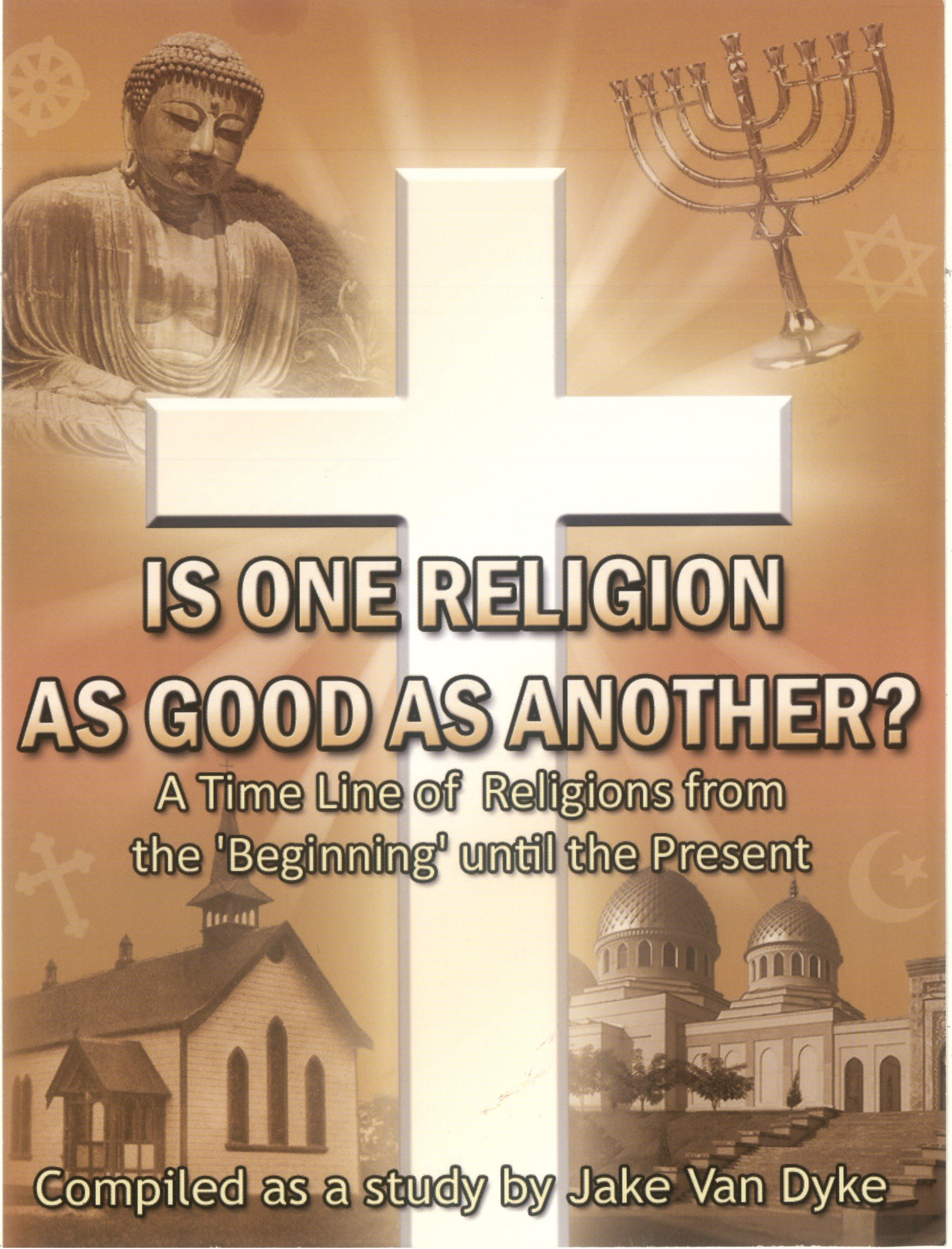

IS ONE RELIGION AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

A Time Line of Religions from the 'Beginning' until the Present

Compiled as a study by Jake Van Dyke

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FORWARD

While paging through a magazine published by one of our well known universities, I began to read 'Mailbag'. In the 'Mailbag' was a letter written by a Professor of Social Ethics Emeritus of this universities' School of Religion. I will quote from this letter while keeping its author anonymous. Who he is does not matter. What he said does need to be reviewed because there are so many in the world that think and teach as he does. He does not directly invite comment, but does say that those of Jewish, Christian, or Muslim 'traditions' "expose and denounce" the "moral dangers of theocracy", "where misguided fanatics pursue Holy War" through "savage tactics".

There are other significant comments which stimulate thought. The ideas presented in this letter will be repeated here, and a personal com mentary will be added in reply.

1. ***"Awareness of religious diversity is doubtless a good thing, especially if it is supplemented by a scholarly study of religion in the university curriculum."***
   Comment: Awareness of religious diversity is a good thing if the origins of this diversity are made known. This is not normally the course or direction of these "scholarly studies".

2. ***"College is just the place to learn how to avoid supernatural nonsense while coming to appreciate the mythopoeic (pertaining to the making of myths) profundity (profound or deep matters) of religion."***
   Comment: Religion is based on things 'supernatural' but there has been an accumulation of supernatural nonsense added to religions over the course of the existence of mankind. There are also many religions based on myths and stories distorted from the original source of religion. There is a natural desire of man to create his own religions that fill his needs. There is therefore, a need to go beyond these sources in a 'scholarly' way to learn what religion is and should be.

3. ***"Knowledge of how a so-called sacred text like the Bible or the Koran is created can provide an antidote to unintelligent notions of "the Word of God", and knowledge of how ecclesiastical doctrines and institutions have developed can prevent a too-submissive reverence for priestly elites."***
   Comment: There are some very good books available as a study of how we got the Bible, and how various books survived the ages and how some books were not selected as part of 'sacred text'. The Bible speaks for itself in stating that all scriptures are God breathed, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness. A study of the Muslim Religion will reveal that the Koran is a collection of passages revealed to Mohammed during the years 610 to 632 AD. It is good to have knowledge of the development of doctrines and institutions to prevent a submissive reverence for any man who takes on the role of a leader in any religion.

4. ***"In addition to awareness and knowledge, students must also cultivate the powers of discernment that will enable them to evaluate faith traditions in terms of whether they support or endanger human well-being."***
   Comment: This is an excellent statement, and a valuable asset for any person, to cultivate powers of discernment, and evaluate faith based traditions, especially where human life may be endangered because of religion. Powers of discernment and religion can also be used to determine 'moral issues' and the effect on human well being; issues such as abortion, homosexuality, faithfulness in marriage, concern for the disadvantaged, financial responsibility, war, and the focus on wealth and ownership, caring for the creation, and matters of social justice.

5. ***"Above all, they must come to recognize Enlightenment principles of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience as one of the greatest achievements of European civilization.***
   Comment: Religious tolerance is important to peace among men, but should never be expected to the point where people of religious faith lower their defenses so that others who are intolerant can easily conquer, murder, or harass them, as has happened so often in history. Enlightenment as in the Reformation in the sixteenth century and then again in the Restoration Movement of the nineteenth century were very important in providing the direction of progress toward peace in religion.

6. ***"This will lead to a lively comprehension of the evils of theocratic fundamentalism as a pernicious brand of religion that differ from other forms of religious faith in it's insistence that what it calls the will of God should be imposed on everyone, everywhere. Impassioned believers who see themselves as 'defenders of God' are a menace, for they mistakenly think that God's honor will be stained unless all humankind is forced to conform to their notion of His law."***
   Comment: There has been a real misuse of religion in the Christian era. The Bible records God directing His people and other nations and Kings to war with one other for the purpose of preserving the line of the 'seed of the woman' who was to be the Savior. This was no longer necessary after the savior arrived. But history shows many times when religions in the name of God did try to impose their will on others by their use of force or political coercion. Examples easily recognized are the Crusades and the Inquisitions by the Catholic Religion, Jihad or Holy Wars and battles of the Muslims begun by Mohammed, and subjugation of entire nations by Communists.

7. ***"A university religious program has an obligation to insure that all of its participants realize one cardinal truth: All believers are worthy of respect, but not every kind of belief is."***
   Comment: This is true: it is not the purpose of a university to teach religion, but only to teach about religion. It is the responsibility of the church to teach religion. It is also true that not every religion has earned a place of respect and some should be feared as potential dangers to other religions. It will be the purpose of this book to sort out origins, the history, and the purpose of religions.

8. ***"The moral dangers of theocracy must be exposed and denounced, hopefully by those of the same tradition - Jewish, Christian, or Muslim - where misguided fanatics pursue Holy War objective through savage tactics."***
   Comment: There are those in every religion who, even with the best intentions, will hurt others. Some cases are

obvious as when killing the body occurs. Some cases are not so obvious but can be even more deadly, when the spirit, when the soul is wounded and people are driven away from God, and there are eternal consequences and eternal separation from God.

9. ***"Religious belief is an option for those who derive comfort* or *inspiration from it. But it is merely a possibility* or *a hope, not something we can know for* sure."**
   Comment: Religion, or even the lack of religion, is based on faith; everyone has a belief system of one kind or another. An atheist has the faith that there is no God. Those who believe the Bible as the Word of God are told that "Faith comes by hearing the Word of God" and their faith is based on that, and they derive comfort and inspiration from it. An atheist has no basis for morality, no knowledge of where he came from, why he exists and no motive for kindness to others. There is no basis for spiritual values or hope beyond the grave. No hope of heaven, and no fear of hell.

10. ***"Philosophical and political pluralism, on the other hand, are part of a moral worldview whose benefits we know and need, and religious liberty trumps* mere *belief. It is the responsibility of higher education* to *protect and promote pluralism, and - no* matter *how subtly* or *politely* to *oppose any manifestation of religion that imperils it."***
    Comment: Philosophical and political pluralism has benefits we need, but religious pluralism, on the other hand, has been the major source of the world's problems. There is only one God, who created the world. He has never appreciated those who worshipped in ways which He had not directed. There is the 'supernatural' and it is directed by a force in opposition to God. sometimes called Satan, or the devil, a fallen angel. God has given man His commandments to follow in the course of time, and when those are understood, no pluralism will result. We will proceed with a timeline of God's dealings with man through the ages, to understand where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going; and we will look at the various origins of man made religions as well in the pages to follow.

There are many questions which we need to answer in life. Does God exist? Who or what made the world we live in? How did it get here? How did I get here? What is life? What is my place in it? What choices should I make? How did this earth come to be arranged in such perfect order? Is there life after death? What is true, what is not? These are just some of the questions which we can investigate in a journey through the ages. The answers to these questions are addressed by many people in various ways in the religions that have been established. Our main question we are addressing is ***"Is* one *religion* as *good* as *another?"*** Which religions can answer the important questions of life?

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EVOLUTION

Religion is any system of faith or worship. **EVOLUTION** is a faith in a theory of the gradual development or ascent of higher forms of life from simpler forms or lower types. This is the complex process by which living organisms are believed to have originated on earth and have changed in form and function to the various types of fauna and flora, and new types of organisms.

The notion that populations of organisms can be transformed over generations into populations of different kinds has been suggested repeatedly since early recorded history of ideas. It was taught in ancient Greek philosophy, (400 BC) but no scientific processes were attempted until the 18th century. From that point on more detailed knowledge of living organisms and fossils attracted students. Jean Baptiste de Lamarck, early in the 19th century argued that the patterns of resemblance found in various creatures showed a common lineage. For example, Lions, Tigers, and other cats may have had a common ancestor.

Charles Darwin in his famous book "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" in 1859 noted differences between offspring and parents were not due solely to environment but were inheritable. He noted natural selection, both man made, as in farm animals, and when environmental conditions change were able to change the characteristics of the animal toward more desirable qualities. Survival of a sufficient number of individuals would lead to an eventual adaptation of the population as a whole, or would lead to extinction. Thus, according to Darwin's theory, evolution proceeds by the natural selection of well adapted individuals of many generations.

Later, Gregor Mendel discovered Genetics and that an inherited gene performs in a statistical and predictable fashion. The discovery of mutations which would occur randomly caused 'natural selection', that is, evolution directed by adaptive fitness, later to be reduced to a minor role by mutationalists.

Many began to accept evolution theory as fact, while the theories concerning the process of evolution continue to be debated and refined. The theory of evolution is itself evolving!

There are some major unanswered questions and obvious omissions in the theory. Among the most commonly known is the absence of a complete fossil record or explanations of rapid or abrupt change in the fossil record. Another obvious omission is 'the missing links' or individuals that show a gradual change from one type of species to another.

Before Charles Darwin, most people in the west including a great majority of scientists accepted creationism in some form. Charles Darwin expressed faith in his Bible in the closing days of his life. Lady Hope, Northfield, England was a woman who often attended to him at his bedside before he died. She entered his room and found him reading from the book of Hebrews. She made some allusion to the strong opinions expressed by many on the history of the Creation, and then their treatment of the earlier chapters of the book of Genesis. He seemed distressed, his fingers twitched nervously, and a look of agony came over his face as he said, "I was a young man with unformed ideas. I threw out queries. suggestions, wondering all the time about everything. To my astonishment the ideas took like wildfire. People made a religion of them."

(This account found in "Voices from the Edge of Eternity" by John Myers published by Barbour & Co. Uhrichsville, OH. 44683)

Another, more compelling aspect of the Theory of Evolution is the theory that life arose by spontaneous generation. Atheists are compelled to this theory, in spite of the fact that it can not be demonstrated. The origin of life becomes a very important issue in the study of faith based theories or religions.

How did life arise from non-living chemicals? This is fundamental, yet unproven issue. How did genes originate? Where did DNA organize itself in such intricate patterns? How did the nervous system plan and execute its development? Explain the formation of an eye, an ear, taste, and the various other organs, the limbs, bones, kidneys, hair, skin, teeth, perspiration, touch, coordination of all these things, and brains. How is there design without a designer? Is it reasonable to assume the chaos gave rise to such sophisticated order? Is the Theory of Evolution accepted because we do not want to believe that there is a Creator, since then we would have to submit ourselves to His laws and expectations for us?

All of the proposed examples of evolution fall far short of demonstrating the theory. Discovery over time tends to point in the direction of creation and demonstrates the impossibility of Evolution.

If evolution were a fact and man came thru the process of development from lower forms,

Why: Didn't we keep the feathers of the peacock rather then being naked, or keep the sensitivity of a Snow bird whose feathers rapidly fall out to adjust to a change in temperature?

Why: Did we lose the sense of hearing that a robin has?

Why: Not keep the eyesight of an eagle, instead of wearing glasses? **Why** don't we see in the dark?

Why: Didn't we maintain a sense of smell like a dog or a bear that can smell food a mile away?

Why: Did we give up the built in compass that many species of birds use to migrate, or find home?

Why: Not keep a gizzard that can handle dirt and stones or the stomach of a pig who can eat garbage with no ill effects? Dogs, possums, and vultures can eat dead things gone putrid, **why** would this not be an advantage in the survival of the fittest?

Why: Can't we carry 40 times our weight like an ant?

Why: Can't we swim under water anymore?

Why: Didn't we keep the jet propulsion of the squid, instead of riding donkeys or inventing automobiles?

Why: Don't we run like a gazelle, or climb like a squirrel or a monkey?

Or **why** would there be a need for male and female in reproduction, and how could this come about?

Why would we choose to leave so many beneficial features to our ancestors, and do without them now, when we could still use these in our survival?

There are some age old questions which the process of Evolution can not answer, because evolution did not happen. Those features and designs need a creator to choose what features we needed to please Him, and designed our brains, functional organs, blood and nervous systems, limbs, heart and lungs, and other details we have not even discovered yet. The very recent discovery of DNA is beginning to explain how the design of living things had been programmed. But how did we program ourselves? Why is there no memory of how we did it?

How did we determine that the temperature of our bodies had to be above 96 degrees Fahrenheit or we would go into hypothermia, and less than 106 degrees or our brains would malfunction?

There are some areas in which the proponents of evolution claim to be scientific. True science can be demonstrated, evolution cannot. It is faith based, and has become a Godless religion.

If evolution is true, where did life come from, and how did it originate? How did the earth come to be the delicate environmental necessary for the maintenance of life? Why didn't all forms of life develop into greater forms? Why do we still have simple forms of life? How did brains become so complex, without a designer? Where is the evidence that there has been a transition from one kind of species to another? The fossil evidence indicates that all life did not have a common ancestor!

Scientific research demands that the results of its investigations be verifiable though repeated testing. Advances in such sciences as medicine, space, and computers are verifiable evident in our increased life span, our pin point landing on the moon, and development of communcations on the internet.

Researchers in the field of evolution have produced some discoveries of what has already existed, but have not been able to verify the theories or the origins of the very things the theory is about. Some had even admitted ignoring real facts and altering the theory to fit selected data. In spite of these unscientific tactics, the Theory of Evolution continues to be presented in schools and textbooks at all educational levels. Encyclopedias also write about evolution as fact. There are no established scientific facts which contradict the Biblical record of creation.

Secular education is based on the premise of Humanism, that there is no God, or if there is, He is irrelevant. The processes of nature are currently at work and are sufficient to account for all diversity of living things that exist today. In some places, it is illegal to attempt to teach anything but evolution.

The belief in the Theory of Evolution is the foundation of many problems in the past century. Humanism denies God and elevates man as the highest form of life in the universe. How can we be sure what other forms of life exist in the universe? Our planet is only a small part of the universe. Evolution teaches that man is just another animal. If man is an animal without a higher power, then he will act as an animal. Evolution then, supports 'barnyard' morality, and

this is what our children are being taught today! Evolution does not foster peace in the world but produces selfish, me first, and everybody owes me, types of individuals. Wars and quarrels, lust, and murder are the results of a Godless society, and none is better off and most destroy what they had by this form of conduct. Religion answering to a higher power result in hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, and social benefit organizations, and seek peace. Mass murder has been common in Communist, godless countries for the benefit of those in power.

In the United States of America it has been established in the Constitution that the government is not to establish any religion, yet it has established the Theory of Evolution as fact and will not allow other faith based teachings such as Intelligent Design. Schools and newspaper editors claim that Evolution is science, and has withstood the test of time and research. It is junk science because its origins cannot be proved, and it is a faith of its own. Those who mention other faith based teachings such as Intelligent Design are ridiculed and ignored. Editorials are preaching that Evolution is an empirically undeniable scientific concept crucial to an understanding of how life on this Earth today got to be what it is, and must be taught to our children. The word 'empirical' means "depending on experience or observation alone, without using science or theory, or derived from or guided by experience or experiment." (American College Dictionary) While some experiments are a part of the Evolution Theory, it is still based on empirical observation, not facts. Information "pulled out of the air" and taught as fact, does not make it fact. All the teachers and schools, even scientists that have come to believe it cannot make it fact. Everything cannot be determined by science. You cannot by science prove the absence of divine design, and you cannot by science prove divine design. Many scientific theories are far from proven. Because a theory is embraced does not make it in-arguably proven. Scientific theories of the moment are subject to change as more evidence becomes available, or they are not scientific at all. Science can tell us how things work and are constituted but cannot tell us their origin.

The Theory of Evolution has had a negative effect on modern behavior. Human behavior has never been what it should have been, but since the teaching of Darwin that man is a product of the environment and is not responsible for individual actions but rather is living out inherited traits, law is no longer relevant. Experiment in killing conducted by Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb and Adolf Hitler were influenced by the concepts of evolution. Evolution has been accepted by the Communists and served as the basis for their concept of change by revolution and anti-religious attitudes. Karl Marx claimed, "Darwin's book is very important and serves as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history." Two atheists, Stalin and Mao, following the theory of Marxism have killed more people than many, many religious leaders combined.

If man does not have to answer to a higher power or a supernatural being, or a God, he has nothing to base morality on, and has no reason to care about anything but his own individual survival. We would not to able to build a society but would be as barbarians, each individual for himself, and could build nothing.

If life came from non-life, where did those objects come from? If there were chemicals to start from, what source do they have? They could not have changed from something that was not in some form of energy source. All things have energy in them, either kinetic or as potential energy. Energy exists in various forms including mechanical. thermal. chemical. Electrical, radiant, atomic, and possibly others we have not discovered yet. All forms of energy are inter-convertible by appropriate processes. In the process of transformation either kinetic or potential energy may be gained or lost but the sum total of the two remains the same. Energy can change its

form but not its quantity. Something had to be there for something to evolve from it. Where did that energy come from?

The problem of the Theory of Evolution is always the unanswered question of "where did that come from?" The Bible has some answers of where things have come from. In **Hebrews 1:10-13,** *"and you, Lord in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; and they will grow like* a *garment; like* a *clock You will fold them up, and they will be changed."* NKJv

The Bible says there was something there. It says that it will grow old. Another law of physics states that the universe has a tendency toward decay. The rate of decay is variable, but nothing since the fall of man is being created, rather things are deteriorating. If you place a car in the yard and leave it alone, soon it won't run, tires go flat, and paint is gone giving way to rust... Does it every fix itself?

It is interesting that all the ancient civilizations claimed a god, later some suggested evolution, but only recently has this theory become popular. (Early 1800s)

Is the Theory of Evolution as old as the writings of the Bible? The eternality of matter was written of on the Babylonian Creation Epic "Enuma Elish" 1000 years before Genesis was written.

The Bible says God created everything "after its kind". Living things enormously diverse in form, but form is remarkably constant within any given line of descent; pigs remain pigs and oak trees remain oak trees generation after generation. Breeding by man to select certain features and breeds can only be done within the rules of genetics. A highly bred dog, if left to nature, cross breeding with other breeds will revert to the original 'mutt' in three generations. A Fantail Pigeon crossed with a highly bred Homing Pigeon will do the same, reverting to a 'Rock Dove' or common pigeon.

Do mutations result in new life forms? No, mutations result in weaker forms, not a greater or developing form. The problems won't go away, even 150 years after Darwin.

Creation also requires that something be in place to create something else, and that all things existed in some form, some kind of energy source, and some kind of intelligence. God says that He is that source in the earliest writings and traditions known to man. The oldest sources of knowledge and the existence of man go back to a source of power who called Himself "I AM" indicating He always was. There is the answer evolution does not have. The Bible is one of the oldest sources of information about life on this planet and in the universe around us. What does it say and is it reliable?

