CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

RON RHODES



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Cover illustration @ Michael Brown / Fotolia

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

Copyright © 2005/2015 Ron Rhodes Published by Harvest House Publishers Eugene, Oregon 97402 www.harvesthousepublishers.com ISBN 978-0-7369-5291-0 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-5292-7 (eBook)

The Library of Congress has cataloged the edition as follows:

Rhodes, Ron.

The complete guide to Christian denominations / Ron Rhodes.

o. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7369-1289-4 (pbk.)

1. Protestant churches—United States. 2. Protestant churches—Doctrines. I. Title.

BR516.5.R47 2005

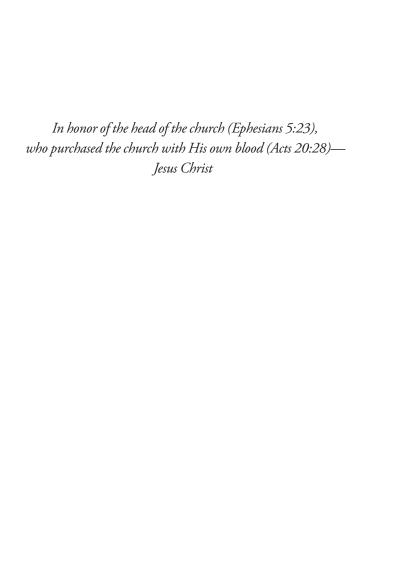
280'.4-dc22

2004017507

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Printed in the United States of America

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 / VP-CD / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Acknowledgments

Researching every denomination in this book required considerable effort. Representatives of many of these denominations made the task easier by pointing me to helpful information regarding their groups. To these individuals—too many to list—I offer a heartfelt thanks.

Kerri, David, and Kylie (my wife and adult children)—as always, I could not have written this book without your continued support. God has used you mightily in my life!

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BEGINNINGS: THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY AND DENOMINATIONS



The word Christian is used only three times in the New Testament, most importantly in Acts 11:26 (see also Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16). In Acts 11:26, we are told simply and straightforwardly, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." This would have happened around AD 42, about a decade after Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead.

Until this time, the followers of Jesus referred to themselves as brothers (Acts 15:1,23), disciples (Acts 9:26), believers (Acts 5:12), and saints (Romans 8:27). Now, in Antioch, they were called Christians.

The term is loaded with significance. Among the ancients, the *ian* (or *ean*) ending meant "belonging to the party of." Herodians belonged to the party of Herod. Caesareans belonged to the party of Caesar. Christians belonged to Christ. And Christians were loyal to Christ, just as the Herodians were loyal to Herod and Caesareans were loyal to Caesar (see Mark 3:6; 12:13).

The name Christian is noteworthy because these followers of

Jesus were recognized as members of a separate group. They were distinct from Judaism and from all other religions of the ancient world. We might loosely translate the term Christian, "those belonging to Christ," "Christ-ones," or perhaps "Christ-people." They are ones who follow the Christ.

Those who have studied the culture of Antioch have noted that the Antiochians were well-known for making fun of people. They may have used the word Christian as a term of derision, an appellation of ridicule. Nevertheless, history reveals that by the second century, Christians adopted the title as a badge of honor. They took pride (in a healthy way) in following Jesus. They had a genuine relationship with the living, resurrected Christ, and they were utterly faithful to Him, even in the face of death.

The city of Antioch was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. People of both backgrounds in this city became followers of Jesus. What brought these believers unity was not their race, culture, or language. Rather, their unity was rooted in the personal relationship each of them had with Jesus. Christianity crosses all cultural and ethnic boundaries.

If a Christian is one who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, then Christianity is a movement of people who have personal relationships with Jesus Christ. This may sound simplistic, but from a biblical perspective, this is the proper starting point.

In the New Testament, the early Christians never referred to their collective movement as Christianity, even though they used the term Christian with greater frequency as the movement grew in numbers. By the time of Augustine (AD 354–430), the term Christianity appears to have become a widespread appellation for the Christian movement.

