate).

**CONGREGATIONAL HOLINESS CHURCH** (1921; membership: 15,000)

**ELIM FELLOWSHIP** (1947; MEMBERSHIP: 20,000).

**FIRE BAPTIZED HOLINESS CHURCH** (1898; black)

**INDEPENDENT ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, INTERNATIONAL** (1922)

**INTERNATIONAL PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF CHRIST** (1917, founded *Flatwoods, KY* by John Stroup; incorporated at Portsmouth, OH in 1927; headquarters now at London, OH).

**OPEN BIBLE STANDARD CHURCHES, INC** (1935; membership: 40,000)

**PENTECOSTAL FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH, INC** (1959; membership: 28,000;

originated among Free Will Baptists in North Carolina which blended with G. W. Cashwell’s preaching in 1906; mixture of Baptist and Pentecostal doctrines; baptism of Holy Ghost evidenced by speaking in tongues; divine healing; premillennial).

*And many, many others...*

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MIRACULOUS GIFTS HAVE CEASED
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**INTRODUCTION:** Though some in the religious world claim miraculous gifts (signs) – supernatural miraculous gifts from God such as were in evidence in the 1<sup>st</sup> century church (speaking in tongues, working miracles, prophesying, etc) – others, such as myself, maintain that such miraculous gifts ceased with the apostolic era in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

Following are some reasons why some of us are convinced that apostolic miraculous signs and wonders have ceased:

1. **THEIR PURPOSE HAS BEEN FULFILLED.** The purpose of miraculous gifts was the confirmation of truth (**Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3-4; cf. Matthew 11:20-23; Mark 1:32-38; 2:8-10; John 9:6-12; 10:31-32; 11:14-15; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22; Acts 3-4;** etc.). We have the confirmed Word of God today (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**), called “that which is perfect” (**1 Corinthians 13:8-13; James 1:25; Psalm 19:7**).
2. **THERE ARE NO APOSTLES TODAY.** Miraculous gifts came directly from God upon the apostles (**Acts 2**), and then to others through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (**Acts 8:14-18; 14:3; 19:6**). But the apostolic office closed with the 1<sup>st</sup> century (**1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Ephesians 4:7-11**). The requirements for apostolic office cannot be met by anyone living today (**Acts 1:15-26**), Paul in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was the “last” (**1 Corinthians 15:8**), and no one today demonstrates miraculous “signs” of an apostle (**Romans 15:18-19; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4**). Since the apostles are gone, obviously the means of receiving miraculous gifts, through the laying on of their hands, must also be gone.
3. **THE BIBLE SAYS MIRACULOUS GIFTS WOULD CEASE.** Miraculous gifts were never intended to be permanent: the Bible says they would “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away” (**1 Corinthians 13:8**). They were only to last until the unity of the faith, the full revelation of New Testament Christianity, was accomplished (**Ephesians 4:13**). Thus when that which is perfect (complete, mature) had come – the full, complete revelation of God’s will (**Mark 16:20; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13**) – then that which was in part – miraculous gifts – would cease (**1 Corinthians 13:8-13**). Remember it is not “we” who say miraculous gifts would cease, but the inspired apostles. [for further study, see **Daniel 7:20-27**]
4. **NO ONE IS PERFORMING MIRACLES TODAY.** Though some claim to work miraculous signs and wonders, affirmation is not the same thing as confirmation; we deny those who claim such are really doing anything like what the apostles clearly and undeniably demonstrated. In the days of the apostles, the dead were raised (**Acts 9:36-43; 20:9-10**) and other great wonders were done: *where is any individual doing such today?* The Bible warns about “false signs and lying wonders” (see **Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12**). *No one today is really casting out devils, speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents or drink deadly things without harm, healing the sick, or raising the dead.*

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## NON-TRADITIONAL PROTESTANTISM

### DEFINITION:

1. By this terminology, reference is made to religious groups which are basically Protestant in doctrine, but have certain peculiar, non-traditional doctrinal or practical characteristics which define them, and to which they cling tenaciously.
2. Often these particular doctrines come to influence everything else about the group.

## SABBATARIAN

### DESCRIPTION:

1. These are groups that emphasize keeping the Seventh-Day Sabbath (Saturday).
2. Many of them also emphasize other aspects of the Old Testament Law (such as dietary restrictions, feasts and holy days, etc).

