

Fort Bend Christian Academy

ONE CREED TO RULE THEM ALL

On modern denominational doctrine and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as the foundational dogma for, and unification of, all of Christendom.

A thesis submitted to the teacher and students of Fort Bend Christian Academy's Advanced Apologetics class

Department of Worldview and Apologetics

By Gunner West

Sugar Land, TX

May 2015

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. PART ONE: DENOMINATIONAL STUDY.....	5
a. Comparative Belief Chart.....	5
b. Western Christianity.....	13
1. Roman Catholicism.....	13
2. Protestantism.....	20
i. Baptist.....	20
ii. Lutheran.....	28
iii. Presbyterian.....	36
iv. Methodist.....	44
v. Seventh-day Advent.....	51
vi. Pentecostalism.....	58
vii. Anglicanism.....	65
3. Non-trinitarianism.....	73
i. Jehovah's Witness.....	73
ii. Mormonism.....	80
b. Eastern Christianity.....	90
1. Eastern and Oriental Orthodox.....	90
III. PART TWO: NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED.....	101
IV. CONCLUSION.....	114

## INTRODUCTION

Although a completely unified Christian Church lasted over 400 years due to great effort by early church fathers in the ecumenical councils and confessing creeds, it was eventually torn apart by the same councils and creeds that were meant to keep the Church solidified and united. A disagreement during the fourth ecumenical council, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, regarding the nature of Christ and the nomenclature of “in two natures” as opposed to “of two natures” in the formulating creed, marked the first split in the Christian Church and triggered the faction that would eventually grow into the Oriental Orthodox Church to dissociate and split from the rest of the Church.

Over time, further disagreements and reformations lead to more splits and divisions in the Church into respective denominations and traditions, all claiming to be a part of the Christian Church, while containing divergences between each other’s doctrinal beliefs. Today, there are three<sup>1</sup> major branches of Christianity: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy, and within each branch are even more divisions into different subgroups and traditions, each having their own distinct set of doctrinal beliefs and practices. While many of these divisions have a mutual respect for each other and their respective beliefs, there are some denominations and traditions that allow their differences to separate them even further by rejecting each other’s authority and place in the Church.

The diversity and disunity found in the numerous branches, denominations, and traditions within Christianity seems to call to question the validity of Christianity as the one true religion and suggests the lack of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the modern Church. However, although there is an obvious disconnect between the Christian churches, there is an underlining unity

---

<sup>1</sup> Anglicanism is sometimes considered to be its own branch of Christianity due to its blend of Catholic practices and Protestant beliefs. However, since the main focus of this thesis is the standards of beliefs in each system of Christianity, Anglicanism will be considered under the Protestant branch of Christianity.

found through the foundational dogmatic doctrines within the Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed, designating these essential core beliefs as the standard for all Christianity. For this reason, it is the firm belief of this thesis that the Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed is the unifying factor for all of Christendom.

# COMPARATIVE BELIEF CHART

West 5

	Roman Catholic	Baptist	Lutheran
Date Founded	1054 (Great Schism)	1609	1517 (95 Theses) 1530 (German/Protestant Reformation)
Founder and Developers (in addition to that of Jesus Christ, Apostles, and Church Fathers)	St. Peter	John Smyth	Martin Luther
The Nature of the Father	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe
The Nature of Christ	Fully God, Fully Man	Fully God, Fully Man	Fully God, Fully Man
The Nature of the Holy Spirit	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity
The Nature of the Trinity	One God, Three separate persons	One God, Three separate persons	One God, Three separate persons
Christ's Crucifixion	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Substitutionary and Expiatory
Christ's Resurrection	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death
The Holy Bible	Inspired and Inerrant	Inspired and Inerrant	Inspired and inerrant. (LCMS)  Inspired but not inerrant. (ELCA)
Sacred Texts	Holy Bible - Old Testament, New Testament, and Apocrypha	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament (Apocrypha not sacred but useful for edification)
Source of Doctrine	Bible, church fathers, popes, bishops; Seven Ecumenical Councils; Trent, Vatican, and other Catholic councils.	The Holy Bible	The Holy Bible
The Nature of Humanity	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature
Atonement	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin

	Roman Catholic	Baptist	Lutheran
The Means of Salvation	Received at baptism; may be lost by mortal sin; regained by penance	Salvation by “grace alone” through “faith alone” in “Christ alone.”	Salvation by “grace alone” through “faith alone” in “Christ alone.”
The Ability to Lose Salvation	Affirmed	Denied	Denied
Free Will	Free to do good and evil	Free only to do evil	Free only to do evil
Predestination	To Heaven through God’s Foreknowledge only (God does not predestine anyone to go to Hell)	Predestination to Heaven only, but not Hell	Predestination to Heaven only, but not Hell
Body and Soul	Spirit and Matter in union to form a single nature	Body and Soul are one organism. Body being matter and soul being spirit	The Soul is one with the body, psycho-physical being
Eschatology	Amillennialism	Christ will physically and visibly return and will judge the righteous and wicked	Christ will resurrect the righteous to live eternally while the souls of the wicked suffer in Hell
Eternal Life	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Affirmed	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied
Infant Baptism	Accepted	Rejected	Accepted
View of Eucharist	Transubstantiation	Symbolic	Consubstantiation
The Sacraments	The seven sacraments, “ <i>ex opere operato</i> ,” are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Holy Matrimony	Baptism and Eucharist	Baptism and Eucharist
Belief on the Church	The “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.”	Baptized body of believers	Baptized body of believers
Belief on other Denominations	Believers in Christ who have been properly baptized are in “imperfect communion” with the Catholic Church	Respects other Christian Denominations and hopes for cooperation between them	Invisible communion between all believers

	Presbyterian	Methodist	Seventh-day Advent
Date Founded	1560 (Scottish and Swiss Reformation)	1787 (English Reformation)	1845 (Second Great Awakening)
Founder and Developers (in addition to that of Jesus Christ, Apostles, and Church Fathers)	John Calvin	John Wesley	William Miller Ellen G. White
The Nature of the Father	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe
The Nature of Christ	Fully God, Fully Man	Fully God, Fully Man	Fully God, Fully Man
The Nature of the Holy Spirit	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity
The Nature of the Trinity	One God, Three separate persons	One God, Three separate persons	One God, Three separate persons
Christ's Crucifixion	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Substitutionary and Expiatory
Christ's Resurrection	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death
The Holy Bible	Inspired but not necessarily Inerrant	Original Text Inspired and Inerrant, although translation's essential doctrine is inerrant.	Inspired and Inerrant
Sacred Texts	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament (Apocrypha useful for edification. Tradition and reason help interpretation)	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament
Source of Doctrine	The Holy Bible and the Church's Historic Confession of Faith	The Holy Bible	The Bible Ellen G. White's Writings
The Nature of Humanity	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature
Atonement	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin

	Presbyterian	Methodist	Seventh-day Advent
The Means of Salvation	Salvation by “grace alone” through “faith alone” in “Christ alone.”	Salvation by “grace alone” through “faith alone” in “Christ alone.”	Salvation by “grace alone” through “faith alone” in “Christ alone.”
The Ability to Lose Salvation	Denied	Affirmed	Affirmed
Free Will	Free only to do evil until one is saved. Then they are free to do good.	Free only to do evil until one is saved. Then they are free to do good.	Humans have the tendency to rebel
Predestination	Mostly Affirmed; Suggests predestination to Hell	Affirmed; Based on Foreknowledge	Affirmed
Body and Soul	Body and Soul are one organism. Body being matter and soul being spirit	Body and Soul are one organism. Body being matter and soul being spirit	Body wears away after death, Soul is put in an unconscious state until resurrection
Eschatology	Belief varies widely but the Lord will renew the world and reign over it.	Resurrection of the Righteous at Christ's Second Coming, Resurrection and Judgement of the Wicked at a later time	Premillennialism; 1844 - Christ begins his “Investigative Judgment”
Eternal Life	Heaven - Affirmed. Saints will live eternally in Heaven Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed. Temporary resting place after resurrection during the 1,000 years. Then righteous will live eternally on the New Earth Hell - Affirmed. Where the Unrighteous will be permanently destroyed shortly after judgment
Infant Baptism	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted
View of Eucharist	Consubstantiation	Symbolic	Symbolic
The Sacraments	Baptism and Eucharist	Baptism and Eucharist	Baptism, Communion, Foot-Washing
Belief on the Church	Baptized body of believers	Baptized body of believers where the Sacraments are duly administered	Baptized body of believers
Belief on other Denominations	Seek to Create Union	Respects other Christian Denominations and hopes for cooperation between them	Hope for a Universal Church



	Pentecostalism	Anglicanism	Jehova's Witness
Date Founded	1901 (Pentecostal Movement)	1534 (King Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy)	1879 (Restorationist Movement)
Founder and Developers (in addition to that of Jesus Christ, Apostles, and Church Fathers)	Charles Fox Parham William J. Seymour	King Henry VIII Queen Elizabeth I Thomas Cranmer (English Reformation)	Charles Taze Russell Joseph Rutherford Nathan Knorr
The Nature of the Father	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe, Exclusively call him "Jehova"
The Nature of Christ	Fully God, Fully Man	Fully God, Fully Man	Created, Before incarnation he was Michael the Arch Angel. On earth he was fully man and not divine. He is inferior to God the Father
The Nature of the Holy Spirit	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	God's active force, not part of the Trinity
The Nature of the Trinity	One God, Three separate persons	One God, Three separate persons	Denied
Christ's Crucifixion	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Christ died as a man
Christ's Resurrection	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death	Resurrected into Immortal spirit
The Holy Bible	Inspired and Inerrant	Inspired and Inerrant	Inspired and Inerrant, Only read the <i>New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i>
Sacred Texts	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament	Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament ( <i>New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i> )
Source of Doctrine	The Holy Bible	The Holy Bible, The Apostolic Church, and The Early Church Fathers	The Holy Bible
The Nature of Humanity	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature
Atonement	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ was the ransom for the inherited sin from Adam. Other sins must be atoned through the good works of man.

	Pentecostalism	Anglicanism	Jehova's Witness
The Means of Salvation	Salvation by "grace alone" through "faith alone" in "Christ alone."	Salvation by "grace alone" through "faith alone" in "Christ alone."	Salvation through faith in Christ and obedience to Jehovah.
The Ability to Lose Salvation	Affirmed	Denied	Affirmed
Free Will	Free to do good and evil	Free only to do evil	Free to do good and evil
Predestination	Belief Varies; free to accept or deny God's grace.	Affirmed	Denied
Body and Soul	Body and Soul are one organism. Body being matter and soul being spirit	Body and Soul are one organism. Body being matter and soul being spirit	The Soul is the entire creature
Eschatology	Christ will resurrect the righteous to live eternally while the souls of the wicked suffer in Hell	Christ will resurrect the righteous to live eternally while the wicked suffer eternal death	Jehova will make the earth into paradise after he rids it of all the wicked and the righteous will live there eternally.
Eternal Life	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Where the Unrighteous will be permanently destroyed shortly after judgment Purgatory - Denied
Infant Baptism	Accepted	Accepted	Rejected
View of Eucharist	Symbolic	Symbolic	Symbolic
The Sacraments	Baptism and Eucharist	Baptism and Eucharist	Deny all seven sacraments, however they do practice baptism and Eucharist
Belief on the Church	Baptized body of believers	The "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."	Believe they are the one true way
Belief on other Denominations	Hope for a Universal Church	Working towards full unity	Corrupted doctrine and divergence from early church.

	Mormonism	Eastern Orthodox	Oriental Orthodox
Date Founded	1840 (Restorationist Movement)	1054 (Great Schism)	451 (Council of Chalcedon)
Founder and Developers (in addition to that of Jesus Christ, Apostles, and Church Fathers)	Joseph Smith Oliver Cowdery Brigham Young	Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople Michael Cerularius	No one founder; Theology largely based on the teachings of St. Cyril the Great
The Nature of the Father	Creator and Governor of the Universe, perfected physical body	Creator and Governor of the Universe	Creator and Governor of the Universe
The Nature of Christ	Literal son of God, Brother to Satan, lived a perfect life	Fully God, Fully Man	Miaphysitism
The Nature of the Holy Spirit	The light force of God	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity	Works within the World and Reveals Truth to Humanity
The Nature of the Trinity	Denied	One God, Three separate persons	One God, Three separate persons
Christ's Crucifixion	Incomplete atonement for sin	Substitutionary and Expiatory	Substitutionary and Expiatory
Christ's Resurrection	Christ visited North America after he visited the disciples	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death, The supreme declaration of faith	Physical Resurrection, Defeated Sin and Death,
The Holy Bible	Inspired and Inerrant for only approved translations	Only the original text was inspired and the Scripture is only inerrant in regards of faith	Only the original text was inspired and the Scripture is only inerrant in regards of faith
Sacred Texts	The Book of Mormon Holy Bible - Old Testament and New Testament Doctrine and Covenants Pearl of Great Price	Holy Bible - Old Testament, New Testament, and Apocrypha, plus 3 more books	Holy Bible - Old Testament, New Testament, and Apocrypha, plus 3 more books
Source of Doctrine	The Book of Mormon Holy Bible Doctrine and Covenants Pearl of Great Price John Smith's Revelations	The Holy Bible, Sacred Apostolic Tradition, and Seven Ecumenical Councils	The Holy Bible, Sacred Apostolic Tradition, and Seven Ecumenical Councils
The Nature of Humanity	Eternal beings that were created by God before their earthly lives and will ascend there way to become gods	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature	Made in the image of God Inherent Sinful Nature
Atonement	Atonement started in the garden of Gethsemane and continued through the crucifixion. However, Christ's atonement did not cover all sin.	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin	Christ's Death and Resurrection Atoned for Man's Sin

	Mormonism	Eastern Orthodox	Oriental Orthodox
The Means of Salvation	Resurrected by grace but saved through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel	Received at baptism; may be lost by mortal sin; regained by penance	Received at baptism; may be lost by mortal sin; regained by penance
The Ability to Lose Salvation	Resurrection - Denied Godhood - Affirmed	Affirmed	Affirmed
Free Will	Free to do good and evil	Free only to do evil until one is saved. Then they are free to do good.	Free only to do evil until one is saved. Then they are free to do good.
Predestination	Predestined to fulfill one's calling, however, the means by which one does this is up to their free will.	Seeks middle ground between Pelagianism and Augustinian predestination	Seeks middle ground between Pelagianism and Augustinian predestination
Body and Soul	Eternal Soul, We were souls before we were given a heavenly body and when we die our souls will be granted planes of our own	Spirit and Matter closely bound together	Spirit and Matter closely bound together
Eschatology	Restoration of the Ten Tribes, Zion (New Jerusalem) will be on the American Continent	Souls of the righteous get a foretaste of Heaven and the unrighteous get a foretaste of Hell	Souls of the righteous get a foretaste of Heaven and the unrighteous get a foretaste of Hell
Eternal Life	Heaven - There are different levels of eternal glory called kingdoms. Base of the morality of the life lived. Hell - Affirmed. called "Outer Darkness" Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied	Heaven - Affirmed Hell - Affirmed Purgatory - Denied
Infant Baptism	Rejected	Accepted	Accepted
View of Eucharist	Symbolic	Transubstantiation	Transubstantiation
The Sacraments	Saving Ordinances instead of Sacraments. They are baptism, confirmation, ordination into priesthood for males, endowment in the temple, and marriage.	The seven sacraments, or mysteries, are: baptism, confirmation, confession, the Holy Communion, matrimony, anointing of the sick, and holy orders	The seven sacraments, or mysteries, are: baptism, confirmation, confession, the Holy Communion, matrimony, anointing of the sick, and holy orders
Belief on the Church	Believe they are the one true way	The "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."	The "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."
Belief on other Denominations	Corrupted doctrine and divergence from early church.	All other denominations are not in communion with the Lord	All other denominations are not in communion with the Lord

## **PART ONE: DENOMINATIONAL STUDY**

### **WESTERN CHRISTIANITY**

#### **Roman Catholicism**

##### *Introduction and Background*

When historians trace the history of the church, it is most often done from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church. The Great Schism in 1054 is spoken of as if the East, with the bishop of Constantinople as its head, split from the West, with the bishop of Rome at its head, and not the other way around. When Martin Luther nailed his *95 theses* to the castle church door and began the Protestant Reformation, the accounts state that the Protestant church split from the Roman Catholic Church. It seems in most historical records that the Roman Catholic Church is viewed as the trunk of a tree and every split, reform, or schism is a new branch diverging from the Roman Catholic trunk to make up the tree of Christianity. This focus and perspective on the Roman Catholic Church could be due to St. Paul's and St. Peter's connection with the church in Rome or simply because of the Catholic Church's sheer size and influence. No matter the reason, the Roman Catholic Church seems to be the branch of Christianity that extends all the way back to the roots of Paul, Peter, and Christ himself.

Today, there are over 1.5 billion members of the Roman Catholic Church that reaches across the entire world, including 62 million members in the United States alone, making this single denomination of Christianity hold around 21 percent of the entire world population, while a single person, the Pope, leads them all. The Pope of the Roman Catholic Church has as much influence, if not more influence, than the President of the United States, the leader of one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world because of his authority in the lives of so many people across the globe. The Magisterium, which consists of the Pope and a college of

bishops, interprets the Scripture and uses tradition to determine the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, so any statements of faith or doctrine made by the Magisterium are considered infallible by the authority of St. Peter, the first pope of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup>

There are many different Catholic beliefs and practices that differ from the Protestant and Orthodox churches, and the differences between the Catholic and Protestant churches constitute the largest divide in all of Western Christianity. These major differences consist of the authority of tradition, the canon of the Bible, means of salvation, number of sacraments, priesthood, the existence of purgatory, and prayers to the saints.<sup>3</sup> This section will focus on the Catholic beliefs and their faith, which has been declared by the Magisterium through the interpretation of the Scripture within the Tradition of the Church.

There is much diversity among the Catholic Church itself, which would be expected with a membership base that spans 1.5 billion people over the entire world, consisting of Traditional Catholics, Liberal Catholics, Charismatic and Evangelical Catholics, and Cultural Catholics, and within all of these different types of Catholics, there are minor pieces of doctrine that differ between each of them as they either make them their own or choose to reject them. Although diversity is present, the main focus for these beliefs will be the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> "Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Vatican*. Roman Catholic Church, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>4</sup> All doctrinal information recorded in this thesis is based from the actual statements and beliefs from the respective churches themselves and not from the idle talk of other people who do not adhere to the Church. Whenever information from one source contradicts with the official statements of the Church itself, the latter will always take authority over the former, and this hold true throughout the entire thesis. For example, later on in the Mormonism study, in regards to eternal life, many sources record that adherents to the Mormon faith believe that each one of them will receive a planet that he or she will be the god over with their family from their life on Earth. However, this information was not recorded in the actual statements of the Mormon Church and therefore cannot be considered a part of their official doctrine.

