

DENOMINATIONS
after the
REFORMATION

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CONTENTS

Foreword	2
1. The Presbyterians	5
2. The Anglicans	11
3. The Methodists	19
4. The Baptists	23
5. The Evangelical Movement	27
6. The Charismatic Movement	33
7. The Progressive Christianity Movement	43
8. The Ecumenical Movement	48

FOREWORD

BE READY AND FAITHFUL!

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

*“³Let no man deceive you by any means:
for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first,
and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
⁴Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,
or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God,
shewing himself that he is God.”*

God gave humanity a new Pentecost in the Sixteenth Century Reformation after more than 1,000 years of spiritual darkness, when the great Roman Catholic Church embargoed and locked the Word of God within its system of superstitions and sacerdotalistic teachings. By the grace and mercies of God, and the courage of an ex-monk named Martin Luther who nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Church gate at Wittenburg on 31 October 1517, the denominational church as we know it was born. This little flame of the Reformation burst into a forest fire that consumed Europe with the truth of the gospel – that the just shall live by faith alone and believe in grace alone; Christ alone saves, and Scripture alone binds the conscience of man and all things done to God’s glory only. These were the five pillars of the Reformation. However, the Roman Catholic Church called this the Protestant Movement because she protested against the Roman Catholic Church.

With men like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and Johan Calvin and many of their respective followers, there would inevitably be differences in the understanding of certain doctrines of the Bible. These differences were not about salvation, which the above five pillars

succinctly defined, but were in areas such as church governance and church practice, including the mode of baptism and congregational versus presbyterian rule.

Due to these differences, denominations such as Baptists, Presbyterians, Brethren, Methodists, etc., came into existence. The unity of the church is crucial. The unity of the church depends on the unity of doctrines. Based on this understanding, Christianity should continue her witness for Christ to reach the uttermost part of the world via these denominations. Such is the history of the local church witness. Europe and the rest of the world are what it is today because of the global influence of Christianity.

However, all good things must be earnestly contended for. Wherever Christianity spreads, the god of this world is close behind. In every church or ministry where Christ is taught and the Word of God is promoted, the evil one will undermine by deceit and infiltration into the highest rank of church leadership to maximise the damage. The evil one has marvellously succeeded, especially at the turn of the twentieth century. The only way to bring to pass the end time one world church of the Antichrist was for these

denominations to be erased and united. Even after nearly 400 years of contention, these denominations must put aside their doctrinal differences to become one. This seems to be an impossibility. But the evil one did it in raising the Charismatic Movement, whose emphasis is feeling and emotions and nothing much about doctrine. Soon, the clarion call of “Love unites and doctrine divides” became acceptable in Christendom. In 1948, the ecumenical movement was born in the form of the World Council of Churches initiated by the Protestant movement.

The denominations are disappearing in their essence as a church because the ecumenical movement has swallowed them whole, even though the names of these churches remain.

God prophesied this in 2 Thess 2:3-4. He knew this would happen. Christianity will fall away, i.e. turn apostate before Christ returns to earth for His church, an event known as the First Resurrection for those who have died in Christ, and the “Rapture” for believers still alive at His return.

Be Ready and Faithful!

Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew

THE PRESBYTERIANS

BIBLICAL BASIS

Presbyterianism is as old as the Bible itself. In Acts 15, there was a convening of all the apostles and elders of the churches, forming a governing body to deliberate over issues that the churches were confronted with. Their decision was authoritative, for the letters sent out by this council were given to all the churches and regarded as a commandment to be obeyed (Acts 15:23-24).

Through this we see the biblical pattern for the form of government that we now term as Presbyterianism. Further evidence of a distinctly presbyterian polity in the New Testament church can be seen in passages such as Acts 14:23 where Paul “ordained elders in every church”, and likewise charged Titus to “ordain elders in every city” (Titus 1:5).

In such a system, the church is governed by a plurality of elders (from the Greek word ‘*presbuteros*’) elected by the congregation. These are to be the most spiritual men in each congregation. They are charged with making spiritual decisions on behalf of the church. But beyond being a system of church government, Presbyterianism has also been associated with distinctives such as Reformed Theology according to the Westminster standards, practice of infant

baptism, conservative liturgical worship and a strong emphasis on doctrine and the Word of God.

REFORMATION ROOTS

The history of Presbyterianism is invariably linked to John Knox (1505-72) and the Church of Scotland. An ordained Catholic priest, Knox was converted to Protestantism in the 1540s through the influences of earlier Scottish reformers such as Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart. Because of the political pressures and persecution in Scotland at the time, Knox was forced to take refuge in Geneva from 1554-1559 (with stints at Frankfurt and Scotland in between). There, he came under the tutelage of John Calvin, and described Geneva as “the most perfect school of Christ on earth since the apostles”.¹

A year after Knox returned to Scotland in 1559, Queen regent Mary Guise died. Following that, the Protestants came to power. The parliament of Scotland officially renounced papal authority, and the Church of Scotland was established as a national Protestant institution. Under the leadership of Knox, a distinctly Presbyterian polity was instituted with elders and deacons installed in individual congregations and the ministers

¹ James Edward McGoldrick, Richard Clark Reed, and Thomas Hugh Spence, *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches: A Global History* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 108.

convened for General Assemblies. The Scots Confession was written by Knox and his colleagues and adopted by the Church, patterned closely after the theology found in Calvin's Institutes. Scottish Presbyterianism soon spread to neighbouring Ireland, and England. By the mid-1600s, Presbyterian reached the height of its influence with the convening of the Westminster Assembly where the Westminster Standards were formulated.

However, political power struggles in the subsequent years prevented Presbyterianism from being established in the Church of England. Instead, due to the Act of Uniformity of 1662, close to 2000 ministers, majority of them Presbyterians, were forced out of their pulpits for refusing to conform to Anglicanism. This led to the swift decline of Presbyterianism in the England. Nonetheless, the Westminster Standards remained the doctrinal standards adopted by the English-speaking Presbyterians.

AMERICAN ADVANCEMENT

It was primarily the Scottish Presbyterians (though supplemented with some Irish influences) that established the Presbyterian church in America. They began migrating to North America in the early late 1600s and early 1700s, bringing with them their Presbyterian and Reformed heritage. By 1750, about two hundred thousand Scots and Irish immigrants had moved to the colonies, settling in the areas of New Jersey, New York, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and quickly established churches in those regions. Although initially in the

minority, the Scotch-Irish influence over the colonies extended over any other group of settlers, planting churches over widespread areas and shaping American Presbyterian tradition. The first synod of the colonies was held in 1716, and in 1729 the Westminster Confession was adopted as their standard of faith.³

The growth of the Presbyterian church was vibrant and strong. Buoyed by the events of the Great Awakening in the 1730s and 40s, Presbyterian churches and Reformed Theology grew steadily. They had a strong emphasis on education, such that "by the end of the 18th century almost one hundred schools and colleges were operating under Presbyterian auspices".⁴ After the American War of Independence, the Presbyterians in the US organised themselves as a distinct denomination, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) with the first General Assembly meeting in 1789. In that period, the Presbyterian and Congregational (who were also Calvinistic) churches were the strongest denominations in America.

They were disciplined in doctrine and trained in administering the affairs of their churches, and this gave them a distinct advantage as they sought a new life in the colonies and erected Presbyterian churches wherever they settled... Both its Calvinism and its presbyterial form of government provided the means by which it would become the dominant theological movement in American church history and also in the formation of the American national character.⁵

² McGoldrick, Reed, and Spence, 109.

³ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 364.

⁴ McGoldrick, Reed, and Spence, *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches*, 204.

⁵ Stanford W. Reid, ed., *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 269.

However, the 1800s brought with it certain doctrinal controversies that would weaken the church. Most notably was the ‘*Old School – New School*’ dispute that threatened to split the denomination. The *New School* Presbyterians “sought loose subscription to the Westminster Standards and broad interdenominational cooperation, and some advocates of these practices were rather receptive to liberal ideas coming from New England”.⁶ Those of the *Old School* continued, as the name suggests, to insist on the old ways, of strict adherence to the Westminster Standards and orthodox theology. The factions eventually led to a schism in 1837 with both parties claiming to be the true Presbyterian Church.

In the meantime, the American Civil War (1861–65) took place, taking attention away from ecclesiastical matters and granting an impetus among the leaders to seek union rather than conflict. In 1870, both sides reunited in a merger, though the issue with regards to adherence to the Westminster Standards were not resolved. Another product of the war was the formation of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUS) in 1861, made up of the presbyteries of the southern confederate states that were mostly of the *Old School*. As a denomination, they remained generally more conservative than their northern counterparts, though the influences of liberalism did eventually overwhelm them as well.

DREADFUL DECLINE

The turn of the 20th century brought with it further attacks against orthodox Christianity, and sadly this time, liberal

theology won the day. Men who were trained in the liberal universities of Europe were bringing back with them ‘scholarship’ that challenged the fundamentals of the faith. Increasingly, rationalistic thought and modernistic influences were creeping into the seminaries and Bible colleges.

The battleground in which this conflict played out was in Princeton Theological Seminary. Established in 1812, this seminary was a bastion of truth for more than a hundred years, a stronghold of Old School Presbyterianism. However, matters came to a head when members of both the board and faculty were split on how they were to deal with the rising tide of liberalism within the denomination. On one side were the tolerant moderates who felt that there should be a degree of tolerance and liberty to individual ministers over their doctrinal convictions. The militant conservatives, led by J Gresham Machen, were insistent that liberalism was entirely incompatible with Christianity and should not be allowed at all.

After some investigations into the disputes in the seminary, the General Assembly took control of Princeton in 1928 and placed a new single board over the school which had full authority over the direction of the school.

The seminary was reorganised in such a way that conservatives who had been a majority on the board of directors were now a minority... In effect, the seminary had been forced to conform to the theologically tolerant – if not indifferent – character of the Presbyterian Church. Princeton Seminary, an institution that

⁶ McGoldrick, Reed, and Spence, *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches*, 213.

⁷ D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Committee on Christian Education and the Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995), 25–26.

had stoutly served the Reformed faith since 1812... had been lost to the cause of Presbyterian Orthodoxy.⁷

This event would mark a huge turning point in the history of Presbyterianism in America, as control of this historic institution was wrestled from the hands of conservatives into the hands of inclusivists who were sympathetic to the cause of liberalism.

In response to these events, Machen together with other conservatives who supported him, left to start a new independent school, the Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in 1936. A year later, it was out of the OPC that the Bible Presbyterian Church and Faith Theological Seminary was established by Carl McIntire and others who desired to take a more fundamentalist stance on separation and Christian living, and adopt a premillennial position with regards to eschatology.

PRESENT PROBLEMS

Since the fundamentalist-modernist conflicts of the 1930s, the mainline Presbyterians in America have been in steady decline. The previously mentioned PCUS remained conservative for longer, but it too gradually succumbed to the influences of liberalism in the 1960s. Because of that, a group left to form the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in 1973, while the main body eventually merged with the PCUSA in 1983.

Today, the Presbyterians are some of the most liberal and progressive groups around. The PCUSA is the largest Presbyterian denomination and has always been at the

forefront of the ecumenical movement. It was a founding member of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and has been an active member since. They are proudly and unashamedly ecumenical, declaring in an article in its denominational website:

The great strength of Presbyterianism is its uncanny knack of fostering a fellowship in which people of different viewpoints continue to dialogue. Not only in the same denomination but also in the same congregation it is often possible to find folks who believe every word of the Bible to be factual worshiping alongside sisters and brothers in Christ who treat the Bible as true in meaning but not necessarily factual, and still others who would not even agree that the Bible is wholly true in meaning, let alone factual.⁸

They do not think it is an issue that they have not just members but ministers questioning the veracity of the Bible and regard it as simply a collection of myths and stories. They have abandoned the Westminster Standards and other historical creeds and confessions, publishing their own modernist “Confession of 1967”. They are a clearly apostate church ordaining ministers (male, female, homosexual), who deny the fundamentals of the faith and the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The Presbyterians of today are a far cry from the valiant defenders of the faith that they once were. It is a tragic tale of the end result of compromise.

