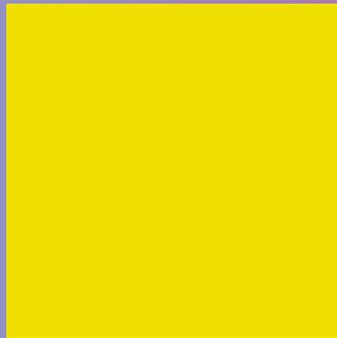


5



PROTESTANTISM

PROTESTANTISM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Protestantism is the second-largest Christian tradition, with a total of 800 million to 1 billion adherents. It is however not a uniform tradition and consists of many different subdivisions in movements, organizations, and churches. Protestantism started out as a movement wanting to reform the Western Church in the 16th century. The movement eventually led to a split in the Church. Protestantism differs from other traditions in its emphasis on salvation by faith alone and the bible as the only authority for teaching and life. Within Protestant theology, these emphases have led to a focus on the individual's relationship with God.

Protestantism holds that the church is always critically examining itself in the light of God's word and always needs to seek the language and form that meets the demands of the times. This has led to the continued emergence of new movements and Churches that each have their own focus. Calvinism and Lutheranism quickly developed into prominent branches of European Protestantism. In the early years of the United States, many Protestant believers, especially persecuted minorities, settled in these new areas. In the United States and abroad, renewal movements such as the Great Awakening led to the emergence of the evangelical movement. This movement, which places great emphasis on a personal and enthusiastic faith, rapidly spread across the world. The Pentecostal movement, with a lot of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, emerged from that movement. Protestantism also led to the development of global missionary and evangelistic movements in the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g., the Lausanne Movement). The ecumenical movement, which seeks visible unity among all Christian traditions, also developed in the 20th century, especially under the impetus of Protestantism.

5.2 FOCUS

In this lesson, we decided to give space to diversity within Protestant churches and traditions in addition to the main similarities.

The following themes are discussed in this lesson:

- The role woman in the church
- The meaning of the bible
- The meaning of Jesus
- Pentecostalism



Figure 5.1
Statue of Martin Luther
Source: © Pxhere

5.3 CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

5.3.1 STRUCTURE This lesson consists of an introductory video, in which some aspects of Protestantism are discussed. Thereafter a number of exercises follow. The first exercise contains questions aimed at helping students better understand the content of the video. These questions are followed by several in-depth exercises aimed at making the students think more deeply about what it means to be a Protestant and also let them reflect on what all these lessons tell about themselves. The second exercise examines what it means to be a Protestant in practice. The third exercise allows students to further reflect on what Protestants believe by discussing the five Solas. The fourth exercise focuses on the discussion about the role of men and women in the church. The fifth and final assignment is about the Pentecostal movement.

5.3.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC The introductory questions at the beginning of the lesson can be addressed in class. In addition, several images could be shown of the diversity within Protestantism. Another option is to create a mind map together with the students.

5.3.3 WATCHING THE VIDEO The class watches the brief video of Hannah's description of Protestant Christianity and are asked to answer the questions of exercise 1.

5.3.4 EXERCISES **Exercise 1: Understanding the letter**

1. Hannah was talking about prayer. Which statement is consistent with what she said?
 - a. Protestants only pray at fixed times of the day.
 - b. Prayer is a way for Protestants to communicate with God.
 - c. Prayer plays a minor role in the Protestant church service.
 - d. Protestants only pray together with others.

The correct answer is b. The other answers are intended to highlight the contrast with other worldviews. Although there are traditions of prayer at fixed times, this is not the general standard and primary practice within the Protestant tradition.

2. Select everything important in a Protestant church service

- a. Penance
- b. Eating together
- c. Icons
- d. Rituals
- e. Music and singing
- f. The Bible
- g. Prayer
- h. Being together
- i. Dancing
- j. j. Kneel down
- k. Meditation
- l. Sitting still

The correct answers are music and song, the Bible, prayer, being together. All answers, except eating together and icons, can partly be found within modern Protestant churches.