The Birth of the Church

Scripture refers to both the universal church and the local

church. The universal church is a company of people who have one Lord and who share together in one gift of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ (Titus 1:4; Jude 3). It may be defined as the ever enlarging body of born-again believers who comprise the universal body of Christ, over which He reigns as Lord.

Although the members of the church—and members of different denominations—may differ in age, sex, race, wealth, social status, and ability, true believers are all joined together as one people (Galatians 3:28). All of them share in one Spirit and worship one Lord (Ephesians 4:3-6). This body is comprised only of believers in Christ. The way one becomes a member of this universal body is to simply place faith in Christ. If you're a believer, you're in!

The word *church* is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*. This Greek word comes from two smaller words. The first is *ek*, which means "out from among." The second is *klesia*, which means "to call." Combining the two words, *ekklesia* means "to call out from among." The church represents those whom God has called out from among the world and from all walks of life. All are welcome in Christ's church.

Many theologians believe the church did not exist in Old Testament times (I think they are right). Matthew 16:18 cites Jesus as saying, "I will build my church" (future tense). This indicates that when He spoke these words, the church did not yet exist. This is consistent with the Old Testament, which includes no reference to the church. In the New Testament, the church is portrayed as distinct from Israel in such passages as Romans 9:6, 1 Corinthians 10:32, and Hebrews 12:22-24. Therefore, we should not equate the church with believing Israelites in Old Testament times.

Scripture indicates that the universal church was born on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2; compare with 1:5; 11:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13). We are told in Ephesians 1:19-20 that the church is built on the foundation of Christ's resurrection, meaning that the

church could not have existed in Old Testament times. The church is thus called a "new man" in Ephesians 2:15.

The one universal church is represented by many local churches scattered throughout the world. For example, we read of a local church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2), and another in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Only a few local churches existed at first, but due to the missionary efforts of the early Christians, churches soon cropped up around the globe.

FAST FACTS ON the Church

	Universal Church	Local Church
membership	embraces all believers from Pentecost to the rapture	embraces believers in a specific locale who meet for fellowship and worship
living or dead	includes living and dead believers	includes living believers only
denominational affiliation	includes all true believers, regardless of denominational affiliation	normally identi- fied with a specific denomination or movement
joining	One becomes a member by faith in Christ.	One becomes a member by profession of faith in Christ plus any requirements unique to the denomination, such as baptism.

The New Testament strongly urges believers to attend local churches. Hebrews 10:25 specifically instructs us not to for-sake meeting together. The Christian life as described in Scripture is to be lived in the context of the family of God and not in isolation (Acts 2; Ephesians 3:14-15). Moreover, by attending church, we become equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12-16). The Bible knows nothing of a "lone ranger" Christian. As the old proverb says, many logs grouped together burn brightly, but embers that are isolated quickly die out (see Ephesians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11; and 1 Peter 3:8).

The Spread of Christianity

Christianity experienced phenomenal growth following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We learn in Acts 1:15 that about 120 Jewish believers in Christ gathered in Jerusalem. A bit later, after Peter's powerful sermon, 3000 people became believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). The number soon grew to 5000 (Acts 4:4). Soon enough, the Samaritans—whom the Jews considered "unclean"—were added to the church (see Acts 8:5-25), as were the Gentiles (see Acts 10; 13–28).

In Acts 1:8 the Lord instructed His disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The rest of the book of Acts is a historical account of how Paul, Peter, and others empowered by the Holy Spirit spread Christianity among both Jews and Gentiles around the northern Mediterranean, including Samaria (Acts 8:5-25), Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch (9:32–12:25), Phrygia and Galatia (13:1–15:35), Macedonia (15:36–21:16), and Rome (21:17–22:29). Despite persecution by Roman authorities, Jewish authorities, and others (2:13; 4:1-22; 5:17-42; 6:9–8:4), Christianity spread like wildfire.

The apostle Paul went on three missionary tours (Acts

13:1–14:28; 15:36–18:22; 18:23–21:17), spreading God's Word in strategic cities like Antioch, Perga, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, and Miletus. One of Paul's strategies was to visit major Roman capitals that were easily reached by existing trade routes, a strategy that resulted in the gospel spreading out to other areas through these routes. Local churches popped up one after another.

