**Non conformists – Top Ten Religious Movements**

1. **Congregationalism**

Congregationalism emerged in Britain in the late 16th century following the Reformation. Congregationalists believe that it is the right and duty of each congregation to make its own decisions about its affairs - which was the cause for their separation from the Anglican Church. By the 19th century, Congregationalists were one of the largest non conformist groups in existence.

1. **Methodism**

Methodism is a movement of Christianity that began in the 18th century, founded by [John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley) Wesley who, along with his brother, soughts reform by way of a *‘return to the gospel’* through encouraging people to experience Jesus Christ personally. John travelled the country giving open-air sermons and visiting poor neighbourhoods and appointing un-ordained preachers to evangelise and care for all people in Christian societies. Methodists have been great advocates of women’s rights and were the first to allow ordination of women with full rights of clergy.

1. **Presbyterianism**

Presbyterianism was founded by John Knox in Scotland in 1557, with modern Presbyterianism tracing its institutional roots back to the [Scottish Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Reformation) in 1560. Presbyterian belief and practice centres on the Bible and the sovereignty of God. In Presbyterian churches, governing authority is given to elected lay leaders known as *‘elders’* or *‘presbyters’*, who work with the congregation's ordained minister. In the 20th century, some Presbyterian churches entered into unions with other churches, such as [Congregationalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_church), [Lutherans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutherans), [Anglicans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglicans) and [Methodists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodists).

1. **Lutheranism**

Lutherans take their name from 16th century German Augustinian monk and theologian Martin Luther. He believed that the church was ignoring or contradicting important teachings of Christ, and had become indulgent and corrupt as an institution. Luther also believed that [salvation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation) came not from good work or monetary contributions to the church, but was a free gift of God received only by [grace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_grace#Grace_in_the_Protestant_Reformation) through [faith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith_in_Christianity#Lutheranism) in [Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism#Christ). Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation, and as a result the Lutheran Church was one of the first churches to grow out of the Reformation movement and separate from the established Anglican Church.

1. **Quakerism**

The roots of the Quaker movement, also known as the ‘Religious Society of Friends’, lie in the mid-17th century. The founder of Quakerism, [George Fox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Fox), became convinced that it was possible to have a direct experience of Jesus Christ without the mediation of clergy. He set about spreading this message and found several pre-existing groups of like-minded people, eventually becoming accepted as their leader. Throughout history Quakers have actively campaigned against the [transatlantic slave trade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transatlantic_slave_trade) and for the rights of women, prisoners and homosexuals. According to George Fox, they "called us Quakers because we bid them tremble at the word of God".[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. **Baptists**

The roots of the Baptist movement date back to the 16th century and the post-Reformation period. Baptists believe that the Bible, not church tradition, is the guide in all matters of faith and practice. They also believe that the church should be made up of and governed by *‘believers’,* not by hierarchical figures such as bishops. They refuse to conform to the Church of England, saying Christ, and not the monarch, is head of the Church.

1. **Unitarianism**

Unitarianism was first defined and developed within the [Protestant Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation), with the first Unitarian congregation forming in 1774. Unitarians believe in one God and the unity of God, in contrast to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Unitarians also argue that each congregation should manage itself without outside control and refuse to accept Anglican practice though their churches, which caused them to separate from the established church in the 18th century. Five American presidents were Unitarians, as were [Florence Nightingale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Nightingale), [Charles Dickens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Dickens) and [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge).

1. **Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is an international Christian evangelical movement that was founded in 1865 as the *‘East London Christian Mission’* by William and Catherine Booth. The Salvation Army's stated mission is to perform evangelical, social and charitable work and bring the Christian message to those who are 'unwelcome' in polite Christian society, including the poor, destitute and hungry.

1. **Evangelicalism**

Evangelicalism began in Great Britain in the 1730s. The movement is characterised by an emphasis on having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which begins when a person receives Christ's forgiveness and is spiritually reborn. Evangelicalism requires people to look at new ways of interpreting and applying God's word to that of the established Anglican church. Today, Evangelicalism is one of the most widespread religions in the United States.

1. **Puritanism**

The Puritans were a group of Protestants who arose in the 16th century within the Church of England, demanding the simplification of doctrine and worship, and greater strictness in religious discipline. Puritans opposed the supremacy of the monarch in the Church and argued that the only head of the Church in heaven or earth was Christ, leading to their separation from the established church. English revolutionary Oliver Cromwell was a devout Puritan.

1. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/486026/Quaker [↑](#footnote-ref-1)