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BIBLICAL TOPICS FOR STUDY – THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND THE PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS

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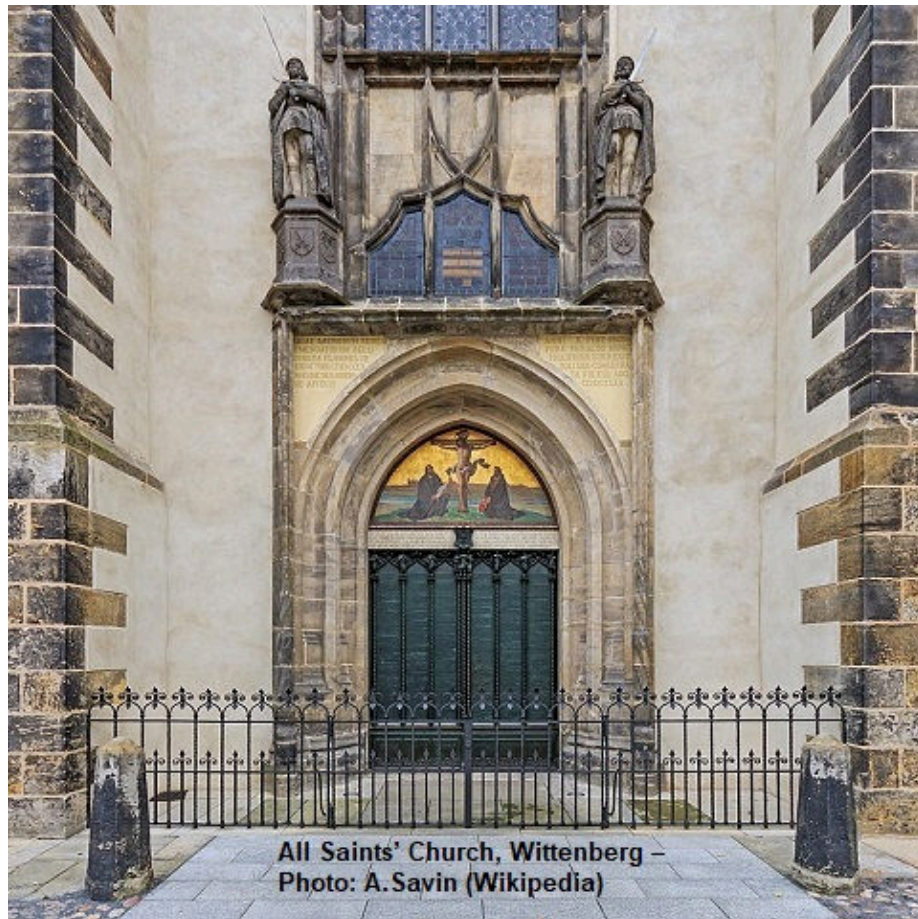


Image above: Door of the Theses in Wittenberg, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. Luther's theses are engraved into the door of All Saints' Church, Wittenberg; the Latin inscription above informs the reader that the original door was destroyed by a fire, and that in 1857, King Frederick William IV of Prussia ordered that a replacement be made. Photo: A. Savin (wikipedia.org).

INTRODUCTION

In this study I will explain about the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and the main historical figures who participated in it, such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. Then I will talk about the Protestant denominations that emerged after the various religious movements that followed and, consequently, the ramifications from each church that was founded. I will also talk about the Great Awakenings or Great Revivals that started in Europe in the 18th century and spread to North America.

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THE REFORMERS

MARTIN LUTHER

- Martin Luther (1483-1546) was born in Eisleben, Germany. He entered the University of Erfurt in 1501 and completed his master's degree in law in 1505. That same year, during a thunderstorm on his way back from his parents' house, a lightning bolt nearly struck him and, terrified of dying and going to hell by divine judgment, he took a vow to become a monk. He entered the Augustinian order (ordained priest in 1507) and became professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg (he graduated Doctor of Theology in 1512). During this period, he studied Greek and Hebrew, knowledge he would soon use for his own translation of the Bible from Latin into German. In 1510 he visited Rome, from which he returned quite disappointed. He challenged several dogmas of Roman Catholicism, most notably the doctrine that God's forgiveness could be acquired through the trade in indulgences (in particular, an act performed by Johann Tetzel in 1516, a Dominican Catholic preacher and friar who lived in the period 1465-1519) and this disagreement led him to write ninety-five theses in 1517, which he nailed to the door of the church at Wittenberg Castle, initiating the Protestant Reformation.

Indulgence means to give the sinner the means to get rid of the punitive consequences of his sins, that is, the ecclesiastical authorities granted indulgences to reduce very long and severe penances for those who had committed grave sins; so they would receive God's forgiveness. This started to happen from the third century. In the sixth century serious canonical penances were replaced by lighter penances such as

prayers, alms and fasts, and until the tenth century they consisted of pious donations, pilgrimages and other good works. Then, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they began to be related no longer to penance, but to remission of the temporal penalty due to sin, that is, to free or shorten the sinner's lifespan in purgatory, before he went to hell. In the Middle Ages documents issued by ecclesiastical authorities divulged indulgences of hundreds or even thousands of years. Some Councils have tried to limit this time to just 40 days to correct this abuse [the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and the Council of Ravenna in 1317]. Unfortunately, in the late Middle Ages the abuses grew, to the point where they were freely sold by 'forgiving professionals' who stated: 'As soon as the gold in the casket rings the rescued soul to heaven springs.' In 1517, Pope Leo X granted indulgences to those who, with their alms, helped rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Johann Tetzel (1465-1519), a preacher and Catholic friar of the order of Saint Dominic (the Dominicans) made a very aggressive marketing campaign on this topic using the above phrase, literally selling indulgences in exchange for money, a lot of it, which received papal punishment and was contradicted by Martin Luther.

Martin Luther stated that indulgences would not take souls directly to heaven, nor would they pay their price to deliver them from purgatory, for salvation was granted by faith in Jesus Christ, although he did not deny the right of the Church or the Pope to grant pardons or penances. His theses were printed and within two weeks they had spread throughout Germany and, within two months, throughout Europe.

Luther also challenged the equal authority of Church tradition and Scripture, i.e., it was the Bible, not the Pope or the Church, that would be the most reliable source of knowledge of God's revealed truth, as well as he condemned the collection of relics of Frederick III the wise (1463-1525), Prince of Saxony, which he stored in the church of his castle, and money was paid in order to venerate these relics. In 1518 there were 17,443 relics and two years later, the collection exceeded 19,000 pieces. They included a thumb from St. Anne, a twig from Moses' burning bush, hay of the holy manger, and milk from the Virgin Mary (source: Wikipedia.org). Later, Frederick III was a supporter and protector of Luther.

According to one account, Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the 'Church of All Saints' in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517.

The Ninety-five Theses, also known as the "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences", is a list of propositions for an academic disputation written in 1517 by Martin Luther, then a professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg, Germany.

It was no coincidence that the day before, in the early hours of 30 October 1517, almost on the eve of the feast of All Saints, Prince Frederick III had a dream that had a profound effect on him and foreshadowed the work of the Reformation. He dreamed that a monk began to write something on the door of the church in Wittenberg. The characters could be read from a great distance because they were so large and bright; and the pen he used was so long that its tip reached Rome, and it wounded the ears of a lion which was crouching there, and shook the triple crown on the pope's head; the distraught lion began to roar. The pope demanded, especially of Frederick III, that the monk be restrained, since he was his subject. He also saw that all the princes of the empire were flocking to Rome, and were striving to break the mysterious pen, but it was becoming stiffer. The monk said that he had obtained it from one of his former teachers, and that it belonged to a Bohemian goose, a hundred years old (this was a reference to John Huss, who a century earlier had started the questioning within the Church. 'Huss', in the Bohemian language, means 'goose') and that it was strong because no man could take the pith out of it. But then many pens had issued from the long pen, and Frederick

woke up scared. This meant that the power of the Catholic Church would be shaken, the monk's ideas would be spread to many places and many works would later be written based on Luther's work [Source: White, E. (June 14, 1883). "The First Blow of the Reformation" (PDF). *Signs of the Times*. 9 (23). Public Domain].

In 1518, Luther was considered a heretic by the Medieval Inquisition, and invited to an audience with the Roman cardinal during the meeting of the imperial courts of Augsburg, where he did not recant his doctrine.

After the papal choice of Charles V (also called Charles I of Spain) as emperor in 1519, Luther's case, which had been on hold for some time, was again revised. He was brought before Pope Leo X in 1520 and Emperor Charles V of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire at the Diet of Worms (government conference) in 1521, but he did not recant his writings, leading to his excommunication from the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church. Although not denying the right of the Church or the Pope to grant pardons or penances, Luther defended the thesis that indulgences would not take souls directly to heaven, nor would they pay their price to deliver them from purgatory, for salvation was freely given by God through men's faith in Jesus Christ. Unlike John Calvin, Luther maintained the doctrine that a Christian's soul sleeps after it is separated from the body in death. He also rejected the existence of purgatory. He affirmed the continuity of one's personal identity beyond death.

The former Augustinians of Wittenberg who revolted in late 1521 ended the Masses to move to another form of worship, but they displeased Luther because of their violence and intolerance. Despite this, they insisted on the abolition of the Mass, the elimination of images in churches and the abrogation of celibacy. The Lutherans still considered infant baptism as valid, unlike the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation, the Anabaptists, who believe that baptism is of value only when people are consciously converted to Christ.

In 1522, during a period of forced seclusion of one year at Wartburg Castle at Eisenach, by the protection of Frederick III, Luther translated the New Testament from the original Greek into German in just eleven weeks. However, he was not the first Bible translator into German. There were already several older translations. There, for example, he wrote about other matters, denying mandatory confession and admitting voluntary private confession. According to the emperor's orders, anyone could kill Luther, without any punishment, for he was considered an enemy of the state.

In April 1523, Luther helped 12 Cistercian nuns (Reformed Benedictine order) escape from the convent. One of them, Katharina von Bora (1499–1552), from a noble family, married Luther in 1525 (He was 42 and she was 26). They had 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls. This encouraged the marriage of other priests and nuns who had adopted the Reformation, breaking with the Roman Church once and for all.

During this period, the German Peasants' War took place. The German Peasants' War was the largest and most widespread popular uprising in the German-speaking countries of Central Europe, fought between 1524–1525 for economic and religious reasons, in which peasants and farmers, often supported by members of the Protestant clergy, took the lead against the abuses of the aristocracy. Although they had already occurred in the 14th and 15th centuries, even in speeches by other reformers in Belgium, France and England, this one in the 16th century was in a way a response to Luther's speeches and his verbal attacks on the clergy and its hierarchy, condemning the strong ties between the hereditary nobility and the leaders of the Catholic Church. A old friend, follower, and supporter of Luther, Thomas Münzer, led peasant masses against the imperial nobility. In 1524, Luther wrote a letter to the Princes of Saxony about this spirit of revolt, showing the tyranny of the nobles who oppressed the people and the

folly of the peasants to fight back with force, but to no avail. In the last battle of the war, Thomas Münzer was captured, tortured, and beheaded. Of the 300,000 peasants and farmers who joined the revolt, 100,000 were killed. The war was an expression of deep social discontent with the power of the local nobles and the privileges and corruption of the Catholic Church; also the desire of city leaders for freedom from the power of the Church and of the leaders of the nobility of the Holy Roman Empire, with rivalries between them. Luther had to reject the demands of the revolting peasants and uphold the right of the German leaders to suppress the revolts.



Martin Luther (1529) by Lucas Cranach the Elder – wikipedia.org

In his later years, Luther was radical in his proposals against German Jews, and he was even later considered an anti-Semite, burning down synagogues and schools, seizing their goods and money, expelling them and subjecting them to forced labor and, as it seems, even advising their murders. He considered them liars and wrote two works in 1543. His campaign against the Jews was successful in Saxony and Brandenburg (Two of Germany's 16 federal states) and Silesia (a historical region divided between Poland, Czech Republic and Germany). Luther's anti-Semitism persisted after his death (1546) and this trend helped to ground the ideal of Nazism in the 1930s and 1940s. Since the 1980s, some organs of the Lutheran Church formally denounced the writings of Luther about the Jews and disassociated themselves from them (wikipedia.org). His anti-Semitic statements can be read in his book "Von den Juden und iren Lügen"; in modern spelling "Von den Juden und ihren Lügen" (On the Jews and Their Lies), a 65,000-word treatise written in January, 1543.

Martin Luther wanted to reform the Catholic Church, while John Calvin believed that the Church was so degenerate that there was no way to reform it. Calvin wanted to organize a new Church with doctrine and some customs similar to the Early Church. Luther ended up moving away from his original plan to reform the Catholic Church and

founded Protestantism, which followed the doctrine recorded in the Bible, not religious traditions, and whose uses and customs would not be bound by conventions or times.

Luther died a natural death, but the exact cause is not known. He was buried in Wittenberg Church.

Inquisition

The term Medieval Inquisition covers the courts of the 12th century (beginning in France in 1184, the Episcopal Inquisition; then the Roman Inquisition in 1230, under Papal control) to the mid-15th century (late Middle Ages and early Renaissance). But it was expanded in response to the Protestant Reformation (started with Luther's 95 theses in 1517) and the Catholic Counter-Reformation (from 1545), extending to other European countries besides Italy (Rome), resulting in the Spanish Inquisition (1478 – by Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabel I of Castile, to maintain Catholic orthodoxy in their kingdoms) and Portuguese (known as the Tribunal of Holy Office, from May 5th, 1536 to March, 31st 1821, which judged in particular the Jewish converts to Christianity, who brought much of their old Judaizing practices into the new religion). In short: approximately 637 years, almost seven centuries of Inquisition.

The Dark Ages

The Dark Ages is a historical periodization that emphasizes the demographic, cultural and economic deterioration that occurred in Europe as a result of the decline of the Western Roman Empire (476). The term 'Dark' is used because in this period of history there was a scarcity of historical records and other writings, at least for some areas of Europe, thus making it obscure to historians. The term 'Dark Ages' derives from the Latin 'saeculum obscurum' and was applied by Caesar Baronius (Cesare Baronio, life: 1538-1607, an Italian cardinal, historian and orator of the Catholic Church) in 1602 to this tumultuous time between the 5th and 9th centuries (High Middle Ages).

Table of the Ages of Humanity

Eras (Ages)	Date	Details
Ancient times or Antiquity	4000-3500 BC–476 AD	From the invention of writing until the fall of the Western Roman Empire
Classical Antiquity, Classical Era, Classical Period or Classical Age	From the 8 th Century BC to the 5 th Century AD	It is centered on the civilizations of the Mediterranean Sea, such as ancient Greece and ancient Rome, that is, the Greco-Roman world.
Middle Ages (or Medieval)	It is a period of European History between the centuries V and XV. 476–1499	It begins with the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 AD) and ends with the fall of Constantinople (1453 AD = the end of the Eastern Roman Empire) and the period after the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492; for practical purposes: 476-1499 AD.

High Middle Ages	476–999	The medieval period is a strictly European event.
Low Middle Ages	1000–1499	The medieval period is a strictly European event.
Modern Age	1500–1789	Until the French Revolution (1789) and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.
Contemporary Age	1789 onward	From the French Revolution (1789) until the current period in Western history.

ULRICH ZWINGLI

• Ulrich Zwingli or Huldrych or Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531) was a Swiss theologian. Initially a Catholic Church chaplain, he was shocked by the exuberant religious practices of the faithful and the practices of the clergy of selling divine favors, blessings, ecclesiastical offices, material prosperity, spiritual goods, sacred things, etc. in exchange for money. This realization later led him to be the main leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland.

In 1519 in Zurich, in his preaching he began to criticize indulgences and to comment on the Bible according to ‘the pure gospel’, drawing inspiration from the writings of Luther and Erasmus. He also took a stand against ecclesiastical celibacy. In August 1519, Zürich was struck by an outbreak of the plague. In September, he caught the disease and nearly died but recovered. In 1522 he secretly married Anna Reinhart, a widow, whom he publicly married in 1524. They had four children. From 1522 onwards he began to criticize more and more radically the devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints, the authority from the dogmas and disciplines of councils and popes, the worship of images and the mass as sacrifice. So the Bishop of Constance forbade him to preach, accusing him of heresy. So he devoted himself to the work of reformation and wrote 67 short articles of faith, in which he asserted that Christ is the only authority in the church and that salvation works by faith.

He defended infant baptism, since no law forbids the practice. For him, baptism was a sign of a covenant with God, thereby replacing circumcision in the Old Testament. In one of his writings, he denied salvation by works, the intercession of the saints, the obligatory nature of monastic vows and the existence of purgatory, which Luther had already done. At one point they diverged: Zwingli affirmed the symbolic character of the Eucharist, that is, he denied the sacrificial character of the Mass, diverging from Martin Luther, who took literally the words of Christ ‘this is my body.’ Zwingli did not leave an organized church, but his doctrines influenced Calvinist ideas. The magistrate and the population of Zurich supported him, leading to significant changes in civil life and state affairs in the city. The Zurich government overturned the bishop’s ban, introduced the German language into the liturgy, and abolished ecclesiastical celibacy. Five of the thirteen states in Switzerland adopted the Protestant Reformation and another five stood by the Roman Catholic faith. Calvin died at the age of 47 in battle, as a chaplain, in a clash between the Catholic cantons and the Christian Civic Alliance that he had organized in Zurich, but which were attacked by surprise near Kappel am Albis. It is said that his body was dismembered and then burned.

However, there is a somewhat delicate point in his doctrine, compared with Luther’s: The Lutheran view was moved by faith and focused on man’s inability and the great distance between him and God and that there are no intermediaries to help anyone

get over this. Zwingli, on the contrary, had a rational and humanistic vision, focusing on the essential goodness of man, which makes him able to make him ascend to God on his own. Thus, Zwingli's doctrine reduces original sin to a simple hereditary vice not worthy of eternal damnation; focuses on the positive value of the Law and not just the negative; says that eternal happiness is accessible also to pagan sages who had practiced the natural moral law.



JOHN CALVIN

- John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French Christian theologian, religious leader and writer who initiated the Reformation in the 16th century in Geneva, Switzerland. Martin Luther wrote his 95 theses in 1517 when Calvin was just eight years old, making him a member of the second generation of the Protestant Reformation. In 1529, shortly before reaching the age of twenty, by his father's wishes, Calvin began to pursue a career in law, interrupting the theological studies he enjoyed. He went to study law in Orleans, and in 1529 he went to Bourges. He also studied Greek and Hebrew to get a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. With the death of his father in 1531, Calvin returned to Paris and devoted himself to classical literature. In 1532 he graduated a Bachelor of Laws in Orleans.

It is not known for sure when his conversion to Protestantism took place, but probably around 1532 and 1533 (at the age of 23 or 24) under the influence of his cousin, Olivétan. During this period, Pope Clement VII pressured the King of France to repress the French Protestants, that is, to annihilate the 'Lutheran heresy' and other sects that were gaining influence in that part of the Holy Roman Empire, in addition to what the French kingdom was facing also the war against the Turks.

Basically, Calvin condemned the Mass in violent terms, comparing Catholic ritual to witchcraft and accused the Pope, bishops, priests and monks of lying and blasphemy, and rejected the Catholic doctrine of the Mass as a 'reconstitution' of Christ's sacrifice

in Cross. Like Luther, he advocated justification by faith and salvation by grace; however, he had a more radical attitude towards the organization of the Churches, the liturgy and the relationship with the world. He supported not only the reform of the Church, but that of all individuals, a society of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Calvin emphasized that the church should have the power of excommunication. He supported not only the reform of the Church, but that of all individuals, a society of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Calvin emphasized that the church should have the power of excommunication.

He supported salvation by faith (the doctrine of Paul), the theory of predestination (God decides who will be saved), confirmed the presence of God equally in the religious and secular life, defended the sacraments as means of grace (supper and baptism, including infant baptism) and had a binding doctrine with capitalism, however, saying that wealth only had reason to be to help the needy.

Unlike Luther, who defended his point of view by indulging in theological discourses and arguments, the Calvinists used more aggressive methods in their religious zeal to defend their ideas, as in the case of 37x25 cm panels or posters (placards) placed at various locations in 1534, criticizing the celebration of the Mass as it was officially performed by the Catholic Church. There was a massive repression of religious dissidents, when the Catholic Church organized a procession through the streets, including the participation of King Francis I (reign: 1515-1547), who succeeded Louis XII; and that day alone, six Protestants were burned at the stake as heretics. In 1535 Calvin fled to Basel (Basilea, in Switzerland), where he lived until March 1536.

In 1535 the first Protestant Bible translated into French was published, directly from Hebrew (the Old Testament) and Greek (the New Testament), not from the commonly used Latin. It was translated by Pierre Robert Olivétan (1506-1538), cousin of John Calvin. The text was again revised in collaboration with Calvin and republished in 1546.

After Basel, Calvin went to Geneva, Switzerland, but was expelled one year and a half later (1538) for doctrinal problems, for example, he refused to administer the Supper with unleavened bread. Then he headed to Strasbourg (a commune in eastern France, on the left bank of the River Rhine), to a French Protestant church, where he began to develop his doctrine and write commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans and Holy Communion, strengthening the foundation of Protestant thought: the doctrine of justification through faith. For him, the sacraments only made sense through faith. It was in Strasbourg that he became acquainted with the German versification of the psalms prepared by Martin Luther and others. In 1539, he assembled a small book of Psalms and other hymns (the Song of Simeon, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments), the first edition of Calvin's psalter, which became known as the Strasbourg Psalter.

Calvin married in 1540 in Strasbourg the widow of an Anabaptist. She was called Idelette de Bure and had two children from her first marriage. The ceremony was performed by a French evangelical leader (probably a Huguenot). The Huguenots were French Protestants who maintained the Calvinist tradition (the Reformed Church of France), unlike the Lutheran majority in France. Perhaps, the term may be derived from the name of a Swiss political leader from Geneva, Besançon Hugues (1491–1532), also of also of Calvinist orientation.

In 1541 there was an outbreak of the Black Death (or bubonic plague) in Strasbourg and his wife and stepchildren sought shelter in her brother's house nearby. In that year of 1541, he returned to Geneva, as in 1540 he had already been invited to return to Geneva, regaining his post there, as it was before his expulsion.

In accordance with biblical guidelines, he began to make a constitution for the church, a confession of faith, a catechism, a liturgy, a hymnal (the Genevan Psalter, hymnal initiated in 1539 and now in a new edition in 1542; the complete edition was in 1562) and organizing the ministries: pastors (preached), teachers (taught), presbyters or elders (warned about behavior and doctrine) and deacons (tended to the poor and sick, since begging was prohibited). The Genevan Psalter is also known as the Huguenot Psalter.



Calvin also created a kind of ecclesiastical court, the Consistoire (Consistory), to judge individual behaviors and sins according to the word of God, including the power to decide the excommunication of a member, and which was composed of the elders (twelve) and the ministers. The Geneva Consistory judged sins such as: adultery, illicit marriages, curses, unauthorized luxury, disrespect in the church, traces of Roman Catholicism, blasphemy or gambling, among others. Unlike the Geneva Consistory, the other Swiss Consistories were dominated by secular authorities.

In 1542 a son of Calvin died shortly after birth. In 1549 Idelette Calvin died of illness. John Calvin continued his work until he died at the age of 55 in 1564 in Geneva of a natural death.

THE GREAT AWAKENINGS OR THE GREAT REVIVALS

Just a comment about the so-called **Great Awakenings or the Great Revivals**:

- The **First** Great Awakening or First Great Evangelical Revival was a series of Christian revivals that took place in Great Britain and its thirteen North American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s (some say 1755).
- The **Second** Great Awakening (1790-1840) began in the USA in the 1790s and early 1800s among Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists.

- The **Third** Great Awakening (1855-1930) influenced Protestant Pietist denominations and gained strength with postmillennial belief in the Second Coming of Christ; the worldwide missionary movement emerged and applied Christianity to social issues, moral causes such as the abolition of slavery. Emerged: the Holiness movement, Nazarene and Pentecostal movements, Jehovah's Witnesses, Spiritualism, Theosophy (from Russia to the USA, as a movement involving occultism, esotericism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Neo-Platonism. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Russian writer Elena Petrovna Blavátskaya, better known as Helena Blavatsky or Madame Blavatsky, 1831-1891), Thelema (an esoteric and occult social or spiritual philosophy and a religious movement developed in the early 1900s by Aleister Crowley, an English writer, mystic and ceremonial magician) and Christian Science (a set of beliefs and practices belonging to the metaphysical family of new religious movements). William J. Seymour, a black preacher in Los Angeles, preached and sparked the Azusa Street Revival in 1906. Just look with the eyes of the Holy Spirit and see if we can call these non-biblical philosophies and movements a true "Spiritual Awakening." The only exception was William J. Seymour.

- The **Fourth** Great Awakening (1960-1980) took place in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but the idea of revival itself was not generally accepted, despite the many changes that took place. Mainline Protestant churches weakened in their influence and the more conservative religious denominations (Southern Baptists and the Missouri Synod Lutherans) grew rapidly in number, had severe internal theological battles and schisms, and became politically powerful. Other evangelical and fundamentalist denominations (such as the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian, reacting to theological liberalism and cultural modernism) also expanded rapidly. At the same time, secularism grew dramatically, and the most conservative churches found themselves fighting secularism on issues such as LGBT rights, abortion and creationism.

CONGREGATION / MEANING OF 'EKKLESIA'

Congregation (or church) is a group of people gathered together for a specific purpose or activity, in our case, a group of people gathered together for religious worship. Many churches are formally organized, with constitutions and statutes, offices, clergy or lay leaders, and, often seek non-profit corporate status. Non-denominational churches are not part of denominations, but may consider themselves part of larger church movements without institutional expression. The word 'church' is used in the sense of a distinct congregation in a given city in less than half of the uses of the term 'ekklesia' (ἐκκλησία, Strong #1577) in the New Testament.

It has its etymological origin in the Greek word 'ekklesia', which literally means 'a calling out,' from ek, 'out', and klesis, 'a call' or 'a calling', 'vocation.' Some versions of the Bible translate ekklesia as 'church', although a congregation is not limited to churches (temples). The term was used by the early Greeks to refer to a body of citizens assembled to transact business of state. The English equivalents of this word are 'assembly' (Acts 19: 32; 39) and 'congregation.' It is the New Testament term referring to the Christian Church (either a particular local congregation or the whole body of the faithful).

The equivalent Hebrew word is qahal (קהל; literally 'crowd'), used with reference to the congregation of Israel.

The expression ‘congregation’ applies, in its broadest sense, to the entire body of Christian disciples, under Christ as the head.

The English language word ‘church’ comes from the Old English word *cirice*, derived from West Germanic *kirika*, which in turn comes from the Greek *κυριακή* *kuriakē*, meaning ‘of the Lord’ (*κύριος* *kurios* = ‘ruler’ or ‘lord’). *Kuriakē* in the sense of ‘church’ is most likely a shortening of *κυριακή οἰκία*, *kuriakē oikia* (‘house of the Lord’) or *ἐκκλησία κυριακή* *ekklēsia kuriakē* (‘congregation of the Lord’). The Greek term *κυριακόν* *kuriakon*, to indicate the ‘House of the Lord’, that is, Christian churches, was more frequent used from the 4th century onwards, but *ekklēsia* and *βασιλική* *basilikē* (basilica) were more common. Some grammarians and scholars say the word has uncertain roots and may derive from the Anglo-Saxon ‘kirke’ from the Latin ‘circus’ and the Greek ‘kuklos’ for ‘circle’, the shape of which is the way in which many religious groups met and gathered (Source: wikipedia.org).

The expression ‘congregation’ applies, in its broadest sense, to the entire body of Christian disciples, under Christ as the head (Strong’s Concordance):

Strong #1577, *ἐκκλησία*, *ekklēsia*, which means: an assembly, congregation, church; the Church, the whole body of Christian believers. Origin: From a compound of ‘ek’ and a derivative of ‘kaleo’; a calling out, i.e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both). Use: assembly, church.