Yet this comes as no surprise, for time and again, Scripture has warned that this day will come: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to*

⁸ “The Bible — The Living Word,” Presbyterian Mission Agency, accessed September 30, 2023, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/the-bible-ii/>.

seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;” (1 Timothy 4:1). Our forefathers were wise in separating from the Presbyterian church to form the Bible-Presbyterians. May we continue to remain faithful to the Lord, that we would “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3).

THE ANGLICANS

INTRODUCTION

Prophecies in Scripture have already predicted that the world will be ruled by the Antichrist controlled by the Devil (Daniel 2,7,9,12). The Antichrist, known as the “little horn” (Daniel 7:7-8,20-21) will rule over the one-world political system – the United Nations (UN), the economic system – the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the religious system – the World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC will culminate in the “One World Church” through the Ecumenical movement.

The Anglicans, one of the major denominations that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, play a pivotal role in the formation of this “One World Church”. It is currently the third largest denomination in Christendom with a population of more than 110 million people.

The roots of Anglicanism can be traced back to the tumultuous era of the English Reformation. Its split from the Roman Catholic Church in the early 16th century marked the inception of the Church of England. This separation set the stage for a unique form of Christianity, influenced by both Protestant and Catholic traditions.

Accordingly, influence from both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants

has turned Anglicanism into the “middle ground” between both. The position that the Anglicans have taken can be seen in its theology, distinctives, practices, and church government. This unique nature of the Anglican Church makes it a prime candidate for the Ecumenical Movement.

HISTORY OF ANGLICANISM

Why has Anglicanism chosen the “middle ground” between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants? The answer has much to do with the history of the Church of England, which has intricately shaped it to become what it is today.

FACTORS THAT STARTED THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

There were a few factors that came together to initiate the English Reformation: (1) political factors, (2) spiritual factors, (3) King Henry VIII’s marital problems. Without the convergence of these factors, it would be challenging to imagine the occurrence of the English Reformation.

Political Factors: The Tudor Monarchs ruled England from 1485 to 1603. The monarchy created a strong national state in which the ruler, through the army and its bureaucracy, was able to give to a rising middle class the security that was essential to business. Although the middle class was becoming richer, Rome robbed much of England’s wealth through taxation.

Furthermore, Rome also claimed huge portions of English territories for their own, resulting in a rising tide of national consciousness to break away from Rome.

Spiritual Factors: During the period of John Wycliffe (1330-1384), he passionately championed the supreme authority of the Bible, advocated for clergy to renounce material possessions, and contested the concept of transubstantiation by emphasising the absence of any Biblical foundation for this doctrine. Wycliffe's teachings found resonance among the Lollards, a group that spread his message across England from the mid-14th century until the English Reformation in the 16th century.

Additionally, the writings of Martin Luther, which challenged numerous Roman Catholic doctrines, gained widespread circulation in England. At the same time, the meticulous translations of the Bible by William Tyndale (1494-1536) and Miles Coverdale (1488-1568) also became readily accessible. Further to this, there was also teaching from John Colet (1467-1519), an associate of Erasmus, who studied the Greek New Testament, and began explaining its meaning to the people. This wealth of biblical knowledge empowered the people of England to discern and critique the erroneous teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. This newfound availability of the Word of God, and its thoughtful exposition, played a pivotal role in transforming the spiritual landscape of this period.

King Henry VIII's Marital problems: King Henry VIII believed that England needed a male heir after his death, who would lead the country in turbulent times. However, King Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon had not produced a son. At the

same time, his affair with Anne Boleyn resulted in her pregnancy. King Henry sought an annulment of the marriage with Catherine from Pope Clement VII, but the Pope refused. Undeterred, King Henry severed England from the Pope's jurisdiction and made himself head of the Church of England. In 1533, King Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine was declared to be invalid, leading to his marriage with Anne Boleyn in the same year. This personal reason of King Henry became the final catalyst that would spark off the English Reformation, culminating in the decisive break from the Roman Catholic Church.

HENRY VIII AND THE ACT OF SUPREMACY (1534)

In 1534, the English Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, which declared King Henry VIII as the "Supreme Head of the Church of England", effectively separating the English Church from the authority of the Pope in Rome. King Henry VIII was to be the Head of the Church "as far as the law of Christ allows". Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), a prominent Protestant and King Henry's chief minister, was appointed as the Archbishop of Canterbury. King Henry VIII ruled the English clergy with an iron fist by restricting them from promulgating any papal bull (official letter or document from the Pope). The English clergy was not to accept any appointee of the Pope without his permission. They were also not allowed to live abroad. To seal the break from Rome, King Henry VIII won the hearts of the middle class by confiscating the lands and monasteries from the Roman Catholic Church and sold them cheaply to the middle class.

Nonetheless, the break from Rome had only been political because in theology,

the Church of England remained true to Rome. In 1536, King Henry VIII passed the Six Articles - these Articles reaffirmed Roman Catholic doctrines such as transubstantiation and celibacy. King Henry VIII's son, Edward VI was to carry out the next phase of the Protestant movement which his father started.

EDWARD VI AND PROTESTANT REFORMS (1547-1553)

During the reign of King Edward VI, England saw more significant Protestant reforms. King Edward VI was only nine years old when he came to the throne and so the Duke of Somerset, Edward Seymour, was appointed Regent. He would help to administer the matters of the state. Somerset, a Protestant, was instrumental in strengthening the Protestant slant of the Reformation movement. Under Somerset's directives, the Six Articles which affirmed Roman Catholic doctrines were repealed. Other directives include the legalisation of the marriage of priests (a practice previously prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church), the reformation of church services to be in the common tongue (instead of Latin) so that it could be understood by the laity, and the imposition of the Act of Uniformity, which mandates all churches in England to use the the Book of Common Prayer. This Book of Common Prayer, published by Thomas Cranmer in 1549, was a text that, while retaining some Roman Catholic elements, also incorporated substantial Protestant reforms influenced by the works of Martin Luther and other reformers. In 1552, it underwent further revisions, incorporating additional Protestant theology and practices. Thomas Cranmer and John Knox later collaborated on the creation of the Forty-Two Articles (later reduced to Thirty-Nine Articles), which exhibited a Calvinistic tone, particularly

in matters related to the doctrine of predestination and the Lord's Supper.

MARY I AND CATHOLIC RESTORATION (1553-1558)

Things took a turn against Protestantism when Queen Mary I, the daughter of King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon ascended to the throne. Queen Mary I, who was a staunch Catholic, attempted to restore Roman Catholicism to England. She forced the Parliament to restore religious practices in England to what they were at the death of her father in 1547, and repudiated changes that had been made under Edward VI.

The period during which Queen Mary I reigned was known as the Marian Persecutions, during which many Protestant Christians lost their lives. Due to her ruthlessness in the persecutions of Protestant Christians, Queen Mary I was also known as 'Bloody Mary'. Many Protestant Christians were martyred for what they believed in - these martyrs include Thomas Cranmer, Hugué Latimer, and Nicholas Ridley. Many English clergy fled to Geneva and to Frankfurt for refuge where they imbibed Calvinistic teachings. They came to be known as the Geneva Settlement.

England witnessed significant bloodshed during Queen Mary I's reign, leading to a surge in sympathy towards the Protestants. Reacting against Queen Mary I's harsh and cruel policies, the people of England sought a "middle ground" between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

ELIZABETH I AND RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENT (1558-1603)

When Elizabeth I succeeded Mary I, she followed moderation in religious matters because most of the people in England

favoured this approach. She treaded carefully to avoid extreme conflicts on either side.

In 1559, the Parliament revived the Act of Supremacy, declaring Queen Elizabeth I to be “the only Supreme Governor of this realm” unlike King Henry VIII who declared himself to be “the Supreme Head of the church.” This was a moderate approach because while the Queen had administrative powers, it implied that the Church of England held authority over religious matters. An Act of Uniformity was reintroduced to impose the usage of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer with only slight modifications. In 1563, Parliament accepted the Forty-Two Articles originally drawn up by Thomas Cranmer and John Knox. It was revised and reorganised to become Thirty-Nine Articles. With only slight modifications in 1571, it has been the creed of the Anglican Church ever since then.

Despite changes to the theological understanding of the Anglican Church, worship continued to be liturgical. Vestments were worn by the bishops when they conducted the services, and many of the Roman Catholic traditions were kept. At this stage, the Anglican Church was Protestant in its theology but Catholic in its rituals.

The Elizabethan Religious Settlement did bring England peace and prosperity. However, Queen Elizabeth I would soon come to clash with her greatest critiques – the Puritans.

THE PURITANS

The Marian exiles that left for Geneva under “Bloody Mary” became acquainted with Calvinism. Together with the knowledge of Calvinism and the availability of the

Geneva Bible of 1560, Puritanism grew in force in England. Cambridge became the epicentre where the Puritans had their greatest influence. The Puritans emphasised God’s sovereignty and Christ’s loving redemption. They urged the people to meditate on the authoritative inspired Bible. The Puritans were also against the Anglican’s lack of consciousness of sins, and their lackadaisical attitude to keep the Sabbath day holy.

They caused Queen Elizabeth I no little difficulty as they became the Queen’s hardest critiques. Their quest was to “purify” the Church of England of any Roman Catholic influences – particularly the use of liturgy and the form of church government – and thereby complete the Reformation of England.

With regard to church government, the Puritans had wanted to change the Episcopalian state church into a Presbyterian or Congregational church, separate from the state. This would wrest the authority over the church away from the monarchy, to which Queen Elizabeth I deftly refused. In 1593, Elizabeth I passed an act to imprison any the Puritans for not attending the Anglican church. Separatists were hanged by the authorities for their views on church government. Many fled the persecutions. Among those who fled, a group migrated to America in 1620 in the *Mayflower*.

In 1603, James I became the King of England. Though he adhered to Calvinistic doctrine, he favoured the episcopal way of governance. This was a disappointment to Puritans who hoped for his support in establishing a Presbyterian system within the Anglican Church. Nonetheless, though that was denied, he approved the translation of the King James Version.

As the Puritans gained more supporters for their cause, tensions escalated between advocates of the Presbyterian church governance and proponents of the Episcopalian church governance. In 1642, a civil war erupted in England pitting these two factions against each other. Under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), the Puritans emerged victorious, leading to the abolition of episcopacy in 1643. The Parliament commissioned the Westminster Assembly, comprising 151 English Puritans. Significant works of this assembly included the Westminster Confession of Faith completed in 1646, and the Longer and Shorter Catechisms completed in 1647. By 1648, the Church of England transformed into a Calvinistic Presbyterian state church. The Puritans remained in control of England until 1660.

After Oliver Cromwell's passing, the English populace grew weary of the Puritans' strict way of life. In 1661, they installed King Charles II as their ruler and reinstated episcopacy. Since then, the church governance of the Anglican church had remained Episcopalian. Bishops who had been removed were reinstated. Stringent laws were enacted to prohibit the gatherings of the Puritans. The Church of England underwent a process of "Restoration", reverting to its previous "middle ground" Anglican practices.

GOVERNMENT OF ANGLICANISM

Today, Anglican churches are known for their episcopal structure, with bishops overseeing dioceses which is a group of churches. The structure of its church government is as such:

Archbishop: Some bishops hold the title of archbishop. They have authority over

multiple dioceses. The Archbishop of Canterbury is considered the highest office of the Anglican Church.

Bishop: A bishop is responsible for the spiritual and administrative oversight of a group of churches in a geographical area called a diocese. A bishop has the authority over a diocese under his charge.

Clergy: Below the bishops, there are various levels of clergy, including priests and deacons, who assist in the ministry and administration of the church. A priest is called to pastor its parish with deacons serving under him.

Synods: Synods are governing bodies of Anglican churches, which consist of clergy and lay representatives. These synods make decisions on matters related to the church's governance and doctrine.

