

Origin Of Some Religious Names

by Bill Crews

The name **"Baptist"** is derived from the ordinance of baptism (John *"the Baptist"* is called that in the Scriptures because he was sent by God to baptize Jewish people; John *"the immerser"* would be a better translation; John was not "a Baptist"). The name **"Methodist"** is from the word "method" and was given them by others because of their "methodical" way of conducting their religious services; they accepted it. The name **"Nazarene"** comes from the name of the city Nazareth; Jesus was called *"a Nazarene"* because He came from that city (Matt. 2:23); the people who call themselves "Nazarenes" did not come from that city; their church was founded in 1908 at Pilot Point, Texas. The name **"Pentecostal"** came from the name of an annual Jewish feast of harvest or first-fruits (it was called in Greek *"Pentecost"*) commanded of Jews in the law of Moses; they wish to place emphasis upon the pouring out of the Holy Spirit by Jesus as He had promised in Acts 1:4-5; thinking that they have had the same experience as the apostles on that day of Pentecost, they choose to call themselves "Pentecostals." The name **"Lutheran"** was derived directly from the last name of the Catholic reformer, Martin Luther; they consider themselves his followers and wear his name in spite of his asking them not to. The name **"Episcopalian"** comes from a Greek word which is used to describe that church's form of church government; it broke from the Anglican Church (or the Church of England). The name **"Presbyterian,"** like the name "Episcopalian," also comes from a Greek word and is used to emphasize their form of church government (in the New Testament church the spiritual shepherds in charge of a local congregation are also called "PRESBUTEROI," elders, and "EPISKOPOI," overseers). The name **"Catholic"** is from a Latin word meaning "universal"; the Roman Catholic Church and other "Catholic" churches all claim to be the original, universal, apostolic church that Jesus built in the first century. The name **"Adventist"** is used by some to place special emphasis upon the second advent (or second coming) of Christ, which they teach is always imminent (about to occur). The name **"Universalist"** was used to emphasize their teaching that salvation is universal (they believe all men will finally be saved). The name **"Mormon"** came from a mythical prophet and angel (the Bible does not teach that dead saints become angels) invented by Joseph Smith in his so-called latter-day revelation which was named *"The Book of Mormon."* The name **"Congregationalist"** came from the word *"congregation"* (another way of translating the Greek word EKKLESIA, which is usually translated *"church"*), and used by those who wear it to emphasize their belief in the independence of each congregation. The name **"Unitarian"** arose from the desire to emphasize their belief in the doctrine that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all one being, one "unit." (After the Congregationalists and the Unitarians united, they soon rejected everything supernatural about the Bible and religion.) The name **"Mennonite"** came from the name of a man, Menno Simons, and is freely accepted by those who followed after his teachings. The name **"Jehovah's Witness"** came from a misapplication of Isaiah 43:10, 12 (where God said to His ancient people Israel, *"ye are my witnesses"*) on the part of "Judge" Rutherford to the followers of Charles Taze Russell. The name **"Moravian"** came from a geographical province in Europe where these people originated. The name **"Amish"** came from the name of a man, Jacob Ammann, who separated the people who now wear his name from the Mennonites. And the list could go on, but suffice it to say, that human religious creeds and human names for those who profess to be God's people, individually and collectively, have only served to divide and to thwart the wonderful prayer of our Savior for unity of those who believe on Him through the word given the world by His apostles.

Said Jesus in that prayer, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (Jn. 17:20-21). And the implication is that if those who profess to be believers in Christ are divided, the world will be influenced to believe that Jesus was **not** sent by the Father, which is exactly what has happened. To these words from the prayer of our Lord, may I add the commandment of the apostle Paul to the divided Christians at Corinth? "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

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