There are 114 verses in the NT with the Greek word ‘ecclesia’, mostly translated as ‘church’, sometimes ‘assembly’: 2 times in Matthew (Matt. 16: 18; Matt. 18: 17); 24 times in Acts (Act. 2: 47; Act. 5: 11; Act. 7: 38; Act. 8: 1, 3; Act. 9: 31; Act. 11: 22, 26; Act. 12: 1, 5; Act. 13: 1; Act. 14: 23, 27; Act. 15: 3, 4, 22, 41; Act. 16: 5; Act. 18: 22; Act. 19: 32, 39, 41; Act. 20: 17, 28); Romans (5; because 1 reference Strong’s Concordance is not found in our translations), 1 Corinthians (21); 2 Corinthians (9); Galatians (3); Ephesians (9); Philippians (2); Colossians (4); 1 Thessalonians (2); 2 Thessalonians (2); 1 Timothy (3); 2 Timothy (1); Tito (1); Philemon (1); Hebrews (2); James (1); 3 João (3); Revelation (19).

Link: <https://pesquisa.biblia.com.br/pt-BR/KJVS?q=Strong%20G1577>
(tab: ‘interlinear’ 17th frame)

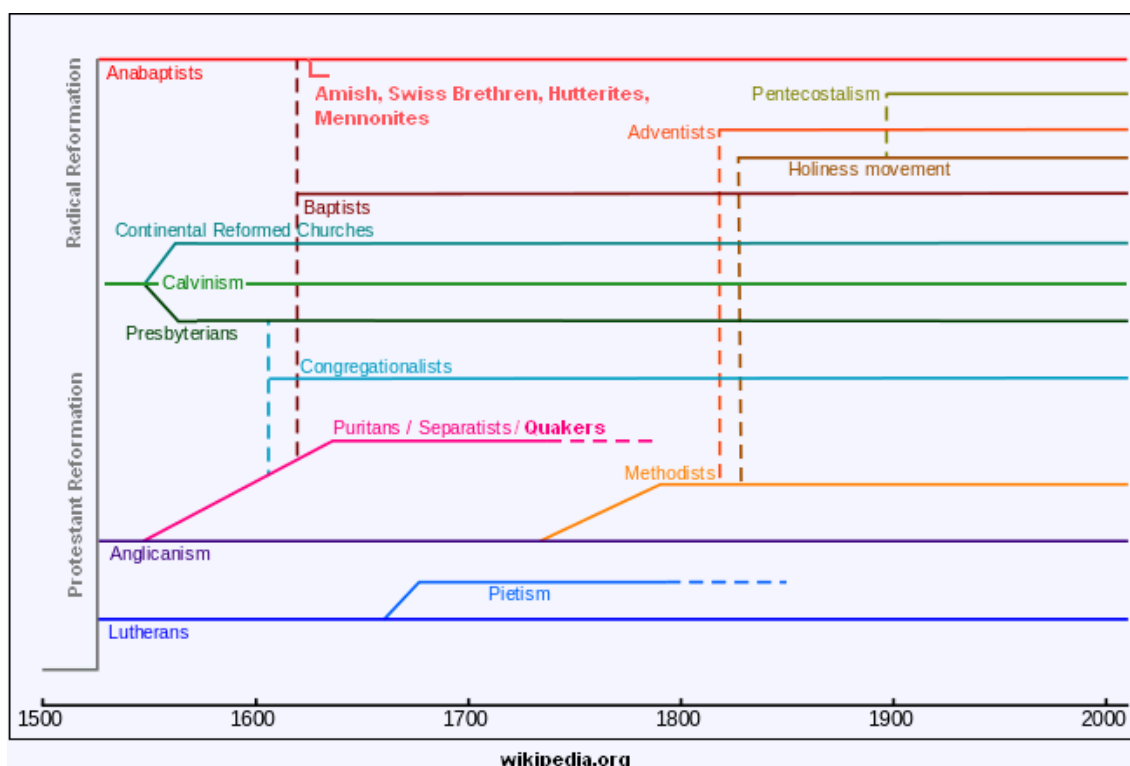
THE PROTESTANT BRANCHES – OVERVIEW

All the Protestant denominations you’ll see below, despite their distinct characteristics, are part of one family, the family that was born out of Martin Luther’s Protestant Reformation, and diverge over time because of doctrinal diversification. Protestantism is one of the divisions of Christianity, which also encompasses the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church and the two branches of the Orthodox Church (the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches). These last two were the result of the Great Schism between East and West that occurred in 1054.

When we deeply study the subject of Christianity and the Protestant Reformation with its subsequent ramifications, we can notice that Protestant denominations have not always emerged as a truly God-inspired move (spiritual revivals) to perfect church doctrine and bring it back to the true doctrine of Jesus, but one can clearly notice that the endless schisms among the members of the various denominations that arose after Luther were the result of absurd human differences to satisfy egos.

Some churches have been erected, and after a very short time you can see 15–25 more dissenters who have come out of only one, just because of the tiniest points of contention. Others were literally erected under mystical influence, mixing true

Christianity with superstitious human visions and the corrupt human desire to walk without leadership. This view becomes apparent when we are endowed with certain gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the study in question gives us an extremely broad view of what we call 'Church of Christ' or 'The Body of Christ.' Distortions of the Word of God by the human mind and gross errors of doctrine show us no longer a cohesive Body, interacting with each other and with the Spirit of God in a single purpose, but a true 'Babylon', where teachings so subtly disguised cause only more destruction in the minds of their proselytes.



One gets the impression of looking at a complex business system, rather than a spiritual work organized by the Creator's hands with a purpose other than product advertisements. On the other hand, this study revealed to me a very important facet, even different from what the Protestant (or evangelical, if you prefer) church sees about the 'Body of Christ' on earth, what it sees about salvation, and those who are actually saved in Christ. I can only say one thing: God sees it in a completely different way and is saddened by the false judgments being made by all strands of Christianity, including the Catholic wing, not just the Protestant.

It is a big family where brothers clash with brothers, trying to argue for reason, and saddening the Father. It is as if we see myriads of tiny lights, which they think are big torches, when the Holy Spirit no longer enjoys being there among them; at the same time, we note the searching eyes of God in search of true lights to be able to use the way He wants. It's really a shocking revelation for anyone looking from 'outside.'

The Evangelical Movement (Evangelicalism, Evangelical Christianity, or Evangelical Protestantism) emerged after the Protestant Reformation (XVI century), first with the emergence of the Puritans in the 17th century, from the Anglican Church, but based on Calvin's Reformation; and soon after in the 18th century, with the emergence of Methodists, also from the Anglican Church.

PROTESTANTISM

Western Protestantism	
Proto-Protestantism	Hussites, Waldensians, Lollards
Historical Protestantism	Classic Lutherans • Classic Calvinists • Anglicans • Anabaptists (Amish, Hutterites, Mennonites, and Dunkers or Dunkards)
Later Protestantism	Pietists, Puritans • Reformed Churches (Amyraldism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Congregational churches • Presbyterianism • Neo-Calvinism) • Methodism (Calvinistic Methodists, Holiness Movement, The Salvation Army, Wesleyanism) • Baptists (General, Strict, Reformed Baptists) • Evangelicalism (Charismatic and Neo-charismatic movement, Evangelicals and Neo-Evangelicals, Plymouth Brethren, Protestant fundamentalism)
Pentecostalism	Church of God in Cleveland • Latter Rain movement • Word of Faith • The Azusa Street Revival (William Seymour) • The Assemblies of God • The Church of The Four Square Gospel
Neo-Pentecostalism	Neo-Pentecostal churches
Restoration movement / Adventism / Millerism (Historical)	Seventh-day Adventist Church • Other Adventist Churches
Restoration movement / Non-Trinitarian Denominations	Davidians • The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints • Shakers • Christadelphians • Christian Science • Churches of Christ (Iglesia ni Cristo) • Bible Student movement (Jehovah's Witnesses, Free Bible Students, Friends of Man, Campbellites) • Unitarianism
Uncategorized	Quakers
Esoteric Christianity	Rosicrucians • Swedenborgianism • Unity Church • Gnostics • Antroposophy • Theosophy (All of them call themselves Christians but they are not categorized as Protestant denominations)



Protestantism was born, not exactly with Luther's intention to start a new sect, but in his 95 theses, which were nothing more than complaints against the acts of the Catholic Church, encouraging it to reform itself. He affixed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. His texts, increased by the works of the Swiss theologian Ulrich Zwingli and the French theologian John Calvin, led to a split in European Christianity, creating Protestantism, the second largest branch of Christianity after Catholicism itself.

In Western Christianity, a series of geographically isolated movements preceded the Protestant Reformation. In Italy, in the 12th century, Pedro Valdo founded the group of the Waldensians. They left a great influence on the Protestant groups of the modern era (15th century). In the early 14th century, a movement initiated by the Czech Jan Hus (or John Huss) in Bohemia challenged the Catholic Papal States and remains with the Moravians to this day. Moravia is the eastern part of the present-day Czech Republic.

Protestantism does not have an internal, centralized governmental structure. In this way, diverse groups such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Anabaptists, Methodists, Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, and possibly Restorationists, (depending on the classification scheme used) are all part of the same family. Anglicanism, although theoretically part of Protestantism, is seen by Anglican writers for its own tradition, with a more Catholic understanding, characterizing it as Protestant and Catholic at the same time.

Thus, Protestantism is generally analyzed together as large denominational families. Each Protestant movement developed freely and many divided, on account of theological issues, doctrinal issues, and questions of conscience. A large number of movements, for example, originated from religious revivals, such as Methodism and

Pentecostalism. The Anabaptist tradition, composed of the Amish and Mennonites, rejected the Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of infant baptism and is also recognized for its uncompromising defense of pacifism (and the Quakers too). Shakers were a branch of the Quakers, and it is a Non-Trinitarian Restorationist sect that emerged in England in 1747.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Before the Enlightenment in the 18th century (also known as the Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason, although its origins can be already evidenced as the late 17th century, in the 1620s, with the beginning of the Scientific Revolution), Christian leaders who denied the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (dogma formulated over the first four centuries of the Christian era) they would be expelled from their churches and, in some cases, exiled or even killed. Currently, some faith traditions deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, but they still consider themselves Christians in their essence. Very strange, by the way, because this nullifies every word and biblical teaching and gives a gap to knowledge and doctrines completely distorted in the Body of Christ, which only God can judge with justice and deliver those who are really His from the clutches of the devil.

With the Enlightenment questioning the entire authority of the monarchy and the Church and exalting reason as the main source of authority and legitimacy, changing forms of government and greatly emphasizing individual freedom and progress, the humanity's new acquisitions of ideas gave rise to other kinds of harmful spiritual and religious thought (Theosophy of Helena Blavatsky (*), for example); more than that, wiping out people's faith, and paving the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. Historians generally date the period of the Enlightenment between 1715 (the death of Louis XIV of France) and 1789 (the beginning of the French Revolution), or the end of that period with the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars (1804-1815).

(*) As I said before, Theosophy came from Russia to the USA, as a movement involving occultism, esotericism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Neo-Platonism in the period of the "Third Great Awakening" (1855-1930). The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Russian writer Elena Petrovna Blavátskaya, better known as Helena Blavatsky or Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891).

During the Age of Enlightenment philosophers freely disseminated their ideas through meetings in scientific academies, Masonic lodges, literary salons, cafes and in printed books and pamphlets. The first Masonic lodge was opened in London in 1717, also influencing many religious doctrines, including Protestantism. Thomas Jefferson incorporated some of the ideals of the Enlightenment into the United States Declaration of Independence (1776).

Therefore, the Enlightenment ended up having action, in one way or another, on Protestantism, with the emergence of new movements, including denying the Trinity or interpreting it in a distorted way.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as Mormon), for example, understands the Holy Trinity differently: for them, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinct beings. Although it does not characterize itself as a Protestant denomination, it is considered by many scholars as such, but its doctrine is quite strange to those who claim to be a Christian. It has its origins in the 'Second Great Awakening'

and was paralleled to the rise of numerous other North American religions, including the Adventists and the restoration movement, with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses, although claiming to be Christians, do not consider themselves part of Protestantism either. They accept Jesus as a divine being, but He is not God (Jehovah, as they call Him), therefore rejecting the belief in the Trinity and teaching that the Holy Spirit is the active force of Jehovah, but not a person, the third person of Trinity. Really, all their doctrine is distorted, and it doesn't agree with the bible. Biblical verses are interpreted in a totally false and tendentious way. Although they claim to practice early Christianity, none of this is true.

UNITARIANISM

Other movements gave rise to Unitarianism, which formally renounced its Christian origins in 1961 and exists as a separate religious organization. Despite their abstention from any formal doctrine, however, there are Unitarians (or Oneness) who self-identify as Christians despite being a minority. In the early days, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had people in its midst who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, although some scholars say that this was part of their teachings from the beginning, and others say that it was not until 1980 that the Seventh-day Adventist Church changed its fundamental beliefs by adding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as a basic belief. Even the husband of Ellen White claimed that her views did not support the Trinitarian creed. Unitarians reject the Trinitarian belief in the tri-personal godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Instead, they profess the absolute unity of God. In addition, they reject the doctrine of original sin.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM OR UUISM

Unitarian Universalism (or UUism or UU or the Unitarian Universalist Association – UUA) is a liberal religious movement that was formed in 1961 through the consolidation of the American Unitarian Association, established in 1825, and the Universalist Church of America, established in 1793.

Unitarians reject the Trinitarian belief in the tri-personal godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Instead, they profess the absolute unity of God. In addition, they reject the doctrine of original sin.

Universalists accept the universal principles of most religions, deny the doctrine of everlasting damnation, and proclaim belief in an entirely loving God who will ultimately redeem all human beings.

Unitarian Universalists seek spiritual growth from several sources. This way, Unitarian Universalist congregations include many atheists, agnostics, deists, and theists. With this ecumenical character, they seek inspiration from the world's main religions, such as: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism (an Indian religion originating in the Punjab region of India), Buddhism, Taoism, syncretism, neopaganism, atheism, agnosticism, New Age, omnism, pantheism, panentheism, pandeism, deism, and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith (a monotheistic religion founded by Bahá'u'lláh, a Persian nobleman who lived in the 19th century. His teachings assert that there is only one God and that all major world religions have the same divine origin).

ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY

There are some Christian traditions that call themselves ‘mystery religions’ and are correlated not with cult, but with the self-knowledge of man as spirit and an integral part of God. These traditions are known as Esoteric Christianity (or Mystical Christianity), and are the only reincarnationist and evolutionary Christian denominations. They support the idea that the world is like a stage of development for all living forms, which start in unconsciousness and end in the highest consciousness (Even Mormons think so). Then, the word of Christ would be valid for the present stage of humanity, in order to awaken man to love and altruism, and when a universal brotherhood is formed, humanity will be ready to address God directly. One of the well-known organizations linked to Esoteric Christianity is the Rosicrucian Fraternity of Max Heindel. Several other Rosicrucian fraternities also claim to be Christian and Gnostic. Other sects that call themselves Christians are: the Unity Church (founded by Charles Fillmore and Myrtle Fillmore in 1889, and which emerged from transcendentalism – an idealistic philosophical and social movement which developed in New England around 1836 in reaction to rationalism) and Swedenborgianism (or ‘The New Church’), based on the writings of the scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) predicting that God would replace the traditional Christian Church, establishing a New Church that would worship Jesus Christ as God, and that each person should cooperate in repentance, reformation, and regeneration.

UNCATEGORIZED

Some denominations that emerged in the midst of the Western Christian tradition consider themselves Christian, but not Catholic and not entirely Protestant, as is the case with the Religious Society of Friends (or Quakers). Quakerism began as a Christian movement of an evangelical and mystical character in the 17th century in England, dispensing priests and all Anglican and Catholic sacraments from its worship. Like the Mennonites, Quakers are traditionally opposed to any form of violence, such as participating in wars. The Shakers came from the Quakers, and is another Non-Trinitarian, Restorationist sect.

PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS

ANGLICANISM

The Anglican Church arose in 1534 deriving from a schism between King Henry VIII of England and the Catholic Church in divorcing Catherine of Aragon to marry Anne Boleyn and leave a male descendant on the throne. It has an Episcopal organization similar to the Catholic Church, where bishops from national or regional ecclesiastical provinces are in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in turn is subordinate to the Pope, who is in the Holy See (See of Rome or Apostolic See; Latin: Sancta Sedes; Italian: Santa Sede), governing not only the church in the world but also having jurisdiction over Vatican City. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the most senior cleric, although the monarch is the supreme governor. The English Church under Henry VIII continued to maintain Roman Catholic doctrines and sacraments despite separation from Rome. Under King Edward VI (1547-1553), however, the church in England went through what is known as the English Reformation, with radical Protestant tendencies constituting its distinct Anglican

identity. In 1559, with Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the Church of England declared its independence from the Catholic Church, but ended up on an intermediate path between the two Protestant traditions: Lutheranism and Calvinism. However, over time Protestantism ended up in a state of interrupted development. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that Anglicanism stood in an intermediate position between the Catholicism of the 16th century and the Lutheran Protestantism of that time; therefore, it is considered by some scholars as a Reformed Catholic Church. The 'Book of Common Prayer' is the collection of services that worshipers in most Anglican churches have used for centuries, the first of which was compiled by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1549. And in 1662, under King Charles II, a revised Book of Common Prayer was produced. In the prayer books are the foundations of Anglican doctrine: the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds, the creed of Athanasius (probably refers to Archbishop Athanasius I, the patriarch of Alexandria, defender of orthodoxy but whose attitude was for Arianism. The Athanasian Creed is rarely used today), the scriptures, the sacraments, daily prayer, catechism and apostolic succession.

Anglicans base their Christian faith on the Scriptures and Gospels, apostolic Church traditions, apostolic succession (historical episcopate) and the writings of the Church Fathers (not the Apostles of Jesus, but their successors after the first century, of course). They also celebrate Mass and Eucharist in a similar way to the Western Catholic tradition, in priestly robes, but have a considerable degree of liturgical freedom, just like the other traditional sacraments. As for the theology of the Supper (Eucharist), Anglicanism itself has no official doctrine on the subject, believing that it is wiser to leave the Presence in mystery, although its members diverge: some believing in Zwingli's memorialist vision, others believing in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, according to the doctrine of transubstantiation of the Catholic Church or the position of Martin Luther and Calvin (sacramental union and consubstantiation).



In the images above you can see:

Left: Westminster Abbey, formally titled, the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter at Westminster. Photo – Rabanus Flavus – wikipedia.org

Right: High Altar at the Anglo-Catholic Church of the Good Shepherd (Rosemont, Pennsylvania) – photo: Francis Helminski – wikipedia.org

They also differ on the doctrine of justification, for some Anglo-Catholics advocate the sacraments and a faith with good works, while other Evangelical Anglicans believe in justification by faith. The beliefs and rituals of personal piety mostly follow the Catholic tradition, reciting the Rosary and the Angelus, the adoration of ‘Our Lady’ and the petition for the intercession of the saints. In addition to bishops, who exercise the jurisdiction of dioceses, there are two other orders of ministry: deacon and priest. No requirement is made for clerical celibacy, although many Anglo-Catholic priests are traditionally unmarried. After World War II, Lambeth Conference resolutions approved contraception and remarriage for divorced people. After the second half of the 20th century, women could be ordained deaconesses in almost every province, as priestesses and bishops. In more recent years, some jurisdictions have allowed the ordination of homosexuals, as well as their matrimonial union.

PURITANISM

Puritanism emerged in England in the 16th and 17th centuries from a community of radical Protestants after Calvin’s Reformation. The Puritans rejected both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church’s Episcopal ritualism and organization, as well as opposed to Anabaptism (‘re-baptizers’). They intended to purify the Anglican Church, making its liturgy closer to Calvinism (Only traces of the liturgy of Catholicism remain in it). Due to the persecution in England, many of the Puritans fled to countries like the USA (to New England). Puritanism was never a formally defined religious division within Protestantism. Many continued to practice their faith in non-conformist denominations, especially in Presbyterian and Congregationalists churches (in the Calvinist tradition, each congregation independently and autonomously administers its own affairs). In Presbyterian churches, the government of the church is by representative assemblies of elders. They also come from Calvinism. The Puritans advocated greater purity of worship and doctrine, as well as personal and group piety. They also wanted the Presbyterian customs of government, that is, by representative assemblies of elders. However, these reforms through the English Parliament were blocked by Queen Elizabeth I, who was an Anglican.

The Puritans wanted parts of the liturgy to be omitted to allow more time for sermon and singing. Some of its members refused to bow upon hearing Jesus’ name and to make the sign of the cross at baptism. Puritan clerics preferred to wear black academic attire (the Geneva gown, also called a pulpit gown, pulpit robe, or preaching robe) and demanded that priests wear surplices, written prayers in place of improvised prayers, and objected to revering the name of Jesus. The surplice (Late Latin, ‘superpelliceum’, from super, ‘over’ and pellicia, ‘fur garment’) is a liturgical garment of the Western Christian Church. The surplice is shaped like a tunic of white linen or cotton fabric, reaching to the knees, with wide or moderately wide sleeves. It is most typical of Congregational, Presbyterian and Reformed churches (influenced by Calvinism) and also common with Baptist and Methodist clergy; its use waned in the 20th century, when there was a general shift toward a less formal religious service; this movement spread across most denominational lines.

The Puritans eliminated music with musical instruments, such as the organ, and with a choir in their religious services because they were associated with Roman Catholicism; however, they sang the Psalms.

Image below: A pastor wearing traditional Presbyterian liturgical clothing, a Geneva gown (pulpit robe) over a cassock with white preaching tabs. Photo: Tim Engleman – wikipedia.org.



Above: Interior of the Old Ship Church ('the Old Ship Meetinghouse'), built in 1681 in Hingham, Massachusetts, and the only surviving 17th-century Puritan church in America. Its congregation gathered in 1635 for the first time. Puritans were Calvinists, so their churches were unadorned and plain. Michael Carter – wikipedia.org.

Like Calvin, the Puritans accepted the doctrine of predestination (the 'elect' were destined by God to receive grace and salvation). God's elect could be saved through faith in Christ. Conversion was admitted after an individualized personal encounter with God, not merely by intellectual recognition of the truth of Christianity. However, a prolonged and continuous introspection was required of the person, which made the sanctification of a believer a grievous burden. Many texts written by the Puritan clergy served as spiritual guides to help their parishioners seek personal piety and sanctification.

Puritans believed in Sabbath, the day of rest, kept on Sunday. Sabbatarianism or Puritan Sabbatarianism or Reformed Sabbatarianism is Sabbath observance in Christianity, typically characterized by all-day devotion to worship and, consequently, avoiding recreational activities and sports. Unlike Seventh-day Sabbatarians, Puritan Sabbatarians practice First Day Sabbath (Sunday Sabbatarianism), keeping Sunday as the Sabbath and referring to it as the Lord's Day. Not only on Sunday, other forms of leisure and entertainment were completely banned for moral reasons, such as blood sports: bear fights (the 'Bear-baiting', for example, involving the encouragement / force of a dog and chained bear fighting (baiting) or involving a bear against another animal) and cockfighting, because they involved unnecessary injury to God's creatures. Card playing was banned in England and the colonies, as was mixed dancing involving close contact between men and women, because it was thought to lead to fornication. But folk dancing was allowed. Puritans were not opposed to drinking alcohol in moderation. However, alehouses (brewing house) were strictly regulated by Puritan-controlled governments in England and colonial America. The laws prohibited the practice of toasting each other, with the explanation that this led to the waste of beer and wine as the gift of God, in addition to be a carnal behavior.

Sunday worship consisted of Morning Prayer in the Anglican's 'Book of Common Prayer', including the sermon, a means of religious education, and the most common way for God to prepare a sinner's heart for conversion. But Holy Communion was only observed occasionally. Most people only received communion once a year at Easter. The Puritans rejected the Roman Catholic (transubstantiation) and Lutheran (sacramental union) teachings that Christ is physically present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Instead, the Puritans embraced the Reformed doctrine of the real spiritual presence, believing that in the Lord's Supper believers receive Christ spiritually. They were very strict in administering the Eucharist, judging people a lot with regard to their right to receive the sacrament.

The Puritans agreed with the practice of infant baptism, and wanted to do away with godparents, who took baptismal vows on behalf of children, to give that responsibility to the child's father. They did not allow priests to make the sign of the cross at baptism, and they believed that preaching should always accompany the sacraments. Some Puritan clerics refused to baptize dying infants because it implied that the sacrament contributed to salvation.

The wedding ceremony was criticized for wearing a wedding ring (which implied that marriage was a sacrament, as Catholicism sees it). Puritans accepted sexuality but placed it in the context of marriage. Sex outside of marriage was punished. They believed that marriage was rooted in procreation, love and, most importantly, salvation. Husbands were the spiritual heads of the family, while wives were expected to demonstrate religious piety and obedience under male authority. Furthermore, marriage represented not only the relationship between husband and wife, but also the relationship between the spouses and God. Puritan husbands ruled, using authority through family guidance and prayer. The female relationship with her husband and with

God was marked by submission and humility. Thus, in the public sphere, women were inferior to men, but there was spiritual equality between men and women in marriage, which gave women authority over the affairs of the home and the education of children, property and administration of inns and their husbands' taverns. They greatly emphasized the child's religious education and obedience, associating this with the remission of that soul. Girls were catechized separately from boys in adolescence, for they carried the additional burden of Eve's corruption. They were educated for domestic and religious purposes, while boys were prepared for vocations and leadership roles. The servants had with their master a relationship very similar to that of father and son, therefore, the masters were responsible for hosting and educating the young servants; and were taken care of in case of illness or injury. African-American and Indian servants were likely excluded from these benefits. There was also punishment for homosexuality.

Puritans in the 16th century believed in the active existence of the devil and demons, just as they believed in witchcraft and witches, people connected with the devil. Thus, inexplicable phenomena such as the death of cattle, human diseases and horrible attacks suffered by young and old could be attributed to the action of the devil or a witch. Therefore, Puritan ministers performed exorcisms for demonic possession in some important cases. As a result of this thinking, thousands of people across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries were accused of being witches and executed (the 'witch hunt') and the Puritans got involved, especially after they lost political control of the Massachusetts colony. The Salem Witch trials in 1692 had a lasting impact on the historical reputation of the New England Puritans.

Another subject closely linked to the Puritans was 'millennialism', basing their eschatological beliefs and views on a historicist interpretation of the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel. Theologians of that time tended to put their own period of time near the end. For them, it was expected that the tribulation and persecution would increase, but eventually the enemies of the church – the Roman Catholic Church (identified with Antichrist) and the Ottoman Empire – would be defeated. Based on Rev. 20: 1-10, it was believed that a thousand-year period (the millennium) would occur during which the saints would rule with Christ on earth before the final judgment. Likewise, Christianity and Judaism produced messianic movements based on a millennium and often led to a great deal of social unrest.

In fact, 'Millennium' was a conception created by Jewish scholars in the post-exilic and Intertestamental Period to endorse a belief and hope for redemption and regeneration of Israel in a physical and overly material way (the restoration of Israel as a nation, in its own land, endowed with a literal throne, a literal Davidic king, a literal temple, and a literal system of sacrifices), because they misinterpreted the words of the prophets they did not expect that their Messiah would come differently, so they did not believe in Him. This theory is called: Dispensationalism. However, many scholars feel that the idea of a Millennium or Messianic Kingdom cannot be embedded within the biblical eschatological view [Rev. 20: 1-6 concerns the victory of the martyred saints (Rev. 20: 4 – 'the souls of the beheaded'), which are in heaven, those martyred by the Beast]. According to this theory, the second coming will immediately inaugurate the consummation, the final judgment, and the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21: 1; Isa. 65: 17; Isa. 66: 22; 2 Pet. 3: 13; 1 Cor. 15: 23-28). This point of view is called 'amillennialism' [Source: J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995 / Note the commentary to this paragraph: cf. G.E. Ladd, Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God, 1952, pg. 141 et seq.]. The Gospels, Paul's letters and the general letters do not speak of a millennium.

The Puritans understood eschatology on a personal level, related to sanctification, the assurance of salvation, and the experience of conversion. On a broader level, eschatology was a way of interpreting events like the English Civil War and the Thirty Years' War.

The English Civil War (1642-1649) was a civil war between supporters of King Charles I of England and Parliament, led by Oliver Cromwell.

Before the revolution, the king's power was absolutist. After that, the king's power was reduced, that is, he reigns but does not govern; who governs is the Prime Minister, through the parliament. Charles I was sentenced to death.

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) was a series of wars that several European nations waged against each other, especially in Germany, for religious, dynastic, territorial and commercial rivalries, beginning with the rivalry between Catholics and Protestants and German constitutional matters. It was one of the biggest and most destructive conflicts in history, where more than eight million people died.