### *The Nature of God*

There is one God, the Almighty, who is the Triune Creator and Lord of the universe and all that exists, and He is of one essence, undivided, represented as three eternal persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Son, Jesus Christ, was eternally begotten by the Father, incarnate on Earth, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the immaculate and blessed Virgin Mary to live a perfect life and take our place in the punishment for our sins, that God's people may be in fellowship with the Father once more. God the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son to empower and give life to believers.<sup>5</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Christ, who knew no sin, was born unto the Earth as fully God and fully man to be the perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice on the cross for the Original Sin of humanity so that God's people may be cleansed of sin and receive salvation through fellowship with Him.<sup>6</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

On the third day, Christ rose from the dead, defeating sin and death, consequently redeemed all of humanity. He was the first to be resurrected into a new, glorified body and it is the hope of believers that He was not the last, for the children of God will be resurrected into a glorified body just as Christ was resurrected.<sup>7</sup> He ascended into Heaven whilst manifesting His glorified body now ruling at the right hand of God the Father as humanity waits for His return.

### *The Holy Bible*

The Bible is the inspired and inerrant, written Word of God that reveals the truths needed for salvation, and all interpretation of Scripture must be done through the Tradition of the Church in order to gather the context behind what is written.

---

<sup>5</sup> "Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Vatican*. Roman Catholic Church, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,

### *Sacred Texts*

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testament, as well as the deuterocanonical<sup>8</sup> books of the Apocrypha, is the only sacred text.<sup>9</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

The “sacred deposit of faith” consists of the written Word of God and the oral tradition of the church that serves as the unwritten information on the doctrine of the church. Tradition is the faith of the church that has been passed down from Jesus Christ to his disciples, throughout the Roman Catholic Church history all the way down to today, keeping of one essence and substance but constantly being matured and deepened by alterations, additions, and subtractions.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Nature of Humanity*

Humanity, at the beginning of creation, was created in the image of God as innocent, but Adam, by his own free will, disobeyed God’s command and broke humanity’s fellowship with God, causing the Fall of Man, which is a burden to bear for all of humanity because all people, with the exception of the immaculate Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, are born inheriting the Original Sin of Adam being naturally inclined toward sin.<sup>11</sup> Humanity is unable to save itself and therefore requires the grace of God.

### *Atonement*

Christ was incarnate on the earth to be the perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice to atone for the Original Sin of humanity so that humanity could be cleansed and brought back into fellowship with God.

### *Baptism*

---

<sup>8</sup> Secondary Canon

<sup>9</sup> "Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Vatican*. Roman Catholic Church, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,



Baptism<sup>12</sup> is the initial justification for salvation that cleanses one's soul of sin and replaces it with sanctifying grace, and when one goes through baptism, he or she is born again as a child of God, made new.

### *The Means of Salvation*

Salvation begins with the "first actual grace" or prevenient grace of God, because this grace is God's initial act that allows one to seek God and pursue salvation. One must yield to its influence so that by cooperating with this grace, one may carry out "salutary acts" to prepare his or her soul for baptism. After baptism, the Original Sin cleanses from his or her soul and substitutes the sin with sanctifying grace or efficacious grace, allowing the baptized person to experience the "initial justification" of salvation, which was achieved by no merit but only by the grace of God. The second step of justification works through one's life as a Christian, through good works and a relationship with God, and the final step of justification, which is necessary for eternal life, comes after one keeps a good relationship with God by cooperating with His grace and performing many meritorious works throughout one's life. Any sins committed throughout one's life will subtract grace from one's soul and one can only regain their lost grace through acts of penance in the sacraments.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

Salvation may be lost through sin, but one can regain it through the sacraments of penance.<sup>14</sup>

### *Free Will/Predestination*

Humanity has the free will to do both good and evil, but God does predestine the elect to Heaven, however, God does not predestine others to bear punishment for all of eternity in Hell.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Infant baptisms are valid.

<sup>13</sup> "Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Vatican*. Roman Catholic Church, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*,

### *Body and Soul*

The union of the body and soul form one essence, and when the body dies, the soul goes immediately to Heaven to be with God, but the wicked go straight to Hell and the imperfectly purified go to Purgatory.

### *Eschatology*

When the Kingdom of God has reached its fullness, Christ will return and resurrect the dead into new, glorified bodies to judge the righteous and unrighteous. There will be a new Heaven and a new Earth where the righteous will spend eternity with Christ in their glorified bodies. However, the unrighteous will receive punishment for all of eternity in Hell. Hell includes limbo for infants and Fathers, while Purgatory is a separate place for further purging of one's transgressions. Purgatory is for those who were in fellowship with God, yet were imperfectly purified of all sin.<sup>16</sup>

### *Spiritual Gifts*

The body of Christ is empowered by the Holy Spirit to give spiritual gifts to His children to equip them with the tools to further the Kingdom of God.

### *The Sacraments*

There are seven sacraments practiced by the Catholic Church and they are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Holy Matrimony. These sacraments are necessary for salvation and are *ex opere operato*, meaning they are ways of obtaining grace. Catholic Mass or the Eucharist is a way to commemorate the death and

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,

resurrection of Christ every week. The bread and wine actually turn into the body and blood of Christ, through transubstantiation.<sup>17</sup>

### *Belief on the Church*

The Roman Catholic Church believes they are the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”<sup>18</sup> that clearly follows the teachings of Christ and his disciples, because the bishops of the church are spiritual successors of the apostles and the Pope is the spiritual successor of Saint Peter himself.<sup>19</sup>

### *Belief on other Denominations*

The Vatican Council II, lasting from 1962 to 1965, decided that all other baptized Christians who confess faith in Christ and repent of their sins are a part of God’s family, but they will now refer to them as “separated brethren” because they are in imperfect communion with the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>18</sup> An excerpt from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

<sup>19</sup> "Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Vatican*. Roman Catholic Church, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.,

## Protestantism

### Baptist

#### *Introduction and Background*

The first Baptist Churches, founded in 1609 by John Smyth, began in England and were Armenian in their theology. Several years later, Calvinistic Baptist churches began to emerge in England. Baptist churches did not reach the New World until Roger Williams established a church in Providence, Rhode Island in 1639.<sup>21</sup>

The Baptist denomination has 100 million members worldwide and is the largest protestant denomination in the United States, with only Roman Catholicism beating it out as the single largest denomination in America.<sup>22</sup> Because Baptist churches are locally autonomous, meaning every church is self-governing, there are many different sub-denominations within the Baptist denomination itself. There are three major sub-denominations or churches in the Baptists church that warrant mentioning.<sup>23</sup> The largest of them is the conservative group called the Southern Baptist Convention (hereafter SBC) with 15 million members in the United States alone. Almost half of all Baptists in the United States affiliate themselves with the SBC.<sup>24</sup> Because of its overwhelming majority in the Baptist denomination, the SBC will have the most emphasis in this belief study.

The other two churches that have a significant following are mainline Protestant churches. The American Baptist Churches USA (hereafter ABC) in the United States has 1.5 million members, and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (hereafter PNBC), a large

---

<sup>21</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." *Southern Baptist Convention*. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>23</sup> There are many sub-denominations in the overarching Baptist Church, however, because the Southern Baptists Convention hold a large majority of membership in the United States, the focus will be on them, while differences in belief from other groups will be noted.

<sup>24</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." *Southern Baptist Convention*. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

supporter of the late Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement, has 2.5 million members.<sup>25</sup> The ABC widely ranges from conservative to liberal but is, as a whole, much less conservative than the SBC. This wide range of views is due to their tendency to avoid adhering to any set creed or statement of the faith. This allows the Holy Spirit to guide the individual in a community of believers to freely interpret the Scriptures as he or she feels.<sup>2627</sup> Although both of these groups have less in number, their membership is significant enough to evaluate the main differences between them and the SBC.

### *Calvinism vs. Arminianism*

A large divide currently exists in the Southern Baptist Convention on whether they should follow the beliefs of Calvinism or Arminianism. The divide is noteworthy enough to garner its own section and clarify to the reader the main points of both Calvinism and Arminianism.

The Five Points of Calvinism can be summarized into the acronym T.U.L.I.P.

Total depravity: Although humans can have good impulses, the damage by sin is so great that they are not able to do anything that will deserve them of salvation. Only through Christ's redemptive death and resurrection is this possible.

Unconditional election: God chose to give salvation to the elect, not based on anything that humans have done or will do, but solely based on His sovereignty.

Limited atonement: Christ's redemptive death and resurrection gave atonement to only God's elect.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>26</sup> "What We Believe." American Baptist Churches USA. ABC USA, 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015

<sup>27</sup> It is the own belief of the writer of this thesis, and not that of ABC, that a more liberal view on doctrinal beliefs can lead to an unstable foundational belief and allows room for heresies.

Irresistible grace: All of God's elect, because of His irresistible grace, will ultimately have faith in Christ to receive salvation.

Perseverance of the saints: As one of God's elect, they will not loose their faith and will persevere until the end. However, those not chosen by God will eventually fall short and lose their salvation. Only the genuine believers will persevere in the faith.<sup>28</sup>

The Five Points of Arminianism do not fall easily into a clever acronym but are as follows:

Election based on foreknowledge: God chose to give salvation to those who He knew would have faith in Christ by their own free will and persevere in the faith until the end.

Unlimited atonement: Christ's redemptive death and resurrection is for all humankind so that all can have salvation. Although all are savable, His atonement is for those who believe in Christ.

Natural inability: Only the Holy Spirit can save humankind and give them new life. As humans, we are unable to do this ourselves.

Prevenient grace: The Holy Spirit has given humankind grace so that we may cooperate with God in salvation and respond to the Gospel.

Conditional perseverance: God has enabled the saved to persevere and to be victorious in the last days, but because humans have free will, it is possible to turn from grace and loose salvation.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Nature of God*

God is the Lord of all and the Creator of the universe who reveals himself in the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although, God is three distinct persons: the Father, Son, and

---

<sup>28</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." *Southern Baptist Convention*. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*,

Holy Spirit; they are of one essence and nature. They are of one essence, but God the Father reigns over all of His creatures and His universe with care throughout all of human history according to His grace.<sup>30</sup> God is a personal being who wants to have a personal relationship with His creation. God the Son was not created by the Father, but was with the Father and the Holy Spirit when the Universe was created. All three distinct persons have always existed and will always exist. The Son became incarnate on Earth as fully God and fully man conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.<sup>31</sup> He came as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of humanity, because the only means of a relationship with God is through Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Father's warrior. He empowers believers, enlightens their minds, and convicts men of their sin. He empowers the church for service, worship, and evangelism.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Jesus Christ was born of the earth by the Father to atone for the sins of Mankind. Since the Fall of Man at the Garden of Eden, man has had to atone for his sin through ritual sacrifices. Christ, the Son of God, was the final, perfect, expiatory, and substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of man. Humanity could only be saved from the clutches of sin and death through the crucifixion of a perfect being who knew no sin.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Christ's Resurrection*

Christ defeated both sin and death in the grave and rose from the dead on the third day. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance and the beginning of what man looks forward to when Christ returns. He was the first to resurrect into a new, glorified body, and it is the hope of

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>31</sup> "What We Believe." *American Baptist Churches USA*. ABC USA, 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,

believers that He was not the last. Christ's followers believe that the children of God will resurrect into a glorified body just as Christ resurrected in the Gospel.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Bible is perfect, true, and trustworthy; "It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."<sup>35</sup> The Bible, inspired by God's revelation to man, was recorded by man, but the ultimate author of the Word of God is God Himself. The Scriptures are the ultimate authority on all things and put Christ at the center of their divine revelation. All religious opinions, social positions, and creeds should be examined through the lens of the Scriptures.<sup>36</sup>

### *Sacred Texts*

The Holy Bible consists of sixty-six books from the Old and New Testament.<sup>37</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

The Bible alone is the ultimate authority.

### *The Nature of Humanity*

God created Man, innocent of sin and in the image of Him, and gave man the power of free will and dominion over all of God's creation. Man used this power on his own accord and sinned against God by disobeying His commandments, thereby bringing sin to humankind. This sin broke the fellowship with God, placing humankind in a fallen and tainted world, where man is inclined toward sin.<sup>38</sup>

### *Atonement*

---

<sup>34</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." Southern Baptist Convention. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>37</sup> "What We Believe." *American Baptist Churches USA*. ABC USA, 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>38</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." *Southern Baptist Convention*. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.



Man can only be saved from sin and brought back into the fellowship with God through the grace of God and belief in Christ's redemptive death and resurrection.<sup>39</sup>

### *The Means of Salvation*

The only means of salvation is by grace through faith alone in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. By repentance of sin and faith in Christ, a believer is reborn spiritually and is dead to sin. Christ's redemptive death can save all men.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

All true and genuine believers of Christ, God's chosen elect, will persevere until the end and will not lose their salvation.<sup>41</sup>

### *Body and Soul*

When one dies, his or her body will decay and return to the ground as dust, but one's soul will immediately go to be with Christ in Heaven.<sup>42</sup>

### *Eschatology*

God will bring the fallen world to an end on His own time when He sees fit. At that time, Christ will physically and visibly return to judge humanity. All the dead will resurrect and the righteous, with new and glorified bodies, will spend eternity with God in Heaven while the unrighteous will be condemned to the eternal punishments of Hell.<sup>43</sup>

### *Spiritual Gifts*

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>40</sup> This is the unlimited atonement of Arminianism.

<sup>41</sup> This is the perseverance of the saints of Calvinism. The SBC seemingly contradict themselves by having both Arminian and Calvinistic beliefs in their statement of beliefs. This shows that the SBC cannot decide on whether to follow the teachings of Arminius or Calvin.

<sup>42</sup> "What We Believe." *American Baptist Churches USA*. ABC USA, 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.,

God the Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts upon believers to use to strengthen and serve the body of Christ to further the Kingdom of God.<sup>44</sup> Although some Baptists believe in the spiritual gift of tongues, many do not.

### *The Sacraments*

Christ commands two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is by immersion in water as in the name of the Lord. "It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus."<sup>45</sup> Much like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism is a confession of faith in Christ and is necessary to one's membership in the church body or covenant with God.<sup>46</sup> Because baptism is a consensual act, only the baptisms of adults are valid in the view of the Baptist church. The Lord's Supper is an act of obedience that is symbolic of Christ's body and blood.<sup>47</sup>

### *Belief on the Church*

The universal church is the body of Christ, including believers of all ages, alive and dead. Local churches are autonomous, made up of a body of baptized believers, and officered by pastors and deacons. The body of baptized believers seek to spread the Word of God to all people, associate by a covenant in the faith, exercise fellowship in the gospel, utilized the gifts given to believers by the Spirit, and practice the two ordinances Christ commands of the believer's. Although both men and women can hold position in the church, only men can hold the position of pastor, as ordained by Scripture.<sup>48</sup>

### *Belief on Other Denominations*

---

<sup>44</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." Southern Baptist Convention. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>46</sup> "What We Believe." *American Baptist Churches USA*. ABC USA, 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>47</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message." *Southern Baptist Convention*. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.,

One should respect other theological understandings as long as it “involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word revealed in the New Testament.”<sup>49</sup> Although there are many different beliefs, all Christian denominations are among the universal church, as long as they do not go against the Word of God.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.,

## Lutheran

### *Introduction and Background*

The start of the Lutheran church can be traced all the way back to the beginning of the Reformation with the “Father of Reformation” himself, Martin Luther. Luther, a German, became an Augustinian monk in 1505 and was ordained as a priest two years later. He soon became overwhelmed by the large presence of sin in his life, and even though he followed all the cleansing rituals set forth by the Roman Catholics, he still felt that he was not right with God. Luther turned to Scripture in hopes to find reconciliation. Through extensive study, he realized that many of the teaching and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church in his day did not line up with the teaching of Scripture.<sup>50</sup>

In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses* to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. These theses were created to challenge all Roman Catholic teachings or practices that did not coincide with the Word of God. Luther’s theses challenged the power of the pope, the abuse in the sale of indulgences, and the teaching that souls remain in purgatory until they have fully atoned for their transgressions. He found no scriptural authority for the pope, he discovered that people would just pay indulgences instead of attending confession, and he realized that the teaching of further purging in purgatory compromised Christ’s fully redemptive power.<sup>51</sup>

Luther’s most important critique

Martin Luther’s reform of the Roman Catholic Church can be summed up into the Three *Solas* in Lutheranism: *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*.

*Sola Scriptura*: (Scripture alone) The Scripture is the only basis and ultimate authority.

*Sola gratia*: (grace alone) Salvation is by grace alone.

---

<sup>50</sup> "ELCA Teaching." *ELCA.org*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*,

Sola fide: (faith alone) Salvation is through faith alone.

Although Luther's original intention was to bring light to these amoral teachings and practices and to reform the church of his day, he soon realized reform was not plausible and committed the rest of his life to spreading his teachings, despite excommunication from the church and threats to his life. He gathered a following, which took up the name Lutherans, although at the time it was used as a derogatory term toward them. These Lutherans followed the writings, teachings, and lectures of Martin Luther. The first Lutheran church does not officially emerge until 1530, after the Augsburg Confession of Faith.<sup>52</sup> After Luther's death, his followers accumulated the many beliefs of Luther and wrote them down in a book to give a basic overview of their beliefs. *The Book of Concord*, as it is called, consists of creeds, confessions, Luther's catechism, and articles of faith. Because of this book, the Lutheran faith was plainly established, which allowed for stability in the church. However, some Lutheran churches abandon the book for more liberal beliefs and has since caused less stability in the Lutheran church.<sup>53</sup>

In 1962 and 1963, many German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Slovak Lutheran churches merged to form two separate entities, the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. These churches largely spoke English, since they first arrived in America, so it was now possible for them to merge. Since the language barrier was broken between these Lutheran churches, there was no need to keep the churches separated because their theology was more or less the same. In 1976, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS) split in two. The moderates formed the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the conservatives remained the LCMS. Then in 1987, the Lutheran Church in America, the

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>53</sup> "Statement of Our Faith." *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches merged into one church named the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (hereafter ELCA).<sup>54</sup>

After all of these splits and mergers, two notable churches remained under the Lutheran denomination. They remain the ELCA with 4.71 million members, the largest Lutheran church, and the LCMS with 2.39 million members.<sup>55</sup> Both churches share the name Lutheran but it would be a mistake to say these churches have the same beliefs. These two Lutheran churches are not in fellowship because of major divides in authoritative belief. First, the LCMS believes that the Bible is truly the Word of God and that it is completely inerrant. On the other hand, the ELCA take a more liberal view, believing that the Bible is not always accurate and true. Because of this, the ELCA encourages different manners of interpreting the Scriptures. Second, the LCMS believes in the authority of *The Book of Concord* and the historic Lutheran confessional statements contained within the book. Again, the ELCA does not make their member confess to the authority of the book and its contents. They believe that although they were true at the time the confessional statements were written, they do not necessarily hold completely true today.<sup>56</sup> Among these differences, many others are a result of these two major divides between the ELCA and the LCMS. This thesis highlights these differences through the belief study. However, all cooperating beliefs are presented as Lutheran in general.