Can something invisible become visible? God says He is invisible, but that He has 'born' for Himself an image. That image can be seen by something that has a mechanism capable of seeing. What about blind things, or things without eyes; because they cannot see, does that mean that nothing exists that can be seen? Because we cannot see something or even understand it does not mean it is not real or does not exist. The universe does not rotate around us and could exist without us. It did exist without us before we were born, or before our species was created. We can read history books and determine that it did.

Let's look at the scriptures, these old writings, and see what we can learn about this source

of all things! Can we really know all about Him? **1 Corinthians 2: 6-16,** *"However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those that love Him." "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of man except the spirit of man that is in him? Even* so *no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now* we *have received, not the Spirit of this world, but the Spirit who is of God, that* we *might know the things that have been freely given to us by God."*

"These things we *also speak, not in words which mans wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" but* we *have the mind of Christ."*

God is 'incomprehensible'. **Romans 11: 33** & **34,** "O *the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?"*

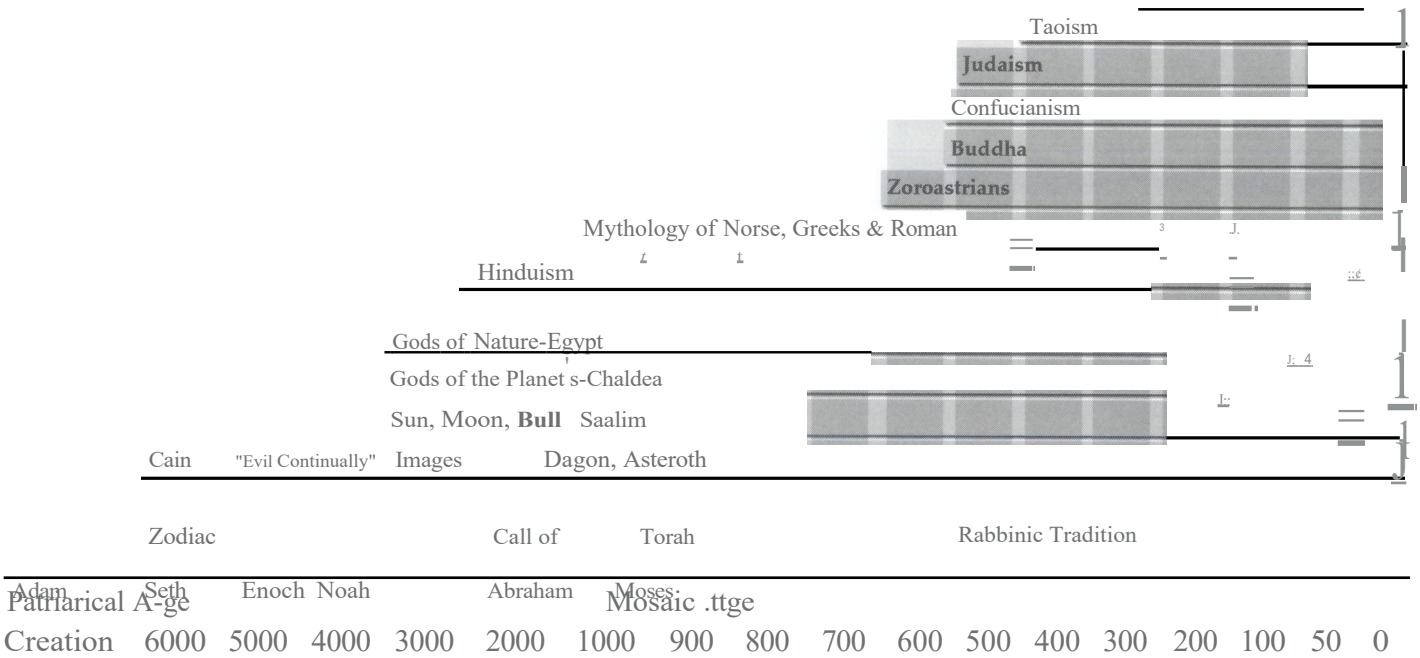
Why has the Theory of Evolution been believed for so long in spite of the major problems relating to the origin of things?. And if it is believed, doesn't this qualify it as a religion, rather than a science? Science does not have to be believed, it can be proved and demonstrated repeatedly. There are mechanisms in the body which do not develop in partial steps. System for the eye, for blood clotting, or for bacterial and molecular machinery within cells do not function until the entire device is operational. Until the device is complete there is nothing there to be selected by the 'natural selection processes'.

Obsession with evolution has blinded us from the obvious of being created in the image of God. A spiritual warfare with man a morally free agent began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were able to choose between good and evil. In the Book of Job we read of God and Satan, a rebel angel, in a contest for the conduct and spirit of Job. Even Jesus, the Son of God was confronted by choice as Satan tempted Him, as recorded in **Luke 4: 1-13.** The Apostle Paul warns us of the struggle with the forces of good and evil in **Romans 7: 15 and 8:10.** We may not want to be free moral agents, but we have a choice to make any way, a choice of good and evil, and what religion to believe.

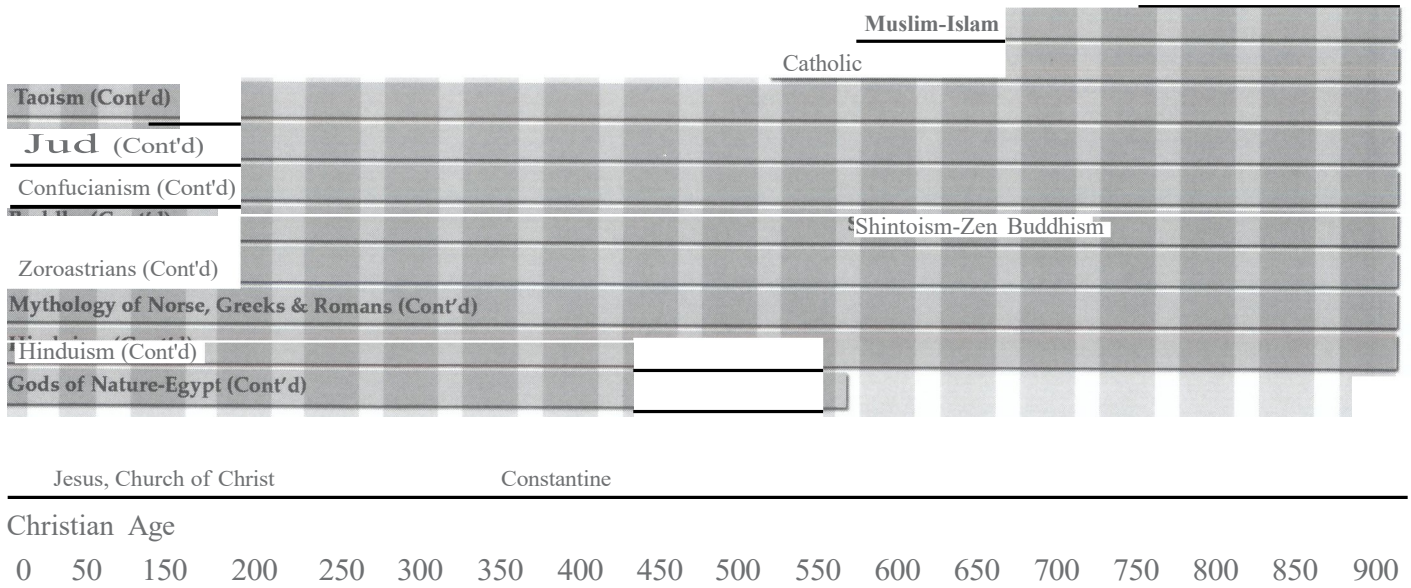
If the Theory of Evolution is believed there is no need for a further study of religion, for if there is no God or creator, then we will not need to know why He created us or what He desires of us. If there is doubt that evolution is true, or there is a possibility of a creator, it would be well to follow His dealings with man-kind from the beginning until today. We will also have to at how man-kind has dealt with God, and other things supernatural, to determine the path of truth and error in religion. We will do this using a timeline showing religions and their origins.

RELIGION TIMELINES A

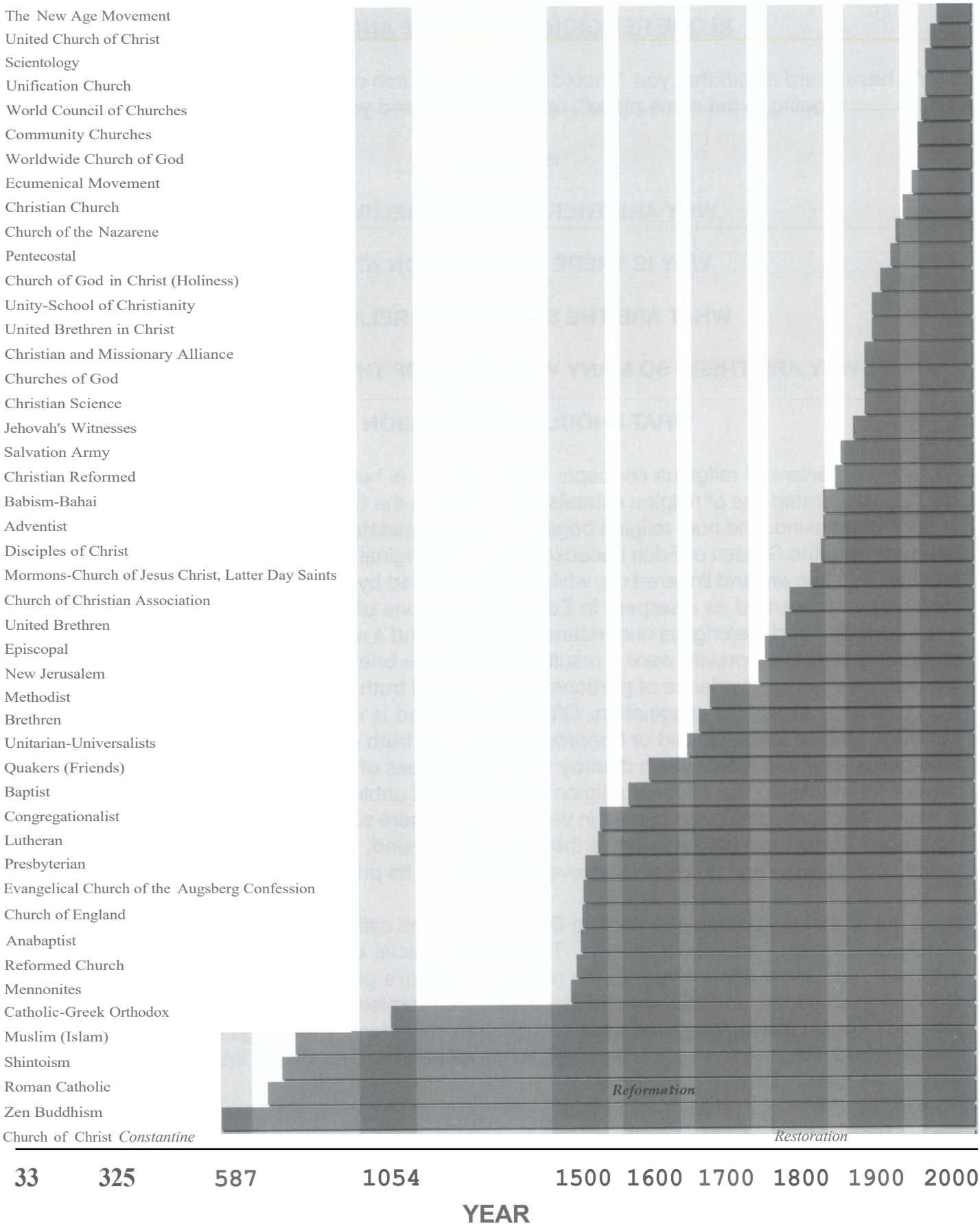
Year BC



Year AD



Religion Timelines B



INTRODUCTION

IS ONE RELIGION AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

We have heard it said that you "should attend the church of your choice", or, 'we are all going to the same place", or, "if you live good you will be alright.

Is this true?

WHY ARE THERE VARIOUS RELIGIONS?

WHY IS THERE ANY RELIGION AT ALL?

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF RELIGIONS?

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY VARIATIONS OF THE SAME RELIGION?

WHAT SHOULD OUR RELIGION BE?

So be aware of religious concepts and practices is helpful to finding the true and un-adulterated line of religion established by God in the Garden of Eden with the creation of mankind. The pure religion began to be contaminated soon after Adam's family was removed from the Garden of Eden because of sin. The original knowledge of God and what He required was known, and lingered on, while being distorted by human ideas influenced by that third party represented as a serpent in Eden. The religions of the world resulted from departures from God and the original understanding of God, and a reverence for God. Various levels of morality to total depravity were a result of this. As we briefly trace the various religions of the world we will see evidence of portions of the original truth of God incorporated along with the distortions of human imagination. Often a major god is considered as the highest God, but other gods are worshipped or honored as well. The truth of God has been spoiled by human philosophy and ideas which destroy the original ideas of the sovereignty of God and His desires for mankind. The origin of religion was pure and unblemished and gradually changed in many directions, becoming tainted in various ways where sometimes the original is not recognizable, Some have taught that it is the other way around, that religion was begun by man out of corrupt living and gradually improved and refined its principles.

From the end of the deluge (the flood in **Genesis 8** to the call of Abraham in **Genesis 11)** the history deals with humanity in general. There are no racial distinctions but after the call of Abraham the history deals only with the race of Abraham's people. The Bible deals only with God's chosen people and with the Christ. (Christ, the promised savior) The Gentiles are never referred to again unless they have been brought into some kind of dealings with God's earthly people, Israel, until the seed of the women, Jesus, established His church into which all people were welcomed.

We are familiar with the call of Abraham but why was that call necessary? What happened that led up to that call? What made it imperative? To find out, and to begin to understand why there are different religions we need to go back to some beginnings.

In **Genesis 1 and 2** is the explanation of how the heavens and the earth were created, and how God created man and woman. God gave Adam specific instructions of what he could and what he could not do. **Genesis 2: 16-17,** *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat there of you shall surely die."*

But there is a third party involved; it isn't just man and God.

In **Genesis chapter 3** the serpent is introduced, convinces woman and man to do the thing God said not to do, and now they are subject to the penalty. (You shall not eat of it; neither shall you touch it, lest you die) Now from **Genesis 3: 14-15** to the birth of the Savior is the record of a great conflict, God on the one hand, working slowly but surely to bring the promised seed into the world, and the serpent, (Satan) on the other hand, striving by all means at his disposal to prevent God from doing it. **Genesis 3:13-15,** *"And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, your are cursed above the cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: and I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed: it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*

The fall of man, which implied ***the death of man*** - represented Satan's first effort to frustrate the Divine purpose. Adam did not die. God intervened by providing a substitute, a sacrifice of an animal, and the man continued to live. God's action in the garden gives us a prophetic picture of the saving work of God through the Lord Jesus the Christ. An animal, an innocent victim, was slain. Its skin became the covering for the guilty pair. Similarly in the work of the Lord Jesus as He became the innocent victim, He provides a covering for all who will believe in Him. The one skin covered Adam and Eve, and the sacrifice of Jesus, like the one skin, provides the covering required to cover His people.

Adam and Eve did not do what God had said to do, and there would be many examples of people as they failed to do what God desired. Adam and Eve bore children, Cain and Abel. **Genesis 4:1-2.** Eve may have thought that Cain was to be the 'seed of the woman' the deliverer; Satan may have thought that too, as he would only know that which was revealed. Satan found a convenient and suitable instrument in Cain *"who was of that wicked one and slew his brother."* **1 John 3:12.**

WHY IS THERE ANY RELIGION AT ALL? Why is religion necessary?

The promise was, *"If you eat of the tree you will surely die."* In **Romans 6:23,** we read, *"The wages of sin is death."* As God sacrificed the innocent animal and covered Adam and Eve so it was necessary for every person to make a sacrifice for their sin. **Hebrews 11:4,** *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."* How did Abel know what to do? Why didn't Cain do it? Abel did it by faith. **Romans 10:17,** "So *faith* comes *by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* Abel heard the Word of God and he followed it. He obeyed it. **IS ONE SACRIFICE AS GOOD AS ANOTHER? In Genesis 4:4-7** Cain brought first fruits of the ground. Is this what God wanted? Worship demands

obedience. God did not respect Cain's offering. Cain talked with Abel, killed him, and Cain was cursed. In **Genesis 4:8-15** God punished Cain but made provision to protect him. Even in this God showed His mercy to Cain.

Faith in anything comes from what you have heard others say, or you have read it somewhere. Faith in a religion, a doctrine, evolution, or atheism, comes from what you heard and what you believe of what you hear.

Obedience was necessary for Adam and Eve, obedience was necessary for Cain and Abel. We will see all through history that obedience is necessary. Then it would follow that it is necessary for us too.

Now we follow the generations of Cain and the generations of Adam through his son Seth in the rest of chapter 4 and 5. The line of Seth followed God, Enoch walked with God, and God selected Noah from this family line. But the line of Cain lived in immorality, violence, and evil thoughts continually. *"Then the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair: and took them wives of all which they chose."* **(Genesis 6:2)**

God's way of dealing with this corruption was to keep one family free from it, and destroy all the rest by means of the deluge.

After the flood a new order of things was initiated by Noah under divine direction, but this too culminated in the general apostasy of **Genesis 9:1-9.** Satan's power to control was evidenced by the people's unity of thought and action, headed by the person of Nimrod. **Genesis 11:5-9,** *"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built. And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language: and this they begin to do: and nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.* Go *to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one anothers speech.* So *the Lord scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the earth: and they left off building the city."* It had been the direction from God to Adam as recorded in **Genesis 1:28,** *"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the* sea, *and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."* Building this tower did not fit God's plans.

To understand the Genesis passage let us look at **Romans 1:18-28,** *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that were made, even his eternal power and Godhead;* so *that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not* as *God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image like corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.*

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a *lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen"*

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the

natural use into what is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their Just one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. God gave them over to* a *reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;"*

These two passages explain *the origin of the heathen world.* Man has a religious instinct. a desire to worship, but man without the truth of God is ignorant, and incapable of rightly direct ing his religious tendencies. **Jeremiah 10:23,** "O *Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* Who is the god of this world?
2 Corinthians 4:3-4, *"But if our gospel* (good news of Jesus Christ) *be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, Jest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* **Ephesians 2:2,** *"Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."*

The answer to the questions about why there are various religions and why there are variations in the same religion are found in these scriptures. Man has allowed the prince of the power of the air to work in them because they did not want to retain God in their minds.

People from the beginning were primarily tribal, and built their cultures to themselves and within their languages. This included religion as they found it passed down to them. Their survival was as a tribal family competing for food and land with other tribal families and languages. They originally trusted God to provide for them but over time found it desirable to reach out on their own, with out God, to survive and to suppress other tribes. Division and warfare among people are common to the natural man, but were not common in the laws of religion. which taught people to care about each other as well as to follow God.

Division and warfare has also become common among people of religious backgrounds when they use their religion to suppress others to their religion or to follow the ways of men rather than the commandments of God. Starting with Noah all men had access to the commandments and teachings of God. Religion has also been used though out history by men who seek power over other men. They find religion a good tool to control others using a mixture of truth and error that sounds like direction from God.

Division and warfare among Christians has always given people a reason to say, "Religion is responsible for all wrongs." When we consider some of the problems in the world such as in Ireland, which started when most of Britain was Roman Catholic. Certain acts of the King and parliament, along with the idea that the Irish may be an under class of people, were the core of what is called religious warfare. It is a tribal or national warfare using Christianity from its beginning. Though out history this has repeated itself, as in the Crusades, the madness and human destruction of the Genghis Khans, Adolph Hitler, or Josef Stalin who used religion, or an excuse to stamp out religion as the reason to use brutal ways to herd people into their own versions of the tribe or national superiority, using what ever props needed to accomplish their end. The Japanese in World War Two believed they were a superior race and claimed their emperor was a god. Many in the Muslim world use religion as a reason also for suicide while killing others. as did the Japanese. The motivation is a promise of reward in an afterlife. As we follow the time line of God's dealings with man we will find a time when God, to preserve the seed of the woman' did direct nations in the destruction of other nations, or to bring judgment upon them for their many sins, but we can no longer justify war as a part "of doing

God's work.' We cannot make any assumptions that anything said or done in the name of religion is above criticism. If the result is intolerance, immorality, or injustice, it is not of God and our duty should be to defend our God given liberties from such dangers, from those who suppress religion, or use it to control or endanger others. Remember that third party, Satan, the prince of the Power of the Air, who seeks to influence all of us, and would separate us from the truth of God as revealed in His word.

Let's follow the history of God's dealings with man and find the sources of various religions and the variations and changes over time using the time line chart.

ZODIAC

In **Romans 1:18-29** we learned that they knew God, but they gave Him up.

How did they have the opportunity to know God?

Let's look briefly to base our understanding of origins (Where did that come from?) and why things are as they have been, and what we can learn from these things, and what errors we can learn to avoid.

Genesis 1:14, *"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven... and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years."*

On the 4th day of creation God created the heavenly lights, or heavenly bodies that give off light. The 'days and years' is obvious and the movements of the 'lights' give us the seasons. We know the four seasons of the year, but how do we explain or understand 'for signs and for seasons'. Usage of the word 'seasons' would also indicate something fixed or appointed. A time in which something predetermined is to happen. For instance: *"The rain comes in due season."* **(Deuteronomy 11:14)** *"A shock of corn comes in his season." (Job 5:26.) "A tree brings forth its fruit in his season."* **(Psalm 1:3)** Things happen in their proper time or season. i.e. *"At the time appointed I will return unto thee... and Sarah shall have a son."* **(Genesis 17:21)** at the *"set time of which God had spoken."* **(Genesis 21:2)** We speak of seasons to explain a general season, such as; football or baseball season. Solomon said in **Ecclesiastes 3:1,** *"To every time there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."*

"For signs," Gideon asked for a sign in **Judges 6:17,** *"Show me a sign that thou talkest with* me." Hezekiah asked for a sign in **2 Kings 20:8** and the shadow turned back 10 degrees.