Fast-forward to the twenty-first century. Christianity has continued to grow and expand from the first century to the present, and it is now variously represented in some 300 denominations in the United States alone. And this number is constantly in flux as new denominations form and other denominations disappear from the religious landscape.

With so many denominations sprinkled across the land, keeping track of their similarities and differences has become increasingly difficult. That is one reason I wrote this book. You will find this book a handy guide that provides a brief history and doctrinal summary of the mainstream denominations in the United States.

Fast Facts on the Necessity of Church Fellowship

- "There is nothing more unchristian than a solitary Christian" (John Wesley).
- "The New Testament does not envisage solitary religion; some kind of regular assembly for worship and instruction is everywhere taken for granted in the Epistles. So we must be regular practicing members of the church" (C.S. Lewis).
- "Churchgoers are like coals in a fire. When they cling together, they keep the flame aglow; when they separate, they die out" (Billy Graham).

What Is a Denomination?

The English word *denomination* comes from the Latin word *denominare*, which means "to name." In this book, you will find that the names of denominations are diverse, reflecting a wide range of distinctive beliefs and practices.

A denomination is "an association or fellowship of congregations within a religion that have the same beliefs or creed, engage in similar practices, and cooperate with each other to develop and maintain shared enterprises." Seen in this light, Presbyterians are Presbyterians precisely because they share the same beliefs, engage in similar practices, and cooperate with each other to develop and maintain shared enterprises. Likewise, Roman Catholics are Roman Catholics for the same reasons.

Though the church experienced some sectarianism even in early New Testament times (see 1 Corinthians 3:3-7), formal denominations are actually a relatively recent development. One reason for this is that in many countries of the world, governmental authorities believed that civic harmony hinged on religious conformity. The recipe for a healthy society, they believed, included "one king, one faith, and one law." This is why so many countries have had state churches. They resisted the idea of allowing people to have freedom of religious belief, for they thought such a policy would be disruptive to society. When denominational groups did emerge in some of these countries, persecution soon followed. Only with the emergence of the United States did all this change in a significant way.

The United States promises every American the free exercise of religion. This is one of the things that makes America so great. The First Amendment, ratified in 1791, affirms that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In keeping with this, James Madison, who became the fourth president of the United States (1809–1817),

wrote, "The religion...of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man...We maintain, therefore, that in matters of religion no man's right is [to be] abridged by the institution of civil society." ⁵

This policy is one reason so many people immigrated to the colonies in the early years of our country. As these people arrived, they brought with them their churches and denominations.

Among the English colonists there were Congregationalists in New England, Quakers in Pennsylvania, Anglicans in New York, Presbyterians in Virginia, and Roman Catholics in Maryland. In addition, there were Dutch, Swiss, and German Reformed [and] Swiss and German Lutherans. ⁶

Transplanting their former churches onto American soil served to help these immigrants adjust to their new surroundings. They were able to stay grounded in a familiar spiritual environment even while getting used to their new physical environment. Eventually these various churches took on an American flavor and adapted to fit in with American society.

With the passing of time, new denominations continued to emerge on American soil as a result of splits and mergers. Why do denominations split? The answer is simple. Wherever human beings congregate, they will have differences of opinion about what to believe and how faith should be practiced. This book will illustrate how, in many cases, churches split off from a parent denomination because of differences in belief and/or practices, thereby giving rise to entirely new denominations.

FAST FACTS ON Church Attendance

- According to the New Testament, church attendance is not merely optional—it is vital.
- Hebrews 10:25 specifically instructs, "Let us not give up meeting together."
- Scripture describes the Christian life as being lived in the context of the family of God and not in isolation (Acts 2; Ephesians 3:14-15).
- By attending church, believers become equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12-16).
- The Bible knows nothing of "lone ranger" Christians (see Ephesians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11; and 1 Peter 3:8).

What Are Protestants?

The three major divisions of Christianity are the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the Orthodox Church. I provide a full history of how the Roman Catholic Church (chapter 4) and the Orthodox Church (chapter 14) emerged. However, the great majority of denominations in this book—including those affiliated with the Methodists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Lutherans—are Protestant. Therefore, an introductory history of Protestantism may be helpful.

