

DENOMINATIONS: Reformed

Religion: the belief in a god
(_____)

Denomination: a religious grouping where congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices
(_____)

Synod: Greek for “walking together.” Congregations voluntarily choose to belong to a synod, which is a group of congregations that are in agreement with each other.
(_____)

Basic History of Christian Denominations:

1054: “Great Schism” (Split of Orthodox and Rome)

1530: Protestant Reformation

- Lutheranism
- Calvinism
- Anglicanism
- Anabaptism

The Lutheran Vantage Point

In this study we examine denominations from a Lutheran point of view. But we always attempt to describe their systems of teaching fairly.

When the beliefs of these non-Lutheran systems disagree with Scripture, we shall point out why such teachings cannot be considered acceptable.

On the other hand, we shall note with pleasure those teachings that emphasize beliefs also found in the Lutheran Confessions, those teachings often make applications to Christian life, etc., from which Lutherans can gladly learn.

Questions:

1. Compare the Bible verses below. What differences can you see between the two columns?

Exodus 20:1-6	Psalm 103:8
2 Chronicles 20:6	Joel 2:12-13
Psalm 103:19	Ephesians 2:4-5
1 Timothy 6:15-16	1 John 4:16

2. In what way do these Bible verses speak about the meaning of Christ’s death (John 3:16-17; John 6:51; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 2:2)? _____
3. What do these verses say about predestination (Romans 8:29-30 & Ephesians 1:5, 11)? _____

HISTORY OF THE REFORMED CHURCH



ZWINGLI

Martin Luther (1483-1546) sought to correct the abuses in the Church of Rome by means of clear and simple teaching from the Word of God. Luther's contemporaries, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and John Calvin (1509-1564) had different desires. They sought a complete break from Rome. Later, the teachings of John Knox (1505-1572) established Reformed theology in Scotland.

“Reformed” is an umbrella term for the church bodies that separated from the Church of _____ during the Reformation in the 16th century, but were not _____.

The Reformed family of churches organized in the Swiss Reformation, especially in Zurich, under the city's chief pastor Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and Geneva, where John Calvin (1509-1564) served as a pastor and teacher.

Like Luther, Zwingli was ordained in the Roman Church. In 1519, he began to preach ideas on reform in the Roman Church. He began to make controversy in 1522 as he attacked Lenten _____, wrote on church corruption, promoted clerical _____, and spoke against the use of _____ in places of worship. Like Luther, Zwingli introduced a new common liturgy to replace the Roman Mass. Zwingli also created Zurich into a _____. In 1529, Zwingli came to Luther's attention and the two wished to meet to unite their Reformations. They met at the Marburg Colloquy and agreed on many points of doctrine, but the two Reformations could not unite, since the two came to an impasse on the doctrine of the _____ Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The impasse was on the word “is” in the Words of Institution (Table on Page 3).

CALVIN

John Calvin was born in _____, but his break from Rome forced him to move to Switzerland, where he could live free from persecution. While in Switzerland, Calvin wrote his influential *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. He also established a government in Geneva that he believed was based on the example of the _____ Testament. Under Calvin's leadership, governmental power was placed in the hands of four classes of men: pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons. These men had the authority to oversee moral behavior and to inflict harsh punishment on those who indulged in such fleshly pleasures as dancing and playing games. Opponents of Calvin were tortured and executed, and he eventually enjoyed unopposed leadership of Geneva during the final decade of his life.

KNOX

Scottish Presbyterians trace their historical roots to the work and teachings of John Knox (1505-1572), who became a leader in establishing Calvinism in _____ after he was driven from England during the reign of Queen _____, a staunch Roman Catholic. From Scotland, Presbyterianism eventually spread back into England, and then beyond England to the British colonies in America.

The term “Presbyterian” has to do with the form of governance in which a small group leads the entire church body, as happened in Geneva under Calvin’s rule. Presbyterian literally means a congregation led by elders in Greek.

