

PROTESTANTISM

Protestantism is one of the main branches of the Christian faith. Within **Christianity**, Protestant churches are those outside of the other two branches – Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox tradition. They are comprised of followers of Jesus Christ who embrace the beliefs of those who protested and broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, due to what were perceived as erroneous doctrines and excesses inconsistent with scriptural understandings of our relationship to God and how we experience spiritual life.

Origin

The Protestant movement originated when followers of Jesus Christ '*protested*' against the rule of the Pope (papacy) and against the entanglement of the government of the Roman Empire in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Chief among the concerns was the sale of indulgences that were supposed to provide forgiveness of sins for those who bought them. Protestors also had concerns about the supremacy of the Pope and the role priests served in positioning themselves between God and humanity for the forgiveness of sins. These and other concerns led to the Reformation Period and to Protestantism.

The event that sparked the Reformation was Martin Luther publishing 95 Theses (or opposing positions to Roman Catholic church life) and posting them on the door of Wittenberg Castle in Germany on October 31, 1517. Prior to Luther, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, and others had attempted to bring about reforms within the Catholic Church, with little success. Luther's 95 Theses had a much greater impact. The Church condemned Luther as a heretic. In 1529, leaders in the Lutheran movement wrote a letter *protesting* the edict of the Diet of Speyer that had condemned the teachings of Luther. It was this letter of protest that gave Protestantism its name.

At that point, Reformation was already underway. The spread of Protestant thought led to Reformed, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and many other bodies of faith under the Protestant banner.

Main Beliefs

Common to most Protestants are five foundational principles held by theologians and clergy, central to the doctrine of salvation. These principles were called *solae*, beliefs that stood apart from Roman Catholic tradition – *faith* alone, *Christ* alone, *grace* alone, *Scripture* alone, and *God's glory* alone. Together the five *solae* underscored three major doctrinal points:

The Bible, containing all inspired and canonized scripture, is the sole authority regarding matters of faith and practice, not tradition or the authority of a Pope. Biblical foundation for this, among others, can be found in **2 Timothy 3:16-17** and **2 Peter 1:20-21**.

Salvation of souls is realized by faith alone, not by sacraments, human effort, or works. **Ephesians 2:8-9** expresses this point clearly.

Followers of Jesus Christ live for God's glory alone, whereas Roman Catholic beliefs embrace obedience to the Church and subservience to its priesthood and other leaders. Protestants embrace the concept of *the priesthood of every believer*, citing **1 Peter 2:9** as the basis – “**You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**”

Demographics

Differences of theological and ecclesiastical understanding of the main beliefs of Protestantism have resulted in different denominations. Whereas the Catholic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East consider themselves to be the one and only original church founded by Jesus Christ, many Protestants embrace a concept called the *invisible church*. The visible church is what can be seen – gatherings in church buildings, usually on Sunday mornings, that most certainly have present those who are seeking to know more about matters of faith and who have not yet received God's salvation through Jesus Christ. The invisible church, for those who embrace the concept as reality, is the true church that only God sees, born-again redeemed and sealed believers of the past, present, and future.

The total number of Protestants, the second largest form of Christianity, numbers between 800 million to one billion, more than one third of all Christians. Some denominations within Protestantism have worldwide or large regional presence in

multiple continents; others only in a single country. Most Protestants are part of one of the following denominational bodies:

- Anabaptists (Brethren, Mennonites, and Amish)
- Baptist
- Episcopalian
- Evangelist
- Methodist
- Presbyterian
- Pentecostal/Charismatic
- Lutheran
- Anglican
- Evangelical
- Assemblies of God
- Christian Reform/Dutch Reform
- Church of the Nazarene
- Disciples of Christ
- United Church of Christ
- Christian Science
- Seventh Day Adventist

This is an introduction on the subject of **Protestantism**. Here are a few other resources you may wish to explore:

[What is Protestantism? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[What is a Protestant? Their Beliefs & Differences from Catholics \(christianity.com\)](#)

[What is the difference between the visible and invisible church? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[The main differences between Catholics and Protestants | Culture| Arts, music and lifestyle reporting from Germany | DW | 21.04.2019](#)