### SOME CATEGORIES (and EXAMPLES):

#### **1. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST**

- a. Founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ellen G. White, and greatly influenced by her teachings.
- b. Many (including this writer) consider it a cult.

#### **2. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST, DAVIDIANS**

- a. There are at least three different groups that have split in this movement (one became famous at Waco, TX in 1993!).
- b. Again, this is more than a denomination; these are radical cults.

#### **3. SABBATARIAN CHURCH OF GOD**

- a. There are several different denominations wearing the name “Church of God” which are distinctly Sabbatarian (and some are cults).
- b. Some examples:
  - (1) **WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD** (Herbert W. Armstrong; this church has completely changed its emphasis, and become a mainstream evangelical Protestant denomination after Armstrong’s death).
  - (2) **THE ETERNAL CHURCH OF GOD** (split from Armstrong’s group)
  - (3) **CHURCH OF GOD AND SAINTS IN CHRIST** (Cleveland, OH – these are sometimes called “Christian Israelites” or “Black Jews”)
  - (4) **CHURCH OF GOD IN TRUTH**
  - (5) **CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL** (split from Armstrong’s group, originally led by his son Garner Ted Armstrong)
  - (6) **CHURCH OF GOD (SEVENTH-DAY)** (Denver, CO)
  - (7) **CHURCH OF GOD, 7<sup>th</sup> DAY** (Salem, WV)
  - (8) **CHURCH OF THE GREAT GOD** (split from Armstrong)

(9) **INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH OF GOD** (split from International Church of God split; led by now-deceased Garner Ted when he was removed from the former due to continuing immorality charges).

(10) **LIVING CHURCH OF GOD**

(11) **PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD** (split from Armstrong)

#### 4. SABBATARIAN BAPTISTS

a. These are churches historically and doctrinally associated with the Baptist movement which came to emphasize keeping the Sabbath as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

b. Contemporary expression:

**SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE USA & CANADA**

#### BIBLE TRUTH:

1. Keeping the Seventh-Day Sabbath was part of the covenant between God and Old Testament physical Israel exclusively (see Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:1-3; 15; Exodus 20:1-2, 8-12; 16:4-5, 22-31; 31:12-18; Leviticus 23:2-3; Nehemiah 9:12-14).
  - a. Sabbath-keeping was very restrictive (no work done, food gathered, baked, or boiled, no fire kindles, no sticks gathered, no buying or selling, no travel over half-mile, no leaving one's abode, with death being the penalty for breaking the Sabbath).
  - b. There is no Biblical distinction between "the Law of Moses" and "the Law of God" as is sometimes affirmed (see 2 Chronicles 31:3; 34:14; Ezra 7:6; Nehemiah 8:18; 10:29; Malachi 4:4; Luke 2:22-24, 39).
2. We are under the New Covenant (Testament) of Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 7-10; Galatians 3), and not commanded to "keep the Sabbath":
  - a. God said Sabbath-keeping would cease (Hosea 2:11; Amos 8:5-10; Matthew 27:45, 51; Luke 23:44-45; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:13-17).
  - b. The New Testament firmly rebukes those who would seek to bind the Jewish Law on Gentile Christians (Acts 15:1-3; Galatians 4:10-11, 21-31; 5:4; Romans 3:19).
3. The Christian's day of worship is the **FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK** (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, 9; Luke 24:1, 13, 36, 46-49; John 20:1, 19-23, 26; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; etc.).

<b>SACRED NAME CHURCHES</b>
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#### DESCRIPTION:

1. These are churches that emphasize a particular "Sacred Name" that is to be used with Deity (generally not the name "God"), but there is not unanimity among these churches as to what the correct "Sacred Name" is that is to be used.

2. Many of these arose out of the Sabbatarian Church of God movement, and many have deep roots within the Adventist movement.
3. What the matter is all about:
  - a. In the Hebrew Old Testament, the name of God (as in Exodus 3, “**LORD**”) is transliterated into the English letters **YHWH**, called the *tetragrammaton* (note that the original Hebrew had only consonants, no vowels, and was written from right to left – literally HWHY).
  - b. So the question is: *How should this word be written in English (adding vowels)?* In fact, no one knows for certain!
  - c. There is no universal and unanimous agreement as to how this word is to be translated – Some possibilities:

**YAHWEH**  
**YAOHU**  
**YAHUWAH**

**YAH VEH**  
**YAHUAH**  
**YAHWAH**

\*The older spelling, **JEHOVAH**

4. The bottom line: there is no absolute, positive way to know how the word must be spelled or pronounced (and there is confusion and divergence among Sacred Name groups themselves).
5. This confusion also exists concerning the name of “Jesus” as well (alternates: **YHWHSHUA, YAHSHUA, YAHOSHUA, YESHUA, YASHUA, YASHWA**, etc).