Parish: The basic unit of the Anglican Church is the parish, led by a priest. It refers to the local congregation which is under the care of a priest.

Lay involvement: Laypeople (non-clergy members) in the church take part in certain decision-making processes.

DISTINCTIVES OF ANGLICANISM

Anglicanism is often described as the "via media" or "middle-way" between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. It incorporates elements of both sides into its theology and practices, seeking to maintain certain Catholic traditions while embracing Reformed theology.

THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES

The Anglican Church is known for their use of the Book of Common Prayer. All Anglican churches in the world are to use this book for their worship. It is a

distinctive feature that unifies Anglican worship worldwide.

Ever since this book was written, it was designed as a compromise text that sought to maintain continuity with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Notable revisions of this book were made in history to suit the political climate – if the monarchy leaned more towards Protestantism, more Reformed theology would be included; if the monarchy preferred Catholicism, more Catholic elements would be added. True to its original intent, different Anglican congregations today from different parts of the world have the freedom to adapt this book to suit their theological preferences.

The Book of Common Prayer incorporates both Protestant and Roman Catholic elements. Protestant elements include emphasising the significance of Scriptures, advocating for a simplified worship style, rejecting specific Catholic practices, and promoting the doctrine of justification by faith. Notably, it omits the concept of transubstantiation.

Roman Catholic elements include a sacramental structure within its services, the observance of Holy Communion, the recitation of the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed, adherence to a liturgical calendar with periods like Lent, designated liturgical hours for daily prayers and psalms, the use of incense, and the veneration of saints.

PRACTICAL DISTINCTIVES

Anglicans observe unique practices such as having a structured liturgical format in worship that incorporates Scripture reading, prayer, and the Eucharist (Holy Communion). The ordination of Anglican bishops follows a historical succession believed to trace back to the apostles,

which is perceived as a vital continuity with the early Christian church. Anglicans also adhere to the liturgical calendar, observing seasons like Advent, Lent, and Epiphany, in addition to specific feast days and commemorations. Within Anglicanism, worship styles vary widely, spanning from high church traditions that emphasise a more traditional and liturgical approach, to low church practices that are less formal and more evangelical. This diversity enables Anglicanism to adapt flexibly to local cultures and practices.

GROWTH OF ANGLICANISM

“The sun does not set on the British Empire” – this phrase shows how vast the territories or land conquered by the British Empire were in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was so extensive that it seemed as though it was always daytime in at least one part of its vast empire. Aided by the conquest of the British Empire, Anglicanism expanded both in England and across the British Empire. Anglican missionaries and settlers brought Anglicanism to various parts of North America, the Caribbean, Africa, India, and the Pacific. The Anglican Communion comprises churches worldwide, which demonstrate their global reach.

Its flexible nature allowed it to adapt to diverse cultures while maintaining core theological beliefs. Anglican liturgy and worship styles were adapted to include elements from local cultures. This included incorporating traditional music, dance, and art, into Anglican services.

Over time, various provinces of the Anglican Communion gained a degree of autonomy, allowing them to make decisions that suited their local contexts. This led to a diverse range of personalised practices within the global Anglican Communion.

ANGLICANISM AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The collaboration among various denominations initially stemmed from a shared commitment to advance missionary efforts and champion social causes. Organisations such as the American Bible Society, Antislavery Society, Student Volunteer Movement, the Gideons, and Youth for Christ are non-denominational, drawing members from diverse denominational backgrounds united in their common purpose.

In the 19th century, Ecumenism replaced the original intention in the minds of many people. Theology had been the lowest common denominator to drive consensus among the different denominations. It is easier to achieve reunions when there are similar backgrounds of theology, church governance and practices. The Anglicans, with its “middle ground” approach in all these, was well positioned for the reunion with both the Protestants and Roman Catholics. Actively engaging in ecumenical efforts, the Anglican Church has been participating in dialogues, conferences, and initiatives with other denominations, actively promoting unity among the faith communities.

ANGLICANS AND THE ROMAN CATHOLICS CHURCH

The Roman Catholics have been very interested in reuniting with the Anglicans because of the Anglican church’s geographical reach. Due to their global expansion, Anglicans can be found in many different parts of the world. Furthermore, the Anglicans also have very similar doctrines and practices with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is an

organisation created to bring about the merger between these two denominations. Significant steps have been taken over three phases in ARCIC I, II and III.

ARCIC I (1970-1981): ARCIC held a number of meetings with representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglicans to discuss issues such as the doctrine of Eucharist, authority and ministry. The Times carried a report which stated: “The Church of England, through its representative body, declared its willingness to take into its system the office of universal primate, the Bishop of Rome.” The Church of England effectively accepted the primacy of the Pope. The Church of England also agreed to remove the Thirty-Nine Articles which were Calvinistic in tone. While ARCIC I did not achieve full consensus on all the topics discussed, it paved the way for further dialogue and mutual understanding.

ARCIC II (1983-2011): During the second phase of the ARCIC, the topics examined were the communion of local churches and certain ethical and moral issues related to marriage, family and social ethics. ARCIC II produced the document “Life in Christ” in 1994, which highlighted areas of agreement on ethical and moral issues. This phase furthered the dialogue on the nature of the Church but did not resolve all theological differences.

ARCIC III (2011-Present): ARCIC continued the discussion of the communion of the church and its unity and ethical decision-making within the church among other issues. ARCIC III is ongoing and continues to foster dialogue and understanding between the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics. While full unity remains a long-term goal,

this phase contributes to mutual respect, cooperation, and the pursuit of common principles.

CONCLUSION

The historical trajectory of the Anglican Church had always seemed intertwined with the prospect of reunification with the Roman Catholic Church. The initial schism, though unclean, appeared to be

a necessary step in the grand scheme of things. God's omniscient wisdom has overseen the intricacies of the ecumenical movement working towards the realisation of the "one world apostate" church. With this perspective, it becomes evident that every event, every divergence, and every reunion, is orchestrated by the sovereign control that God exerts over the course of Mankind's history.

THE METHODISTS

HISTORY OF METHODISM

The Methodists are a protestant denomination that began as a movement in the Church of England in the 1700s. This movement was birthed in a small club at the University of Oxford dubbed 'The Holy Club'. This club was started by brothers John and Charles Wesley in 1729. At that time, John Wesley was already ordained a priest in the Church of England and had returned to Oxford as a fellow. The members of this club dedicated themselves to the study of the Bible, pious living, frequent attendance at Holy Communion, and social work. They were called 'Methodists' in derision by their peers because of their methodical living. The Wesleys thought that devoting themselves to strict living would gain God's favour. However, although they dedicated themselves to Christian works, they were not yet born again.

In 1735, the Wesleys were invited to the colonies (later known as the United States of America) to be pastors to the colonists and missionaries to the Native Americans. However, during their stint in the colonies, it had become increasingly evident to them that while they had been fastidious in living the Christian life and doing good works, they had no genuine saving faith. They were unsuccessful in their pastoral and missionary endeavours and returned to England the following year. After their

return, they found themselves in the company of Peter Böhler, a Moravian, from whom they learnt more of the new birth. After discovering the gospel in Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians, on Sunday, May 21, 1738, Charles Wesley truly believed the gospel and came to Christ. Three days later, on May 24, 1738, at a Moravian service in Aldersgate, John Wesley too came to saving faith after hearing a reading of Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans. He testified, 'I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins.'

Concurrently, a notable fellow member of The Holy Club, George Whitefield, was also in a similar spiritual condition as the Wesleys – doing Christian works but not yet being born again. In that same year of 1735, Whitefield learnt the significance of the new birth through a book that Charles Wesley had given him – 'The Life of God in the Soul of Man' by Henry Scougal. Having understood what it meant to be born again, Whitefield too was converted, and would become another key figure in the Methodist movement.

The Methodist movement flourished during the period of The First Great Awakening (c.1730-1755). The Wesleys and Whitefield would go throughout

England and the colonies, preaching the gospel to thousands in open fields. Much of England had a cultural understanding of Christianity but many were unconverted in their hearts. During this period of revival, the Spirit of God worked mightily to save many through the ministry of the Wesleys, Whitefield, and others. John Wesley formed local societies of these converts, encouraging them to meet in small groups regularly and to attend their local Anglican church and Methodist meetings.

Wesley established 'The Yearly Conference of the People Called Methodists' in 1784 to ensure the continuance of the Methodist movement after his death. What initially began as a movement within the Anglican church soon became recognised as a denomination of its own in 1795, four years after Wesley's death. The Methodist denomination has since continued until today, spreading to many different countries across the globe.

DISTINCTIVES OF METHODISM

The Methodist denomination has various doctrinal and practical distinctives. Firstly, the Methodists are Arminian in their theology. In essence, this means that they believe that man has the free will to choose to believe in God in and of themselves. This is opposed to a Calvinistic understanding of the Bible that teaches that man is totally depraved, unable to choose God, and it is God that chooses some to salvation. (Romans 3:10-12; Ephesians 1:3-6) The Methodists believe that the work of salvation is synergistic – man cooperating with God – while the Reformed view is that salvation is monergistic – all of God alone. Though Whitefield was Calvinistic and the Wesleys were Arminian, Methodism would be primarily Arminian, following its principal leader, John Wesley.

Consistent with their Arminian theology, the Methodists believe that a believer can fall from grace and lose his salvation, holding to the doctrine of conditional security. They believe that a person who is a true believer can fall so severely into sin such that he loses his salvation. This contradicts the biblical truth that the believer's salvation in Christ is eternally secure – once truly saved, always saved (John 10:27-30).

Secondly, regarding the doctrine of sanctification, the Methodists believe that after the first work of grace (the new birth), a second work of grace is needed. This is also known as 'Entire Sanctification' or 'Christian Perfection'. Wesley believed that after salvation, a mature Christian could reach a state where the love of God reigns supreme in his heart, whereby he no longer sins. He does all things motivated by his love for God, so much so that he becomes sinless. Wesley taught that such a perfected person may make 'mistakes' at times, but such 'mistakes' are not sin. However, this is a false dichotomy, and the Bible teaches that while Christians are still in this mortal body, they will still contend with sin, and will only be perfected in heaven (1 John 1:8-10; Romans 7:14-25).

Thirdly, touching the topic of worship, hymnody plays a large role in Methodist worship. This was popularised by Charles Wesley, who wrote about 6,500 hymns in his day. Wesley had the gift of poetry and music, and he put it to good use in the service of the Lord. Wesley's hymnodic influence spread far beyond the Methodist movement, with many churches outside the Methodist denomination using his hymns for worship. Hymns like 'Hark! The Herald Angles Sing,' 'Love Divine,' and 'And Can It Be That I Should Gain' are still widely sung in churches today.

Outside of the worship service, the Wesleys were active in helping the poor, widows, orphans, and prisoners alongside their evangelistic duties, and sought to abolish slavery and influenced prison reforms in their day. They cared for the needy while giving them the gospel as John Wesley rightly stressed the importance of loving God and loving one's neighbour. However, over time, this biblical characteristic of the Methodists has degenerated into the preaching of a mere social gospel, placing a greater emphasis on meeting one's physical needs than one's spiritual need.

Lastly, pertaining to their polity and church governance, the Methodists follow their Anglican roots, taking an episcopalian form of governance. The Methodists ordain both men and women into the clergy, despite the Bible forbidding the ordination of women (1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-7). In the British tradition, the Annual Conference is the authority that governs the denomination. Methodist churches and societies in Britain are grouped together by districts and are regulated by Synods, Circuit Meetings, and Church Councils. In the American tradition (United Methodist Church), bishops are elected by the Jurisdictional Conferences. Methodist churches in America are grouped by district and are presided by Annual and District Conferences. On a global scale, the Methodists are represented by the World Methodist Council.

METHODISM TODAY

The Methodist movement began well, and with its strong emphasis on the gospel and on the Bible, it was greatly used by God for the salvation of many souls. However, in the process of time, the Methodist denomination has compromised in various ways.