"Let them be for signs." What were the heavenly bodies to be signs for? Signs?

Most people have heard of the signs of the Zodiac. Their names and order are preserved in an old rhyme. The Ram, the Bull, the heavenly twins, and next the Crab, the Lion shines, the Virgin and the Scales, the Scorpion. Archer, and the Sea Goat, the man that carries the water pot, the Fish with glittering tails.

Looking into history and tradition the 12 signs are always the same, in the meaning of their names and in their order. The Chinese, Chaldean, and Egyptian records back 2000 years are the same. The Zodiacs in Drederah and Esneh in Egypt are about 4000 years old. (About the time of Abraham.)

Josephus, a Jewish historian on the 1st century A.D. referred to 8 Gentile authorities (whose works are now lost) that all assert that "God gave the ante-diluvians such a long life that they might perfect those things which they had invented in Astronomy." Ancient Persian and Arabian traditions ascribe its invention to Adam, Seth, and Enoch to preserve their revelation as to two coming judgments of WATER AND FIRE; made 2 pillars (one of brick and one of stone) **describing the whole of the predictions of the stars.** (Josephus book 1 chapters 1-3)

In **Psalm 19,** the first 6 verses deal with the instruction contained in the heavens which is inaudibly conveyed by them to humanity. Remember **Romans 1:19-20.** The next 8 verses speak of the

scripture which were available in David's time. The point being that what is in them reveals God and that God's works prove Him and that His statutes and judgments are right.

"There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard," **Psalm 19:3.** The message conveyed by the heavens was received in every part of the world. *"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."*

The signs gave the history of the coming One; His birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and His coming again in glory.

"Let them be for signs and for seasons."

The Gospel in the Stars! An oral tradition handed down though the generations.

Note, In addition to the 12 major signs, there are also 36 pieces, (decans) or minor signs. Each sign has 3 minor signs connected to it.

The Virgin VIRGO-THE SEED OF THE WOMAN.
100% divine and 100% human. Genesis 3:15

Coma, The desired one	"The desire of the nations" who should come - Jesus Christ Haggai 2:7
Centaurus. The Centaur	Part horse. Part man, 2 natures. The despised one. Isaiah 53:3
Bootes, The Coming One	The conqueror and harvester of the earth. Revelation 14:15

The Scales LIBRA-THE REQUIRED PRICE PAID.
Christ as redeemer. Isaiah 53

Crux, The Southern	The cutting off. Daniel 9:26
Cross Victima, The Victim	To be slain Revelation 13:8 Lay down His life. John 10:15-18, Isaiah 53:7
Corona, The Crown	Christ, the Crowned Victor Hebrews 2:9 Crowned with glory and honor Philippians 2:6-9

Scorpion SCORPIO-THE MORTAL CONFLICT.
Christ wounded for our transgressions. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21

Serpent, The Serpent	The great dragon, that old serpent, the deceiver. Revelation 12:9
Orphiuchus, The Serpent Holder	Christ restraining the power of the serpent. Luke 10:19
Hercules, The Mighty One	Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God. Isaiah 9:6

Archer SAGITTARIUS-THE FINAL TRIUMPH.
Christ the God-man as victor over sin & Satan. 1 John 3:8

Lyra, The Harp	Praise for the Conqueror Exodus 15:1, Psalm 21, Ephesians 5:18-19
Ara, The Alter	That place of consuming fire prepared for His enemies Psalm 21:8-9
Draco, The Dragon	The great dragon cast out Revelation 12:9-11 His head under the foot of Hercules

Goat-fish CAPRICORN - LIFE OUT OF DEATH.
Christ's death for our sins makes us spiritually alive. John 12:24

Sagitta, The Arrow	The arrow from the bow of God Psalm 38:2
Aquila, The Eagle	Christ, The pierced, wounded and falling eagle, stuck by the arrow
Delphinus, The Dolphin	The sin bearer, descends into hell, and rises again gloriously 1Corinthians 15:3,4

Water bearer AQUARIUS - BLESSING OUT OF VICTORY.
God's Spirit poured out on His people. John 7: 37-38

Piscis Australis, The Southern Fish	The Christian transformed into a new creature by the living water
Pegasus, The Winged Horse	Christ going forth with the power of His Gospel
Cygnus, The swan	The Lord or Judge to come, he who goes and returns quickly Revelation 22:20

The Fishes PISCES - DELIVERANCE OUT OF BONDAGE.

People of all nations delivered by the Gospel. Matthew 4:18-19

The Band, The Bands	Christ holding the reins, the saints follow Revelation 14:4
Andromeda, The Chained women	The church, the bride, chained and in affliction
Cepheus, The Crowed King	Christ enthroned

Lamb ARIES - GLORY OUT OF HUMILIATION.

Raised from the dead and made ruler of all. Revelation 5:12

Cassiopeia, The Enthroned	The church lifted up, enthroned and glorified: set up as a queen
Women Cetus, The Sea Monster	The monster which threatened the women when she was chained
Perseus, The Breaker	Jesus Christ, the great redeemer, come to redeem His bride Micah 2:13

Bull TAURUS - HIS GLORIOUS COMING.

Christ to come in judgment like a rampaging bull. Isaiah 34:2-8

Orion, The Glorious One	The brilliant, the swift, a strong one, a hero, the foot that crushed Genesis 3:15
Eridanus, The River	Fiery stream from the judge Daniel 7:9,1O Psalm 97:1-3 Nahum 1:6 2 Thess.
1:7,8 Auriga, The Shepherd	Shepherd comes to gather His own Isaiah 40:10,11

The Twins GEMINI - HIS UNION WITH HIS BRIDE.

Christ's fellowship with his people in His eternal Kingdom. 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Lepus, The Enemy	Serpent being trodden under the right foot of Christ
Canis Major, The Prince	The 'sent' prince as a hawk will come swiftly to crush the head of the serpent
Canis Minor, The Redeemer	Comes to destroy the wicked and brings redemption

Crab CANCER - HIS POSSESSIONS HELD SECURE.

A great Kingdom with people of every race. Genesis22:11-18

Ursa Minor, The Lesser Sheepfold	The gathering of God's people in heaven
Ursa Major, The Greater Shepherd	The vast multitude of redeemed and ransomed people of God
Argo, The Ship	The ship, has completed its journey, is now at rest in a safe harbor at home

Lion LEO - HIS ENEMIES DESTROYED.

Jesus Christ victorious over sin, the world and Satan. Revelation 5:5

Hydra, The serpent	Satan is cast out, outside of the great circle of the ecliptic
Crater, The Cup	The Cup of wrath on the back of the serpent Revelation14:10 Psalm 11:6
Corvus, The Raven	The final battle, the fowls filled with the flesh of those who followed the beast Rev. 19:17-21

(Sources for these can be found in "The Gospel in the Stars" by Joseph Seiss or "The Real Meaning of the Zodiac" by James Kennedy, PhD)

The stars in the heaven which represent those 12 signs bear absolutely no resemblance to the pictures of the signs. i.e., the Big Dipper. (Ursa Major) The Great Bear does not look like a great bear or even a Teddy Bear. The other signs look nothing like what they are supposed to represent. Yet all agree to what they are.

In what may be one of the oldest books in all human history, The Book of Job, we find the constellations of the Zodiac were already known and understood. Job goes back to about 2150 BC which is 650 years before Moses wrote the Pentateuch. In this book God speaks to Job and his 'comforters' as He is questioning Job showing their ignorance. God says to them, *"Can you bind the* sweet *influences of Pleiades, or* loose *the bands of Orion? Can you bring forth Mazzaroth in his* season? *Or can you guide Arcturus with his* sons?" **Job 38: 31-32.**

Here we have reference to the constellation of Orion and Pleiades, and the star Arcturus. Also in this book there is reference to Cetus, the Sea Monster, and to Draco, the Great Dragon. *Mazzaroth* is a Hebrew word meaning *"The Constellations of the Zodiac."* God made the stars, He numbered them, and set them in the firmament for signs. The original story as tradition tells us, was told by Seth and Enoch, and which Noah brought to this side of the flood. This story has been corrupted into something counterfeit, and gave birth to what is now known as Astrology, which the Bible repeatedly condemns and warns us against.

Satan has always been and **still is** the great counterfeiter, the great deceiver who has deceived people into trusting in the sign rather than the thing God has signified. **This is why we are reviewing this ancient material before proceeding to what is happening in the world today with religion. We must understand the basic spiritual struggle in which we find ourselves, As we go through the ages we will repeatedly see the pattern that in every age the influence of the wicked one is there to try to take us away from the straight and narrow path that is the truth.**

Jumping ahead just for some examples:

Time period: The wilderness and the Israelites. Nadab and Abihu Leviticus 10:1-3

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and ***offered strange fire*** *before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, This is it that the Lord spoke, saying , I will be sanctified in them that come nigh* me, *and before all the people I will be glorified, And Aaron held his peace."*

Time period: The Kings The Brazen Serpent - Hezekiah. 2 Kings 18:4

"He (Hoshea) removed the high places and broke down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it:..."

Time period: Apostle Paul, the Galatian church Galatians 1:6-7

"I marvel that you are so *soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."* (Gospel meaning 'good news')

The Gospel in the stars is an example of God's original message which was then perverted by Satan and sinful men. Instead of trusting God and His Christ (Messiah. Savior) to which the star story pointed, we will continually see these same symbols used to form and base complete religions on, and even to create many gods. All over the world and in many different religious systems we see the traces of them over and over.

ASTROLOGY HAS BEEN CONDEMNED.

When the time of written communication occurred and the Gospel in the Stars was no longer needed, and people began to use stars as their gods instead of the story of God, the Bible condemned astrology very strongly. In **Isaiah 47:13** it states; *"Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon you . behold, they shall be* as *stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; there shall not be* a *coal to warm them at, nor fire to sit before it."* (This fire may be like that in a microwave oven - unseen but very hot.)

The earliest form of religion and God's dealings with man is called the **Patriarchal Period** when God spoke directly to heads of families and animal sacrifice was an act rolling forward their sins until the time when the 'seed of the woman', Jesus, would be the perfect sacrifice to make atonement for the sin of man.

This **Patriarchal Period** was in place through the period of time of Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and after the flood when God made His covenant with Abraham until the giving of the law to Moses and the covenant with the people of Israel.

Genesis 12:2,3 *"And I (God) will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless you, and curse them that curse you: and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed."*

Genesis 17:19-21 *"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear you a son indeed; and you shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you: Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly, twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto you at this set time next year."*

Genesis 18:18 *"Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."*

Hebrews 11:9 *"By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles (tents) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the promise."*

On our time line then, we would have a straight line from the creation of man until the years around 1500 BC. Along side of this line we have the origins of Chaldean and Egyptian religions which began the worship of other gods and things of nature. The line will represent God's dealings with man as the Patriarchal religion, and the lines along side the religions of man.

Dispersion of Races and Religions

Genesis is a book of origins. Many of the questions of life are given answers when this book is studied. Where did the world come from? How was the world populated? Are there other living things in the universe not of this planet? How did we get here and why are we here? When was music invented? Has the planet always been like it is now? What is the order of creation? What did God require of His creation? Why animal sacrifice to God? What is our responsibility to the animals? Were some people created as animals? Why are there thorns and thistles growing in our gardens? What is sin? How were people dispersed across the face of the earth? What about the origins of languages? When did people originate their religions? Why is there any religion at all?

Genesis ten and First Chronicles one provide a genealogy of the origins of the sons of Noah who survived the deluge that wiped out the other inhabitants of the earth who were the descendants of Adam and Eve. In Genesis eleven the story is told how and why the dispersion of people occurred. God's commandment was that people multiply and inhabit the earth. The people choose to remain together and build cities and high towers *"who's top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us* a *name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."* This was a form of rebellion against the commandment of God, and an action that God decided to move against by changing in each family its language. From that day as people moved about the face of the earth, they took with them some knowledge of the one true God. They began to add ideas of polytheism, rituals of sacrifice to these gods, and even priesthoods of their own making. It is interesting as we look at the various religions that were created by man to see some of the similarities and some of the great differences, remember ing that all originated from the same source and from the same original religion.

The Race Charts of Shem, Ham, and Japheth indicate general areas where these families moved to on the face of the earth. There would be, of course, some intermarriage, some blending of the races over time, and some being totally annihilated by wars and disease. Spellings and usages of names also vary some from time and translations of languages. It is also interesting to note that the further away from the origins of people the more different the style and manner of the religions becomes.

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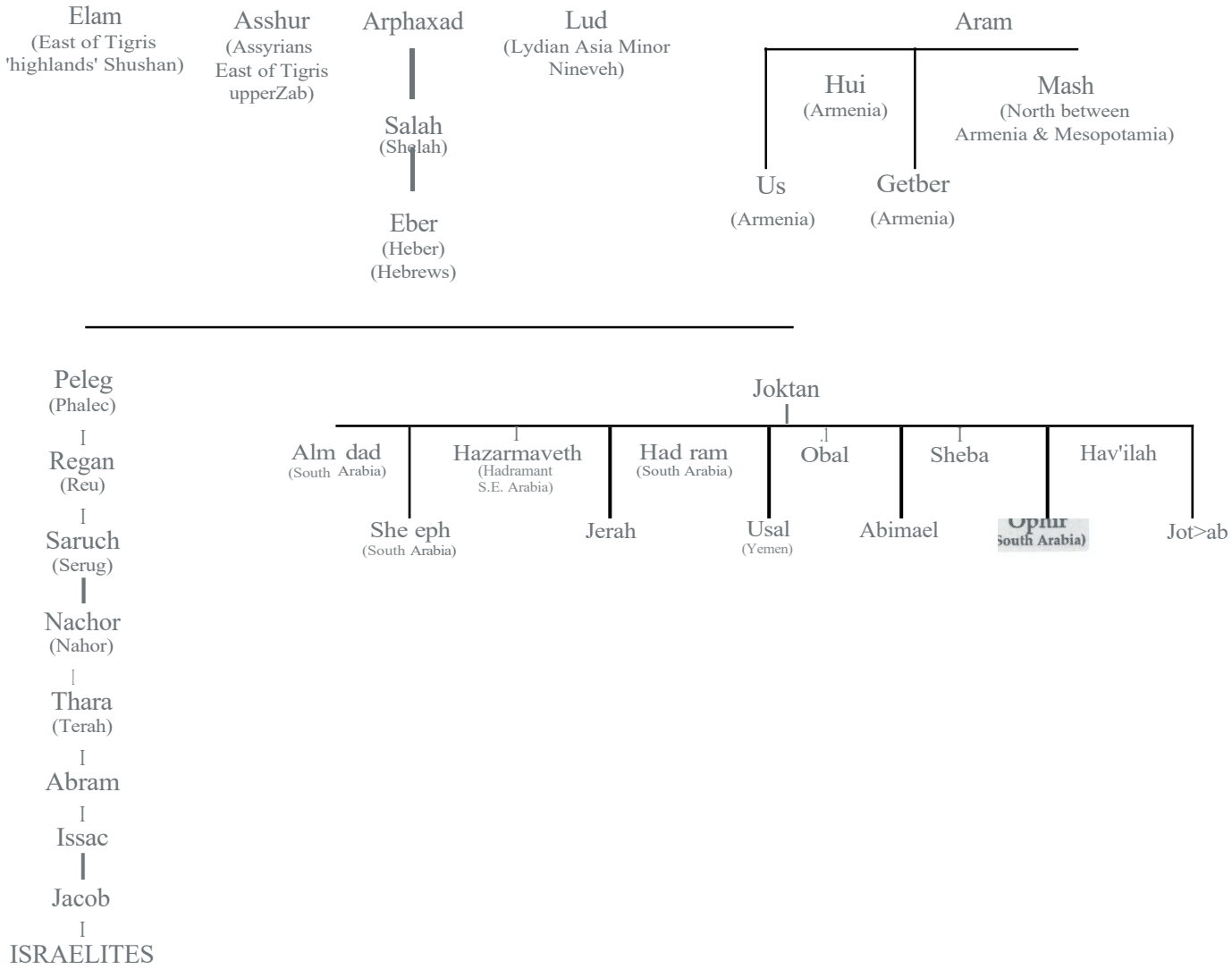
SHEM

Race Charts and Geneologies-The Sons of Noah
Genesis 10

SHEM

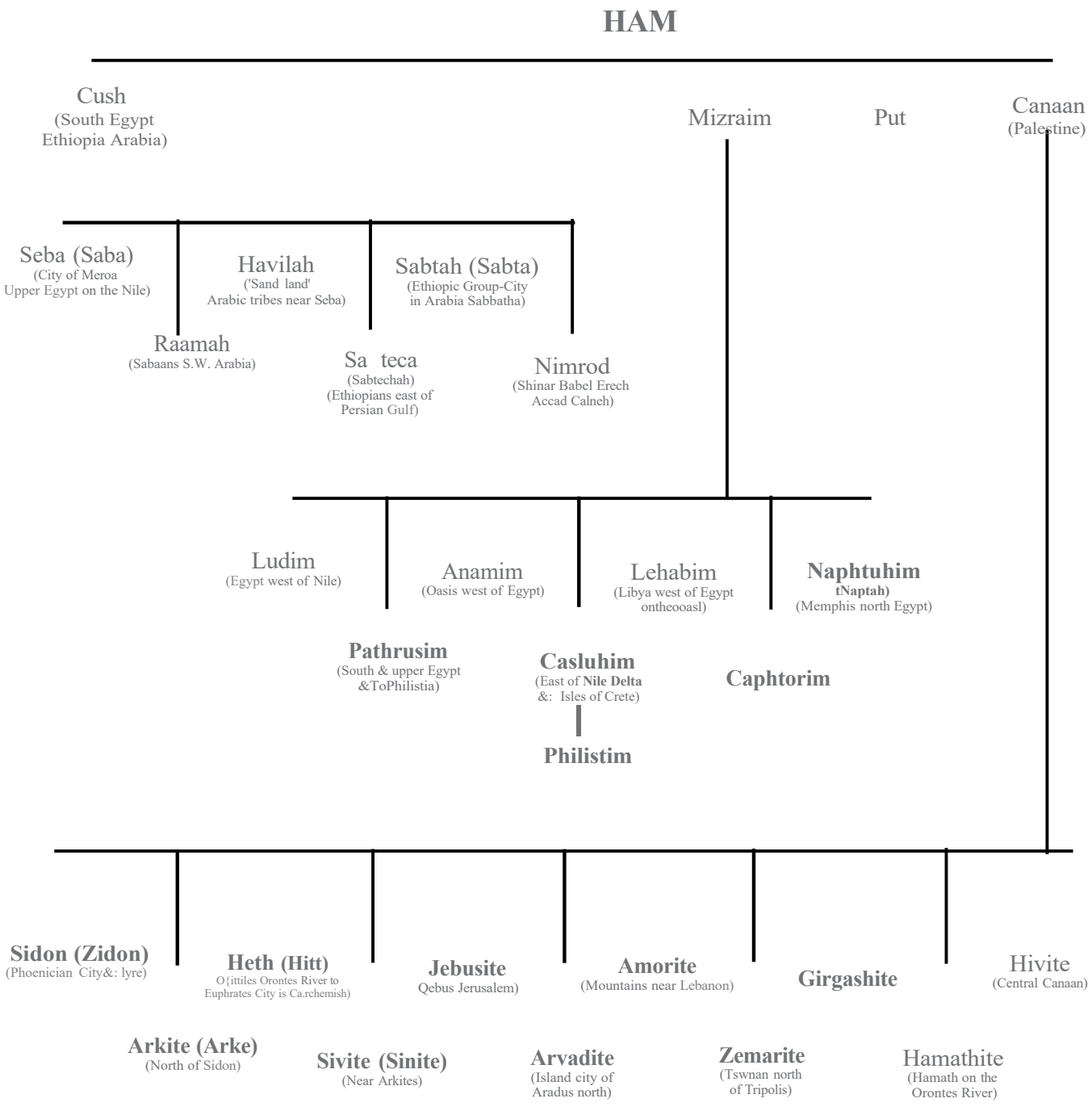
(Note: Spelling of names varies slightly from Genesis 10 to Chronicles 1)



HAM

Race Charts and Geneologies - The Sons of Noah
Genesis 10

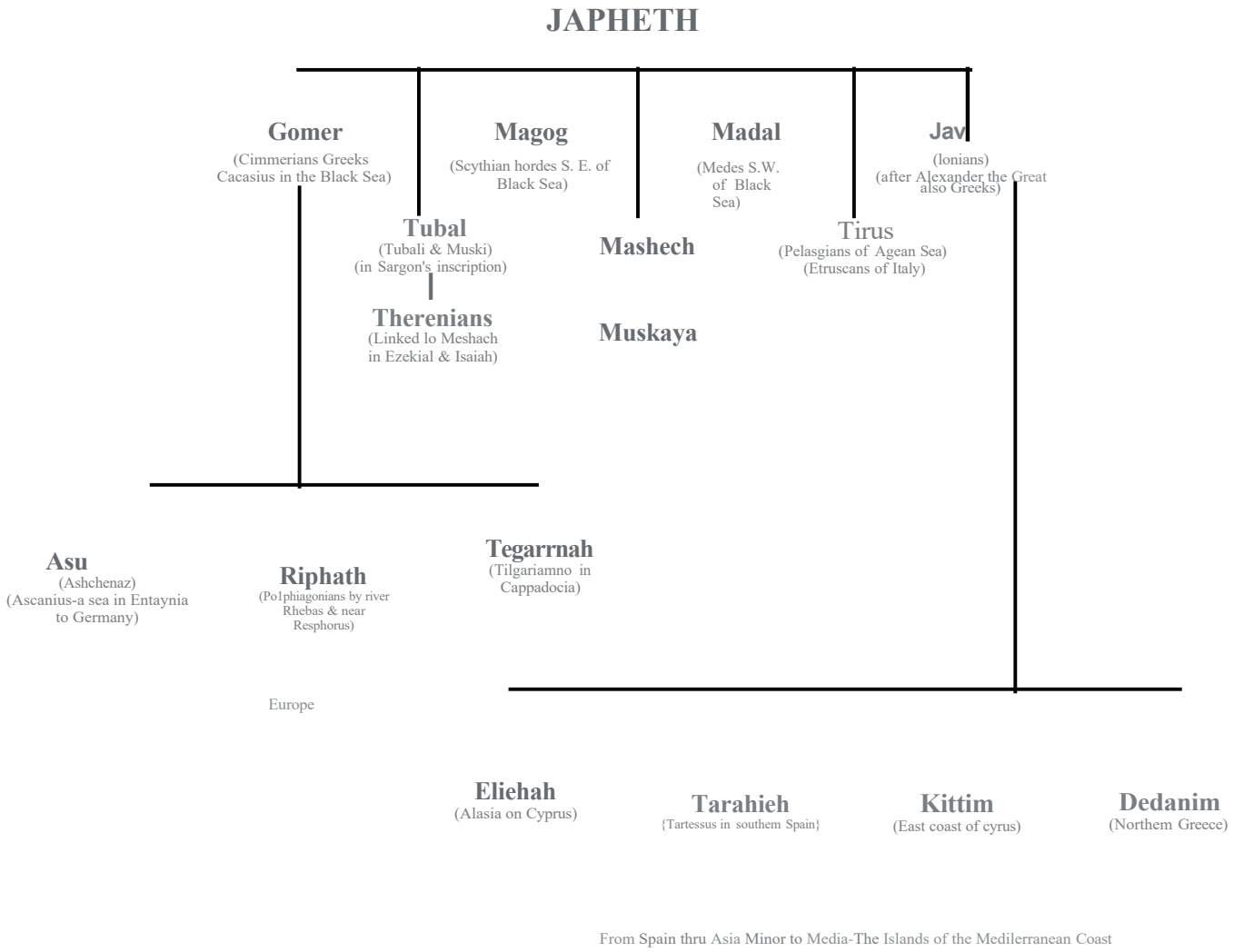
(Note: Spelling of names varies slightly from Genesis 10 to Cluonicles 1)



JAPHETH

Race Charts and Geneologies - The Sons of Noah
Genesis 10

(Note: Spelling of names varies slightly from Genesis 10 to Chronicles 1)



PAGANS

PAGANISM, HEATHENS, IDOLATRY: A heathen according to Webster is "one who does not believe in the God of the Bible; one who is neither a Christian, Jew, or Mohammedan; an irreligious person; pagan, unenlightened.