3. For each statement, indicate whether it is true or false:

- a. Protestants usually believe that the Bible is the word of God. - TRUE
- b. Protestants believe there are three Gods. - NOT TRUE
- c. All Protestants believe that a pastor should always have a degree. - NOT TRUE
- d. The Sunday church service plays an important role in Protestantism. - TRUE
- e. Personal faith is important to Protestants. - TRUE
- f. In Pentecostalism, they believe that the Holy Spirit is irrelevant today. - NOT TRUE

4. What are two forms of baptism and what is the difference?

_____ Baptism and the _____ baptism

The correct answer is infant and believers' baptism. The difference between the two forms is the latter focuses on personal faith commitment as a prerequisite to baptism. Consequently, there is typically also a difference in the age when baptism takes place.

There is also a difference in the exact meaning, but this is not discussed in the video.

5. In her story, Hannah talks about herself, her parents, sister, brother, classmate, uncle and aunt. All of them are Protestants, but they don't always agree in their beliefs. Fill the correct person for each descriptions of a person.

Correct answers:

Believes that Jesus is an example and that the Bible serves as a source of inspiration.	Sister
Attends a church where choosing to follow Jesus marks an important moment through baptism.	Classmate
Likes more modern music in the church and finds churches that differ in form and style from his own church very interesting.	Hannah
Attend a church where experiencing the holy spirit is important.	Uncle/Aunt
Finds it important to practice his faith together with others and has not so much with the individual focus of many churches.	Brother
The Bible is the word of God for them and they use it to make life decisions.	Parents

Exercise 2: Faith in Practice

For many Protestants, the concept of personal faith is very important. If you look at the story, what does this personal faith look like in the life of a Protestant?

The following aspects should be considered:

- Communicating with God
- Following Jesus
- Reading and studying the Bible
- Attending church
- Being baptized
- Participating in the lord's supper
- Praying daily
- Singing

What does faith or searching for meaning in life look like for you?

This question is asked to let students reflect on their own faith practices.



Figure 5.2
Source: © Pxhere

Exercise 3: Doctrine of the Faith

The five solas of the Reformation are five principles that describe what Protestants in the 16th century considered important, formulated in Latin. Although these principles were central during the birth of Protestantism, there has been much discussion about them in the past 2 centuries. Protestants differ in their valuing of the different principles today.

<i>Sola Scriptura</i> Only through Scripture	Protestants have traditionally believed that one can only know God with certainty through the Bible. The Bible is therefore considered the Word of God.
<i>Sola Gratia</i> Only by grace	Important to Protestants is the belief that not the works of men but only God's grace can save someone. Grace is getting something that one doesn't deserve.
<i>Sola Fide</i> Only by faith	This principle implies that people become justified in God's eyes only by faith in Jesus. This principle is in line with the Sola Gratia because it emphasizes that righteousness is not due to human actions.
<i>Solus Christus</i> Only Christ	This principle means that only Jesus plays the crucial role in salvation and can bridge the distance between humans and God. For Protestants this also means that Jesus can be worshipped as he is the Son of God.
<i>Soli Deo Gloria</i> Glory to God alone	This means that everything people do should be for the glory of God and not for their own honor.

What do you notice about the five principles? What do these principles reveal about Protestants?

The following observations can be made:

- These principles clearly show the central place Jesus takes.
- The emphasis on the absence of a role for humans in their own salvation.
- The reverence for God that is shown.
- The important role the bible has.
- The emphasis of faith as the central to salvation.

These principles reflect what is important to many Protestants. What principles would you set for yourself as important for your life and/or faith? Why do you think this is important?

The purpose of this exercise is that the students reflect on what they consider important in their life. This can be based on a religion, moral principles or on what drives their motivation and purposes. The students are encouraged to discover that formulating central principals can show what a person really values.



Figure 5.3
Engraving of John Wesley preaching to native American Indians
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Exercise 4: Contemporary developments - gender

The Bible speaks of men and women in a number of places. These Bible texts are not only about the relationship between men and women, but also about the role of women in the church. This is a topic discussed in many different Protestant churches. The Bible text below often plays an important role in the discussion.