Traditionally, the Methodists affirm the Bible to be the supreme guide to faith and practice, holding to the historic creeds and confessions. Today, the Methodists still claim to hold to the same view of Scriptures, but their practices reveal otherwise. This is especially seen in their capitulation to the LGBT+ movement. In June 2021, the Methodist Conference in Britain officially voted to affirm the right for same sex marriages to be conducted on Methodist premises by Methodist officeholders. Across the English Channel, the United Methodist Church (UMC) is moving towards a similar direction, and it is poised to vote in favour of same-sex unions in 2024. Church law currently forbids homosexuality in clergy and laity, but this is set to change in the upcoming General Conference. This increasingly liberal stance of the UMC has resulted in a schism within the Methodist denomination, with those opposing same sex unions separating to form the Global Methodist Church (GMC) in 2022.

Today, the Methodist Church is also heavily involved in the Ecumenical movement as an active member of the World Council of Churches. The Ecumenical movement is the preparation for the one world church of the Antichrist that is to come (Revelation 17:1-6). The Methodist Church has an ecumenical office in Rome which facilitates their ecumenical endeavours. They have been in dialogue with other Protestant denominations (Baptists, Anglicans, Lutherans, and the Salvation Army) and particularly with the Roman Catholic Church for more than 50 years. They have even issued a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 2019 together with the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed denominations, affirming a common understanding of Justification. In doing so, they have

undermined the gospel and the doctrine of Justification, for Rome does not believe in the biblical understanding of Justification by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Besides this, the World Methodist Council has also held Interfaith Dialogues with those of other religions and are currently seeking to have dialogues with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Although the Methodist movement began well and was used mightily by the Lord, Methodism today has largely

veered from its original purpose of proclaiming the true gospel according to the Scriptures. Outward vestiges of doing social good may remain today, but the heart of Methodism – the gospel – has been lost. The Methodist denomination today is in a similar state that the Wesleys and Whitefield were in before their conversion. What the Methodist Church needs today is an Aldersgate experience, that the flame of the true gospel may burn brightly once again for the salvation and revival of souls.

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THE BAPTISTS

THE ROOTS OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT

The Baptist Movement has its roots in the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, from which a group of English Separatists emerged. These Separatists, guided by the belief in their individual capacity to read and interpret the Bible, sought to distance themselves from the perceived corruption within the Church of England.

THE FOUNDERS OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT

History unveils the pivotal roles played by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys in laying the foundations of the Baptist Movement.

John Smyth (c. 1554 – 28 August 1612) was ordained as an Anglican priest in England in 1594. Shortly after, his unwavering zeal led to his imprisonment for refusing to conform to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. Smyth was a vocal figure, known for challenging others' beliefs and adapting his own positions as his personal theology evolved. His confrontations with the Church of England eventually reached a point where he could no longer maintain fellowship with the institution.

In 1606, Smyth participated in a conference of radical Puritans in Coventry,

deliberating the possibility of breaking away from the Church of England and becoming Separatists. It was during this conference that he formed a close bond with Thomas Helwys (c. 1575 – c. 1616). Helwys, who had provided a haven in his home for radical Puritans and likely supported their mission financially, ended up joining Smyth's Separatist congregation, which convened clandestinely in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Helwys articulated a uniquely Baptist plea for the separation of church and state in legal affairs, aiming to ensure individuals' religious freedom. Tragically, he met his end in Newgate prison as a result of religious conflicts with English Dissenters during James I's reign.

Given that Separatism was prohibited, the Gainsborough Dissenters were arrested for their shared beliefs with the Puritans and Congregationalists, and their houses were raided. Consequently, this led a significant portion of the congregation to seek refuge in exile in 1607 within the more tolerant Dutch Republic's city of Amsterdam. This emigration was coordinated under the leadership of Helwys. It was there in Amsterdam that the distinctive Baptist faith first took shape, culminating in the establishment of the first Baptist Church in 1609 under Smyth, who led the first congregation of 36 men and women.

THE KEY DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT

The Baptist Movement, much like Congregationalists that practice congregational polity (from which they derive their name), believed that true Christian believers should seek out fellow Christians to establish their own congregations. By doing so, they placed a strong emphasis on the right and responsibility of each properly-organised congregation to autonomously govern its own affairs. This encompassed decisions related to their church's forms of worship, confessional statements, and the appointment of officers and administrators. This autonomy within an individual congregation eliminated the necessity to defer to any higher human authority, be it bishops or presbyteries, and serve as a safeguard against external interference. As a result, each individual church was considered entirely independent.

In opposition to the territorial parish structure of the Church of England, where residents in a specific area were automatically affiliated with a parish from birth and underwent infant baptism, Congregationalists championed the concept of the "gathered church." In this model, membership and baptism were voluntary, reserved exclusively for those who openly professed their faith as believers. It is worth noting that Congregationalists maintained the practice of infant baptism. However, Smyth and Helwys adhered strictly to believer's baptism and rejected infant baptism. This rejection of infant baptism became a key distinctive of the Baptist Movement.

THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCHES

Initially baptised as infants, these early Baptists, drawing parallels with the Anabaptists of the Radical Reformation, came to believe in the need to be re-baptised as adults. In January 1609, with no other minister available, John Smyth took the remarkable step of baptising himself, followed by the rest of the congregation, beginning with Thomas Helwys.

However, Smyth's convictions soon led him to question the validity of his self-baptism upon learning more about the Mennonite (Anabaptist) community in Amsterdam. He reasoned that self-baptism could be justified only if there were no true church offering a valid baptism. In 1610, after thorough investigation, Smyth was convicted of his error, formally sought membership among the Mennonites, and pursued re-baptism. He also recommended for the congregation to unite with the Mennonites. However, Smyth passed away while awaiting membership and some followers became Mennonites.

Thomas Helwys opposed Smyth's direction and took over the leadership of the remaining congregation. Despite the evident risks, he, along with about ten others, courageously returned to England. It was then that they adopted the name "Baptist", signifying their distinctive approach to the meaning and mode of baptism. In 1612, Helwys founded the first Baptist Church in England, located in the district of Spitalfields, East London. Additionally, he authored the inaugural Baptist confession of faith, titled "A Declaration of Faith of English People," in 1611.

THE TWO DISTINCT STREAMS OF THEOLOGY – GENERAL BAPTIST AND PARTICULAR BAPTIST

General Baptists believed that Christ's atonement on the cross extended to all people, offering salvation to those who chose to accept it. They held to the theological position known as Arminianism, emphasising free will as the key determinant of salvation. In contrast, the Particular Baptists adhered to a Calvinistic tradition. They believed that Christ's atonement was specific to the elect, securing salvation definitively for God's chosen ones. This perspective is often referred to as Limited or Definite Atonement.

General Baptists, which included Thomas Helwys and the first congregation in England, were among the earliest Baptist groups with five known churches by 1624. By 1650, their numbers had grown to at least 47 congregations. However, the Particular Baptists did not arise from a split with the General Baptists but developed concurrently and independently.

The origins of the Particular Baptist movement can be traced back to a non-Separatist church established in 1616 by Henry Jacob in Southwark, located across the Thames from London. In 1638, a group of its members, under the leadership of John Spilsbury, chose to establish the first Particular Baptist Church. It was Spilsbury who championed the strict practice of believer's baptism through immersion, as opposed to affusion or aspersion. Remarkably, in 1644, the relatively small and young group of at

least seven Particular Baptist churches collectively authored a confession of faith known as the First London Confession of Faith. Notably, this confession preceded the renowned Westminster Confession of Faith by two years.

While the prevailing narrative of Baptist history often leans towards the General Baptist movement, it is the Particular Baptists who significantly influenced the doctrines and practices of modern-day Baptists. Given their alignment with the teachings of John Calvin and other prominent figures of the Reformation, many Particular Baptist churches today proudly carry the label of "Reformed Baptist."

THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT

While the Particular Baptists and similar congregations were emerging in England, Baptist churches were also finding a foothold in the English colonies, notably in Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. In 1638, Roger Williams laid the foundation for the inaugural Baptist congregation in the North American colonies situated in what we now know as Providence, Rhode Island. Shortly thereafter, John Clarke established another Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island.

In the subsequent two centuries, the Baptist movement experienced remarkable growth and influence in the United States of America, primarily driven by two significant religious revival movements: the First and Second Great Awakenings. The First Great Awakening was a religious

revival movement which occurred in the 18th Century which had a profound impact on the American colonies. It was characterised by fervent preaching, emotional religious experiences, and a call to personal salvation. Many Baptist preachers, including renowned figures such as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, played pivotal roles in this awakening. They attracted large congregations, and through their powerful sermons, numerous individuals were converted to embrace Baptist beliefs. This period and the Second Great Awakening marked significant increases in church membership within the United States, contributing significantly to the growth of the Baptist movement.

Similarly, in the 19th Century, notable Baptist preachers emerged on the other sides of the Atlantic. In London, the eloquent Charles Haddon Spurgeon drew enormous crowds to his sermons, captivating thousands with his passionate oratory and unwavering faith. In Manchester, Alexander Maclaren similarly attracted throngs of worshippers with his inspirational preaching. These charismatic preachers were instrumental in spreading Baptist beliefs and contributing to the growth of Baptist congregations. Their ability to connect with and inspire people led to a surge in Baptist church memberships during this period.

The Baptist Movement also has a rich history of missionary activity, a testament to their unwavering commitment to evangelism and spreading their faith. This missionary zeal extended both domestically and internationally, leading to significant growth in various regions across the globe. One of the most notable figures in the annals of Baptist missionary work is William Carey. His pioneering efforts in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries laid the foundation for modern Protestant missions. Carey's unwavering dedication to spreading Christianity led him to India, where he engaged in educational and evangelical initiatives, translating the Bible into numerous Indian languages. His tireless work not only left an indelible mark on the Baptist tradition but also played a pivotal role in the broader history of Christian missions, inspiring generations of missionaries to come.

Emphasising educational institutions, the Baptist Movement established numerous universities and seminaries. These institutions not only provided education for clergy but also served as significant centres of Baptist influence and growth. This concerted effort has made the Baptist Movement one of the largest Protestant Christian denominations globally. Its presence is represented on a global scale through the Baptist World Alliance, which was established in 1905.

THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

A GOOD BEGINNING

The word “evangelical” is derived from the Greek word *euangelion* which means “gospel” or “good news.” It is closely related to the word “evangelise” which means “announce the good news” or “proclaim glad tidings.” These words appear about one hundred times in the New Testament and have been passed into the English language. An evangelical, in the Biblical sense of the word, is someone who believes in and who preaches the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not only refer to the various points of the Gospel that pertain to salvation, but to the whole counsel of God, which is the Word of God. An evangelical is a Christian who obeys and abides by God’s Word.

During the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther used the expression *evangelische kirche* which is German for “evangelical church” to describe Protestant Christians in order to distinguish themselves from the Roman Catholics. This term was synonymous with the term “Protestant” and was used to describe a person who believed in the true Gospel and who rejected the gospel of salvation by works that was taught by Rome. During that time, it was understood that an evangelical would believe in the

sovereignty of God, in the inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of Scriptures, in the substitutionary atonement of Christ, in the bodily and in the resurrection of Christ. These were Christians who were truly born again. At that time, it was understood that an evangelical was not a Roman Catholic.

A SHIFT IN DEFINITION

By the 18th Century, with the development of the denominations, the definition of Evangelicalism had changed. The definition had become broader and more inclusive and it had become an all-encompassing term for all types of Christians. Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Lutherans would all be included under the umbrella of an ‘Evangelical’. During the time of the Great Awakening, evangelists such as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards may also be described as evangelicals in the broad sense of the word.

INROADS OF MODERNISM

Protestant Christianity had begun to shift in its meaning and in its identity. The late 17th Century and early 18th Century saw the rise of Modernism and Liberalism in Christianity. There were the teachings of English Deism, which denied the authority of Scripture and the miracles of the Bible.