Martin Luther (Real Presence)	Ulrich Zwingli (Memorial Meal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Sacrament has not been invented nor introduced by any man. Without anyone’s counsel and deliberation it has been instituted by Christ. ▪ The Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine, which we Christians are commanded by Christ’s word to eat and to drink. Just as Baptism is not simple water, so here also we say that through the Sacrament is bread and wine, it is not mere bread and wine, such as are ordinarily served at the table. But this bread and wine included in, and connected with, God’s Word. ▪ Whoever believes the words has what they declare and bring. For they are not spoken or proclaimed to stone and wood, but to those who hear them, to whom He says, “Take eat,” and so on. Because He offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received except by faith. This faith He Himself demands in the Word when He says, “Given ... and shed for you,” as if He said, “For this reason I give it, and ask you to eat and drink it, that you may claim it as yours and enjoy it.” Whoever now accepts these words and believes that what they declare is true has forgiveness. ▪ I testify on my part that I regard Zwingli as un-Christian, with all his teaching, for he holds and teaches no part of the Christian faith rightly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A sacrament is a sign of a holy thing. When I say: the sacrament of the Lord’s body, I am simply referring to that bread which is a symbol of the body of Christ who was put to death for our sakes. The papists all know perfectly well that the word sacrament means a sign and nothing more, for this is the sense in which it has always been used by Christian doctors. ▪ If [Jesus] is present literally and essentially in the flesh, then in the flesh He is torn apart by the teeth and perceptibly masticated. ▪ If we take the word “is” literally, then necessarily the substance of bread has to be changed completely into that of flesh. That means that the bread is no longer there. ▪ For if the “is” is to be taken literally, then we must eat the body of Christ with its flesh, bones, veins, nerves, marrow and other members which I will forbear to mention: for God cannot lie.

From the Lutheran Confessions:

The Affirmative Teachings:

We believe, teach, and confess that in the Holy Supper the Body and Blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, truly distributed and received with the bread and wine. – Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Affirmative Theses 1.

The Contrary, Condemned Teachings:

When it is taught that words of Christ’s testament ought not to be understood or believed simply as they sound, but that they are an obscure expression, the meaning of which must be sought in other passages. – Epitome, Negative Theses 4.

The Contrary, Condemned Teachings:

That the bread and wine in the Holy Supper are only representations, similes, and symbols of the far-distant Body and Blood of Christ. – Epitome, Negative Theses 7.

Calvin's TULIP

Total depravity of man: we do nothing good, not even respond to God's call.

Unconditional election: God saves people by His mercy alone.

Limited Atonement: Jesus died for some, but not for all.

Irresistible grace: if you are chosen for salvation, there is no way you can avoid it.

Perseverance of the saints: once you are saved, you are always saved.

Reformed: Major American Church Bodies

Historic Reformed (Calvinism/Presbyterian)

SOURCE OF DOCTRINE: Scripture serves as the source for doctrine. Presbyterians observe the Westminster Confession as a statement of their beliefs. The writings of Zwingli, Calvin and Knox influence the teachings of the Reformed.

ROLE OF CHRIST/WAY OF SALVATION: Justification comes by grace through faith. Salvation is seen as God's generous gift to the believer, not the result of anything the individual has done. However, in the Calvinist viewpoint, this gift comes on its own, without a means of grace (i.e., Word and Sacrament). This leaves the believer to decide if the promise of God's grace is really for him or her. Presbyterians teach "once saved, always saved."

SACRAMENTS: Since Baptism and Holy Communion are not seen as means of grace, these Sacraments take on a merely symbolic role in the Presbyterian Church. This comes from the theology of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), who denied the actual presence.

The Last Day – On the Last Day Christ will come visibly to judge the world. The Reformed, like Lutherans, believe Christ could come at any moment and do not take the thousand-year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation 20 literally, but symbolizes the reign of Christ from His first appearing to His reappearing at the end of time (amillennialism). To all who believe in Him, He will give the eternal life and glory that He has gained as the Redeemer. They will forever behold Him in His glory and praise Him. But for those who do not acknowledge Christ as their savior, Jesus will pronounce the doom of everlasting punishment.

COMPARING THE CHURCH BODIES:



Presbyterian Church – USA (PC-USA):

Source of Doctrine: The Bible is sacred Scripture and is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible contains all we need to understand regarding how God has been present with humanity since the beginning of time and continues to be present today.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: Justification comes by grace through faith. Salvation is seen as God's generous gift to the believer, not the result of anything the individual has done. PC-USA teaches "once saved, always saved."

Sacraments/Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is only symbolic of Christ's body and blood.

Other: The PC-USA ordains women and has approved gay marriage. PC-USA is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELCA.



Presbyterian Church in America (PCA):

Source of Doctrine: The Holy Bible. The Westminster Confession of Faith is the PCA's primary doctrinal standard.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: Justification comes by grace through faith. Salvation is seen as God's generous gift to the believer, not the result of anything the individual has done. The PCA teaches "once saved, always saved."

Sacraments/Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is only symbolic of Christ's body and blood.

Other: The PCA ordains only men and follows Biblical teachings on social issues, such as homosexuality and abortion.



United Church of Christ (UCC):

HISTORY: The United Church of Christ (UCC) was formed by mergers of the Congregationalist Church, the Christian Church (General Convention of the Christian Church), the Reformed Church in the U.S., and the Evangelical Synod of North America. The Congregationalists and the Christian Church merged in 1931. The Reformed Church in the U.S. and the Evangelical Synod joined in 1934 to form the

Evangelical and Reformed Church. The resulting two groups united with each other in 1957. None of these mergers were based on confessional unity. All of the bodies were characterized by a growing indifference about questions of doctrine.