Ephesians 5:21-33:(NIV)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Read the following 2 quotes about the role of women:

“Men and women, though equal in essence, were designed for different roles. Women are in no sense intellectually or spiritually inferior to men, but they were quite clearly created for a distinctive purpose. In the economy of church and family, the Bible says women should be subordinate to the authority of men. Yet scripture also recognizes that in a completely different sense, women are exalted above men - because they are the living and breathing manifestation of the glory of a race made in God’s image.” ~ John F. MacArthur Jr.¹

“If a woman is held back, minimized, pushed down, or downplayed, she is not walking in the fullness God intended for her as his image bearer, as his ezer warrior. If we minimize our gifts, hush our voice, and stay small in a misguided attempt to fit a weak and culturally conditioned standard of femininity, we cannot give our brothers the partner they require in God’s mission for the world.” ~ Sarah Bessey²

MarcArthur and Bessey represent two different camps within Protestantism. The first, John MacArthur, believes that men and women have different but complementary roles in the world. The second Sarah Bessey believes that men and women are equal in the roles they are allowed to fulfill.

Compare the quotes with the Bible text. What questions do you have about this Bible text? Do you think these questions are easy to answer?

Sample answer: In the first quote, it is the uniqueness of the woman and the added value it has to the world. The second quote calls on women to show their full potential.

The discussion about gender roles is very sensitive, and often focuses on discussions of how the Bible should be interpreted. For some protestants this discussion impedes on the principle of Sola Scriptura. The discussion can lead to frustrations, anger and even churches that split. Are there discussions you have in life that conflict with your principles of Exercise 3? How do you deal with them?

This exercise is focused on letting students reflect on their own conflicts. The goal is to make students understand some of the underlying conflicts in a person that often fuel discussions within religions.

¹John MacArthur, Twelve Extraordinary Women: How God Shaped Women of the Bible and What He Wants to Do with You (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books, 2005), 8.

²J Sarah Bessey, Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible’s View of Women, First Howard Books trade paperback edition. (New York: Howard Books, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc, 2013), 80.

Exercise 5: Contemporary developments - Pentecostal movement

Pentecostalism is a fast-growing movement within Protestantism. This movement has experienced strong growth, especially in South America and Africa. Pentecostalism can be described as a movement of energy and strength. The working of the Holy Spirit is central. This means that supernatural experiences are often emphasized by Pentecostals. Consider, for example, divine healing and prophesying. Pentecostalism gives much value to the experience of people. Living with the Holy Spirit then means personally and physically experiencing the Holy Spirit.

An important concept to talk about is *supernatural*. It refers to everything that does not fit into our common perception of the laws of nature. This is a very important concept in the Pentecostal movement. Below is a black and white photo of people praying for divine healing for a woman in a wheelchair. Not all Protestants necessarily believe in God working in supernatural ways. Some may believe that the miracles in the Bible were supernatural, but do not believe that supernatural events occur in our time.



Figure 5.4
Laying on of Hand in the
Church of God in Lejunior
Kentucky on 9 May 1946
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#)

A frequently described supernatural experience is prophecy. Prophecy means passing on a message from God that says something special about the world, the direction of the church, or people's lives. In Pentecostalism, this is a common practice, but in Protestantism as a whole, there is a great deal of disagreement on this subject. Many Protestants do believe that God can speak to a person's heart, but they do not believe in prophetic messages supposedly given to some people.

**Why does the concept of prophecy lead to discussion within Protestantism?
Use the principle of Sola Scriptura from Exercise 3 in your answer.**

This is a tricky question for students to answer. The correct answer is that there is a tension between receiving personal insights and having the Bible as the supreme source of authority. If you give authority to a prophecy, the authority of the Bible is affected and with it the basis of Protestantism.

What is your view on the concept supernatural?

The purpose of this question is to let the students reflect on their stances on a central topic within Pentecostalism, namely the supernatural.