#### **SOME EXAMPLES:**

1. **ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH** (Bethel, PA)
2. **ASSEMBLY OF YAHVAH** (Winfield, AL)
3. **ASSEMBLY OF YAHWEH** (Eaton Rapids, MI)
4. **ASSEMBLY OF YHWHHOSHUA**
5. **CHURCH OF GOD, JERUSALEM**
6. **HOUSE OF YAHWEH** (Abilene, TX)
7. **WORLDWIDE ASSEMBLY OF YHWH**
8. **YAHWEH’S ASSEMBLY IN MESSIAH**
9. **YAHWEH’S NEW COVENANT ASSEMBLY**

#### **BIBLE TRUTH:**

1. There is no one, sole, singular “name of God” that is to be used by His people, to the exclusion of all others (and if there were, no one knows what it is!).
2. The Sacred Name followers are placing extraordinary emphasis on that which the Scripture does not.
3. The Sacred Name movement fails to distinguish between the Two Covenants (2 Timothy 2:15), and thus falls into many other religious errors (Galatians 5:4; et al.).

NON-TRINITARIAN CHURCHES / “ONENESS” or “APOSTOLIC”

**DESCRIPTION:**

1. These churches deny the historic doctrine of the **Trinity**, and emphasize what is commonly called “Jesus only,” meaning God exists in only one person, **Jesus** (*Jesus is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost – thus, no Trinity, and “Jesus only”*).
2. Pentecostal in practice, these often refer to themselves as “Oneness” or “Apostolic.”
3. Some of these baptize “In Jesus’ name” and for the remission of sins.

**SOME EXAMPLES:** (the first two listed are the largest of these groups)

1. **PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF THE WORLD** (founded: 1907; membership: 1,500,000; baptism in Jesus’ name; predominantly black).
2. **UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, INTERNATIONAL** (founded: 1945; membership: 500,000; headquarters Hazelwood, MO; distinction: baptism “in Jesus’ name” for the remission of sins; strict moral code).
3. **APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLIES OF CHRIST, INTERNATIONAL**
4. **APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLIES OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**
5. **APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF CHRIST**
6. **APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF CHRIST IN GOD**
7. **APOSTOLIC OVERCOMING HOLY CHURCH OF GOD, INC.**
8. **CHURCH OF GOD (APOSTOLIC)**
9. **CHURCH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH, INC.** (founded: 1919; membership 30,000; begun Columbus, OH; headquarters New York City; presiding: Chief Apostle, Presiding Apostle, and Board of Apostles)
10. **CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH** (founded 1903 by a woman, Mary Lena Lewis-Tate, known as the “First Chief Overseer and Mother in True Holiness”; headquarters McComb, MS).
11. **ETERNAL LIGHT CHURCH OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH**
12. **HOUSE OF GOD, HOLY CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH, THE HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE**
13. **INTERNATIONAL APOSTOLIC FELLOWSHIP**
14. **NEW GOSPEL CHURCHES OF CHRIST**
15. **ORIGINAL GLORIOUS CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST APOSTOLIC FAITH**
16. **PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH**
17. **PRIMITIVE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST**
18. **TRUE VINE PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES OF JESUS (APOSTOLIC FAITH)**
19. **UNITED APOSTOLIC CHURCH INTERNATIONAL**
20. **WAY OF THE CROSS CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**BIBLE TRUTH:**

1. There is ONE GOD exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:16-17; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 John 5:7-8; etc.).
2. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are ONE GOD, and are IN UNITY (John 10:30), but are not the same persons (Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 1:3).
3. The emphasis on baptism being performed “in Jesus’ name” is a misplaced priority.

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## **BIBLE TRUTH CONTRASTED WITH DENOMINATIONAL ERRORS**

There are many denominational doctrines and practices that are not in harmony with the Word of God. They represent additions to God's Word (Proverbs 30:5-6), doctrines which are commandments of men (Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:21-23), transgressing and rejecting the commandment of God by man's tradition (Matthew 15:3; Mark 7:9), thereby thinking of men above what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

The easiest way to refute false teaching is to simply set forth Bible truth. Anything that is not in harmony with Scripture is thereby false (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Consider the following major doctrinal teachings of Scripture:

### **I. THE NATURE OF GOD**

- A. There is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- B. The one God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7-8).
- C. The Father is God (Ephesians 4:6), the Son is God (John 1:1; 8:58), and the Holy Ghost is God (Acts 5:3-4), and these three are ONE GOD.