Protestantism refers to a broad system of the Christian faith and practices that emerged in the sixteenth century. It began as a movement seeking to bring reform to the Western (Roman Catholic) Church.

The term Protestant was first coined in 1529 at the Diet of Speyer, an imperial assembly. Just three years earlier, another diet (or formal assembly) had granted tolerance to the Lutherans, allowing them to determine their own religious position. At the Diet of Speyer, the Roman Catholic majority of delegates rescinded this tolerance.

Consequently, six Lutheran princes and the leaders of fourteen German cities signed a protest against this action, and it was then that Lutherans became known as Protestants. Gradually, however, the term Protestant came to embrace all churches that were not affiliated with (and that had separated from) Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy. This small beginning eventually mushroomed to embrace more than 400 million people (as of AD 2000). About one-fifth of all Christians are Protestant.

One religious researcher suggests, "If the Christian church you're sitting in isn't Orthodox or Roman Catholic, then you are in a Protestant church of one variety or another. The thing to remember about Protestants is that they *protest*." One cannot deny the element of protest in the history of Protestantism. Many scholars are quick to note, however, that the term *protest* etymologically carries the idea "to testify" or "to affirm." Robert McAfee, in his book *The Spirit of Protestantism*, gives us this interesting insight:

The verb "to protest" comes from the Latin *protestari*, and means not only "to testify" but, more importantly, "to testify on behalf of something." *Webster's Dictionary* gives as a synonym, "to affirm." *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, "to declare formally in public, testify, to make a solemn declaration." The notion of a "protest against error" is only a subsidiary meaning. Thus, the actual word itself is charged with positive rather than negative connotations. "To protest," then, in the true meaning of the word, is to make certain affirmations, to give testimony on behalf of certain things. ⁸

The point, then, is that Protestantism is not simply a reactionary, negative movement. To be sure, the early Reformers did take

a stand against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. But Protestants predominantly testify to what they consider to be the truth!

Distinctive Emphases of Protestantism

Protestants have strong convictions on quite a number of doctrines, but three are particularly important. These three serve to distinguish Protestantism from Roman Catholicism.

- 1. The exclusivity of the Bible. Protestants view the Bible as the only infallible rule of the Christian life and faith. It is considered the sole source for spiritual teachings. This is in obvious contrast to Roman Catholicism, which places heavy emphasis on the authority of tradition and the ex cathedra pronouncements of the pope.
- 2. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Protestants have always emphasized that the benefits of salvation are by grace alone through faith alone (Romans 4; Galatians 3:6-14; Ephesians 2:8-9). By contrast, Roman Catholics have historically placed a heavy emphasis on meritorious works in contributing to the process of salvation. This is not to say that Protestants view good works as unimportant. They simply believe good works are by-products of salvation (Matthew 7:15-23; 1 Timothy 5:10,25).
- 3. The priesthood of all believers. In Roman Catholicism, the priest is the intermediary between the believer and God. For example, a person must confess sins to a priest, who then absolves that person of sin. By contrast, Protestants believe each Christian is a priest before God and thus has direct access to Him without need for an intermediary (see 1 Peter 2:4-10).

Divisions Within Protestantism

The independent spirit intrinsic to Protestantism has been both a strength and a weakness. It has been a strength in that it has had a revitalizing effect on church members who are free to directly interact with God and serve Him freely in the church. It has been a weakness in that such independence has led to numerous denominational splits throughout history.

Today, Protestantism includes many denominations—each having some distinctive beliefs and histories. Lutheran churches, for example, emerged out of the reforming work of Martin Luther in the early sixteenth century in Germany. Churches in both the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions emerged largely from the Calvinistic side of the Reformation. The Methodist church grew out of the holiness teachings of John Wesley. The work of several influential Christian leaders gave rise to new denominations.

FAST FACTS ON
Influential Religious Leaders

Historical Person	Denomination
Pope Leo I (400–461)	Early pope of the Roman Catholic Church, dur- ing whose reign claims of papal authority over all other churches were first made.
Michael Cerularius (d. 1058)	Patriarch of Constantinople in power when the Eastern Orthodox Church split off from Roman Catholicism.
Martin Luther (1483–1546)	German Reformer. Followers became the Lutherans.
Menno Simons (1496–1561)	Dutch leader. Followers became the Mennonites.