Figure 5.5
The Apostolic Faith
Mission on Azusa
Street, considered to
be the birthplace of
Pentecostalism
Source: Wikimedia
Commons

5.4 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

5.4.1 EXERCISE: THE BIBLE

The Bible consists of the New and Old Testament. For Protestants, only 66 books are part of the canon. For many Protestants these 66 books are inspired. This means that God has led authors in what to write down when they wrote these books. Protestants have a deep respect for the contents of the Bible, yet many believers do not hesitate to ask questions about the Bible.

How would you describe the role that the Bible plays in Protestantism?

The correct answer is that the Bible plays a central role in the authority for faith issues. Furthermore, the bible has been given a more central place above traditions and church authority in most protestant churches.

How do you deal with the holy book in your religion? / What sources do you use that tell you something about how to live?

The purpose of these two questions is to help students reflect on the role of a sacred book in their own lives.

5.4.2 EXERCISE: THE MODERN CHURCH

The students are instructed to watch clips of 4 different types of church services on YouTube. These are, for example a Reformed, a Lutheran, a Pentecostal or Charismatic and Mennonite church service. The students are instructed to look at the differences and the similarities between the different church services.

Examples of churches are:

- Reformed: Reformed Congregation, Église Réformée de France,
- Lutheran: *Svenska kyrkan*, *Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia*, *Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands*
- Pentecostal / Charismatic: *Hillsong Europe*, *Kościół Zielonoświątkowy w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, *Ελευθέρα Αποστολική Εκκλησία Πεντηκοστής*
- Mennonite: *Konferenz der Mennoniten der Schweiz*, *Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France*, *General Mennonite Society*

5.5 GLOSSARY

Bible

The Bible is the sacred book of Christians. It is composed of two parts: the Old and the New Testament. The Bible is actually a collection of various types of books, such as poetry, narratives, visions, and numerous other genres. To Protestants, the Bible is made up of 66 books.

Baptism

Baptism is a ritual that symbolizes the purification of a person and his/her admission into the church. In some churches, a baptism involves sprinkling water on the head, usually of a baby. In other churches, an (older) person is completely immersed in water.

Church

Church is a term that is used in several ways. It can be used to refer to a community of believers that are engaged in activities with one another. In addition, the term church can be used to describe the community of all believers in the world. Finally, the buildings that are built specifically for Christians to gather on Sundays are also called a church.

Pastor

A pastor is a person who leads a Protestant church community. In some denominations, this person must undergo training before they are allowed to do so.

Faith

Faith is a strongly held belief and trust in a thing or person. In Protestantism and Christianity in general faith is put in Jesus and God.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons in the Trinity. Pentecost celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church.

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a sacred act that Christians perform in all traditions perform. It consists of eating bread and drinking wine. By consuming bread and wine believers remember that Jesus died to save humanity. According to the Bible, Jesus himself instructed his followers to perform this act regularly.

New Testament

The New Testament are the 27 books of the Bible written after the life of Jesus.

Old Testament

In the Protestant Bible, the Old Testament contains 39 books which were all written before the time of Jesus.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a movement within Protestantism that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit through people.

Salvation

The word 'salvation' means that someone is saved from harm. In Protestantism the term is used to indicate that a solution has been provided so that people can bridge the distance between mankind and God.

Sermon

A sermon is a speech by a pastor on a Bible text with the aim of teaching people about Christian faith and life.

Sola's

The Solas are a set of principles that make clear what Protestants in the 16th century, and often still today, consider important in their religious life

Trinity

The Trinity is a central doctrine within Christianity. This teaching states that there is one God who consists of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

5.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Hello, I am Hannah, and I come from a Protestant family. I want to tell you about what that means for me. Protestantism arose about 500 years ago because people did not agree with the course of the 'Western' church. An important moment was when Martin Luther drew up a list of 95 points of the practices of the church of that time which he believed were not in line with the Bible.

Let me tell you more about my life as a Protestant. When I wake up, I often try to do a quick prayer. My father has always made it clear that prayer is important because it is a way to communicate with God.