A positive and optimistic side of the Puritan millennium was the belief in a future worldwide religious revival before the second coming of Christ, as well as the belief that the conversion of Jews to Christianity was an important sign of the Apocalypse.

As for the celebration of Christmas, it was widely condemned by the Puritans, as they considered the feast a Catholic invention, and seen as an impious festival (English prisons were often full of drunken revelers and brawlers). But in 1660, the Christmas holiday in England was legalized again. In Boston, Christmas was banned from 1659, but the prohibition was revoked in 1681, along with the Puritan ban on Saturday night festivities. However, it wasn't until the mid-19th century that celebrating Christmas became commonplace in Boston.

Puritans in England and New England believed that the state should protect and promote true religion through education and that religion should influence politics and social life. Some historians consider New England Puritans to have a major impact on American culture and identity.

THE PILGRIMS

The colonization of the United States was initially carried out by the separatist Puritans (English dissenters), known as the Pilgrims, who arrived aboard the Mayflower on November 11th, 1620, founding the Plymouth Colony in what is now Massachusetts, in the New England region. It received this name because they set sail from Plymouth, England, on September 6th, 1620. An important pilgrim figure in this stage of colonization was William Bradford. He was governor of the Plymouth Colony between 1621 and 1657. Of the 100 people who came on the ship, only 50 survived the diseases and the harsh winter. They managed to make contact with the American Indians after a while, especially the descendants of the Wampanoag tribe. After their first harvest in 1621, the Pilgrims celebrated a thanksgiving feast in Plymouth around September 29th, which the natives also attended. But the Pilgrims held a true Thanksgiving celebration on July 30th, 1623, after a 14-day fast and refreshing rain before the autumn harvest. This feast was recognized as an order of the civil authority (Governor William Bradford) rather than the church, making it probably the first civil recognition of Thanksgiving in New England.

The Puritans who arrived in New England ten years later differed in their views of the Church of England. The Puritans wanted to reform the Anglican Church by banning Catholic customs, while the Pilgrims wanted to complete separation from the church.

The Puritans established their own Colony in Massachusetts Bay on the Shawmut Peninsula (present-day Boston) in 1630.

PRESBYTERIANISM

Presbyterianism refers to Protestant Christian churches that adhere to the Calvinist Reformation of the sixteenth century and whose form of ecclesiastical organization is characterized by the government of an assembly and elders (also known as presbyters).

The ‘elders’ to whom the bible refers in Acts 20: 17 are called in Acts 20: 28, ‘overseers’ [in NRSV, NIV and KJV. In ARA in Portuguese, the word is ‘bishops’, as well as in Greek] because of their office. In 1 Tim. 3: 2-7, the apostle Paul particularizes the qualities that should clothe those who have to carry out this mission in the church. Bishop comes from the ancient Greek, ἐπίσκοπος or episcopos; and from the Latin ‘episcopus’: ‘inspector’, ‘director’, ‘superintendent’ or literally ‘supervisor’, from epi, ‘end’, ‘edge’ + skopos, ‘view’, that is, ‘one who sees from above, from on high’, ‘the one who oversees.’ Before Christianity, the term was used to describe all kinds of administrator or supervisor in civil, financial, military and judicial domains. The bishops also played pastoral functions (Acts 20: 28; 1 Tim. 5: 17). When the organization of the Christian churches among the Gentiles required the pastoral superintendence, the title of ‘episcopus’ or ‘episcopos’ was promptly adopted by the Greeks, as had been the term ‘elder’ (presbyter) in the mother church of Jerusalem. Consequently, there is no doubt that the word ‘elder’ and ‘presbyters’ or ‘overseer’ (Strong gr. #4245: presbuteroi or presbuteros) and ‘bishop’ (episkopon or episcopos) were considered primarily equivalent (1 Tim. 5: 17 – elders = presbuteroi; 1 Tm 3: 1-2 – overseer or bishop = episkopon or episcopos – Strong gr. #1984). In the first century the terms ‘elders’ and ‘bishops’ or ‘overseers’ were used for local church leaders submitted to an apostle (for example, Titus and Timothy, chosen by Paul of Tarsus), and at the end of the first century and until the middle of the second century the Roman Church did not have only one bishop as head of the local church, but a group leadership, and the mono episcopacy began only later, and thus, originally the Papal ministry did not exist.

Therefore, the Presbyterian Church in England, Scotland, and Ireland adopted a Presbyterian form of government (an assembly of elders or presbyters) rather than an Episcopal one. This form of government was developed as a rejection of dominance by individual bishops’ hierarchies (form of Episcopal government) and because this was the organizational model used by the Apostles in the early days of the Church of Christ. Episcopal is a form of hierarchical organization, with maximum local authority exercised by a bishop. This structure is present in most Catholic Churches, Orthodox Churches and Episcopal Churches, including the Church of England (Anglican). Some Protestant denominations have also adopted episcopacy, such as the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, in which the bishop rules regions, the Methodist Church and the Assembly of God, which recently became governed by a College of Bishops (at least in Brazil). Some other independent churches also have this structure. In this system the main ministers of the church are the bishops. Other ministers are elders and deacons. In the New Testament, as we noted before, the terms ‘elder’, ‘presbyters’ and ‘bishop’ were synonymous.

Government of the Presbyterian Church was ensured by the acts of the Union in 1707, which created the Kingdom of Great Britain. The Acts of Union were two Acts of Parliament: the Act of Union with Scotland 1706, passed by the Parliament of England, and the Act of Union with England, passed in 1707 by the Parliament of Scotland.

Presbyterians also split in some countries for doctrinal reasons, among other reasons, thus causing several different Presbyterian denominations to exist in some countries (about 25 branches in Brazil), but all with the same system of ecclesiastical government. There are a range of theological views within contemporary Presbyterianism. In the 20th century, some Presbyterian churches merged with other churches, such as Congregationalists, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Methodists.

In Scotland in particular, the Presbyterian tradition has its origins in the Church founded by St. Columba. Columba or Colmcille (521–597) was an Irish abbot, missionary evangelist, who brought Christianity to Scotland at the beginning of the Hiberno-Scottish mission in the 6th century. The Hiberno-Scottish mission was a series of missions and expeditions, initiated by various Irish clerics and cleric-scholars. They did not act together, but brought Christianity to the various barbarian nations of the Roman Empire. Columba founded the important abbey on Iona, which became a religious and political institution in the region for many centuries. Many Celtic influences remained in the Scottish church despite Roman rule and its religious influence. Among the remaining Celtic traditions are the singing of metric psalms, Scottish folk and traditional songs adapted to Celtic Christianity, and which later became part of Scottish Presbyterian worship.

But the beginning of Presbyterianism as a distinct movement came during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century through the work of John Knox, a Scottish Catholic priest who studied with the French theologian John Calvin in Geneva. John Knox brought Calvinist teachings to Scotland. In 1560, the Scottish Parliament adopted the Scottish Confession as the creed of the Scottish Kingdom and the First Book of Discipline was published. In it were written important doctrinal matters and regulations for church government, including the creation of ten church districts with appointed superintendents who later became known as presbyteries. As you may remember when we talk about Calvin, he studied law and his religious view also encompassed secular life, so his structuring of the Church places a lot of value on hierarchy and we can see a structure very similar to the legal system, with many established rules and laws. Officially Presbyterianism arrived in Colonial America in 1644, settling in Hempstead, New York, and was organized by the Rev. Richard Denton.

Presbyterians are distinguished from other denominations by doctrine, institutional organization (or ‘church order’) and worship, using a ‘Book of Order’ to regulate common religious practices and order. There were not only doctrinal differences in the Presbyterian church, but also disagreement over the standardization of bible translation in churches and the degree to which those ordained to religious offices should agree with the ‘Westminster Confession of Faith.’ Presbyterians place great importance upon education and learning. Continued study of the Scriptures, theological writings, and understanding and interpretation of church doctrine are embodied in various statements of faith and catechisms formally adopted by various branches of the church, often referred to as ‘subordinate standards.’

The Westminster Confession is ‘The principal subordinate standard of the Church of Scotland.’ The Presbyterian Church (USA) has adopted the ‘Book of Confessions,’ which is contained in the Westminster Confession, other 16th and 20th century Reformed confessions, and ancient statements of the Creed (the Nicene Creed of 325 AD, the Apostles’ Creed). Presbyterian churches come from the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and maintain the character of the Catholic Church [the term ‘Catholic’ is derived from the Greek word: καθολικός (katholikos), which means ‘universal’ or ‘general’], as stated in the Apostles’ Creed. It is a Christian denomination committed to ethical and moral values.

The Apostles' Creed

The initial English official translation of the Roman Missal of the Roman Catholic Church (1970) adopted the ICET version (International Consultation on English Texts, formed in 1969 to create common liturgical texts for ecumenical use), as did catechetical texts such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In 2008 the Catholic Church published a new English translation of the texts of the Mass of the Roman Rite, use of which came into force at the end of 2011. It included the following translation of **the Apostles' Creed** with the traditional division into twelve articles:

1. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,
2. And in Jesus Christ, his Only Son, our Lord,
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;
5. He descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
7. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. The holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,
10. The forgiveness of sins,
11. The resurrection of the body,
12. And life everlasting. Amen.

Lutheran Church

The publication *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* published by Augsburg Fortress, is the primary worship resource for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest Lutheran denomination in the United States, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. It presents the official ELCA version, footnoting the phrase 'he descended to the dead' to indicate an alternative reading: 'or 'he descended into hell,' another translation of this text in widespread use. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a mainline Protestant denomination that was formed in 1988. It presents the following translation divided into three articles. The text is as follows:

- 1st article:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

- 2nd article:

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And he will come to judge the living and the dead.

- 3rd article:

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy Catholic Church [in Portuguese, Christian Church], the communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed, sometimes titled the Apostolic Creed or the Symbol of the Apostles, is a Christian creed or a confession of faith that expresses the essential beliefs of Christianity. The Apostles' Creed has roots in early Christianity, before the 50s AD. The expression 'Apostle's Creed' is first mentioned in a letter from the Synod of Milan dated AD 390, referring to a belief at the time that each of the Twelve Apostles contributed an article to the twelve articles of the creed. It has been used in the Latin liturgical rite since the 8th century, and by the various modern branches of Western Christianity, including the modern liturgy and catechesis of the Catholic Church, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, the Moravian Church, Methodism, and Congregational churches. The Apostles' Creed is shorter than the Nicene Creed (325, at the 1st Council of Nicaea) or the full Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed adopted in 381, for these arose after councils over theological debates with the Arians and over the nature of Jesus and the nature of Mary's motherhood, if she was the mother of the Son of God or mother of Christ.

Presbyterian Ecclesiastical organization

Presbyterian Ecclesiastical organization is carried out by councils (known as courts) of elders, responsible for the ordination of ministers and legislation. This lower council is known as the session or consistory (as created by Calvin), responsible for the discipline, nourishment, and mission of the local congregation. In this way, the governmental role of elders is linked to decision-making when there is a meeting.

The ministry of the word of God, worship, prayer and administration of the sacraments is a function of the teaching elders (pastors or ministers) in each local church. Especially in larger congregations, elders delegate the practical aspects of buildings, finances, and ministry to the needy in the congregation to a distinguished group of officers called deacons, who are ordained in some denominations. They are sometimes known as 'presbyters' by the congregation.

Presbyterian councils follow a hierarchy. Each local church has its own council, called a session or consistory. This is composed of teaching elders and ruling elders from each of the constituent congregations. The churches in a particular region make up a larger council called the presbytery. The presbyteries, in turn, compose a synod. A synod is a council of a church, usually summoned to decide a matter of doctrine, administration, or application. Then, if it becomes necessary to discuss other matters of greater importance, the presbyteries call the General Assembly or Supreme Council.

Over subsequent centuries, many Presbyterian churches modified the old prescriptions, introducing hymns, instrumental accompaniment, and ceremonial attire into worship. However, there is no fixed style of worship. Most Presbyterian churches follow the traditional liturgical year and observe traditional holidays, sacred times such as Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, etc.

Presbyterian theology emphasizes the sovereignty of God, the authority of Scripture, and the need for grace through faith in Christ. He also believes in predestination, as interpreted by John Calvin.

Presbyterians advocate only two sacraments: Baptism, in which they baptize children and converted adults, and this is done by the aspersion (sprinkling) or affusion (pouring) method in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, instead of the immersion method. As for the Lord's Supper, Presbyterians believe in the real presence of Christ in the spiritual sense, in the bread and wine by the Holy Spirit, but not present in these elements, as in transubstantiation or consubstantiation.

Some Presbyterian Church buildings are often decorated with a cross, which has a circle around the center, the Celtic cross, acknowledging its origins (Ireland). There are usually no statues of saints, but some Presbyterian churches are ornamented with statues of Christ, ornate stained glass windows depicting scenes from the bible, or sculpture scenes from the Last Supper.



Images Above:

Center: St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland. Photo: Andrew Gray – Wikipedia.org. In 1559, the church became Protestant with John Knox, the foremost figure of the Scottish Reformation, as its minister. The current building was begun in the 14th century and extended until the early 16th century; significant alterations were undertaken in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Left: Iona Abbey in Scotland was founded by Saint Columba. Photo: Colin Smith – Wikipedia.org.

Right: Celtic cross draped for Easter at a Presbyterian Church – Photo: CHBarrett – wikipedia.org

ANABAPTISM

Anabaptism [Anabaptist meaning ‘one who baptizes again’ or else, ‘re-baptizers’, the Greek ἀναβαπτισμός: ἀνά- (re-) + βαπτισμός (baptism)] is a movement called the ‘radical wing’ of the Protestant Reformation. They were so called because they rejected infant baptism and re-baptized converts who had already been baptized as infants. Baptism candidates could make their own confessions of faith. The Anabaptists disregarded both Catholic baptism and the baptism of Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican Protestants, but they did not form a single group or church, for there were several groups generically called ‘Anabaptists’ with different and divergent beliefs and practices. Many preferred to call themselves Radical Reformers.

As a result of their views on the nature of baptism and other issues, Anabaptists were heavily persecuted during the 16th and 17th centuries by Magisterial Protestants (Lutherans and Calvinists) and Roman Catholics, and continued thereafter. There was a small difference between the Anabaptists and other groups who practiced adult baptism: Anabaptists took literally Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount, which prevented them from taking oaths, participating in military actions, and participating in civil government. Anabaptism was never established by any state and therefore never enjoyed any civil privileges, for its members regard themselves as citizens of the kingdom of God, not of earthly governments.

The Amish, the Swiss Brethren, the Conservative Hutterites, and the Mennonites are direct descendants of the first Anabaptist movement. Dunkers, Bruderhof, and the Christian Apostolic Church are later developments among the Anabaptists. The Radical Reformation Anabaptists are divided into radicals and the so-called ‘second front.’

Some of their teachings are:

- Biblical theology, especially the NT, must not be systematized, but obeyed as God’s will and applied in everyday life. Thus, the essence of Christianity is a practical adherence to the teachings of Christ.

- They did not require formal adherence to creeds and confessions; they were simply documents to demonstrate what is believed in common. They accepted the historic creeds of Christianity but did not profess it.

- The Church is not subordinate to any human authority, whether the State or religious hierarchy. So they avoid participating in government activities, swearing loyalty to the nation, participating in wars.

- The Church is not a spiritual and invisible institution composed only of re-born people, but a voluntary community, a human and real collectivity, which separated itself from the world and from sin to follow the commandments of Christ. Therefore, Anabaptism emphasized community life.

- Adult Baptism was by immersion as a symbol of recognition and obedience to Christ, and Holy Communion was celebrated in memory of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

- Salvation depends on free will. Human beings have the ability to repent of their sins and God regenerates them and helps them to walk in a life of regeneration.

- One of the important theologians of the Radical Reformation was Menno Simons (created Mennonism), among others, who believed in the ‘Semi-Nestorian’ doctrine of

the nature of Christ, that is, Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, but He didn't inherit any physical part of her. Mary would then be just an instrument of God, but not the mother of God. In short, they partially believed in Nestorius' doctrine. Nestorius (428-431), patriarch of Constantinople, affirmed that Christ would not be a single person, but in Him there would be a human nature and another divine, distinct one from another and, therefore, he denied the traditional teaching that the Virgin Mary could be the 'mother of God' (Theotokos in Greek), so she would only be the mother of the man (Gk. anthropotokos) or the 'mother of Christ' (Greek, 'Christotokos'), to restrict her role as mother only of the human nature of Christ and not of his divine nature. Theotokos (Greek: Θεοτόκος; literal translation in English: 'bearer of God' or 'birth-giver of God') is the Greek title of Mary, used especially in the Orthodox Church or patriarchal Churches of the East (Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch and Constantinople) and Eastern Catholic Churches. Translations less literal include 'Mother of God.' Catholics, Anglicans, and some Protestant denominations use most often the title of 'Mother of God' than Theotokos.

- The ethics of love governs all human relationships.
- Pacifism: Christianity and violence are incompatible.

In the 21st century, there are great cultural differences between assimilated Anabaptists, who are not much different from Evangelicals; and traditional groups such as the Amish, the Old Colony Mennonites, the Old Order Mennonites, the Old Order Brethren (the Swiss Brethren), the Hutterites and the Old German Baptist Brothers.

Anabaptism in Switzerland began as an offshoot of church reforms instigated by Ulrich Zwingli. As early as 1519, in his preaching he began to criticize indulgences, to comment on the Bible according to 'the pure gospel' and to take a stand against ecclesiastical celibacy. From 1522 onwards he began to criticize more and more radically the devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints, the authority of the dogmas and disciplines of councils and popes, the worship of images and the mass as a sacrifice. For him, Christ is the only authority in the church and that salvation works by faith. He defended infant baptism, since no law prohibits the practice, and saw it as a sign of covenant with God, thus replacing circumcision in the Old Testament. He denied salvation by works, the intercession of the saints, the obligatory nature of monastic vows and the existence of purgatory, which Luther had already done. The Eucharist for him had a memorial character, not a literal one ('this is my body'), as Luther thought; in other words, The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Christ's body and blood, given for our salvation. The magistrate and the population of Zurich supported him, leading to significant changes in civil life and state affairs in the city. He only erred in one point of his doctrine, by minimizing the corrupt nature of man and considering original sin to be a simple hereditary vice not deserving of eternal damnation, implying that the essential 'goodness' of man would enable him, by himself, to come to God.

Thenceforth, he gathered around him a group of reformist men, with whom he studied classical literature and the Scriptures. The youths were considered 'second front reformers,' and felt that Zwingli was not moving fast enough in his reform. Thus, the division between him and his disciples became more evident in October 1523 in Zurich. They began to gather to study the Bible on their own, for the city council was slow to give its position to adult baptism, and one of them (William Reublin) began preaching against infant baptism in villages near Zurich, encouraging parents not to baptize their children. Among them was Felix Manz, who even petitioned the council to find a solution, for he disagreed with Zwingli. In January 1525 the council threatened to expel those who refused to baptize their children within a week, but the movement grew and many new adult converts were baptized. Roman Catholics and Protestants persecuted

the Anabaptists and many were tortured and killed in various parts of Europe between 1525 and 1660. Even the Protestant monarchs of House Tudor (Edward VI of England and Elizabeth I of England) persecuted them for considering them too radical and, therefore, jeopardizing religious stability.

Because of persecution in Europe, a large contingent of Anabaptists migrated to North America, including the Amish, the Hutterites (German: Hutterer), the Mennonites, and the Swiss Brethren. Only the Amish and the Hutterites today are an ethnic group composed mainly of descendants of European Anabaptists. Among the Mennonites there are ethnic Mennonites and others who are not. The groups of 'Brethren' have mostly lost their ethnic distinction, for this name refers to various offshoots of the Anabaptists or Pietists around the world.

As for the relationship between Baptists and Anabaptists (descendants of the Puritans), it was originally strained, although they had information about Anabaptist theology. In 1624, the five existing Baptist churches in London issued a condemnation of the Anabaptists. Baptists make the 'London Baptist Confession of Faith' of 1644 CE. Baptists say the Anabaptists do not reflect the historic teaching of the Baptists. German Baptists are not related to the English Baptist movement and were inspired by the Anabaptists of Central Europe. Upon moving to the United States, they joined the Mennonites and Quakers.

Before we talk about Baptists, let's take a look at the main ramifications of Anabaptism.

THE BRETHREN

The largest movement of 'the Brethren' grew out of the Anabaptism of the Protestant Reformation (16th century).

- The Hutterites (Hutterian Brethren) originated from German, Swiss, and Tyrolean Anabaptists led by Jacob Hutter in the 1520s.
- The Swiss Brethren, the name Swiss Anabaptists used from 1525 until their split into Amish and Mennonite groups in 1693.
- The Mennonite Brethren, originated among Russian Mennonites in 1860.
- The Schwarzenau Brethren originated in 1708 in Schwarzenau, in Bad Berleburg, Germany, with Alexander Mack. Their roots are in the Radical Pietism movement but they were strongly influenced by Anabaptist theology. They have also been called Dunkers or German Baptist Brethren. The group split into three wings in 1881–1883.

THE SWISS BRETHREN

The Swiss Brethren are a branch of Anabaptism that started in Zürich, spread to nearby cities and towns, and then they migrated to neighboring countries. They rejected infant baptism. This belief resulted in their persecution by all other reformers as well as the Catholic Church. Because of persecution many Swiss Brethren moved from Switzerland to neighboring countries. They became known as Mennonites after the division of 1693, a disagreement between groups led by Jacob Amman and Hans Reist. Many of the Mennonites in France, Southern Germany, the Netherlands and North America, as well as most Amish descend from the Swiss Brethren. Michael Sattler was the author of the First Anabaptist Confession of Faith in 1527, called Schleithem. It contained seven articles on the following topics:

- Believer's baptism
- Church discipline
- Lord's Supper
- Separation from the world and evil
- Selection and role of pastors
- Nonviolence (nonresistance)
- Prohibition of oath-swearing

Most Swiss Brethren accepted these seven articles.

THE HUTTERITES

Hutterites (Hutterian Brethren) are a branch of Anabaptists, like the Amish and Mennonites, who came from the Radical Reformation of the early 16th century and formed communities of goods and nonresistance. The founder of the Hutterites, Jacob Hutter, established the Hutterite colonies in 1528 on the basis of the Schleithem Confession, a classic Anabaptist statement of faith, also followed by Swiss Brethren. After the death of Jacob Hutter the Hutterites spread to several countries for hundreds of years through Central and Eastern Europe. Although almost extinct they migrated to Russia in 1770, and about a hundred years later to North America and grew in number from about 400 to around 50,000 at present. Today, almost all Hutterites live in Western Canada and the upper Great Plains of the United States.

Picture below: Bon Homme Hutterite Colony, located in Bon Homme County, South Dakota, is the mother colony of all Hutterite Colonies in North America and also the oldest Hutterite Colony in the world still in existence. It was founded in 1874 by Hutterite immigrants from Ukraine. It was the only Hutterite Colony that did not relocate to Canada after World War I.



Bon Homme Limestone House, of the Hutterite Colony,
near Tabor, South Dakota – photo: Iankl – wikipedia.org

In accordance with the Schleithem Confession, they believe in adult believer's baptism, in the Christian pacifism, and the rejection of oaths. The Hutterite Churches

also believe in a set of community rules for Christian living and the principle of worldly separation. They practice excommunication. They live in rural communities called 'colonies,' virtually self-sufficient, and with leaders for specific functions, from legal to agricultural positions and as a German teacher for the school-aged children. The Hutterite colonies are mostly patriarchal. They live in an almost total common ownership system: all property is owned by the colony, and provisions for individual members and their families come from the common resources. This is based in their interpretation of passages in chapters 2, 4, and 5 of Acts of the Apostles. In North America, the Hutterites split into six branches.

THE AMISH

The Amish are descendants of the Swiss Radical Reformation groups called the Anabaptists. Menno Simons (1496-1561) was a Dutch Catholic priest who converted to Anabaptism in 1536 and founded the denomination called Mennonite. From the Mennonites came the Amish movement in 1693 through Jakob Ammann (c. 1656-c. 1730), a Mennonite leader living in Alsace (the eastern region of France bordering Switzerland and Germany) who believed the Mennonites in Switzerland and Alsace were moving away from Simons' teachings.



An Amish family riding in a traditional Amish buggy in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania – wikipedia.org

The Amish are known for their ultra-conservative customs, such as the restricted use of power-line electricity, telephones, automobiles and other electronic equipment. The first Amish began to migrate to the United States in the 18th century, settling mainly in Pennsylvania. In the second half of the 19th century, the Amish divided into various subgroups, with two-thirds of the more progressive assimilated the North American culture and became known as Amish Mennonites (joined the Mennonite Church and other Mennonite denominations), mainly in the early 20th century.

The more traditional groups became known as the Old Order Amish, who remain in their communities as isolated as possible from the 'outside' world. Men wear black suits and hats and grow beards to symbolize manhood and marital status, as well as to promote humility. They are forbidden to grow mustaches because they relate it with the military, which they oppose to, due to their pacifist beliefs.

Women wear calf-length dresses, muted colors along with bonnets and aprons. They cover their heads with a white cap or bonnet; white for married women and black for the single ones. The women are not allowed to wear jewelry, such as wedding rings. All clothing is sewn by hand. The Amish value rural life, manual labor and humility. The Amish don't like to be photographed. They interpret that, according to the Bible, a Christian should not keep his own recorded image. They also believe that being photographed shows a lack of humility. The mainstay of Amish food is meat, dough and tubers, in many cases cultivated and raised by them. Among the purchases they normally make in the 'outside' world are flour, salt and sugar.

The principles emphasized by the Amish are:

The bible, especially the New Testament, must be obeyed as the will of God, although not systematizing its theology, but applying it in everyday life. Bible interpretation is performed in church services and meetings.

Credo and confessions are only documents to demonstrate what one believes, but they require adherence or belief in them. They accept, therefore, in essence the historical Credo of Christianity, but do not profess them.

The Church is a voluntary community made up of adults who freely choose to be baptized into the Amish Church. It is not subordinate to any human authority, whether the State or the religious hierarchy. So they avoid participating in government activities, swearing loyalty to the nation, participating in wars.

The Church is not a spiritual and invisible institution, but a human and real collectivity, marked by separation from the world and sin and an affirmative position in following Christ's commandments.

The Church celebrates adult baptism by immersion method as a symbol of recognition and obedience to Christ, and Holy Communion in memory of the mission of Jesus Christ.

The Church has the authority to discipline its members and even their expulsion, according to Matt. 18: 15-17, in order to maintain the purity of the individual and the church.

As for salvation, the Amish believe in free will, human beings have the ability to repent of their sins, and God regenerates them and helps them walk in a life of regeneration.

The Amish do not believe that conversion to Christ is a one-time emotional experience, but a lifelong process.

The essence of Christianity is a practical adherence to the teachings of Christ.

The ethics of love governs all human relationships.

Pacifism: Christianity and violence are incompatible.

The Amish church service is practiced in the same way since the conception of Anabaptism at the time of the Reformation. It has no ritual acts; only the sermon and the songs. Worship is turned to God and does not have the evangelizing character; therefore, practices such as 'calling to the altar' or 'accepting Jesus' do not exist.

They don't build a church, so they meet in private houses or barns. The women sit apart from the men and cover their heads with a veil. The service begins with an invocation of one of the elders, followed by hymns from the Ausbund hymnal (written between 1535 and 1540 by Anabaptists who were imprisoned in the dungeon of the

‘Veste Oberhaus’, a fortress on the banks of Danube, opposite the city of Passau, Germany), which has been the same text since the 16th century. There are two sermons, a shorter one and a longer one. Between the sermons there is a prayer, where everyone kneels silently until a male member prays for the church. The reading and preaching of the Bible are done spontaneously, without prepared sermons, and many elders open the Scriptures randomly. A minister’s prayer and a final blessing follow. The congregation bids farewell with a kiss.

Lord’s Supper is held only if all members give their consent to it.

Excommunication is applied to members who do not conform to these community expectations and do not repent.

In addition to excommunication, members may be shunned, a practice that limits social contacts to shame the wayward member and make him come back to the church.



Amish children on their way to school – Gadjoboy – wikipedia.org

Amish, such as the Anabaptists, believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible. **Ordnung** is the German word for order, discipline, rule, arrangement, organization, or system. The Ordnung is a set of behavioral rules to protect a person’s character, and all members within each church agree to have their lives ordered by that code. Conservative Mennonites call Ordnung by the English terms ‘discipline’ or ‘standard’. Some of the most common Ordnung rules are: separation from the world, hard work, a woman’s submission to her husband, mode of dress and so forth. The Ordnung attempts to prevent pride, envy, vanity, laziness, dishonesty, etc. Therefore, the foundations of the Amish life are: a modest character, the love of friends and family, and respect for the community.