Also related to these are a **WORSHIP of NATURE, PANTHEISM, and POLYTHEISM.**

Paganism is also the beliefs and practices in the worship of nature. Paganism may include

Pantheism, a belief that the whole of everything is divine, (as the Bible says, *"God is all and in all,"* but this would not indicate that all things in nature should be worshipped as God.) **Polytheism** is a belief in many gods. **Animism** is belief that the natural features of the world are invested with divine powers. **Divine** is partaking of the nature of God, sacred and holy.

Paganism as it was before Christ and in the early years after Christ was stamped out by the

Roman Empire around 400 AD, but by definition it still exists.

WHERE DID THE HEATHEN WORLD COME FROM?

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF RELIGIONS?

We will deal with some of them here and some we will have to look into later.

Can without the truth of God's word is in a primitive state and ignorant, and incapable of rightly directing his steps and religious tendencies. **Proverbs 1:7,** *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* You can have a doctorate in thinkology from the finest university, but to have real knowledge it is necessary that you have the fear of the Lord first, or all else is folly. Put another way in **Proverbs 9:10,** *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."* What do we need first before we really know anything?

Remember **Romans 1:21-23.** Can we apply any of this to what is happening in religion today? *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing them selves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image like corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things."*

In his ignorance man bows down to whatever appeals vividly and forcefully to his imagination and understanding -natural phenomena such as rain, wind, thunder, the heavenly bodies; and so on.

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Why is idolatry so emphatically denounced in the scriptures? It is denounced not as some kind of small error of the ways, but as the very essence of iniquity. Why are there such terrible penalities attached to it? How did these people get into such a condition of ignorance of God?

The first mention of idols (images) used as gods in the scriptures is in **Genesis 31:18-42.** They were stolen from Laban by his daughter Rachel. When Laban was searching for them, Rachel hid them in the camel's furniture. This would indicate the approximate size of these images **used as gods. r1erse 30, 32, & 34) The importance of these gods to Laban. and Rachel is** shown here by her need to steal them and Laban's pursuit of Jacob to get them back. They were not just household knick-knacks!

Jacob's family in some way blended the worship of false gods with the acknowledgment and worship of the true God. We will see this practice in various religions and sects as we look at the origins and practices in religions. This attempt to reconcile different and opposing principles and practices in religion is called syncretism. The religion of God perverted by dancing or sex orgies or adding symbols such as a Bull to represent God leads to total Paganism in time.

A good reading is found in **Isaiah 45.** This declares to the King of Persia who God is and what will become of the makers of idols.

In the New Testament we are told what an idol is. **1 Corinthians 8:1-7,** verse **4b,** *"we know*

*that an idol is **nothing** in the world",* verse **5,** *"there be that are called gods."*

And finally, in **Revelation 21:8,** *"idolaters - shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* (Burnetheth' indicates continuously) **Rev elation 20:14, 15,** *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, and whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."*

In **Genesis 11** we had the human race as it existed gathered together in the land of Shinar: and we learned from **Romans 1:18-29** that, although they knew God, they gave Him up, *"they glorified Him not, neither were they thankful" "changed the glory of the uncorruptable God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things." "changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.* "

What happened then?

"Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts." Etc. God gave them up in **Genesis 11:1-9,** confounded their language and scattered them. When did this occur? **Genesis 10:25** gives us a clue. In the days of Peleg was the earth divided. God does have a point at which He will allow man to go his own way. **Proverbs 1:29- 31,** *"for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would have none of my counsel; they despised my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."*

God allowed nature to take its course for those who did not choose Him, those who rejected Him.

Let's keep an eye out for change; watch for changes in God's covenants with man, and in man's systems of religion. Watch for the sources of Paganism and Polytheism. Watch for evidences of Paganism today in our movies, television shows, and in the news.

POLYTHEISM

Many religions which turned to Polytheism originated with one God. Some of the ancient religions have had a clear tendency toward one superior God, and at one time had Monotheism, which is the belief in just one God. Polytheism is the belief in the existence of many gods or divine beings. These gods may represent forces of nature, objects, animals, insects, and birds, things in the heavens like stars, things on earth like mountains, rain, or fire. There is a mixture of animals and man in some forms represented as gods.

Polytheism has a relationship to a belief in various kinds of spirits or demons. This is also found in Animism, Totemism, and Ancestor worship. There is usually assigned a hierarchy to the various deities, and these are described in the sacred writings or myths.

Polytheism was prominent in the religion found in Egypt, Hinduism, and Roman or Greek Mythology. The Old Paganism had elements of forms from many religious ideas, including polytheism, witchcraft, and animal sacrifice.

The Christian people in some areas also digressed to forms of polytheism in the veneration of saints or angels, prayer to the Virgin Mary, use of holly, box, and bay, and Christmas trees in celebrations, and even songs honoring the Christmas tree or the Christ substitute, Santa Claus.

Theories as to why polytheism originated include a need for supernatural moral sanctions or for some assumption that they could appease the uncontrollable forces of nature. Sometimes there was a connection to the social structure in class distinctions such as when the Pharaoh of Egypt was considered a god or a son or god along with the veneration of many other objects as gods that controlled the forces of life.

In the first chapter of the book of Romans we have an explanation of how polytheism occurred. People knew God and the things of God had been shown to them. But when they knew God they did not glorify Him as God and became vain in their imaginations, and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man, and to birds, beasts, and creeping things. They changed the truth into a lie! This is common to what man has done to most religions, whether polytheist or monotheistic.

ANIMISM

Animism as the word sounds is from the Latin word anima, which would give the idea of something animal or animated. It is a theory of the existence of some force that is not material. It is the concept of 'breath or soul', to which all life and action are attributable. It is a belief that the soul is a vital principle upon which organic development depends. An Animist is one who believes that all nature is endowed with life. It is also a belief in spiritual beings. Some believe that the human mind is a non-material entity that interacts with the body by the brain and nervous systems.

All religions involve some form of animism. Even primitive peoples without written traditions, believe that spirits or souls are a cause of life in humans. There are ideas of phantoms, shadows, and spirits that can move from person to person or into plants, animals, and even lifeless objects. The Bible confirms the idea that man has a soul, or spirit, and that persons have life after leaving the body. It also speaks of other non-material beings such as spirits and angels. It should not be surprising than that religions of all kinds have used this concept and have imaged it in so many ways.

Christianity and the other religions such as the Islamic faith believe in a reward system in life after death for the soul. Conditions of obedience and faith are a vital part of these religions with the promise of salvation from sin and the wrath of God when these conditions are met. Heaven and Hell are waiting for the souls of men after this life is completed and the soul separates itself from the flesh.

CHALDEA

Where did that come from? This is the question we are asking. It is the same question we asked when considering Evolution. It is the same question we will ask with everything where we want an objective and reasonable view of things. This will be our question as we look at the sources of religions. We will look to the earliest sources of history, archaeology, and ancient mythology. From Ridpath's 'History of the World' published in 1914 we can find accounts of the principal events of the human race from its beginning to more modern times. Recent sources of history and especially archaeology can shed some light as do the older books, but can be suspect where obvious efforts to rewrite history are noted. The dispersion of the races into Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria, Media, Babylonia, Persia, Parthia, and Greece, along with their religious ideas can be found in these ancient history volumes. This information goes back to around 4000 BC.

The religious system of the Chaldeans began with the creation of the world. This was taught by the priests of Babylon and has been preserved in the fragment of Berosus and is as follows:

"Once all was darkness and water. In this chaos lived horrid animals, and men with two wings, and others with four wings and two faces, and others with double organs, male and fe male. Some *had the thighs of goats and horns on their heads; others had horse's feet, or were formed behind like* a *horse and in front like* a *man. There were bulls with human heads, and horses and men with heads of dogs, and other animals of human shape with fins like fishes, and fishes like sirens, and dragons, and creeping things, and serpents, and wild creatures, the images of which are to be found in the temple of Bel."*

"Over all these ruled a *woman of the name of Omorka. But Bel divided the darkness and clove the woman asunder, and of one part he made the earth, and of the other the sun and moon and planets: and he drew off the water and proportioned it to the land, and prepared and arranged the world. But those creatures could not endure the light of the sun and became extinct."*

"When Bel saw the land uninhabited and yet fruitful he smote off his head and bade one of the gods mingle the blood which flowed from his head with earth, and form therewith men and animals and wild creatures who could support the atmosphere. A great multitude of various tribes inhabited Chaldea, but they lived without any order, like the animals."

"Then there appeared to them from the sea, on the shore of Babylonia, a *fearful animal of the name of Oan. His body was that of* a *fish, but under the fish's head another head was attached, and on the fins were feet like those of* a *man, and he had* a *man's voice. The image of the creature is still preserved. The animal came at morning, and passed the day with man, but he took no nourishment, and at sunset went again to the sea, and there remained for the night. The animal taught men language and science, the harvesting of seed and fruits, the rules and boundaries of land, the modes of building cities and temples, arts and writing, and all that pertains to the civilization of human life."*

The legends of Berosus, a third century priest, author of a history of Chaldea and Assyria, are known to us because of the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea in the third century AD.

A story of the great flood was also told by the Chaldeans as is found in most early stories of beginnings found in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Eskimos and 'Indians' of the Americas. The Chaldean version is called 'The Gilgamesh Epic' and was translated from tablets found in the library of King Assurbanipal of the period 669-626 B.C. This account has some similarities to the Biblical account and is a relatively recent Archaeological discovery.

In the origin of religion in Chaldea the names of Bel and Nimrod are some what confused...

Bel. **(Isaiah 46:1)** supreme god of the Babylonians is a Chaldaic form of ***Baal*** and is also used in the sense of being "Lord" or "owner". Bel presided over the air. His consort was ***Be/it.*** Bel has been identified with the Greek god ***Zeus*** but with some differences. As ***Bel-Merodach,*** the god was connected with the planet Jupiter in astral mythology with the productive power of nature. (fhis god was also called ***'Be/us'*** by the Greeks.)

Bel had titles such as "the Supreme." "The Procreator or the Lord of spirits."

There is some confusion between what the titles and offices of Bel and those of the 'Half Mythical' ***Nimrod*** were after Nimrod's deification. When the great hunter was enrolled among the gods his attributes and epithets were merged with that of Bel. In later times there was little distinction between the deified Nimrod and Bel. **Genesis 10:8-10** *"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord, and beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."*

The hero god ***Bel-Nimrod*** or "the Hunter Lord" had his chief seat of worship at Calneh or Nipur. ***Be/tis*** was the wife of Nimrod... Together with ***Anu*** and ***Hea*** he consulted a trinity of Chaldean gods.

Lesser gods.

Hea - Fish monster who taught the Chaldeans letters and Astronomy. "Giver of good gifts". Sometimes called "Lord of the Abyss" or "Lord of the Sea." Like Poseidon of the Greeks his symbol was the serpent, the common emblem among the oriental nations of superhuman wisdom. ***Dav-kina*** was his queen. (Isn't this interesting that a creature relating to a serpent would show up to instruct people. It has a similar creature as in the story in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve.)

Gods of the planets.

Sin - Moon god - earlier name was ***Hurk,*** same root as ***Ur,*** the city of worship.

Sames -god of the sun - (symbol is the circle)

Bin - Storm god - ***Uranus*** of the Greeks

Adar - The Lord of Saturn (Semitic names = ***Bar*** **& Nin.)**

Oan -who taught Chaldeans art and science.

Merodach - (the most ancient) "The old man of the gods" God of judgment, justice, and right. (from the earlier worship system) Even then they could not stay on the old paths, but had changes - apostasy. ***Zirbanit*** was his queen.

Nergal -Planet Mars - King of battles and champion of the gods.

Bilit- Planet Venus - The Lady, 'queen mother of the gods' - fertility and birth. Opposed to this goddess was ***/star,*** the 'goddess of war and ruin.'

Nebo- Planet Mercury - Forethought, intelligence, and prophecy. (Not one of the early gods.)

The source of these gods was the Zodiac. The affairs of life seemed to receive their laws and conditions from the skies. The antecedents of good and evil were the stars. Merodach was the author of good. Adar, the breeder of evil.

The Chaldean religion , while telling us their origins, and a wide variety of gods with interesting stories, does not follow the line of the savior, and offers us no future with God. The stories do not connect us to a promise of the 'seed of the woman' but fit the writing in **Romans 1: 22,**
23... *"changed the glory of the uncorruptable God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things...* "

The curse on the Chaldeans because of their images and idols is in Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51.

EGYPT

In Genesis chapter 12 we are introduced to the land of Egypt. In the time of Abraham (about 2000 BC) the Egyptians had a Pharaoh. What else did they have at this time?

Remember **Romans 1:22-23,** *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptable God into an image like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things."*

The gods of Egypt were either animal, bird, or insect. They had deities which represented every phase of life. They changed one God into many gods (Polytheism). They believed, as many others have, in one Great God, almighty, and eternal. But... they considered 'that this being was too great and mighty to concern Himself with the affairs and destines of humans'. So... He 'permitted the management of this world ... to hordes of "gods" and demons, good and bad spirits.' This is what the Egyptians believed.

This was also how the Apostle Paul found things when he went to Greece; in Athens he found the monument ***'to the unknown God'.*** **Acts 17:23.** If a man worships all these different gods he cannot know the living and true God. Even today from Mars Hill in Athens you can see the Parthenon with all of its temples for various gods.

Let's look at the time of the Exodus where the ***Lord God*** attacks the gods of Egypt to show them who He is. To *"multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt."* **Exodus 7:3** *"and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord."* **Exodus 12:12.**

We are familiar with the 10 plagues necessary to free God's people from Egypt. First let us note that God took the man that we normally know as one of God's prophets, and made him His representative before the Pharaoh as *"a god to Pharaoh."* **Exodus 7:1.** Then He appointed Aaron to be the prophet of Moses. Pharaoh was elevated in Egypt as a god . God put Moses above him. At the word of Moses these plagues would occur! As God would use a prophet as spokesman, so Moses would have Aaron as his prophet.

Pharaoh asked the question ***"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice*** *to let Israel go? I* ***know not the Lord;*** *neither will I let Israel go."* **Exodus 5:2**

God was very considerate in dealing with this Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He warned Pharaoh at the beginning (call it a contest) *"Either let my son go or I will slay your son."* In **Exodus 4:22,23,** God claimed that the nation , *"Israel is my son, even my firstborn."* (They are in the line of promise - **Genesis 3)** God sent many plagues (warnings) before He touched the first born of Egypt, giving Pharaoh time to acknowledge God and let Israel go. The Pharaoh did not choose to take those opportunities and in the last plague this is what happened! Do we get any of these warnings today?

Now let's look at "The gods of Egypt"

At their first visit to Pharaoh, Aaron's rod was made a serpent. **Exodus 7:10.** (tannin, the Hebrew word as used in **Psalm 74:12,** 'leviathan', **Isaiah 27:1** 'leviathan the piecing serpent' and

Job 7:12 'whale' is some kind of amphibian, or aquatic creature. The most common in Egypt was the Crocodile. The first use for serpent was 'nashash' in chapter **4:3,** here it is 'tannin= whale... In **Jeremiah 9: 11** it is a dragon. In the books of Isaiah and **Ezekiel** it is rendered a dragon.) The same word can be rendered 'leviathan' or 'dragon'.

The Egyptians worshipped the Crocodile. ***Sebak*** was a deity of evil with a crocodile head. ***Apepi*** was the arch enemy of all the solar gods, and appeared in the form of a crocodile. The Egyptians engaged in a magical ritual in the temple of Amen-Ra in Thebes. Apepi was thought to try to prevent the rising of the sun god Ra. He stirred up lightning, thunder, storms, hurricanes, and rain, trying to block out the sun with clouds, mist, fog, and darkness. The Egyptian ritual was an effort to restrict Apepi. It was a prominent worship of Egypt and the first thing against which God delivers a blow.

The Apostle Paul mentions these magicians and uses them as an example in **2 Timothy 3:8,** *"now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses,* so *do these resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."* These Egyptian magicians had some limited power!

Do we encounter this type of person today? Those who *"resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."*

THE ATTACK BY GOD AGAINST THE GODS OF EGYPT CHARTED.

Plague#	Plague	Scripture	Affected	Result	Egyptian god attacked
	Water turned to blood	Ex. 7:14-25	7 days Everyone affected	Magicians duplicated	Hapi: a fat man with breast of a woman indicating powers of fertility & nourishment (Nile River was the 'life blood' of Egypt)
2	Frogs	Ex. 8: 1-15 Frogs can't Live in bloody water!	Everyone affected	Magicians duplicated (could not remove them) Frogs sacred - couldn't kill them.	Heka, a frog headed goddess. Also shown hold ing a frog out of whose mouth flowed a stream of nourishment. One of the oldest & mother god dess of fertility & rebirth. Patroness of midwives.
3	Lice (Gnats)	Ex. 8: 16-19 Lice eat dead frogs	Everyone affected	Not duplicated Magicians recognized the finger of God	Geb, closely related to earth, made his report to Osiris on the state of the harvest.
4	Flies the Swarms	Ex. 8: 20-27 Flies breed on stinking dead frogs & me" dead fish.	Goshen not to be affected	Pharaoh said,"Go- in land" only. Then "not very far away" & pray "entreat for	The Egyptian scarab; spoke of eternal life. This swarm of the sacred thing is a curse to the people.
5	Murrain animals on only. cattle.	Ex.9:1-7 bacteria, carried by insects) (Anthrax)	Israel not Dead fish & frogs breed	None, just dead to be of Egyptians affected	Apis, the black bull. Temple in Memphis. A new Apis was believed to be born upon the death of the old. (Archaeologists have unearthed hundreds of mummies of bulls, entombed in sarcophagi. No indication here that the Egyptian cattle were born to replace these deceased!
6	Boils	Ex. 9:8-17 From dust of furnace not related to past plagues.	Man& beast in Egypt	Magicians get it first Could do nothing.	The priests who served in Egyptian temples had to be clean, without defects or sickness. This shut down all false worship.

7	Hail	Ex. 9:18-35	Goshen not to be affected.	Pharaoh admitted sin, & asked for prayers. VS27	VS 14-16 & 19-21 Warned to get cattle inside A chance for believers to avoid the hurt. Iris, god-dess of the air, (supposed to control the rains, etc.)
8	Locusts	Ex. 10: 1-20	The face of the earth in thy coast. All the trees, herbs, Etc	God asks, "How long?" VS 3, Pharaoh asks "How long?" VS 7 Pharaoh admitted sin, & asked for prayers VS 16	The wind was worshipped in Egypt under the name Kneph. VS 11: Did not want to allow children to go. Pharaoh told them to go before the plague. (Conditional obedience)
9	Darkness	Ex.10:21-29	The land of Egypt	3 days	Darkness in the daytime, this judgment is against the sun god, Ra; the chief god they worshipped. (Ra or Re, depicted with a human body & head of a hawk. Main symbol - sun disk & obelisk. The chief temple was at the city of Heliopolis.
10	Death of 12 the first born	Ex. 11&	Death to the firstborn of Egypt, man and beast.	Pharaoh said "Go- take flocks & herds and be gone, and bless me also. Ch. 12: 31-32	Ch. 12:12 "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord."
Final	Red Sea	Ex. 14:5-31	Death of all of the host of Pharaoh's Army.	Freedom for Israel	Pharaoh Himself.

COMMENTS ON THE GODS OF EGYPT.