Faith is especially important to us. We Protestants emphasize that God asks us to put our faith in Jesus, rather than try to live perfect lives. For most protestants, this faith is more than just saying you believe that Jesus has once walked on earth. It means that you trust him as someone who loves you and wants the best for you, also today. We call this personal faith. Such faith should also be visible in what someone does in their life.

Oh, maybe I should have started with telling something about Jesus. Just as in other Christian traditions, Jesus is at the center of Protestantism. In the Bible we read that Jesus walked on this earth, was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Traditionally, Protestants believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he did all this to save humankind. My sister, however, thinks Jesus is important, but she sees him only as an exemplar whose life shows how we can live together lovingly.

What we believe about Jesus comes from what we find in the Bible, which is a holy book to us. For this reason, we read a section of the Bible at dinner every day. My parents also go to church for a Bible study every week. There, they reflect on the Bible together with others. When they encounter a problem in life, they often seek for guidance in the Bible, because

they believe the Bible is the word of God. My sister disagrees with this. According to her, the Bible is just a book of humans, but it may serve as a valuable source of inspiration for life.

Every Sunday we go to church, where we sing songs, listen to a sermon, and pray together. My brother no longer attends church with us. He thinks that in traditional protestant churches, people are too much focused on themselves and on their salvation. He says he can experience what we do in church at home also by watching a church service. According to him, he can live out his faith better by being focused on others. He does a lot of volunteer work, such as helping a family of refugees who recently moved to our village.

The sermon is an important and big part of the church service for us. A lot of time is allocated to the sermon in my church, but I know of other churches where sermons are much shorter. The sermon is always about a Bible text that is applied to the Christian life. We call the person who leads the church the pastor or preacher. Our pastor is a nice man, who had to study for 6 years before he was allowed to lead our church. I also went to the church of a classmate a couple of times. In her church people are allowed to speak who have not studied but believe that God commissioned them to speak in churches.

The pastors in our church are always men. Women are not allowed to become a pastor and therefore cannot lead a church service. My father says this is what the Bible teaches us. In our church, there was a discussion about this three years ago and it was decided not to change anything about it. My sister was one of those who disagreed. She therefore went to another church. According to her, it is not at all in the Bible that women should never preach. She also thinks that this belief is outdated.

Another important part of the church service is singing together, which gives us a means to worship

and praise God. In our church, this is done under the guidance of an organ. My mother likes this very much. I find it a bit old-fashioned myself. What I like better is the band with guitar, drums, and keyboard in a classmate's church.

Another element in our services we consider important is the Lord's Supper. In some churches, this is even more important than the sermon. In my church, we celebrate this once a month during a church service. The Lord's Supper involves remembering what Jesus did for us and consists of eating bread and drinking wine. The bread represents the body of Jesus and the wine the blood of Jesus. Jesus himself said that his followers should do this regularly to remember him. By consuming bread and wine, we remember that Jesus died to save us.

During a vacation in South America with my uncle and aunt, we visited a church that was nothing like ours. There was a lot more singing and a lot of dancing. They also spoke in a strange language. My uncle called it "speaking in tongues." They also prayed for people while laying hands on them. My uncle told me this is a Pentecostal church. He said that Pentecostals consider it important to listen to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power of God who works through people. Protestants believe with other Christians that there is one God, but he exists of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I don't understand this well, but it is called 'the Trinity.'

A ritual that is important to us is baptism. This ritual symbolizes the purification of a person and the admission into the community of God. In our church we administer what is called infant baptism, in which water is sprinkled over a baby's forehead. In my classmate's church, on the other hand, they believe that a person should not be baptized until they make a conscious decision themselves to be baptized. This is called believer's baptism and happens later in life and the person is fully immersed in water. Both forms are usually done while proclaiming

the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Faith in God, central in Protestantism, is not just saying you believe but also showing it in rituals and in living as a follower of Jesus. This means that we must act loving and caring for each other and the world as Jesus did.

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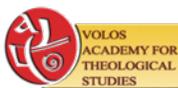


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