### *The Nature of God*

God is the creator of all things, who exists eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is of one undivided essence that manifests in three persons who

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>56</sup> Barry, Dr. A. L. "What About the Differences Between the ELCA and the LCMS?" Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

are all equal in power, majesty, and eternity.<sup>57</sup> Jesus Christ, the Son of God and an eternal person in the Holy Trinity, was incarnate, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary on Earth as fully God and fully man. He lived a perfect life with no sin and perfectly obeyed the will of the Father. Christ is the Mediator between God and humanity and is the only Savior of humankind's sins. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God residing with His children. The Holy Spirit empowers believers for ministry, blesses them with spiritual gifts, is active in the church, and guides the faith of believers. His goal is to edify the church and bring glory to Christ.<sup>58</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Jesus Christ was born of the earth by the Father as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of Mankind. Since the Fall of Man at the Garden of Eden, man had to atone for his sin through ritual sacrifices. Christ, the Son of God, was the final, perfect, expiatory, and substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of man. Humanity could only be saved from the clutches of sin and death through the crucifixion of a perfect being who knew no sin.<sup>59</sup>

### *Resurrection of Christ*

On the third day, Christ resurrected from the dead into a new and glorified body, defeating sin and death. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance and the beginning of what man looks forward to when Christ returns. He was the first to be resurrected into a new, glorified body and it is the hope of believers that He was not the last, for the children of God will be resurrected into a glorified body just as Christ was resurrected. He ascended into Heaven to

---

<sup>57</sup> "Statement of Our Faith." *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.,

be with God, continuing to manifest in his glorified body, ruling at the right hand of God the Father.<sup>60</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Bible is an authoritative text for all Lutherans. However, the inerrancy of the Bible is up for debate between the LCMS and the ELCA. The conservative LCMS believes that the Word of God is of absolute inerrancy with no contradictions, but the more liberal ELCA believes that the Scriptures are errant. Although inspired by God, Scripture is not meant to be an accurate record or depiction of history or science. The LCMS holds the Bible to infallible truth as ultimate authority.<sup>61</sup>

### *Sacred Texts*

The Protestant Bible, consisting of 66 books from the Old and New Testament is the only sacred text. However, the Apocrypha is useful in increasing one's faith.<sup>62</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

*Sola Scriptura.* (The Scriptures alone)<sup>63</sup> *The Book of Concord* is authoritative in the sense it clearly states the beliefs of the Lutheran church, however, the source at which the contents of this book originates from the Bible itself because it follows along with the Word of God. Because of this, *The Book of Concord* is not a source of doctrine.

### *The Nature of Humanity*

Man, made in the image of God as innocent creations in fellowship with God, was given dominion over all of God's creation, but because of the Original Sin of the first man, Adam,

---

<sup>60</sup> "A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod." LCMS.org. Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>61</sup> "Statement of Our Faith." *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>62</sup> "ELCA Teaching." *ELCA.org*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,



carried out by his free will, all of his ancestors are born in sin with an inclination toward evil.

For this, humanity needs salvation so it can get back to fellowship with God. Humanity cannot do this on its own, but only by the grace of God and faith in Christ can it be saved and cleansed of its Original Sin and brought back into communion with God.<sup>64</sup>

### *Atonement*

These sins must be paid for but because humanity is unable to do it on its own, Christ was sent to be the perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity. Only one without sin could atone for those full of sin.

### *The Means of Salvation*

*Sola gratia. Sola fide.* Humanity, broken by the sins of its ancestor, cannot achieve salvation on its own. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ's perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory life, death and resurrection.<sup>65</sup> Good works are inevitable when one has faith in Christ, but in no way can merit give one salvation.

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

Those chosen by God are the elect and are true and genuine believers that will persevere until the end.

### *Free Will/Predestination*

God has predestined those who are the chosen elect to go to Heaven. He chose these people before creation. However, he did not predestine those to Hell. Humanity only has the free will to do evil.<sup>66</sup>

### *Body and Soul*

---

<sup>64</sup> "Statement of Our Faith." *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith." *Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics*. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

The soul is not separate from the body but the “life principle” of the essence of one self. The soul is a psychophysical organism.<sup>67</sup>

### *Eschatology*

The Lutheran church does not adhere to any type of millennialism for humanity cannot know for sure when and in what way he will return. However, the Scriptures say that Jesus will return physically and visibly for all to see. The dead will resurrect and Christ will judge all. Those who are righteous and faithful to God will enjoy eternal life in Heaven, but those who are unrighteous will be condemned to an eternity of punishment and suffering in Hell.<sup>68</sup> Lutherans strongly reject the idea of purgatory.

### *Spiritual Gifts*

The Holy Spirit empowers the body of Christ with spiritual gifts to minister to the world and further the Kingdom of God.<sup>69</sup>

### *The Sacraments*

Holy Baptism saves, applies grace, and forgives the sins. This act is a sign of membership in the body of Christ as one of God’s people. With baptism by water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one dies to sin and is reborn as a child of God. Baptism by means of immersion, pouring, or sprinkling are valid. Holy Baptism is necessary for salvation for one is dead to sin and reborn a child of God. It is not just a confession of faith and conversion but also a rebirth into the Kingdom of God. God gives His grace, forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life to both adults and infants. Infants who go through baptism will also

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>68</sup> "ELCA Teaching." *ELCA.org*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.,

go through a confirmation process when he or she comes of age. Once reborn, one becomes a member of the body of Christ and the church.<sup>70</sup>

The Lord's Supper is a closed communion only for those who are in the church and share the church's confession of faith. Lutheran's believe in consubstantiation or the belief that the bread and wine is not only symbolic of Christ's blood and body but it is also the actual blood and body of Christ for Christ's presence is in and with the bread and wine.<sup>71</sup>

#### *Belief on the Church*

The church is the body of Christ, Christ at the head, made up of baptized believers who have faith in Christ and a personal relationship with Him.<sup>72</sup>

#### *Belief on other Denominations*

There is an invisible communion among all believers and all those who follow the commands of God and have faith in Christ are of the body of Christ.

---

<sup>70</sup> "A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod." LCMS.org. Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.,

## Presbyterianism

### *Introduction and Background*

The terms Presbyterian and Reformed are often used interchangeably, though they are not exactly synonymous. The Presbyterian Church, named so after its style of church government, is led by elders or presbyters; the Reformed church is named so because of its reformed theology. Although these two usually go hand-in-hand, not all Presbyterian churches are reformed in theology, and not all Reformed churches are presbyterian<sup>73</sup> in their style of government. However, because the majority of them are both presbyterian in government and reformed in theology, the author of this thesis has grouped them together in order to study their doctrines and theology more effectively.

Presbyterian and Reformed church roots can be traced back to the Scottish and Swiss Reformation and to the thoughts and influence of John Calvin, a 16th century French reformer. The Reformation movement profoundly influenced Calvin and led him to convert to Protestantism in 1533. He eventually authored the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a work containing his reformed views on human salvation and the sovereignty of God.<sup>74</sup>

In the city of Geneva, often called a “Protestant Rome” for its heavy promotion of the Reformation movement, Calvin founded the University of Geneva, whose graduates went to Germany, Italy, and Scotland to spread the Reformed theology. Through the immigration of reformed German and Dutch churches, reformed theology spread throughout America. Today, there are 75 million members of the Presbyterian Church worldwide and 2.5 million belong to the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA). Other notable churches are the conservative

---

<sup>73</sup> Hereafter, these churches will be referred to as Presbyterian churches with a capital “P” in order to show their reformed theology. A lowercase “p” in Presbyterian churches refers to their style of government alone and does not imply any type of theology.

<sup>74</sup> “Presbyterianism.” *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the liberal United Church of Christ (UCC).<sup>75</sup>

Presbyterian churches are reformed in doctrine by following the five points of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. The Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, and the Westminster Confession of Faith are the most important historical confessions in the Presbyterian Church. Within these confessions, there is a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the significance of the Bible, the priesthood of all believers, and justification by faith.<sup>76</sup>

### *The Nature of God*

There is only one true God, infinite and eternal, perfect and gracious, almighty and incomprehensible. He will reward those who diligently seek Him and punish those who are wicked. He is all-sufficient, needing no help from any creature, and manifests his glory within and upon us. God exists, a most pure spirit, in three separate persons of one substance, equal in power and eternity: God the Father, neither begotten nor preceding from the other two; God the Son, eternally begotten from the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, preceding from both the Father and the Son.<sup>77</sup> God the Father sent the Son incarnate, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, and was fully God and fully man. The Holy Spirit, God's most intimate, mysterious, and powerful being, gives and renews life to those who believe. The Holy Spirit guided the hands and minds of the writers of Scripture to keep it infallible and inerrant in

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>77</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith." Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

doctrine, fact, and judgment. The Holy Spirit guides the elect to realize their sin, repent, and believe in Christ.<sup>78</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

The Father sent Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the final, perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice for God's elect. He lived a perfect life, knowing no sin, but died for sinners (among God's elect), so that they may be cleansed and brought back into fellowship with God.<sup>79</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

On the third day, Christ physically resurrected from the dead, defeating sin and death, with a transformed and glorified body. He did not resurrect into different flesh, leaving the old decaying body behind in the tomb, nor did a spirit possess Christ's body to give it life. However, He did resurrect with the same flesh, transformed and glorified, leaving the tomb empty. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance into the world's future of what man looks forward to when Christ returns. He was the first to resurrect into a glorified body and it is the hope of believers that He is not the last. The children of God will resurrect into a glorified body just as Christ did. Christ ascended into Heaven to be with God, continuing to manifest in his glorified body, and rules at the right hand of God the Father.<sup>80</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Holy Scripture, which consists of the standard Protestant Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit through men, whose writings are infallible and inerrant. This is the historic view, however, most members of the PCUSA believe that the Bible is merely written by men and therefore, cannot be inerrant. The more modern view of the

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>80</sup> "What Do Presbyterians Believe?" Presbyterian Mission Agency. Presbyterian Church (USA), 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

Scripture is that it is the greatest witness to the life of Christ. The PCA does hold to the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures in its original text, being the ultimate standard and rule of faith and life among which everything is tested.<sup>81</sup>

### *Sacred Texts*

The Bible is the ultimate authority.

### *Source of Doctrine*

The Bible and the church's historic Confession of faith provide the standard of beliefs.<sup>82</sup>

### *The Nature of Humanity*

At the beginning of Creation, God made his first covenant with man, the covenant of works, wherein Adam, the first man, lived for as long as he carried out a perfect and personally obedient life. Adam broke this covenant when he disobeyed God, urged on by the temptations of the serpent. Man fell out of his righteous communion with God into a life of sin and death. Humanity is now born into sin, guilty and tainted by its Original Sin at creation, unable by its own power and will to save itself. The relational gap between humanity and God caused by sin is too great for man to close on his own. However, through God's grace and unconditional mercy, man is given a second covenant, a covenant of grace, wherein humanity is offered life and salvation through Jesus Christ with the promise that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit to guide it in its faith so long as it believes and has faith in Him. Humanity is only able to choose God, because God chose humanity first; for it is not by any merit of man that He saves

---

<sup>81</sup> "What Do Presbyterians Believe?" *Presbyterian Mission Agency*. Presbyterian Church (USA), 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*,

but only through the unconditional love and grace of God. Good works are a fruit of true faith, but by no means does merit bring salvation to humanity.<sup>83</sup>

### *Atonement*

The Father sent Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to live a perfectly obedient life of no sin, so that He could take humanity's place in punishment, on the cross, as a final and expiatory sacrifice for Humanity's sin. He died, but on the third day, He physically rose from the dead, defeating sin and death, so that God could cleanse the sins of humanity and to bring man back into communion with God.

### *The Means of Salvation*

God chose to save Humanity through His covenant of grace and unconditional mercy. Salvation is by God's grace through faith alone in Christ's death and resurrection. Merit does not guarantee one's salvation, for humanity has violated the image of God because of sin; there is no hope for humanity on its own. Fortunately, the creator of the universe and most powerful being of all eternity has extended His metaphysical and metaphorical hand to lift humanity out of the pits of sin and death and offer it a second chance of salvation.

The PCA, due to their Calvinistic roots, believes that God, by His grace, has unconditionally elected certain humans for salvation. God chose these elect not based on anything that they did, but He sovereignly predestined these elect "to everlasting life for no other reason than His own unfathomable love and mercy."<sup>84</sup> Therefore, Jesus' death and atonement is not for all people but only for those of God's elect. The PCUSA, who also finds its roots in Calvinism, is not as clear on the matter. Their statements of belief are ambiguous enough to cause uncertainty on the matter, whether all of humanity is saved through Christ's death or if God

---

<sup>83</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith." Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.,



chose an elect few that will be saved. It seems their only condition for salvation is faith, and God will give salvation to all those who repent and believe in Christ.

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

In typical Calvinistic fashion, the elect are secure in their salvation and will persevere in their faith to the end. Those who fall short of salvation or loose their faith along the way were never truly faithful and were not genuine believers. Again, this is blatantly clear in the conservative PCA yet not so much as among the beliefs of the PCUSA.

### *Free Will/Predestination*

People are only free to do evil, and it is through the revelation given to them by the Holy Spirit that they realize their sin and their need for God's mercy and forgiveness.<sup>85</sup> Only once Christ's saves them and breaks them from the bondage of sin, after one's commitment to faith in Christ, can they freely do good. Some believe that God predestines those who He saves, while others believe it is by God's grace and the free will of a man to choose his salvation. However, despite predestination for salvation, there is no predestination for damnation. There is no such thing as "double predestination," although their confessions might suggest otherwise.<sup>86</sup>

### *Body and Soul*

When a person dies, his body will be returned to the dust in which it came, and the souls of the righteous will immediately go to be with God in Heaven, while the souls of the wicked will be separated from God for all of eternity and wait for Christ to return for the final judgment on humanity.<sup>87</sup>

### *Eschatology*

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.,

Christ will one day return, physically and visibly for all to see, for the final judgment on humanity. All the dead will resurrect to be judge. At the last days, those who remain alive transform into glorified bodies.<sup>88</sup>

### *Eternal Life*

The righteous will live in eternal joy with God with their transformed and glorified bodies, while the wicked will be condemned to eternal suffering and torment in Hell.

Presbyterians deny the existence of Purgatory where those who need to further purge for their sin in order to receive salvation.

### *The Sacraments*

Baptism is a one time sacrament, valid for all that are in covenant with God, including both adults and infants, that is a seal and confession of faith in Christ. It is a sign of being in covenant with God, cleansing of sin, dying with Christ and resurrecting with Him to new life, being born into the family of believers as a child of God. Baptism is ordained by Christ but not necessary for salvation. The proper method of baptism varies among believers. The PCA believes baptism should be done by pouring or sprinkling. The PCUSA believes it should be done by sprinkling alone. The RCA believes in pouring, sprinkling, or immersion.

The Lord's Supper is a communion for believers that they perpetually practice for the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for humanity's sin. By the eating of the bread (Christ's body) and by the drinking of the wine (Christ's blood), Christ's presence is literally there within and of the bread and wine but not changing in substance in order to strengthen and nourish the believer. This belief of Christ's literal presence but unchanging substance is called consubstantiation.<sup>89</sup>

### *Belief on the Church*

---

<sup>88</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith." Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>89</sup> "What We Believe." Presbyterian Church in America. Presbyterian Church in America, 2009. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

The church is God's covenant community of believers who adhere to His word and believe that Christ is the Son of God.

*Belief on other Denominations*

The universal church wants to work together and cooperate with each other so long as that church follows and preaches the Word of God, follows the ordinances of Christ, and rightly exercises its faith in Christ.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.,

## Methodist

### *Introduction and Background*

Methodism is attributed to the teachings of John Wesley and his brother Charles Wesley in the 18th century. The Methodist had a humble beginning at the University of Oxford where both brothers studied and attended meetings of prayer and religious exercises with others. This group soon became known as Methodist, for their methodical and strategic prayer, fasting, and Bible reading at these meetings. Wanting to spread the Word of God, John Wesley, an ordained Anglican priest, and his brother went to America as missionaries. On their mission trip, John Wesley met a group of Moravian Christians, which would later lead him to visit a Moravian sermon where he experienced a revival within himself.<sup>91</sup> He was impacted by his new understanding of justification by faith alone and unlimited atonement, going on to preach to large crowds in open fields and town squares under the encouragement of the Evangelical preacher George Whitefield.

Wesley preached to the poor and helpless, teaching salvation for all people. Many people began to follow his teachings, meeting in groups called “societies” where they would openly talk to each other about their spiritual struggles, praying together and signing hymns written by Charles Wesley. Methodism had spread across England due to the enthusiastic sermons and the salvation for all teachings of Wesley. It soon spread to America under the leadership of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, employing a ministry of circuit riders that would ride across America preaching Methodist sermons that emphasized conversion, leading to mass spiritual revivals.<sup>92</sup>

John Wesley’s teachings, known as Wesleyanism, were largely influenced by Armenian theology, offering salvation for all and teaching the free will of humans to choose to take up this

---

<sup>91</sup> "Methodism." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.,

offer. Wesley was criticized for his earlier doctrine that he later back away from, known as the doctrine of perfection. This doctrine teaches that with the Holy Spirit, humans are able to be absent of sin, practicing holiness and everyday morality in life.<sup>93</sup> This doctrine is similar to legalism, being very strict in what one may wear, say, listen to, or do. Although he intended only to reform the Church of England, Wesleyanism lead to the formation of multiple denominations, influencing both the Methodist and Holiness movement. Some notable denominations that came out of these movements are the United Methodist Church (the largest Methodist denomination), the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Wesleyan Church.

Today, many Methodists reject the five points of Calvinism and its emphasis on predestination. They believe that Christ atonement and redemptive death is meant for all people and that humans have the free will to choose to accept God's gracious offer of salvation. Methodists also believe in the doctrine of entire sanctification and that overall, attaining a high quality of morality in life is more important than defending doctrine. There are three major doctrinal statements that define Methodist belief. The Apostles' Creed, the 25 Articles of Religion adapted by John Wesley from the Church of England's 39 Articles of Faith, and the Doctrines of Discipline.<sup>94</sup>

### *The Nature of God*

There is only one true God, who is the creator and sustainer of all things. He is eternal and sovereign, being of no body, and infinite in wisdom, power, love, and goodness. He is represented in three distinct persons of one essence: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is eternally begotten by the Father, was born of the Virgin Mary. He was incarnate, fully God and fully man,

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.,

and sent to atone for the sins of man. Christ is the Mediator between man and God. God the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, convinces the world of sin, repentance, and judgment. He empowers and guides the faithful.<sup>95</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent by the Father as the final, perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice for humanity. He lived a perfect, sinless life, knowing no sin, dying for all sinners, so that they may be cleansed and brought back into fellowship with God.<sup>96</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

On the third day, Christ physically resurrected from the dead, defeating sin and death, into a glorified body. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance into the world's future and the beginning of what man looks forward to when Christ returns. He was the first to be resurrected into a glorified body and it is the hope of believers that He was not the last; for the children of God will be resurrected into a glorified body just as Christ was resurrected. He ascended into Heaven to be with God, continuing to manifest in his glorified body, ruling at the right hand of God the Father.<sup>97</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Wesleyan Church believes the Bible to be infallible and inerrant in its original manuscript, and although it has been translated throughout thousands of years, there has been no corruption of any essential doctrine. This is the more historic view of the Scriptures. The more modern and liberal view of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible is held by most Methodist today.