### **II. GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

- A. Man is saved from sin by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) through the blood of Jesus Christ shed at Calvary (Matthew 26:26-28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
- B. Man must respond to God's offer of salvation by obedient faith (Hebrews 5:8-9).
- C. This obedient faith involves:
  - 1. **Hearing God's Word: John 6:45**
  - 2. **Faith: John 8:24**
  - 3. **Repentance: Luke 13:3**
  - 4. **Confessing faith in Christ as the Son of God: Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37**
  - 5. **Baptism: Mark 16:16**
- D. Some common denominational errors: "faith only", "ask Jesus into your heart", "pray the sinner's prayer", "come to the altar to receive Christ", etc....

### **III. BIBLE BAPTISM**

- A. Baptism is by immersion (meaning of the word; also exemplified – John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
- B. Baptism is for those who are accountable for their sin, and able to meet the conditions (mentioned above) of faith, repentance, and confession.
- C. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38); its purpose is salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21).
- D. In baptism, we become children of God by faith (Galatians 3:26-27).

### **IV. SIN**

- A. The Bible teaches the universality of sin: Romans 3:9-10, 23
- B. But only those who are individually accountable are guilty of sin: man does not "inherit" sin from another (thus no "original sin") – see Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 5:12.

## V. THE CHURCH

- A. The Bible teaches Jesus built and bought the New Testament church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28) and is its only Founder and foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11).
- B. There is one church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; Colossians 1:18).
- C. Many false concepts about “the church” abound: “join the church of your choice,” “one church is as good as another,” “the church doesn’t have anything to do with salvation,” etc.

## VI. ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

- A. The only Head of the church is Jesus Christ: Colossians 1:18
- B. God’s organization of the church involves only the local congregation: Elders who shepherd the flock (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4), deacons who serve (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1), preachers (2 Timothy 4:2), and every member working within the context of the local church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16).
- C. The varying complex ecclesiastical hierarchies which characterizes so many denominations are simply without any Scriptural authority or warrant whatsoever.

## VII. WORSHIP

- A. God is worthy of our worship: Matthew 4:10
- B. We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).
- C. The New Testament sets forth a pattern for the worship of the church:
  - 1. *Preaching / teaching: Acts 2:42*
  - 2. *Prayer: Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17*
  - 3. *Singing: Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19*
  - 4. *The Lord’s Supper each 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week: 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Acts 20:7*
  - 5. *Giving on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week: 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8*
- D. Much that is done in “worship” in denominational religions is without any Scriptural authority at all, and represents vain worship (Matthew 15:7-9), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23), and will worship (Colossians 2:21-23).

### SOME FINAL WARNINGS:

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Psalm 127:1      | 5. Acts 20:29-31 |
| 2. Matthew 15:13-14 | 6. 2 Peter 2:1-2 |
| 3. Galatians 1:6-9  | 7. 2 John 9-11   |
| 4. 1 Timothy 4:1-4  | 8. Hebrews 2:1-3 |

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<h2>CONTEMPORARY DENOMINATIONAL TRENDS</h2>
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### I. DECREASING EMPHASIS ON DENOMINATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

- A. There is a definite trend away from traditional denominational affiliation based on family, birth, heritage, etc (“once a Baptist, always a Baptist,” and so forth).
1. People are more apt to “switch denominations” today than in previous times.
  2. Even people reared in more overbearing churches, like Roman Catholics, are often not as tied to their traditional denominational affiliations as previously.
  3. Some sociologists studying religion have called ours a “post-denominational” period of lost religious identification.
  4. Contributing to that also must be the increasing pluralism of 21<sup>st</sup> century America: our society has become home to many, varied religious expressions (eastern religions, cults, new denominations, new trends, etc) which have all increased religious diversity and lessened denominational identification.
- B. The implications of this:
1. For those advocating New Testament Christianity, this seems good news and bad.
  2. GOOD: *people with lessened denominational holds may be more open to discussion of differing doctrines, and less inclined to simply hold to traditional affiliations.*
  3. BAD: *it could very well bad if a significant reason for this change is a decrease in personal doctrinal conviction, which makes it more difficult to convince one of absolute, irrefutable truth.*