French Naturalism, the teaching that there is no personal God and that science is the arbiter of truth. German Rationalism, the teaching that reason is god. These three doctrines began to influence the Church.

Modernism attacked fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Christ, the miracles of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, total depravity and the need to be born again.

Sadly, they were successful in infiltrating many Bible colleges, seminaries and Churches. By the 20th Century, their views had infected and influenced every major denomination.

THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

By the grace of God, during such a time, the Lord raised many faithful and Bible-believing saints to stem the tide of Modernism. Towards the end of the 19th Century, those who were opposed to the modernist brand of Christianity preached and warned against these false teachings and they did so earnestly and passionately.

In 1909, two businessmen sponsored the publication of a series of 12 booklets, which were later republished into four volumes, called *The Fundamentals*. These booklets consisted of articles written by conservative theologians defending the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. They defended the doctrines of the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the miracles of Christ, the doctrines of justification by faith, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and other fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

Soon, many pastors and seminary professors realised that they were fighting a losing battle by contending for the truth while remaining within their respective denominations and seminaries. Hence, many of them left to found new denominations and Bible Colleges. One such example was J Gresham Machen who left Princeton Theological Seminary to form the Westminster Theological Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. His student, Carl McIntire, would later found Faith Theological Seminary and the Bible Presbyterian Church in America, which the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore traces its roots back to.

This led to the rise of a group of people known as the fundamentalists. A fundamentalist was essentially a Christian who held on the fundamentals of the Christian faith and rejected liberal theology.

THE RISE OF THE NEW EVANGELICALS

In the middle of the 20th Century, in the midst of the spiritual and theological battle between the fundamentalists and modernists, there soon arose a younger group of fundamentalists who were unhappy and dissatisfied with the polemics of fundamentalism. They wanted to distance themselves from the older generation of fundamentalists. One such person was Harold John Ockenga. He was one of Machen's students who left Princeton Theological Seminary, and joined him at Westminster Theological Seminary.

He criticised the attitude of the fundamentalists accusing them of unwarranted suspicion and for being unloving. He also disagreed with the practice and approach of Biblical Separation which was held

by fundamentalists and he criticised the lack of results and effectiveness of the preaching of the fundamentalists charging them for the lack of effectiveness in addressing the social issues of the day. He not only wanted to disassociate himself from fundamentalism, he wanted to kill off this term.

In 1948, in an address at a convention at Fuller Theological Seminary, Harold Ockenga coined the new expression “New Evangelicalism” also known as “Neo-Evangelicalism” to define a new movement that was supposed to be the middle ground between fundamentalism and Liberalism. New Evangelicalism is a movement that is not limited to any particular denomination. This was one of the objectives of these New Evangelicals. They wanted to avoid a “rigid” kind of Christianity which practised Biblical separation. They wanted to adopt a method of “infiltration” to influence Churches into what they thought was true. The New Evangelicals also emphasised greater involvement in society and they often criticised fundamentalists for not engaging in social or charitable works.

The New Evangelicals founded organisations and launched various initiatives to promote their cause. Harold Ockenga, together with others of the same view, formed the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942. This was an inter-denominational organisation that sought to bring together various evangelical denominations to facilitate collaboration between these leaders.

It was through the NAE’s initiative that a committee was formed which eventually led to the publishing of the New International Version of the Bible.

Another initiative of the New Evangelical

movement was the publication, Christianity Today. This magazine was founded in 1956 by Billy Graham. Billy Graham was an influential evangelist but he was a supporter of New Evangelicalism. Even today, the magazine, Christianity Today, supports the mediating position of the new evangelicals.

THE YOUNGER EVANGELICALS

In the early 2000s, younger evangelicals who grew disillusioned by the New Evangelicals came out of the movement and called themselves Younger Evangelicals. Just as the younger fundamentalists were unhappy with the older fundamentalists, these younger evangelicals had grown dissatisfied with the neo-evangelicals. These younger evangelicals were born and raised in a Christianity that was steeply influenced by modernism and they felt that evangelicalism needed “updating.”

The younger evangelicals wanted a faith that was not only creedal but also practical. They got involved in politics and social issues and they wanted Churches that were not institutional and rigid. The younger evangelicals were supportive of same-sex marriages, and were against organisation and governance in Churches. They were also opposed to the headship and leadership of men both in the Church and at home, but they believed that men and women ought to be given equal rights in the Church. They were interested in building organic communities and not Churches as defined by God’s Word.

EVALUATION OF EVANGELICALISM

Today, the term “evangelicalism” has become so broad that any professing Christian from any denomination may identify himself as an evangelical. The term in itself is a Biblical term. But if this term is used in reference to the New Evangelicals

or Younger Evangelicals then it carries specific meaning and implications.

There are several fundamental issues with the New Evangelical movement. First of all, they undermine the authority of the Bible. The key issue with the New Evangelicals is their rejection of Biblical authority. While they may believe that the Bible is inerrant and infallible in the doctrines of salvation, they do not believe that the Bible is without error in matters of geology, astronomy, history, genealogy and figures.¹ In their attempt to fraternise with the modernists, they have compromised their position on the Scripture. The Bible tells us that the Word of God is forever inerrant, infallible and without mistakes in its entirety even to the very jot and tittle. Matthew 5:17-19 says, *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Another doctrinal deviation of the New Evangelicals concerns the doctrine of Biblical Separation. One of the objectives and goals of the NAE is to break down the barriers that separate different denominations. To do so, they have to surrender the doctrine of Biblical Separation. Instead of separation, the Neo-Evangelicals practices a form of “infiltration.” The rejection of the doctrine of Biblical Separation paves the way for the ecumenical one-world Church of

the Antichrist. The doctrine of Biblical Separation is the first line of defence that God has given to His Church that would guard the Church against compromise. Without the doctrine of separation, the Church would soon lose its unique identity and its distinction from the world. The Bible teaches this doctrine in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 – *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”*

Because of the New Evangelical’s view of the social Gospel, they have also undermined the doctrine of salvation. Neo-evangelicals often speak of a “Christian culture” or a “new social order.” They seek to bring about social reforms and to rid society of social ills. Over the pulpit, neo-evangelicals would often address social injustices and political issues. What the world needs is the pure Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The commission which Christ has given to the Church is to preach the Gospel, not to bring about social, economic or environmental changes or reforms. Matthew 28:18-20 – *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of*

¹ William LaSor, “Life Under Tension,” in *The Authority of Scripture at Fuller*, 23, quoted by Pickering, 17.

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

CONCLUSION

Evangelicalism today has lost its original meaning. Today, evangelicalism is really neo-evangelicalism. The Neo-evangelical

movement is an end time movement that is paving the way for the one world Church of the Antichrist.

What Christians need to do today is to return to the pure Gospel as revealed in the inerrant and infallible Word of God. Christians must be discerning and vigilant and have the courage to stand for the Truth of God.

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Charismatic movement is one of the fastest growing and influential movements in Christendom today. According to global statistics, this movement has grown phenomenally from 58 million in 1970 to 656 million in 2021.¹ The influence of the Charismatic movement has been so widespread and pervasive that some historians consider it as the third great epoch of church history, the first two being the age of Roman Catholicism (AD 100 to 1517) and the age of Protestant Reformation (1517 to the present).²

The Charismatic Movement derives its name from the Greek word *charisma* which means gift. In a special sense, it refers to gifts of the Holy Spirit, prominent among these gifts being tongue speaking and prophesying. This movement emphasises the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as a sign of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Adherents of the Charismatic movement hold to the view that the manifestations of the Holy

Spirit given to the first century church are still experienced and practised to this day.

The history of the Charismatic movement can be divided into three phases, often referred to as three “waves” of the Holy Spirit.³

THE FIRST WAVE (1906-1960)

The first wave is also called Pentecostalism or the Pentecostal movement. The movement draws its name from the term *pentecost*, an event in the Christian church which commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Acts chapter 2.

The roots of the Pentecostal movement lie in three sources. First, John Wesley’s (1703-1791) view of sanctification and his emphasis on the second work of grace also called entire sanctification where a believer was purified and made holy.⁴ Second, Charles Finney (1792-1875) who equated the idea of entire sanctification

¹ Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing, *World Christianity and Mission 2021: Questions about the Future*, International Bulletin of Mission Research 2021, 45(1), 18.

² <https://www.samstorms.org/all-articles/post/history-of-the-pentecostal-charismatic-movements>

³ Peter C. Wagner, *Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders* (Michigan: Servant Publications, 1988), 92.

⁴ Mack B. Stokes, *Major United Methodist Beliefs*. (Abingdon Press, 1998), 95.

with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Third, the National Holiness movement (1867) which sought to preserve historic Wesleyanism.

Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929) is widely accepted as the founder of the Pentecostal movement. Parham, although being part of the National Holiness movement, was an independent evangelist and healer until he arrived in Topeka, Kansas in 1898. In 1900, Parham established the Bethel Bible Institute which he also used for his divine healing ministry. There, Parham taught his students that speaking in tongues was true evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. On January 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman (1870-1937) prayed for the experience and began to speak in tongues. According to Moriarty,

“Miss Ozman allegedly began speaking in the ‘Chinese language’ while a ‘halo seemed to surround her head and face.’ Following this experience, Ozman was unable to speak in English for three days, and when she tried to communicate by writing, she reportedly wrote in Chinese characters. During the next few days, about half the student body likewise received the experience. Sometime later Parham himself was baptised in the Spirit and from then on preached the doctrine in all of his meetings.”⁵

This marked the beginning of the Pentecostal movement. Following that, other cities in the United States reported similar occurrences, but the most significant development took place in Los Angeles, in a church pastored by William J. Seymour.

William J. Seymour (1870-1922) was black Baptist pastor who became a Holiness preacher. In 1900, he moved to Cincinnati where he came under the tutelage of Martin Knapp (1853-1901), a Methodist who founded the International Apostolic Holiness Union. In 1906, Seymour moved to Houston and pastored a small Holiness church. There, he encountered Parham who had set up a Bible school. Seymour, desiring theological training, joined Parham’s School. There, Seymour learnt that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was even greater than a second work of grace; it was a third work of grace.⁶ In January 1906, Seymour left Houston to accept an invitation to pastor a black Holiness mission in Los Angeles. His insistence of tongue speaking as an evidence of Spirit baptism resulted in his expulsion from the Mission. Following that, Seymour conducted cottage meetings in a home in North Bonnie Brae Street. There, he as well as several others began to speak in tongues. Desiring a larger facility to house his increasing congregation, Seymour found an old building at 312 Azusa Street. On April 14, 1906, Seymour held his first meeting at Azusa Street. Scores of people began to “fall under the power” and to speak in tongues.⁷ On April 18, 1906, the first report on the meetings at Azusa Street appeared in the Los Angeles Times under the headline “Weird Babel of Tongues”. The paper reported that:

“meetings are held in a tumble-down shack on Azusa Street, near San Pedro Street, and the devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad

⁵ Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 22.

⁶ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 103-104.

⁷ *Ibid*, 107.

excitement in their peculiar zeal. Colored people and a sprinkling of whites compose the congregation, and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve-racking attitude of prayer and supplication. They claim to have the 'gift of tongues' and to be able to comprehend the babel."⁸

The phenomenon attracted the attention of many. For the first time, it brought whites and blacks to worship together though racial segregation was the norm at that time. The manner and practice of worship comprised strange utterances, wild excitement, men and women shouting, weeping, and dancing. It also involved speaking in tongues and interpretation of messages into English.⁹ The central teaching of the Azusa Street revival was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was evidenced by the speaking of tongues. The speaking of tongues was considered as the "crown restoration jewel of what many have called the 'second Pentecost.'"¹⁰

The series of revival meetings that took place at Azusa Street was subsequently called the Azusa Street Revival. The Azusa Street Revival functioned as an important catalyst for the growth of American Pentecostalism. It is also considered as the birthplace of the worldwide twentieth century Pentecostal Renewal.¹¹ It led to the formation of many Pentecostal denominations.