### *Sacred Texts*

---

<sup>95</sup> Wesley, John. The 25 Articles of Faith. N.p.: United Methodist Church, n.d. Print.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.,

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Protestant standard of 66 books throughout the Old and New Testament is the final authority for all things. The Apocrypha, although not sacred, can be useful in the edification of one's life, and tradition and reason assist the believer in the interpretation of the Scripture.<sup>98</sup> The Bible is a guide for the believer in faith and practice, and reveals the Word of God. Any matter that is not established in the Scriptures should not be taught as necessary for salvation or written as an Article of Faith.<sup>99</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

The Bible is the only text necessary for salvation.

### *The Nature of Humanity*

Man was made in the image of God, innocent and in communion with God. Man, by his own free will, given to him by God, disobeyed one of God's commandments, thereby breaking the covenant between them. Man fell into sin, absent from God, unable to live a life of holiness and inclined to evil. Only by rebirth in Christ, can man be brought back into communion with God.<sup>100</sup>

### *Atonement*

Jesus Christ was sent by God to live a perfect and sinless life in order to be sacrificed to atone for the Original sin, that stains the soul of man, and to reconcile man with God.

### *The Means of Salvation*

One can only be given salvation when they are reborn in Christ, being cleansed of their sin and regenerated in Christ. Only by the grace of God and Christ's redemptive death is one able to freely accept God's offer of salvation. Good works are not necessary for salvation but are

---

<sup>98</sup> "Articles of Religion." *The Wesleyan Church*. The Wesleyan Church, 2005. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Wesley, John. *The 25 Articles of Faith*. N.p.: United Methodist Church, n.d. Print.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.,

an inevitable fruit of faith. One is only justified or seen as righteous to God if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three graces given to humans by God in Wesleyan theology, prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace gives humanity the ability to respond to the gospel and prevent the believer from falling to far away from God. Justifying grace gives salvation to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctifying grace gives the believer “entire sanctification” in their life.<sup>101</sup>

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

It is possible for a believer to fall out of their faith, but they can be brought back to the faith through repentance and turning back to God. If one falls into sin and does not repent, they will lose their salvation.

### *Free Will/Predestination*

Only by the grace of God can one freely do good works that are pleasant to God. Without the grace of God, one is only free to do evil. Most Methodists follow basic Armenian theology, thereby rejecting the belief that God predestines the elect for salvation based on His sovereignty. However, predestination based on God’s foreknowledge of who will believe and persevere until the end is affirmed.<sup>102</sup>

### *Body and Soul*

When one dies, their body returns to the dust in which they came. The soul of the righteous will go to be immediately with God while the soul of the wicked are condemned to Hell for eternal punishment.<sup>103</sup>

### *Eschatology*

---

<sup>101</sup> "Presbyterianism." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

<sup>102</sup> "Articles of Religion." *The Wesleyan Church*. The Wesleyan Church, 2005. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.,



Methodists do not adhere to any type of millennialism. Although it is uncertain when Christ will return, He will return on the last days. Christ will physically and visibly return to earth to judge the living and the dead. The dead will be resurrected from the grave and given glorified bodies. The resurrection of the righteous will be at the Second Coming of Christ while the resurrection of the wicked will not occur until a later time.

### *Eternal Life*

The righteous will live in eternal joy in the presence of God while the wicked will suffer eternal condemnation and everlasting punishment absent from the presence of God for all of eternity.

### *The Sacraments*

There are two sacraments ordained by Christ to strengthen and confirm our faith and to symbolize our confession of our faith in Christ.

Baptism is a sign of one's faith as they are born again through Christ. It distinguishes one from those who are not baptized in the faith. Baptism is a one-time sacrament that can be administered to a person of any age by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. This sacrament joins believers together in the Church and symbolizes God's love and forgiveness of their sin.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of communion with other believers where they eat bread that represents the body of Christ and drink wine that represent the blood of Christ. Holy Communion is a celebration of Christ's life, death, and resurrection where believers give thanks to God for His sacrifice, grace, and forgiveness of sins.<sup>104</sup>

### *Belief on the Church*

---

<sup>104</sup> Wesley, John. The 25 Articles of Faith. N.p.: United Methodist Church, n.d. Print.

Methodists believe in one, holy, apostolic and catholic church that is made up of a body of true believers under the Lordship of the Savior Jesus Christ. The purpose of the church is to maintain worship, redeem the world, and allow for continual edification of believers.<sup>105</sup>

*Belief on other Denominations*

All believers who practice the sacraments ordained by Christ and preach the true Word of God are considered a part of the visible church.

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.,

## Seventh-day Advents

### *Introduction and Background*

In 1816, William Miller had a radical spiritual experience and was converted back to Christianity amidst the Second Great Awakening. Miller had previously been persuaded out of his Baptist faith by his skeptic friends and into deism, but he became a devout student of the Bible after his powerful conversion.

After reading the books Daniel and Revelation, Miller became obsessed with prophetic scripture. He believed that the exact date of Christ's second coming could be found in the Bible and searched fervently for scripture that would divulge this revelation. He found what seemed to be the revelation he was seeking for in Daniel 8:4, which reads, "And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed'" (NKJV). Miller adopted the common practice of substituting days for year and interpreted "the sanctuary being cleaned" as Christ's second coming. Using the days for years method, Daniel 8:4 dated the return of Christ to the year 1843. Miller's prophecy attracted many eager followers to his movement who prepared for the glorious return of their Messiah, Jesus Christ. The year 1843 came and went, but Christ had still yet to return to "cleanse the sanctuary." Many were disappointed and Miller apologized for his error in calculation. Because of his error, many abandoned his movement and returned to their former churches, and some even abandoned Christianity all together.<sup>106</sup>

However, hope was not over for the movement, because a group of members claimed that Christ would actually return on the Festival of Atonement on October 22, 1844. Many people, including Miller, believed their calculations to be true and once again prepared for the return of Christ; some even quit their jobs to join the movement. As one would expect, the Festival of

---

<sup>106</sup> "Beliefs." *Seventh-Day Adventist Church*. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

Atonement came and went but Christ had not returned. Many people were devastated once again and the failed prophecy became known as the “great disappointment.” Despite this colossal error in prophecy, a core group of believers continued to follow the teachings of Miller. They met in Albany, New York in 1845 to define their basic theology and regroup as a community of followers.<sup>107</sup>

In their final decision, this core group of followers decided that although Christ did not physically return on the dates prophesied by Miller and the other members of the church, Christ did start his “investigative judgment” that year, 1844. This judgment was to determine who among the living and the dead were true believers in Christ. The group of believers that continued to follow the basic theology of Miller became known as the Adventist Church. Miller died in 1849, but was quickly succeeded by the prophetic Ellen G. White who would make revelations of her own.<sup>108</sup> Unlike Miller’s prophecies, White did not interpret scripture as her basis for prophetic words, so many Adventist churches refused to accept her writings and teachings.

The church that the prophet White started has developed into the largest church among the Adventist churches today, and has since been known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, due to their distinctive belief that Saturday is the proper day of worship.<sup>109</sup> Because this church is by far the largest among the Adventist churches, with over 17 million members worldwide, the main focus will be on the Seventh-day Adventists and their beliefs. Many of the smaller divides of the Adventist church reject the belief in the Trinity and other historic Christian doctrines and

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>109</sup> They hold this believe because Saturday is the seventh day of the week, and on the seventh day, God rested from all his work.

since should be categorized as heretical and thus will be excluded from association with the Adventist church because they cannot be called Christians.<sup>110</sup>

### *Nature of God*

Seventh-day Adventists believe in one God, Lord of all, the triune God, made up of three coeternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the “Creator, Sustainer, and sovereign Governor of the universe.”<sup>111</sup> The Son, Jesus Christ, is eternal and incarnate, fully God and fully man. He was born of the Virgin Mary and sent as the perfect sacrifice for man’s sin.<sup>112</sup> The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God and empowered Christ during His ministry. He works within the world and within humanity to continually transform followers of Christ into God’s image. The Holy Spirit commissions spiritual gifts to believers for use in their ministry, such as the gift of prophecy. Seventh-day Adventists believe this gift was bestowed upon Miller’s successor, Ellen G. White.

### *Christ’s Crucifixion*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was without sin, was crucified on the cross for the Original sin of Adam and Eve that tainted all of humankind and for the sins of all humanity, thereafter. He was the perfect, expiatory sacrifice and the last blood that would ever have to be shed for humanity’s<sup>s</sup> atonement. Christ bore humankind’s sin and took the punishment of death in humanity’s place as a substitutionary sacrifice because He loved them and so that humans might be able to have eternal life and a personal relationship with Him.

### *Christ’s Resurrection*

---

<sup>110</sup> "Beliefs." *Seventh-Day Adventist Church*. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.,

Christ was crucified and laid in a tomb to rest, but on the third day he rose from the dead. He defeated sin and death in Hell and resurrected as a physical, glorified body. His resurrection into a glorified body brought with it the return of the Kingdom of God established on God's creation and a promise for believers to be resurrected into physical and glorified bodies when Christ returns.

### *The Holy Bible*

The Old and New Testament are the inspired Word of God and an infallible expression of God's will. It is an accurate historical text that reveals God's plan, His role in humanity, and His truth.

### *Sacred Texts*

The only sacred text is the Holy Bible, which consists of the Protestant Old and New Testament with a total of 66 books.

### *Sources of Doctrine*

The Word of God as well as the writings and teachings of the prophet Ellen G. White are the only sources of doctrine and revelation<sup>113</sup>. The Holy Spirit gave White the spiritual gift of prophecy and her writings are thus held with high significance as both authoritative and true, especially in regards to her teachings on Heaven.

### *The Nature of Humanity.*

In the beginning, God created man in His image and gave humanity dominion over all of His creation. Man was given the ability to choose and the discernment of the mind. Unfortunately, man disobeyed God in what became known as the Original Sin and fell from their glory and relationship with God. Man was broken by sin but Christ's atonement saved man from

---

<sup>113</sup> Ellen G. White's significance as a prophet and authoritative source of doctrine is not held by all Adventist churches but is unique to the Seventh-Day Adventist church and was therefore included in their beliefs.

sin and death, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in man and restore the image of God made in him.<sup>114</sup>

### *Atonement*

It is only through Christ's perfect, expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice that man is atoned from Original Sin, saved and clean.

### *The Means of Salvation*

Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Man must repent of his sin and believe that Christ is humanity's savior. He must believe that Christ was the perfect, expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice that conquered sin and death and resurrected into a physical and glorified body. Believers will be resurrected on the last day and given eternal life. Good works and obedience are simply fruits of salvation.<sup>115</sup>

### *The Body and Soul*

The body and soul are two essences combined to make one entity. When a human dies, his earthly body decomposes but his soul survives and goes into an unconscious or resting state until Christ's return.<sup>116</sup>

### *Eschatology*

In 1844, Christ began his investigative judgment, surveying among the living and dead for those who believe in Him. Christ will not return until his investigative judgment is complete. A notable majority of Seventh-Day Adventists are premillennialists. Premillennialists believe that when Christ physically and visibly returns His followers will be awoken from their unconscious state and raise from the dead to ascend into heaven before the start of The

---

<sup>114</sup> "Beliefs." Seventh-Day Adventist Church. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.,

Millennium, the golden age of peace when Christ will reign on Earth.<sup>117</sup> After the Millennium, the wicked will be resurrected and destroyed<sup>118</sup>, but the righteous will live eternally on the New Earth.

### *Eternal Life*

Heaven is a resting place for the righteous as they wait for the end of the Millennium. Only the righteous will have eternal life and will live eternally on the New Earth following the Millennium. Hell is not the eternal venue for the wicked, for they will be resurrected and destroyed. The idea of Purgatory is rejected.

### *Spiritual Gifts*

Spiritual Gifts are given to believers by the Holy Spirit to equip them with tools to use in their ministry so that they may further the Kingdom of God. The spiritual gift of prophecy was given to Ellen G. White who made many revelations regarding Heaven.<sup>119</sup> Because of her spiritual gift, her writings and teachings are a source of authority for the Seventh-Day Adventists.

### *The Sacraments*

The sacraments practiced by the Seventh-Day Adventists are baptism, the Lord's Supper, and foot washing.

Baptism is a sign of one's faith and their rebirth into salvation. Man is atoned from Original Sin and the tainted blood by Christ's sacrifice. Believers who are baptized are born again with a clean slate through immersion when he or she affirms his or her faith in Christ,

---

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>118</sup> Some Adventists believe that the wicked will be punished before they are destroyed. Regardless of whether they will be punished or not, the wicked will be destroyed, which is a unique belief among Adventists believers.

<sup>119</sup> "Beliefs." *Seventh-Day Adventist Church*. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.



shows evidence of his repentance, and affirms historic Adventist's doctrine.<sup>120</sup> Due to the consensual nature of baptism, only adult baptisms are valid.

The Lord's Supper is symbolic of Christ's blood and body and is an expression of one's faith in Christ. The sacrament of foot washing is done before the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in preparation for communion.<sup>121</sup>

#### *Belief on the Church and other Denominations*

The universal church is the body of all believers, not exclusive to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, many will loose faith during the last days and only a remnant of believers, the truly faithful (the Seventh-day Adventist Church), will remain loyal to Christ and keep His commandments.<sup>122</sup> In regards to other denominations, there is hope for unity among the universal church but this is the end goal. As of now, all baptized believers who follow the teaching of the Bible are a part of the Church.

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.,

## Pentecostal

### *Introduction and Background*

Pentecostalism is a renewal movement that began in the 20th century along side the Holiness movement in the United States, and although relatively new, it has quickly garnered over 500 million members reaching to Africa, Asia, and South America. Pentecostalism is a form of evangelical Protestantism that puts an emphasis on baptism with the Holy Spirit (“second blessing”) and a personal experience with God.<sup>123</sup> Pentecostalism gets its name from the account in Acts 2 describing the Holy Spirit’s presence among the disciples on the day of Pentecost that empowered them to speak in tongues.<sup>124</sup>

This movement began at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. In 1901, Agnes Ozman began to speak in tongues at a Holiness church in the presence of Charles Fox Parham who would go on to speak in tongues three days later. Parham left the state of Kansas to start a Pentecostal school in Houston, Texas where he would teach his newly discovered teachings in Scripture. William J. Seymour, an African-American holiness minister, attended Parham’s school, and after reading the Pauline epistles, Seymour was convinced that Parham’s teachings on the Holy Spirit and its association with the spiritual gifts of tongues were correct. After discussing their views, Seymour and Parham agreed on three great works of faith required in the life of a believer: salvation, sanctification, and empowerment. Empowerment came from the Holy Spirit’s presence inside of a true believer, enabling them to speak in tongues, which

---

<sup>123</sup> Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second baptism, unlike the mainstream baptism of the believer. This first baptism is for the remission of sins while the second baptism to be sanctified further. Speaking in tongues is a sign of Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>124</sup> "Fundamental Truths." *Assemblies of God*. The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2008. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

Seymour was convinced was the true mark of a believer who is filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>125</sup>

Seymour took these ideals to the streets of Los Angeles, California and started the Azusa street revival in 1906. Due to the Holiness movement happening around the same time, many people were excited at the idea of a revival and the possibility of Christ's imminent second coming. Seymour warned to the people of Los Angeles, declaring that God would judge them if they did not repent of their sins. At first, many believed he was crazy, but a week later, a dangerous earthquake swept across California. This natural disaster catalyzed the start of the Pentecostal movement and aided the Azusa street revival to last for another three years. Due to the massive media coverage of the revival, many people traveled from across the country to take part in the movement. These people would then take back their newfound beliefs home, and share them with others, allowing for a faster spread of Pentecostalism.<sup>126</sup>

There are over 700 different denominations within Pentecostalism, and most of them can be traced back to the Azusa street revival and Pentecostal movement. Because of their corresponding points in origin, many of these denominations are significantly similar in doctrine. However, there was a large split among Pentecostal church over the doctrine of the Trinity, dividing into Trinitarian Pentecostal churches and non-Trinitarian Pentecostal churches. The non-Trinitarian Pentecostal churches obviously reject the doctrine of the Trinity and therefore will not be talked about in this section. Some of the more notable Trinitarian Pentecostal churches are the Assembly of God with 3 million members who are predominantly white, the Church of God in Christ with 5.5 million members who are predominantly black, and the

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.,

International Church of the Foursquare Gospel with more than 350,000 members.<sup>127</sup> While these churches are the biggest among Pentecostal churches, Pentecostalism is not unique to just Pentecostal churches. Recently, through the Charismatic movement, Pentecostalism has crossed denominational lines, finding its way into other Protestant and Catholic churches. However, the focus will remain on Pentecostal churches as they hold a vast majority of churches that follow Pentecostalism.

### *The Nature of God*

God is the creator of all things, being of one essence in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, eternally begotten, was conceived and born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He acts as a mediator between humanity and God. God the Holy Spirit, preceding from the Father and the Son, equal in power and glory, who teaches and guides believers to Christ. The Holy Spirit is a gift given to believers so that the Spirit may empower the believers to advance the Kingdom of God.<sup>128</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent by the father as the final, perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice for humanity. He lived a perfect, sinless life, knowing no sin, died for all sinners, so that they may be cleansed and brought back into fellowship with God.<sup>129</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

On the third day after his crucifixion, Christ physically resurrected from the dead, defeating sin and death, into a glorified body. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance into the world's future and the beginning of what man looks forward to when Christ returns again. He

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>128</sup> "What We Believe." Church Of God In Christ. The Church Of God In Christ, Inc., 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

<sup>129</sup> "Fundamental Truths." *Assemblies of God*. The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2008. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

was the first to be resurrected into a glorified body and it is the hope of believers that He was not the last, for the children of God will be resurrected into a glorified body just as Christ was resurrected as a result of His Second Coming. He ascended into Heaven to be with God, continuing to manifest in his glorified body, ruling at the right hand of God the Father.<sup>130</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Bible is the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God that consists of the Protestant Old and New Testament. The Bible is the ultimate authority for all things and reveals to humanity the nature and will of God.<sup>131</sup>

### *Sacred Texts*

The Bible is the ultimate authority and the only sacred text.