### II. COMMUNITY CHURCHES & MEGA-CHURCHES

- A. A contemporary trend affecting many denominations – and a trend that has affected members of churches of Christ as well – is the “Community Church” direction.
1. “Community Church” describes a church that is often “open” regarding doctrinal absolutes, geared toward the “community” (often what are called “the unchurched”), and often non-denominational or inter-denominational.
    - a. Some have been created through the merger of two or more denominations.
    - b. Others are entirely independent in affiliation and organization.
    - c. These churches are often very dependent on a particular, dynamic, energetic, skillful “head pastor.”
    - d. Many of these churches has had tremendous growth; hence the designation “mega-church.”
    - e. The Community Church movement is a perfect example of a “unity-in-diversity” approach to religion.
    - f. A common explanation offered: it is a “a new way of doing church.”

2. Description from *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Frank S. Mead, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2005, Abingdon Press, Nashville, pp. 316-17

*“One of the most important trends in American Christianity since 1980 has been the rapid increase in the number and size of congregations with few or no ties to traditional denominations.... Increasingly in the 1980s and ‘90s, energetic and entrepreneurial ministers have responded to demographic shifts by establishing congregations that reflected the musical and social tastes of the ‘baby boomer’ generation. Some of these dynamic congregations have become ‘mega-churches.... Doctrine is rarely the defining feature of the churches in this category.... Since each church is adjusted to the needs of a different community, there is a great variety among Community Churches in worship, work and witness styles, and methods. They are generally more flexible in worship, more casual in dress, and more focused on family issues than denominational churches.... The theology and doctrine of community churches and mega-churches vary according to the beliefs of the pastor, but in general they may be termed conservative evangelical. A personal decision of faith is expected and members are encouraged to bring others to faith.... Some advertise themselves as churches ‘for people who do not like church.’”*

B. Some examples:

1. **WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH**, South Barrington, IL
  - a. Membership: 20,000
  - b. Preacher: Bill Hybels
  - c. This is one of the original (and most well-known) “community churches” which is a “mega-church,” and became the role model for numerous others who sought to copy their plan (in fact, Willow Creek has for years offered seminars and other tools and services to teach its “model” of church growth, and has trained tens of thousands of ministers and pastors).
  - d. From the beginning, the emphasis was on *contemporary music, drama, performance, and entertainment*.
  - e. When Willow Creek began, members surveyed the surrounding neighborhoods, asking people why they do not attend church, and summarized the following five reasons:
    - (1) *Churches are always asking for money;*
    - (2) *Church services are boring and lifeless;*
    - (3) *Church services are predictable;*
    - (4) *Sermons were irrelevant to daily life;*
    - (5) *The preacher makes people feel guilty or ignorant.*
  - f. So Willow Creek was established on a premise on not being, or doing, the above: architecturally designed to resemble a mall or college campus; food court; small group meetings (to develop a sense of community); no obvious religious symbols; an emphasis on feeling “good” about oneself; drama and contemporary music.
2. **THE POTTER’S HOUSE**, Dallas, TX
  - a. Membership: 28,000
  - b. Preacher: T. D. Jakes (black Pentecostal TV preacher and author)

3. **SADDLEBACK CHURCH**, Lake Forest, CA
  - a. Membership: 20,000
  - b. Preacher: Rick Warren (author, *The Purpose Driven Life; The Purpose Driven Church*; etc.).
  - c. This church has started more than 30 other churches following its model.
4. **SOUTHEAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH**, Louisville, KY
  - a. Membership: 18,000
  - b. Preacher: Robert Russell
  - c. This church, with historic ties to the Independent Christian Churches, has become a “mega-church,” widely known for its huge campus, spectacular Christmas and Easter programs, and mission works.

**C. BIBLE TRUTH:**

1. The concepts involved here misunderstand the nature of the New Testament church, which is not about entertaining, pacifying, or esteeming man, but glorifying God.
2. See Ephesians 3:20-21; Jeremiah 10:23; etc.