King Henry VIII (1509–1547)	King responsible for the Church of England's break with the Roman Catholic Church. (Anglican and Epis- copal churches emerged out of the Church of England.)
John Calvin (1509–1564)	French Reformer. Led to rise of Presbyterian churches and Reformed churches.
George Fox (1625–1691)	Mystical preacher. Led to rise of Friends (Quaker) churches.
Jakob Amman (1656–1730)	Swiss Mennonite bishop. Led to rise of Amish churches.
John Wesley (1703–1791)	Evangelist and missionary. Led to rise of Methodist churches.
Thomas Campbell (1763–1854) Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) Barton Stone (1772–1844)	Three individuals instrumental in founding Christian or Disciples of Christ churches.
William Miller (1782–1849)	Itinerant preacher. Led to rise of Adventist churches.
Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874)	Itinerant speaker. Led to rise of Holiness churches.
Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) Cyrus Scofield (1843–1921)	Three individuals instrumental in the rise of fundamentalist Bible churches.

William J. Seymour (1870–1922)

Evangelist whose Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles led to Pentecostal churches.

How to Use This Book

This book is divided into 17 alphabetized groupings of denominations—Adventist churches; Baptist churches; Brethren churches; Catholic churches; Christian churches; Congregational churches; Episcopal and Anglican churches; Friends (Quaker) churches; fundamentalist, Bible, and conservative Evangelical churches; Holiness churches; Lutheran churches; Mennonite churches; Methodist churches; Orthodox churches; Pentecostal churches; Presbyterian churches; and Reformed churches. In each case, I provide a brief history of the emergence of the group as a whole before dealing with specific denominations in that group. For example, I provide a brief Baptist history before providing information on relevant Baptist denominations.

This book is not intended as an apologetic critique of each denomination. Rather, it is intended to provide a brief history and doctrinal summary of the major denominations in North America. I do not personally endorse the teachings of some of the denominations in this book.

Unlike some other denomination handbooks, this book does not provide information about denominations from Judaism, world religions like Islam, or cultic groups. For example, you will not find listed in this volume information on the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses. These groups may claim to be Christian but in fact are not Christian because they deny one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity as taught in the 66 books of the Bible. (See appendix B, "Cults Are Not Denominations.")

For each denomination I provide statistics on church

membership and the number of congregations in the denomination. Please note, however, that these statistics should not be taken as "gospel truth." Some churches, in their membership rolls, count all baptized persons, including infants. Others exclude infants and include only adults who have made a formal profession of faith in Christ. Some churches include only members in good standing. Others include people who officially joined the church at some point but rarely ever attend services. Some churches are not careful about excluding the deceased or those who have left their congregations. In a number of cases, one person may be on the membership rolls of more than one church. O Such factors make obtaining exact figures extremely difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, the figures presented in this book are good guesstimates.

Though I seek to provide helpful doctrinal summaries of the various denominations I cover in this book, some of them publish less information than others regarding their beliefs. For this reason, some denominations in this book have briefer doctrinal summaries than others.

Moreover, I have chosen to allow each denomination to speak for itself as to its doctrinal position. I based my doctrinal summaries on the doctrinal statements of the various denominations. There is both an upside and a downside to this. The upside is fair doctrinal representation. The downside is that in many cases, the doctrinal statements I examined were somewhat vague. I soon came to recognize that one reason for vague doctrinal statements is to allow a bit of wiggle room for churches within a denomination. In other words, vagueness in doctrinal statements allows for at least some diversity of beliefs among associated churches.

Still, each broad family of denominations—Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and the like—has notable distinctions. In each chapter, I have included a brief section noting some of the primary distinctions.

You will also notice many charts of Fast Facts scattered throughout the book. These are intended to provide general information in a concise format. An index of these charts is provided at the back of this book.

For most denominations, an Internet website address is provided so you can easily obtain more information. The bibliography includes additional websites and other resources. The website addresses are accurate as of the time of publication. A regularly updated list of website addresses for denominations is available at www.ronrhodes.org.