### *Source of Doctrine*

The Bible is the theological standard and ultimate authority on which all Christian theology should be tested against. Doctrinal beliefs come from the Word of God; however, many believe that some Pentecostal leaders are anointed prophets, whose words should be regarded as authoritative.<sup>132</sup> While their messages are widely accepted as truth, they are still verified against the Scriptures.

### *The Nature of Humanity*

Man was made in the image of God in the beginning of creation, being innocent and perfect. By his own free will, man disobeyed God and caused humanity to fall. The Fall of Man broke the communion between God and man, leaving no hope of salvation for man because he is born into sin and tainted by the Original Sin of mankind. Humans, God's greatest creation, are

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>132</sup> "What We Believe." Church Of God In Christ. The Church Of God In Christ, Inc., 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

unable to bring salvation to themselves and rejoin in communion with God. Only by the grace of God can the covenant between God and man be reunited.<sup>133</sup>

### *Atonement*

Christ was sent by God as a suffering servant to die on a cross for the sins of all humanity as the perfect sacrifice for man's sin. He shed His blood so that humanity did not have to, for humanity is hopeless on its own. By his expiatory sacrifice, humanity was cleansed of its sin and offered salvation for all of humanity.

### *The Means of Salvation*

Salvation is by grace through faith alone in Christ's redemptive death and victorious resurrection over sin and death itself. By repenting of one's sin and having faith in Christ, one will be born again into the family of believers and given salvation. One's salvation is evident by their inward witness to the Holy Spirit and their outward life of righteousness. Once a believer has converted and gone through justification, they are regenerated, which is the first holy act of one's faith. After regeneration, the believer is sanctified, to say they are set apart as holy and saved. The final step to complete salvation, unique to Pentecostalism, is baptism of the Holy Spirit.

According to Pentecostalism, a sign that a believer is full of the Holy Spirit and has gone through the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that the believer will have the spiritual gift of tongues. With this baptism comes deeper understanding and reverence for God, fullness of the Spirit, greater love for Christ, and power for ministering and advancing the Kingdom of God. Pentecostals believe that in the early church, speaking in tongues was a sign of being filled with the spirit, evident in Acts 2. Therefore, speaking in tongues is mandatory for all believers but not

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.,

necessarily for salvation.<sup>134</sup> Another spiritual gift empowered to the believer by the Holy Spirit is the power of healing, which is very real and evident within the Pentecostal church.

#### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

One is able to fall out of communion with God and lose their salvation if they disobey the commandments of God without repentance or if they lose faith in Him.

#### *Free Will/Predestination*

Humanity is free to accept or reject God's offer of salvation, but it is only by God's grace and Christ's expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice that we are able to have salvation and communion with God.

#### *Body and Soul*

Upon dying, the souls of the righteous will leave their bodies, going immediately to be with the Father in Heaven, while the souls of the wicked are condemned to Hell to wait for the final judgment day.

#### *Eschatology*

Christ will return physically and visibly with His entourage of Saints to all people. All those who have died up to that point will be raised from the dead and be given a glorified body. Christ will take up those who were righteous to meet Him in the sky. The living righteous will also join along side the resurrected righteous. Christ will then reign on earth for 1,000 year of peace with His saints.<sup>135</sup>

#### *Eternal Life*

---

<sup>134</sup> "What We Believe." Church Of God In Christ. The Church Of God In Christ, Inc., 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

<sup>135</sup> Gibson, Lois E. "UPC Articles of Faith." Spiritual Abuse. N.p., 1997. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

The final judgment day will come and the sinful who are not saved and are without faith will be condemned to Hell where they will suffer eternal punishment in Hell's lake of fire. The righteous will live eternally with God on a new Heaven and a new Earth.<sup>136</sup>

### *The Sacraments*

Christ has ordained three sacraments: baptism, communion, and foot washing. Baptism is an outward representation of an inward conversion and acceptance of God. The preferred method of baptism is by immersion in water to signify one's death to sin and rebirth into the family of believers as a child of God. The Lord's Supper is performed in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for humanity. The bread and wine symbolize Christ's body and blood. It is also a celebration of new life in communion with God. The foot-washing ceremony is done after communion demonstrating that humility exhibits greatness within the Kingdom of God.<sup>137</sup>

### *Belief on the Church*

The church is a group of believers that make up the body of Christ, with Christ as the head. Each member is an important part of the body and with the Church; believers should go out and minister to the world converting people to a faith in Christ.<sup>138</sup>

### *Belief on other Denominations*

All believers who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and who keep the commands of God are a part of the Church. The experience of speaking in tongues is mandatory for all believers.

---

<sup>136</sup> Gibson, Lois E. "UPC Articles of Faith." *Spiritual Abuse*. N.p., 1997. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.,



## Anglicanism

### *Introduction and Background*

The Anglican Communion is a worldwide association of churches in full communion with the Church of England stretching over 161 countries with 70 million members. The largest of these is the Episcopal Church in America with over two million members. The Episcopal Church largely shares the same doctrinal beliefs and practices of the Church of England; however, they distinguish themselves from the British crown.<sup>139</sup>

Many movements and changes in the British throne have influenced and led to the evolving theology and practices of the Anglican Communion. The Church of England first separated from the Roman Catholic Church, because Pope Clement VII refused to grant the divorce of King Henry VIII and his wife, Catherine of Aragon due to her inability to birth a son to heir the throne after his father. Through the Act of Supremacy in 1534, King Henry VIII declared himself supreme head of the Church of England to replace the role of the pope. Later, he appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer to be the focus of the church and hold the highest church office in England. Cranmer quickly annulled King Henry VIII's marriage.<sup>140</sup> Although there was a change in authority, hardly any Catholic doctrine was changed and the religious life and worship of the English Christian remained relatively the same.

After King Henry VIII's death, his son and heir King Edward significantly contributed to the Church of England's shift toward reformed Protestantism by influencing Thomas Cranmer to write the liturgical *Book of Common Prayer* and the 42 Articles that laid out their doctrine. King Edward required the Book of Common Prayer to be in all churches, which upset both Catholics and Protestants for different reasons. King Edward was replaced at the throne in 1553 by his

---

<sup>139</sup> "Being an Anglican." *Church of England*. Archbishops' Council, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

<sup>140</sup> "Anglican History." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

older half-sister Queen Mary I after King Edward's death. Unlike her predecessor, Mary was a reverent Catholic returning England to its previous Catholic ways, undoing all that King Henry and Edward had done. Because of his help in the shift toward reformed Protestantism, Thomas Cranmer was burned at the stake along with 300 other Protestants, rightfully earning the queen the name "Bloody Mary."<sup>141</sup>

Mary's influence did not last long, for only five years later Mary died and the throne was passed along once again. This time, Queen Elizabeth I, who sought peace in England between the Roman Catholics and the Reformed Protestants, found a middle way between the two, giving the Church of England the description "Catholic and Reformed." She appointed Protestant bishops, but kept a majority of the Catholic tradition. The *Book of Common Prayer* was reissued and the 42 Articles were reduced to 39, together forming the doctrine and practice of the Church of England. In the revision of the articles, she had them altered to read more vaguely so that both the Catholic leaning members and the Protestant leaning members could read and interpret the articles to fit what they believed. Although there was criticism from extremists from both sides, Elizabeth's changes to the Church of England appealed to the vast majority. In 1833, the Oxford movement, also called the Catholic Revival, began and attempted to re-implement the rituals and sacraments in Catholicism.<sup>142</sup> This movement was largely successful and many of these practices are done today.

As the British Empire expanded, the beliefs and practices of Anglicanism spread, eventually allowing Anglicanism to cross oceans and establish a base in the New World. The Episcopal Church formed in America and emerged as an extension of the Church of England with full allegiance to the church. The "Episcopal" name derives from the Episcopalian

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.,

government where in bishops rule the churches. After the American Revolution, the Episcopal Church was forced to sever their ties with the British crown, becoming completely autonomous but keeping the same theology and practices to continue the legacy of the Church of England in America.<sup>143</sup>

Because the Church of England split away from the Catholic Church due to a political disagreement and not a reform or disagreement in doctrine, the Anglican Church is unusually unique. The theology has been redirected and molded by the British throne and not by prominent theologians. Because of its unusual beginning, there is no historical confession like that of the Westminster Confession for the Presbyterians, or founding theologian such as John Wesleyan or Martin Luther. There is also no church head that establishes the church's doctrine like the Magisterium and the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. However, there is the Archbishop of Canterbury who is seen as a symbol of unity within the Anglican Communion but not as an authoritative figure over all churches within the Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury is one of the four instruments of Communion put into place to keep the unity and cohesiveness between all of the churches within the Anglican Communion, while the other three include the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primate's meeting.<sup>144</sup>

Today, Anglicanism continues to be characterized as a combination or middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. Although Anglicans have kept many of the practices, rituals, sacraments, and forms of worship in Catholicism, they are not contingent on the Pope in Rome and are largely Protestant in doctrinal belief and theology. There is much diversity within Anglicanism and the Episcopal Church due to the vague nature of the 39 Articles, but the basic theology of Anglicanism can be summed up in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. This

---

<sup>143</sup> "Being an Anglican." *Church of England*. Archbishops' Council, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

<sup>144</sup> Anglican History." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

statement of Anglican identity has four points: the Holy Scriptures that holds all that's necessary for salvation, the Apostles' and Nicene Creed that are an adequate statement of Christian belief, the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion that are seen as important and significant, and the historic episcopate that is seen as a ancestral rite to be ordained as a bishop.<sup>145</sup> This study of the theology and practice of Anglicanism and Episcopalianism will largely focus on the unity found in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

### *The Nature of God*

There is only one true and living God that is infinite and eternal in wisdom, power, and goodness. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, visible and invisible. God is represented as three eternal and distinct persons in the Trinity that are unique parts of the whole, yet inseparable. These three persons are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Son, Jesus Christ, was eternally begotten, not made, by the Father. He is of the same substance of the Father and the Holy Spirit, both eternal and divine. He was incarnate, born of the Virgin Mary, and fully God and fully man. The lives of humanity are brought back into fellowship with God through Christ's life, death, and resurrection because humanity's sins are forgiven. God the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity, proceeding from, of equal power and divinity, and of one essence with the Father and the Son. He works within the world giving believers the strength to further the Kingdom of God and make disciples.<sup>146</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent by the father as the final, perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice for humanity. He lived a perfect life, knowing no sin, but dying for all

---

<sup>145</sup> The historic episcopate is the apostolic succession of the bishops.

<sup>146</sup> "Doctrine." *Anglican Communion Website*. Anglican Consultative Council, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

sinner, so that they may be cleansed and brought back into fellowship with God.<sup>147</sup> He died a human death for he was fully human and fully divine, but death could not keep Him.

### *Christ's Resurrection*

On the third day, Christ, defeating sin and death, physically resurrected from the dead into a glorified body. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance into the world's future and the beginning of what man looks forward to when Christ returns. He was the first to be resurrected into a glorified body and it is the hope of believers that He was not the last; for the children of God will be resurrected into a glorified body just as Christ was resurrected. He ascended into Heaven to be with God, continuing to manifest in his glorified body, ruling at the right hand of God the Father.<sup>148</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Holy Bible is the Word of God and it fills the liturgical worship of the Episcopal Church from beginning to end. They put a large emphasis on actually reading the Bible. Anglicanism's view on the inerrancy of the Bible is unclear, but they believe that the Holy Scriptures contain all that is necessary for salvation.<sup>149</sup> Scripture should be interpreted with the use of reason (humanity's God-given intellect) and tradition (the historical beliefs and practices of the church). This way of interpreting scripture is an example of the "catholic and reformed" mentality of the church and the balance between Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>150</sup>

### *Sacred Texts*

---

<sup>147</sup> "The Thirty-Nine Articles." *Anglicans Online*. Society of Archbishop Justus, 1997. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>150</sup> "Anglican Beliefs." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2013. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

The Protestant Old and New Testament are accepted as canon of Scripture. However, although the Apocrypha is not viewed as scripture, it is respected.<sup>151</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

Along with the Holy Scripture, the early church fathers and the Apostolic Church are regarded as authoritative in doctrinal beliefs.<sup>152</sup>

### *The Nature of Humanity*

Man was made in the image of God, but Man violated that image when he disobeyed God's commandments and, therefore, lost his original righteousness and his communion with God in the Fall of Man. Because of Original Sin, human beings are born in sin and inherently inclined toward sin. Man cannot atone for his Original Sin or bring himself back into communion with God so, by God's grace; He made a way to atone for humanity's sin.

### *Atonement*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent incarnate, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live a perfect life without sin and take humanity's place on the cross to die for the sins of man. He was an innocent sacrifice who was victorious over sin and death, which atoned for the sins of mankind among God's elect, allowing for the believer to be brought back into communion with God.<sup>153</sup>

### *The Means of Salvation*

By believing in the Son of God, Jesus Christ as apart of the Trinity, and his redemptive sacrifice on the cross for the sins of mankind, one is given salvation by the grace of God. It is only by the merits of Christ that humanity is saved and not by the works of man.

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

---

<sup>151</sup> "The Thirty-Nine Articles." *Anglicans Online*. Society of Archbishop Justus, 1997. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>153</sup> "Doctrine." *Anglican Communion Website*. Anglican Consultative Council, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

Nothing can separate the believer from the grace and love of God.

### *Free Will/Predestination*

Man is free to decide through his own reason, to create with his own mind, and to love with his own heart so that he may live in harmony with God's creation. God has predestined and chosen before creation an elected few of mankind that would be brought into salvation.<sup>154</sup>

### *Body and Soul*

Upon death, the body will return to the dust of the earth in which it came and the souls of the faithful and righteous will be purified in order to enjoy full communion with God. The soul of the wicked will be condemned to eternal death.<sup>155</sup>

### *Eschatology*

On the day of Judgment, Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. The righteous will be resurrected into a glorified body to enjoy the eternal presence of God while the wicked will reject God and forego eternal death.<sup>156</sup>

### *The Sacraments*

The two sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, as ordained by Christ, are an outward representation and confession of an inward faith and spiritual grace.

New members, including infants and converts, are inducted into the church as a part of the covenant with God and communion with fellow believers by being reborn into the family of God in baptism. Baptism is done by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and is necessary for regeneration.<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>157</sup> "Anglican Communion." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

The Catholic belief of transubstantiation is rejected but Christ does reside among the elements of the bread and wine. However, the means of this are still a holy mystery of a heavenly manner and should be taken up by faith. This belief is most likely more along the line of consubstantiation. The Holy Eucharist is a sign of the believer's redemption in Christ's death.

Although not divinely ordained, there are additional sacraments that are useful in the life of a believer. These sacraments are Confirmation (an affirmation of baptismal vows made by an adult), Reconciliation of a Penitent (private confession), Matrimony (Christian marriage), Orders (ordination as a church official), and Unction (oil anointing to the dying or sick).<sup>158</sup>

#### *Belief on the Church*

The Anglican Church is the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church." Unity within the Anglican Communion is found with the Archbishop of Canterbury. The visible church makes up the body of Christ and consists of the congregation that preaches the pure Word of God and practices the sacraments ordained by Christ. The Anglican Communion follow the liturgical worship laid out in the *Book of Common Prayer* and emphasized a commitment to the essential doctrine but the freedom of liberty in regards to non-essential doctrine. This allows for religious liberty and religious thinking.

#### *Belief on other Denominations*

The ultimate goal is to work toward full unity within Christianity among denominations. If one is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and if they follow God's commands while teaching the Word of God then they are a part of the visible church. Doctrinal diversity is to be expected and accepted as long as it does not contradict the Word of God.

---

<sup>158</sup> "OUR BELIEFS." African Methodist Episcopal Church. AMEC, 2014. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.



## Non-trinitarianism

### Jehovah's Witness

#### *Introduction and Background*

The founder of the Watch Tower Society, Charles Taze Russell, grew up Presbyterian in Pittsburg, but later became agnostic at 17 years old due to the doctrines of predestination and eternal suffering. A few years later, he attended an Adventist's meeting, in the 1860s, that was declaring the imminent return of Christ. Through this, he became intrigued with the Bible and began to closely read the Word of God with a group of people who referred to him as their pastor. These readings lead him to reject the doctrine of the Trinity as well as predestination and eternal suffering in Hell. In 1879, after much reading and studying, Russell began the publishing of the Watch Tower, which still prints bi-monthly to this day.<sup>159</sup>

Russell and his followers went on mission trips in the United States and European Countries to evangelize and gain more followers. He founded 30 congregations that would join together to form the Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society in 1881, later changing the name to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. After gaining a considerable following of 50,000 members worldwide by 1910 and moving his headquarters to Brooklyn, New York, Russell followed the lead of Adventists and began to make predictions of his own on Christ's return. He believed that Christ would return in 1914, but when Christ was nowhere to be found, Russell informed his followers that Christ had in fact returned invisibly. He assured his followers that Christ's visible return would happen soon. He believed this return would lead to God's final victory over the devil in the Battle of Armageddon.<sup>160</sup>

---

<sup>159</sup> "Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and History." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.,

Russell died in 1916, leaving his lawyer, Joseph Rutherford, to succeed him as head of the society. Rutherford made many improvements to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society that would help with the organization and authenticity of the group as an official religious sect. He further developed the ideas that Russell had taught and organized them into an official doctrine, which allowed for more stability in the beliefs of the society. Over his controversial 25-year reign as president of the Society, Rutherford made many changes to their doctrine and practices, including the emphasis on door-to-door missionaries. He equipped them with phonographs so that they could play his recorded voice to spread the message of the Kingdom of God.<sup>161</sup>

Although Russell had failed, Rutherford made a prediction of his own, teaching that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would return in the year 1925, even going as far as buying them a mansion and car to prepare for their “imminent” arrival, which never happened. In 1931, Rutherford officially changed the name to Jehovah’s Witnesses, believing that those who proclaimed themselves as followers under this name are special among God’s people.<sup>162</sup> The name of Jehovah is actually a corrupt interpretation of the name YHWH, but nonetheless it holds today.

Again, the presidential office was passed on after Rutherford’s death to Nathan Knorr who made many changes. His most prominent changes were the introduction of evangelical teaching through door-to-door missionaries, a strict moral code, and a new translation of the Bible called *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. Not learning from the mistakes of his predecessors, Knorr predicted the start of Christ’s one thousand-year reign in the year 1975. Many people left Jehovah’s Witnesses after the prediction was proven to be false. Since

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>162</sup> Saunders, Fr. William. "WHAT DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE?" Eternal Word Television Network. Eternal Word Television Network, 2004. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

then, Jehovah's Witnesses have shifted the authoritative power on theology from the president to a Governing Body and have stopped making predictions on the return of Christ.<sup>163</sup> Today, there are over 6.5 million adherents around the world, the majority residing in the United States.