D. For further research, look into the “**Emerging Church**” movement, which is closely related.

**III. “CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP”**

- A. There has been an emphasis in the last few years on offering “worship choices”:
1. The choice is between “traditional” and “contemporary” worship (one or the other – almost never both – they seemingly cannot “mix”!).
  2. Of course, definitions and expressions may vary somewhat, but the basic difference is between using “traditional” songs and expressions of worship (old hymns; more structure), or “contemporary” songs and expressions of worship (newer songs / “praise songs and choruses”; more spontaneity in worship).
- B. The dilemmas:
1. Anything “old” was once new – thus “older” vs. “contemporary” is a subjective determination; what is “contemporary” now will someday be “traditional,” so this approach puts one on a road toward change that must be constant and continuous.
  2. Some “newer songs” are excellent, some traditional hymns are beautiful, reverent, and awe-inspiring; some newer songs are shallow or even unscriptural; some older hymns do not clearly express thoughts to some – but one mustn’t get tied to one over the other simply because of tradition; either extreme can manifest a wrong attitude.
  3. In almost all the discussion concerning “traditional” vs. “contemporary” worship, Biblical truth is never considered – the discussion is based on individual preferences or likes, with no regard to what the Bible teaches God desires in His worship for His glorification.

**C. BIBLE TRUTH:** *The New Testament sets forth an explicit pattern regarding worship – see Matthew 4:10; John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 3:20-21; etc.*

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<b>CHURCHES OF CHRIST &amp; CHRISTIAN CHURCHES</b>
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**HISTORY:**

Contemporary churches of Christ are historically part of what has been termed “**The Restoration Movement**,” a movement of believers determined to abandon denominational division and restore New Testament Christianity in every detail – *doctrine, practice, worship, organization, and life*. This plea can be historically traced to different eras of time and cultures of people, but was particularly successful in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, led by such preachers of the day as *James O’Kelly, Abner Jones, Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott*, and many others. Thousands abandoned denominational affiliations and man-made doctrines and traditions to return to the Bible only and be simply Christians. The plea continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, in the mid-1800’s, division came to those who had pleaded for New Testament Christianity.

In 1849 a Convention was held in Cincinnati, Ohio among brethren desiring a *general church organization* for the furtherance of mission work. A new organization arose: the **MISSIONARY SOCIETY** (originally called **THE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY**), complete with new structures and offices (such as President, Vice President, Managers, Life Members, etc.) exactly like the sects. Of course those then advocating such were those who had formerly opposed denominational associations and human organizations for accomplishing the work of the church. Bitter opposition arose over these unscriptural associations.

In 1859 another issue arose that would be divisive: **INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC** in worship. Previously congregations were unanimous in teaching and practice that unaccompanied singing was the music of the church (“acapella”) to be used in praising God. But L. L. Pinkerton introduced the instrument into worship among restoration churches at Midway, Kentucky (citing as his reason the poor singing of the congregation), and division was inevitable.

By 1906 two separate groups were recognized by the U. S. Census Bureau: *the churches of Christ and the Christian Churches*. It really involved differing “conservative” vs. “liberal” perspectives that affected many teachings and practices (see “Bible Authority” below). Note carefully that the churches had unity when they were practicing only what the Bible authorized; only when unscriptural practices arose did division come.

During the 1920’s two different groups arose within the ranks of the Christian Churches because of a “fundamentalist / modernist” controversy, one becoming the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)** and the other evolving into the **Independent Christian Churches (ICC)**. By 1967-69, some 3,000 congregations officially withdrew from the Disciples Yearbook and Directory (after a restructuring) and are today the Independent Christian Churches (sometimes called “Church of Christ,” but using instruments in worship and identifying with Christian Churches). The Disciples are today extremely liberal, having completely abandoned the restoration plea, and now consider themselves a Protestant denomination founded, they say, by Alexander Campbell. The Independent Christian Churches are less liberal, but still have significant and insurmountable differences with churches of Christ.

Consider the three groups in relationship to each other theologically in the following way:

<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	/	<b>MODERATE</b>	/	<b>LIBERAL</b>
<b>Churches of Christ</b>		<b>Christian Churches</b>		<b>Christian Church (Disciples)</b>

What are the main differences between Churches of Christ and Christian Churches (Independent)?

1. **BIBLE AUTHORITY.** A different hermeneutic (Bible interpretation) has arisen between the two, centering around a different understanding and application of the *silence of the Scriptures*.

Churches of Christ insist upon strict Biblical authority for doctrine and practice, acknowledging the voice of Scripture (what Scripture enjoins) and respecting the silence of Scripture (not adding to what God's Word has authorized: see *Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:28-33; 12:32; Joshua 1:7; 23:6; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19*), recognizing that God has always condemned any addition, subtraction, or deviation concerning His commandments and His way (see *Leviticus 10:1-3; 1 Samuel 15; Proverbs 16:25; Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 15:7-9*; et al).

