

# Christian Denominations: Nonconformist Churches

## Learning Objectives:

All (L8-L4): will know what is meant by a Nonconformist Church

Most (L8-L5): will be able to explain some things about Nonconformist Churches

Some (L8-L6): will be able to analyse and evaluate aspects of Nonconformist Churches

## Key Words

- Reformation
- Protestant
- Salvation
- Grace
- Excommunication
- Baptist
- Methodist
- Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
- Nonconformist





## Starter:

- Look at the Key Words.
- Discuss the words with a partner and see if you know or can work out what any of them mean.
- As you work through the lesson write down each definition as it appears.



## Another history lesson



- **Martin Luther** 1483 –1546 was a German Roman Catholic priest.
- He had many arguments with the Pope over religious teaching.
- He said that people could not earn salvation by good deeds but only if they had faith in Jesus and received grace from God.
- He also said that the only source of teaching was the Bible and not the Pope or the Church.
- He was excommunicated (thrown out of the Church) in 1521.
- He is one of the most important figures in what is now known as the Protestant Reformation.



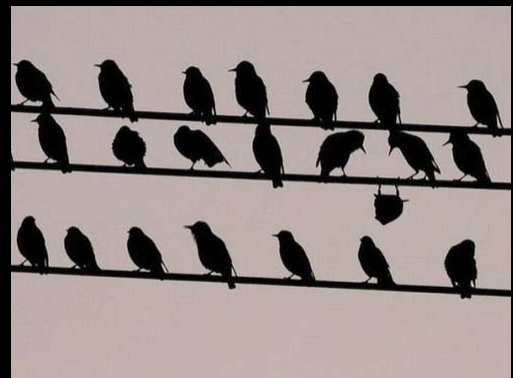
## Protestantism

- The great religious movement of the 16th century, which 'protested' about the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.
- It resulted in the establishment of the various Reformed or Protestant Churches of central and north-western Europe.
- Its leaders included:
  - Martin Luther
  - John Calvin
  - Philipp Melancthon



## Nonconformist Churches

- In the United Kingdom these are Protestant Churches who 'protested' against the teachings of the Church of England and did not 'conform' to them.
- There are many different Nonconformist Churches.



## Methodist Church

- John Wesley was the son of an Anglican clergyman and was ordained himself.
- Wesley travelled around the country on horseback preaching two or three times a day.
- He 'rode 250,000 miles, gave away 30,000 pounds, ... and preached more than 40,000 sermons'.



John Wesley 1703-1791



## Methodist Church

- He wanted to bring Christianity to the people who did not go to church.
- He had no intention of starting a separate denomination but ended up doing so.
- Methodism emphasises helping the poor and the average person.
- It aims to help a person grow.
- It also stresses the missionary work of the Christian Church.



The first Methodist Church –  
the New Room, Bristol



## Methodist Church



- John Wesley's brother, Charles was also a preacher.
- He did preach at Methodist services but remained an Anglican.
- He is best known as a hymn writer:
  - Rejoice, the Lord is King



Charles Wesley 1707-1788

## Methodist Church



- The Four 'Alls'
  - All need to be saved - the doctrine of original sin
  - All can be saved - Universal Salvation
  - All can know they are saved - Assurance
  - All can be saved completely - Christian perfection.

*Copy the second part of each 'all' into your books*



## Baptist Church

- In 1607 a lawyer, Thomas Helwys and an Anglican priest, John Smyth left England for Holland after being persecuted for wanting to purify the Church of England of all traces of Roman Catholicism.
- They had joined a group of 'Separatists' in Gainsborough in 1606. Their three core beliefs went on to shape later Baptists. They were:
  - The Bible, not church tradition or religious creed, was the guide in all matters of faith and practice
  - The church should be made up of believers only, not all people born in the local parish
  - The church should be governed by those believers, not by hierarchical figures like bishops.



## Baptist Church

- While in Holland John Smyth baptised himself by pouring water over his head and then baptised Thomas Helwys and others members of the congregation.
- In 1612 Helwys and others returned to England to establish the first Baptist Church on English soil.
- Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century Baptists were persecuted for their beliefs, being known as 'nonconformists' or 'Dissenters'.
- They refused to become members of the Church of England, saying Christ - and not the monarch - was head of the Church.
- The nineteenth century saw a period of growth for the Baptist movement. Great preachers such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon in London drew crowds in their thousands.

## Baptist Church



- In the Baptist Church everyone is equal. There is no hierarchy of bishops or priests. Baptists reject the idea that authority flows down from previous church leaders who can be traced back to the apostles in apostolic succession.
- Baptists are congregational and each church is self-governing and self-supporting. The churches encourage those attending to become church members through baptism by total immersion.
- Most Baptist churches have a baptistery, which is more or less a pool (about 4m by 3m) in the church.



## Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



- Like many Christian groups, Quakers never intended to form a new denomination.
- Their founder, George Fox, was trying to take belief and believers back to the original and pure form of Christianity.
- Fox was born in July 1624 in Leicestershire, England, and died in 1691, by which time his movement had 50,000 followers.
- Fox was puzzled by the inconsistency between what Christians said they believed and the way they behaved.
- He became a religious activist at the age of 19, and was imprisoned eight times for preaching views that annoyed the religious and political establishment.



## Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



- Quakers are active in politics and in working for justice in the world.
- This comes partly from their belief that there is something of God in every human being, and that they should respect the worth and dignity of each person, and also from trying to follow Christ's example of social activism.
- Quakers have played a part in:
  - criminal law reform
  - prison reform - particularly through the work of Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845)
  - reducing poverty
  - ending the slave trade
  - ending the opium trade
  - Women's rights
  - anti-racism
  - human rights.



## Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



- Quakers believe that war and conflict are against God's wishes and so they are dedicated to pacifism and non-violence.
- 'We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.'
- 'A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it.'





## Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



- Quaker worship is designed to allow God to teach the worshippers.
- Quakers call worship events *meetings for worship* rather than services.
- In a Quaker meeting for worship a group of people sits in a room in silence for an hour.
- From time to time someone may speak briefly, but sometimes the entire hour may go by without a word being spoken.
- Quaker meetings for worship are open to everyone and children are particularly welcome.



## Task



- Complete the table showing what you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of these three Nonconformist Churches.
- Now give your opinion.



## Plenary

- In your books write down three important things which you have learnt in this lesson.