Rumspringa (also spelled Rumschpringe or Rumshpringa) is a rite of passage during adolescence (or simply refers to adolescence), translated in English as ‘jumping or hopping around,’ used in some Amish communities. The Amish, intentionally

segregate themselves from other communities as a part of their faith. For Amish youth, the Rumspringa normally begins around the ages of 14–16 and ends when a youth chooses either to be baptized in the Amish church or to leave the community. For some Mennonites, Rumspringa occurs between ages of 17 and 21. Rumspringa is a Pennsylvania German noun meaning ‘running around.’

During that time some kind of misbehavior is expected and is not severely condemned (as shunning, for instance). Amish adolescents may engage in rebellious behavior, resisting or defying parental norms. In a narrow sense the young are not bound by the Ordnung because they have not taken adult membership in the church. Amish adolescents do remain, however, under the strict authority of parents who are bound to Ordnung, and there is no period when adolescents are formally released from these rules.

Therefore, the period of Rumspringa is when the young person is regarded as having reached maturity, and is permitted to attend the Sunday night ‘singings’ that are the focus of courtship among the Amish. Members of the local church district often attend the singings and usually bring younger children along.

A minority of Amish youth do diverge from established customs. Some may be found:

- To wear non-traditional clothing and hair styles (referred to as ‘dressing English’).
- To drive vehicles other than horse-drawn vehicles (the buggies, as communities avoid motor vehicles).
- Not to attend home prayer.
- To drink and smoke.

Not all youth diverge from custom during this period. The majority remain within the norms of Amish dress or behavior during adolescence. Almost 90 percent of Amish teenagers choose to be baptized and join the Amish church. Some Amish youth do indeed separate themselves from the community, even going to live among the ‘English’ (non-Amish Americans), experiencing modern technology. Their behavior during this time does not necessarily prevent them from returning for adult baptism into the Amish church.

THE MENNONITES

The Mennonites are a group of Christian denominations that descend directly from the Anabaptist movement that emerged in Europe in the 16th century, at the same time as the Protestant Reformation. Its name is derived from Menno Simons (1496-1561), a Dutch Catholic priest who converted to Anabaptism in 1536 and through his writings articulated and formalized the teachings of the Swiss Anabaptists.

Moderate Mennonites include the largest denominations, the Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonite Church. In most forms of worship and practice, they differ very little from other Protestant congregations. There is no special form of dress and no restrictions on use of technology. Services typically consist of singing, scripture reading, prayer and a sermon. Some churches prefer hymns and choirs; others make use of contemporary Christian music with electronic instruments. A small sum, based on membership numbers, is paid to the denomination, which is used to support central functions such as publication of newsletters and interactions with other denominations and other countries.

The Reformed Mennonite Church was formed in the early 19th century.

Old Order Mennonites cover several distinct groups. Some groups use horse and buggy for transportation and speak German while others drive cars and speak English.

Conservative Mennonites are generally considered those Mennonites who maintain somewhat conservative dress, although carefully accepting other technology. They are not a unified group and are divided into various independent conferences and fellowships.



Old Order Mennonite horse and carriage – Alan Walker – wikipedia.org

The Mennonite church recognizes the legitimacy of and honors both the single state and the sanctity of marriage of its members. Single persons are expected to be chaste, and marriage is held to be a lifelong, monogamous and faithful covenant between a man and a woman. In conservative groups, divorce is discouraged.

Mennonite theology emphasizes the primacy of Jesus' teachings as written in the New Testament. They believe in the ideal of a religious community based on New Testament models in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. The basic beliefs derived from the Anabaptist traditions are:

- Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ;

- The authority of Scripture and the Holy Spirit;

- Baptism of believers understood as: Baptism by the Spirit (internal change of heart), baptism by water (public demonstration of testimony) and baptism by blood (martyrdom and asceticism or the practice of self-denial as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline);

- Discipleship understood as an outward sign of an inner change;

- Discipline in the church (Matt. 18: 15-17). Some Mennonite churches practice excommunication;

- The Lord's Supper understood as a remembrance rather than a sacrament or ritual, preferably communed by baptized believers within the unity and discipline of the church;

- Disciples of Jesus Christ do not participate in wars or use weapons to attack, injure, or kill their enemies.

Images below:

Left: Mennonite Church in Hamburg-Altona, Germany – Carl Auer – wikipedia.org

Right: Child of an Old Order Mennonite community – author unknown – wikipedia.org

Middle: Germantown Mennonite Meetinghouse, built 1770; Photo: Smallbones – wikipedia.org



THE REFORMED CHURCHES – THE FIVE SOLAE

Still following the sequence of the scheme used in this study, I will talk a little about the Reformed Churches, in addition to the Presbyterianism that I have already

mentioned. And I'll also talk about the Congregational or Congregationalist churches, all of them based on Calvin's reformation.

Calvin was one of the first leaders of the so called 'Reformed Churches' that follow his doctrine and practice. As we discussed earlier, Presbyterianism is a part of the Calvinist tradition within Protestantism that traces its origins back to the Church of Scotland. From **Calvinism** also came the Reformed Churches, among them **Arminianism**, based on the teachings of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) and his historical supporters known as the Remonstrants (they signed in 1610 a theological declaration, the 'Remonstrance', sent to the Netherlands General States, 1 year after the death of its leader. 'Remonstrance' means 'Protest'). Jacobus Arminius studied at the Theological University of Geneva. His teachings were held in the five solae of the Protestant Reformation, but they were distinct from the particular teachings of Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, and other Protestant Reformers.

The five solae are:

- Sola fide (by faith alone) – justification is received by faith alone, without any interference or need for good works. They are the result of faith.
- Sola Scriptura (Latin, *sōlā scrīptūrā*; by Scripture alone) – the Bible is the only authorized and inspired word of God and is the only source for Christian doctrine, not requiring interpretation outside of itself, such as interpretation by orthodox and Eastern orthodox, and Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic traditions.
- Solus Christus or Solo Christo (only Christ) – Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, and there is no salvation through any other. This eliminates the sacraments as a condition of being saved.
- Sola gratia (only grace) – salvation comes only by divine grace (undeserved favor), without merit from the sinner; it is an undeserved gift from God because of Jesus.
- Soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone) – all glory is to be due to God alone, not to any human beings or canonized saints, nor to demons. God is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12: 2) and moves people to good works.

The Catholic Church believes in all five points, excluding the words 'solae' ('only').

Arminianism differs from Calvinism with regard to salvation, in particular, predestination and divine election. Calvin thought that God's grace is bestowed upon a person only by His choice, and is limited to just a few (those whom He predestined to salvation). However, Arminius stated that the human being has free will and, therefore, this influences his condemnation or not on the Day of Judgment. In other words, while Calvin left the responsibility of choice entirely to God, excluding man's free will from choosing his path, Arminius placed on the human being the responsibility to receive or not God's grace, that is, to deny it.

Many branches of Protestantism were influenced by his teachings: Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists from the first New England colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries, and some Reformed churches in Switzerland, Hungary and Brazil.

Today, the World Communion of Reformed Churches unites them all with a statistic of more than 80 million members in 211 denominations around the world. There are more conservative Reformed federations, such as the World Reformed Fellowship and the International Conference of Reformed Churches, as well as independent churches.

CONGREGATIONALISM – CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

Congregationalism originated in the Puritan movement and the English separatists who broke their connection with Anglicanism.

Alongside the Reformed Churches influenced by John Calvin are the Congregational (or Congregationalist) churches, following a type of ecclesiastical government where each congregation independently and autonomously manages its own affairs: its own theological reflection, its missionary expansion, its relationship with other congregations and selection of its ministry, needing no other ecclesiastical authority, whether a larger or more extensive organization or entity, than that of its own assembly. Local churches are in communion with each other, are interdependent and are committed to each other in fulfilling all the duties resulting from that communion. Therefore, they organize themselves into councils, synods or associations. However, these organizations are not Churches, but are formed by them and are at their service.

Thus, Congregationalism is a Protestant movement within the Calvinist tradition that occupies a theological position between Presbyterianism on one hand and the Baptists and Quakers on the other. Quaker is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, a Christian movement founded by George Fox c. 1650 and devoted to peaceful principles. The central core of Quakers' belief is the doctrine of the 'Inner Light,' or sense of Christ's direct working in the soul. This has led them to reject both formal ministry and all set forms of worship. Also Anabaptists follow this type of behavior more or less.

In England, the early Congregationalists were called Separatists or Independents to distinguish them from the similarly Calvinistic Presbyterians, whose churches embrace a polity based on the governance of elders. Congregationalists also differed from the Reformed churches using Episcopalian Church governance, which is usually led by a bishop.

Over time, the churches in England returned to a more centralized behavior, which contradicted the Congregationalist principles of the former English separatists.

Modern Congregationalism in the United States is largely split into three bodies: the United Church of Christ, the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, which is the most theologically conservative.

Congregationalists have two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Unlike Baptists, Congregationalists practice infant baptism. The Lord's Supper is normally celebrated once or twice a month. Congregationalists do not use the sign of the cross or invoke the intercession of saints.

In Brazil, Congregationalism did not originate in the British or North American movement, but in the missionary work of the Scottish medical missionary of Presbyterian origin Robert Reid Kalley and his wife Sarah Poulton Kalley, who arrived in Brazil in 1855. Kalley did not belong to any specific denomination. He started a work of evangelization and founded three churches in two Federal States. They were just Brazilian evangelical churches, without any denominational link with churches abroad. Kalley considered himself the brother of any Christian regardless of denomination. He himself left his Presbyterian origins because of its rigid formulas of creed, ecclesiastical organization and very close relationship with other denominations.

In establishing churches in Brazil, Kalley introduced an evangelical governance structure, where ties between congregations are grounded in voluntary submission and the council of local officials is the most powerful body; something similar to the Continental Reformed Churches of Switzerland, Holland and France. From this work

emerged the current 'Union of Evangelical Congregational Churches of Brazil' and the 'Alliance of Evangelical Congregational Churches of Brazil', among other groups.

The second root of Congregationalism in Brazil is linked to the immigration of German Pietists to the South of the country, who formed the denomination known as the Evangelical Congregational Church of Brazil.



Elsternwick Congregational Church (1894-1977) in Victoria (Australia).
Photo: Donaldtong – wikipedia.org

QUAKERS

Some denominations that emerged in the midst of the Western Christian tradition consider themselves Christian, but not Catholic and not entirely Protestant, as is the case with the Religious Society of Friends (or Quakers).

Quakerism began as a Christian movement of an evangelical and mystical character in the 17th century in England, dispensing priests and all Anglican and Catholic sacraments from its worship. Like the Mennonites, Quakers are traditionally opposed to any form of violence, such as participating in wars.

Quakers are various religious groups (currently more or less with seven branches and many societies around the world: some with evangelical and holiness understandings, the liberal, the traditional and the non-theistic, whose spiritual practice does not depend on the existence of God) with common origin in a 17th-century British Christian movement of an evangelical and mystical character, dispensing priests and all Anglican and Catholic sacraments from their worship. The Quaker denomination is called Quakerism, Religious Society of Friends, or simply Society of Friends. Its founder was George Fox, a young man who had a vision, standing on a hill in England that "the Lord let him see in what places He had a great people to be gathered." George Fox was born into a Puritan family. So he traveled through England, Holland and Barbados preaching and teaching, the central theme of his Gospel message: that Christ came to teach His people about Himself. Fox considered him the restorer of a true 'pure Christian church.' But in 1650 Fox was accused of religious blasphemy and Quakerism

faced official persecution in England and Wales in the period 1662-1689. Persecution of the Quakers in North America began in July 1656 with two English Quaker missionary women. One of them was hanged; the other was deported.

Quakers believe in the ability of every human being to experience the light within or see 'the light of God in each one.' Direct relationship with Christ was encouraged through the spiritualization of human relationships and the redefinition of the Quakers as a sacred tribe, 'the family and house of God.' They described themselves using terms such as 'True Christianity', 'Saints', 'Children of the Light', and 'Friends of the Truth', reflecting terms used in the New Testament by members of the Early Christian Church. They do not call each other 'brothers' but 'friends.'

The ancient Quakers were known for using 'thee' as a pronoun rather than 'you', refuse to participate in war, for wearing simple clothing, refuse to take oaths and a formal creed, oppose slavery (they became involved in the abolitionist movement of America) and practice total abstinence from alcoholic beverages; also, for the defense of simplicity, rejecting the creeds and hierarchical structures of the church in order to live in recollection, in moral purity and in the active practice of pacifism, solidarity and philanthropy. Described as 'natural capitalists', many Quakers were successful in a variety of public and industrial sectors: banking; life insurance; shipbuilding; pharmaceutical products; chocolate; confectionery; biscuit manufacturing; manufacture of matches and manufacture of shoes. Initially, the Quakers had no ordained clergy and therefore did not need seminaries for theological training. Later, Quaker schools emerged in the UK and Ireland.





Friends Meeting House, Coanwood, Northumberland, England, built in 1750. Photo: Goldenlane – wikipedia.org



Quakers traditionally use numbers to name the months and days of the week, something they call a 'plain calendar.' It does not use calendar unit names derived from the names of pagan deities. The week starts with the first day (Sunday) and ends with the seventh day (Saturday). The months range from the first (January) to the twelfth (December). The 'plain calendar' emerged in 17th century England in the Puritan movement, but became closely identified in the late 1650s and was commonly employed in the 20th century. It is less commonly found today. The calendar in England, in the period 1155-1751, and in Wales, Ireland and the British colonies abroad, marked the 25th of March as the first day of the year. For this reason, the Quaker records of the 17th and early 18th centuries generally refer to March as the first month and February as the twelfth month; something very similar to the Hebrew calendar.

As a Christian denomination derived from 16th-century Puritanism, many Quakers avoid religious festivals such as Christmas, Lent or Easter, but believe that the birth and

crucifixion and resurrection of Christ should be marked every day of the year. Some Quakers are not Sabbatarians, claiming that ‘every day is the Lord’s day’, although the meeting for worship has generally been held on the first day (Sunday) since 1656.

Some of their beliefs:

- That every individual is able to feel God directly, without any intermediaries. God continually reveals the truth directly to individuals.
- Some express their concept of God using phrases such as ‘the inner light’, ‘inward light of Christ’ or ‘Holy Spirit.’
- Bible – traditionally, they accepted Christ as the Divine Word (Logos) and the Bible would be the witness of that Word. Some Quakers only have it as an indisputable basis.
- Testimony of simplicity – they adopt simple ways of life: without valuing expensive clothes, social class distinction, honorific titles or unnecessary expenses.
- On equality, they avoid discrimination based on class and social influence. Women have had equal rights and participation in Quaker cults since the 17th century. In the 1650s and 1660s, individual Quaker women prophesied and preached publicly.
- In honesty – refuse to swear, conduct shady business, unethical activities.
- Social Action – several organizations, such as Greenpeace, were founded by the Quakers (1971) and, as well as Amnesty International and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.
- Pacifism – Quakers refuse to use weapons and violence, even in defense of others. They hardly engage in military service.

As in society in general, there is a diversity of views among friends on the issue of same-sex marriage.

Some profess a priesthood of all believers inspired by 1 Peter 2: 9 and therefore reject clerical leadership. Rejecting any outward form of religion and outward sacraments, Quakers do not practice water baptism or the Lord’s Supper, unlike most Christian denominations. They believe that the individual is baptized ‘with fire’ (by the Holy Spirit), speaking in conscience; and they recall the work of Christ in giving thanks at every meal, believing that holiness can exist in all activities of daily life and that all life is sacred in God. In the early 1880s, some Friends (the Evangelical Gurneyites) began using the external sacraments in their Sunday services (in Ohio, Africa, Latin America, and Asia), baptizing adults by immersion in water. In this they differ from most other branches of the Religious Society of Friends.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the so-called Quaker Renaissance movement began in London. These men downplayed the Quaker evangelical belief in Christ’s atonement on the cross at Calvary.

There are two forms of worship in the Religious Society of Friends Meetings:

- The Scheduled Service, which is similar to any other traditional Protestant service: conducted by a minister, with hymns, prayers and readings from the Bible. Some friends’ meetings are business meetings, where they seek God’s will to make decisions. Presumably, if everyone is in tune with God’s Spirit, the way forward will be clear.
- The Silent or Unscheduled Worship, without a minister to lead, where they gather and wait for someone to feel led by the Holy Spirit to exhort, read the Bible, give a testimony, pray, or sing. Sometimes an unscheduled service can go by without any manifestation, being an hour of silence and meditation.

Divisions (Schisms)

At the time of the American War of Independence (1775-1783; when thirteen American colonies declared their independence from England, as the United States of America), some American Quakers broke away from the main Society of Friends for supporting the war, then forming groups like Free Quakers and Universal Friends. Later, in the 19th century, there was a diversification of theological beliefs in the Religious Society of Friends, and this led to several larger divisions within the movement.

Thus, each branch sought to continue traditional practices and theological emphases on new ideas based on external influences. All these branches have unified annual meetings of the many regional associations around the world.

The Orthodox Quakers emphasized biblical sources, while the Hicksites and their followers believed that 'the inner light' was more important than the authority of the Scriptures. Some Orthodox Quakers in America did not like the move towards evangelical Christianity, seeing it as a dilution of the traditional Orthodox Christian belief of friends in being internally led by the Holy Spirit.

After the Christian revivals in the mid-19th century, the Quakers sent missionaries to Asia and Africa: India (1866 and 1896), Madagascar (1867), Lebanon (1873), Syria (1874), China (1896), Sri Lanka (former Ceylon – 1896) and Pemba Island (an Island of Tanzania – 1897), Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda.

The Hicksite-Orthodox split arose out of ideological and socio-economic tensions. The Hicksites tended to be agrarian and poorer than the more urban and wealthy Orthodox Quakers. With increasing financial success, the Orthodox Quakers wanted to 'make the Society a more respectable body – to turn their sect into a church – by adopting mainstream Protestant orthodoxy'. The Hicksites had the religious views of Elias Hicks and were considered Universalists and liberal, contradicting the historic Orthodox Christian beliefs and practices of the Quakers. The great separation between Hicksites and Orthodox took place in 1827, with parallel meetings. Great Britain only recognized Orthodox Quakers and refused to correspond with the Hicksites. The Hicksites saw the market economy as corrupt and believed that the Orthodox Quakers abandoned spirituality to value material success. For the Hicksites, the Bible was secondary to the individual cultivation of God's inner light. Within this movement, they rejected the market economy and focused their attention on community and family ties. They typically follow the Quaker tradition of unscheduled meeting (no minister to lead the service), although there are a number of churches or Friends meetings with pastoral leadership.

From the Orthodox came the Wilburites, the Gurneyites and the Beaconites.

The Beaconite branch insisted that inner light was in conflict with religious belief in salvation through Christ's atonement.

The Wilburite branch originated in the nineteenth century split between the Orthodox and the Liberals (Hicksites). The Wilburites (Wilburite Conservative Friends), led by John Wilbur, rejected biblical infallibility and preferred a 'quietist' approach, that is, a mystical doctrine created by a Christian Spanish priest in the 17th century, according to which the believer would reach a state without sin and of perfect union with God through contemplative prayer and the passivity of the soul; in this state of stillness, the human mind becomes inactive, it no longer has a will of its own, but remains passive, it being God himself who operates in it. In short, something very similar to the 'emptying' of the mind, the 'transcendental meditation' practiced by esotericism and yoga, not a true meditation on the word of God as true Christians do. They tend to follow the open customs of talking and dressing more than other branches of the Society of Friends. Although a minority wears traditional simple attire, they are

more associated with traditional Quaker style today. They also maintain the kind of business meeting that was in use among all Quaker branches until the mid-twentieth century. And like all other friends' societies, they have their annual meetings. In Canada they were known as Conservative Friends.

Orthodox Friends became more evangelical during the 19th century and were influenced by the Second Great Awakening (1790-1840, which started among Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists). This movement was led by British Quaker Joseph John Gurney, founding the Gurneyite branch, which moved towards Protestant principles and away from the spiritualization of human relationships. His movement reached North America, Africa (In Kisumu, Kenya) and the Caribbean. Later, there was a second division within this group, creating the Gurneyite-Conservative branch and the more Gurneyite-Evangelical branch. The Evangelical wing supported the primacy of the authority of the Scriptures. Gurneyite friends were deeply influenced by the evangelical movement, especially the ideas of John Wesley. The Gurneyites who started with Joseph John Gurney held revival meetings and became involved in the church's holiness movement. From the 1870s onwards, it became common in Britain to have 'home mission meetings' on Sunday evenings with Christian hymns and a sermon based in the bible, alongside the Silent meetings for worship on Sunday morning. They also held annual meetings. Some Gurneyites began to change their thinking regarding the authority of Scripture and the sacraments. The Evangelical Friends place their belief more in a literal reading of the Scriptures than in the authority of the 'Inner Light.'

This was one of the main reasons for the 19th century split in the Gurneyite branch. The Evangelical branch also believes in water baptism and the Lord's Supper as spiritual realities, which are accomplished by the Holy Spirit. They refer to their local congregation as a 'church' or a 'monthly meeting.' Evangelical friends consider Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and have religious beliefs similar to those of other Evangelical Christians. His view of salvation is in more accordance with the Bible. They believe that all people need salvation, and that salvation comes to a person putting their faith in Jesus. They believe in Christ's atonement on the Cross at Calvary, Biblical infallibility, and the need for everyone to experience a personal relationship with God. The statement of faith of the 'Evangelical Friends International' society (mainly in the United States, Central America and Asia) is comparable to that of other evangelical churches.

Other friends have a wide range of views about salvation, including beliefs such as religious pluralism. A minority of friends holds views similar to non-theists who have emerged from the Anglican Church. They are predominantly atheists, agnostics and humanists who still value membership in a religious organization.

BAPTISTS

The term 'baptist' comes from the Greek word baptistés (βαπτιστής Strong #G910; Matt. 17: 13; Mk. 6: 24; Lk. 7: 33; 'the baptizer', 'the Baptist', epithet used only of John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, forerunner of Jesus), being related to the verb (βαπτίζω baptizō; Strong #G907; Mk. 6: 14), which can be translated as 'to baptize, to dip, submerge, immerse (he immerses, he baptizes), to make whelmed, bathe, wash, pour, cover, or dye (to paint), according to the New Testament and the Septuagint. 'Baptist' is also related to the Latin word 'baptista', which also means 'the baptizer', 'the Baptist', a reference to John the Baptist.

Baptist churches are a historic denomination whose origins date back to England and Holland in the early 17th century. There are historians who say that the rise of the Baptist church was a consequence of the Anabaptist believer's baptism movement started in 1525 on the European continent, but its roots are different from Anabaptism. The Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites are direct descendants of the first Anabaptist movement.

During the Protestant Reformation, the Church of England (Anglican) separated from the Roman Catholic Church. There were some Christians who were not happy with the achievements of the Reformation, as the Church of England did not make the corrections that some considered errors and abuses. Some Christians have chosen to try to make constructive changes within it. They became known as Puritans. Others left the Church and became known as Separatists. A group of English dissidents from the Lincolnshire congregation was led by John Smyth, a clergyman, and Thomas Helwys, a lawyer. They went to Holland in 1608 in search of religious freedom. John Smyth was raised in England and became a Puritan; later a Baptist separatist, and ended his days working with the Mennonites. The two organized a Church with Baptist doctrines in Amsterdam in 1609. John Smyth rejected infant baptism and instituted baptism only for believing adults (by immersion); even Smyth and Helwys were baptized as believers. In 1609, Smyth first baptized himself and then baptized others. Thomas Helwys organized the Baptist Church at Spitalfields, outside London, in 1612. That same year he was arrested for writing a pamphlet warning the English monarchy to submit to God, and criticizing the papacy and the Puritans. He died in prison in 1616. This pamphlet was the first publication in English to defend the principle of religious freedom and conscience for all human beings, i.e., faith is a matter between God and the individual. In other words, Baptists believe in the separation between Church and State.

Baptist Churches have a Congregationalist form of government, that is, the autonomy of each local church. The congregation itself decides on internal matters. Churches associate themselves in groups of mutual support and cooperation, called associations or conventions, maintaining, however, the autonomy of each local church. There is no hierarchy or subordination between pastors of one church and another. Such groups of associations can have local, regional or even national scope.

Baptists recognize only two ordinances: baptism and communion, because these are the only ones expressly ordained in the Bible. In the Lord's Supper, the gesture of Christ and the apostles is repeated when bread and wine are shared among all the members of the congregation, that is, the Supper is a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice, according to Zwingli's theory.

The basic Baptist doctrine is salvation through faith alone (*sola fide*), with the Holy Bible as the only rule of faith and practice (*sola scriptura*), the believer's baptism of complete immersion, when he is old enough to be aware of the act and wishing for it on their own initiative. The dip in the water symbolizes the death of the carnal and sinful old self, and the emergence of the new man, already with a new nature, spiritual, similar to Christ. For them, baptism is not necessary for salvation; it is an ordinance, not a sacrament, since, in their view, it grants no saving grace.

It is also part of their doctrine, the adherence to Christian orthodoxy and general Protestant principles: belief in the Trinity; virgin birth of Jesus; miracles; atonement for our sins through Jesus' death, burial, and bodily resurrection; the Kingdom of God; the simultaneously human and divine nature of Jesus ('*Dyophysitism*', as established by the Council of Chalcedon in 451); the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2: 9); to the eschatological vision (Jesus Christ will personally and visibly return to earth in glory, the dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all with justice); evangelism and missions.

Many churches still baptize children, such as Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, the Reformed churches (Arminianism, Calvinism, Congregationalist or Congregational Churches), Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Moravia, Orthodox Church (the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches). The other evangelical denominations associated with Pentecostalism practice the baptism of believers, by immersion in water, after the new birth and profession of faith (doctrine closely associated with Baptist and Anabaptist traditions). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints completely rejects infant baptism but practices adult baptism. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, baptism by immersion is not required again for those who are already an Adventist; only for those who feel they have received new information that makes a difference or have gone through a reconversion.

In many non-denominational evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal churches, a ritual known as infant dedication is performed (presentation of babies to the Lord).

In Baptist churches, young adults and unmarried couples are encouraged to marry early to experience sexuality according to God's will. Some liberal communities, unlike the conservative and fundamentalist communities, accept LGBT relationships, promoting their wedding ceremonies.

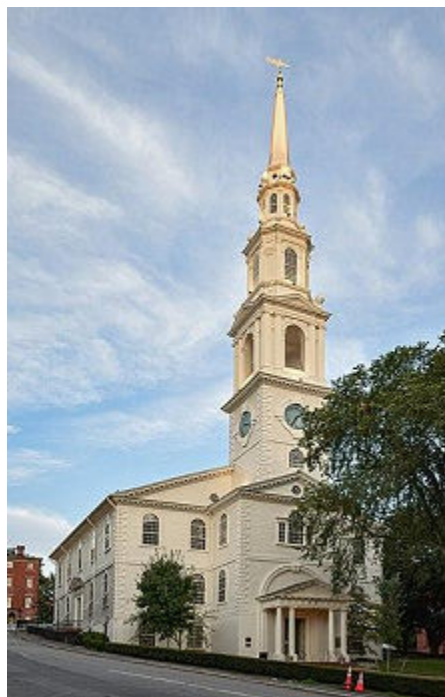
In Baptist churches, worship includes praise (Christian music), worship, prayers, a Bible-based sermon, offerings, and periodically Holy Communion. In many churches there are services adapted for children, even for teenagers. Prayer meetings are also held during the week.



Baptism of a believer in Northolt Park Baptist Church, London –
Photo: Brett Jordan – wikipedia.org

Baptist denominations are traditionally seen as belonging to two parties: General Baptists defend Arminianism, based on the teachings of Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609: salvation is the result of man's free will to the grace offered by God, for Jesus died for the entire world not just for the chosen elect) and Particular Baptists (sometimes known as Reformed Baptists or Calvinistic Baptists) uphold Calvin's theory of salvation (predestination and divine election: God chooses

who will be saved). The two branches agree on the other points of Baptist doctrine as described above.



