

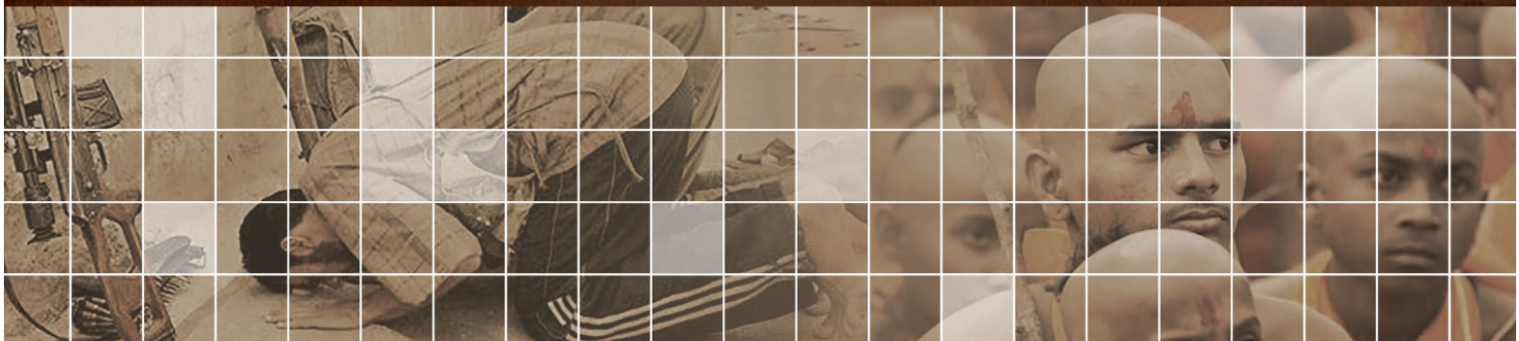


WORLD RELIGIONS

DENOMINATIONS



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



Protesting the Protestants

We have seen the early development of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, Switzerland, and England under Luther, Calvin/Zwingli, and Henry VIII, respectively. In each of these lands the distinctive elements of church government and worship gave shape to the denominations that grew in them. We now survey the various forms of church government as well as the issues surrounding both polity and worship that gave rise to further denominational division within Protestantism.

I. Three Forms of Church Government

A. Monarchial

The church is governed by a single ruler. Examples of this are seen in the Roman Catholic and Episcopal (Anglican or Church of England) churches.

B. Presbyterian

The church is governed by a body of elders (presbyters) inside and outside the assembly. Examples of this are seen in the Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

C. Congregational

The church is governed by the membership. Examples of this are found in the Baptist and other independent churches.

II. The Significance of Sacraments

We have seen that the Roman Catholic sacramental system is one whereby the individual works for his salvation. The Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli were all former Roman Catholics who had to struggle with the relationship of the sacraments to their view of *sola fide* (“faith alone”).

A. Luther

1. Communion involves “consubstantiation”
2. Baptism has a mystical power (baptismal regeneration)

B. Calvin

1. Communion involves the ‘spiritual presence’ of Christ
2. Baptism enters one into the ‘covenant community’

C. Zwingli

1. Communion is a memorial only
2. Baptism enters one into the ‘covenant community’

III. Reform within the Anglican/Episcopal Church (Church of England)

Henry VIII can hardly be mentioned as a “reformer” in the same sense as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. The church he began and ruled differed with Roman Catholicism primarily in terms of the individual in whom the government of the church rested (the king rather than the pope). Nevertheless, he did start a new Protestant denomination that would spawn others in the years to come.