There was apostasy, even in the worship of false gods. People have a hard time remaining in the old paths. First they knew the true God, then they created their own gods, and then they changed the powers assigned to their creations. Example: ***Ra*** was, in the original system, considered the creator and controller of the universe. Ra later became associated with other 'important dei ties' particularly ***Amon*** and ***Horus.*** Worship of Ra was more general than other deities except ***Osiris*** and frequently combined with worship of ***Amun, Num,*** and ***Sebak.*** This produced the compound systems of ***Amun-Ra., Num-Ra,*** and ***Sebek-Ra;*** deities adored together.

But ***Ra*** came after ***Ptah.*** In ancient Egyptian *mythology,* one of the greatest and earliest gods described as "creator of the earth," father of the gods and the beings of this earth, "father of beginnings" was Ptah. Usually represented as a mummy with the symbols and spirit of life, power, stability, light, and truth. Had the power of both sexes within him and considered 'Double god'. The sacred beetle which brought forth *"without the agency of* sex" was placed on Ptah's shoulders as his head. Originally 'one god' (Monotheism) then later Polytheism, but Ptah always at the head of the 'gods'. Whatever gave life was worthy of their adoration

Osiris was one of the principle Egyptian deities. Originally the local god in the ancient cities of Abydos and Busiris on the western bank of the Nile (about 100 miles south of Thebes) where most of the ancient Egyptians kings are buried. Osiris represented the male productive force in nature and became identified with the setting sun. He was considered the ruler of the realm of the dead in the mysterious region below the western horizon. He was both brother and husband to ***Isis,*** goddess of the earth and the moon. Osiris, as king of Egypt, had a people very barbarous, and taught them law, agriculture, and religion. He was murdered by his brother **Set.** Set scattered his body, Isis found and buried the remains, and claimed that their son Horus was sired by a temporarily regenerated Osiris. Horus avenged his father's death by killing Set and then ascended to the throne. Osiris lived on in the underworld as the ruler of the dead, but also though Horus, regarded as the source of new life.

At the annual festival, great lamentation was made for Osiris's death. A bull was filled with bread, honey, and incense, drenched in oil and set afire. While the flames burned the people lamented, what remained of the sacrifice was eaten. A serpent was slain if effigy.

Blessing and life were good, but there was also evil in the world. There was a spirit of evil. He was the serpent called ***Typhon*** by the Greeks, the Egyptians called him Set, in Hebrew Satan.

Set was the genius of malevolence; a murderer, he slew Osiris.

Horus, in Egyptian Mythology, was god of the sky, light, and goodness. One of the major deities, the great helper, the pillar of the worlds. Horus, son of Isis, the nature goddess, and Osiris, the god of the underworld does honor to the spirit of his father. After Osiris was murdered by his evil brother Set, the god of darkness and evil, Horus avenged his father's death by killing his uncle. Worshipped throughout Egypt, Horus was usually shown as a falcon headed man. He is the genius of light. He rides in a sun-boat and stabs the serpent Apopi. He treads crocodiles under his feet. The form of the winged disc - triumphs over the Hippopotamus. Horus destroys shamelessness and sin when he is invoked. All mankind rejoice when they see the sun and praise the son of Osiris and the serpent turns and flees. (Horus is the 'Apollo' of the Greeks.)

Lesser gods of Egypt:

Thoth - moon god (the head of Ibis)
Mat- goddess of truth. Her son the Jackal - headed Anubis.

Next, 4 genie called the **Amenu** who presided over embalming.
Chnun
Khem - the Greek 'Pan'.
Nit

Looking back at these myths, can we see how man has made gods even of other men?

In the story of the Exodus of the people of Israel and in the stories of god of Egypt, **can *we determine if* one *god is* as *good* as *another? Was the religion of Egypt* as *good* as *that of the Chadeans? Is* one *religion just* as *good* as *the other?***

TORAH - HEBREW

In the continuous line of our timeline of God's dealings with man, we began with the creation and God's dealings with Adam and Eve. We were able to see the fall of man kind from the paradise God had created for them and the beginning of sin against God. Sin may be defined as a missing of the mark, or also as a rebellion against God and His requirements for man. The first law of God would appear to be very simple to follow and understand "Do not eat of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil". Soon the influence of that third party called Satan corrupted all of mankind except one line of patriarchs which resulted in the selection by God of a man named Noah who was still faithful to God and His law of sacrifice. Then God destroyed all of the evil persons in the world with a deluge, a flood, and saved Noah and His family. The story of this flood is told in the Holy Bible in the book of Genesis. It

is also found in Archaeology and History in the 'epic of Gilgamesh, and in folklore of almost every civilization.

The Torah, also called the Pentateuch, is the cornerstone of the Hebrew religion. The Pentateuch consists of the first five books of the Bible, which in order are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Pentateuch presents the continuous story from the creation to the death of Moses and the preparation of the People descending from the patriarch Israel, to enter the land of Canaan as promised to them and overseen by God.

When Adam and Eve, the first people sinned against God the penalty for that sin was death. Adam knew that he had sinned and learned that he was naked. He tried to cover that nakedness with fig leaves sewn together. God in His mercy provided an animal to provide a 'coat of skins and clothed' them, covering their sin. God provided the first sacrifice of an animal to protect man from separation from God and the spiritual death resulting, by shedding the blood of this animal. God required the sacrifice of animals in worship to Him as told in the story of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. God also promised that the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (Israel) would bring the earth a savior from man's sin, and allow man to be redeemed, or made whole, before God again.

After the flood and the re-habitation of the earth by the descendants of Noah, God's dealing with mankind again involved the sins of man and the breakup into nations and languages as recorded in the story of the building of the Tower of Babel, which violated the requirement of God's law to 'replenish the earth'. Man had begun to build large cities and were honoring men and forgetting God.

God choose a righteous, but not perfect man, to carry the seed of the woman from the promse in Genesis three, and then promised his son Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, that they also would carry that seed of promise. From the line of Israel it was to be Judah that continued the line and down though the generations to David, and finally to Jesus, from His mother Mary who was of this seed

The Old Testament books from Joshua to Malachi follow the adventures of this race, and record the prophecies of the coming Savior. These books also tell of the failing of the people of Israel who failed to remain faithful to God, the many ways they rebelled against Him, and how they went after other gods of the pagan people who lived around them. In many ways and times they returned to God and were restored to His religion and followed His commandments, but eventually, as had been foretold, they were brought into captivity for rejecting God's commandments. After a period of captivity in foreign lands there was a return of the remnant of the people, and a temporary return to God.

The details of this timeline of history which was the true religion of the one true God is given in the Old Testament although the order of the books are not arranged according to the time sequence in which they occurred. It should be noted that while God had selected the line of Abraham to carry the seed of the Savior, these were not the only people who were faithful to God. Abraham, himself acknowledged Melchisedec as a king and priest of the Most High God; Moses married a daughter of the priest of Midian; Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon was shown and acknowledged the power and majesty of the Most High God; Jonah was sent to Nineveh to preach repentance and the people there did repent and acknowledge God.

The story line of this religion and the men in God's plan for redemption brings us through the captivity in Egypt and the Exodus, or departure from Egypt, the conquest of the land that God had already promised them in Canaan, the continuing conflict between the people of Israel and their neighbors, the frequent worship of other gods and their return to the God of Heaven, the building of the empire through the times of Kings David and Solomon, the divided kingdom, the decline of the kingdoms, and the subsequent enslavement and emancipation. The stories of the King of Israel and Judah are told with regard to their faithfulness and following God's commandments. Whether these Kings purged the land of the gods of the pagans, or whether they were themselves wicked Kings is told in vivid detail. All of the sins of these kings are brought to light, even the sins of King David who was overall a man after God's own heart.

The laws and commandments to God's people were given to Moses beginning with the Ten Commandments listed in Exodus 20, and including the laws of worship, health and cleansing, food restrictions, social, moral and criminal. Rituals and priests were established and were to be maintained by the tribe and descendants of Levi, a son of Israel. These laws were recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and repeated in the book of Deuteronomy.

The prophets show the call for the return to God when the people strayed away, foretelling of the doom to come because the people did not listen to the prophets of God, and the foretelling of details of the promised Savior, as to when He would come, where He would be born, what His attributes would be, and even of His suffering and death as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. These prophecies are recorded many times in the New Testament as having been completed by Jesus birth, life, death, and resurrection from the dead.

There is evidence that there were people who had continued to be faithful to the Hebrew religion even as the period of the years B.C. (Before Christ or before the Christian era) ended and the period of time A.O. (C.E. - Christian era) began. In Luke chapter one, Zacharius a priest in mentioned, and his wife Elisabeth, were both righteous before God. Joseph and Mary are mentioned and Mary was said to be highly favored of the Lord. Cornelius was called a devout man and one that feared God, as recorded in Acts, chapter ten. In Acts, chapter 8, a man from Ethiopia, a man of great authority under the Queen of the Ethiopians had come to Jerusalem to worship and was found reading from the writings of Isaiah, the prophet of God.

This was the true religion of God, and there was no other religion equal to it, because this was the religion established and nurtured by the one true and Holy God. It's purpose was to protect the seed of the Savior and the laws and commandments, the holding of a nation together, the prophets, the Torah and the writings, the priests and religious system, worked together to accomplish this.

When the time was fulfilled as written of by the prophets, the Savior was born into this world, lived the perfect life, declared Himself by miracles and signs, taught His disciples, was rejected as foretold and was crucified, rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Mission accomplished! After His ascension His church was established by His disciples and the need and purpose for the Hebrew religion was complete.

Every scripture and prophecy speaking of the kingdom of Christ in the Hebrew period, every scripture before Acts chapter 2 in the establishment of the church (the Kingdom), speaks of it as in the future. Every scripture after Acts 2 speaks of it as being in existence. In **Daniel**

2:44 the prophecy is made that the Kingdom will be established. In **Matthew 3:1-2,** John the Baptist in found preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. In **Matthew 16: 18 & 19** Jesus said *"I will build my church"* and gave Peter the *"keys to the Kingdom of Heaven",* The Lord's church and His kingdom are mentioned as one and the same. In **Colossians 1:13** we read that the Father, (God) *"has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son"* This is past tense, meaning it is already done, not a future event.

The law of the Hebrew religion had completed its purpose and was nailed to the cross of Christ. **Colossians 2:14** *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross".* **Galatians 3: 16** to the end of the chapter explain the promise, the law, and the new faith in Christ very well. Excerpts from this passage read *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made"*- one seed- *"which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot dis-annul, that it should make the promise of none effect, for if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions,* ***until the seed should come*** *to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith* came, *we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which afterwards should be revealed. Wherefore the* ***law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*** *But after that faith is* come, ***we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*** *For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"*

In **2 Timothy 2:15** is says, *"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth".* It is necessary when looking at religions to keep in mind the time period of God's dealing with man. The early periods in the Bible tell of God's dealings with the Patriarchs,(Heads of families) After the law of Moses was established that people were to live under that law as defined in the Old Testament (covenant), The early books of the New Testament tell of the life of Jesus the Christ who lived under the law of Moses. The establishment of the church of Christ begins in Acts 2 and the remainder of the New Testament is written to establish and provide the ordinances of His church. The teachings found in these epistles written by the Apostles and Disciples of Christ are what are to be binding on the church today. The law of Christ and the commandments given in the New Testament has not been changed. Jude verse three tells Christians" that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and he goes on to warn us that men will come to corrupt the faith, even denying the only LORD God; and our Lord Jesus Christ" The Apostle Paul warned many times that there would be those that would pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In **Galatians 1:6-9** he wrote, *"I marvel that you are* so soon *removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which* is *not another; but there be* some *that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.* ***But though we. or an angel from heaven. preach any other gospel unto you . let him be accursed.*** As *we said before,* so say *I now again, If any man preaches any other gospel unto you than that you have received let him be accursed."*

Is any other religion as good as the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Is any other church or religious organization as good as the church of Jesus Christ? Does any other religion follow the promises of God as does the church of the New Testament? Is one religion as good as another? Does

another religion promise eternal life with God both here and in the afterlife to come? Does another religion offer peace within and the blessing of God's promises as does the religion of Jesus Christ?

The Hebrew religion is no longer needed, nor is it followed. The Christian religion has superseded it. The Jewish religion does not follow it and no longer follows the ritual , sacrifices, feast days, or priesthood of the Hebrew religion.

HINDUISM

Hinduism goes back to about 2000 BC., about the time of Abraham. It began in India. It is still practiced today in India, East and South Africa, Southeast Asia, the East Indies, and some in England and the Americas. Hinduism is a major world religion with many followers.

About 1500 BC, about the time of Moses, it was influenced toward the 'pantheon of gods' and by the 6th century BC Buddhism had an interaction with Hinduism. Over the course of time it has absorbed parts of many religions, and has a wide variety of beliefs and practices. It induces whatever all the people have believed and practiced and has become a social system extending into every aspect of life. Hinduism is defined by what people do, rather than what they think. Very few practices are shared by all.

Most Hindus worship Shiva, Vishnu, or Devi the goddess, but they also worship many other minor deities peculiar to a particular family or village.

They worship some major gods and like the Egyptians also have a wide variety of lesser gods. Magic spells and the belief in reincarnation are important to this religion. People are born into classes and have to try to achieve a better class the next time they live. They also may return as animals or plants, or even as a mineral.

Hindus believe the universe is a large enclosed sphere, within this sphere are concentric heavens, hells, oceans, and continents, and of course, India at the center. Time is first degenerative, going from the golden age, through two periods of decreasing goodness, to the present age. Time is cyclic, and at the end of each age, the universe is destroyed by fire and flood, and a new golden age begins. Human life is also cyclic. After death, the soul leaves the body and is reborn in another form, a person, animal, vegetable, or mineral. The quality of life in the new birth has been determined by the merit or demerits resulting from all the actions that the soul has performed in its past lives.

Their writings, in the form of 'Epics,' are from 200 BC to AD 500. There are hymns written around 1300 to 1000 BC to a pantheon of gods still used today. There is a textbook for sacrifice and a book of magic spells added around 900 BC. There are writings on the mystical and philosophical meditations about the meaning of existence and the nature of the universe.

The Vedas; these old writings are the original authority for all Hindus regarded as what has been heard from the gods. The Smriti, 'What is remembered' is orally preserved. There is no prohibition to making variations, rewording, or challenging the Smriti. There are other epics or stories which were written at much later dates, probably between 300 BC and 300 AD.

There were 3 classes of people (Brahman) -priestly, warrior, and general populace. A fourth class was added around 600 BC, the 'renouncer' whose goal is to be released from the stages the others have as goals and debts. The Brahman denotes the priest who speaks with cosmic power.

Vishnu is the supreme god, from whose navel a lotus sprang, giving birth to the creator who is called Brahma. Vishnu created the universe, separating heaven and earth. He has rescued it on a number of occasions. He is worshipped in various forms of incarnations, such as fish,the tortoise, or the boar. Other forms are the dwarf, a man-made lion, the Buddha, and some who were originally human heroes. There are gods and goddesses.

Our question has been, "Where did that come from?

There was, about 2000 BC, in the area now called India a people referred to as the 'Vedic Civilization'. About 1500 BC, Indo-Aryan tribes invaded India and brought with them their European pantheon of gods with a warrior ethic, very worldly, yet religious. By the 6th century BC Buddhism began to have an interaction with Hinduism.

There is no connection to the 'seed of the woman' of Genesis here, no promised savior, and life after death is conditional to past lives, yet there is no remembrance of the past life to base a knowledge of what it takes to gain a better afterlife. There is the same evidence of religion based on the works of that third party, and the host of fallen angels that follow him.

Jude in his little epistle tells us that we should *"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, for there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God in lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord , having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels, which kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even* as Sodom *and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, despise do minion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you. But these speak evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally* as *brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves* . Woe *unto them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain saying of Core."*

The works of the devil are everywhere in religion, yet we must be careful in reviewing various religions that we do not bring accusations, or make judgments which are not ours to make. If Michael the archangel would not bring accusation against the devil; we had best not do it either. His works we can see, his pattern of leading men like Cain, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the religions of the world on a path opposing God, distorting the original truth and the commandments of God as he did with Adam and Eve; providing alternative gods and rules of life, will lead us to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire as well.

Transcendental Meditation is a religion based on Hinduism. It was founded in 1959 in California by Maharishi Mahesh. It has its headquarters in Washington, D. C. USA. It uses Hindu writtings and the book, 'Science of Being and the Art of Living', and other writings by the founder.

Also based on Hindu teaching is **Hare Krishna,** a religion variation found by AC. Swami Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada. The variation was founded in 1965 in New York, N.Y. USA. Prabhupada distributed 'Back to the Godhead' magazine, his commentaries on Hindu scriptures.

Our question is **"Is one religion as good as another?"** Is Hinduism as good as those religions that were practiced in Chaldea and Egypt. Many aspects of pantheism and polytheism look very similar here. Of course, they did add a few features, but is this religion as good as what we need to find eternal life with God?

JUDAISM

THE HEBREW RELIGION AND JUDAISM

Judaism originated in the MOSAIC AGE, which was the period of time between the giving of the law by God to the people of Israel, until the time of the establishment of the Lord's church by the Apostles of Jesus after the ascension of Jesus into the heaven approximately AD 33.

Judaism as a term did not exist until there was a nation called Judah, well after the division of the kingdom into two parts called Israel and Judah. Coming from the world's oldest religion, given to man by God, following the patriarchs through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the time of the giving of the law, and down to the captivity of Israel and Judah, the Hebrews spoke of 'Torah', God's revealed instruction to Israel.

This instruction to Israel provided religious law, civil law, medical instruction, dietary law, and rules of cleansing and discipline. These laws are found in the existing books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. These laws mandated a way of life and a cultural system, along with the rite of circumcision which was instituted by god in covenant with Abraham. This covenant was for land and for the promise of the 'seed of the woman' to come from his descendants. It was necessary that they keep the line of Abraham through Jacob and down through the families of Israel until the Savior would come. Circumcision and records of family lineage were necessary and were followed closely, although sometimes and often the people forgot the only living God and worshipped other gods or none at all.

Judaism originated in the land of Canaan, also now known as Palestine. Judaism has always been a belief in a single God who created the universe and continued to govern it though His prophets, priests, and kings. **Deuteronomy 6: 4-9** provides the principal commandments and includes the words, *"Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."* This same God who created the world revealed Himself to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai and provided a written law commonly known as the 'Ten Commandments.' The other laws were given by God though Moses His prophet as they journeyed in the wilderness between Sinai and Jericho.

A major feature of this religion was the covenant, or contractual agreement between God and the descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac, and continuing down the line in the family of Jacob, who in later years was called Israel. The people of Israel agreed to a relationship with God where they would acknowledge and worship Him as their ruler, and obey His laws: God in turn would acknowledge Israel as His special people and be mindful of them. After many other nations had failed to acknowledge God and turned to gods of their own making, God turned to the family of Abraham and Israel to be His people and the seed to carry the promised Savior. Israel was to be a nation of priests and to live by divine laws, and would be a model, or a witness, to the other nations of God's gracious dealings with mankind.

Worship was to be conducted at the Tabernacle or later at the temple, and was conducted by the priests from the tribe of Levi. The form of worship continued the use of sacrifices for the sins of the people, as the patriarchs had done and would be necessary until the time when the perfect sacrifice, the 'Lamb of God', would come as told by the prophets. Israel's well being depended on their faithfulness to God and their obedience to His commandments. Historically we see that they often departed from these ways and were brought to judgment because of

this. This story demonstrates God's mercy, patience, and justice. Their experiences when forced into military defeat and finally into exile from their land of Israel; their time of suffering brought prophets who gave them hope with prophecies of the 'Messiah' or Savior who was to come. This Savior was to be of the house of King David and establish His Kingdom. Various prophecies revealed the details of His life, His birthplace, His suffering, and the minor events of His life which would prove who He was. He was to be called among other things 'Emmanuel' which means 'God with us'.

The roots of Judaism are in the Hebrew Bible. This Bible consisted of Torah, Pentateuch, and Neblim, the prophetic writing, and the Ketubin, which were the other writings. Judaism is not only a religion based on these old writings, but also on Rabbinical Tradition.

Since the destruction of the temple in AD 70 the place of worship was gone. The people had been scattered many times too many places. Synagogues had been used as places of instruction by Rabbis or teachers; Jewish sages studied the scriptures and created their own traditions as well. These Rabbis taught the written scriptures and faithfully transmitted oral traditions which they maintained that God had given to Moses at Sinai. This oral Torah is called Misnah and is that which is learned or memorized. The earliest written form of Misnah is from around the 3rd century AD and a Babylonian Talmud, from about the 6th century. The Talmuds are 'that which is studied' also called Germers in Aramaic. From the 16th century there are Rabbinical writings which include codification of Talmudic Law.

These early Rabbinical writings contain commentaries on the scriptures, some translations of the Pentateuch and other books of scripture. To study Torah means to study all of these materials, not only the Torah itself.

After AD 70 and their failed revolt in 132-135 led by Simon Bar Kokhba, Judaism suffered the loss of its priesthood, who were now discredited. The Jewish people had no control over their political destiny. The rabbinical movement emerged to strengthen their spiritual and community life. They taught conformity to the Torah and the Rabbinical Traditions in the daily life, though prayer, study, and observance of traditions in family life.

The traditions taught that a Jew could achieve salvation while waiting for God to complete His promise to bring about messianic redemption to all of Israel. Some Rabbis taught that if Jews complied with the Torah, the Messiah would be compelled to come. The synagogue which had been used before the destruction of the temple and since about 400 BC for study and instruction now became a place of worship.

The laws of the Mosaic Age of Temple Worship and sacrificing of animals, or the first fruits of the field, such as corn, were no longer followed.

Sabbaths and festivals are remembered. Prayers are to be said three times a day correspondig to the times of the day when sacrifices had been offered in the Jerusalem temple. Jewish worship services consist of standing prayer including petitions for welfare and the messianic restoration. A group of ten men forms a congregation for prayer. The head is covered during prayer as a gesture of respect to God. Pious Jews wear a head covering everywhere recognizing God's presence. The study of the Torah is also an act of worship. Passages from the scripture, Misnah, and Talmud are recited. Readings from the Torah are heard on Sabbath and festival mornings and the entire Torah will be read each year. The public reading of scripture constitutes a significant part of Synagogue Worship.