First Baptist Church in America in Providence, Rhode Island –
Photo: Filetime – wikipedia.org

Going back to the times of John Smyth, there was persecution of Baptists and other English dissidents for not agreeing with certain practices and doctrines of the official church, the Anglican Church. Due to this persecution, many people migrated to America, to the colonies of New England (which would later form the United States). The first American Baptist church was founded by Roger Williams, the Providence Baptist Church in 1639, in the colony he founded with the name of Rhode Island. John Clark organized Newport Baptist Church, also in Rhode Island in 1648. Baptist churches continued to expand, practically restricted to England and the United States, until the end of the 18th century, when Baptist missionaries began to be sent to all parts of the world.

At the beginning of the 19th century, some missionaries from other denominations had already arrived in Brazil, as Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists. But due to the American Civil War (1861-1865; in several European languages, the war is called 'War of Secession'), thousands of farmers from the south of the United States migrated to places where there was land with agricultural potential, including to Brazil. Here they arrived around 1867. Among these, the majority professed Protestantism, and many were Baptists. In 1871, American Baptists organized the 'First Baptist Church in Brazil for Foreigners' in the city of Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, and in 1879, another Baptist Church was founded there by another group of American immigrants, in another district of the city, currently belonging to a city called Americana. In the 1960s, because of Pentecostal doctrines and practices, there was a great break within the various Protestant

denominations in Brazil, including the Baptists, dividing their church into ‘Renovated Baptists’ and ‘Traditional Baptists.’



‘Chapel of the Field’ (Capela do Campo – Santa Bárbara d’Oeste – SP – Brasil),
founded in 1871 – photo: Felipe Atílio – wikipedia.org

Baptists developed the study of the Scriptures in the churches, creating the Sunday Bible School. Along with Religious Education, Theological Education came, and then the Seminaries emerged: one in the city of Recife and another in the city of Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the 20th century. Baptists also opened schools in the secular sphere, thus exerting influence on Brazilian society.

Baptists generally believe in the literal Second Coming of Christ. Beliefs among Baptists regarding the ‘end times’ (eschatology) are divided. ‘Eschatology’ is a word that derives from two Greek roots: ‘eschatos’ (ἔσχατος), which means ‘last’; and ‘logy’ (λογία), which means ‘study’, therefore, the study of ‘things of the end.’ In a broad sense, the word eschatology, or the expression ‘things of the end’ can be applied to the end of an individual life, the end of time, the end of the world or the nature of the Kingdom of God. In general terms, Christian eschatology focuses on the ultimate fate of individual souls and the entire created order, based primarily on the biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments.

Thus, Baptists still diverge on the so-called millennial theories: dispensationalism, amillennialism, historical premillennialism, postmillennialism and preterism.

Dispensation is a period of time (historical / spiritual), in which God deals with mankind or with a people of a particular manner. In the first dispensation, God dealt with His people through covenants, the third covenant with Moses being operated through the Law. Man would be upright and just before Him and, logically saved, fulfilling the Law. Jesus came bringing a new dispensation, that of the grace (unmerited favor, that is, it is not by our works that we are saved), because by faith in Him we attain salvation and no longer need to comply with the endless precepts of the Law, but two: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus

paid the price for us on the cross. As the Jews did not receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, grace began to be poured out on the Gentiles.

The gospel of Christ was preached exclusively to the Jews until 33 AD, completing the sixty-nine weeks of Dan. 9: 24-26, when the first martyrs like James and Stephen appeared. After Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans (Titus), the time of God's covenant with the Jews was finished and the time of God's kingdom to the Gentiles began (Matt. 21: 43; Lk. 21: 24; Rom. 11: 25; Ezek. 30: 3). Thus, the covenant with Israel will only be restored in the second coming of Christ, when through their repentance, they begin to cry out for Jesus (Matt. 23: 39; Acts 1: 6-7). "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Lk. 13: 34-35) – the last seven weeks correspond to the Period of the Great Tribulation.

Thus 'millennium' was a conception created by Jewish scholars in the post-exilic and Intertestamental Period to endorse a belief and hope for redemption and regeneration of Israel in a physical and overly material way, for they misinterpreted the words of the prophets, and they did not expect that their Messiah would come differently, so they did not believe in Him. The prophet Zechariah, for example, brings his understanding of a 'millennium' from the Jewish standpoint (Zech. 14: 9-11; Zech. 14: 16-21): the fulfillment of the promises of God made to them, that is, the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel as a nation, in its own land, endowed with a literal throne, a literal Davidic king, a literal temple, and a literal system of sacrifices, which will be fulfilled to the letter, overly emphasizing the materialistic side of all this. This theory is called Dispensationalism. The Christian Church interprets this as a period of time of thousand years when the righteous will reign on earth.

However, many scholars feel that the idea of a Millennium or Messianic Kingdom cannot be embedded within the biblical eschatological view [Rev. 20: 1-6 concerns the victory of the martyred saints (Rev. 20: 4 – 'the souls of the beheaded'), which are in heaven, those martyred by the Beast]. According to this theory, the second coming will immediately inaugurate the consummation, the final judgment, and the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21: 1; Isa. 65: 17; Isa. 66: 22; 2 Pet. 3: 13; 1 Cor. 15: 23-28). This point of view is called 'amillennialism' [Source: J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995 / Note the commentary to this paragraph: cf. G.E. Ladd, Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God, 1952, pg. 141 et seq.]. The Gospels, Paul's letters and the general letters do not speak of a millennium.

The moment of the 'restoration of Israel' or 'renewal of all things' described in the bible (Act. 1: 6; Matt. 19: 28; Mk. 10: 40; Lk. 22: 28-29) will correspond to the moment of repentance (at the time of the second coming of Christ – Zech. 12: 10-14; Zech. 13: 1-6; 9; Rev. 11: 13b) and to the opening of their understanding to Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, before the final judgment, with the separation between those who inherit eternal life and those who go to hell (Matt. 25: 31-46; Matt. 16: 27; Matt. 19: 28). Thus, Israel will be entitled to live in the spiritual New Jerusalem (Zech. 14: 7-11; Rev 21: 1-8, Rev. 22: 1-5; Rev. 22: 12-17).

Christ is now enthroned at the right hand of God (Mk. 16: 19; Rom. 8: 34; 1 Pet. 3: 22); but His kingdom is not evident to the world, therefore He will return in a visible way to those who do not believe, and to carry out His judgment. After His victory, when all things are subject to Him, His kingdom will be handed over to the Father (1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

The Lord will appear in heaven, will catch up His living saints (with their glorified bodies) and resurrect the saints who are asleep (dead). He will make His judgment upon those who have the mark of the beast (Rev. 13: 16-17; Rev. 15: 7, Rev 16: 1-2; 3; 4; 8; 10-11; 12; 18-21; Rev. 18: 9-10; 21) and will deal with darkness (1 Cor. 15: 24-26; 28; Rev. 19: 11-21; Rev. 20: 10). The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15: 26; Rev. 20: 14). In other words, the second coming will immediately inaugurate the consummation, the final judgment, and the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21: 1; Isa. 65: 17; Isa. 66: 22; 2 Pet. 3: 13; 1 Cor. 15: 23-28).

Premillennialism in Christian eschatology is the belief that Jesus will physically return to earth (the Second Coming) before the Millennium, the literal golden age of a thousand years of peace.

Postmillennialism sees the second coming of Christ occurring after the Millennium.

Preterism, a Christian eschatological view, interprets some or all prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened. This school of thought interprets the Book of Daniel as referring to events that happened from the 7th century BC until the 1st century AD, while seeing the prophecies of the Book of Revelation as events that happened in the 1st century AD. Preterism claims that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, or else, with the Papal era that followed.

PIETISM OR PIETISTIC LUTHERANISM

From the Lutheran Church emerged the Pietists in the late 17th century, reaching their peak between 1650 and 1800 and diminished during the 19th century, almost disappearing in America in late 20th century. The movement had for leader, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), a German Lutheran theologian, and reached Germany and Scandinavia. Pietism combined Lutheranism from the time of Reformation (the biblical doctrine) with the individual experiences of the believer, emphasizing sanctification and decreasing emphasis on creeds and confessions. In other words: an individual piety and a living a vigorous Christian life. It also supported the need to renounce the world and to strengthen the universal love among believers, also giving a religious expression to emotions.

Pietistic Lutherans gathered together in conventicles, apart from the service in church, to encourage mutual piety. For them, the believer must strive in order to have a holy life, and this sanctification is achieved when he follows biblical divine commandments.

A conventicle originally signified no more than an assembly, and ancient writers used this name for a church (a Latinized synonym of the Greek word ‘church’). It came to be applied specifically to private meetings for worship.

Images below:

First: a Haugean Pietist Conventicle – Adolph Tidemand (Norwegian Painter; 1814-1876) – Unknown source. Haugean was reform movement in the Pietistic Church of Norway that bore the name of the lay evangelist Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824) – wikipedia.org.

Second: Bedroom at Fosnes Bygdemuseum, Norway. All of the decorations on the wall are religious motifs. The black sign says ‘Our God is our Mighty Fortress’ (from Luther). Pietistic Lutheran frugality and humility, restraint and sense of duty and order

have been strong cultural and religious influences in Scandinavia. Photo: Thomas Bjørkan – wikipedia.org



In 1675, Spener published his *Pia Desideria* or *Pious Desire* for a Reform of the True Evangelical Church, a collection of sermons. The title gave rise to the term 'Pietists.' In this publication he made six proposals as the best way of restoring the life of the church, and can be easily understood this way:

- The earnest and thorough study of the Bible in private meetings ('ecclesiolae in ecclesia', that is, 'little churches within the church').
- Since Christians are all priests, lay people must participate in the spiritual government of the church.
- The knowledge of Christianity must be achieved by the practice of it.
- A sympathetic and kindly treatment to unbelievers and heterodox (not conforming to the accepted or orthodox standards or beliefs).
- More emphasis on devotional life in theological training of universities.
- A different style of preaching: instead of rhetoric, a living word, denoting faith and an inner rebirth; something vivid.

Spener stressed the need for a new birth and believers' separation from the world, avoiding all common worldly amusements, such as dancing, the theatre, and public games, which ended up leading to an ascetic morality, sometimes harsh, especially regarding to food, clothing and leisure. On the other hand they instilled in Pietists a sense of responsibility to the world, leading them to mission and charitable activities. Some believe this led to a new form of justification by works. His 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia' also weakened the power and significance of church organization, emphasizing a person's direct contact with God and diminishing the differences between clergy and laity.

Pietism influenced the rise of independent religious movements inspired by Protestant doctrine such as Methodism (inspiring the Anglican priest John Wesley), Holiness Movement, Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, Neo-Pentecostalism and charismatic groups.

However, in the 19th century, a neo-Lutheran movement emerged, in which there was a revival of the doctrine of Lutheran confessions and a renewal of the traditional liturgy. Some writers on the history of Pietism treat it as a backward movement from the Christian life towards Catholicism.

METHODISM

The Methodist Church began in 1784 in England as a revival movement with John Wesley (1703-1791), an Anglican priest and evangelist, and his younger brother Charles (1707-1788). It was founded under the influence of George Whitefield (also known as George Whitfield, 1714–1770), an itinerant Anglican minister. What began as an evangelical revival movement within the Church of England in 18th century became a separate Church after Wesley's death and had a vigorous missionary activity. He emphasized the methodical study of the Bible and the search for the personal relationship between the individual and God.

In 1729, newly ordained deacon of the Anglican Church, John Wesley met with a group of students organized by his brother Charles at Oxford University, 'the holy club'. Their group met weekly and they began to live a holy life in a systematic way: they fasted regularly, received communion once a week, abstained from most forms of entertainment and luxury, and frequently visited the sick and poor as well as the prisoners. They were called Methodists for the methodical and orderly way they practiced their Christian faith. But this group broke apart in 1735. He and his brother spent two years in America (1736-1738), but they returned because they considered their mission with the evangelization of Native Americans fruitless.

Early in the year 1738, John Wesley experienced what came to be called his 'evangelical conversion', when he felt his heart 'strangely warmed' with the assurance

of his trust in Christ alone as His Savior and received an inner assurance that He had taken away his sins, and saved him from the law of sin and death. His brother Charles had a similar experience a few days earlier.

The two brothers immediately began preaching salvation by faith to individuals and groups, in homes, in religious societies, and in the few churches that had not closed their doors to evangelical preachers. As the pulpits of the Anglican Church were closed to the Wesley brothers and their friend George Whitfield, they decided to preach outdoors. In 1739, Wesley organized the first Methodist Society and opened a chapel ('The Foundry') in London.

As for salvation, most Methodists such as Wesley supported the Arminian doctrine (by the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius – 1560–1609), emphasizing that Christ accomplished salvation for all human beings and that they must exercise their free will to receive it (as opposed to the traditional Calvinist doctrine that God alone makes the process and arbitrarily determines everything, that is, God had preordained an elect number of people to eternal beatitude, while others perished eternally). On the other hand, George Whitfield (Anglican clergyman and evangelist – c. 1714–1770) and other friends were Calvinist Methodists.

Charles Wesley wrote many of the Methodist Church hymns and influenced many other hymn writers.



The Foundry (or Foundry), the first Methodist chapel in London
– lithograph by H. Humphreys, 1830 – wikipedia.org

Image above: The Foundry (or Foundry), in Moorfields, was the first London foundry for casting brass cannon for the British Board of Ordnance. The building subsequently served as the first Wesleyan Methodist place of worship, and an important meeting place for the early Methodist community. In 1778, the Methodist congregation was moved to the nearby purpose-built Wesley's Chapel on City Road.

Whitfield had been a student of the Wesley brothers and became known for his itinerant and heterodox ministry, in which he devoted himself to outdoor preaching, reaching thousands of people. He had even participated in a mission in Georgia (USA).

A key step in the development of John Wesley's ministry was to preach in fields, mines and cemeteries to those who did not attend parish services regularly. George Whitfield helped him with that.



Engraving of a Methodist camp meeting – Jacques Gérard Milbert (1766-1840) – wikipedia.org

Many converts were those disconnected from the Church of England, but Wesley still remained a clergyman of it and insisted that they attend his local parish church, as well as Methodist meetings, because only an ordained pastor could perform the sacraments of baptism and communion. Due to increasing evangelistic and pastoral responsibilities, Wesley and Whitfield appointed preachers and lay leaders, and they focused on evangelizing people who had been 'neglected' by the Established Church of England. Thus, in 1742, Wesley and the lay leaders and preachers organized the new converts into Methodist societies, divided into a system of 'classes', small group meetings of approximately twelve people in which individuals confessed their sins to one another and edified each other, sharing their testimonies. In 1744 the first annual conference of Methodist preachers was held with Rev. John Wesley.

They saw three teachings as the foundation of the Christian faith:

- People are all, by nature, 'dead in sin.'
- They are justified by faith alone.
- Faith produces inward and outward holiness.

Because of his organizational skills, Wesley was established as the main leader of the movement. As for the doctrine of predestination, Wesley was an Arminianist and Whitfield was a Calvinist. This undermined their friendship, although it was later restored and each one of them remained steadfast in their way of thinking. Wesley argued that Christians could enjoy an entire sanctification (or 'Christian perfection') in this life in the following way: love God and neighbor, meekness and lowliness of heart, and refrain from all appearance of evil.

Initially, Methodists only sought reform within the Church of England (Anglicanism), but the movement gradually moved away from that Church, for the fixed forms of prayer in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer displeased George

Whitfield, who preferred spontaneous prayers, and he insisted on the need for the New Birth.



Methodist Church Logo

Early Methodism experienced a radical and spiritual phase that allowed women authority in church leadership. Methodist women formed a community that cared for the vulnerable, extending the role of mother beyond physical care. Women were encouraged to testify of their faith. However, the centrality of the role of women declined dramatically after 1790, as Methodist churches became more structured and more dominated by men. The Methodist Church also cared about the education of children, at first with the creation of Sunday Schools, but in 1836 the British Methodist Conference also supported the creation of ‘weekday schools.’

John Wesley taught four key points fundamental to Methodism, focusing on sanctification and the transforming effect of faith on a Christian’s character:

- A person has the free will to accept or reject salvation.
- All people who obey the gospel according to the measure of knowledge given to them will be saved.
- The Holy Spirit assures the Christian that he is justified by faith in Jesus (Rom. 8: 16: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children”).
- Christians in this life are able to attain Christian perfection (make a move toward holiness) and God commands them to seek it. After justification by the grace and blood of Jesus in the ‘new birth’, the power of the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian in the process of sanctification.

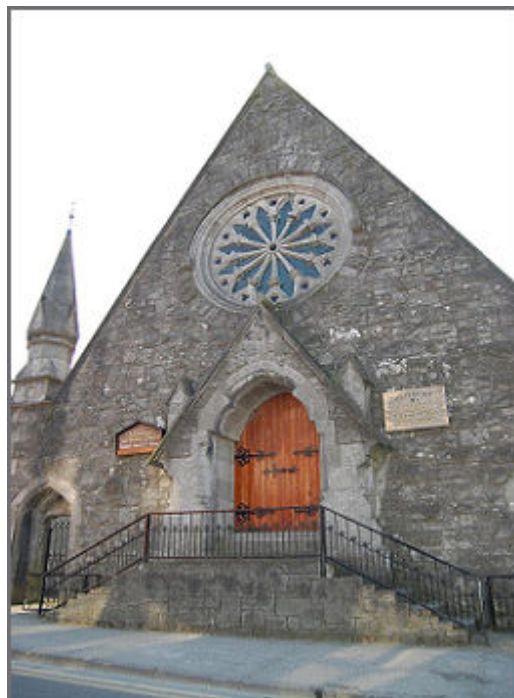
Other doctrines accepted by Methodism:

- Scripture is considered a primary authority, but Methodists also look to Christian tradition, including historical creeds.
- Evangelism
- Methodism emphasizes the ‘Social Gospel’: charity and support for the sick, poor and afflicted through works of mercy. These works are put into practice with the establishment of hospitals, orphanages, popular kitchens and schools to follow Christ’s command to spread the Good News of salvation and serve all people.

- There is a wide variety of liturgical forms of worship, ranging from churches that place greater value on rituals and sacraments to churches that place less value on them, and in addition to revivals at camp meetings held at certain times of the year.

Methodism inherited its liturgy from Anglicanism, although American Methodist theology tends to have a stronger ‘sacramental emphasis’ than that of Evangelical Anglicans.

In common with most Protestants, Methodists recognize two sacraments as instituted by Christ: Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Lord’s Supper). Most Methodist churches practice infant baptism in anticipation of a response to be made later (confirmation), as well as believer’s baptism. As for the Supper, the way Christ’s presence manifests itself in the elements (bread and wine) is described as a ‘Holy Mystery.’



A Methodist chapel in Athlone, Ireland, opened in 1865.

Photo: Dantadd – wikipedia.org

Early Methodists wore simple clothing, fasted once a week, abstained from alcohol, and devotedly observed the Sabbath. They did not participate and still condemned ‘worldly habits’, including playing cards, horse racings, gambling, attending the theater, dancing (both in frolics and balls) and cockfighting. They came from all levels of society, including the aristocracy, but the Methodist preachers carried the message to workers and criminals who tended to be left out of organized religion at that time. In Great Britain, the Methodist Church had a great effect in the first decades of working-class development (1760–1820). In the United States, it became the religion of many slaves who later formed black churches in the Methodist tradition. Methodists are historically known for their adherence to the doctrine of separation from the world, reflected by their traditional standards of commitment to abstinence from alcoholic beverages, prohibition of gambling, regular participation in ‘class’ meetings, and weekly observance of the fast on Friday.

Over time, many of these practices were gradually relaxed into traditional Methodism, although practices such as abstinence from alcohol and fasting are still very much encouraged, in addition to the current ban on gambling. The Methodist Church in America still keeps Sunday, for it requires believers to comply with all of God's ordinances, including public worship, and forbids desecrating the Sabbath day, whether doing normal work or buying or selling.



Wesley's Chapel in London was established by John Wesley, whose statue stands in the courtyard. Photo: Mike Peel – wikipedia.org



Statue of John Wesley, by Paul Raphael Montford, in outside Wesley Church in Melbourne – Photo: Adam Carr, 2005 – wikipedia.org

The Methodist Church in Brazil was founded by American missionaries in 1867. It became autonomous in 1930. In the 1970s, it ordained a woman as its first minister. In

1975 it also founded the first Methodist University in Latin America, the Methodist University of Piracicaba.

Many denominations emerged from Methodist Church. Other movements are linked to Methodism, such as 'The Salvation Army' founded by William Booth, a Methodist, in London in 1865, as well as The Holiness movement.

THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT

Many denominations and movements emerged from the Methodist Church. Others are linked to Methodism, such as 'The Salvation Army' and the Holiness movement, which involves a set of Christian beliefs and practices that emerged mainly within 19th-century Methodism and to a lesser extent other traditions such as Quakerism, Anabaptism, and Restorationism. Its theology is based on the Wesley-Arminian view, with emphasis on the entire sanctification of the believer, leading to Christian perfection. For the Holiness Movement the term 'perfection' signifies completeness of Christian character; his freedom from all sin, and complete possession of all the gifts of the Spirit. The Holiness movement that started with Wesley influenced several Evangelical Christian denominations and prepared the ground for Pentecostalism in the late 19th and early 20th-centuries, which in USA was called the Third Great Awakening (1855-1930). The Holiness movement influenced, not only Protestant denominations as the Pietists, for example, but also other religions and sects, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Spiritualism and Christian Science (a set of beliefs and practices belonging to the metaphysical family of new religious movements) among others.

THE SALVATION ARMY

'The Salvation Army' was founded by William Booth, a British Methodist preacher (1829-1912), in London in 1865. William Booth was a Methodist preacher, more interested in evangelistic ministry, and the church wanted him to preach there. But God revealed to him and his wife Catherine that his path would be to preach to the poor and lost in London's most troubled neighborhood, the East End.

In 1865, Booth and his wife founded the "Christian Revival Society" in the East End of London, with evening meetings in a former warehouse for the poor and outcast. The name was later changed to the "Christian Mission" and then to the "East London Christian Mission". But it was long and hard work, and he often returned home exhausted and with head injuries, for the local pub owners were not happy to see some of their best customers becoming Christians. From a disorganized band of William's followers, marching with Bibles and prayers as weapons, they had evolved into an organized army by 1878. The name changed to the "Salvation Army," which was modeled on the army, with its own flag (or colors) and its own music, often with Christian lyrics and popular and folk songs sung in pubs. Booth became the "General," and his other ministers were given the appropriate ranks of "officers." Other members became "soldiers." His secretary, George Scott Railton, was the "Captain."

In the power of the Holy Spirit, they managed to conquer more and more lives, of all ages, in all social classes, especially among the poor and unemployed, creating professional training centers and giving them a more dignified life. In the early 1880s, they expanded from London to other countries: the United States, France, Switzerland, Sweden, countries of the British Empire such as: Australia, Canada, India, Cape

Colony, New Zealand, Jamaica, etc., with all types of humanitarian aid services. His book 'In Darkest England and the Way Out' is about abolishing vice (especially drink) and poverty by creating homes for the homeless; farming communities where the urban poor could receive training in agriculture; training centers for future emigrants; homes for abandoned women and released prisoners. The book also presents plans for poor lawyers, banks, clinics and industrial schools.

William Booth and Catherine Mumford were married on June 17th, 1855, and had eight children: Bramwell, Ballington, Kate, Emma, Herbert, Marie, Evangeline, and Lucy. Booth appointed Bramwell Booth as his successor General. Kate Booth took the Salvation Army to France and Switzerland. Emma Booth became Director of the Officers' Training Center, the first training school for women in the Salvation Army, at the age of just 19. Evangeline Booth was the most involved in the work and the first woman to hold the post of Evangelist in the Salvation Army. Lucy Booth and Marie were also involved in the work in some way.

Ballington and Herbert, faced with opposition and accusations from some members of society, denounced their father as their leader and turned their backs on the Salvation Army. Ballington founded a separate organization, the 'Volunteers of America', with himself as its 'General', but it seems it didn't get very far because of his temper. Herbert became an independent evangelist and oversaw the development of a production department for the Salvation Army, and was also the writer and director of 'Soldiers of the Cross', a film production made in Australia, which consisted of film segments and slides, with episodes from the life of Christ and stories of early Christian martyrs, to awaken the public to religious devotion. Catherine died in 1890 and William in 1912, aged 83, in London.

In the image below, the Salvation Army logo, 'Blood' refers to the blood of Jesus, shed for the salvation of sinners, and 'Fire' refers to the fire of the Holy Spirit's revival, which was often misinterpreted by William Booth's opponents.



THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT (RESTORATIONISM)

One of the movements that emerged in the 19th century and also influenced the Church was the Restoration Movement (also known as the American Restoration Movement) on the part of those who believe that historic Christianity, at some point in its existence, apostatized from the faith; therefore, it is necessary to restore the early

Christianity of the apostolic age. Some Protestant Christian denominations that supported this position were the Hussites, Anabaptists, Puritans, Landmarkists (or Landmark Baptists, a Baptist branch in the Southern United States) and Waldensians.

The Waldensians

The Waldensians (also known as Waldenses, Vallenses, Valdesi or Vaudois) received this name because of the founder of this ascetic movement, Peter Waldo (Pierre Vaudès), a wealthy merchant from Lyon who gave away his property around 1173, preaching apostolic poverty as the way to perfection. They considered as the forerunners of the Protestant Reformation and were declared heretical in 1215 by the Catholic Church, merging in the Radical Reformation becoming a part of the Calvinist tradition in 1532.

The Hussites

The **Hussite** (15th century) movement follows the teachings of the Czech Reformer Jan Hus (or John Huss; 1372–1415), who became the best-known representative of the Bohemian Reformation and one of the forerunners of the Protestant Reformation. Bohemia is a historic region of Central Europe. It was part of the Holy Roman Empire, the Austrian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After World War II, it became the western and middle third of the current Czech Republic. The eastern part is Moravia. This predominantly religious movement was driven by social issues and strengthened the Czech national consciousness. Hussite traditions among Christians today are found in the Church of Moravia and in the Hussite churches of Czech Republic.

ADVENTISM, MORMONISM AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Other movements such as **Adventism**, **Mormonism**, and **Jehovah's Witnesses** (from the Bible Students Movement) sought to reestablish a visible and restored church in accordance with biblical principles. Although Restorationism was prevalent among Protestants, there are other religious groups involved in it: some wings of Catholicism, Christian Science and Spiritualism.

In the 19th century this thinking (**Restorationism**) reemerged in the United States and England. The English Presbyterian pastor, **Edward Irving**, proclaimed a spiritual restoration of Early Christianity. On the other hand, **John Nelson Darby** (1800–1882; an Anglo-Irish preacher) and other Protestant groups in Ireland, such as the **Plymouth Brethren** (**Assemblies of the Brethren**, Dublin, around 1825) intended to restore a simple and Non-denominational Christianity. The Assembly of Brethren comes from Anglicanism and affirms the 'sola scriptura.' It consists of a collection of independent churches that think the same way, but don't see themselves as a Christian denomination. They give little emphasis to ritual, often having an emphasis on preaching, individual salvation and personal conversion.

At that time, during the Second Great Awakening in the United States (1790-1840, among the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists) Restoration movements emerged, the first on the agricultural frontier in the Appalachian region (Eastern Mountain Range of North America, which extends from the Canada to Alabama, in the southeast of the

USA), where some Christians preached a Christianity without creeds and without denominational barriers. Then, movements such as Mormonism, Adventism and Jehovah's Witnesses emerged at practically the same time and in the same region, which sought to reestablish a visible and restored church according to biblical principles, not just a spiritual restoration of Early Christianity, as suggested by the Presbyterian Pastor Edward Irving.

ADVENTISM

MILLERISM

Adventism or Millerism began in the 19th century with the Second Great Awakening in the United States (1790-1840), with William Miller (1782-1849), whose followers became known as Millerites.