### *The Nature of God*

Following strict Monotheism, they believe there is one God, named Jehovah, and reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Jehovah is the personal name of God revealed to his believers. He watches over all things in the form of a spirit body in Heaven. The idea of the Trinity is believed to be a pagan idea, even going as far as attributing it to Satan himself. This greatly contradicts mainstream Christianity. Jehovah is an all-powerful being that created all things visible and invisible. His first creation was Jesus, the Son of God, who was a spiritual being called the Word who was with Jehovah at creation, existing in pre-human form. He is superior to all except for Jehovah and is considered to be the greatest Witness of all time. Jesus is also believed to be the Archangel Michael who became man on earth through a virgin birth. He was born a man and died a man. The divinity of Jesus is denied. The holy spirit is an impersonal and invisible force that Jehovah employs and is not part of the Godhead.<sup>164</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Christ lived a perfect, sinless life and was crucified on a stake. The idea of the cross is believed to derive from false religions. He died on the torture stake and was buried in the tomb.<sup>165</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

---

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>164</sup> "Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and History." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.,

Jesus was fully man his entire life and upon his resurrection he became an immortal Spirit creature, leaving his body to be destroyed. He ascended into heaven but was not made King until 1914, when he invisibly returned.<sup>166</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

God inspired all Scripture. The Holy Bible consists of the Protestant canon but is only accepted in the New World Translation. All other translations are considered inaccurate.<sup>167</sup> There are other aids, made by Jehovah's Witnesses, to help interpret the Bible.

### *Sacred Texts*

The only sacred text is the New World Translation of the Bible.

### *Source of Doctrine*

The Bible (only the New World Translation) is the only authoritative text for all doctrinal issues. However, other notable texts that have significant influence include the *Watch Tower* magazine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, and *Awake! Magazine*.<sup>168</sup>

### *The Nature of Humanity*

Jehovah's original plan was to make the Earth a paradise for humans to live. However, Adam and Eve sinned, causing the Fall of Man, thereby, giving man the ability to get sick, age, and die. Believers are encouraged to try their best to follow the laws of Jehovah.

### *Atonement*

---

<sup>166</sup> "Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and History." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>167</sup> Many have criticized this translation for purposefully mistranslating verses to adhere to their doctrine. This is obviously not the personal belief of adhering Jehovah's Witnesses, because they believe the translation to be accurate.

<sup>168</sup> "Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and History." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

Christ was sent incarnate, born a virgin birth, in order to live a perfect life as an example to all, teach the truth of God, and to atone for the sins of mankind, thereby, freeing them from their sin.<sup>169</sup>

### *The Means of Salvation*

Salvation is possible because of Christ's sacrifice. Since humanity has been cleansed of its Original Sin, they hope to gain salvation from God. The ultimate goal in life is to gain salvation and minister to others about the Kingdom of God while living a moral life so that they may be a part of God's future kingdom. Salvation requires more than just belief in Christ's death. It also requires one to prove one's loyalty to Jehovah as a witness of His coming kingdom. One must acquire knowledge about Jehovah and to keep His commandments.<sup>170</sup> By doing these things, salvation can be earned.

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

Salvation can be lost. One must continually live a life of morality to keep in communion with God.

### *Free Will/ Predestination*

Predestination is rejected. Those who are saved are not done so by fate. Free will is endowed on all intelligent creatures.

### *Body and Soul*

When one dies, the mind goes into an unconscious state. On the day of Armageddon, all the dead are resurrected and given the chance at eternal life.<sup>171</sup> At Armageddon, the righteous are separated from the wicked through the divine judgment of Jehovah.

### *Eschatology*

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.,

The end times began in 1914 when Christ invisibly returned to set up his Kingdom. Christ banished Satan and his demons from Heaven onto Earth, which is evident by the apparent progressing condition of evil and chaos on earth. Ever since then, Christ has been ruling his Kingdom of Earth from Heaven. Armageddon will occur when all government has been abolished and God as set up a theocracy on Earth. There will be an epic, all or nothing battle between good and evil where Jehovah will be victorious. Witnesses believe this to be soon but do not give an exact date due to “miscalculations” in the past.<sup>172</sup>

### *Eternal Life*

Witnesses do not believe in an eternal Hell, therefore, all the souls of the wicked will be destroyed. The souls of the righteous will be allowed into the gates of Heaven as a part of God’s Kingdom. According to revelation from the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation, only 144,000 believers will rule with God in heaven. However, the 144,000 “anointed” believers list is already full. All the other righteous believers will enjoy paradise on Earth with no more sickness, unhappiness, old age, or death. The righteous believers on Earth must perfectly obey Jehovah’s commands in the first 1,000 years or else they will be destroyed forever.<sup>173</sup>

### *The Sacraments*

Although both baptism and the Last Supper are practiced, Jehovah’s Witnesses reject all seven sacraments. Baptism, done by immersion, is a sign of one’s commitment and devotion to God and is done to a person of responsible age. Although the doctrine of the Trinity is denied, believers are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They do not celebrate

---

<sup>172</sup> Saunders, Fr. William. "WHAT DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE?" Eternal Word Television Network. Eternal Word Television Network, 2004. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>173</sup> "Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and History." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

birthdays or any holidays except for the Memorial of the Last's Supper once a year. Witnesses would partake in the bread and wine as symbols of what Christ did for humanity.<sup>174</sup>

*Belief on the Church*

The Church of God consists of only those who proclaim Jehovah as their one true God. Only 144,000 will rule Heaven with Jehovah while the other righteous will live in paradise on Earth.

*Belief on other Denominations*

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only they are true Christians. All of the other Christian denominations are misguided.

---

<sup>174</sup> Saunders, Fr. William. "WHAT DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE?" Eternal Word Television Network. Eternal Word Television Network, 2004. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

## Mormon

### *Introduction and Background*

Mormonism is categorized into three main groups. The largest and most well-known of the Mormons, the “mainstream Mormons”, are known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or LDS church); the liberal reformist Mormons, with the largest liberal group and second largest Mormonism group, is the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or more commonly called today, the Community of Christ<sup>175</sup>; and the Mormon fundamentalists that hold certain traditional teachings that the modern LDS church has since abandoned, such as polygamy, the principle of blood atonement<sup>176</sup>, and the exclusion of African-Americans as priests. The LDS church is overwhelmingly the largest group of the three and, therefore, will be the focus and standard of this doctrinal study.

The LDS church originated in America as part of the Second Great Awakening, a restorationist movement in the 19th century. The entirety of the religion and its theology and practice is based on revelations given to the founder, Joseph Smith. In the year 1820, in western New York, at the age of 14, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Smith in a vision in which they revealed to him that all other Christian denominations were corrupt and had drifted away from the true faith of Christianity. They told Smith that he would be the one to restore the Church to how it was before the martyrdom of the apostles.<sup>177</sup>

When Smith was 17, an angel named Moroni appeared to him and revealed to him the location of two ancient golden plates with transcriptions of the history and beliefs of two ancient indigenous tribes that came to North America in 600 BC. The golden plates were authored by

---

<sup>175</sup> The Community of Christ differs in many doctrinal beliefs from the LDS church, most notably being the doctrine of the Trinity in which the Community of Christ accepts while the LDS church rejects.

<sup>176</sup> The principle of blood atonement teaches that Christ's atonement does not extend to or cover the sins of murderers.

<sup>177</sup> "Mormonism - LDS History and Beliefs." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 01 May 2015.



Ether, Mormon, Lehi, and Nephi. Along with these golden plates, Smith found a brass plate authored by Laban that consisted of genealogies and quotations from Hebrew scripture, two stones named Urim and Thummim that aided him in the translation of the plates, and a breastplate.<sup>178</sup> Written within these plates was a story of Christ's visit to these tribes in North America after his death and resurrection. According to the angel Moroni, Smith was not allowed to remove the artifacts and could only visit them every four years on the Autumn Equinox. Smith was later allowed to move the artifacts from their location and use the help of his wife, Emma, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris to translate and transcribe the plates. Harris's wife, who was a skeptic of Smith, promptly lost the completed translation of the Book of Lehi. Fortunately, the Book of Nephi had many of the same events written in the Book of Lehi, but due to this incident God took the translation stones away from Smith out of anger. Smith was able to finish the translations through a seer stone given to him by God.<sup>179</sup>

John Smith and Oliver Cowdery were visited on two occasions; the first by John the Baptist to teach the water baptism and the second by the Apostles Paul, Peter, and James, at which time the two were ordained priests and positioned as the two elders of the church. By 1830, they had officially started the LDS church and gained over 1,000 followers within the first year. Due to their restorationist views and unconventional doctrine, the church was met with much persecution. They began to migrate west, where the LDS church would eventually settle in 1847 in Salt Lake City, Utah, lead by Brigham Young. Here, the LDS church established their official headquarters that still stands today. During their migration west, before the church's eventual settlement in Salt Lake City, the church was moved from city to city, not staying long in any particular place due to persecution from the respective cities. The church even suffered

---

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.,

persecution from the United States Federal Government due to their polygamy practices. In 1844, the Mormon Church had settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, where John Smith would be murdered by an angry anti-Mormon mob.<sup>180</sup>

John Smith's sudden death caused mass confusion and chaos because all other possible options to succeed him were either dead, excommunicated, or too young to lead, as in the case of Smith's son, John Smith III, who was only 11 at the time. This led to a succession crisis and many schisms occurred in the Mormon Church due to the struggle for the leadership position.<sup>181</sup> While Sidney Rigdon, the only surviving member of the First Presidency, arguably had more right to lead the church compared to other possible candidates. However, through congressional vote, Brigham Young was appointed as church head. Rigdon left the church, starting a sect of Mormonism in Pittsburgh, while Young took the LDS church to the Salt Lake Valley due to constant oppression from the people of Nauvoo. Many other schisms occurred, each going their respective way and forming factions of their own. The most notable of the factions being John Smith III's, formed in 1860, calling itself the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>182</sup> The largest group that remained was Young's, which kept the original name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Today, there are over 12 million adherents in the LDS church who continue to face persecution and criticism. Many Christians criticize the Mormon Church<sup>183</sup>, accusing them of not truly being Christians because Mormonism differs in much of its theology from mainstream Christianity. Ironically, Mormons believe they are the only true Christians and all other Christian denominations are wrong in much of their doctrine, and therefore will not receive salvation.

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>183</sup> When referring to the Mormon Church, it is specifically talking about the LDS church and not other groups within Mormonism.

### *The Nature of God*

Unlike many other Christian denominations, Mormons do not adhere to the doctrine of the Trinity. They believe that the Godhead is completely separated into three separate gods; one in purpose but not one in essence.

The Heavenly Father shares many attributes with orthodox Christian doctrine<sup>184</sup> about God the Father, but Mormons believe that He is physical with flesh and bones, as opposed to the non-physical being of orthodox Christianity. This belief is due to John Smith's revelation where the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him in two separate and physical bodies.<sup>185</sup> The Heavenly Father is also a personal God who is all-good and all-powerful and cares and loves His spirit children, human beings. No other matches His power and sovereignty. The Heavenly Father used to be a man but ascended or progressed to godhood. He also has a wife named the Heavenly Mother.<sup>186</sup>

Jesus Christ was the Heavenly Father's first creation and the literal Son of God through the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. He was His first spirit child and is the spiritual older brother of all of the Father's spirit children. Satan and Jesus competed to be the redeemer of all humanity but Jesus was victorious and was given a physical body.<sup>187</sup>

Although not considered a deity, the "Holy Spirit" is apart of the Godhead, being the light force or emanation of the Heavenly Father.<sup>188</sup> The Holy Spirit does not have physical body

---

<sup>184</sup> Orthodox Christian refers to mainstream Christian beliefs and not the specific beliefs of Eastern or Oriental Orthodox Christians.

<sup>185</sup> "Mormonism - LDS History and Beliefs." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 01 May 2015.

<sup>186</sup> Christianity, Cults & Religions. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2005. Print.

<sup>187</sup> "Mormonism - LDS History and Beliefs." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 01 May 2015.

<sup>188</sup> The Holy Spirit, being an emanation of the Heavenly Father and a separate spirit, seems contradictory in nature but was the general consensus among sources.

like the Father and Son and is considered separate from the two. He guides and teaches humans to live morally, as well as sanctifies souls.<sup>189</sup>

### *Christ's Crucifixion*

The incarnate man, Jesus Christ, was born from the sexual union between Elohim, the Heavenly Father, and Virgin Mary. Mormons hold a different definition of virgin, saying that the virginity of Mary was sustained because she had sexual relations with an immortal man and not a mortal man. Opposed to orthodox tradition, Jesus was married.<sup>190</sup> Christ, who lived a perfect life, was crucified to redeem humanity, but His death only gave humanity resurrection after death. It did not, however, atone for the all of the sins of mankind. Further atonement is needed and provided through good works. Atonement began at the Garden of Gethsemane and ended on the cross.<sup>191</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

Christ physically resurrected on the third day and visited the disciples to instruct them to build His church. Also unique to Mormonism, it is believed that after Christ left the disciples, he visited the Christian tribes on the American continent that wrote the all of the ancient plates that Smith discovered. Jesus informed them about His life and the Gospel. He ministered to them and organized His church among them.<sup>192</sup>

### *The Holy Bible*

The Bible consists of the Protestant canon. The King James Version and Smith's inspired version are accepted translations. The Bible is seen as the word of God and accounts the History of God's people and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>189</sup> "Latter-day Saint/Mormon." *Project Interfaith*. Project Interfaith, 2011. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>190</sup> This belief is most likely held because marriage is a saving ordinance.

<sup>191</sup> "Latter-day Saint/Mormon." *Project Interfaith*. Project Interfaith, 2011. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.,

### *Sacred Texts*

Along with the Holy Bible, there are three other texts that are considered sacred among Mormons. They are the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. The *Book of Mormon* is a translation of the history and teachings of God's people in America transcribed on the ancient plates found by John Smith. The *Book of Mormon* complements and verifies the Bible. The *Doctrine and Covenants* consist of a collection of declarations and revelations given to the LDS church. The *Pearl of Great Price* is a collection of some of the writings and revelations of John Smith. It also lists the 13 article of the Mormon faith.<sup>193</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

Mormons sources of doctrine include the Holy Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*.

### *The Nature of Humanity*

All human beings existed as spirit children of God before they were born with a physical body on Earth. All of God's spirit children were given the option for further progress and salvation through a growing experience as a human being with a physical body on Earth. Most chose this option but one third, led by Satan, chose not to take up this option. Each spirit is given a place and time that they will be born, as chosen by God. The purpose of life on Earth is to prove one's worth to live eternally with the Heavenly Father by developing virtues and by being subject to certain experiences that could not be done as a spirit. During one's life on Earth, one must build a family that they will be with for the rest of eternity. Adam and Eve, the first spirit children to be given a physical body, were free from sin. Satan tempted them and they sinned in the Garden of Eden. Because of this, they fell from God both physically and spiritually. Opposed

---

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.,

to orthodox belief, humans are born free of sin and are unable to sin until the age of accountability and reason, which is the age of eight.<sup>194</sup>

### *Atonement*

God knows that humans will make mistakes, and for that reason He sent His first Son to redeem humanity. Christ's atonement, which started in the Garden of Gethsemane and ended with His death on the cross, gave humans resurrection. However, His atonement did not forgive all of humanity's sin and therefore must be atoned for in other ways.

### *The Means of Salvation*

Human beings are resurrected by grace, but salvation and exaltation to godhood is by works and saving ordinances. One must do good deeds, have moral character, ask for forgiveness and repent of one's sins, be baptized among other saving ordinances, and spread the faith of Mormons.<sup>195</sup> Human beings without the Mormon faith will not be given eternal life.

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

By guarantee of the atonement of Christ and grace of the Heavenly Father, all humans will have eternal life, however, not all people will reach godhood. The evil and wicked will be given the opportunity to repent before eternal Hell, but if they still reject God, then they will spend eternity in Hell with Satan and all of those who reject His name.<sup>196</sup>

### *Free Will/ Predestination*

Mormons reject the doctrine of predestination and believe that human beings have the free will to do both good and evil.

### *Body and Soul*

---

<sup>194</sup> "Mormonism - LDS History and Beliefs." Religion Facts. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 01 May 2015.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.,

All human beings existed as spirit children before the life on Earth. When they die, the soul will be reunited with their body forever after a period of instruction and preparation.

### *Eschatology*

When a human dies, their soul will depart from their body and will receive instruction and preparation in the spirit world. After this is completed, and at the time of Christ's Second Coming, the soul will be reunited with the resurrected body to never be separated and to live forever. Righteous Mormons will live within the presence and glory of the Heavenly Father with their families for all of eternity in the Celestial Kingdom. If one is not Mormon or did not live a life worthy of the Celestial Kingdom, they will not be allowed to be in the glorious presence of God, but will be put into one of the other two kingdoms according to their righteousness. The second kingdom is the Terrestrial Kingdom while the lowest is the Telestial Kingdom. The Terrestrial Kingdom will experience the presence of Christ, the Son of God, but not the fullness of the Heavenly Father. The Telestial Kingdom is for those who did not following the teachings of Christ, did not know of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, or sinned too much in their earthly life.<sup>197</sup>

After the Second Coming of Christ, He will reign on the Earth for a millennium. At the beginning of the millennium, inhabitants that will be in the first two kingdoms will be resurrected and judged. Those in the lowest kingdom will reside in Spirit Prison for the entire millennium. At the end of this millennium, their soul will be reunited with their now resurrected body. Sometime during the millennium of Christ's reign on Earth, He will cleanse the Earth of all wicked people and sin, while all good people regardless of faith will remain. Close to the end of the millennium, Satan will gather followers to fight one last battle against Christ. The Archangel Michael, also believed to be Adam, will lead the opposition against evil and will be

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.,

victorious. Christ will then celestialize the Earth at the end of the millennium. Many believe that Earth will be the Celestial Kingdom after it is cleansed and glorified by Christ. Satan and his followers, along with all those who reject the name of God even after revelation to His glory and the millennium in Spirit Prison, will cast out into the Outer Darkness forever. These people are known as the Sons of Perdition.<sup>198</sup>

### *Eternal Life*

The four destinations of eternal life, in order of the most glory to no glory, are the Celestial Kingdom, the Terrestrial Kingdom, the Telestial Kingdom, and Outer Darkness.<sup>199</sup>

### *The Sacraments*

There are many sacraments, or ordinances as called in Mormonism, among the LDS church. Some of the ordinances are called saving ordinances, which are necessary for salvation, but does not give one salvation just by doing these sacraments alone. The saving ordinances are as follows: Baptism by immersion, which is done after the age of accountability and allows one to be an official member of the church; confirmation and anointing of the Holy Spirit on one's soul, which is done directly after baptism and is performed by laying hands on the head of the baptized believer; ordination into priesthood for males; endowment in the temple, which is washing and anointing of one's body; and marriage to a spouse. There are other ordinances that

---

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>199</sup> As stated previously, all doctrinal information recorded in this thesis is based from the actual statements and beliefs from the respective churches themselves and not from the idle talk of other people who do not adhere to the Church. Whenever information from one source contradicts with the official statements of the Church itself, the latter will always take authority over the former, and this hold true throughout the entire thesis. In regards to eternal life, many sources record that adherents to the Mormon faith believe that each one of them will receive a planet that he or she will be the god over with their family from their life on Earth. However, this information was not recorded in the actual statements of the Mormon Church and therefore cannot be considered a part of their official doctrine. Albeit, some might argue that this information cannot be found on the Mormon website because adherents unlock certain levels of knowledge as they progress in their faith and their position in the Church. However, this is only speculation and cannot be confirmed, so the authority of the official statements still holds precedent.



are not necessary to salvation that include: the Lord's Supper, prayer circle, and naming and blessing children, among others.<sup>200</sup>

*Belief on the Church*

All Christian denominations other than the LDS church are wrong and have fallen away from the original teachings of the early church before the martyrdom of the apostles. This is why Mormonism is trying to restore the New Testament and Christian doctrine that has been corrupt.