Mitzvah means commandment, and implies action in which the Jew responds to God. Mitzvot, the plural of Mitzvah in Torah are those religious observances between God and man, and between man and man. Social justice is Mitzvah, and the study of Torah is Mitzvah.

To Orthodox Jews, God is Spirit, a personal, eternal, all powerful, and compassionate God. To other Jews God is impersonal, and unknowable. There is no trinity, as God is one God. Jesus is seen either as an extremist false messiah, or a good but martyred Jewish teacher. Jesus is not considered at all and they do not believe He was the Messiah, Son of God, or that He was resurrected from the dead. Orthodox Jews believe Messiah will restore the Jewish kingdom and rule the earth.

A Jewish male is still circumcised on the eight day into the covenant God made with Abraham. But over the years, through the Medieval periods and to more recent times, gradual changes have occurred in Judaism. During the Medieval years there were influences from various areas of the world, and Judaism encountered the mystical and ethical - pietistic movements, and then the 13th century the Spanish Cabala. The Cabala is an esoteric theosophy (privately taught system of philosophy) which investigates unexplained laws of nature, and knowledge of God. It describes the nature of the Godhead and offers symbolic interpretation of the Torah and its commandments. It began in small, scholarly groups but became a major movement after the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. Its spread was facilitated by the mythical, messianic reinterpretation explained to the exiles as the meaning of their suffering and gave them a role in the story of redemption.

Various reformers of Judaism occurred in Europe particularly in Germany, where it took on a look of Protestantism, changing the sermons in worship, and rejecting much Jewish law and custom. The Rabbi took on many of the roles like a Protestant Minister and emphasized ethics and a belief in human progress in a blend of traditional Judaism and modern learning.

Zionism, a form of cultural and ethical nationalism, was gaining strength in eastern Europe, rooted in traditional Judaism and the hope of the Messiah and ultimately led to the re-creation of a state of Israel in 1948.

In the United States, "refugees" from Europe from 1881 to 1924 and more reent survivors of the Holocaust established communities and congregations. There are various forms of Judaism resulting from the adaptation of these immigrant groups to American life and the accomidation one to another. There are Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox affiliated nationally. Most congregations retain autonomy.

Reform Judaism was mostly German, but in America it was influenced by liberal Protestants and the Social Gospel movement. It was oriented to liberal philosophies with emphasis on its people. It maintained some of its religious culture.

Conservative Judaism respects traditional Rabbinic Jewish law and practice with a flexible approach. They maintain a sense of community and Jewish culture,

Orthodox Jews have variations, a traditional group, a Modern Orthodox who try to integrate tradition with a modern life, and some groups that attempt to shut out the modern world.

Judaism is no longer the religion of Moses, or David, or the covenant made with Israel in the

wilderness of Sinai. It has been changed considerably since the times of the captivities and the loss of the temple in Jerusalem. With the dispersion of the Jews and the influences of the world around them, adaptations were made to carry on the hope of the national religion, and that of a coming Messiah.

The ancient writings of the prophets which warned the people of Israel to return to God before the captivity, and the prophets who wrote during the captivity, pointed the Jewish people to the Messiah. Isaiah wrote in the first paragraph of his book, *"Hear,* 0 *heavens, and give ear,* 0 *earth, for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against* me...*sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers... they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem and He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.* 0 *House of Jacob come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."*

Jews know that this has not happened literally. We know that this has not happened literally. Why in this age or in future times would anyone want plowshares or pruning hooks? With the modern machinery for farming and pruning this would be a step backward. This is language to indicate that the people of God would learn and practice peace. A law would go out from Jerusalem.

Speaking to Ahaz in Isaiah seven the Lord offered a sign and said, *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel."* (God with us).

Again in **Isaiah 9:2,** *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined."* **And verse 6 and 7,** *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, and upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."*

Isaiah 53, actually starting in chapter **52:13** tells us more of what we can expect. **Jeremiah** tells us in chapter **31: 31,** *"Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."* **Verse 32,** "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they brake; although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord."

Ezekiel confirms this new covenant in chapter **16:60-62** and Daniel speaks of the kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. Many of the prophets from David to Malachi add something to the promise which started with Abraham of the Savior, the seed of the woman.

Judaism does not ascribe any divinity to any human being, and has the concept of 'one' God. We know there is only one God. **Deuteronomy 6:4** established this, *"Hear,* 0 *Israel; The Lord our God* is *one Lord;"* Jesus, whose life and subsequent death fulfilled the prophecies necessarily of

the Messiah, also claimed to be Messiah. In **John 4** while talking with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, *"The woman said to him, I know that* Messiah *cometh, which* is *called Christ, when he* is come, *he will tell* us *all things.* Jesus *saith unto her, I that speak unto you,* am *he."* Jesus claimed to be Messiah, and also to be God. In **John 10:30** He said, *"I and my Father are one,"* yet He declared to be the 'Son 'of God, and Son of David.(Man) **Matthew 16:16** Simon Peter said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

How can He be a son and still be one with the Father as God? **Colossians 1:15** gives us a clue but does not fully explain the mystery of the Godhead. Verse 15 speaking of the Son of God. *"Who* is *the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"* **Verse 16,** *"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were made by Him"* **Verse 17,** *"and He* is *before all things, and by Him all things* consist."

If Messiah comes and He is the seed of the woman, but not divine, how can He be worthy and sinless to be able to be a Savior? (like the innocent animal sacrifice God provided for Adam and Eve) No man can meet those criteria. If He comes and is God, no man can see Him since He is invisible to us. How would we know if He has come, if we can't see Him? As the image of the invisible God, we can see Him.

The Mystery of God and the details of His plans for us and all of His ways are not known to us. Only what He has chosen to reveal to man over the ages is known. The Apostle Paul in his writing to the **Ephesians chapter three and beginning in verse eight** said, *" ... that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and make all men* see *what* is *the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world* has *been hid in God, who created all things by* Jesus *Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ* Jesus *our Lord."* And going back to **Ephesians 1:10,** *"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him;"*

Is Judaism what we are looking for? Have the Jews missed the coming Messiah? Have they failed to recognize him, while looking for him? Messiah needs to fit the promise of the 'seed of the woman' and the writings of the prophets. He must also be "God with us." The letter from the Apostle Paul to the Galatians speaks of the seed of the woman. **Chapter 3: 16-18,** *"Now to Abraham and his* seed *were the promises made. He said not, And to* seeds, as *of many; but* as *of one, And to thy* seed, *which* is *Christ. (Messiah) And this I* say, *that the covenant, that* was *confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which* was *four hundred and thirty years after it* is *no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise."* In **verse 29** of the same chapter, *"And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's* seed, *and heirs to the promise."* **Chapter 4:4,** *"But when the fullness of the time* was *come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."*

It is necessary to want Him, in order to find Him. When the disciples of Jesus asked Him why He spoke to them in parables, as recorded in **Matthew 13: 10-13,** He said to them, *"Because it* is *given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it* is *not given... Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing,* see *not: and hearing,*

they hear not, neither do they understand." **Mark 4:12** adds to this, *"lest at any time they should be converted, and their* sins *should be forgiven them."* **Romans 11:25** speaks of the blindness of Israel... *"For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part* is *happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."*

Romans 10: 1-4, *"Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel* is, *that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righ*teousness, *have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,. For Christ* is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."*

The writing to the Hebrews whose author is not stated began his letter with these words, *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners* (Various times and ways) *spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto* us *by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, by whom He* a*l*so *made the worlds;"*

John 3:16, *"For God* so *loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

John 14:6, "Jesus *said to him,* (Thomas) *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by* me."

John 5: 39-40, *"Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me, that you might have life.*

John 5: 43-47, "*I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, which honor one another, and seek not the honor that* comes *from God only? Do not think that I will* accuse *you to the Father: there* is *one that accused you; even* Moses, *in whom you trust. For had you believed* Moses *you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?"*

We have asked the question about Evolution. Where did that come from? We have asked questions about the ancient religions of men. Where did they come from? We have asked is one religion as good as another? We ask now, Is Judaism still that religion of God, as God gave it to man? As God gave the covenant to Abraham and to Israel it was to lead to the Savior. (Messiah) The prophets pointed to Messiah and provided details of what to look for. Jesus filled those requirements and claimed to be that Messiah. If you do not believe that Jesus is that Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God, then you need not look into the church of Christ as He established it, nor will you need to look at the various divisions in 'Christianity' to learn if one of them is better than another.

TOTEMISM

Totemism is no longer regarded as a religion, and has no real significance in our study of religions. Totemism does have some similarities to a current world view that assigns the various powers of nature to the relationship between human beings and our environment. Sometimes that relationship can reach into the realm of religion with its tendency toward worship of nature and its systems. Sometimes this is an undue reverence for mankind and our dominion over the things of nature.

Totemism was sometimes used as a way of sorting and separating various social groups within a society. The society used names and identities from various plants and animals.

We have all seen or heard of Totem Poles. These are made showing objects, such as birds, animals, or plants in various combinations and carved to represent a system of ideas, or symbols. The symbols assumed some relationship between an individual or social group to the objects in some way.

There were some prohibitions against harming, eating, or touching the items represented on the totem.

The totems were found in Africa, Guinea, Malaysia, among the Australian Aborigines, and Native American people (which we call Indians.)

ZOROASTRIANS

Zoroastrianism, religion founded in ancient Persia by the prophet Zoroaster, also called Zarathustra. The doctrines preached by Zoroaster are preserved in his metrical Gath as, (psalms) which form part of the sacred scriptures known as the Avesta Tenets. His teachings became the guiding principles of Persian civilization.

Zoroaster lived about 600BC according to teZoroaster lived about 600BC according to the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrian religion. He was born in northern Persia, which is Iran today.

Zoroaster began to have visions at an early age. His early manhood was spent in the wilderness where worked out the principles of Zoroastrianism. At the age of 30 he began preaching his new religion abou supreme being called Ahura-Mazda, but had little success in having people listen to him. At converted King Vishtaspa, of Chorasmia; now in Western Turkey. The king spread this new religion by for Zoroaster lived to the age of 77. Cyrus the Great and Darius the Great, the mighty and famous rulers spread this religion around their empire.

The basic tenets of the Gathas consist of a monotheistic worship of Ahura - Mazda. (the 'Lord Wisdom') Ahura - Mazda speaks 'as friend to friend'. The God of the Gathas has six names: Good thought, Beauty of Holiness, Righteousness, Perfect health, Dominion, and Immorality.

Zoroaster taught that even the wicked are eventually saved. The righteous go directly to paradise, while the wicked must first be punished in hell. The Gathas teach that the greatest virtues are pure thought, good words, and righteous deeds.

The priests of the ancient Medes and Persians were called Magi. After the rise of Zoroaster, the Magi became priests of the Zoroastrian religion. They were astrologers, interpreters of dreams, and givers of omens. The words 'magic' and 'Magician' are from the Greek words originating from the concept of the work of the Magi.

Mithras was a god of the ancient Persians, and also of the Aryans of India. In the Zoroastrian religion he was the angel of light who fought on the side of Ahura - Mazda against the forces of evil. The Persians carried this belief to Assyria and Asia Minor, where people identified Mithras with the sun. **Mithraism** took on the form of a religion of its own,; a mystery religion with elaborate rites and ceremonies. It spread to Rome in 75 BC and became a principal competitor of Christianity for 200 years. (The ancestors of the Persians, sub-group of the Inda-European peoples, and invaders of northern India were of the same stock, and they are similar to those in Hinduism.) Cattle are also considered sacred animals as in Hinduism. Worship of ancestors, nature spirits, the fire god, and other deities are similar to that of Hinduism.

The structural complexity of the Gathic scheme has best been explained by the assumption that Zoroaster mixed or combined two religious systems. The first is re quite different. Many natural objects and mythical creatures, as well as ancestor spirits are worshipped . The figure of Ahura - Mazda here resembles the god Varuna or Asura, Lord of the most ancient Indian compositions.

The Vendidad is a part of the Avesta. And gives the laws of the religion. It contains some

useful laws of hygiene, which were available before the days of modern medicine.

The Gathas and the Seven Chapters form part of the liturgy called the Vasna. This incorporated the Aryan polytheistic paganism into Zoroastrianism. Among these deities is Anahita, a fertility and river goddess.

Probably the first Persian king to recognize the religion proposed by Zoroaster was Darius 1. His inscriptions are full of the praises of Ahura - Mazda; he stresses rationality and seems to regard Lie as a world force. His son, Xerxes 1, was also a worshipper of Ahura - Mazda. Artaxeres 1 (reigned 465-425BC) was also a worshipper of Mazda. Artaxeres 2 (reigned 409-358 BC) venerated Ahura - Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita; in his reign the first Persian temples were built. The new Persian dynasty of the Sassanids (AD 224-641) established Zoroastrianism as the state religion of Persia.

After Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Zoroastrianism began to die out, but was revived during the early days of Christianity. The teachings of Zoroaster are the basis of the Parsi religion in India. Some still recite the Avestan liturgy and tend the sacred fires, and a few still follow the Magian doctrine of placing corpses on raised edifices (called towers of silence) to be prey of vultures.

There are a number of sects of Zoroastrians. One group are fire worshippers in Iran called Ghebers.

Persia was gradually converted to Islam after its conquest by the Arabs in the 7th century. Zoroastrianism survived, however, in small communities of Gabars (a derogatory term coined by the Arabs) in the mountainous region of Yezd and Kerman.

There is a mix of various religious thought in these religions and influence from one religion to another, but they do not follow from a source from the creation of mankind, or provide a savior for the sins of mankind, or a promise of a future with God in the here-after. Would these religions be as good as any other? What was the source of religious ideas by Zoroaster?

BUDDHISM

Buddha lived around the period from 563 to 483 BC. He was born in Kapilavastu, India. This is now in the area of the city of Napal. Buddha was taught to be a warrior and a ruler. He married at an early age and participated in the life of the court. Buddha found this worldly, carefree existence dull and self indulgent. He had an early inclination toward meditation. He began wandering in search of enlightenment.

While wandering in Northern India, he first investigated Hinduism and took instruction with Brahman teachers. Hinduism has some extremely rigid exercises in religious duties and austerities toward worldly desires. Buddha, whose family name was Gautama, found the Hindu caste system repellant, and ascetic way of life futile. About 526 BC in a place that is now Buddha Gaye in the state of Bihar, he was sitting under a tree and experienced the great enlightenment he sought. This enlightenment revealed the way of salvation from suffering. The name Buddha means 'Enlightened One.' His name was Siddhartha Gautama Buddha.

Soon afterward he preached a sermon that is still preserved today, which contains many elements of Buddhism.

Tradition has it that in the year 533 he encountered a sick man, and aged man, and a dead man. Suddenly he noticed and deeply realized that suffering is the common lot of mankind. He then determined to live as a begging man devoting himself exclusively to a religious life, living a calm and serene life, forsaking wealth, family, and power in a quest for truth. Being far from the land of Israel, it was not likely that he would know what God was doing to preserve the seed of Abraham, and having descended from people who had already rejected God, he would not know that truth that leads to life with God; but it is always a good idea to seek truth. His decision to change his life is known to Buddhism as the Great Renunciation.

He gathered disciples and traveled through the Ganges River valley teaching his doctrines, gathering more followers. He then established monastic communities that admitted anyone, regardless of caste. He returned for a brief time to his home town and while there, converted his father, his wife, and other family members to his beliefs. He spent about 45 years converting people to his teachings. He began a new religion during this time. His teachings have influenced many people for nearly 2500 years. He died at age 80. All of the surviving accounts of his life were written many years after his death by his followers.

His teaching against self indulgence, the caste system, and extremes of spiritualism and asceticism also influenced the Hindu religion.

Buddhism was a monastic movement within the dominant Brahman tradition of Hinduism. It quickly developed its own direction. Rejecting significant aspects of Hindu philosophy, the authority of its priesthood, and the Vedic scriptures, while denying that a person's spiritual worth depended on his birth status.

Buddhism has been significant in Asia, from India east through Burma.

Four Noble Truths are the core of Buddha's enlightenment:

1. Life is suffering, human existence is essentially painful from birth to death. There is no relief in death as life is a cycle. Leading to rebirth.
2. Suffering is caused by ignorance of the nature of reality and the attachment and grasping to life.
3. Suffering can be ended by overcoming ignorance and attachment.
4. There is an eight-fold path to suppressing suffering consisting of the right views, intentions, speech, actions, livelihood, efforts, right mindedness, and right contemplation. These eight are in three categories that form the Buddhist faith; Morality, Wisdom, and Concentration.

Buddha taught the denial of a permanent soul. Existence being characterized as having no soul, no permanence, but with suffering. He taught a doctrine of dependent origination. Ignorance in a previous life creates a tendency for the mind and senses to lead to craving and clinging to existence. This condition triggers a process of becoming once again in a renewed cycle of birth, old age, death, and a connection between one life and the next, in a stream of existences. These renewed existences are not permanent life, but a passing of the soul from one life to another.

Closely related to this belief of recycled life is the teaching of 'Karma'. Karma consists of the ethical consequences of a person's acts. There is a universal justice in that good deeds are rewarded and evil deeds are punished in the actions leading to rebirth. This karmic process operates through a moral law rather than a divine judgment. The karma determined your species, beauty, longevity, wealth, intelligence, and social status. According to the Buddha, karma of varying types can lead to your rebirth as a human, a ghost, an animal, or even a devil or a Hindu god.

Buddhism does not assign the gods any special significance as they are in the same process as all other creatures. While they are gods they are living in heaven in a long and pleasurable condition. Even the gods are subject to death and a rebirth of some other, maybe a lower state of existence. Gods are not in control of human destiny, nor were they the creators of it. **There is no value in offering sacrifices or prayers to them.** Human existence is to be preferred, as enlightenment is only possible for humans.

The ultimate goal in the Buddhist cycle is to be released from existence with its inherent suffering. To achieve this is called Nirvana. Nirvana is the enlightened condition where greed, hatred, and ignorance are gone. This would not be a condition of total annihilation but of a state that is indescribable.

Over time there have been changes and divisions of Buddhism too. Zen and Pure Land were the most important of these Zen was developed in China and later in Japan. Zen advocates the practice of meditation as the way a sudden, intuitive realization of the inner Buddha nature in you. Zen was founded by an Indian monk named Bodhidharma who went to China in the year 520 AD. Zen emphases practice and personal enlightenment rather than a study of doctrine or scripture.

Pure Land stresses faith and devotion to the Buddha of infinite light. This is the means to a rebirth in an eternal paradise known as Pure Land.

There is also a Japanese Buddhism named after its founder, Nichiren. From the 13th century AD this sect believed that the Lotus Sutra contains the essence of Buddhist teaching. By repeating a formula *"Homage to the Lotus Sutra"* the devotee may gain enlightenment.

Worship in Buddhism is individual rather than congregational. An expression of faith has been the reciting of the three refuges. "/ *take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the dharma (doctrine), and I take refuge in the Sangra."* The Sangra is the monastic community of various orders. Some honor Buddha by walking around a dome-like sacred structure carrying flowers and incense. For some, images and temple altars serve as a focus for worship. Prayer and chanting are common acts of devotion as are offerings of fruit, flowers, and incense.

Buddhism has the ability to adapt to changing conditions and cultures, but always opposed too materialism.

Is Buddhism as good as Hinduism? Is Buddhism as good as the religion of the ancient Egyptians or the Chaldeans? Is one religion as good as the another? Does Buddhism connect to our origins? Did we ever have an origin or has recycling been forever? Does it provide forgiveness from sin, or just relief from suffering? Does Buddhism ever give promise of eternal life with the God of creation, or just a temporary existence with some gods.

Would a person of the Buddhist or Hindu persuasion finding themselves as a human now, living in the Christian age, be able to trust Jesus Christ who suffered for mankind, pass through their personal suffering; obey the principles of the New Covenant in Christ , and have the hope of a permanent life with God , as the Christians do? Would this end the cycle of rebirths? Would this belief in Christ end the cycle of existence that Buddha believed in, and that the Hindus teach?

CONFUCIAN

Confucianism is a major system of thought in China. It developed from the teachings of Confucius and his disciples. Confucius lived in the period of time approximately 551 to 479 BC. He was a philosopher in China, a scholar, and a teacher who taught the principles of good conduct, practical wisdom, and proper social relationships. He taught good government with honest and educated officials. Confucianism has influenced the Chinese attitude toward life and social standards. It has spread from China into Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, and has some interest to scholars in Western countries.

Confucius established a school about 530 BC in which he taught history, poetry, government, music, divination, and socially correct behavior.

Although Confucianism became an official ideology of the Chinese state, it has never existed as an established religion with a church or priesthood. It does need to be evaluated in our question, "Is one religion as good as another?" Not as a religion, but because many have thought of it as a religion over time, it may be good to look at what it teaches. Confucius was honored as a great teacher but he was never worshipped as a god, nor did he ever claim divinity. The temples built to honor Confucius were not built to worship, but as public places for annual ceremonies such as the philosopher's birthday. Several attempts to deify Confucius have failed because of the secular nature of the philosophy.

The Confucian 'Bible' would be nine ancient Chinese works handed down by Confucius and his followers. Some existed from ancient time many centuries before Confucius. These nine writings are from two groups; the Five Classics and the Four Books.

The Five Classics include a 'Book of Changes' which is a manual of divination probably as old as the eleventh century BC. A supplement which may have been written by Confucius or his disciples is philosophical. Another of the classics is a 'Book of History'; a collection of ancient historical documents. There is a 'Book of Poetry' with ancient poems, a 'Book of Rites' which deal with principles of conduct for private and public ceremonies. There is a work on 'Spring and Summer Annals' which may be the only work complied by Confucius. It is a chronicle of major historic events in feudal China from the 8th century BC to the days nearing the death of Confucius in the 5th century BC.

The Four Books were complied by Confucius and Mencius, one of the followers of Confucius. The 'Analects' is a collection by Confucius that form the basis of his moral and political philosophy. The 'Great Learning' and the 'Doctrine of the Mean' contain some of the philosophical utterances of Confucius arranged with comments by his disciples. The fourth book contains the teachings of Mencius and is called the 'Book of Mencius'.