A. Puritans within the Church of England

*The Puritans contended that too many “rags of popery” were still in the Anglican church [the Church of England]; and they wanted to “purify” the Anglican church in accordance with the Bible, which they accepted as the infallible rule of faith and life. This desire led to their being nicknamed Puritans after 1560.*⁹⁵

B. Separatists and the Church of England

*The major point of difference between the...Puritans and the [Separatists] was the idea of the church covenant by which the Separatists bound themselves in loyalty to Christ and one another apart from a state church.*⁹⁶

*William Bradford (1590-1657)...became a member of this group [Separatists]. It was members of this group who finally migrated to American in 1620 on the Mayflower.*⁹⁷

C. Baptists and the Church of England

1. The General Baptists

*It is significant that doctrinal standards soon disappeared among the General Baptists so that there was nothing to prevent them from drifting into error during this period when adverse winds were blowing. In contrast to this the Particular Baptists were doctrinally minded. Both groups had published confessions but the General Baptists were so weak doctrinally that as early as 1697 they could not even commit the churches to a clear statement on the Trinity, whereupon seven ... churches withdrew from the General Baptist Association. (Errol Hulse, *An Introduction to the Baptists*, p. 26).*

2. The Particular Baptists

By 1660, there were 131 Particular Baptist (Calvinist) churches and 115 General Baptist churches.

3. Baptist Doctrinal Distinctives

⁹⁵ Cairns, p. 335.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 337.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 338.

- a. Believer's Baptism
 - b. Baptism by Immersion
 - c. Autonomy of the Church
4. Baptist Doctrinal Confessions

Baptists owe a great debt to the Reformers. Baptists accepted their biblical reforms and embellished them further. Likewise, Baptists owe a debt to all the orthodox who have preceded them, dating back to the second century. Baptists fully accept the doctrinal confessions of the first centuries of the church. However, just as these creeds sought to clarify orthodoxy over-against error, so the distinctive Baptist creeds sought to set Baptist belief apart from the erroneous, contemporary teachings.

- a. The London Confession of 1644

The Calvinist Confession of the Particular Baptists had several distinctive emphases. Baptism was the "door" into church fellowship and should only be administered to persons professing faith in Christ. The ministry was placed firmly in the immediate control of members of the covenant Christian community. In political matters the "king and parliament freely chosen by the kingdom" had legitimate powers, but there should be no state interference in church matters. The mutual cooperation of all churches was stressed, particularly as this related to church planting, financial assistance and resolution of controversial matters within a local church. (Christian History Magazine, Volume IV, No. 2, p. 9)

- b. The Second London Confession of 1689

5. Baptists in America

A dominant theme in the establishment of each of the American colonies was that of religious worship. Thus, the various colonies each had their own religious expression.

- a. State sponsored worship
 - (1) Massachusetts - Congregationalists
 - (2) Virginia - Anglican.
 - (3) Rhode Island - Baptist
- a. Ministerial training.
 - (1) Harvard in Massachusetts
 - (2) Rhode Island College (later Brown University)

c. Early American Baptist leaders

(1) Roger Williams (1603-1683)

- Born in London
- Graduated from Cambridge University
- Ordained by Anglican church in 1649
- Soon adopted Separatist convictions
- Fled ecclesiastical and governmental persecution, arriving in Massachusetts on February 5, 1631
- Refused a position at the Boston Puritan church because *I durst not officiate to an unseparated people, as, upon examination and conference, I found them to be.*
- In 1633, assumed position at Salem Puritan church and there began voicing his criticisms of the Puritan establishment. He said, among other things, that the Massachusetts government should not punish offenders of the first four commandments. He was banished from Massachusetts in 1635 and fled to Providence where he established a settlement (1636) and church (1638). Historian William Warren Sweet refers to Rhode Island as *the first civil government in the world to achieve complete religious liberty.*
- Carried on a “war of words” with Boston pastor John Cotton, during which time he wrote his famous treatises, *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution* (1644) and *The Bloody Tenet Yet More Bloody* (1652).

(2) John Clark (1609-1676)

- Arrived in Boston from England in 1637. Like Williams was banished from Massachusetts.
- Came to Rhode Island in 1638 and founded Portsmouth and Newport.
- Established the first Particular Baptist Church in America in 1644.

(3) Obadiah Holmes (1606-1682).

- Active in the Newport church and was one of its pastors
- Punished with thirty lashes, in public, for holding an unauthorized meeting back in Massachusetts.