William Miller (1782-1849) was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, of a simple family, he learned to read from his mother, and attended school for only eighteen months. But he read the few books he had at home very voraciously: a Psalter, a Bible and a prayer book. In his youth in rural Low Hampton (New York), as a farmer, he believed in the bible and other books as inspired. He married Lucy P. Smith in 1803 and moved to Poultney (in Vermont), but from their marriage on he rejected his Baptist heritage and adopted deism, a philosophical position that believes in the creation of the universe by a superior intelligence (which may or may not be God), through reason, free thought and from personal experience rather than direct revelation or religious tradition. In other words: a deist is one who accepts the existence of a creative principle, but does not practice any religion, and does not deny the reality of a world completely governed by natural and physical laws. In addition to being a farmer, he had several professions and volunteer roles such as the office of Constable, Deputy Sheriff, Justice of the Peace, and military; he received the rank of militia lieutenant in 1810. A constable is a person holding a particular office, most commonly in criminal law enforcement. The office of constable can vary significantly in different jurisdictions. A constable is commonly the rank of an officer within the police. Other people may be granted powers of a constable without holding this title. He served as a volunteer in the War of 1812 (between the United States and the United Kingdom), ending up as a captain in 1815. In 1816, he returned to Low Hampton, at the same time being a deist and a member of a Baptist church. He was asked to read the day's sermon during one of the local minister's frequent absences, and turned with ardor to study the bible, for he had has an encounter with God. His view was that the bible, if it were really the word of God, should by itself explain its apparent contradictions. Between 1816 and 1818 he studied the sacred book intensively. While in Deism, Miller became a Freemason, occupying the position of Grand Master; however, he would renounce his affiliation with Freemasonry in 1831, finding it incompatible with his evangelistic ideas.

One day (around 1830), studying the bible, he came across the text that should mark him for the rest of his life: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8: 14). Using other texts such as Ezek. 4: 6-7 and more others (unfortunately, interpreting them in a distorted way and outside the biblical context), he concluded that the 2,300 afternoons and mornings represented 2,300 literal years that would have started in 457 BC (when Artaxerxes I ordered the 2nd return of captives in Babylon to Jerusalem under the command of Ezra – 458 BC), ending with the end of the world and the literal return of Jesus Christ between the spring of 1843 and

the spring of 1844. Miller thought the sanctuary was the Earth and that its cleansing would be done with fire at the coming of Christ. In 1831, at the age of 50, he decided to propagate his interpretations, and began preaching on farms, then in villages, and finally in big cities.

I just want to leave a comment regarding the chronological time of this prophecy of Daniel (Dan. 8: 14). He was referring to the time elapsed from the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Seleucid king (around 168-167 BC) to its purification by Judas Maccabeus. The Maccabean revolt lasted from 167 BC to 160 BC, that is, 2,300 days, more precisely, 6 years, 3 months and 18 days (not 2,300 years, as Miller misinterpreted).

In 1838, studying chapters 8 and 9 of the Apocalypse (The Angels with the Seven Trumpets), he came to the conclusion that in just two years, that is, 1840, the Ottoman Empire, influential and powerful at the time, would disintegrate. The Ottoman-Turkish Empire did indeed go through a crisis, but it did not disintegrate as Miller had predicted. The Tanzimat period (from the Arabic *Tanzîmât*, meaning ‘restructuring’) – 1839-1876 – was a series of constitutional reforms in the Ottoman Empire that led to a very modern army (military conscription), reforms in the banking system, the decriminalization of homosexuality, the replacement of religious law by secular law, and replacement of guilds (craft production units, associations of artisans and merchants who oversee the practice of their craft or trade in a particular area, and that emerged in the Middle Ages) by modern factories.

However, this left an alarming feeling in people’s hearts, making them believe in an imminent return of Jesus for those days. He said that the only millennium taught in the Bible was the thousand years that would follow the resurrection of the righteous at the coming of Jesus (Rev. 20: 4; 7).

People from various religious denominations in America joined this religious movement, which was called Adventism or Millerism, as they awaited the return of Jesus very soon, although it did not have a formal ecclesiastical organization, and had people from the most different Protestant strands.

The name Adventism or Millerism refers to belief in the imminent second coming (or ‘second advent’) of Jesus Christ. Throughout the denomination’s history, various groups have left the church and formed their own movements. The Adventist Church family is considered to be conservative Protestants.

After what became known as ‘The Great Disappointment’, the group dispersed into smaller ones. On January 29, 1845, Miller, his family, and his adherents were expelled from the Baptist Church. In 1848, he built a chapel on his property for Adventist worship. He died in 1849.

Some of these adherents insisted on re-evaluating Miller’s ‘prophecies’, giving a new interpretation to Christ’s return. In 1845, the Albany Conference was organized, and the American Millennial Association was founded, but in subsequent years, due to doctrinal differences, dissident denominations were formed, such as: The Seventh-day Adventist Church (Sabbatarian church), the Adventist Churches of God (Sabbatarian churches), the Advent Christian Church (a first-day Adventist Church, Sunday instead of Saturday), the Bible Student Movement, from which Jehovah’s Witnesses emerged. In the beginning of its development, the Bible Student Movement founded by Charles Taze Russell had close connections with the Millerite movement and supporters of the Adventist faith. Although both Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Bible Students do not identify as part of the Millerite Adventist movement (or other denominations, in general), some theologians categorize these groups and related sects as Millerite

Adventist because of their teachings regarding an imminent Second Coming and their use of specific dates.

Within those mentioned above, many other denominations emerged. The Davidians or 'the Shepherd's Rod' or 'the Rod' is an American offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. It was founded in 1929 by Victor Houteff, its president and prophet. Houteff joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1919 but was expelled from it in 1930 for promoting heretical doctrines. The organization's official name was changed in 1942 to Davidian Seventh-day Adventist, but it was still referred to as 'The Rod' by both members and critics. The various groups that claim Houteff's theology continue to be known as the Shepherd's Rod and Davidians.

All these denominations held in common a sense of the imminence of Jesus Christ's return.

Although Adventist churches have much in common, their theologies differ on whether the state of the dead is unconscious sleep (Eccl. 9: 10) or conscious, whether the ultimate punishment of the wicked is annihilation or eternal torment; the nature of immortality, if the wicked are resurrected or not after the millennium; and if the sanctuary described in Daniel (Dan 8: 11; 13) refers to that in heaven or on earth. Others include Sabbath keeping, dietary regulation, and investigative judgment (an eschatological process in which God's judgment began in 1844, as interpreted by Ellen White).

ELLEN WHITE

For Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen White considered the 1844 event to be the 'investigative judgment,' an eschatological process that began that year when Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary and each person would be judged to see if was an elect to salvation, and the righteousness of God would be confirmed before the universe (It would be a Pre-Advent judgment, that is, before the Second Advent).

Ellen Gould White (1827-1915) was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and a famous American Christian writer. For Adventists, the 'testimony of Jesus' (which is the prophecy, according to Rev. 19: 10) is also present in Ellen White's messages, because her message is in agreement with the bible, recognizes the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ and it was fulfilled, in accordance with the Scriptures. Therefore, they consider her a contemporary prophetess, who falls into the line of prophets who were called by God to give encouragement, counsel, and admonition to God's people, but whose writings do not enter into the sacred Canon. They quote some Prophets from the Bible and compare them to her: Nathan, Gad, Shemaiah, Azariah, Eliezer, Ahiah, Ido and Obed in the OT, and Simeon, John the Baptist, Agabus and Silas in the NT. They also include women like Miriam, Deborah and Huldah, who were called prophetesses in ancient times, as well as Anna at the time of Christ, and the four daughters of Philip, who prophesied, according to Acts 21: 9.

Ellen White speaks in her works on theology, evangelism, Christian living, education and health (advocates vegetarianism). Her writings seek to show the hand of God guiding Christians throughout history. It also makes evident the existence of a cosmic conflict being waged on earth between good (God) and evil (Satan). This conflict is known as 'The Great Controversy' and was essential to the development of Adventist theology.

In the year 1840, at the age of 12, during a camp meeting of the Methodist Church, Ellen gave herself to Jesus. And in 1842 she was baptized in water and was accepted as

a member of the Methodist Church. In December 1844, at age 17, she had her first vision, not long after the 'Great Disappointment' of October 22, 1844. Her aim was to encourage her Adventist brethren, discouraged and fragmented in so many denominations because of that year's event. She saw the Adventist people traveling on a high and straight path towards the New Jerusalem and there was a bright light at the beginning of the path behind them. Jesus encouraged travelers who were tired; others didn't care about the light that guided them and 'fell from the way down into the dark and ungodly world.' In the vision, they enjoy scenes of Christ's second coming and the Advent people entering the New Jerusalem. When the vision ended, upon 'returning to Earth', she felt lonely, desolate, longing for a better world. The vision was an encouragement to Adventists, a triumph despite the despair in which they had plunged into.

She had two more visions in 1845, one after the other, where she saw the new earth, which for her gave meaning to her first vision and supported the development of rational thinking about the sanctuary of Daniel 8, fighting the visions of fanatical Adventists, portraying God and Jesus as literal beings and Heaven as a physical place. Only after some time she shared her views with the Millerite community. At a prayer meeting in her home, a very bright light, like a fireball (she describes), came towards her and she felt like she was in the presence of Jesus and the angels. The voice of the Lord came to her, asking her to make known the revelations she received to the other brothers. At that time, she still attended regular meetings of the Methodist Church held in private homes.

In that same year, 1845, she met a Millerite, James Springer White, whom she officially married in 1846 in Portland, Maine. They had four children: Henry Nichols (1847), James Edson (1849), William Clarence (1854) and John Hebert (1860). But her youngest son died of erysipelas at the age of three months, and the oldest died of pneumonia at age of 16.

Ellen White described that in her visions she was always enveloped in bright light, feeling in the presence of Jesus or His angels, and being shown historical and future events, as well as places (on earth, heaven, or other planets); or else she received information. Upon returning from these visions, she felt enveloped again by the darkness of Earth. Scholars write that people witnessed moments when she had her visions, and on one of those occasions, a doctor was present and said that when she was in vision she did not breathe, she kept her eyes open and her gaze serene, as if she looked into the distance, and she could stay in this state for minutes or hours. Upon leaving the vision, the Lord directed her to write immediately.

In 1858, White received a vision where he claimed to have received practical instructions for church members (how to keep the Sabbath, for example) and had a cosmic glimpse of the conflict 'between Christ and His angels, and Satan and His angels,' which was exposed in a book later. Some of her supporters say that she received visions of the American Civil War (1861-1865), the rise of modern spiritualism, the supremacy of the USA in the world and other prophecies with full fulfillment. Ellen G. White died in 1915 at age 87.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially founded in 1863, with the participation of Ellen White and her husband, James White; Joseph Bates (also a

Millerite; was a minister and, in secular life, a sailor) and John Nevins Andrews (also a Millerite; minister, missionary, writer, editor, and scholar).

Adventist scholars credit Ellen G. White for bringing the Seventh-day Adventist Church to a broader awareness of Godhead during the 1890s, influencing the church's shift from semi-Arian roots to Trinitarianism (Although her husband stated categorically that her visions did not support the Trinitarian creed). Other scholars argued that early Adventism had neither an Arian, Semi-Arian, nor Trinitarian theology, but rather a materialist one. Arianism is a heretical view of Christ created by Arius (c. 250-336 AD), a Christian presbyter of Alexandria, in the early days of the Early Church and denied the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, that is, He was accepted as the Son of God, but was not equal to God the Father, therefore, was not God. He was subordinate to God, but was not God. Thus, the Arian thesis says that the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, and God the Father would be of different substances (Greek: *ousia*). The Adventist Church only adopted the Trinitarian theology in the beginning of the 20th century and from then on began to dialogue with other Protestant groups, finally gaining recognition as a Protestant church (before it was considered a sect, for denying the Trinity).

The Church is distinguished by its strong belief in the imminent second coming (Advent) of Jesus Christ before the millennium (doctrine called premillennialism); the observance of the Sabbath, which is the seventh day of the week in the Christian and Jewish calendars; emphasizes diet and health, adhering to Kosher food laws, defending vegetarianism and its holistic understanding of the person (the human being is composed of body, soul and spirit, which are inseparable). It supports religious freedom, but her principles and lifestyle are conservative.

Adventist doctrine also supports the Arminian theory, namely, salvation depends on man's free will to respond positively to God's unconditional grace; it believes in the infallibility of Scripture, in justification by faith alone, in Jesus' death on the cross as a means of atoning for our sins, and believes in the resurrection of the dead. They perform baptism by immersion. As for Creation, they believe in a time of six literal days.

Other teachings include eternal life for those who believe in Christ ('conditional immortality'), the unconscious state of the dead (the dead sleep unconscious until the resurrection of the dead when there will be a Last Judgment before the world to come) and the doctrine of an 'investigative judgment.'

I will first present some of its guidelines, described in the church manual, and then talk a little about the topics that generate controversy, such as: 'investigative judgment', death and resurrection of the believer, the second coming of Christ and the millennium according to the SDA. Their manual: <https://gc.adventist.org/church-manual/>

SOME SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH GUIDELINES

Diet

The Adventist Church places a high value on the believer's integrity and health. Adventists advocate the consumption of vegetables and kosher foods (kosher means: 'allowed, proper, good, correct food, correct food'). Kosher is not only about meat from animals, but the preparation of many other types of food, including vegetables. The animals permitted and forbidden by God to man are described in Lev. 11: 1-47, which means that of all four-footed animals, those prohibited in food were: the camel, the rock

badger (similar to an alpine marmot; it is vegetarian and lives on the rocks), the hare and the pig. Among the birds, birds of prey were prohibited, which usually feed on carrion (corpse). Among the aquatic animals, only those with fins and scales (fish) were allowed, but the animals that we now call seafood were prohibited (such all edible invertebrates such as crustaceans: lobsters, crayfish, shrimp, crabs, etc., for example), and all that have a shell and are soft as the slug; therefore, we only eat their contents, such as mollusks (mussels, snails, slugs, octopuses, squids, clams etc.). Of the winged insects, only the locust, the katydid, the cricket and the grasshopper were allowed).

The Church also prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or illegal drugs. Also, some Adventists avoid coffee, tea, Coca-Cola, and other beverages containing caffeine. Among pioneer church members, breakfast cereals were widely accepted, such as Kellogg's brand cereal, a company founded by William Kellogg at the encouragement of his brother John Harvey Kellogg, one of the early founders of the Adventist health work. John Harvey considered breakfast cereals a healthy food and advertised bland corn flakes as a way to curb sexual desire and avoid the evils of masturbation. The church now has in Australia and New Zealand a famous manufacturer of health-related products and vegetarian foods.

Marriage and sexuality

For Adventists, marriage is a lifetime legal commitment of one man and one woman, being a divine institution established by God Himself before the fall. Wives must submit to their husbands, according to OT and NT texts. Adventists believe in and encourage sexual abstinence for both men and women before marriage. The church disapproves extramarital cohabitation.

They do not perform same-sex marriages, and individuals who are practicing homosexuals cannot be ordained, but they can hold religious offices and be members of the Church if they are not actively seeking same-sex relationships. They are welcome in the services and treated with love and kindness, as any human being is. Adventists believe that Scripture does not condone homosexual relationships, and their official position opposes this.

Ethics

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church abortion is out of harmony with God's plan for human life, including abortion as birth control and sex before marriage in any case.

The Church has officially stated its position on other ethical issues:

It is against active euthanasia (a substance is administered with the purpose of causing death), but it allows the removal of medical resources that kept the person alive – passive euthanasia.

It is in favor of birth control for couples, if used correctly.

It is against human cloning because the technology is unsafe and would result in defective births and miscarriages.

Dress and entertainment

Adventists oppose practices such as body piercing and tattoos and avoid wearing jewelry, including items such as earrings and bracelets. They traditionally maintain socially conservative attitudes toward clothing and entertainment. Conservative Adventists shun certain recreational activities that are considered a negative spiritual

influence, including dancing, secular theater, rock music and popular music, reading novels, playing cards, bowling, snooker, or even being fascinated by professional sports. The Adventist Church officially opposes the practice of gambling.

Church government structure

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is governed similarly to the Presbyterian system of church organization. The basic level is the local church, where members have voting power within it. On the level above the local church is the 'Local Conference', an organization of churches within a state, province or territory that appoints (ordains) ministers, owns church lands, and organizes the distribution of tithes and payments to ministers. It usually manages about 50-150 local congregations. The higher level of it is the 'Union Conference', which incorporates a series of local conferences within a larger territory (they are responsible for 6-12 local conferences). The highest level of leadership is the 'General Conference', which consists of 13 'divisions' corresponding to various geographic locations. It is the ultimate authority of the church and decides the most important matters and the administrative ones.

The ordained clergy of the Adventist Church are ministers (pastors). Ministers are appointed by Local Conferences, which assign them responsibilities over a single church or group of churches. Elders (or Presbyters) and deacons are appointed by vote of a local church business meeting or elected committees. Elders play a primarily administrative and pastoral role. The role of deacons is to assist in the smooth running of a local church and maintain church property.

Although the church does not have a written policy prohibiting the ordination of women, it traditionally ordains only men.

Health

Adventists sponsor a large number of hospitals and nonprofit health-related institutions.

Religious liberty

The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks protection under legislation not to affect its religious practices, such as protecting Adventist employees who wish to keep the Sabbath. The church advocates the separation of church and state.

Civil duties

Their manual says, "Even though we must stand apart from political and social strife, we should always, quietly and firmly, maintain an uncompromising stand for justice and right in civic affairs, along with full adherence to our religious convictions. It is our sacred responsibility to be loyal citizens of the nations to which we belong, rendering "to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matt. 22: 21)"

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1980 compiled the basic beliefs of this church into the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. All of these doctrines, with the exception of item concerning the premillennial return of Christ, are widely held among

conservative or evangelical Protestants (different groups of Protestants have different views on the millennium). Beliefs can be divided into groups:

I) Doctrines of God

1. Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of God's will. Adventist theologians believe that God inspired the thoughts of the biblical authors ('thought inspiration') and that they expressed those thoughts in their own words, but not that God dictated His words ('verbal inspiration') to them, as other denominations of conservative evangelicals believe. Adventists generally reject highly critical approaches to Scripture, that is, they avoid believing in the presuppositions and inferences of the historical-critical method.

2. Trinity

The Godhead consists of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The three are one.

3. God the Father is a personal and spiritual being, immortal, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is infinite in wisdom, love and faithfulness. He is the Creator of all things.

4. Jesus Christ, the Son, is God; therefore, of the same nature and essence as the father. He assumed human nature, living as a righteous man on earth, dying for the sins of mankind, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, where He intercedes for mankind. He will come again for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things.

5. The Holy Spirit is God, is eternal. He was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled the life of Christ with power and attracts human beings; those who respond, He renews and transforms in the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to always be with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and leads it into all truth in harmony with the Scriptures. However, among the Seventh-day Adventists a minority today is charismatic (manifesting gifts of the Holy Spirit such as divine healing and speaking in tongues or 'tongues of angels'). The gifts are strongly associated with those who hold more 'progressive' Adventist beliefs.

II) Doctrines of Humanity

6. Creation

The doctrine of Creationism from the Seventh-day Adventists' standpoint, based on the opening chapters of Genesis, is that they are to be interpreted literally, that is, all earthly life was originated in a six-day period, about 6,000 years ago, and a global Flood destroyed all land animals and humans except those saved in Noah's Ark. They do not believe in a symbolic interpretation for the days of Creation. Although they maintain that Creation week was a recent event (6,000 years), they believe the bible speaks of other worlds populated by intelligent beings in other parts of the universe that existed before Earth's Creation week – I have not been able to find any Adventist text

with irrefutable biblical evidence regarding this (they are based on from Ellen White's visions about God having revealed to her other places on earth, in heaven, and on other planets – Other inhabited planets are located in the vastness of space, well beyond the reach of space probes of our solar system 'contaminated by sin, and placed in quarantine due to this infection'). The 'sons of God' of Job 1: 6-12 (the NIV clearly writes, 'angels') are the 'Adams' of 'unfallen worlds' who find themselves in the presence of God somewhere in the universe. But if they themselves say, "Adventists generally reject highly critical approaches to Scripture, that is, they avoid believing in the presuppositions and inferences of the historical-critical method (Manual: Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists; I) Doctrines of God; 1. Holy Scriptures)," that is, if they reject presuppositions and inferences, and what we've read above is a presupposition, since there is not one verse in the bible that speaks clearly of it, then this is an incongruity. Furthermore, the hypothesis of worlds more spiritually evolved than our miserable planet is a spiritualist doctrine that other non-Christian religions share, and are not part of God's salvation project for us. Not even science has tangible evidence regarding this. None of this matters to us as Christians. Remember that Adventism was originally Millerite, and Miller knew far more about the occult sciences than any other Christian, such as Deism and Freemasonry.

Adventists believe in inorganic matter that was created before Creation week and then changed to its current form at the time of God's creative process. Therefore, computed dates from standard geology by Carbon-14 are irrelevant to dating the Creation of life on Earth, since it is an interpretive science.

7. Nature of Humanity

Holistic human nature

Humans are an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit in corporeal form. But according to Adventists beliefs (posted in Adventist magazine) they do not possess an immortal soul and there is no consciousness after death (commonly referred to as 'soul sleep'). This concept that humans do not possess an immortal soul is the same as that held by Jehovah's Witnesses: the soul does not survive death. Adventists believe that the Bible does not teach the inherent immortality of the soul and that it is an eschatological gift of God inseparable from the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15: 50-55), that is, the soul is not released when the body dies; it remains in the body unconsciously until the day of resurrection – "Adventist Magazine" – Apr. 15, 2024.

Now I ask, "If the soul does not separate from the body after death, why would Jesus have said to the evildoer at His side, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise' (Lk. 23: 43)? How would that man be with Jesus in paradise if the soul were dead and attached to the body?"

"How does the soul remain attached to a body that decays inside a tomb or is cremated?"

"Why did Jesus say: 'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.' (Jn. 5: 24)? Would it only be for the second coming or for now, for those who confess Him as Lord and Savior?"

"Why did Jesus say: 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' (Jn. 11: 25-26)? Would it only be for the day of the resurrection of the Last Day? Or would it be just for Lazarus, who received the miracle of the resurrection of his body at that moment? Or would it be the promise of eternal life for those who believe in Him and that begins now, at the moment of our surrender?"

“Why did Jesus say: ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they [*His sheep*] may have life, and have it abundantly.’ (Jn. 10: 10)? Doesn’t abundant life begin with the new birth right here, when we surrender ourselves to Him?”

Following: Man and woman were created in the image of God with individuality and freedom to think and act. When they disobeyed God, they fell from their exalted position. The image of God in them was distorted and they became subject to death. Their descendants share in this fallen nature and its consequences.

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III) Doctrines of salvation

8. The Great Controversy

In the common Christian view, mankind has been involved in a struggle between Jesus Christ and Satan since evil began in heaven, when Lucifer (an angelic being) rebelled against the Law of God. The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that ‘The Great Controversy’, as they call this, refers to the cosmic battle between Jesus Christ and Satan, also waged on Earth, as Ellen White wrote in her book ‘The Great Controversy’, published in 1858 and where she recounts the visions she received, along with biblical references. For Adventists, this is an important concept, for it makes us understand the origin of evil and its destruction, as well as the restoration of God’s original purpose for this world.

All mankind is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan concerning the character of God, His law and His sovereignty over the universe because of the rebellion of a spiritual being, which led Adam and Eve into sin. This brought to humanity the distortion of the image of God, the disorder of the created world and its devastation at the time of the Flood. In the end, God’s love will prevail. To help His people overcome this conflict, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and His angels to guide and protect His own, protect and sustain them in the way of salvation (Heb. 1: 4-14).

9. The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ

In short, it was an attitude of reconciliation on the part of God to man, providing the atonement for human sin. Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life (‘Conditional immortality’).

10. The Experience of Salvation

The Holy Spirit makes us recognize our sins and prompts us to repent. By faith, we can see Jesus as Lord and Savior, our Substitute. And that faith is a gift from God (Eph. 2: 8-9 – my note). Salvation comes to us by His grace (His undeserved favor upon us). Through His blood we are justified, freed from the dominion of sin, and we born again.

11. Growing in Christ

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us, perfects our character so that we reach perfection (Eph. 4: 13), keeping us in communion with Him in prayer, reading and meditating on His Word, singing praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. The Spirit transforms us every moment and

every task we perform, such as ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity.

IV) Church doctrines

12. The Church

The main weekly worship service takes place on Saturday, usually starting with Sabbath School, a bible study in the church, performed in small groups. The so-called 'Sabbath School Lesson' is officially produced, and it is a biblical text or particular doctrine each quarter. Parallel to adult worship, there are meetings for children and youth (similar to Sunday school in other churches). After a short break, the religious service begins, following the evangelical custom, with songs, prayers, an offering, including tithing (or money collection), reading of the Scriptures and the sermon. The instruments and forms of worship music vary greatly depending on the country. Some churches in North America have a contemporary Christian music style, while other churches sing more traditional hymns, including those from the Adventist Hymnal. Worship is restricted in terms of time and bodily manifestations.

13. The Remnant and its mission

The universal church is made up of all who believe in Christ, but there will be a remnant in the end-time who will keep the commandments of God and will have 'the testimony of Jesus' ("the remnant...which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (KJV) – Rev 12: 17). The gift of prophecy is the sign that identifies the Remnant Church. One of the questions asked by an elder to a candidate for membership in the church and baptism therein is (source: 2022-Seventh-day-Adventist-Church-Manual.pdf – Chapter 7, Baptism, Baptismal Vow and Commitment, Vow, item 13, page 52): "Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship? Do you desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world Church?"

(<https://gc.adventist.org/church-manual/>)

The Remnant announces the hour of judgment, proclaims salvation through Christ, and foretells that His coming is at hand. For them, this proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14 and coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reformation on earth.

14. Unity in the Body of Christ

The Church is a body with many members, called from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (1Cor. 12: 12-31; Eph. 1: 22-23; Eph. 4: 4-6; 16; Rom. 12: 5).

15. Baptism

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, after the candidate responds to public examination by the pastor before the congregation or by the Council of Elders, confirming the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Church ('Baptismal Covenant') and takes a Commitment vow ('Baptismal Vow'), the Church casts its vote and he is accepted as a member of the church and baptized. He receives a written copy of the Covenant, the Certificate of Baptism and the Commitment, duly signed. Baptism is by immersion. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, re-baptism by immersion is not required again for those who are already an Adventist; only for those who feel they have received new information about the teachings of Jesus or have gone through a 'new conversion', a

new religious experience with Jesus. Members from other churches who accept the church's beliefs and who have previously been baptized by immersion may request for re-baptism. Members who have turned away from the faith and presence of God and come back to congregate are re-baptized. Members of other churches in the Adventist Church who have not been able to obtain a transfer letter from their home church or members whose 'membership record' has been lost are also accepted into the Church and re-baptized. Generally, they are very cautious about receiving a person who has come from another Christian denomination.

16. The Lord's Supper

Adventist Churches generally practice open fellowship ('all who have dedicated their lives to the Lord') four times a year. It begins with a foot-washing ceremony, known as the 'Ordinance of Humility', based on the Gospel account of John chapter 13. The 'Ordinance of Humility' is intended to imitate Jesus' act at the Last Supper, when He washed the feet of His disciples, and remind the participants of the need to humbly serve one another. According their manual, in the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists – item 16 – page 173 – The Lord's Supper, it is written, "The Master ordained the service of foot-washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christ like humility, and to unite our hearts in love." Then, they consider the foot-washing ceremony as an ordinance from Jesus, and which is part of the Lord's Supper.

Participants separate: women in one room and men in another, although some congregations allow couples to perform the ordinance on one another and families are often encouraged to participate together. Upon completion, participants return to the sanctuary for the Lord's Supper, which consists of unleavened bread and unfermented grape juice. For Seventh-day Adventists, the Supper has a memorial character, that is, it reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

17. Spiritual gifts and ministries – 1 Cor. 12: 1-11; Eph. 4: 7-16; Rom. 12: 3-8. God bestows spiritual gifts on all members of His Church, in all ages. However, a minority of Seventh-day Adventists today are charismatic (manifesting gifts of the Holy Spirit such as divine healing and speaking in tongues or 'tongues of angels'). The gifts are strongly associated with those who hold more 'progressive' Adventist beliefs.

18. The Gift of Prophecy – Rom. 12: 6; 1 Cor. 12: 10; Eph. 4: 11; Rev. 19: 10. Ellen G. White's ministry is commonly referred to as the 'Spirit of Prophecy' and messages from her speak with prophetic authority, providing comfort, guidance, instruction and correction to the church according to the Bible. In other words: unlike Calvinists, who believe that the gift of prophecy ended with the apostle John, Adventists believe that the prophetic gift was given by the Holy Spirit to the Christian church, and not just to the apostles (Rom. 12: 6; 1 Cor. 12: 10, 28; Eph. 4: 11-14), and they believe that this gift was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. But as for other servants of God from other denominations today who call themselves prophets, I can't tell you whether they believe it or not.