*Belief on other Denominations*

Mormons believe they are the only true Christians.

---

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.,

## **EASTERN CHRISTIANITY**

### **Orthodoxy**

#### **Oriental and Eastern Orthodox**

##### *Introduction and Background*

Understandably so, the Eastern branch of Christianity is much less studied in the West than its Western counterpart. Due to its remarkably different culture and its concentration of adherents in the eastern part of the world, not many Western people know much about this branch of Christianity, while some do not even know of its existence. Despite its unpopularity among Westerners, the Eastern branch of Christianity has a rich and ancient history, dating all the way back to the early centuries of the Christian era. One of the denominations associated with the Eastern churches is the Orthodox Church, which literally means, “right worshiping.”

The two main splits within the orthodox family are the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church. Although their share almost identical names, considering “eastern” and “oriental” are synonyms of each other, these two churches are not in communion with each other. Due to this confusing nomenclature, this thesis will further address the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church as the Chalcedon Orthodox Church (hereafter, COC) and the Non-Chalcedon Orthodox Church (hereafter, NCOC) respectively. This is in obvious reference to NCOC’s split over the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD.<sup>201</sup> The history of this split from the church and the implication behind it will be discussed in the history segment of this section.

The COC and NCOC can further be broken down in their own respects. However, this further fragmentation is only because of the ethnicity or culture of that church and not its theology. For example, the COC consists of Albanian Orthodox, Bulgarian Orthodox, Georgian

---

<sup>201</sup> "Orthodox Churches (Oriental)." Oikoumene.org. World Council of Churches, 2013. Web. 02 May 2015.

Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Montenegrin Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, and Ukrainian Orthodox churches while as the NCOC consists of Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Eritrean Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (India), and Armenian Apostolic churches.

Again, all of these churches that are considered a part of the Oriental or Eastern Orthodox Church are similar in theology but can vary in measure of difference in terms of culture. The major dogmatic difference between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox church was in regards to the nature of Christ. The Oriental or NCOC split from the church at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD over the issues of the nature of Christ, while the Eastern or COC split from the church during the Great Schism between East and West in 1054 AD. Despite these two churches initial variance, after 20 years of unofficial meetings and finally an official meeting in the late-20th century, they have come to a general consensus on the nature of Christ.<sup>202</sup> They now see that their terminology and definition are too similar to warrant disaffiliation.

Although the nature of Christ was the principle reason for disunion between the NCOC and COC, these two churches continue to stay out of communion only because of what seems to be division itself. No significant doctrinal theology exists, but when two organizations have been apart over a millennia and a half, significant historical and cultural differences. However, since this thesis is a study of the comparison among theology and not culture, for our intents and purposes, these churches will be considered the one in doctrine, while still respecting the distinction between them. Any differences in theology that arise will be discussed.

### *History of the Oriental Orthodox Church*

---

<sup>202</sup> Erickson, Rev. John H. "Beyond Dialogue: The Quest for Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Unity Today." Svots.edu. Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 27 Oct. 2000. Web. 02 May 2015.

The Oriental Orthodox Church, or the NCOC, founded by the apostles' disciples and some of the apostles themselves, follow the first three ecumenical councils: the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, the First Council of Constantinople in 381, and the First Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.<sup>203</sup> Many historical traditions would suggest their apostolic roots, such as St. Philip's baptism of an Ethiopian traveler who returned to African lands south of Egypt to share his faith, St. Mark's consideration as the first bishop of Alexandria, and the term "Christian" being first used in the city of Antioch mentioned in the book of Acts. Their apostolic beginnings speak to their ancient history, culture, and beliefs. This foundation holds to the Orthodox belief that they are the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."

The Alexandrian school of thought and the teachings of St. Cyril the Great have shaped the NCOC's theology. The NCOC's Christology is largely based on St. Cyril's one nature: human and divine. This belief caused controversy among the early church and led the NCOC to reject the fourth council, the Council of Chalcedon, and split from the church. This was the first split in church history, and, as was common among those who reject one of the seven ecumenical councils, the NCOC was deemed heretical.

The Council of Chalcedon addressed the Christ's nature and came to a consensus that Christ's was in two natures, both human and divine, united in one and inseparable. The NCOC rejected this definition, equating it to accepting the heretical Nestorianism, which stated that Christ existed in two separate persons, the divine and man, within one body. Nestorianists hold the belief that only Jesus the man suffered, while God did not. They preferred the definition "of/from two natures" instead of the council's "in two natures."<sup>204</sup> Because of this rejection, the NCOC is often referred to as Monophysites, which has heretical implications. They reject this

---

<sup>203</sup> Allen, Michael S. "An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches." Pluralism.org. The Pluralism Project, 15 Mar. 2005. Web. 02 May 2015.

<sup>204</sup> "Orthodox Churches (Oriental)." Oikoumene.org. World Council of Churches, 2013. Web. 02 May 2015.

title and prefer being called Miaphysite or non-Chalcedonian churches. After the Council of Chalcedon, the NCOC disassociated themselves with the rest of Christendom and took their own path through history, spreading their faith beyond the Byzantine Empire.<sup>205</sup>

Today, there are currently 84 million adherents of the Oriental Orthodox Church worldwide. The current “first among equals” of their bishops and pope, given this title out of reverence and admiration and not out of superior position over all other bishops, is Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria.

### *History of the Eastern Orthodox Church*

When people discuss the Orthodox Church, they are more often than not, referring to the Eastern Orthodox Church. While more widely known than the Oriental Orthodox Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, or the COC, is shadowed in the West by Catholicism and Protestantism. The COC adheres to all seven ecumenical councils and finds similarities among to the Roman Catholic Church in both practice and doctrine. The COC does, however, reject Catholic doctrines such as papal infallibility, indulgences, and purgatory. This similarity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church would seem to support the fact that for the first millennium of these churches’ existence, they were one church. However, in 1054 AD, the church suffered a Great Schism.

The split between the Western Roman church and the Eastern Orthodox Church was prompted by the claim to the universal papacy and the *Filioque Controversy*. There was a power struggle between the bishop of Rome, who had long been considered the Western churches, and the bishop of Constantinople, the head of the Eastern churches. Each bishop eventually excommunicated each other, sealing the deal on the schism of these two churches. Leading up to this split was the *Filioque Controversy*. In the 6th century, *Filioque*, meaning “and from the

---

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.,

Son,” was added to the Nicene Creed in order to emphasize the divinity of Christ. This dealt with the origin of the Holy Spirit, where it had originally read, “who proceeds from the Father” to “who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Although Eastern churches were also against ever changing any of the dogmatic beliefs of the seven ecumenical councils, this alteration was specifically rejected because they believed that both the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and not the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son.<sup>206</sup>

Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church is the second largest church and is apart of the third largest branch of Christianity, that being Orthodoxy. There are currently 225 million adherents to the COC church worldwide, spanning from Eastern Europe, Russia, Greece, the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. The current head of the COC church is the Ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople, “His Holiness” Bartholomew I. The beliefs and practices of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church are seen as the standard for all COC churches due to their primacy and size. Out of the 225 million adherents, only 5.9 million reside in the United States.<sup>207</sup>

### *The Nature of God*

There is one God, represented in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is the Creator of all things visible and invisible, and He is a mystery to all men. He is transcendent past human understanding, and His infinite being is beyond the grasp of finite minds. Humanity can only comprehend Him in the context of His actions. The three are of one essence, and no person acts or thinks independently of the others.

As shown above, the nature of Christ was the reason for the split from the rest of the church by the NCOC. However, through meeting between the NCOC and COC, they have come

---

<sup>206</sup> Erickson, Rev. John H. "Beyond Dialogue: The Quest for Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Unity Today." Svots.edu. Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 27 Oct. 2000. Web. 02 May 2015.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.,

to understand that their definitions of Christ align. Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit sanctified and purified the womb of the Virgin Mary and the nature of the divine and Only-Begotten Son merged with the nature of the man and flesh into one nature as Christ. As St. Cyril describes it, He was the “One Nature of God the Incarnate Logos.” The fully God and fully man, did not inherit the Original Sin because it was born of the sanctified Virgin’s womb. The nature of God was never separated from the nature of man.<sup>208</sup>

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only and is one essence with the Father as the third person of the Holy Trinity. He is given to the church as a gift from Christ. The Holy Spirit leads people to faith and empowers the church with love to serve other. He also blesses the church members with spiritual gifts to equip them in their ministry.

#### *Christ's Crucifixion*

Born of the Virgin Mary, Christ lived a perfect, sinless life and died on the cross for the sins of mankind.

#### *Christ's Resurrection*

To the Orthodox Church, the resurrection of Christ is the supreme declaration of faith for Christians. On the third day, Christ resurrected from the grave, defeating sin and death. The resurrection of Christ was the first glance and the beginning of what man looks forward to when Christ returns. He was the first to be resurrected into a glorified body, and it is the hope of believers that He was not the last, for the children of God will be resurrected into a glorified body just as Christ was resurrected. He ascended into Heaven to be with God the Father, continuing to manifest in His glorified body, ruling at the right hand of the Father.

#### *The Holy Bible*

---

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.,

The Word of God can only be understood through the context on which it was written and is only inerrant on matters of faith in the original language. Although inspired, the Bible does not fully hold the revelation of God.<sup>209</sup>

### *Sacred Texts*

The Bible is the only text inspired by God. The Bible consists of the 49 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. This are three more books in the Orthodox canon than in the Catholic canon.<sup>210</sup>

### *Source of Doctrine*

The Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition are equal in authority. The Tradition of the church should be used to read and interpret Scripture. The Holy Tradition has been passed from generation to generation from the time of the apostles to now and includes the seven ecumenical with specific emphasis on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, testimony of the divine liturgies, writings of the historical Greek fathers, and writings of the historical Latin fathers up until the point of the 11th century split between the East and the West.<sup>211</sup>

### *The Nature of Humanity*

The image of God that humanity was created with has been tainted by the Original Sin of the parents of all mankind, Adam and Eve. Although the Original Sin of mankind has brought death to humanity, the sin of Adam and Eve are not inherited at birth. Children remain innocent until such time as they willingly choose to sin. Sin is inevitable for all of humanity because of its morality, and all human beings have a natural inclination toward sin. A mortal body lusts and craves to be satisfied by worldly desires, and when such time as the first sin is committed by a

---

<sup>209</sup> Allen, Michael S. "An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches." *Pluralism.org. The Pluralism Project*, 15 Mar. 2005. Web. 02 May 2015.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>211</sup> "Orthodox Churches (Oriental)." *Oikoumene.org*. World Council of Churches, 2013. Web. 02 May 2015.



human, there is a barrier set up between God and the human being. This barrier is built from the sin of the human, and due to their sinfulness, they are unable to climb over the barrier.<sup>212</sup>

### *Atonement*

Through God's mercy and love for mankind, He set up a way that this barrier can be crossed. He sent his Only-Begotten Son to take humanity's place on the cross to die for its sins and builds a bridge so that humanity may cross the barrier and be in communion with God once again.<sup>213</sup> Only Christ could take up humanity's sin and atone for its sins, because He was a perfect, substitutionary, and expiatory sacrifice.

### *The Means of Salvation*

Salvation is a gradual process that extends throughout one's entire life. One will become more like Christ as they grow both physically and spiritually. Because God was able to fully share in human life, it is believed that humans can fully share in divinity. This is salvation. Through deification, one does not become a God, but the image of God that it was created in is restored and they are brought back into communion with God. Both God and man have responsibility in bringing man to salvation. God has already fulfilled His responsibility by taking the place of humanity, dying on the cross, and atoning for humanity's sins so that the barrier of sin between God and man can be crossed, but man must do his part by having faith in Christ and by practicing good works, which are a fruit of salvation. Verbal confession to a priest is necessary for salvation.<sup>214</sup>

### *The Ability to Lose Salvation*

---

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.,

One is able to lose salvation through sin without repentance. Salvation can be reclaimed through penance.<sup>215</sup>

### *Free Will/Predestination*

Human beings can only truly be free when they are in communion with God. In regards to predestination, God has elected, based on His foreknowledge, who will receive salvation and enter the Kingdom of God.<sup>216</sup>

### *Body and Soul*

The body and soul are bond together within the human. When one dies, their body is returned to the dust from which it came and the souls of the faithful go through a purification process. Unlike purgatory, this process is one of spiritual growth and not one of punishment. The souls of the faithful then reside in Heaven and the souls of the wicked rest in Hell until the resurrection of all human beings.<sup>217</sup>

### *Eschatology*

One day, Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. At this time, the dead will be resurrected and judged with the living. Those who have faith in Christ and love God in communion with Him will live eternity in Heaven with infinite joy in the presence of his majesty. However, those who denied Christ and did not live in full communion with God through the rejection of His gracious gift of salvation will be condemned to eternal punishment in Hell.<sup>218</sup>

### *Eternal Life*

---

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>216</sup> Erickson, Rev. John H. "Beyond Dialogue: The Quest for Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Unity Today." *Svots.edu. Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary*, 27 Oct. 2000. Web. 02 May 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Allen, Michael S. "An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches." *Pluralism.org*. The Pluralism Project, 15 Mar. 2005. Web. 02 May 2015.

<sup>218</sup> Erickson, Rev. John H. "Beyond Dialogue: The Quest for Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Unity Today." *Svots.edu. Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary*, 27 Oct. 2000. Web. 02 May 2015.

Purgatory is denied. The righteous will forever live in the majesty of the Lord Almighty, while the wicked will endure eternal punishment in Hell in the presence of Satan and his angels.

### *The Sacraments*

The sacraments, or mysteries, in the Orthodox Church give the believer guidance from the Holy Spirit and the remission of sins through the grace of God. The seven sacraments are: baptism, confirmation, confession (penance), the Holy Communion, matrimony, anointing of the sick, and holy orders.

Baptism by full immersion is believed to be the initiation into salvation and full communion with God. Infant baptism must be done within the first forty day of life for a male and within the first eighty days for a female. The baby is immersed in water three times during baptism. Adult baptism is done fully undressed to ensure the entire body is sanctified and there is not break within the immersion of water. The person being baptized brings the water up to their neck and the priest dips their head three times. Baptism is accompanied with liturgical prayers and the anointing of oil.

Through transubstantiation, the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist, are transformed into Christ's blood and body. This sacrament is central to the Orthodox Church and is a celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The sacrament of matrimony turns a the union of marriage into a divine union, confirmation seals the gift of the Holy Spirit, confession and repentance give the believer the remission of their sin, and holy orders units the believer with all of the church from the first century to present day.<sup>219</sup>

### *Belief on the Church*

---

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.,

Both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church believe they have not fallen away from the original doctrine and traditions of the early apostolic church and, therefore, hold that they are the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

*Belief on other Denominations*

Orthodox Christians are not currently trying to convert adherents to other denominations, and the Orthodox Church does not consider adherents of other denominations to be apart of the body of Christ because they are the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” Anyone who is apart of another church or leaves the Orthodox Church to join another Christian church is believed to have renounced the true doctrine of Christianity.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.,

## PART TWO: NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

### *Disconnect in Doctrine Calls to Question Validity of Christianity*

Regardless the matter, whether it be over issues of baptism, the observation of sacraments, the exact events of eschatology, or the means of salvation, there is much diversity found in the theological doctrine of Christianity, thereby creating a large disconnect between modern Christian churches. If all of these churches base their doctrine on the teachings of Jesus Christ, then it would seem that their beliefs should be almost similar if not identical from one another and not the way they are today with all of its different variations of the same religion. However, all of these churches are claiming to have the true faith, because they themselves would not believe it if they did not believe it to be true. One can easily see that these two statements do not add up. The Christian church cannot have different beliefs among itself while still, within their respective church, claim that each one has the true faith. So, who is right, who is wrong, and which of these churches have the true faith?

This question, paired with the undeniable disconnect among today's Christian churches, brings to question the validity of Christianity itself as the one, true religion. One cannot claim that Christianity is the true religion when the churches within Christianity cannot agree on certain doctrine themselves. The answer lies within the unity in diversity, because, although there is a variety of beliefs on the nonessential doctrines of Christian theology, all true Christian churches adhere to a core set of irrefutable dogmatic beliefs. This unity and core set of revealed, irrefutable truth was established in the creed formed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, connecting all Christian churches together. Due to the dogma found within this creed and the unity that it promotes, this thesis holds to the statement that the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* is the unifying factor within all of Christendom.

*Doctrine vs. Dogma*

Before continuing on to the history and meaning of the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*, often referred to as simply the Nicene Creed, there must be a clarification in the interpretation and distinction of the words “doctrine” and “dogma.” Unlike its original Greek meaning of “opinion” and the broader sense in which Thomas Aquinas used it, the meaning of the word *dogma* has developed more specifically to refer to an infallible teaching of the Church and a divinely revealed truth. Furthermore, theological “doctrine” is a broader term that refers to any teaching about God and is not necessarily infallible, because there are some doctrines that are infallible but there are also some that are just considered teachings of the Church, so not all doctrines are dogmas but all dogmas are doctrines. Doctrine can vary among Christian churches but all faithful hold to the dogma of Christianity.

It is the purpose of this thesis to defend the belief that all dogma stems from the infallible doctrine taught and confessed in the Nicene Creed, thereby uniting all of a seemingly disconnected modern Church. All dogmatic teachings found within the Creed are necessary for all professing Christians, and, therefore, anyone who does not confess to the beliefs within the Creed will not be considered a part of the Christian belief. The Nicene Creed is the only creed necessary to confess to, to be a part of the Christian body of believers, because all other creeds or confessions that follow the dogmatic teachings of this creed are an extension of the Nicene Creed. If a teaching contradicts the nature and theme of the confession in the Creed, than it is heresy, and those who confess this belief are apart from the Christian Church. However, if a doctrine or teaching does not contradict the nature and theme of the confession in the Creed and is not explicitly addressed in the Creed itself, than this belief will be left to interpretation by the Scripture and looked at as doctrine not necessary to be held by all professing Christians but is

certainly permitted in the diversity of the Christian faith, for there is unity in the essentials and liberty in the nonessentials.