The Assemblies of God was among the earliest and most important Pentecostal

denominations to be established. This denomination was founded at Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914. The movement based its teachings on that of William H. Durham (1873-1912) who had visited one of the Azusa revival meetings. By 1995, the Assemblies of God had become the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world, having 2 million members in the United States as well as 35 million adherents in 150 countries.¹² In addition to the Assemblies of God, several other denominations came about, patterning themselves after the Assemblies of God. These included the Pentecostal Church of God founded in Chicago, Illinois (1919), the Open Bible Standard Church, founded in Eugene, Oregon (1919) and the International Church of Foursquare Gospel in Los Angeles, California (1927). A serious schism occurred amongst the Assemblies of God churches in 1916 that led to the departure of a number of congregations within this denomination. According to Synan,

"In 1916, a major controversy within the denomination led to the non-Trinitarian "Oneness" Pentecostal Movement. This belief taught that Jesus was the only person in the godhead and that the terms "Father," "Son" and "Holy Spirit" were titles. Movement leaders Frank Ewart and Glen Cook taught that the only valid water baptism was immersion "in Jesus' name" and that speaking in tongues was necessary for salvation. Churches that issued from this movement included the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World and the United Pentecostal Church."¹³

⁸ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 95-96.

⁹ Ibid, 101.

¹⁰ Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 21.

¹¹ Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern Day Pentecost* (South Plainfield: Bridge, 1980), 174.

¹² <https://www.apostolic.edu/the-pentecostal-20th-century-by-vinson-synan/>

¹³ <https://www.apostolic.edu/the-pentecostal-20th-century-by-vinson-synan/>

After the Second World War, the Pentecostal movement in America grew significantly. The growth was aided by the emergence of healing evangelists such as Jack Coe (1918-1956) in the 1950s, who brought about greater acceptance of the movement. From America, the Pentecostal movement spread throughout Europe.¹⁴ Subsequently, it became a global movement.

Essentially there are five major beliefs and practices of the Pentecostal¹⁵ movement. They are the following:

1. Restorationism: They believe that the church has lost her power and that God will revive the church through various experiences and teachings. They also believe in the complete restoration of scriptural truths that have been dormant. The sign of restoration revival is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. According to Moriarty, “The classic restoration motif of Pentecostalism was the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced in the speaking of tongues.”¹⁶
2. Spiritual manifestations: They are experience oriented. This blurs the centrality of the Bible. Their meetings often promote spiritual manifestations like that of the Holiness movement. For instance, “Holiness revival was often plagued with religious enthusiasts claiming the ‘holy dance’ or the ‘holy howl’ as evidence of the second blessing. Similarly, the emotions of the Pentecostals often exceed the limits of control. Extended periods of speaking in unknown tongues, panting and groaning to be freed from sin, and being slain in the Spirit, were often signals of spirituality.”¹⁷
3. Prone to be personality-centred: During the days of the Azusa Street Revival, Seymour had a huge following of worshippers coming to hear his messages. Likewise, today, many churches of the Pentecostal movement have generated a personality-centred focus on their pastors and leaders.
4. Theologically and doctrinally thin: Its emphasis on Pentecostal distinctives obscures other important doctrines in the Bible. Biblical exposition is often ignored. Pentecostals emphasise the “foursquare” gospel propagated by Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944).¹⁸ The foursquare gospel refers to the roles of the Lord Jesus Christ with regards to salvation, healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and His Second Coming.
5. Promotes unity, yet has tendency for division: While the movement desires unity in the church, divisions often occur. A case in point was the rift between Parham and Seymour over theological matters as well as bizarre happenings during the Azusa Street revival meetings. Parham publicly denounced Seymour and the Azusa Street revival.

¹⁴ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 104-105.

¹⁵ <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/religion/theological-distinctive-of-the-pentecostal-movement-religion-essay.php>

¹⁶ Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 27-28.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁸ Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 44.

THE SECOND WAVE (1960-1982)

The second wave is also called the Neo-Pentecostal movement or Charismaticism. Just like Pentecostals, the Charismatics believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit after conversion. However, unlike the Pentecostals who established separate denominations, the Charismatics emerged from within mainline denominational churches. Thus, there were Charismatic Methodists, Charismatic Baptists, Charismatic Presbyterians, Charismatic Lutherans, Charismatic Roman Catholics, Charismatic Anglicans, etc. Just like the Pentecostal movement, the Neo-Pentecostal movement also spread throughout the world after its inception in America.

Key initiators of the Neo-Pentecostal movement include Oral Roberts, David Du Plessis and Demos Shakarian. Oral Roberts (1918-2009) was one of the early pioneers of televangelism. Through his televangelism ministry, he brought Pentecostalism into the homes of American families. David Du Plessis (1905-1987) was a South African Pentecostal minister. In 1936, while Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1945), a British evangelist, was on preaching tour in South Africa, Du Plessis received a prophecy from Wigglesworth that would radically change his life:

“I have been sent by the Lord to tell you what he has shown me. This morning, he began. ‘Through the old-line denominations will come a revival that will eclipse anything we have known throughout history. No such things have happened in times past as will happen when this begins... The Lord said to me that I am to give you warning that He

is going to use you in this movement. You will have a very prominent part.”¹⁹

In 1948, Du Plessis moved to America and served in the Church of God and Assemblies of God. Du Plessis became good friends with John MacKay, president of Princeton Seminary. Through their friendship, he had the opportunity to share the message of Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit to many mainline traditional church leaders, so much so that they began to refer to him as “Mr Pentecost”. Du Plessis also became increasingly involved in the World Council of Churches. His main goal was to unite the worldwide Pentecostal movement as well as to influence mainline denominations regarding the Pentecostal outpouring of the twentieth century.

Together with Oral Roberts, Du Plessis helped Demos Shakarian (1913-1993), a Southern Californian businessman, to start the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI). This ministry, whose aim was to spread the message of tongues and healing through non-sectarian lunches and conferences, had tremendous impact on the spread of Pentecostal teachings to mainline denominations. According to Moriarty,

“Another key factor that made FGBMFI extremely successful in reaching mainline Christians with the Pentecostal message was their non-sectarian spirit. Their vision was to reach non-Pentecostals with the message of baptism of the Spirit, not to compel the converts to join Pentecostal denominations. A Methodist could walk into one of the meetings a skeptic and walk out speaking in tongues

¹⁹ <http://www.smithwigglesworth.com/pensketches/prophecy.html>

²⁰ Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 66-67.

without feeling any pressure to leave his church or join a “Spirit-filled” church.”²⁰

April 3, 1960 marks the beginning of the Neo-Pentecostal Movement. For the first time, baptism of the Spirit happened in the first non-Pentecostal church, St Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California. Dennis Bennet, the Episcopalian priest of that church, announced to his congregation that he had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by his ability to speak in tongues. This sparked controversy, amazement and outrage amongst his congregation members, so much so that he eventually resigned. Bennet then left his church to pastor another episcopal church in Seattle. Within a decade, signs of this movement spread to other mainline churches, so much so that it had reached 150 major Protestant denominations and a total of 55 million adherents.²¹ Notable neo-Pentecostal leaders include the following: Larry Christensen (1928-2017, Lutheran), Nelson Litwiler (1898-1986, Mennonite), Brick Bradford (1924-2013, Presbyterian), Pat Robertson (1930-2023, Baptist) and Charles Fulton (1938-2022, Episcopalian).²²

The year 1966 marks the entry of Pentecostalism into Roman Catholic churches. Two professors of Duquesne University, Ralf Kiefer and Bill Storey, together with some students experienced speaking of tongues as well as manifestations of other gifts of the Spirit, including prophecies and visions. Following that, Catholic charismatic experiences were recorded in the University of Notre Dame. Pentecostalism in Catholic churches then spread throughout America, Europe and the rest of the World.

Among the major beliefs and practices of the Neo-Pentecostal movement are the following:²³

1. Power for service: Power gained through baptism of the Holy Spirit brings about victorious Christian living, enabling one to obey God and maintain a godly witness.
2. Worship at a higher dimension: Through baptism of the Holy Spirit, the believer will be able to worship God with his “innermost” being. He is therefore able to worship at a higher dimension.
3. Sign gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10: All the sign gifts listed are meant for the church today, especially the gifts of healing, tongue-speaking and prophecy.
4. New revelation: This involves restoration of personal prophecy. God will speak directly and specifically to believers with detailed revelations to lead and guide them.
5. Demonic activity greatly emphasised: After baptism of the Holy Spirit, the believer is lifted to a new dimension of spiritual awareness of Satan and his demons. There is therefore a preoccupation with Satan, demons and spiritual warfare coupled with an obsession to engage in deliverance ministries.
6. More fervent prayer: After baptism of the Holy Spirit, the believer will be able to pray more fervently and successfully.
7. Experiencing Jesus: Experiencing Jesus

²¹ <https://www.apostolic.edu/the-pentecostal-20th-century-by-vinson-synan/>

²² Ibid.

²³ Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 66.

in a personal encounter will place one in a position to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, enabling one to have the Lord Jesus not just as Savior but as Lord.

8. Exaltation of the Bible: The Bible is exalted and believed to be a source of divine revelation, although God reveals deeper truths to those who have the anointing.
9. Greater power for effective evangelism: After baptism of the Holy Spirit, the believer will have greater power and effectiveness in witnessing. There will be greater zeal for the believer to evangelise.

Aside from the list above, other practices include a personality cult focused upon the leadership, sensationalism and exaggerated claims of miraculous healing, as well as questionable fund-raising motives and methods. Of note also is the promotion of the Health and Wealth gospel, following after the Word of Faith movement propagated by Kenneth Hagin (1917-2003).²⁴ The Health and Wealth Gospel teaches that a believer is supposed to be healthy and wealthy. Illness is attributed to sin and poverty to disobedience to God's Word as interpreted according to Neo-Pentecostal beliefs.

THE THIRD WAVE (1982- PRESENT)

The third wave is also called the Neo-Charismatic Movement or the Signs and Wonders Movement. The term "third wave" was first coined in 1980 by Peter

Wagner (1930-2016), a professor of theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Los Angeles, California.²⁵ The 'first wave' of the Holy Spirit was the Pentecostal Movement which began in 1906. This was followed by the "second wave" in 1960 when mainstream denominations embraced the ministry of the Holy Spirit and its gifts. The "third wave", in contrast, involved evangelicals embracing the gifts of the Spirit and adding distinctives of their own, yet rejecting some of the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal distinctives. Neo-Charismatics, for example, do not believe that the baptism of the Spirit is a second work of grace subsequent to conversion. Neither do they view tongue-speaking as evidence of a person that has been baptised with the Holy Spirit.

The third wave is believed to have started in 1982, when John Wimber (1934-1997) began pastoring a church in Anaheim, California called "The Vineyard". Wimber had previously left his pastorate Calvary Chapel in Yorba Linda, California over complaints of his overtly charismatic nature of worship.²⁶ In the same year, in 1982, at invitation from Fuller Theological Seminary, Wimber taught a course alongside Wagner. The course was called "Signs, Wonders and Church Growth". The course became very successful and popular, drawing the attention of students and faculty. The reputation of the course grew due to certain practices of miraculous healings as well as an in-class practice on praying for the sick. This eventually led to invitations to train churches in the United States as well as around the world on how

²⁴ Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 29-30.

²⁵ Peter C. Wagner, *Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders* (Michigan: Servant Publications, 1988), 92.