V) The doctrines of Christian living

19. The Law of God

God's Law is embodied in the Ten Commandments, which remain binding on Christians.

20. The Sabbath

The Sabbath should be observed on the seventh day of the week, specifically, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Part of Friday can be spent in preparation for the Sabbath: meals, housekeeping, etc. Adventists can gather for Friday night service to welcome Saturday. They abstain from secular work on Saturday as well as purely secular forms of recreation such as watching non-religious television programs and competitive sports. But they encourage nature walks, family-oriented activities, charity work and other activities of a compassionate nature. On Saturday afternoons, activities vary widely depending on cultural, ethnic, and social background, such as a fellowship lunch for members and visitors, and activities with Adventist Youth.

21. Stewardship

Regardless of the church, we are all God's stewards, responsible for the proper use of time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources, which He has placed in our care, but He is the legal owner of all of these. Therefore, we serve Him and our fellowmen, and give the tithes and offerings for the proclamation of His Gospel and for His support and church growth. If, for some reason, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is unable to tithe a certain amount, he should consult with the officials.

22. Christian behavior

Christians are called to be godly people who think, feel, and act in accordance with God's principles. Therefore, for the Spirit to recreate in us the character of Jesus, it is necessary to be involved with things that will produce in our lives the fruits of purity, health and joy similar to those of Christ.

23. Marriage and the Family

Marriage was divinely established by God as a lifelong union between a man and a woman, in loving companionship. For the Christian, the marital commitment is to God, as well as to the spouse, and should only be made between partners who share the same faith. God left in the Law the release for divorce in cases of adultery. As for raising children, parents should educate them to love and obey the Lord. As for a second marriage, they are quite strict, hardly allowing a second union.

VI) The doctrines of the restoration

24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

25. The Second Coming of Christ

26. Death and Resurrection

27. The Millennium and the end of sin

28. The New Earth

COMMENTS ABOUT SOME SDA BELIEFS

In the Seventh-day Adventists Church Manual (2022), corresponding to the Fundamental Beliefs (VI – The doctrines of the restoration), there are topics that deserve comment:

24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary ('the investigative judgment')

26. Death and Resurrection

25. The Second Coming of Christ

27. The Millennium and the End of Sin

24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary ('the investigative judgment')

For Seventh-day Adventists, "there is a sanctuary in heaven where Christ, as our great High Priest, ministers on our behalf (interceding for us with the Father since His ascension), making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross".

In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days (Dan. 8: 14), according to the Millerite interpretation and later interpreted by Ellen White, Jesus began to clean the heavenly sanctuary, that is, Jesus began the second and last stage of His expiatory ministry, through what they called the 'investigative judgment.' According to this view, the 'investigative judgment' (also called 'the pre-Advent judgment' or, more precisely, 'the pre-second Advent judgment' – it would be a Pre-Advent judgment, before the second coming of Christ, so to speak) is part of the elimination of all sin, and was prefigured in the cleansing of the Hebrew sanctuary (Heb. 9: 7), on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur, Lev. 23: 27-28; Lev. 16: 29-30), with the blood of animals, but heavenly things are purified by the blood of Jesus.

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (2022) page 176 (<https://gc.adventist.org/church-manual/>), "the 'investigative judgment' asserts that the divine judgment of Christians has been underway since 1844 and reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent (Lv 16; Nm 14: 34; Ez 4: 6; Dn 7: 9-27; Dn 8: 13-14; Dn 9: 24-27; Hb 1: 3; Hb 2: 16, 17; Hb 4: 14-16; Hb 8: 1-5; Hb 9: 11-28; Hb 10: 19-22; Ap 8: 3-5; Ap 11: 19; Ap 14: 6-7; 12; Ap 20: 12; Ap 22: 11-12)." – literal copy.

Let's explain better:

In fact, the bible says that the Lord is sitting at the right hand of God (Mk. 14: 62; Mk. 16: 19; Rom. 8: 34; Col. 3: 1; Heb. 12: 2; 1 Pet. 3: 22) and intercedes for us. Upon dying on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn (that is, the curtain of the Jewish Temple, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies), symbolizing that we have free entry to His throne, direct passage to Him to ask Him for what we need. Jesus was God's sanctuary with us on earth. When He referred to the 'sanctuary' He was talking about His own body, as today we are God's sanctuary, where His Spirit dwells (Ezek. 37: 25b-27 – Jesus the 'Prince', the Messiah, would be the sanctuary of God as men; Ezekiel was speaking of the spiritual tabernacle ('the dwelling place') brought by the Messiah, as it was at His first coming. In the New Jerusalem, He will continue to be this spiritual sanctuary of God with us. Therefore, there is no sanctuary in heaven, where Christ ministers; He is the sanctuary: Matt. 26: 61; Matt. 27: 40; Matt. 27: 51; Mk. 14: 58; Mk. 15: 29; Jn. 2: 19; Act. 7: 56; Rom. 8: 34; 1 Cor. 3: 16-17; 1 Cor. 6: 19; 2 Cor. 6: 16; Heb. 4: 14-16; Heb. 10: 19-22; Rev. 21: 3 – reminding us of His incarnation).

As for 'investigative judgment', they think that in 1844, when Miller announced the second coming of Christ, which did not occur, Jesus began a 'second part' of the dispensation of grace (God's second dispensation for mankind; the second Covenant), making it clear to His angels who from the dead will rise at His second coming, and beginning to purify those who are His, showing also who is prepared to be caught up.

Repeating the comment regarding the chronological time of this prophecy of Daniel, he was referring to the time elapsed from the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Seleucid king (around 168-167 BC) to its purification by Judas Maccabeus. The Maccabean revolt lasted from 167 BC to 160 BC, that is, 2300 days, more precisely, 6 years, 3 months and 18 days.

Let's clear up the doubts:

In the first place, Jesus did not begin the second and last stage of His atoning ministry, for He has already spiritually fulfilled all that He had to do on the cross. He doesn't need to complete what He has already completed. All deliverance and righteousness to us, and all judgment on sin and all evil, was done: "It is finished!" (Jn. 19: 30). When He returns the second time, it is to judge those who have not let themselves be sanctified by His Spirit here, in their lifetimes; and to pass judgment on those already destined for eternal damnation (Rev. 22: 11).

In second place, He has always done and always will make His judgment here on earth in all ages over any kind of wickedness, perversity, and injustice whenever He chooses, not just from 1844 onwards.

In the third place, the spiritual beings (angels and demons) see those who are sealed with His blood on their foreheads, at the moment of their conversion to Him, and those who are not. It doesn't matter whether they are alive or dead, they already have the guarantee of their eternal salvation. They have already gone through the 1st resurrection and will receive the 2nd as a reward for their faithfulness to Christ.

The 1st resurrection [the 'resurrection of the righteous' (Lk. 14: 14) or 'resurrection of life' (Jn. 5: 24)] means the spiritual resurrection now, of those who accept Jesus, are born again in the spirit, dies to the old self and resurrects to a new life with Christ.

The 2nd resurrection (the 'resurrection to the judgment' or 'the resurrection to condemnation') occurs on the Day of Judgment, with the bodily resurrection of the dead: the dead of the wicked will receive condemnation, while those who received Jesus in life as Lord and Savior, those who have gone through the experience of the 1st resurrection (the spiritual one), will not go through death, they will not be condemned.

In short:

When the Father and Jesus (today in His full spiritual strength and totally aware of God's times) decide that 'it's enough', the Time of Grace ends and all is accomplished ['the close of human probation' as it is written in their manual]. Jesus Himself made it clear in the gospels that everything will happen quickly, in the blink of an eye, and that our part is to sanctify ourselves, prepare ourselves for His coming and clean our garments.

Why complicate things with such difficult words and concepts and with reasoning that looks like spiritualism? Wouldn't it be easier to acknowledge that Miller made a mistake, rather than clinging to the wrong thing and trying to fix or explain something that most likely didn't come from God, but from the flesh? I am not judging God or His servants, but analyzing doctrines that may confuse many.

26. Death and Resurrection

For them, until the Lord returns, death is an unconscious state. Then, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet the Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the wicked, will take place a thousand years later. This is reinforced by item 7 of their manual (Fundamental Beliefs), which speaks of the nature of humanity, as we saw earlier. Let us repeat: Humans are an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit in corporeal form (Holistic human nature).

But according to Adventists beliefs (posted in Adventist magazine) human beings do not possess an immortal soul and there is no consciousness after death (commonly referred to as 'soul sleep'). This concept that humans do not possess an immortal soul is the same as that held by Jehovah's Witnesses: the soul does not survive death. Adventists believe that the Bible does not teach the inherent immortality of the soul and that it is an eschatological gift of God inseparable from the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15: 50-55), that is, the soul is not released when the body dies; it remains in the body unconsciously until the day of resurrection – "Adventist Magazine" – Apr. 15, 2024.

First point: the dead are not actually unconscious; this was a misinterpretation of the apostle Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15: 20; 1 Thess. 4: 13 ('those who have fallen asleep'). The situation Paul was referring here is that the Greeks actually believed in the immortality of the soul but doubted the resurrection of the body (as they were doubting the resurrection of Jesus), so they quarreled with him at the Areopagus at Athens (Acts 17: 31-34). Jesus said to the repentant evildoer crucified beside Him that he would be with Him in Paradise that very day (Lk. 23: 43: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise"). How would that man be with Jesus in Paradise if the soul were dead and attached to the body? If Jesus said that and John reports in Rev 6: 9-10 that the souls of the martyrs cried out for justice, it is because they were conscious in heaven with the Lord. And in Rev 20: 4 he writes that the souls of those beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus lived and reigned with Christ in heaven. The number 1000 is the symbolic number of the age of the church, fullness, wholeness, of a spiritual condition of the redeemed (the souls of the dead – conscious – in heaven with Jesus, and the living doing His work on earth, preaching His word of salvation and repentance).

Second point: the 2nd resurrection is not the resurrection of the wicked, which will take place a thousand years later. The 2nd resurrection (the 'resurrection to the judgment' or 'the resurrection to condemnation'), as it was explained above, is the bodily resurrection of the dead for the Day of Judgment, before the white throne: the dead of the wicked will receive condemnation, while those who received Jesus in life as Lord and Savior, those who have gone through the experience of the 1st resurrection (the spiritual one), will not go through death, will not enter into condemnation.

Third point: how does the soul remain attached to a body that decays inside a tomb or is cremated?

25. The Second Coming of Christ

27. The Millennium and the End of Sin

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (2022) page 178, it is written: "The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever (Jer. 4: 23-26; Ezek. 28: 18, 19; Mal. 4: 1; 1 Cor. 6: 2, 3; Rev. 20; 21: 1-5)." The wicked will not suffer eternal torment in hell, but will be destroyed forever (theory of Annihilationism) and there will be eternal life for those who believe in Christ ('Conditional Immortality').

For Seventh-day Adventists, Jesus Christ will visibly return to earth after a time of trouble, during which the Sabbath will become a worldwide judgment (in other words,

the seven-year period of the Great Tribulation, the seven-year week of Daniel 9: 27). The Second Coming will be followed by a millennial reign of the saints in heaven (In this they differ from Dispensational premillennialism and Historical premillennialism, theological lines of interpretation, which believe that Christ's millennial reign, a literal golden age of a thousand years of peace, will be on earth).

What a strange phrase was this, "During this time the wicked dead will be judged"? Would a God who created the Universe and the Earth in 6 literal days take 1,000 years to judge the dead? And then would He raise them up to make war against a holy city and glorified saints?

The millennium is still a very controversial issue among the several branches of Christianity (Deut. 29: 29a; Dan. 12: 4b; 10), but we can think in a simpler way about the end times when we read the prophecies of Jesus Himself (Matt. 24: 15-31; Mk. 13: 1-27; Lk. 21: 5-28); in 1 Cor. 15: 28, by Paul and in Daniel 12: 1-3, by Daniel.

In other words, the second coming will immediately inaugurate the consummation, the final judgment, and the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21: 1; Isa. 65: 17; Isa. 66: 22; 2 Pet. 3: 13; 1 Cor. 15: 24 -28). The Gospels, Paul's letters and the general letters do not speak of a millennium.

More explanation on the theme of Revelation (Panoramic view) and Revelation chapter 20 (Millennium):

https://www.searaagape.com.br/livrodeapocalipse_visaogeral.html

https://www.searaagape.com.br/livrodeapocalipse_capitulo20.html#mil-anos-omilenio



South St. Paul Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Church in South St. Paul, Minnesota.
Photo: Yotmylmwyd – wikipedia.org

As for the theory of Annihilationism, the bible doesn't agree with this theory, for in Rev. 20: 10 it's written: "And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and **they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**" This means that they will not be exactly

annihilated, as the words of the manual make us understand, but ‘they will be tormented day and night forever and ever,’ that is, they will suffer eternal penalty, they will be tormented for the rest of eternity; an everlasting separation from God (death = eternal separation from God).

The ‘New Earth’ is not physical, it is spiritual (actually another kind of matter, like the glorified body of Jesus); not exactly a physical planet like the one we live on today).

Link: https://www.searaagape.com.br/livrodeapocalipse_capitulo21.html

EVANGELICALISM

Evangelicalism (Evangelical Christianity or evangelical Protestantism) reached the USA during the revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries and still continues to grow. It is a worldwide inter-denominational movement (An interdenominational movement is a group that is not tied to a specific religious denomination. It is open to people from different churches, and each of the participants in this type of ministry is linked to a denomination, to a local Church) within Protestant Christianity that maintains the belief that the essence of the Gospel consists of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, solely through faith in Jesus’ atonement. Evangelicalism also removes the power of rituals, giving strength to the piety of human beings, emphasizing personal conversion (the new birth), biblical authority; it is also committed to express and share the gospel actively.

Its origins are usually traced to 1738 with John Wesley and other early Methodists during the First Great Awakening. Among leaders and major figures of the evangelical Protestant movement were George Fox (leader of the Quakers), John Wesley and George Whitfield (a cleric and evangelist, companion of John Wesley), among others. The movement gained great momentum during the 18th and 19th with the First Great Awakenings in Great Britain and the United States (1730-1755).

Evangelicals can be found in nearly every Protestant denomination and tradition, particularly within the Reformed (Calvinist), Baptist, Methodist (Wesleyan-Arminian), Moravian, Pentecostal and charismatic churches.

The word ‘evangelical’ has its etymological roots in the Greek word euangelion (εὐαγγέλιον), which means ‘gospel’ or ‘good news.’

During the Reformation, Protestant theologians embraced the term as referring to ‘gospel truth.’ Martin Luther referred to the evangelische Kirche (‘evangelical church’) to distinguish Protestants from Catholics in the Catholic Church. In the **21st century**, evangelical has continued in use as a synonym for (mainline) Protestant in some Lutheran churches of Germany and America. In the English-speaking world, ‘evangelical’ was commonly applied to describe the series of revival movements that occurred in Great Britain and North America during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, that is, any aspect of the movement that began in the 1730s.

The word ‘church’ has several meanings among evangelicals. It can refer to the universal church (the body of Christ) including all Christians everywhere. It can also refer to the local church, which is the visible representation of the invisible church. It is responsible for teaching and administering the sacraments or ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but some evangelicals also consider foot-washing as an ordinance as well).

The most common form of church government within Evangelicalism is congregational polity, especially common among non-denominational evangelical churches. Common ministries within evangelical congregations are pastor, elder (presbyter), deacon and evangelist and worship leader. The ministry of bishop with a

function of supervision over churches on a regional or national scale is present in all the Evangelical Christian denominations. The term bishop is explicitly used in certain denominations. Some evangelical denominations officially authorize the ordination of women in churches.

The main Christian festivals celebrated by evangelicals are Christmas, Pentecost (by most evangelical denominations) and Easter for all believers.

Later, from Evangelicalism another movement emerged, Pentecostalism.

CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

Even non-Pentecostal Christians in Protestant and Catholic churches (Charismatic Movement) accepted the idea of Pentecostal beliefs regarding Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Christians in traditional churches in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world began to accept the Pentecostal idea that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is available to Christians today, even if they would not accept other principles of formal Pentecostalism. The charismatic movement then began to grow in the main denominations. Episcopal charismatics, Lutherans, Catholics, Methodists, Baptists emerged and during that period of time the term ‘charismatic’ was used to refer to similar movements that existed within the denominations.

However, Pentecostals used the term ‘charismatic’ to refer to those who were part of churches and denominations that grew from the beginning of the 1906 revival, which took place at Azusa Street in Los Angeles through the black preacher William J. Seymour. Classical Pentecostals formed strictly Pentecostal congregations or denominations, unlike the so-called ‘charismatics’, who adopted the motto: ‘bloom where God planted you’, that is, they let the Holy Spirit pour His gifts into their denominations of origin, without its members having to separate to form new congregations or denominations.

Thus, for many critics, Pentecostalism is regarded as ‘the first wave of the Holy Spirit’, and the charismatic movement as ‘the second wave.’

PENTECOSTALISM

The Pentecostal movement had a restorationist conception at its origin and saw the baptism in the Holy Spirit expressed in glossolalia (speaking in foreign tongues or ‘tongue of angels’) as proof of the restoration of Early Christianity. In the early decades of the Church, charismatic phenomena were common. The term ‘charismatic’ originates from the Greek word ‘charismata’, which refers to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Congregational and Presbyterian churches that profess a traditionally Calvinistic or Reformed theology, there are different views on the continuation or cessation of the gifts (charismata) of the Spirit today. A minority of Seventh-day Adventists today is charismatic (with the manifestation of gifts of the Holy Spirit such as divine healing and speaking in strange tongues or ‘tongue of angels’). These gifts are strongly associated with those who hold more ‘progressive’ Adventist beliefs. However, many denominations have begun to accept the Pentecostal idea that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is available to Christians today.

The term ‘Pentecostal’ is derived from Pentecost, the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks, also called the Feast of Firstfruits (Ex. 23: 16; Ex. 34: 22; 26; Lev. 23: 9-14; Lev. 23: 15-22; Num. 28: 26; Deut. 16: 9-12), commemorated in Judaism with the name

of Shavuot. For Christians, this event commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus Christ, as described in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2. Pentecostalism places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which allows the Christian to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit and power, including spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing. For Pentecostals, their commitment to biblical authority, spiritual gifts and miracles shows them that the movement is a reflection of the same kind of spiritual power and teachings that were found in the Apostolic Age of the Early Church. For this reason, some Pentecostals also call the Pentecostal movement the apostolic movement, thus restoring the office of the apostle in contemporary Christianity.

Pentecostalism eventually ended up generating hundreds of new denominations, including large groups like the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Christ, both in the United States and elsewhere. Ambrose J. Tomlison was a Pentecostal pioneer and founded the Church of God in Cleveland (USA) in 1903. He also founded the Church of God of Prophecy in the same year. He saw the history of Christianity as an unfolding of God-driven restorations: justification by faith by Lutheran influence; the personal conversion influenced by Wesley and the Holiness movement influenced by the Methodist Church. All of this culminated in the manifestation of the new languages (a sign of the Pentecostal revival), which already began in the churches of Ambrose J. Tomlison. In 1917 Aimee McPherson preached that the function of Pentecostalism was to restore the charismatic power of Early Christianity. In the 1950s, William Marrion Branham became an important figure in the Latter Rain movement, which saw itself as a last restorationist dispensation of gifts and divine healing.

Pentecostals emphasize the four fundamental beliefs of Pentecostalism: Jesus saves, baptizes with the Holy Spirit; heals the body; and He is coming again for those who have been saved. They are evangelical, for they emphasize the reliability of the Bible and the need to transform the individual's life through faith in Jesus. Like evangelicals, Pentecostals believe in divine inspiration and biblical inerrancy, with some believing in the doctrine of biblical infallibility. These two terms have a slight difference. Biblical inerrancy is the doctrine that, in its original form, the Bible is completely free of contradictions, including its historical and scientific parts. In other words, it has no errors of any kind. For example: the character of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are always true and immutable; historical events can be correctly placed in the times of humanity; the Bible is the ultimate authority on divine truth, not the church nor human theories, interpretations, traditions or doctrines. On the other hand, biblical infallibility ensures that the Bible is inerrant when it comes to matters of faith and its practice, but not in relation to history and science, for example: it conflicts with archaeology and other branches of science. This is not true, because we have to take into account the concepts and knowledge of the time in which each writer lived, in addition to the fact that the Bible is not intended to be a compendium of History, geography, botany, zoology or archaeology, but rather to reveal the truth, the will and the character of God.

For Pentecostals, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ were the milestone of God's reconciliation with man, for Jesus forgave our sins. These are the 'good news' (meaning of the word 'gospel'). Therefore, it is fundamental for Pentecostalism that people are 'born again.' The new birth is received by the grace of God through faith in Christ, when people confess Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. At being born again, the believer is regenerated, justified, adopted into the family of God, and sanctified. For Pentecostals, the doctrine of salvation is more

Arminian than Calvinist, that is, it depends on man's free will; faith and repentance are necessary for salvation and continue to be necessary for the continuation of that salvation ("Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling – Phil. 2: 12b"). It is not water baptism that saves, but it is an ordinance of God to seal the covenant made with Him in the prayer of surrender. Pentecostalism also encourages the pursuit of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to help the believer's growth.

I'll repeat briefly the Great Awakenings or Great Evangelical Revivals described in the beginning of the study:

- The First Great Awakening or First Great Evangelical Revival – 1730s and 1740s (some say 1755) in Great Britain and its thirteen North American colonies.
- The Second Great Awakening (1790-1840) began in the USA in the 1790s and early 1800s among Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists.
- The Third Great Awakening (1855-1930) influenced Protestant Pietist denominations and gained strength with postmillennial belief in the Second Coming of Christ; the worldwide missionary movement emerged and applied Christianity to social issues, moral causes such as the abolition of slavery. William J. Seymour, a black preacher in Los Angeles, preached and sparked the Azusa Street Revival in 1906.

WILLIAM SEYMOUR – Azusa Street (1906)

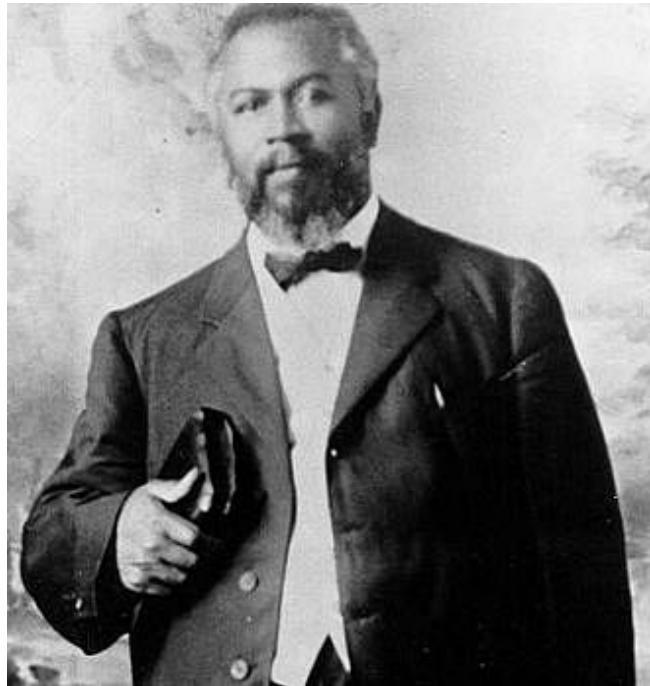
William J. Seymour (1870-1922) was born in Centerville, Louisiana, USA. His parents Simon and Phyllis Seymour were former slaves, and belonged to the natural religions of Africa. Afterwards they became Catholics, but William was raised in the Baptist Church from the age of 14, for the church was close to his home. Due to the great racial segregation, he moved to the north of the country, to the city of Indianapolis, in the State of Indiana. By this time, around age of 25, he contracted smallpox and became blind in his left eye. There he attended the Simpson Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church (possibly another African-American church), and then he experienced the new birth in Christ.

At age 30, he joined the Reformation Movement in the Church of God in Christ (its headquarters was in Indiana) and specialized in holiness theology, explaining that sanctification is a post-conversion experience that results in complete holiness, and teaching about divine healing and the promise of a worldwide revival of the Holy Spirit before the Rapture. Five years later he moved to Houston, where he attended Charles Fox Parham's Bible School in a chair placed in the corridor, for he was black. It was there that he learned the doctrines of the Holiness movement and developed a belief in the gift of tongues, conferred by the Holy Spirit as proof of His baptism. He later moved to Los Angeles, where he started as pastor of a church in the city. He was eventually expelled because his message of revival and baptism in the Holy Spirit was not accepted.

The revival began on April 9th, 1906, in a prayer meeting in a house, where some brethren began to speak in other tongues, but Seymour himself was baptized in the Holy Spirit three days later, on April 12th, 1906.

So he ended up founding his own church in an abandoned temple of the African Methodist Church in Los Angeles, located at Azusa Street. There, a great revival took place on April 18th, 1906, and Seymour not only broke down racial barriers in Christ's church, but also barriers to women participating in church services. His congregation, composed mostly of poor blacks and immigrants, moved by the Spirit of God spoke in

foreign languages (glossolalia) and his preaching brought healings and miracles. This renewal process took place from 1906 until 1909 (some theologians say 1915) and caused many controversies in the church, some persons being in favor, others against.



William Joseph Seymour (the early 1910s) – Unknown author – Wikipedia.org



The Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street (1907), now considered to be the birthplace of Pentecostalism – Unknown author – Wikipedia.org

This movement became known as Pentecostalism, in reference to the manifestation of the baptism with the Holy Spirit that first occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2). This event gave rise to most Pentecostal denominations, such as Assembly

of God (founded in Brazil by Swedish missionaries Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg) and the Christian Congregation (founded in Brazil by Italian Luigi Francesconi (Louis Francescon), former elder of the Presbyterian Church, who experienced a revival in Chicago, similar to that of Seymour). William Seymour died of two heart attacks on September 28, 1922.

PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

Let's talk about the main and most known **Pentecostal Churches**.

1) The Assemblies of God originated from the revival of William J. Seymour at Azusa Street (Los Angeles) in 1906. The new Pentecostal doctrine brought divergence in the USA. While a group approved, another one rejected. Thus, adherents of Pentecostalism were dismissed on June 18, 1911 from the more traditional churches. In April 1914, after the separation of the Church of God in Christ (headquartered in Houston), a predominantly African-American leadership denomination, the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States of America was created. The World Assemblies of God Fellowship today consists of more than 144 self-governing national groupings of churches that together form the world's largest Pentecostal denomination. Among all Christian denominations, it ranks seventh, following the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council.

The doctrine of the Assemblies of God follows the classic Pentecostal and evangelical context. Its belief is Trinitarian, it believes the bible is divinely inspired and is the rule of faith and conduct authorized and infallible. Baptism is by immersion and is practiced as an ordinance instituted by Jesus for those who have been saved; the shift from being dead in sin to being alive in Christ. The Supper is also practiced as an ordinance; the bread and wine are a remembrance of Jesus' suffering and death and a prophecy of His second coming. The Assemblies of God also place a strong emphasis on fulfilling the Great Commission and believe this is the calling of the church. Like classical Pentecostals, the Assemblies of God believe that all Christians have the right and should seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit, for it is a distinct experience and generally subsequent to salvation. The baptism in the Holy Spirit empowers the believer for Christian life and service. The initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues, as the Lord grants each one (Act. 2: 4). The Assembly of God also believes in the actual outpouring of other spiritual gifts, such as divine healing, and encourages the believer to make use of them.

2) International Church of The Foursquare Gospel (considered as a First Wave Pentecostal Church)

It is an evangelical Pentecostal Christian denomination founded in the USA in 1923 by preacher and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. The church has its origins in a vision of the 'Foursquare Gospel' (or 'Full Gospel'), representing the four aspects of Christ's ministry: The Lord saves, baptizes with the Holy Spirit, He heals and is the King who will come soon; a vision based on the four cherubim of Ezekiel chapter 1. Despite some affinities with Pentecostals, their beliefs are interdenominational. Aimee Semple McPherson opened the Angelus Temple in Echo Park in 1923, seating 5,300 people. The beliefs of the Church of The Foursquare Gospel are expressed in its declaration of faith, compiled by its founder. She also wrote a shorter and more concise creedal statement.