The old Congregational churches were at one time strongly Calvinistic in doctrine. Their church was formed in the 17th century by the Puritans, who had wanted to purify the Church of England, and who came to America to found the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and the Separatists, who left the Church of England and were the Pilgrims of the Plymouth Colony. They all adopted the church structure of Congregationalism, in the form that stressed the independence of each congregation. This structure gradually led to problems. As long as the Calvinist creeds were important to these congregations, they took them seriously, but there was no written commitment to common confessional standards and no requirement of a confessional bond between congregations.

In time, the theology degenerated into rationalism and liberalism. The UCC could not prevent this, because each congregation was free to adopt any theology desired by it and its pastor, including using characteristics of the Trinity instead of identifying the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify" – UCC Statement of Faith

Today, the UCC has no definite doctrinal position. In 1959, the UCC adopted a Statement of Faith, which is deliberately so vague in its formulations that it will hardly offend anyone, Trinitarian, Unitarian, Lutheran or Calvinist. The statement does not mention the return of Christ. This is deliberate, because many in the UCC are not convinced that He will return. They think the Kingdom will be ushered in by the Christians' actions of love.



The UCC is the most theologically liberal of all major church bodies. The UCC includes theologians who freely question everything stated in the Bible, including whether Jesus Christ is God.

Source of Doctrine: The United Church of Christ builds its doctrine on the Word of God, the creeds of the ecumenical councils, and the confessions of the Reformation. The UCC acknowledges the historic creeds and confessions of the Church as testimonies but not tests of the faith. The UCC teaches that unity and fellowship do not depend on perfect doctrinal agreement but rather on the simple choice to maintain unity.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: The role of the believer is often placed above Christ's role. The UCC is open to other ways to salvation.

Sacraments/Ordinances: The UCC practices infant baptism and believer’s baptism, both normally done by sprinkling. Water is viewed as a symbol of washing, and washing represents renewal. Baptism symbolizes the believer being adopted into a new life that is hid with Christ. The Lord’s Supper is open to all baptized Christians. The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus.

Other: The UCC grew out of the Calvinist and Lutheran traditions, much like the Prussian Union Church in Germany that combined the doctrines of the Calvinist and Lutheran churches. The UCC is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELCA.

Prussian Union:

On September 27, 1817, King Frederick William III announced the union of the Lutherans and Calvinists into one evangelical Christian church. He appealed for this union to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Reformation. Most German Lutherans objected on the basis of doctrine, including the interpretation of the Lord’s Supper. Out of this controversy, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod was formed.



Reformed Church in America (RCA):

[Originally: Dutch Reformed Church]

Source of Doctrine: The Holy Bible. The RCA accepts the creeds and the four “standards of unity” of the Reformed Church: The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, The Canons of Dort, and The Confession of Belhar.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: Justification comes by grace through faith. Salvation is seen as God’s generous gift to the believer, not the result of anything the individual has done. PCUSA teaches “once saved, always saved.”

Sacraments/Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is only symbolic of Christ’s body and blood.

Other: The RCA ordains women to pastoral ministry and has follows the Biblical definition of marriage, however there are growing numbers in the RCA who wish to allow for gay marriage. The RCA’s position is “welcoming but not affirming.” The RCA is active in the social justice movement. The RCA is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELCA.

Questions:

1. In what way do the following verses cast a question on the teaching of the perseverance of the saints?
 - a. Luke 8:13
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:1-2
 - c. 2 Peter 2:20-21
2. What dangerous temptations can be created by the teaching of the perseverance of the saints?

Synod	Presbyterian Church (USA) (PC-USA)	United Church of Christ (UCC)	Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)	Reformed Church in America (RCA)	Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC)	Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)
Membership	1,775,917 (2015)	914,871 (2015)	370,332 (2015)	246,024 (2012)	237,830 (2015)	150,000 (2016)
Scripture	Contains the Word of God	Contains the Word of God	Inerrant Word of God	Contains the Word of God	Inerrant Word of God	Inerrant Word of God
Creeds & Confessions	Flexible	Flexible	Norm of Scripture	Flexible	Norm of Scripture	Norm of Scripture
Lord’s Supper	Open to all	Open to all	Closed	Open to all	Closed	Closed
Life Issues	Pro-Choice	Pro-Choice	Pro-Life	Pro-Life*	Pro-Life	Pro-Life
LGBTQIA+	Accepts	Accepts	Sin	Sin	Sin	Sin

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- Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press)