²⁶ Christine K. Eubanks, *Distinctly Vineyard: An identity in the making*, *Journal of American Society for Church Growth* 11(1), 48. Retrieved from <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/jascg/vol11/iss1/5>

to pray for and heal the sick. Both Wimber and Wagner propagated the teachings of the third wave. Under Wimber's leading, the Vineyard church at Anaheim grew very rapidly. It also led to the formation of many other affiliated Vineyard churches which came under the umbrella of the Association of Vineyard churches, or the Vineyard movement.²⁷ Baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by manifestation of tongue-speaking and prophecies, however began to adopt new forms of manifestations. These included spiritual ecstasies, tremors, animal sounds, etc. A case in point are the revival meetings of Rodney Howard Browne (1961-present day) in Lakeland, Florida, in 1993. These meetings were accompanied by strange events including what was termed as holy laughter. In the following year, 1994, the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church under the leadership of John Arnott (1940-present day) also reported a phenomenon called "Toronto Blessing". Its services were accompanied by holy laughter, animal sounds, rolling on the ground, prophecies, healings etc.²⁸ Although John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement stopped their fellowship with Arnott's church, these unusual manifestations continued in other churches throughout the decade. Other key leaders of the third wave include: John Kilpatrick (1950-present day), Jack Deere (1948-present day), Reinhard Bonnke (1914-2019), etc.

Among the major beliefs and practices of the Neo-Charismatic movement are the following:

1. Restoration of the five-fold ministry: God has restored the five-fold ministry according to Ephesians 4:11. They believe that the offices of apostles and prophets are now being restored and that the church cannot function effectively without their full restoration. Apostles and prophets are believed to be needed to prepare believers for the day of coming of the Kingdom of God and as testimony to all nations.²⁹
2. Personal experience determines truth: Personal experience is the basis for interpreting God's Word.
3. Power evangelism: Preaching of the Gospel accompanied by signs and wonders is more effective than evangelism without signs and wonders and is akin to the method of evangelism used by first century Christians.³⁰ These signs and wonders will include healing the sick, casting out demons, prophesying, etc.
4. Hearing God speak: Anyone who is baptised with the Holy Spirit can hear the voice of God. A person who knows God intimately should expect to hear God speak to him personally. Although God does speak apart from the Bible, He does not speak contrary to it.³¹
5. Spiritual warfare: A preoccupation with warfare against Satan and demons. Demon casting is often referred to as deliverance ministries because the

²⁷ Peter Hocken, *The challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements. The Tensions of the Spirit* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 75-96.

²⁸ Margaret M. Poloma, *Main Street Mystics. The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism* (Lanham: Ultramira Press, 2003), 59.

²⁹ Peter C. Wagner, *Churchquake: How The New Apostolic Reformation is Shaking the Church as We Know It* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1999), 5.

³⁰ John Wimber, *Power evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986), 34-35.

³¹ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 214.

person or object is delivered out or saved from an evil spiritual force.³²

DOCTRINAL ERRORS

Many beliefs and practices of the Charismatic Movement have been found to be unscriptural when examined in the light of God's Word. Key doctrines include the following:

1. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit:** Most in the Charismatic Movement believe that baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace after conversion. This is an unscriptural belief as the phrase "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is not found in the Bible. The Holy Spirit does not baptise. Rather, the Lord Jesus baptises us with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33-34). In Matthew 3:11, for instance, the Bible says, "*I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:*". At the point of salvation, every born again believer has already been baptised with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).
2. **Restoration of the offices of Apostles and Prophets:** The Charismatic movement deems the restoration of the offices of Apostles with its gifts needful in order to bring the church to full unity, maturity and power before the Lord Jesus returns. Contrary to their belief that God is restoring these offices, the ministries of the Apostles and Prophets have ceased since the Bible was completed. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 says, "*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall*
3. **Tongue-Speaking:** The Charismatic Movement claims tongue-speaking as recorded in the Book of Acts chapter 2 has been restored. In contrast, the Bible says that tongue-speaking has ceased since the Bible was completed (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The tongues spoken in the Charismatic Movement today are unidentifiable languages that involve uttering unintelligible gibberish. In contrast, the Bible says that the tongues spoken in Acts chapter 2 were genuine languages. In fact, over a dozen known languages were recorded (Acts 2:7-11). The tongue-speaking of the Charismatic Movement is not of God. In most cases, it could be spoken out of self-induced delusion.
4. **Spiritual Warfare:** The Charismatic Movement believes in a spiritual warfare which instructs its adherents to engage themselves in casting demons, binding Satan, rebuking evil spirits, etc. These practices are unbiblical. The Bible does not instruct us to confront Satan but to resist him. James 4:7 says, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" The Bible also tells believers to put on the whole armour of God to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11-17).

cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." When the perfect is come, i.e., when the Bible is completed, there is no more necessity for these two spiritual gifts as they were given by God for the writing of the New Testament and completion of the Bible.

³² Sean McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.

CONCLUSION

The Charismatic Movement with all its unbiblical beliefs and practices is certainly not of God. The Lord Jesus Himself has forewarned of its coming in the last days. Matthew 24:24 says, *“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”* The Charismatic Movement

also calls itself the Signs and Wonders Movement. Since its inception at the beginning of the last century, the Charismatic Movement has grown tremendously in numbers and influence. The Charismatic Movement promotes Ecumenism and it will be the glue that will unite all churches under the one world apostate church of the Antichrist.

THE PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In April 2019, Serene Jones, president of Union Theological Seminary, was interviewed by a columnist for the New York Times in an article entitled “Reverend, You Say the Virgin Birth Is ‘a Bizarre Claim?’”¹. In that interview, Jones made some shocking statements repudiating the basic tenets of orthodox Biblical Christianity. Here are some snippets of the audacious statements that she made:

Concerning the reality of a literal flesh-and-blood resurrection of Christ, she said “When you look in the Gospels, the stories are all over the place. There’s no resurrection story in Mark, just an empty tomb. Those who claim to know whether or not it happened are kidding themselves”.

Of the crucifixion, she claimed that “Crucifixion is not something that God is orchestrating from upstairs. The pervasive idea of an abusive God-father who sends

his own kid to the cross so God could forgive people is nuts.”

Relating to the miracles of Christ: “I find the virgin birth a bizarre claim. It has nothing to do with Jesus’ message. The virgin birth only becomes important if you have a theology in which sexuality is considered sinful.”

In answering the question “what happens when we die?”, she responded: “I don’t know! There may be something, there may be nothing. My faith is not tied to some divine promise about the afterlife... And I’m absolutely certain that when we die, there is not a group of designated bad people sent to burn in hell. That does not exist.”²

Despite all that, she still shamelessly claims to be a Christian minister. As the president of a seminary that has been described as the ‘flagship progressive, liberal seminary’, her

¹ Nicholas Kristof, “Opinion | Reverend, You Say the Virgin Birth Is ‘a Bizarre Claim’?,” *The New York Times*, April 20, 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/opinion/sunday/christian-easter-serene-jones.html>.

² Kristof.

views are representative of the movement known as Progressive Christianity.

This is a movement that has been growing in influence over the past twenty years or so. In a sense, it is nothing new, but is liberal Christianity under a new guise. It is a movement that began primarily in America, coming up alongside the radical left of American politics, but is increasingly gaining prominence in much of the western world. So, what is progressive Christianity all about, and is it something that we need to be concerned about?

WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY?

Progressive Christianity is a contemporary movement that claims to emphasise inclusivity, equality, social justice, and openness to a wide range of beliefs and lifestyles. It is a repudiation of traditional orthodox Christianity and has reinterpreted Scripture to suit their own idea of what they think is morally right and needful in modern society.

One of the phrases that surfaces often in the writings of progressive Christians is that they are “spiritual but not religious”. What they actually mean is that they want to claim the name of ‘Christian’, but do not want to follow much of what traditional Christianity is about. They claim to be able to find God on their own terms without the principles of orthodox biblical Christianity to guide them. As one such author asserts:

Christianity isn’t necessarily about being “saved” at all. We too believe that humans are somehow reconnected to

God through Jesus Christ, but we are more concerned with how that impacts *this* life—not the next life... Christianity is a lifestyle, not a set of beliefs. The challenge is living a life of love that Christ called us to, not finding the right set of beliefs to get into “heaven.”³

The one overarching principle which they claim to adhere to is the way of love: “As people who are joyfully and unapologetically Christian, we pledge ourselves completely to the way of Love. We work to express our love, as Jesus teaches us, in three ways: by loving God, neighbor, and self.”⁴ While on the surface, that may sound like a good biblical declaration of obedience to Jesus’ call for us to love, nothing could be further from the truth. Their idea of ‘loving’ is not love at all, but a perverse repudiation of all that Jesus stands for. Based on their confused notion of love, they have devised what they term “The Core Values of Progressive Christianity”, which are as follows:

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean that we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the way and teachings of Jesus can lead to experiencing sacredness, wholeness, and unity of all life, even as we recognise that the Spirit moves in beneficial ways in many faith traditions.
2. Seek community that is inclusive of all people, honouring differences in theological perspective, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, class or ability.
3. Strive for peace and justice among all people, knowing that behaving with compassion and selfless love towards

³ Andrew Springer, “What Is Progressive Christianity?,” *Medium* (blog), September 17, 2022, <https://andrewspringer.medium.com/what-is-progressive-christianity-82d0007d2099>.

⁴ “The Phoenix Affirmations Full Version,” accessed September 12, 2023, <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/the-phoenix-affirmations-full-version/>.

one another is the fullest expression of what we believe.

4. Embrace the insights of contemporary science and strive to protect the Earth and ensure its integrity and sustainability.
5. Commit to a path of life-long learning, believing there is more value in questioning than in absolutes.⁵

While claiming to follow the ways and teachings of Jesus, they have completely redefined what it means to be a Christian. The statements are unbiblical and heretical, directly contradicting the true way and teachings of Christ.

In arguing for the validity of other faith traditions (meaning other religions), they have rejected the teaching that Christ gave in John 14:6 that *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”*. In seeking to be inclusive, they compromise by seeking unity with those of all theological perspectives, including outright heretical and erroneous ones. They also welcome and celebrate the sins of LGBTQ+ and other modern sexual perversions that the Bible clearly condemns.⁶ Instead of focusing on their witness for the Lord, Progressive Christians tend to spend their time on matters of social, economic, and racial and ecological justice. They accept the ‘insights of contemporary science’, meaning that they support theistic evolution and whatever other explanations of the origin of the universe that science claims to purport. They also reject the idea that there are any absolutes, including the

Bible’s own claims of inerrancy, infallibility and present perfection.

In so doing they think that they are showing forth love, but in actual fact they are deceiving and hating their congregants. Instead of loving God and the truth, they love only sin and the world. By redefining the basic tenets of Christianity, they make God to be a lying, contradictory God. It is clear that they are not worshipping or following the God of the Bible at all!

WHERE ARE THEY FOUND?

Because Progressive Christianity is a movement and not a denomination, there is no central organising body, leader or spokespersons. Progressive Churches and Progressive Christians can be found across denominations and churches, and their degree of progressivism can vary as well. Within the same denomination there may be churches that are more progressive than others.

Generally, they are more popular among the younger demographic, attracting young people who have a desire for community and social activism, and not necessarily wanting to have anything to do with a traditional church.

Amongst the larger denominations, the United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church of the United States are known to be the most progressive. Not far behind would be the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church. There are also many smaller and non-denominational churches that would have

⁵ “The Core Values of Progressive Christianity,” accessed September 28, 2023, <https://progressivechristianity.org/the-8-points/>.

⁶ One of the most ludicrous and blasphemous that I have seen is a video on YouTube of a so-called drag queen preacher who was dressed in full costume preaching a sermon berating the denomination for not being open and affirming enough. *11am Sunday Morning Worship*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNKUCqIUpQY>.

progressive leanings, though to varying degrees, and focusing on being progressive in different issues.

While it is most pervasive in America, they can be found in denominations and churches in other more liberalised western countries such as Canada, the UK, Australia, and many European countries. It is a movement that is reflective of the changing societal norms, as churches seek to conform to the world rather than to separate from it.

ARE THEY REALLY CHRISTIAN?