The writings of Confucius present philosophies on love, goodness, humanity, righteousness, piety, integrity, and propriety. In politics he advocated a paternalistic government in which the sovereign is honorable and benevolent and the subjects are respectful and obedient. The ruler is then a good example for the people. Confucius upheld the theory that 'in education, there is no class distinction."

After Confucius died, Mencius continued the ethical teaching of Confucius stressing the

innate goodness of man. He did acknowledge that man has become depraved by his own destructive behavior, and contact with an evil environment. In politics, Mencius advanced the idea of the people's supremacy in the state, which may also be called democracy.

Another line of thought emerged about this time represented by Hsuntsu. He contented that a person is born with an evil nature, but can be regenerated through moral education. He taught that character should be molded by an orderly observance of rites and by the practice of music.

For many centuries Confucianism was taught in varying degrees, sometimes almost neglected and sometimes restored. but always had a firm hold on Chinese intellectual and political life.

During the Song (Sung) dynasty from 960 to 1279 AD a new system of Confucian thought began blending a mixture of Buddhist and Taoism elements. This school of thought was known as Neo-Confucianism. The line of thought included interest in theories of the universe and the origin of human nature. Neo-Confucianism also split into two schools stressing 'law' in one and 'mind' in the other.

During the Ch'ing dynasty from 1644 to 1911 there was a strong reaction to law schools of Neo-Confucian thought. Ch'ing scholars advocated a return to a more authentic Confucianism before it was mixed with Buddhist and Taoist ideas.

After the victory by the Chinese Communist in 1949 many traditions based on Confucianism were put aside. The family system which was revered in the past has been de-emphasized. Official campaigns against Confucianism were organized in the late 1960's and early 1970's. During the Communist rule few Confucian classics have been published.

TAOISM

Taoism has been a Chinese philosophy and religious system originating sometime around 500 BC. Followers of Taoism are called Taoists. It is one of three great Chinese religions and had been second to Confucianism in the number of followers.

The Chinese word Tao means 'the way or channel,' and Taoists believe that everything in the universe is designed to move in an ordered and harmonic way. According to Taoism, man has lost 'his way' and created disharmony by substituting his own designs. In our studies of various religions we should agree that this is true. The way has been lost and man has created many religions as substitutes for the way shown from the beginning of creation.

Taoism teaches that man can find harmony by simplicity and humility. Taoists believe that a person will regain happiness by giving himself up to the great Tao. A person should avoid all distinction and honor, be good to all things, and be humble and quiet, like the forces of nature. An individual should ignore the dictates of society and seek only to conform to the pattern of the universe, the Tao, (the way). The way is not described in words and to be in accord with the way, nothing strained, artificial, or unnatural is done. By emptying oneself of all doctrines and knowledge, being in compliance with the impulses of one's own nature, one achieves unity with Tao and derives a mystical power which enables one to transcend all mundane distinctions, even that of life and death. {There seems to be an oxymoron here, a self contra diction, if all teaching and knowledge of Taoism were achieved how would anyone know how to practice emptying oneself?)

More simply stated, Taoism teaches that fate determines the direction and the outcome of each life. It is useless to struggle against your destiny. Happiness is a result of submitting to whatever happens. To resist this power working on you will make you happy, while submitting to the power is to be happy.

According to tradition, the Chinese philosopher Loatse founded Taoism and wrote the Tao Te Ching, Additional ideas may have been added around 369-286 BC by many thinkers, including Chuang Tzu. Taoism was mostly philosophical in its early stages, but turned to magic and superstitions later. Its ideas of returning to nature for peace and harmony has had a great influence in the Far East and in the religions there.

Taoism has developed a cult in which immorality was sought though magic and the use of various elixirs. Experimenting in alchemy developed a general hygiene system seeking to pro long life by regular breathing and concentration, to prevent disease and promote longevity.

About the 2nd century AD Taoist organizations concerned with faith healing began to appear. Under the influence of Buddhism they adopted monasticism and a concern for spiritual afterlife, rather than just longevity of life. Taoism had been the official religion of China for a few brief periods. Taoism has lost its clergy when ousted by the Communist in 1927 and Taoism has merged with Buddhism and other religions in some areas.

Earth was an object of worship by building mounds of soil in various districts to which the people, who were mostly farmers, bowed down. The Yellow River and mountain of China were objects of worship also. Later the heavens were also added to the worship, followed

by the worship of localized spirits, man eating demons, vampires, ghouls, and gigantic devils with horned foreheads, long fangs, and red fuzzy hair.

Ancestor worship is fundamental to Taoism. Dead ancestors were conceived as living and powerful spirits. The dead being dependent on the living and the bond to the living was strengthened by prayers to them, and sacrifices made in their honor. The living were also dependent on the dead, as dead ancestors could help a family prosper, or if displeased could inflict punishment and poverty.

The ancestral shrine became the center of family life. The shrine would have a name of ancestors inscribed and have a place for it in the home. Wealthy families had family temples. Food sacrifices were offered, and ceremonies would take place in the presence of the ancestors here. The father of the family serves as priest. The worship is patriarchal.

Taoism is in decline under Communist rule and was declared dead by the government, but it is not dead, and there are occasional protests indicating that it is only suppressed and may have a revival one day.

Again, we ask the questions; Is Taoism as good as any other religion? Is a religion that was founded around 500 BC going to be the religion that will lead us to our sources of life, and provide for our afterlife? Does this religion in any way tie in to the origins of life from God? Does this religion bring us to or even mention the 'seed of the woman' who can be our savior? Are our ancestors going to help us find what they were not able to find doing their time on earth? Or, did they really find 'the way'? Jesus claimed, as recorded in **John 14: 6-7,** *"I* am *the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, (God) but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also... "*

Yes, the way has been lost, but can be found by retracing from the sources of history to Jesus, who is 'the way'.

CHURCH of CHRIST

It is interesting to note how many religions and denominations of 'Christianity' are listed in the encyclopedias ... but the church of Christ is not even listed in many of them. The World Book does have an entry separate from the listing of Christianity and this is what the 1960 issue said...

"Churches of Christ" are a group of religious congregations that trace their beginnings to the times of the apostles. Members believe that the first Church of Christ was established on Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. They claim that the church spread throughout the Roman world and then declined until the 1800's. Then Thomas Camp bell (1763-1854), his son Alexander (1788-1866), and their associates restored it.

Doctrines. The Churches of Christ regard Christ as the founder, head, and Savior of the church. They regard the Campbells as restorers of the primitive church. They contend that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom. When it is faithfully preached and obeyed, without addition or subtraction, it will produce true Christians, or the church of Christ.

The churches consider the whole Bible to be inspired by God, but believe that the Old Testament was binding only in earlier times. They accept the New Testament as their sole rule of faith and practice. They maintain that the New Testament sets forth faith, repentance, confession, and baptism as the conditions of salvation. Their items of worship, practiced each Lord's Day, include singing, preaching, contributing money, and observing the Lord's Supper.

Organization. There are about 18,000 independent Churches of Christ (1960), with about 15,000 preachers. A group of elders presides over each church, and a group of deacons serves each. Most of the churches are in the southern and southwestern United States, with the largest number in Texas and Tennessee. The churches conduct extensive evangelical pro grams. They support about 200 workers in more than 50 countries. They also operate 4 senior colleges, 10 junior colleges, more than 20 Bible Schools, and several orphanages and old age homes. The church publishes a number of periodicals and religious papers. For membership in the United States, see Religion (table)." BC Goodpasture

It may be ironic that the church belonging to Christ is not easily identified in today's society. Each congregation being 'autonomous' having no central organization or 'spokesman' does make the Lord's church a little peculiar. The church that has developed as a fellowship of believers with the term 'church of Christ' is the singular form of *"churches of Christ"* found in **Romans 16:16.** This is the legal name used to establish a legal congregation according to the laws of the land, and may be the most descriptive term of who the church belongs to, but it is not the exclusive name given in the Holy Scriptures. In **Corinthians 1:2** it is *"church of God"* **Hebrews 12:23** calls it *"church of the Firstborn"* and in **Acts 20:28 ASV** it is *"church of the Lord"* (King James Version used unless otherwise specified.) The term used most often, especially in the book of Acts, is *"the church".* ***"Church of Christ" is not only a* name, *it describes a possession,*** and it still belongs to Jesus, the Son of God.

A scriptural New Testament church is a <u>spiritual institution</u> of divine origin. The membership roll is kept in a book, not on the books of the local congregations on this earth, but in *"the lamb's* (Jesus) *book of life"* mentioned in **Revelation 13:8** and **Revelation 20:15.**

All creation and history (His-story) exist with Christ in view. *"Who* was *foreknown indeed be fore the foundation of the world, but* was *manifested at the end of time for your* sake." **1 Peter 1; 20.** *"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* **Revelation 13:8** and *"According to His own purpose and grace, which* was *given to* us *in Christ* Jesus *before time eternal."* **2 Timothy 1:9.** The church was planned by God from the beginning of time. In **Ephesians 3: 9-11** it is recorded. *"And to make men* see *what* is *the fellowship of the* mystery *which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by* Jesus *Christ; To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God., according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ* Jesus *our Lord:"*

During all the centuries before Christ, the church was only a plan in God's mind, but age by age, God prepared man for the time when the church would become a reality. Remember **Genesis 3:15** and **Genesis 12:1-3** when God promised the seed of the woman and when God called Abraham and promised that though his descendants all people would be blessed. The Hebrew prophets foresaw the coming church, often described as a kingdom. **(2 Samuel 7:12-16** -David's seed; **Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 7:14)** It would bear the design of its Divine Originator, never become outdated, and be universal, unrestricted by country, politics, racial, or social barriers.

Christ was born as a man, as predicted by many prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, and somewhere around the year 26 or 30 AD (depending on whose calendar you use) while in the city of Caesarea Philippi (Banias) He announced that He would build His church. *"And the* gates *of hell (Hades)* <u>*shall not*</u> *prevail against it."* **Matthew 16:16-19.** Less than a year later He was betrayed, condemned, crucified, and buried, **(Mark 14:15)** but on the third day He was raised from the dead **(Luke 24:1:35).** Seven weeks later after His resurrection and ascension into heaven the predicted church was established in Jerusalem on the Jew's day of Pentecost. (Pentecost was the day to remember the slain lamb back in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and Jesus was that final slain 'lamb'.)

To this world wide audience the Gospel - the Good News that a new age had dawned, the Christian age, Jesus was proclaimed as the resurrected Lord and Christ. **(Acts 2:22-36)** On that day 3000+ persons believed that Jesus was Lord and Christ, and they gladly obeyed the command to be baptized. On that day the church, the Kingdom that God had long promised had come. **(Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Hebrews 12:28).** The church is the total of all people of every age who have obeyed Christ and committed themselves to Him.

Christ and the church are inseparable, He is the head, and the church is the body. **(Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 2:16)** The head depends on the body to carry out its functions and the head unifies and coordinates the different organs of the body. In **John 14:26** Jesus told His apostles (disciples) that the Holy Ghost would be sent to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance that He had said to them. The apostles and disciples put to writing the New Testament which is the rule and practice of the church.

Almost twenty centuries have passed. Many things have changed, including man's ideas about the church. To some the church is a building, some think of it as a "denomination or religion sect." A dictionary may list as its first definition of "church " as a "building for public worship", <u>but the church is people,</u> those who follow the same message as proclaimed in the

first century. The response to the message must still be the same. Man today must do the same things that the people of the first century had to do to become members of Christ's body. The church today is still governed by Christ, its head. Worship is to be expressed in the same acts of faith and obedience as was the practice then. God's plan for His church is just as relevant to modern man.

But this is the space age; this is an age of progress, an age of explosion in knowledge. Man looks ahead, not backward, he is moving forward in science, and out into space. Why should He have a church that is 2000 years old? The life of Christ, His teachings, His death and resurrection were all happenings of the same century in which the church began. Looking back to Christ as man has done over the past twenty centuries has been the most progressive thing man could do. Christ is always contemporary, up to date in every generation. Most of the schools and hospitals that have caused the 'knowledge exposition' were formed and begun by 'Christian' organizations. *Christ has not changed.* **(Hebrews 13:8)** What He did for man's salvation was done completely, never to be repeated, once and for all.

But what about Man? Has he changed? Fundamentally, man is still the same. He has the same basic needs and desires, still has the same drives and ambitions, still the same capacity for doing good or evil, still looks for happiness, and still likes to be in control of his destiny.

Man's condition has not changed. Like Adam and Eve, like Aaron who made the golden calf, and the people of Israel who corrupted themselves in every generation going after gods of their own making, like all the people of the churches in the New Testament era who distorted God's Word in every way, man has discovered no cure for sin and are still influenced by that 'evil one'. The sins of Babel, Jerusalem, Corinth, and Rome are the same as the sins of to day's Tokyo, London, New York, Nashville, Tennessee, and your town. As in the first century, mankind needs Christ on which to base life. We still need direction, purpose, unity, and the love of Christ in our life.

As we look at whether 'One Religion is as Good as Another', lets look at some of these differences. Christianity is the only religion still in existence founded by God. It is the only religion where its head and founder are not in the grave. It is the only religion that can remove sin from the 'Book of Life'. It offers eternal life with God and a better life on this earth; a peace that passeth understanding. Christ is able to meet man's needs.

It takes faith and courage to believe this story that began with Adam and Eve and ends with you in heavenly places. This is especially true because popular beliefs, concepts, and impression of 'church' are far removed from what the church was established to be. It will continue to take faith and courage to move 'against the tide'. It took faith and courage for followers of Christ to move through every age of persecutions and trials. It took faith and courage for Paul and Peter and the other disciples to bring the word to their generation and to ours. It took blood and sweat for Christ to fulfill His love for us and to rescue us from the consequences of our sins. But the glory of Christ and the church is reason enough. Faith and courage grow out of knowing Christ as Lord.

First Thessalonians 5:21, *"Prove all things; hold fast that which* is *good."* **Romans 12:2,** *"Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what* is *good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."*

James 3:16 to 4:10, *"For where envying and strife* is, *there* is *confusion and eve,y evil work. But wisdom that* is *from above* is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and* easy *to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, and the fruit of righ*teousness is *sown in peace of them that make peace. From whence* come *wars and fightings among you? Do they not* come *even of your lust that war in your members? You lust and you have not: you kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war; yet you have not, because you* ask *not. You* ask, *and receive not, because you* ask amiss, *that you may con*sume *it upon your lusts. You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that the friendship of the world* is *enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be friend of the world* is *enemy of God. Do you think that the scripture* says *in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in* us *lusteth to envy. But he giveth more grace . Wherefore he said* , *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourself therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: Jet your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

Life's greatest tragedy is not losing a game. Losing a sale, or health, wealth, or even life itself. Life's greatest loss would be losing the gift of eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the seed of the woman, promised as Savior from the beginning, after man's sin and rebellion against God. Without Him there is no meaning to life or existence on earth. Without Him we have no advocate before God and would have to pay the penalty for our sins with separation from God eternally. Without Him there is no source of our daily bread or our spiritual bread, or sustenance; no inheritance with God, and no hope.

Is there any other religion that connects us to God? Is there another religion that can be traced to our origins, and God's dealings with mankind as recorded in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible? Is there another religion that offers life after death forever with God in a heavenly place prepared for us, and has provided the sacrifice for sin? Is there another religion that forgives sins and brings us through the sufferings we endure on this planet? ***Christianity is not about religion, it is about a living Savior and a relationship with a living God.***

Was it Alexander Campbell who began the churches of Christ 150 some years ago? Was it Jesus the Savior, the Christ who originated His church? If so, when? How can your answer to this question be proved? Is it still possible that a church which originated in the first century could exist in its purity?

Why are there so many denominations in what is called Christianity today? Are these denominations still a part of the whole? Was Jesus the founder of these denominations? If Jesus founded only one church, how can I tell which one it is? What are His requirements to be a part of His church? How many denominations does it take to make a whole church like the

original? What about Jews? Muslims? Hindus? What will the eternal judge of mankind say about who will be saved to live with God and who will not? Could it be true that one must believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of mankind to be saved, and have forgiveness of sins? What is meant by believing in Christ? Does belief require obedience to the commandments of Jesus? Is it important what we believe? Is one church or belief system as good as another?

ZEN BUDDHISM

Zen is a Chinese way of accomplishing the Buddhist goal of seeing the world just as it is, with an attitude, or state of consciousness which grasps no thought or feelings, where thoughts leave no trace. This attitude is called 'no mind'. Zen students it in meditation, while they simply observe without mental comment, whatever may be happening.

Zen is not a religion or philosophy is in the usual sense. It has little to teach and has no rituals. It is a method of discipline of the mind.

Zen or Ch'an is a Buddhist school that developed in China and later in Japan by combining the Mahayana form of Buddhism originating in India and the Chinese philosophy of Taoism. Zen and Ch'an are respectively, the Japanese and Chinese ways, which designate a state of mind roughly equivalent to contemplation or meditation. This is a state of consciousness of a Buddha, one whose mind is free from the assumption that the distinct individuality of oneself and other things is real. Buddhism holds that separate things exist only in relation to one an other. Reality is that the world is ' just as it is' apart from any specific thought about it.

Zen was introduced into China by the Indian monk Bodhidharma. Zen has had a strong influence upon the arts and crafts in Far Eastern countries because its point of view is connected with action rather than theory and with direct vision of nature rather than interpretation. Chinese black ink painting during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) became one of the finest artistic expressions of the Zen school. Zen is studied in semi-monastic communities to which students are admitted for limited periods. The Zen monastery is a training school combining meditation with manual labor, with special attention to the arts and crafts.

The two main sects of Zen were brought to Japan by Japanese who studied in China. The Buddhism monk, Eisai introduced Rinzai Zen in 1191. and the Buddhist monk Dogen introduced Soto Zen in 1227. Both sects of Zen continue to flourish in Japan. Under the influence of Zen, the Japanese brought the art of ceremonial teas drinking to refinement and developed a distinctive kind of poetry, a brief verse form called Haiku.

After World War Two and the occupation of Japan an interest developed in Europe and the United States in Zen, especially among artists, philosophers, and psychologists.

Is Zen Buddhism as good as Buddhism? Is Zen Buddhism an improvement over Buddhism? Does Zen Buddhism connect to our origins? Does it provide forgiveness from sins against God, our creator? Does Zen Buddhism ever give a promise of eternal life with God or connect us to the promise of a Savior as the religions of Judaism and Christianity do? Is this religion as good as any other?

CATHOLIC

HISTORY OF CATHOLICISM
(DEVELOPMENT OF THE PAPACY)

52 AD+/- Apostle Paul predicted that "some *shall depart from the faith."* (1 Timothy 4:1-6; 2, Timothy 4:3-4 & Acts 20:28-30) He listed some of the teachings that would be done, forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats, and doctrinal departures.

115 AD First mention of the term *'catholic'* meaning universal, by Ignatius.

200 AD Gifts began to be offered to commemorate the martyrs, eventually led to *'veneration of saints'* and prayers for the dead.

250 AD Desire for more ritual in the church resulted in the use of priests, then use of elaborate vestments and special ceremonies practiced. Many of the heathen customs, special days, and pageantry incorporated.

253 AD First *'pouring'* instead of 'immersion' considered as baptism, for a person who was ill.

325 AD Council of Nicaea, 'official' recognition for one elder to be leader of the others (bishop) and should rule the district of that church. Bishops of Rome and Constantinople given greater honor than others. The Nicene Creed originated.

350 AD Remembrance of Lord's Supper developed into saying 'mass' through Latin words, "Ite missa est" a statement used to ask those not partaking to leave. Eventually *'missa'* or 'mass' came to name the communion service.

400 AD Bishop of Rome was first called *"Pope"* but not regarded as *'head of the church'.*

410 AD Temporal authority gained at fall of Rome as church was only body strong enough to rule.

476 AD Roman Empire divided into Eastern and Western, Eastern capital was Constantinople (Byzantium), Western capital was Rome. Bishops of these cities considered leading 'Metropolitans'.

500 AD+/- Images used in churches as historical memorials, Eventually used as objects of special worship.

587 AD In Constantinople, John Jejunator declared himself "Universal Bishop"

590AD In Rome, Gregory 1 rebuked him and took the title "Servant of God.

606 AD The Emperor of Rome, took title away from John and conferred it on Boniface 3 who had declared himself "Universal Bishop."

7-800 AD Doctrine of *"transubstantiation"* accepted.

1054 AD Bishop of Rome. Leo 9, excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople and the entire Greek Orthodox church. Reasons for separation:

1. Eastern church never recognized Roman bishop as supreme.
2. Creedal statement that the Holy Spirit come from God *"and the Son."*
3. Eastern church used leavened bread, Western used unleavened in Communion.
4. Celibacy required for priests by Western church

1079 AD Marriage of priests absolutely forbidden.

1200 AD Sprinkling and pouring now used commonly instead of immersion and considered baptism.

1400 AD Use of organs (Musical instrument) became widespread (not used in Eastern churches)

1483 AD Papal 'bull' authorizing the doctrine of the *'immaculate Conception of Mary'* (She was born without original sin)

1535 AD England; Henry 8 declared titular head of English church by 'Act of Supremacy' following his excommunication earlier that year.

1564 AD Pope Pius 4 decreed that it is the role of the church, not individuals, to interpret scriptures.

1870 AD The doctrine of *"papal infallibility"* decreed by Vatican Council. When Pope speaks *"ex cathedra"* or *"officially"* regarding matters of faith and morals, he is protected from any error.

{DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINES)

Meritorious Works Can do good work to gain credit for salvation, can earn more and give to others. Church can grant *'indulgences'* and forgiveness of sin, for a period of time.

Priesthood An especially appointed priesthood.