ADVENTIST CHURCHES



William Miller was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1782. He grew up to be a good citizen, a responsible farmer, and a respected soldier in the War of 1812.

Miller was a nominal churchgoing Baptist. Some of his skeptic friends, however, managed to talk him out of his faith, and he became a deist. Deism involves belief in a God who created the world out of nothing but is now uninvolved with the world or its events, a God who governs the world only through unchangeable, eternal laws.

During the Second Great Awakening (1816), Miller experienced a powerful conversion to Christianity. He became a fervent student of the Bible with a special interest in prophetic Scriptures, such as Daniel and Revelation. His personal Bible had study notes that espoused the chronology of Bishop Ussher, who dated the creation of the world at 4004 BC. Miller came to believe that since the precise dates of Noah's flood, Israel's sojourn from Egypt, and other notable events were laid out prophetically in Scripture, the precise date of Christ's second coming must also be prophesied in the Bible.

Miller believed he found what he was looking for in Daniel 8:14: "And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed'" (NKJV). Miller fixed

the beginning date of this period at 457 BC, which was the year of Cyrus's command to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1; Isaiah 44:28; 45:13; Daniel 9:25). He was convinced that a day in prophecy was equal to a year (Ezekiel 4:6) and proclaimed that the cleansing of the sanctuary would take place within a year after March 21, 1843 (457 BC + 2300 years = AD 1843). He believed the cleansing of the sanctuary was a metaphorical way of referring to the personal return of Jesus Christ, who would cleanse the world (or perhaps just the church) of its evil and then establish His kingdom in place of the kingdoms of this world.

Miller's chronology caught on like wildfire. By 1843, nearly 100,000 people were following his lead, and the sense of expectancy was growing by the day. Miller became an itinerant preacher, going on speaking tours to Baptist, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches, all the while using elaborate charts to illustrate his prophetic scheme. He was quite sure the second coming would occur by the spring of 1844.

In anticipation of this, he wrote *Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843: Exhibited in a Course of Lectures.* The book gave increased impetus to the movement, and other preachers joined the prophetic crusade.

March 21, 1844, came and passed, and nothing happened. There was great disappointment. Miller lamented to his followers, "I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful, and not let that day come upon you unawares."¹

Some people left the movement. Some went back to their former churches. Hope for many was renewed, however, at a meeting in Exeter, New Hampshire, when some prominent individuals in the sect stood up and claimed that the coming of the Lord, according to their calculations, was to occur on the Festival of the

Atonement on October 22, 1844, and not on the Jewish New Year, as Miller had argued. Miller became convinced they were right. The excitement was reignited. People made extensive preparations and sought to let the world know of the impending event. Some gave up their jobs to engage in evangelism.

Sadly, October 22 came and passed, and nothing happened. So devastating was the prophetic failure that it became known as "the great disappointment." The movement was left in chaos, and Miller again acknowledged the prophetic error. He refused to engage in further prophetic speculation. Some gave up on Adventism; others gave up on Christianity altogether.

Despite the prophetic failure, a core of believers retained Miller's basic theology (minus the precise timetables regarding the Lord's return). These met in April of 1845 in Albany, New York, in order to take inventory of their convictions and define their basic beliefs concerning the coming advent of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the coming renewal of the earth. They agreed on these points.

- The present world will be destroyed by fire, and a new earth will be created.
- There are only two advents of Jesus Christ, and both are visible and personal.
- The second coming of Christ is imminent.
- The conditions for participating in the millennial reign of Christ are repentance, faith, and a godly, watchful life.
- There will be two resurrections—believers will be raised at the second coming of Christ, and unbelievers will rise after the millennium.
- Departed believers do not enter paradise in soul and spirit until the final blessedness of the everlasting kingdom is revealed at the second coming of Christ.

Despite these agreements, many at the meeting continued to disagree over other issues.

- Do the wicked suffer eternally in hell, or are they annihilated?
- Are the dead conscious or unconscious?
- Is the Sabbath on the first day or the seventh day?

Controversies over issues such as these gave rise to a variety of Adventist denominations (some of which I summarize below).