Christian Churches believe that if something is not expressly forbidden, it is allowed. Of course, this was the historical difference during the Protestant Reformation between Luther and Zwingli. If only what is *expressly forbidden* is not allowed, think of what that would permit: it is an open door for the floodgates of apostasy! This attitude toward Scripture has greatly contributed to the general liberal drift of Christian Churches (and which continues in expanse!).

2. **INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.** This issue relates directly to the above.

Churches of Christ insist on singing only in worship because that is the New Testament pattern (*Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13*). Mechanical instruments in the worship of the church violate several Scriptural principles, such as faith (*2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17; 14:23*), worship (*John 4:23-24*), unity (*1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17*), and the Scriptural expression of all truth being written (*John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3*).

Christian Churches feel at liberty to add to singing because such addition is not explicitly forbidden in Scripture. Today the organ and piano has given way to the jazz band and bell choir.

Instruments of music were not used in the primitive church, are not inherent in any Greek words for singing in the New Testament, and have been the source of horrendous division among brethren in Christ. Also, unbeknown to many, numerous denominations have also struggled historically with the question of instrumental music in their worship.

3. **THE ROLE OF WOMEN.** Again, a difference is seen regarding the strictness of the New Testament and its application (see *1 Timothy 2:12-15*). The role of women is greatly expanded in Christian Churches. Women often lead services and publicly participate (even from the pulpit!) in ways churches of Christ would not condone. The Disciples (Christian Church) are even more liberal, making no distinctions between male and female roles.

4. **SOCIETIES TO ACCOMPLISH THE CHURCH'S WORK.** Many "societies" have arisen among Christian churches which are all without Scriptural warrant or sanction: United Christian Missionary Society, North American Christian Convention, Women's Missionary Society, Young People's Christian Endeavor, and many other various clubs, groups, organizations, and etc.

5. **DENOMINATIONAL PRACTICES:** Christian Churches are characterized by many denominational customs and practices ("holy days" such as observance of Christmas and Easter services; entertainment; boards and organizations; car washes, bake sales, fairs, carnivals, bazaars, rummage sales, and other kinds of denominational schemes to raise money; denominational

fellowship and affiliations such as Ministerial Alliances; Lord's Supper at other times than the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week; and many other such-like things). Christian Churches often practice full fellowship and participation with various denominations ("Holy Week Services," Ministerial Alliances, pulpit-exchanges, etc.). How shall one distinguish between the New Testament church and man-made denominationalism if one fully accepts denominations?

## 6. PLAN OF SALVATION.

Though there are many similarities between churches of Christ and Christian Churches (Independent) concerning the plan of salvation and the one New Testament church (particularly with older preachers among Christian Churches), there is a generation arising among Christian Churches that have abandoned God's plan of salvation (if some even ever knew it), and some are questioning the meaning and purpose of baptism, acceptance of denominational teachings, etc. This has become a serious problem among them.

Previously churches of Christ referred to Christian Church members as "*brethren*," but "*erring brethren*." This was not said to insult, but to clarify. However, even this description must be used cautiously today because many Christian Churches are accepting into their membership's people from various denominations without regard to the purpose of their baptism; so some may not even be brethren at all, let alone "*erring brethren*."

### SOME STATISTICS: (in the United States)

#### 1. CHURCHES OF CHRIST

- a. Membership: about 1.5 million (1 ½ - 3 million has been cited in various sources).
- b. Congregations: about 13,000
- c. Schools affiliated with: some 24 colleges, universities and Bible colleges; 27 high schools and elementary schools.
- d. More than 100 periodicals, newspapers, and magazines.

#### 2. CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

- a. Membership: about 1 million
- b. Congregations: about 5,600
- c. Schools affiliated with: about 20 (mostly unaccredited preacher-training schools).
- d. Standard Publishing, Cincinnati, OH: a publishing house affiliated with this group.
- e. North American Christian Convention: annual meeting each July

#### 3. CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

- a. Membership about 700,000
- b. Congregations: about 3,600
- c. General Assembly: meets every two years (it is a denominational governing organization).
- d. Schools affiliated with: 21 (largest: Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth).
- e. Note: The Disciples have greatly dropped in membership in the last few decades as they have abandoned firm convictions about much of anything.