It should be clear to any Bible-believing Christian that Progressive Christianity is not Christianity at all. It is an entirely separate religion with no resemblance to any Biblical teaching whatsoever. They have ignored every basic tenet of what the gospel stands for. They reject the seriousness of sin and God's holiness; the reality of Jesus as the risen Saviour; the existence of heaven and hell; or even the basic idea of salvation. They call themselves Christians, but they have no Christ. They gather as churches but worship no God aside from themselves. As Michael Kruger observes:

Now, when you wrap all that up, you're left with something that's not really Christianity at all at the end. If you don't have a divine Jesus and if you reduce it all to moralism and there's no real fall or sin then the cross isn't really anything that saves you. When you look at the cross, it's just a good example of a good person. It's not really good news. That's what's really sad about progressive Christianity.⁷

Basically, what they are doing is to bring

atheists and agnostics into church and assure them that they can remain as they are, but now call themselves Christian. Because there is no clear notion of who God is and what He is like, there is nothing to exercise faith in. With no objective standard for sin, there is therefore no need for repentance. There is no conversion, no walk with Christ, no hope for eternity. God is not in these churches. It is an entirely man-centred system. Yet it is a movement that is popular with the younger generation. They come not to seek Christ but come to soothe their conscience with a semblance of religion and practise their own sense of morality.

They are so blatantly different from orthodox Christianity, that they should not even be considered as wolves in sheep's clothing but are outrightly wolves in wolf's clothing. They do not bother to hide the fact that they do not believe the Bible to be God's Word. Yet their message is welcome to many because there is no desire for God in the hearts and minds of these adherents.

Indeed, we see the warnings of 2 Timothy 4:3-4 being fulfilled, *"for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."*

This is a sure sign of the times that the day of Christ is at hand. This is the apostasy of the last days warned of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the*

⁷ Michael Kruger, "What Is Progressive Christianity?," Reformed Theological Seminary, accessed September 12, 2023, <https://rts.edu/resources/what-is-progressive-christianity/>.

son of perdition.” They are certainly not on the side of God. As James 4:4 warns: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”.

With their strong emphasis on inclusivism and ecumenism, they are certainly paving the way for the one world apostate church of the Antichrist. May none of us ever fall prey to the deceptions of Progressive Christianity.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The word “ecumenical” is derived from the Greek word *oikumene* which is used 15 times in the New Testament and describes the “whole inhabited world¹”. This word used to describe the universal Church or the whole body of churches when used in reference to churches and councils. The early church used this term to describe various councils, such as the council of Nicea (324 AD). These councils were known as ecumenical councils as they were general councils that were convened to consider matters that relate to the church worldwide. Today, when this term is used in reference to the ecumenical movement, it describes a movement that seeks to promote worldwide unity between all different churches and denominations to build towards a worldwide church.

This movement came to life on 23 August 1948, when 147 Churches came together from all over the world to approve a resolution for the World Council of Churches (WCC). Many years were spent preparing and planning for this council. This movement follows after the same spirit as that of Nimrod in Genesis 11, paving the way for the one-world church and one-world government of the Antichrist.

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS

The noble intention to form a one-world organisation arose out of a genuine need in the missions field. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, churches experienced revival across Europe and America. This sparked off many missionary endeavours. However, while some churches that had missionaries to send, they did not have the resources to do so. At the same time, there were churches which had resources but which did not have missionaries to send. The divisions between churches and denominations did not help the situation. This led to the formation of the first World Missionary Conference in 1910 in Edinburgh. Delegates from various mission societies from North America and Europe gathered to discuss plans to promote missions. This was the birth place of the ecumenical movement.

Ten years later, the International Missionary Council was established in 1921 in London and New York. This council was an interdenominational organisation that wanted to serve its members by helping them to tackle various issues and challenges in the missions field. This council provided training, consultation, and assistance for the various needs

¹ For examples see Luke 2:1; Acts 17:6

missionaries may face in the missions field. preliminary founding stages of the WCC.

One of the missionaries who attended the first World Missionary Conference was Charles H. Brent, a Protestant Episcopalian bishop. Brent was a missionary to the Philippines and he realised that in order for Churches to cooperate together in missions, they had to resolve the differences between them that arose out of differing doctrines and systems of church governance – issues which were deliberately avoided in the first World Missionary Conference. With careful planning and persistence, Brent's vision came to fruition 17 years later. In 1927, 400 people representing churches all over the world gathered in Lausanne, Switzerland, for the first World Conference on Faith and Order, in order to discuss and resolve doctrinal issues between churches and denominations. In 1948, during the first meeting of the WCC, the Faith and Order movement was incorporated as a commission of the WCC.

While the Faith and Order movement was gaining traction, another initiative for another movement was also taking shape. This second initiative was led by Nathan Soderblom, the Archbishop of Stockholm. A meeting was arranged in 1914 and in 1930, the Life and Work Movement was officially formed. Its aim was to address the Churches involvement and role in dealing with societal issues. Its motto was “doctrine divides and service unities.” In 1938, the Life and Work Movement was incorporated into the

While there were some initial difficulties and problems within the WCC, it was formally formed in 1948 and today it has grown to become a “fellowship” of 352 member churches and which collectively represent 500 million people all over the world, in more than 110 countries.

THE WCC IN SINGAPORE

The ecumenical body that is active in Singapore is the National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS). The NCCS is a member of the WCC.² In 1948, the Malayan Christian Council was formed as the ecumenical body to unite churches in Malaya and Singapore. After the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, leaders of the MCC thought it necessary to form a separate council in Singapore. In 1974, the NCCS was constituted to fulfill this goal in Singapore.

The founding members of the NCCS include the Anglican Diocese of Singapore, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Singapore, Presbyterian Church in Singapore, Lutheran, Methodist Church in Singapore, Salvation Army, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, and the St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Church.³ The Church of Singapore and the Evangelical Free Church are listed as full members.⁴ Various other Churches are also listed as congregational members⁵ and associate members.⁶ One only has to look at this list of Churches to know which Churches are part of the ecumenical movement.

² <https://www.oikoumene.org/organization/national-council-of-churches-of-singapore>

³ <https://nccs.org.sg/fullfounder-members/>. For a full listing of local churches which are founder members please see <https://nccs.org.sg/fullfounder-members/>

⁴ <https://nccs.org.sg/full-members/>. For a full listing of local churches which are founder members please see <https://nccs.org.sg/full-members/>

⁵ <https://nccs.org.sg/congregational-members/>

⁶ <https://nccs.org.sg/associate-members/>

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WCC

The WCC has three objectives; an immediate, intermediate, and long-term objective.

The immediate objective of the WCC is to promote cooperation and unity amongst local mainline denominations. One of the initiatives that went toward meeting this objective was the formation of local assemblies that would enable local participating denominations to conduct joint ordination, training, newcomer introduction courses, catechism classes for the preparation of Church membership, and inter-church pastoral care. The goal is to change the religious climate and create a culture of ecumenism on a local level.

The intermediate objective is to reunite churches under the papacy. Anglican, Orthodox, Lutheran and Reformed Churches have been engaging in dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church to bring about reconciliation between protestant Christians and Roman Catholics. To this end, the Anglican Church and Roman Catholic Church formed the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commissions I and II to take steps to reunify with Rome. Some of the joint initiatives include joint meetings of bishops, sharing facilitates for theological education, and a degree of the sharing of the eucharist. Another major step taken in fulfilling this intermediate objective was the signing of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document in 1994. This document was drafted to express the resolve of both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics to resolve their differences and to collaborate together in various interchurch activities. Prominent participants and signatories on the evangelical side include J.I. Packer and Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ. In 1999, the Lutherans and Catholics

also agreed upon a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, a document which was drafted by the Roman Catholic Church and which was adopted by the Lutheran World Federation.

The long-term objective of the ecumenical movement is to unite all faiths into a one-world religion. They seek to achieve this aim by organising inter-religious dialogues. The WCC on their website explains:

Historically, WCC work in interreligious dialogue has evolved through three stages. First, dialogue with other faiths was affirmed as an expression of Christian witness that is different from mission. In the second stage, dialogue moved more into an acceptance that Christians need to speak and be open to other faiths and rethink Christian identity. In the current environment, dialogue and interreligious efforts deal with issues that unite and divide, and seek ways in which we can work together. As we continue to deal with religious memory, another focus needs to look to the future, including such issues as new religions and secularisation.

In the past, practical cooperation between staff in interreligious relations and staff in other teams has occurred most specifically with international affairs, education, and Bossey staff. Lack of finances and staff time have limited other efforts, or have limited contact to providing interreligious “color” to programme events. Certainly, there have been interfaith dimensions in programmes which have not directly involved staff in Interreligious Relations.

Churches have been helped by the WCC in interreligious issues through

the limited resources the Council is able to provide, and what is made available through exchanges across countries and regions. In a less direct but no less important fashion, churches do, and increasingly can, draw benefit from the diverse relations the WCC establishes and cultivates with various representative organisations of other faith traditions and interreligious bodies. Churches are also helped through the mediation of dialogue initiatives, bilateral and multilateral, on issues of common interest, exploring areas of connection or addressing divisive questions.⁷

EVALUATING THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

There are serious doctrinal and practical implications if a church joins the ecumenical movement.

The ecumenical movement undermines the authority of God's Word. There are members of the ecumenical movement who are neo-evangelicals and liberals. How can there be dialogue if there is no common authority? On the one hand, we have the Roman Catholics who regard the Pope as their authority. On the other hand, there are professing Christians who claim to uphold the Word of God as their supreme authority. Whose authority is a Christian to submit unto? The Word of God is to be our sole, supreme, and final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

The ecumenical movement undermines the doctrine of salvation. Proponents of this movement believe that a person may be saved through more ways than one. They believe that all religions can lead to salvation and to heaven. In so doing, they have undermined the doctrine of

salvation. John 14:6 tells us, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Again Acts 4:12 says, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" The Bible tells us that salvation is only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The ecumenical movement undermines the doctrine of God. By agreeing with the ecumenical movement, one also has to agree that there are more gods than one. Different religions believe in different gods. To teach that all gods are the same is to deny the one living and true God who has revealed Himself to us through His Word and in Christ. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.*"

The ecumenical movement undermines the doctrine of Biblical Separation. In order for Churches in the ecumenical movement to cooperate together, they have to surrender the doctrine of separation. It is good and proper to work together with other Christians who are like-minded, believe in the pure Gospel, and uphold the fundamentals of the Christian faith. But to cooperate with professing Christians who deny the virgin birth of Christ, the inerrancy of Scripture, the resurrection of Christ, and the atonement of Christ is most displeasing to the Lord. The Bible calls on Christians to be salt and light in this world. To do so, Christians must preserve their distinct identity. Matthew 5:13-16 says, "*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of*

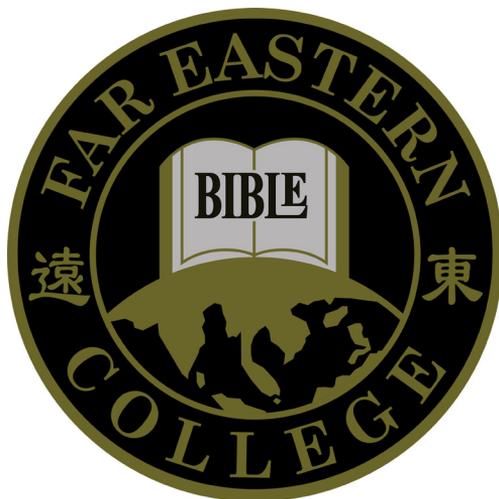
⁷ Tarek Mitri, Hans Ucko, Sarah Speicher, *The Interfaith Dimensions of our Work*, accessed October 2023, <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd33-21.html>

men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

CONCLUSION

It has been more than 70 years since the formation of the WCC. During this time, the ecumenical movement has already achieved its immediate goal, its intermediate goal and, to some extent,

its long-term goal. The Bible has already prophesied that this movement will succeed, for it is paving the way for the one-world church of the Antichrist. This is the warning described in Revelation 17:1-18, which the Bible describes as the “great whore.” It is only a matter of time. The duty for Christians is not to try and prevent the ecumenical movement from achieving its goal. Rather, our duty is to warn others of the dangers of this movement so they would not be a part of this movement. We are already living in the last days. It is especially in these perilous times where we need discernment and courage.



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