Miller died in 1849. He was promptly succeeded by the controversial "prophetess" and "visionary" Ellen G. White. Whereas Miller had sought only to interpret the Scriptures, White went far beyond this and set forth her own new revelations. As will become clear below, some Adventist denominations accept White, but others reject her.

Distinctive Ideas in Adventist Churches

- Many believe Ellen G. White was a true prophet.
- Many believe the proper day of worship is Saturday.
- Jesus Christ, in the year 1844, initiated the "investigative judgment" to determine who among the dead and living are true believers.
- Christ will come again once this judgment is finalized.
- A great apostasy will occur in the end times. Only Adventist believers will be included in the faithful remnant.
- People are unconscious following the moment of death and remain so until the resurrection.
- The wicked will not suffer eternally in hell but rather will be annihilated. (Some believe the wicked will be punished before being annihilated.)
- Many engage in foot washing as a sacrament.

ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Founded: 1860 Members: 23,629 Congregations: 294

Beginnings

The Advent Christian Church is one of the denominations that emerged when Adventists regrouped in 1845 following "the great disappointment" of 1844 (see above). William Miller, though not the founder of this denomination, nevertheless provided the doctrines that serve as the theological backbone of the group. The first Advent Christian General Conference was held in 1860.

Beliefs

Bible. The writings and prophecies of Ellen G. White are rejected. The Bible alone is inspired and is considered revelation from God. Prophecies in the Bible will be literally fulfilled.

God. God is the Creator and is eternally existent in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Son of God. In the Incarnation, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died for sinners, was bodily resurrected, and ascended into heaven.

The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the divine Comforter, whose ministries include convicting the world of sin, sanctifying believers, and sealing them for the day of redemption.

Sin and salvation. Though man was created to experience immortality, he forfeited this blessing through sin. Because of Adam's sin, death spread to all humanity. Only through repentance and faith in Jesus can people be restored to God and become partakers of the divine nature, thereby enabling them to live forever

with God. Believers will receive immortality when they receive their resurrection bodies at Christ's coming.

The church. The church is an institution of divine origin and includes all true Christians, of whatever name. Local churches must be independent of outside control (not in submission to a bishop or pope). Church government is congregational. The proper day of worship and rest is Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection.

The sacraments. Baptism is for believers only and is by immersion. The Lord's Supper constitutes a memorial celebration in recognition of the significance of Christ's death.

The end times. When people die (whether righteous or unrighteous), they remain in an unconscious state until a future day of resurrection that will take place when Christ returns. Christ will literally, visibly, and gloriously come again. Then the righteous will receive everlasting life and dwell forever on a new, restored, sinless earth, which Christ Himself will renovate. The wicked will suffer for a time and then be punished with "everlasting destruction"—that is, they will experience a complete extinction of their being. We should not set dates, but Scripture does seem to indicate that we are living in the general time of Christ's coming.

Website

adventchristian.org

Fast Facts on Styles of Church Government

national church	The state or nation rules over the church.
episcopal	A church hierarchy rules the church. Bishops play a key role.

presbyterian	The congregation vests power in a ruling board of elders.
congregational	All decisions are by congregational vote.

Seventh-day Adventist Church

Founded: 1845 Members: More than 17,000,000 Congregations: 72,144

Beginnings

This denomination (some today call it a Christian cult) emerged out of the Millerite movement.² As noted previously, Miller believed the second coming of Christ would occur in 1844. Though Christ obviously did not come ("the great disappointment"), many nevertheless remained Adventists because they believed the second coming was still imminent. Unlike Miller, who interpreted Daniel 8:14 to mean that the second coming would occur in 1844, Seventh-day Adventists interpreted the verse to mean that Christ cleansed the heavenly sanctuary and began a heavenly judgment (the "investigative judgment"—see below) in 1844 that will end prior to the second coming.

This denomination began in 1845 with a small group of believers in New England led by founder Ellen G. White and some of her associates. They chose the name Seventh-day because they believe the Old Testament Sabbath, Saturday, is the proper day of worship and rest. They believe that observing the Sabbath is the proper way to await the soon advent of the coming Lord.