<b>DENOMINATIONAL PRACTICES &amp; TEACHINGS CURRENTLY AFFECTING CHURCHES OF CHRIST</b>
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There are many “trends” in the religious world generally that have had deep and profound effects on numerous religious groups, and churches of Christ have not been entirely exempt from some of these trends, fads, and cultural concerns.

1. **COMMUNITY CHURCH CONCEPT.**

Some want to abandon historic affiliations to churches of Christ (embarrassment?) to become “Community Churches” (see previous handout). The “Emerging Church” movement, which is interrelated, is definitely having a negative effect in some places.

2. **SALVATION.**

There are some who are abandoning (even in some cases ridiculing) New Testament teaching on salvation, including questioning the purposes and understanding of baptism, etc. (example: Max Lucado).

3. **FELLOWSHIP.**

Some are advocating expanded fellowship with denominations (example: Rubel Shelly).

4. **WORSHIP.**

Some congregations are “experimenting” with worship (“contemporary worship”; expanded roles of women in public services; etc) and some are even adding instrumental music to worship (example: congregations in Texas and Oklahoma have recently announced their intention of adding “instrumental services” to their worship “offerings,” etc.)

5. **THEOLOGICAL MODERNISM**

Certain decidedly modernistic teachings have affected some in churches of Christ:

a. **TRADITIONAL LIBERALISM:** there are some among us (not many – thank God!) who have questioned Biblical teachings and traditional understandings (on such matters as inspiration of Scripture, the resurrection, the virgin birth of Christ, etc.), which reflects traditional liberalism (the word liberal means “loose, ample, generous,” and applied to objective, narrow doctrinal truth is terribly destructive!).

b. **RELATIVISM:** the teaching that there are no moral absolutes, that truth is relative, and “right” and “wrong” are concepts dependent on circumstances, situations, and persons (example: advanced by Jeff W. Childers, co-author of *Crux of the Matter*, at the Harding Graduate School lectures on Feb. 7, 2002).

c. **EXISTENTIALISM:** a philosophy stating that individual man faces a hostile universe, and can only meet its challenges through active will and personal experience, not objective logic and reason; this 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy views truth as subjective, not objective, and has greatly influenced many schools of thought (including even atheism).

- d. **MODERNISM:** traditional modernism placed the reasoning, learning, and experience of man above any “Divine revelations” (such as Scripture) and greatly influenced “Bible criticism” (both higher and lower criticism) in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which has affected many mainline denominations in their wholesale rejection of Biblical truths. Count on modernism to elevate “human learning” or “discovery” above Divine revelation and wisdom.
- e. **POSTMODERNISM:** this is a relatively new (late 20<sup>th</sup> century) worldview which would destroy the foundational beliefs and moral standards of dominant societal structures, particularly Christianity; the contemporary rush to “tolerance” and utter rejection of absolute truths of any kind are examples of postmodern thought; the bases of postmodernism are secularism, pluralism, inclusivism, and relativism, with an emphasis on individual expression, thought, or belief (without regard to objective, discernable standards of truth which are considered undiscoverable by man).
- f. **UNIVERSALISM:** the belief that ultimately all will be saved (thus, no one is “right” and no one is “wrong”).
- g. Other dangerous philosophies challenging 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians include:
  - HEDONISM** (which undermines Biblical moral standards);
  - ATHEISM** (which undermines faith in God);
  - EVOLUTION** (which undermines Biblical teaching on creation);
  - ECUMENICALISM** (which undermines the distinctive identity of the New Testament church);
  - MATERIALISM** (which undermines the spiritual nature of Christianity);
  - And Etc.**

## 6. “CHANGE AGENTS”

Some among us seek to advance “change” among churches of Christ (though they are often less than completely candid or particularly specific regarding what they want changed). They tell us we have become outmoded, outdated, irrelevant, and antiquated, and must change and adapt “the church” to become relevant to modern society (“change or die,” they say). The “church” they envision is “changed” all right: it differs markedly from the New Testament pattern and is indistinguishable from contemporary denominational expressions of religious thought and practice.

To the chants of “change, change, change...,” we rightly ask, “Change what?” Unless one can clearly and Biblically answer such, the change advocates must be rejected. Certainly sometimes proper changes need to be made – but the changes must be spiritually mandated and doctrinally sound.

So be exceedingly wary regarding that which would change the fundamental doctrine, structure, or practice of the church, as such changes would alter the church in relationship to the New Testament pattern.