The church believes in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. It believes that human beings were created in the image of God, but because of the fall, they are naturally depraved and sinful. It believes in the substitutionary atonement brought about by Christ's death. The church teaches that salvation is by grace through faith and not by good works. Believers are justified by faith and are born again upon repentance and acceptance of Christ as Lord and King. Consistent with its belief in human free will, the Church of The Foursquare Gospel also teaches that it is possible for a believer to relapse into bad ways or in the same mistake of before or commit apostasy. Sanctification is a continuous process of spiritual growth, and Christian perfection and holiness can be achieved through surrender and consecration to God and this growth is promoted by bible study and prayer.

The baptism of believers by immersion and the Lord's Supper are ordinances.

The Church of The Foursquare Gospel believes in the baptism with the Holy Spirit as an event separate from conversion and enabling both the individual and the church to fulfill the mission of evangelism. The baptism of the Spirit is received the same way it was in the Early Church, with spiritual gifts (which continue in operation for the building up of the church) and possibly (but not necessarily) speaking in tongues. The evidence of a filled with Spirit is the presence of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. As for divine healing, the Church of the Foursquare Gospel believes that the sick can be healed in response to prayer, for divine healing is part of Christ's atonement, that is, He has already taken up all our diseases (Isa. 53: 4-5). It believes in premillennialism (Jesus will return to earth before the millennium) and there will be a future final judgment, where the righteous will receive eternal life and the wicked, eternal punishment.

They usually anoint the sick and collect the tithe.

The ecclesiastical government there has an 'Episcopal character', as instituted by its founder. Aimee Semple McPherson had veto power over church decisions, appointed all officers, and hired all employees. The Foursquare Convention is the chief body of the Foursquare Church in making decisions. Convention meetings are annual, and members include international officers and licensed ministers.

In general, Neo-Pentecostal churches make intensive use of electronic, print and editorial media; some apply business administration techniques, with the use of marketing, statistical planning, analysis of results, etc. Some preach Prosperity Theology, whereby the Christian is destined for earthly prosperity, rejecting the traditional austere customs of the Pentecostals. Neo-Pentecostalism is the most influential Pentecostal stream, fastest-growing and also the most liberal in matters of customs.

RESTORATIONISM – MORMONS AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

One of the movements that emerged in the 19th century during the Second Great Awakening in the United States (1790-1840) and also influenced the Church was the Restoration Movement (also known as the American Restoration Movement) on the part of those who believe that historic Christianity, at some point in its existence, apostatized from the faith; therefore, it is necessary to restore the early Christianity of the apostolic age. Although Restorationism was prevalent among Protestants (Anabaptists, Puritans, Landmarkists, Hussites and Waldensians) other movements such as Adventism, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses (from the Bible Students Movement) sought to reestablish a visible and restored church in accordance with biblical principles, not just a

spiritual restoration of Early Christianity, as suggested by the English Presbyterian Pastor Edward Irving.

MORMONS

Mormonism is a Restorationist Movement founded by Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844) in western New York in the 1820s and 1830s. In 1820, at the age of fourteen, Joseph Smith Jr., very curious to know which church was really the Lord's church, he went to pray in a grove near his house, where he saw a very bright pillar of light above his head, descending upon him, and two beings of light, with splendor and glory, which he supposed to be God and Jesus. One of them called him by name. And he was told that Joseph should not join any of the churches existing at that time, for the church of Jesus Christ was not on earth. Sometime after the first vision, he saw another being in the form of an angel named Moroni, who supposedly lived in the Americas around 400 AD. This spiritual being spoke about a book written in golden plates ('The Golden Plates') with unknown characters, and that four years later John would receive to translate it. He translated these plates into English in 1827, giving rise to the 'Book of Mormon', which the ancient Prophet named Mormon dictated to him. According to the book, Moroni, son of Mormon, was the last Nephite prophet who lived approximately 400 years after Christ. Nephite, according to the interpretation of this book, was an ancient people coming from Jerusalem, long before the birth of Jesus Christ (600 BC), and guided by the Lord to a promised land (the Americas). Therefore, The Book of Mormon is the faithful record of the ancestral civilization of all American Indians. After he died, Moroni turned into an angel. According to the prophet Joseph Smith himself, 'Mormon' means 'very good.'

Along with the Bible, with 'Doctrine and Covenants' and 'Pearl of Great Price', the Book of Mormon is considered divine scripture to Latter-day Saints (LDS). The Book of Mormon (also called 'Another Testament of Jesus Christ') is not another gospel; just a testimony of Jesus Christ in the Americas, that is, it tells the events of the first indigenous peoples of America before the arrival of Christopher Columbus and their relationship with God. During the period of translating the characters from the golden plates, Smith Jr. was assisted by Oliver Cowdery who was his scribe.

According to Mormons, not only Moroni, but also Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, and several other prophets, apostles, and heavenly beings came from heaven and spoke with their leader. John the Baptist, in another supposed vision of Joseph Smith, bestowed upon him by the laying on of hands, the priesthood of Aaron which gave him the authority to baptize. A few days later, Peter and James, and John, who held the keys of the kingdom of God, appeared to him and by laying on of hands bestowed upon him the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Joseph Smith Jr. is defined by his followers as 'the first prophet of this age' or 'the Prophet of the Restoration.'

On April 6th, 1830, with only 6 people, as the minimum number required by American law, the church was formally organized. And in that same year, 1830, Smith Jr. published the Book of Mormon, becoming the first elder of the church he initiated and called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In fact, the Church's name underwent several changes during the 1830s. Initially it was called 'The Church of Jesus Christ'; then 'The Church of God'. In 1834 it became 'The Church of Latter-day Saints.' In April 1838, the name was officially changed to 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' as it is known today.

The term ‘Mormon’ is derived from the name of the prophet Mormon, the author of the scriptures that made up The Book of Mormon, and who was dictated to Joseph Smith Jr. Although ‘Mormon’ is used to refer to the church members, since Mormon is the author of the doctrine they follow, they prefer to be called members of ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ or just ‘Latter-day Saints’ (LDS).

There were many persecutions of the Saints due to cultural and political differences between the communities and controversial issues at the time, such as the Abolition of Slavery. Mormons were opposed to slavery. By growing in number, the Mormon community was a political threat as it gained weight in votes and undermined the old government structure. At the time, the church also claimed that plural marriage (or polygamy) is biblically authorized, but under pressure from the Utah state government the formal church publicly renounced the practice in 1890. They suffered acts of violence and segregation, such as the burning of caravans led by missionaries and pilgrims, and culminated in the murder of Joseph Smith Jr. and his brother inside a prison cell in Carthage, Illinois. Brigham Young (1801–1877) was the new leader, considered the second prophet among Church members, although some wanted it to be Joseph Smith III, Smith’s son, who believed it should be by order of the family, so like kings in monarchies. Brigham Young was the second LDS president from 1847 until his death in 1877. He founded Salt Lake City and served as the first governor of the Utah Territory. He was a polygamist.

Members of the Latter-day Saint movement, like all other 19th-century restorationists, are adherents of Adventism, that is, this dispensation is the fullness of times or the last dispensation before the second coming of Jesus Christ.

A minority of Mormons, for example the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, whose name was changed in the early 2000s to Community of Christ, believe in the traditional Protestant theology of trinitarianism and moved away from some of the doctrines of Mormonism (it was born of members who supported Joseph Smith III as a leader in the 19th century).

Other groups in the Latter-day Saint movement include the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which supports the linear succession of leadership from Smith’s descendants, and the controversial Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which defends the practice of polygamy until today.

For some historians like Sydney E. Ahlstrom it is even difficult to say what Mormonism is. As he wrote in 1982, Mormonism is a mixture of a sect, a mystery cult, a new religion and an American subculture all at the same time.

According to Latter-Day Saints, Jesus came to restore the priesthood, that is, His authority over the entire Church, following the organization He used when He was on earth: prophets, apostles, and other authorized officers who are now permitted to perform ordinances (sacred rituals) in order to allow families to be united for all eternity, as well as enabling them to receive new revelations.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (LDS)

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), the Holy Bible is not sovereign; the Heavenly Father speaks and reveals new scriptures continually through prophets (men divinely authorized and appointed as special witnesses of Christ). For them, the bible goes along with other books as inspired as it, not to replace it, but to complement it: the Book of Mormon (or ‘Another Testament of

Jesus Christ'), 'Doctrine and Covenants' and 'Pearl of Great Price', containing revelations given to Smith and other religious leaders.

Certain religious groups that emerged during the Protestant Reformation are historically known as nontrinitarian, including The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), Jehovah's Witnesses, La Luz del Mundo, and the Iglesia ni Cristo (Philippines sect, non-Trinitarian), as well as several other smaller groups.

Doctrines

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims to be Christian, although it does not characterize itself as Protestant. It rejects trinitarianism, that is, it rejects the Christian doctrine of **the Trinity**. This church understands the Holy Trinity in a different way: for them, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct beings. God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ, are separate beings with bodies of flesh and blood, while the Holy Spirit lacks such a physical body. It believes in Jesus' divinity and in His atonement and resurrection.

Because of doctrinal differences, the Catholic, Orthodox and many Protestant churches consider the church to be distinct and separate from conventional Christianity. In turn, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sees other modern Christian religions as far removed from true Christianity and claims that it is a restoration of first-century Christianity and the only true and authoritative Christian church. Church leaders claim that it is the only true church and that other churches do not have the authority to act in Jesus' name.

Mormonism includes significant doctrines of: eternal marriage (or celestial marriage), eternal progression, baptism for the dead, polygamy (The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), sexual purity, or the law of chastity (prohibits adultery, homosexual behavior, sexual intercourse before or outside marriage and is strongly opposed to pornography), health (prohibits the ingestion of coffee, tea, tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, but recommends frequent use of grains, fruits, vegetables and little consumption of meats), fasting and Sabbath observance. LDS practice sacred ordinances, including baptism by immersion, confirmation (the laying on of hands after water baptism, so that the person at least eight years old receives the Holy Spirit and becomes an official member of the church), the sacrament of the Eucharist, and ordination to the priesthood. They believe in the doctrine of restorationism, millennialism and apostolic succession. They oppose legalized gambling (for example, casinos), same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia.

For them human salvation includes three heavens, a doctrine of exaltation that includes the ability of humans to become gods and goddesses in the afterlife, that is, to become one with God in the same way that Jesus Christ is one with the Father, what they call becoming a 'joint-heir with Christ.'

To attain this state of holiness, the church teaches that one must have faith in Jesus Christ, repent of his or her sins, strive to keep the commandments faithfully, and participate in a sequence of ceremonial covenants called ordinances, which include baptism, the receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost, the endowment ceremony (I'll comment further below) and the celestial marriage (or 'sealing ceremony'). The 'sealing ceremony' concerns families. According to this theology, men and women can be sealed to each other so that their marriage bond continues for all eternity, just as children can also be sealed to their biological or adoptive parents to form permanent family bonds, thus allowing that all immediate and extended family relationships continue after death;

in other words, the reunification of the mortal family after the resurrection and the ability to have spiritual children in the afterlife and inherit a part of the kingdom of God.

They are baptized for the dead as an ordinance, a favor to them, for the church teaches that everyone will have the opportunity to hear and accept or reject the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive His blessings, in this life or the next.

Looking at all this, I was reminded of a passage from the NT, for it speaks of something similar. It is about a practice known to members of the church in Corinth and described by Paul in 1 Cor. 15: 29: “Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?” He was speaking to those who didn’t believe the resurrection of the dead in Christ (1 Cor. 15: 20-23; 1 The. 4: 13-18). The Greeks actually believed in the immortality of the soul but doubted the resurrection of the body (as they doubted the resurrection of Jesus), so they quarreled with him at the Areopagus at Athens (Acts 17: 31-34). Corinthians were baptized (according to pagan beliefs) for those who had died without baptism. If they didn’t believe in the resurrection of the dead, there was no sense in being baptized, that’s what he meant. This practice became common among the Cerinthians and later among the Marcionites. The Cerinthians were adherents of a sect founded by Cerinthus (50-100 AD), a Gnostic Christian who denied that God created the physical world, said that Jesus was the biological son of Mary and Joseph and that the Holy Spirit left Him at the time of the crucifixion. Marcionism was a 2nd century heretical sect, founded by Marcion of Sinop (85-160 AD), which proposed two gods: that of the OT and the NT, that is, a malevolent God of the OT, and the Savior of the NT. And he also preached baptism for the dead, who did not have the opportunity to be baptized in life.

Meetings and ceremonies

As for LDS worship, meetings for worship and study are held in chapels, where the Lord’s Supper (called Sacrament meeting) is the main purpose of Sunday worship, and the elements are distributed to Church members. They also include prayers, singing of hymns by the congregation or choir, and improvised or planned sermons by Church laity. At weekly meetings there is a time set aside for Sunday school or separate instructional meetings based on age and gender, including Relief Society for adult women.

Its members contribute ten percent of their income to the church as a tithe for the construction of temples, chapels and other buildings and other uses of the church. On the first Sunday of each month, church members fast on food and water for at least two consecutive meals. They donate at least the cost of the two skipped meals as a fast offering, which the church uses to help the poor and needy and expand its humanitarian efforts.

Temples are considered sacred buildings, the most sacred structures on Earth, ‘The House of the Lord.’ There, members only participate in the ceremonies considered the most sacred in the church: the wedding (or ‘sealing ceremony’), baptisms for the dead, and an endowment ceremony. In Mormonism, the endowment ceremony is a ceremony to prepare members to become kings, queens, priests, and priestesses in the afterlife. As part of the ceremony, participants take part in a reenactment of the biblical creation and fall of Adam and Eve. The ceremony includes a symbolic washing and anointing and receiving a new name that they must not reveal to others, except for a certain part of the ceremony, in addition to receiving a temple garment, which Mormons must then wear under their clothing day and night throughout their lives. Participants learn symbolic

gestures and passwords considered necessary to pass the angels guarding the way to heaven, and are instructed not to reveal them to others. The endowment ceremony also consists of a series of promises to God that participants make as a covenant of consecration to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All members who choose to serve a mission or participate in a celestial temple marriage must first complete the endowment ceremony.

Government and hierarchy of the church

Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus leads the church through revelation and has chosen a single man, called 'the Prophet' or President of the Church, as His spokesman on earth. The president (prophet) leads a hierarchical structure with several levels. The First Presidency is composed of two counselors and twelve Apostles, who are prophets and whose teachings are usually given under the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit. Twice a year, general community leaders address the world church through general conference, where church members formally recognize the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. They are followed by a wide variety of local lay leaders, all serving willingly part-time without receiving wages.



Salt Lake temple – KIRCHE, Utah, USA – Photo: Entheta
– It took 40 years to be built (1853-1893) – wikipedia.org

All men who meet the standards of the church are generally considered to the priesthood and are ordained to the priesthood beginning at age 12 years. The priesthood is divided into two: the Aaronic Priesthood for males aged twelve to seventeen; and the Melchizedek Priesthood, for men over eighteen.

Individual church members believe that they too can receive personal revelation from God to guide their lives and reveal them the truth, especially about spiritual

matters. Likewise, the church teaches that its members can receive individual guidance and counsel from God through the blessings of those who hold the priesthood. Patriarchal blessings are considered special blessings received only once in the recipient's lifetime. Women are not ordained to the priesthood, but they do hold leadership roles in some auxiliary organizations of the church, for example:

- Relief Society – Is the premier organization for women over eighteen.
- Young Women Organization – Organization of young women aged twelve to seventeen and is managed by a president and two counselors. This organization is subdivided into three offices: Little Bees, Young Girls and Laurels. Each office of this one has a motto.

There are also other sectors such as:

- Young Men Organization – Organization of young men ages twelve through seventeen who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. As with the Young Women Organization, this organization has three offices: Deacon, Teacher, and Priest.
 - Primary Organization – It is an organization for children up to twelve years old.
- Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are encouraged to set aside one night a week, usually Monday, to spend together in what is called 'Family Home Evening,' when they gather as a family to study the gospel and participate in family activities. Daily family prayer is also encouraged.



Temple statue of Angel Moroni in Bern, Switzerland
– Photo: MTPICHON– wikipedia.org

This statue can be seen upon the tower of each temple of the LDS all over the world.

Today, the church annually sends thousands of young people between the ages of 18 and 26 on two-year mission work around the world. Their temples are all over the world, with the Americas and Oceania and Polynesia being the places where they are most concentrated. They have less entry into Islamic countries, China and Russia.

The Liahona magazine, since 1977, is a monthly publication of the Church in several languages, with guidance from the president. Most communities use other means of publicizing their work, such as: film, websites, graphic art, photography and paintings. The publishing house used by the church is Deseret Book, located in Salt Lake City, which is responsible for selling the most important editions and other publications. The Mormon church also has a satellite television channel, BYU Television, which is operated by Brigham Young University.

Articles of Faith

Joseph Smith Jr. summarized church doctrine in thirteen fundamental points, published in the work 'Pearl of Great Price,' and they are called Articles of Faith, but I found it interesting item 10 that says: "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes, that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory."

Source: Articles of Faith (Latter Day Saints) – wikipedia.org.

Seventeen beliefs

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also summarizes its doctrine into seventeen beliefs, called Basic Beliefs. Among them, some stand out (source: wikipedia.org – Translated from: "A Igreja de Jesus Cristo dos Santos dos Últimos Dias – Crenças Básicas do Mormonismo"):

7th – Adam, in his pre-existence, was the archangel Michael.

10th – Adam was already baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

11th – The Bible, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are the Word of God.

14th – Joseph Smith was the first prophet after the death of Jesus Christ and His apostles. After him other men have been called and ordained by God, to guide the saints according to the authority received by God to act in His name.

16th – The dead can be baptized by proxy.

THE BIBLE STUDENTS AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Jehovah's Witnesses are a Christian Restorationist denomination with a non-Trinitarian belief that differs greatly from other Christian denominations. Jehovah's Witnesses emerged from the Bible Students, a group founded in the late 1870s by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) in his home in Pennsylvania for the purpose of analyzing the origins of Christian doctrine, creed, and tradition, with which he didn't agree with. In his childhood and early teens Charles was a member of Presbyterian Church, and at age thirteen, he left the Presbyterian Church to join the Congregational Church. However, he confessed through his own mouth that he had never been ordained a pastor by any church.

Russell was greatly influenced by Millerite Adventist doctrines and their followers who made strange prophecies, which ended up not being fulfilled, as had already happened with William Miller, establishing the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ between the spring of 1843 and the spring of 1844, and which was not fulfilled

and which became known as ‘The Great Disappointment’. One of his adherents, Nelson Barbour, followed in the same thought, predicting that the Christians who died would be resurrected in April 1878, which also did not happen, but he led Russell to sell his five clothing stores he ran with his father when was still alive.

But Russell continued to believe that Christ had returned invisibly in October 1874, and that he was ruling from heaven ever since. From that date onwards a time of trouble would begin, leading to the gradual deterioration of civilized society, an attack against Israel by many nations, world anarchy and the sudden destruction of all world governments in October 1914. After the outbreak of the First World War, Russell reinterpreted 1914 as the beginning of Armageddon.

Russell neither believed in the trinity nor in the deity of Jesus, but that He had received that deity as a reward from the Father for dying on the cross. In other words: since the soul does not survive death, Jesus, for having been just and having died on the cross for us, was rewarded with the resurrection to an immortal and glorious life in heaven, awaiting at the right hand of the Father the moment to assume the reign over the Earth. He also said that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but the manifestation of the power of God.

Charles Russell attacked Spiritualism, although his critics claimed that several symbols he employed in his publications were of a Masonic nature, implying that he engaged in occult activities. But he said the symbols came from his interpretations of biblical texts. Interestingly, there was a pyramid near his grave whose origins, critics say, were Masonic, although others dispute this fact. Both the Masonic lodge ‘The Grand Lodge of British Columbia’ and Russell, who once gave a lecture in a Masonic hall, denied their affiliation with Freemasonry, but he could not explain how many of his symbols resembled theirs. He said they came naturally to him. He recognized that Christian identity is incompatible with Freemasonry.

In 1881 he founded the Zion’s Watchtower Tract Society to publish his ideas. With the change of that name and the formation of the ‘Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania’ (a legal association of them), there were significant doctrinal and organizational changes headed by Joseph Franklin Rutherford (its president).

JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

The Great Schism took place in 1917, but the group’s current name (‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’) did not come up until 1931 to differentiate them from other Bible Student groups and symbolize a break with the legacy of Russell’s traditions. The Governing Body of this society is a group of elders in Warwick, New York, who direct the denomination. It determines all doctrines based on its analysis and interpretation of the bible.

Jehovah’s Witnesses prefer to use their own translation, the ‘New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.’ They do not believe in the divinity of the Book of Mormon, the Quran (Qur’an or Koran), the Spirits’ Book (by Allan Kardec a pseudonym of the writer Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail – 1804-1869) and the apocryphal Books.

The group is known for its door-to-door evangelism, distributing publications such as ‘The Watchtower’ and ‘Awake!’ They use the media too much to spread their doctrine.

The group believes that the destruction of the current world system at Armageddon is imminent, and that only by stabilizing the Kingdom of God on Earth (Dan. 2: 44) will

there be a solution for all of humanity's problems, with the transformation of the planet in the future Paradise (Ps. 37: 29).

Beliefs – Trinity

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity, for it is not a biblical concept in their view. They see God as the Father, an invisible spirit and a 'person' separated from the Son, Jesus Christ. God the Father is infinite but not omnipresent, He has a location in heaven, but it is possible to have a personal relationship with Him. God must be called by His personal name – Jehovah, the Latinized form of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton (YHWH). The title, LORD (Greek: Kyrios), is rarely used by Jehovah's Witnesses when speaking of God.

They deny that Jesus is God Himself, for He is only the Only Begotten Son of God and that His life began in heaven; He was God's first creation, but He is a separate entity, not part of a Trinity. Jesus helped the Father in Creation. He is actually a spiritual being who is at the right hand of God the Father, but He is not God. Even as king of the kingdom of God, Jesus remains subordinate to God.

The Holy Spirit is not the third person of the Trinity, but the manifestation of the power of God, the active force of Jehovah.

Other beliefs

They also deny the conditional immortality of the soul (eternal life only for those who accept Jesus) and the fire of hell, as a place of eternal torment. In other words: the soul does not survive death.

When we analyze their doctrine, we can notice that all the biblical references given by them to justify their beliefs are totally distorted and loaded with sophistry.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that death is a state of non-existence without consciousness; the soul is a life or a living body that can die and does not survive death. His followers form distinct groups regarding the hope of future life: the 'anointed ones' (with the hope of eternal life in heaven, a 'little flock' of 144,000 selected humans) and the other 'sheep' (who will be resurrected by God to a land cleared after Armageddon, and with the hope of eternal life in paradise restored on earth). They interpret Rev. 14: 1-5 as meaning that the number of Christians going to heaven is limited to exactly 144,000, who will rule with Jesus as kings and priests on earth.

They claim that Jesus would have died on a stake and not on a cross. The instrument of Jesus' crucifixion (known in Latin as *crux*, in Greek as *stauros*) is generally thought to have been composed of a vertical wooden beam to which a crossbeam was added, thus forming a T-shaped structure. Historical sources do not allow any conclusions to be drawn as to the precise form of the cross, whether it was the *crux immissa* (†) or *crux commissa* (T). As it was not very common to affix a title, this does not necessarily mean that the cross was in the form of a *crux immissa*.

Biblical references to the Archangel Michael, Abaddon (Apollyon), and the Word are interpreted as names for Jesus in various roles.

Baptism by immersion is a prerequisite to being considered a valid Jehovah's Witness. Infant baptism is not practiced, and baptisms performed previously by other denominations are not considered legitimate. Baptism candidates must publicly affirm that dedication and baptism identify them as 'one of Jehovah's Witnesses associated with the organization guided by the Spirit of God', although church publications classify baptism as evidence of dedication to God rather than to other humans, cause or

organization. Usually, someone who meets with Witnesses takes several months, or even years, to be approved for baptism and only after expressing confidently their desire to become a Jehovah's Witness.

They refuse blood transfusion (Acts 15: 28-29), once again distorting God's word, giving it a completely wrong interpretation. The verses of Acts 15: 28-29, which they give as an explanation for not receiving blood transfusions, were actually referring to the animal's blood as food, but not the blood necessary to sustain a sick person's life.

Premarital sex is vehemently condemned. They oppose abortion and oppose homosexuality.

Modesty in dress and grooming is frequently emphasized. Gambling, drunkenness, illegal drugs, and tobacco use are forbidden. Drinking of alcoholic beverages is permitted in moderation. Attending university is discouraged and trade schools are suggested as an alternative.

Usually they celebrate wedding parties, but do not celebrate any other type of festivity: birthdays, Christmas, Easter, etc., for they consider them to be of pagan origin and incompatible with Christianity. The explanation for not celebrating birthdays is that John the Baptist was beheaded during the celebration of Herod Antipas' birthday party.

The 'Celebration of Christ's Death' or 'Lord's Evening Meal' is the only date that Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate, in obedience to Jesus' command in Lk. 22: 19-20. It is about a solemn celebration in memory of the death of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God (Mk. 1: 1). For them, this celebration takes on a very different connotation from the 'Eucharist' or 'The Lord's Supper.' The Celebration of the Death of Christ is intended to remind them of the greatest acts of love ever performed, which was the voluntary surrender of Jesus' life, in sacrifice, for the redemption of humanity and, above all, the gift of God the Father, Jehovah, in sending His Son to earth for that purpose. For His straight life, Jesus was rewarded with the resurrection to an immortal and glorious life in heaven, waiting at the right hand of the Father for the moment to assume the kingdom on Earth. They gather together after sunset on the day that corresponds to the fourteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan. A table is placed with the unleavened bread and a glass of pure grape wine, without additives. The speaker reads the passage from Lk. 22: 19-20 and recalls the events of that night.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is always related to the salvation of mankind (Heb. 5: 9). They recall the belief that only 144,000 anointed or chosen people will be resurrected to immortal life in heaven, along with Christ, and reign over the earth (Rev. 14: 1-3). For the rest of mankind, the hope of eternal life on Earth, under the leadership of that Kingdom of God is presented (Ps. 37: 11; 29; Heb. 2: 5; Rev. 11: 15). The elements, bread and wine, are simply an illustration of the body and blood of Christ, but they do not possess any miraculous or similar power. The JW believe that only men and women anointed with the Holy Spirit, therefore belonging to the 144,000 class, should take from the elements. For them, this indicates that those who take the bread and wine enter into a covenant with Jesus to reign with Him. Thus, if anyone in the congregation believes that he/she belongs to this group, he/she will eat part of the bread and drink some wine.

Government of the organization

Jehovah's Witnesses assume strict neutrality in political affairs – they do not vote (Jn. 17: 16).

Their rejection of military service, their refusal to salute national flags and sing national anthems or patriotic songs caused Jehovah's Witnesses to have conflicts with

some governments. As a result, members have been persecuted and their activities banned or restricted in some countries. Processes created by the group resulted in changes to several civil rights laws around the world. In Brazil, these people must carry out replacement benefits, as determined by the military authority.

In addition, the organization has received criticism regarding its translation of the Bible, doctrines, handling cases of sexual abuse of minors and alleged coercion of its members. The charges are denied by the leaders, and some have been discussed in courts and by religious experts.

As for the JW system of government, disciplinary actions include the formal expulsion of a member or his/her temporary social rejection. Baptized individuals who officially leave the church also experience social rejection. Members who are no longer an associate may return if they show repentance.

Meeting places

Their meeting places are called 'Kingdom Halls.' They do not make financial collections at their meetings, ceremonies and congresses, but advise their faithful to contribute, placing their offering in donation boxes. Do not collect tithes. They don't enforce celibacy. They accept voluntary and anonymous contributions to fund their work and their meeting places. 'Elders' retain the responsibility to govern the congregation, but they do not use the term elder as a title to signify a formal division between clergy and laity, even though they may employ ecclesiastical privileges such as confession of sin. Ministerial servants carry out administrative and auxiliary duties, but they may also conduct meetings.

Their religious activities are currently banned or restricted in some countries, including China, Vietnam and some Islamic states. Also, they have already suffered punishment in Canada and Russia.

The purple triangle was their identification symbol in the Nazi concentration camps.



Prisoners who were of the Jehovah's Witness religion were identified by the purple triangle emblem in Nazi concentration camps. Photo: Coreyjo – wikipedia.org.

Main Source: Wikipedia.org.

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family [NIV, a man who stirs up dissension among brothers] (Prov. 6: 16-19).

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