*History and Writing of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*

The Apostles' Creed was the first recognized creed, or statement of belief, among the Christian church and is said to be the foundational summary of their beliefs and the teachings of Christ set up by the Apostles, combating all forms of Gnosticism, before they separated at Pentecost to go out and make disciples of many men. After the death of the apostles and the end of the apostolic age, different opinions on the nature of God and Christ began to arise that caused the emperor Constantine to call for an official council in order to establish their faith by preserving the universal teachings of Christianity to keep unity and peace among his people.

There first ecumenical council, in which bishops of the Church from around the Christian world met to preserve the universal teachings and combat all contrary theology, was the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The creed formed out of this council was specifically created to denounce the teachings of Arius, later known as Arianism, which stated that, "because God is infinitely perfect, Jesus, a man, could not be fully divine and, therefore, was created by God and a creature of God." The main proponent for the full divinity of Christ was Athanasius of Alexandria who refuted the claims of Arius by preserving the universal teachings of Christianity and opposing beliefs that were deemed heretical.

A debate opened over whether the original Nicene Creed was valid and whether the Holy Spirit was divine after Emperor Constantine died and his Arian-leaning son took the thrown, due to the lack of clarification in the first creed. The second ecumenical council, the First Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, was meant to completely destroy and eradicate Arianism and combat such heresies as Macedonianism and Apollinarianism, all of which called to question the nature

of Christ or the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* was formed from this council, which was an updated and revised version of the original Nicene Creed from the First Council of Nicaea, for this creed used more detailed language about the Trinity in accordance with the Scripture and fleshed out the role and divinity of the Holy Spirit and the nature, incarnation, and crucifixion of Christ. The Creed affirms the Trinity and is so fundamental in Christian belief because it holds the standard for the entire Christian Church.

*Interpretation and Meaning of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*

The Nicene Creed asserts the belief of the Trinity and clarifies that nature and divinity of both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, as well as an establishment of the Four Marks of the Church. Because the Creed is the foundational dogma that all professing Christians must confess, all traditions presented in the denominational case study will test against the dogmatic beliefs of the Nicene Creed.

**“We<sup>221</sup> believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.”**

The first article of the Creed begins by confirming the revelation given to Abraham and Moses that there is only one God, Yahweh, who is the Father and that He is an all-powerful being who created all things visible and invisible. The title Father is significant and should not be overlooked due to the normality of the title used in reference to God today, because “Father” was the title of God used and given to believers by Christ himself. This title would be unusual in that time because it brought with it a connotation of relational intimacy between God and His people showing that God is a personal being who cares about His children. Stating that the

---

<sup>221</sup> The creed is sometimes stated with an “I” instead of a “We” because it is a personal statement of one’s own belief. Both are equally valid, however, to emphasis the unity between Christian churches, this thesis uses the form that employs the communal “We.”



Father is an Almighty being confesses His infinite power and existence, and confessing Him as the Creator of all things visible and invisible further dispels the heretical beliefs of Gnosticism and Macedonianism, which believed that because God is all-good, He could not have created an evil, material world and could have only created the pure, good spiritual world.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

All among the denominational case study. (Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox).

**“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.”**

The second article in the Nicene Creed states the nature and divinity of Christ. Jesus Christ is the Lord and master of all creation being with one essence with God at creation having eternally existing and begotten of the Father. Christ is from the essence of God and has always existed, but He is not born or made by the Father, for that would make Him inferior to the Father. Confessing that Christ is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God” blatantly opposed all attempts to say that Christ is not of one divine essence with the Father. They are of the same essence and are equally divine in nature. Christ is not half or part God. He is fully God, distinct in nature but inseparable from the Father. The Father and Son are both God but distinct from each other.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist,

Pentecostal, Anglican, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons do not adhere to this dogma. Jehovah's witness believe that Christ was the archangel Michael in his pre-human form, thereby believing that God created Christ. Mormons also believe that Jesus was the literal son of God, birthed from the Heavenly Mother and Father and brother to Satan. Christ is "eternally begotten of the Father," but He is not created or made. Jehovah's witness, adhering to the teachings of Arius, state that He is inferior and subject to the Father's authority by denying the divinity of Christ while He was incarnate. However, the Creed states that the Son is "true God from true God" confessing His infinite and eternal equality and one being with the Father. It also states that through Christ all things were made, in reference to Paul's statement in the Book of Colossians. Christ was one with the Father and was the Creator of all things visible and invisible. He was not created.

**"For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:"**

This confession states the entire reason that Christ came down<sup>222</sup> from Heaven to our reality on Earth. Christ incarnation was God's gracious act to bridge the gap between God and humanity that was created by Original Sin. Human beings, being born of sin, are not able to save themselves. Only a perfect being, with no sin, could atone for the sins of all of humanity. God being the only being, came incarnate to atone for humanity's sins so that humanity might have salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

All among the denominational case study. (Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness,

---

<sup>222</sup> The language that humans have created limits their ability to clearly articulate all things. Heaven is a spiritual place and not a physical one that exists in the sky above Earth.

Mormon, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox).<sup>223</sup>

**“by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.”**

The Creed further states that Christ became man, incarnate from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, implying that through his sanctified birth, He did not inherit Original Sin. This confesses the fully humanity of Christ, now that his full divinity has been established already. God became human in Jesus. Jesus was not a spirit or ghost. He was truly God incarnate who manifested in a physical human body as an act of love to atone for humanity’s sins. It was necessary for God the Son to become fully human or else He would not be able to atone for the sins of humans. Christ was also not a man that was later adopted by God to become elevated to a higher status among humans to do His bidding. It was God the Son who carried out the will of God, His own will, and the plan for salvation. Christ was also not conceived through sexual intercourse. He was not conceived by a man, but conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Jehovah’s Witness deny the divinity of Christ before his resurrection into “a spiritually immortal being.” Mormons believe that God the Father, Elohim, came to Earth in a physical body to join in sexual union with Mary so that Jesus Christ, the literal Son of God, could be born into a human body. Anything that denies that Christ was fully God and fully man is heretical.

**“For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

---

<sup>223</sup> There are discrepancies on the exact means of salvation, whether all men were saved or just the elect, and whether Christ atoned for all sins of humanity or just the Original Sin. Despite this, they all adhere to the purpose of Christ incarnation, that being for the salvation of God’s children.

Jesus Christ, both inseparable natures of fully God and fully man, suffered on the cross to die and be buried just as humans suffer death. The addition of Pontius Pilate adds historical background and certification to the Creed.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Mormons, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Jehovah's Witness deny that Christ was fully divine before and during crucifixion, therefore they deny that the nature of God in Christ suffered death.

**“On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;”**

The Creed confesses that Jesus Christ was physically and bodily resurrected from the dead on the third day. Christ's resurrection was like Lazarus in the way that his body was physically resurrected, but unlike Lazarus in the way that Christ physically body was transformed into a glorified body. Christ bodily resurrection into a transformed, glorified body is the foundation and climax of the Christian faith.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Mormons, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Jehovah's Witness deny Christ's physical and bodily resurrection. They believe that Jesus was resurrected into a immortal spirit.

**“he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”**

Christ was taken up in the form of bodily consumption into Heaven. When it states that He sits at the right hand of the Father, it does not mean He is literally sitting down next to a throne.

This is a figure of speech to convey that God the Son shares in authority and dominion over all creation with God the Father.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

All among the denominational case study. (Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox).

**“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.”**

The Creed confesses that Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead, the righteous and the wicked, and that the Kingdom of God will last for all of eternity.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

All among the denominational case study. (Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox).<sup>224</sup>

**“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son.]<sup>225</sup>  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.”**

The Creed confesses that the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, is God. This statement attacked the view that denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit such as the Macedonians. While the Father begets the Son, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son. This states the Spirit's relationship to the Father as originating from the Father but still equally and

---

<sup>224</sup> Theories on how and when Christ will return have been given by many people throughout history, and have been stated by many of today's Christian churches. However, man will never know exactly how and when He will return. Professing Christians must only adhere to the belief that He will, in fact, return to judge the living and the dead.

<sup>225</sup> The words “and the Son” was added later by churches of the West leading up to the Great Schism in 1054 AD between the Roman Catholic West and the Eastern Orthodox East. This was known as the *Filioque Controversy* and was added by the West to emphasize Christ divinity. The East rejected the creed's revision and this disagreement remains a huge dividing factor between Eastern and Western churches.

fully divine. The Spirit is distinguished as its own entity in one essence and equal to both the Father and the Son, and therefore, the Spirit should be worshipped and glorified just as the Father and Son are worshipped and glorified. His divine truth is revealed through the true Prophets of God.

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Both Jehovah's Witness and Mormons deny the nature of the Trinity, and their views of the nature of the Holy Spirit do not align with the nature confessed in the Creed.

**“We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.”**

In a shift in theme and a divergence from the nature of the Trinity and its three persons, the Creed states the nature of the Church in the Four Marks of the Church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It may seem that since there are multiple denominations within the Christian faith, that all current churches do not follow this foundational dogma. However, after further review, it is revealed that today's churches do, in fact, follow this dogma. The Church is one because all churches are in communion with one another through the adherence to the confessions of dogma in the Nicene Creed. All church members who confess the Creed find unity in the one body of Christ. The Church is Holy not because of its members but because of Christ's holiness. In fact, the Church remained holy and sanctified throughout all of history despite any unholy actions of the members of the Church. The Church is catholic or universal because it is the fullness of the Church of Christ so for as long as it is not lacking any essential doctrine of the Christian faith. The Church is apostolic because its foundation is rooted in the teachings and beliefs of the tradition of the apostles of Jesus Christ, and because it sent into the world by the Holy Trinity to

bring the world into communion with God.<sup>226</sup>

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Jehovah's Witness and Mormons to not confess to all dogma within the Nicene Creed so therefore, they are not a part of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

**“We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.”**

Baptism by water is both a symbol of one's confession to faith in Christ and a spiritual cleansing and forgiveness of one's sins by death with Christ and a rebirth into the Kingdom of God as a child of God. If one truly holds faith in Christ alone and is baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, then only one baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins and the sanctification of one's soul for salvation. (Note to self - Need to address the second baptism or “full sanctification”, the baptism of the Holy Spirit believed by Pentecostals and possible Methodists/Wesleyans).

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

Although Jehovah's Witness and Mormons do practice baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, their view and rejection of the Trinity makes that baptisms invalid.

**“We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.”**

---

<sup>226</sup> Some churches such as the Catholic Church, Anglican Communion, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Lutheran Church believe that apostolic also means an apostolic succession of bishops from the “laying on of hands” to succeeded bishops by that of bishops before them tracing it all the way back to the apostles of Jesus and the beginning of the Church. Most Protestant Churches believe that apostolic means that the Church was preserve and recognize the teachings of the Apostolic Scriptures.

This confession in the Creed suggest both a Heaven that will be filled with souls before resurrection and the physical resurrection of the dead where one's soul and glorified body will meet again to become of one being.<sup>227</sup>

Denominations that adhere to this dogma:

Roman Catholic, Baptists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox.

#### *Results of the Creedal Test*

Participants must score a perfect score in order to be given the honorary status of "Christian."

Roman Catholic - 12/12 PASSED	Pentecostal - 12/12 PASSED
Baptist - 12/12 PASSED	Anglican - 12/12 PASSED
Lutheran - 12/12 PASSED	<b>Jehovah's Witness - 6/12 FAILED</b>
Presbyterian - 12/12 PASSED	<b>Mormons - 8/12 FAILED</b>
Methodist - 12/12 PASSED	Oriental Orthodox - 12/12 PASSED
Seventh-day Adventist - 12/12 PASSED	Eastern Orthodox - 12/12 PASSED

#### *Other Dogma Not Addressed Creed?*

*The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* holds all of the necessary dogmatic theology in Christianity in order to be a Christian. Any doctrinal belief that adheres to the theme and nature of the Nicene Creed and aligns itself with the dogmatic beliefs in the Creed are necessary.<sup>228</sup>

Any doctrinal belief that is not explicitly stated in the Creed but is also not contrary to the

<sup>227</sup> For more information on the dogmatic belief on the resurrection of the dead and the historical and theological implications that lead up to this divinely revealed truth, please refer to Zach Richards' thesis on the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>228</sup> Although some churches do not officially adhere to the Nicene Creed, such as the Baptists Church, due to their avoidance and hesitation to adhere to any formal statement of faith, they still are considered Christians because their foundational belief align itself to the dogmatic beliefs in the Creed.



dogmatic beliefs of the Creed are open to the Liberty of the individual or Church to interpret through the use of Scripture. Any doctrinal belief that is contrary to the theme and nature of the confessions of the dogmatic beliefs of the Creed, such as Nestorianism<sup>229</sup>, certain beliefs in the doctrine of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and certain beliefs in the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be deemed heretical. For this reason, the Assyrian Church of the East, which is Nestorianists, Jehovah's Witness, and Mormons will not be regarded as Christian denominations.

If there is any question on the validity of a tradition confessing themselves Christian, put this church against the creedal test. If the denominational study in this thesis left out any current denomination, this test can be used to determine their standing, and if a new denomination or tradition every forms, this test can also be used on it to determine that church's standing, and any church that does not pass every question is not Christian. This Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed Test is the final and most important test that all churches must put themselves up against to judge their standing in the Christian Church.

---

<sup>229</sup> Nestorianism, the belief that Christ was two separate persons, divine and man, completely separated, to the point that they were almost two completely distinct beings, was later opposed at the fourth ecumenical council, the Council of Chalcedon. Nestorianists would have held to the belief that while Christ the man suffered and died on the cross, Christ the divine did not experience the suffering the man nature experienced. Although completely eradicated by the fourth ecumenical council, the Nicene Creed formed at the second ecumenical council, the First Council of Constantinople, could have negated this belief. Though not explicitly stated by the words "of two natures; fully God and fully man, inseparable in one being," the theme of the nature of Christ is evident in the Nicene Creed. The phrase "eternally begotten of the Father" confesses the full divinity of Christ while the phrase "he became incarnate by the Virgin Mary and was made man" confesses the full humanity of Christ. The phrases "of one being with the Father" and "he suffered death" confess that Christ was of two natures, fully divine and fully man, inseparable in one person. Therefore, Nestorianism is heretical and anyone who adheres to this belief will not be called Christian.

## CONCLUSION

The *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* is the most important statement of belief in all of Christianity, because it both list and articulates all of the dogmatic beliefs necessary to be a Christian and unifies all seemingly disconnected Christian traditions together into one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church, the body of Christ. All men, in order to be a member of this Church in the body of Christ must confess to, believe in, and practice out the dogmatic beliefs confessed in the Nicene Creed. Anyone who does not confess this faith or confesses to a faith that is contrary to this one, will, thereby, NOT be considered a part of the Church and body of Christ.

Christians who confess to the Nicene Creed should give gratitude to all heretical and vague doctrines, for it was the disconnect and diversity among these beliefs that allowed the early church fathers to come together to establish the truths revealed to man by God and preserve the universal Christian dogma in clear and formulated statements of belief that solidify and hold the foundation of dogmatic theology for all of Christendom.

In the end, on the last days, when Christ returns in glory to resurrect the dead into transformed and glorified bodies, God will be the sole Judge. Only God can judge the living and the dead, between the righteous and the wicked, according to their faith and loyalty to Christ the Son of God. However, it is the firm and infallible belief conveyed in this thesis that the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* is the universal creed for all of Christendom.

## WORKS CITED

- Allen, Michael S. "An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches." *Pluralism.org*. The Pluralism Project, 15 Mar. 2005. Web. 02 May 2015.
- "Anglican Beliefs." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2013. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- "Anglican Communion." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- "Anglican History." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- "Articles of Religion." *The Wesleyan Church*. The Wesleyan Church, 2005. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.
- "Baptismal Covenant." *Episcopal Church*. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- "The Baptist Faith and Message." *Southern Baptist Convention*. SBC, 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.
- Barry, Dr. A. L. "What About the Differences Between the ELCA and the LCMS?" *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.
- "Being an Anglican." *Church of England*. Archbishops' Council, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- "Beliefs." *Seventh-Day Adventist Church*. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.
- Bennett, David. "The Nicene Creed: Symbol of the Catholic Faith." *Ancient and Future Catholics*. N.p., 26 Oct. 2012. Web. 03 May 2015.
- Bowman, Robert M. *Denominations Comparison*. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2003. Print.
- "A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod." *LCMS.org*. Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.
- "Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Vatican*. Roman Catholic Church, Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

*Christianity, Cults & Religions*. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2005. Print.

*Comparison Chart*. Religion Facts, 2008. Print.

"Doctrine." *Anglican Communion Website*. Anglican Consultative Council, 2015. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

"ELCA Teaching." *ELCA.org*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

Erickson, Rev. John H. "Beyond Dialogue: The Quest for Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Unity Today." *Svots.edu*. Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 27 Oct. 2000. Web. 02 May 2015.

"Fundamental Truths." *Assemblies of God*. The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2008. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

Gibson, Lois E. "UPC Articles of Faith." *Spiritual Abuse*. N.p., 1997. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

"Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and History." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

"Latter-day Saint/Mormon." *Project Interfaith*. Project Interfaith, 2011. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

"LDS Doctrine." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

"Methodism." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

"Mormonism - LDS History and Beliefs." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2014. Web. 01 May 2015.

"Orthodox Churches (Oriental)." *Oikoumene.org*. World Council of Churches, 2013. Web. 02 May 2015.

"OUR BELIEFS." *African Methodist Episcopal Church*. AMEC, 2014. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

"Our Core Values & Beliefs." *The Wesleyan Church*. The Wesleyan Church, 2013. Web. 26 Apr.

2015.

"Presbyterianism." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

Rhodes, Ron. *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2015. Print.

"Roman Catholicism." *Religion Facts*. ReligionFacts, 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

Saunders, Fr. William. "WHAT DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE?" *Eternal Word Television Network*. Eternal Word Television Network, 2004. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

"Statement of Our Faith." *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

"The Thirty-Nine Articles." *Anglicans Online*. Society of Archbishop Justus, 1997. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

Wesley, John. *The 25 Articles of Faith*. N.p.: United Methodist Church, n.d. Print.

"Westminster Confession of Faith." *Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics*. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, 2014. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

"What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?" *JW.ORG*. Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2015. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

"What Do Presbyterians Believe?" *Presbyterian Mission Agency*. Presbyterian Church (USA), 2015. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

"What We Believe." *American Baptist Churches USA*. ABC USA, 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

"What We Believe." *Church Of God In Christ*. The Church Of God In Christ, Inc., 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

"What We Believe." *Presbyterian Church in America*. Presbyterian Church in America, 2009. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.