(4) Henry Dunster (1609-1659)

- Became president of Harvard College in 1640
- Because of his denial of pedobaptism in 1654 and his public protest against the rite the General Court and Overseers of the College told him to resign (1655).
- He was later tried again for refusing to have his infant daughter baptized.

(5) John Myles (1621-1684)

- Founded the first Particular Baptist Church in Wales in 1649 but, due to persecution, came to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1663.
- Formed the first Baptist church in Massachusetts in 1663, was fined for “breach of order” in 1667, but allowed to relocate the church near the border of Rhode Island. In fact, Massachusetts granted a tract of land for a town, which the Baptists named Swansea. In 1673, the town built a school of which Myles was the master.

d. Baptists in the Middle Colonies.

- (1) Enjoyed greater freedom due to benevolence of the Quakers
- (2) Pennepeck (New Jersey) Baptist (still exists today!!) was started in January 1688 with Elias Keach (son of famous London Baptist Benjamin Keach) as pastor.

- Keach was saved under his own preaching!!!
- The church gave birth to several other Baptist churches:
 - Middletown, NJ (1688)
 - Piscataway, NJ (1689)
 - Cohansey, NJ (1690)
 - First Baptist of Philadelphia (1698)
- The Philadelphia Baptist Association
 - Formed in 1707
 - Founding churches were the five mentioned above
 - Purpose was to discipline errant ministers, warn churches of impostors, act as ordination council, etc.

An excerpt from the minutes of the first meeting in July 1707 reads:

It was ... agreed, that a person that is a stranger, that has neither letter of recommendation, nor is known to be a person gifted, and of a good conversation, shall not be admitted to preach, nor be entertained as a member in any of the baptized congregations in communion with each other.

It was also concluded, that if any difference shall happen between any member and church he belongs unto, and they cannot agree, then the person so grieved may, at the general meeting, appeal to the brethren of the several congregations, and with such as they shall nominate, to decide the difference; that the church and the person so grieved do fully acquiesce in their determination.

- Produced the first major Baptist doctrinal confession in America - The Philadelphia Confession of 1742

D. Methodists and the Church of England

John Wesley (1703–1791) was an ordained Anglican minister who encouraged individual devotion and piety in contrast to what he saw as the dead formalism of the Church of England.

Wesley did not want to break with the Anglican church ... Not until after Wesley's death in 1791 were the Methodists of England organized into a Methodist church separate from the Anglican church. The Anglican influence in the Methodist church was demonstrated by Episcopal polity and the reception of Communion while kneeling at the altar rail.⁹⁸

Wesley maintained both communion and baptism as sacraments rather than ordinances of the church. He was also *Arminian* (see excursus below) in his view of salvation.

Excursus: Can Salvation Be Lost?

Arminianism (named after 16th century theologian Jacobus Arminius) denies eternal security – i.e. it teaches that one can lose his salvation. While Arminius was a Protestant who believed in salvation by faith alone, he and his followers teach that one's salvation is conditional.

Arminians cite the many passages in Scripture that indicate the necessity of persevering in obedience (James 2:14–26; 1 John 2:3–6; etc.). In addition, they cite instances of supposed believers who lost their salvation – e.g. Judas Iscariot and Hebrews 6:4–6. However, two things must be noted about these arguments: 1) Perseverance *demonstrates* the reality of our profession and, 2) there is no unambiguous instance in Scripture of one losing his salvation. Judas was not saved. Jesus called him a 'devil' in John 6:70 and indicated in John 13:18 that Judas was not "chosen." And, although the people mentioned in Hebrews 6:4-6 certainly enjoyed many spiritual benefits, the passages does not say they were born again believers.

On the other hand, the Bible clearly teaches two things, one of which an Arminian is forced to deny:

- 1) Eternal life is a present possession
- 2) Eternal life is forever

If both of these are true (and they are – see John 3:16; 5:24, etc.) then one simply *cannot* lose his salvation. Although it is possible for one to be a false professor, such people are not children of God and therefore never had salvation to lose:

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.
(1 John 2:19)

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 384.

44. A Family Tree of Protestant Denominational Groups