Seven Sacraments **Baptism,.** Application of water by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring, to give life to the soul by obtaining forgiveness of 'original sin.'
Baptism of Blood; Those put to death for their faith in Christ before baptism can be said to have a ’baptism of blood’,

Baptism of Desire: Those who wished to be baptized, but die before baptism, or those who never heard of Christ or baptism but are well disposed to do God's will and would be baptized if they knew of the necessity are said to have the *'baptism of desire.'*

Confirmation. Usually at first communion one confirms his baptism, usually preceded by Catechism instruction for several weeks and then a confirmation ceremony' is presided over the group being confirmed.

Eucharist. (Greek - to give thanks) Sacrifice of Mass; bread only, priest usually drinks wine for all. Transubstantiation; It is claimed that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is repeated in the Mass and the priest has the power to change the bread and the wine into the literal body and blood of Christ.

Penance. Confession to a priest with sorrow for sins. Priest may impose or grant absolution. Perfect contrition is necessary for forgiveness outside of confession. Imperfect contrition suffices when joined with confession.

Extreme Unction. (An act of anointing) Administered to those in danger of dying to cleanse the soul from sin or remove punishment due to unforgiven sin.

Holy Orders. The sacrament through which Christ had instituted Bishops, Priests, and Deacons for the various functions of His church. Also used for Monks and Nuns. A laying on of hands (Catholics call their priests "Father" because he is the dispenser of the Life of God through the administration of the sacraments.)

Matrimony. There are three vocations, Self-chosen single, religious life in a monastery or convent, or life time marriage. Marriage is God's plan for procreation ... When Christ came, He raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament.

Prayers of the Rosary, **Hail Mary (Ava Maria)** "Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

Glory be to the Father, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall, world without end. Amen"

Our Father. (Pater Noster) As found in Matthew 6:9-13.

Worship	A prescribed liturgy, Mass celebrated every day in parish churches. Sunday Masses in local churches. At High Mass (10 AM to noon) priests prayers are chanted, responses sung by a choir. Low Mass service is read. Brief instruction or sermon by priest, and communion.

Summary: Roman Catholics believe:

1. Theirs is the only true church.
2. A priest can forgive sins.
3. Baptized persons not married in their church, not truly married, living in sin.
4. Everything the Pope says about faith and morals is absolutely true.
5. Mary is to be worshipped along with her son Jesus.
6. Un-baptized babies do not go to heaven.
7. One has to go through Purgatory before entering heaven.
8. Catholics cannot be divorced.
9. At every Mass, Jesus is offered as a sacrifice for man's sin.
10. Catholic children should not attend public School.
11. Catholics should not read the Bible, only recently permitted to do so.
12. Teachings and traditions of the church are as important as the Bible

There are a few obvious comments that need to be made concerning this church which devolved from the church which Christ established at Jerusalem around AD 33. One by one this church changed almost every doctrine which had been established in the New Testament. The papal claim to universal authority over all the churches dates to AD 533.

The claim is the Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church, he is not the head of the Lord's church. Jesus alone is head of His church as recorded in **Ephesians 1:22-23** and **Colossians 1:18,** and God has appointed Jesus as the head of His church, while a College of Cardinals elects the Popes. There is no mention of the office of Cardinal or a College of Cardinals in the New Testament. The Pope is called "Holy Father' by members of the Catholic church and by reporters who bring news of what is happening in the Catholic church. Jesus tells us to "ca// *no man your father on earth; for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven,"* The Popes have claimed to speak for God, but **Hebrews 1:1-2** tells us that *"God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus."*

In life and in death the Popes are adorned in gorgeous ropes and a golden crown. The residences of the Pope are palaces. Jesus, while on earth had only the clothes on His back, and no place to lay His head as recorded in **John 19:23** and **Luke 9:58.** The Pope rules over the earthly 'kingdom' of the Vatican, an independent nation, with its own territory, security force, diplomatic corps, postal system, and a treasury. It holds property in many nations of the world. Jesus refused to be a king on this earth, and made it clear that His *"kingdom is not of this world."* **John 6:15** and **John 18:36.** Leaders of the Catholic church say some individuals should be canonized and elevated to sainthood. Every faithful Christian is already a saint having been baptized into Christ. **(1 Corinthians 1:1-2 and 12-13)**

IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS GOOD AS THE CHURCH JESUS ESTABLISHED?

SHINTOISM

Shinto is A Japanese religion, and has been important in that nation since early times of history. It has aspects of origin along the same lines as Hinduism and Buddhism, and even the Chaldeans in that its worship is centered on a large number of spirits or divinities. This 'pantheon' of divinities represent various aspects of the natural world, such as the heavenly bodies, the earth, and the weather.

The practices include prayers of thanksgiving and offering of personal items, such as armor or cloth seeking purification from evil deeds, crimes, and defilements.

The people of Japan knew of God and had a need for a god, but did not "retain God in their knowledge" as we observed in Romans one. They also *"changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man"* and *"changed the truth of God into* a *lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator."*

During the early years there was no name for this religion, but in the late sixth century the name Shinto was given to it to distinguish it from Confucianism and Buddhism, which now had been introduced from China. Buddhism and Shinto soon began as one religion and Buddhist priests administered the Shinto shrines and introduced their own ways and ornaments. The original gods were generally regarded as manifestations of Buddha in a previous state of existence. Other elements of this religion were adopted from Confucianism.

In the 18th century Shinto was revived as a national religion. It took a form of reverence for Japanese antiquity and teaching of notable scholars. It also developed ideas and practices of hatred for practice of a foreign origin. Buddhism became less a part and Shinto was adopted a state religion. In 1887, the Emperor became head of state, and the Shogunate was overthrown. The Emperor, according to Shinto doctrine was now established as sovereign and divine through his reputed descent from the sun goddess. The sun goddess was considered the founder of the Japanese nation. It is called "The Land of the Rising Sun." Other doctrines developed to the idea that the Japanese were superior to other peoples because of the descent from the gods. The Emperor was believed to be worthy of ruling the entire world. These beliefs were important in the support of their military during World War Two.

After World War Two, Shinto was separated from the state, and the Emperor renounced claims to divinity. There are many variations to Shinto now, some retain the ancient traditions of Shinto, some adhere to Confucian ethics, and some practice faith healing. There are those who worsh1p the mountains and the other things of the world, and there are some use it for purification rites.

Does this religion have the elements of that dangerous theocracy where war is possible and hatred of other races can exist within its doctrines and teachings?

This religion is difficult to separate from others from which it has originated and merged with over time. Is this religion as good any other?

MUSLIMS

Islam, is now a major world religion. it was founded in Arabia based on the teaching of Muhammad, who was called the Apostle or the prophet. The Arabic word Islam, means to surrender, and in the Koran, Islam's guidebook, it means "to surrender to the will of God and His Apostle.' There are at least 25 references in the Koran which require that a faithful Muslim 'obey God and obey the Apostle'(Surah 5:90 is and example.) The texts of the Koran are identified and numbered and called Surahs. The Koran identifies the faithful as Muslims of whom Muhammad was the first. (Surah 6:138) Muslims go to a mosque for prayers, sermons, and counsel. Holy efforts to spread Islam are called 'jihad.' The five pillars of Islam are;

1. Confess that Allah is the one true God and that Muhammad is his prophet.
2. Pray five times daily facing Mecca.
3. Give alms
4. Fast during the month of Ramadan.
5. Make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

That third duty of a Muslim to give alms, or pay 'zakat' which was originally the tax by Muham mad and later by Muslim states on the wealthier members of the community, primarily to help the poor, but also used for winning converts to Islam, for ransom of captives, for relief of people in dept, and for jihad, or Holy War; the struggle for the cause of Islam. It was a tax of 2 1/2 % of income and could also be used for health, education, travel, and communications. In most Muslim states zakat is no longer collected by the government, but is still an essential duty of all Muslims. There are about 23 references for believers to "render the alms levy' (tax) in the Koran. Some examples are Surah 34:39, *"Whatever you give in alms He will recompense you for it."* Surah 58:10, *"When you confer with the Apostle give alms before such conference... "* Surah 64:12, *"If you give* a *generous loan to God, He will pay you back twofold... "*

Other important laws of Islam are the prohibition of alcoholic consumption and eating of swine.

The writings of Islam are the **Koran,** also spelled Qur'an, the **Hadith,** a book of Muhammad's words and deeds, the **Torah,** (the Biblical law given to Moses) and the **gospel** of Jesus Christ. The Koran claims that its revelations *"confirm the scripture which preceded it"* (Surah 3:1 is an example) referring to the Torah and the Gospel. There is an interesting statement in Surah 6:153 which would indicate that either the angel or the prophet were not writing the Koran to 'confirm scripture'. *"The scriptures were revealed only to two communities before us; We have no knowledge of what they read; or; had the scriptures been revealed to us we would have been better guided than they."*

Division in the religions of Christians and Jews is used as a justification for the new revelation.

Muhammad was born in 570 AD, a few months after his father died. His mother died when he was only six years old. He was raised by a grandfather and later by an Uncle. As a youth he traveled with the trading caravans from Mecca to Syria. His first marriage occurred in 595 AD at the age of 25 to a wealthy widow named Khadijah. She was fifteen years older than he. In his travels he acquired a reputation for honesty and wisdom. Also while passing through the land which had been Israel, he came under the influence of Jewish and Christian teachings. Arabian paganism was worshipping Allah, the supreme Semitic God,

and a number of female deities whom they regarded as daughters ofAllah. Muhammad firmly believed that he was a messenger from God, sent to confirm previous scriptures. God had revealed His will to Abraham, the Israelites, and the Christians through chosen prophets and Apostles, but they disobeyed God's commandments and divided themselves into sects. The Koran repeatedly mentions and accuses the Jews of corrupting the Scripture, and the Christians of dividing into sects, making monks and clerics, and worshipping Jesus , son of Mary as Son of God. Islam teaches that there is only one God and He had no son or daughters.

Muhammad received his 'call' about 610 AD in the areas of Mecca and Medina. The head quarters has been in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. There are now many sects of Muslims such as, Sunni, Shite, Ismailis, Druze, Kurds,and Babis, while the Koran in Surah 6:158 and 30:30 teach, *"Have nothing to do with those who have split up their religion into sects"* and *"Do not divide your religion into sects, each exalting its own doctrine."* The very thing was considered a major flaw of the Jews and the Christians has also happened to Islam. There is also a mysti cal movement call Sufism which originated in the eight century. Some small circles of pious Muslims, reacting to the growing worldliness of the Islamic community began to emphasize the inner life of the spirit and reaching for moral purification: by the12th century Sufism devel oped into a complex popular movement.

There is a struggle under way between those for whom Islam is a faith based on justice, humanism, and mercy, and those who use it for hatred, violence, and political control. Women are still forced to wear a chador from head to toe, in some countries they cannot drive an automobile. They cannot travel without permission from their male guardian, and while the Koran gives little rights to women, it is only by 'selective' interpretation of the Koran, Hadith, and Shariah, that woman's rights have been restricted. The word 'Islam' means 'submission. The goal of Islam has been to bring the world into subjection to its teachings. Islam forbids any other religion beside Islam. Death is the punishment for any found following another religion. In any Muslim dominated country we do not find religious freedom. When Muslims are weak in an area, they will talk about friendship and peace, but when they are strong, they will crush all others, and put these laws into place.

The Koran was written in book form during the years 644-656 AD from writings on various available materials left by Muhammad who died in 632 AD. For Muslims it is the infallible Word of God as revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Except for the opening verse and some passages in which the prophet speaks or an Angel speaks in the first person, the speaker is thought to be God. Islam teaches that God is one, yet much of the Koran is written using the pronoun 'We'. (Example: Surah 7:11, *"We created you and gave you form. Then We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam... "* The Koran is a collection of the pas sages said to be revealed to Muhammad during the years 610-632 AD.

Jesus is said to be one of many prophets given by God to many communities. Jesus was born of a virgin, was the son of Mary, but is not the son of God. Jesus was sinless, but not divine nor was he God. He was not crucified and is not a savior. He did ascend to heaven without dying. He is referred to as messiah, word, and spirit from God, and ayatollah or sign from God. The Koran says in Surah 9:27,

"The Christians say messiah is the Son of God. Such is their assertions, by which they imitate the infidels of old." It is interesting that the angel Gabriel from whom Muhammad claimed his revelations, said to the virgin whose name was Mary, as recorded in **Luke 1:31-35,** *"And*

behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a *son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then Mary said unto the angel. How shall this be, seeing I know not* a *man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The power of the Holy Ghost shall* come *upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called* ***the Son of God."*** Here **Gabriel** is saying God will have a Son by Mary but then 610 years later that *"God has never begotten* a *Son."* (Surah 17:111 as example) **Is this the same Gabriel?** The Koran was written to 'confirm' the Torah and the Gospel, but on this point it refutes them. The Koran in Surah 6:100 says *"Creator of heaven and earth. How shall He have* a *Son when He had no consort?"* Luke records Mary as 'consort' to be the mother of the Son of God. The Koran says of the scriptures given to the Jews, (Surah 45:11) *"We gave the book to the Israelites and bestowed on them wisdom and prophet hood... "* Isaiah, one of those prophets recorded a prophecy in Chapter 7:14, *"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear* a *son, and shall call His name Immanuel."* Matthew, an Apostle of Jesus records how this came about in Matthew 1:18-23, *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her* a *public example was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary for a wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth* a *son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold* a *virgin shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is,* ***God with us."***

The Koran declares that God is one, and that is true. It was God in the flesh that was born of Mary. God incarnate, John another Apostle of Jesus explains this in chapter one, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."* Verse14, *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the* ***only begotten of the Father,)*** *full of grace and truth."* The divinity of Jesus was declared by God Himself and recorded by Matthew in two places; at His baptism and His transfiguration. Matthew 3:16 *"And Jesus when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he* (John) *saw the Spirit of God descending like* a *dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven saying,* ***This is my beloved*** **Son,** ***in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him."***

God is one, God is invisible, and God is Spirit. Christ is His image, Firstborn of everything, and He made everything else. God being invisible, made for Himself an image, His firstborn. Explained by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter one speaking of delivering us from the power of darkness, and translating us into the Kingdom of God's dear Son in verse 15 it reads, *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or*

powers; all things were created by and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Verse 19, *"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."* Jesus is God. Jesus is the image of God. Jesus was made in flesh to live among us as God and man, to be in position to pay the penalty necessary to reconcile us, as sinners, to God by His death on the cross. Monotheism is central to Islam, a belief in only one God. Belief in a plurality of gods or in the extension of God's divinity to any person is rejected. Christians believe in one God, Jews believe in one God, God can be and is in multiple forms and still be one, in unity and omnipotence. (Water can be ice, liquid, or vapor and still be H2O) Jesus in the Koran is referred to as spirit of God, and a prophet regarded as any other prophet or apostle. Many Muslim scholars see the angel Gabriel as the Holy spirit. Surah 43:72, "Say (to the Christians) *if the Lord of Mercy had a* Son, *I would be first to worship him."*

Salvation is a matter of faith and good works. Surah 2:80 and at least 35 other references indicate: *"But for those that have faith and do good works are the heirs of paradise,"* Humans are basically good, but fallible and need guidance. The balance between good and bad deeds determines eternal destiny in paradise or hell. God's mercy may tip the balances but is uncer tain. Surah 8;25. *"Believers, if you fear God He will grant you salvation and cleanse you of your sins and forgive you."* Surah 92:1, *"For him that gives in charity and guards himself against evil and believes in goodness, we shall smooth the path of salvation... "* In both the Torah and the Gospel it was necessary that a sacrifice of blood was offered for sins, along with faith. In the Torah it was animal sacrifice, in the Gospel it was the Son of God who was the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the believers. In the Koran only 'faith and good works' are necessary, no blood sacrifice needed here.

We have been asking the question; **Is one religion as good as another?** In Surah 2:61 and 5:65 *"Believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabeans - Whoever <u>believes</u> in God and the last day and does what is right - shall be rewarded by their Lord: they have nothing to fear or to regret,"* Surah 29:46, *"Be courteous when you <u>argue</u> with the people of the book... " "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and which was revealed to you.* "_Here they believe all can be rewarded by God, but the religions are not the same!

The Koran says there will be that final day of reckoning and rewards, and resurrection of bodies. Eternal paradise for those who believe in Islam and eternal hell for infidels; infidels are those who reject Islam. In the Surahs above, believers such as Jews, Christians, and Sabeans also had possibility of reward. It is not consistent to be a Christian and a Muslim simultaneously believing two religions that are not the same in doctrine.

Infidels are the enemy. The Koran orders Muslims to fight in the cause of Allah which is the religion of Islam. There is no separation of church (mosque) and state in Islamic teaching. The government is or should be the religion, and the religion is or should be the government. This requires bloodshed. Surah 9:121, *"Believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you, deal firmly with them."* Surah 66:7, *"Prophet, make war on unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal sternly with them. Hell shall be their home, evil their fate." Surah 8:59, "Let not the unbelievers think that they shall ever get away. They have not the power to do* so. *Muster against them all men and cavalry at your command, <u>so that you may strike terror</u> into the enemy of God and your enemy."* There are over thirty references to fighting for the cause of God in the Koran. Surah 4:91, *"If these do not keep their distance from you, if they neither offer you peace nor cease their hostilities against you lay hold of them and kill them wherever you find them. Over such men we give you <u>absolute authority."</u>* Surah 9:111, *"God has purchased from the faithful their lives and worldly goods, and in return has promised them a garden. They will fight*

for the cause of God, they will slay and be slain. Such is the true promise which He has made in Torah, the Gospel, and the Koran."

The term 'jihad' is usually translated as 'holy war', and designates the struggle toward the Islamic goal of 'reforming the earth,' which may include the use of an armed force to convert people to Islam, or gain political power to implement principles of Islam into public institutions. The concept of jihad has been used by some Muslim rulers to justify war for political ambition. Jihad is still used by some Islamic groups in an offensive way. There is no freedom of religion in Muslim dominated areas of the world. According to classical Islamic law, the world is divided into three zones, The house of Islam, where Muslims are in power; the house of peace, where there are peace agreements with Muslims and other powers; and the rest of the world, considered infidels.

There are rewards for the faithful. Surah 3:192. *"-those that suffered persecution for my sake and fought and were slain: I shall forgive them their sins and admit them to gardens watered by running streams... "* Surah 9:18, *"Their Lord has promised them mercy from himself, and His pleasure, and gardens of eternal bliss where they shall dwell forever."* Surah 38:44, *"Reclining face to face upon soft couches, they shall be served with a goblet filled at a gushing fountain, white, and delicious to those who drink it... " "They shall sit with bashful, dark eyed virgins, as chaste as the -eggs of ostriches."*

Islamic law, called Sharia, spells out the moral goals of the community. Islamic law is based on four sources, or roots of law. The first two are the Koran and the Sunna, or Hadith, The third source, called ijtihad is *"responsible individual opinion."* It is used as an analogical reasoning for issues not covered by the Koran or Sunna. A fourth source of law is consensus of the community, an informal process that has required a long period of time to develop, and can change, discarding some opinions and accepting others. There are variations of Islamic law in areas dominated by sects of Sunnites or by Shiites. They all use systematic reasoning to deal with areas of law not covered by the Koran or Sunna. Islamic law includes both legal and moral or religious rules.

Muslims traditionally have not sought dialogue with people of other religions, but recently have engaged with representatives of Christianity and Judaism, recognized in Islam as other religions of the book.

The Old Testament, Torah and the New Testament (The Gospel) both warn against false prophets. Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18: 20-22, Matthew 7: 15-24; 1 John 4:1-2 are examples. Muslims recognize that there are false teachers in the world. The Gospel speaks of the many miracles of Jesus Christ, and His apostles. The Koran does not claim that Muhammad worked any miracles, but it does teach that Jesus worked miracles. The Koran claims that Christ turned a bird made of clay into a live bird, and He healed *"him who was born blind and the leper by my permission: and how thou didst raise the dead, by my permission."* Surah 5: 110-115 is an example. There are many prophecies in the old Testament concerning Christ and His new covenant, such as Jeremiah 31:31-34, Daniel 2:44, and Isaiah 53. There are no prophecies in the Old or the New Testament predicting the coming of Muhammad. The New Testament recorded many prophecies made by Jesus Christ.

The Koran tells Christians not to go beyond the book, and calls Jesus a messenger from God

and a Spirit from God. Christians are told to stay within the bounds of their religion, recorded in the Book, the scripture. The Book says Jesus was without sin, Hebrews 4:15. The Koran recognizes that Muhammad was a sinner and in need of forgiveness. In Surah 47; 19, "So *know (0 Mohammed) that there is no God save Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy sin and for believing men and women."*

Christians are not exaggerating or going beyond their religion in accepting what the Book says about Jesus Christ being God's Son and that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. This is what the Book says in Matthew 1:18-23, Matthew 11:27, Matthew 14:33, Mark 1:1, Luke 1:35, and John 1:34. Three different writers saying this, and showing that this is a fulfillment of prophecies from the Old Testament prophets.

As the Koran says in Surah 5:46, *"Transgressors are those that do not judge according to God's revelations. After them We sent forth Jesus son of Mary, confirming the Torah already revealed, and gave Him the Gospel in which there is guidance and light, corroborating what was revealed before in the Torah: a guide and an admonition to the righteous. Therefore let those who follow the Gospel judge according to what God has revealed therein. Evil doers are those that do not judge according to God's revelations."*

Everything which has been done or taught by professing Christians is not the Gospel or true Christianity. True Christians are those who judge and practice what is in the Book, which God revealed to Jesus and His messengers. If Christians do not do what is in the Book, the Koran agrees that they are 'evil-livers.' It would not be right to judge Christ by what some Christians have done or that Christians have divided into sects. The Book does not authorize these divisions and teaches against them. The Koran agrees that what was revealed to Moses, the prophets, Christ, and His messengers is truth from God. This would then necessitate that a complete study of the Bible should be investigated by all Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Sabeans alike.

In Hebrews 1:1-2 the Book says God, in former ages spoke *"in various manners" "by the prophets"* but in *"these last days has spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, and by whom He made the worlds."* The diversity of manners of communication ended, God no longer speaks to men today by angels or prophets, but we have His Word in the New Covenant or Testament. This is God's final words *"in these last days."*

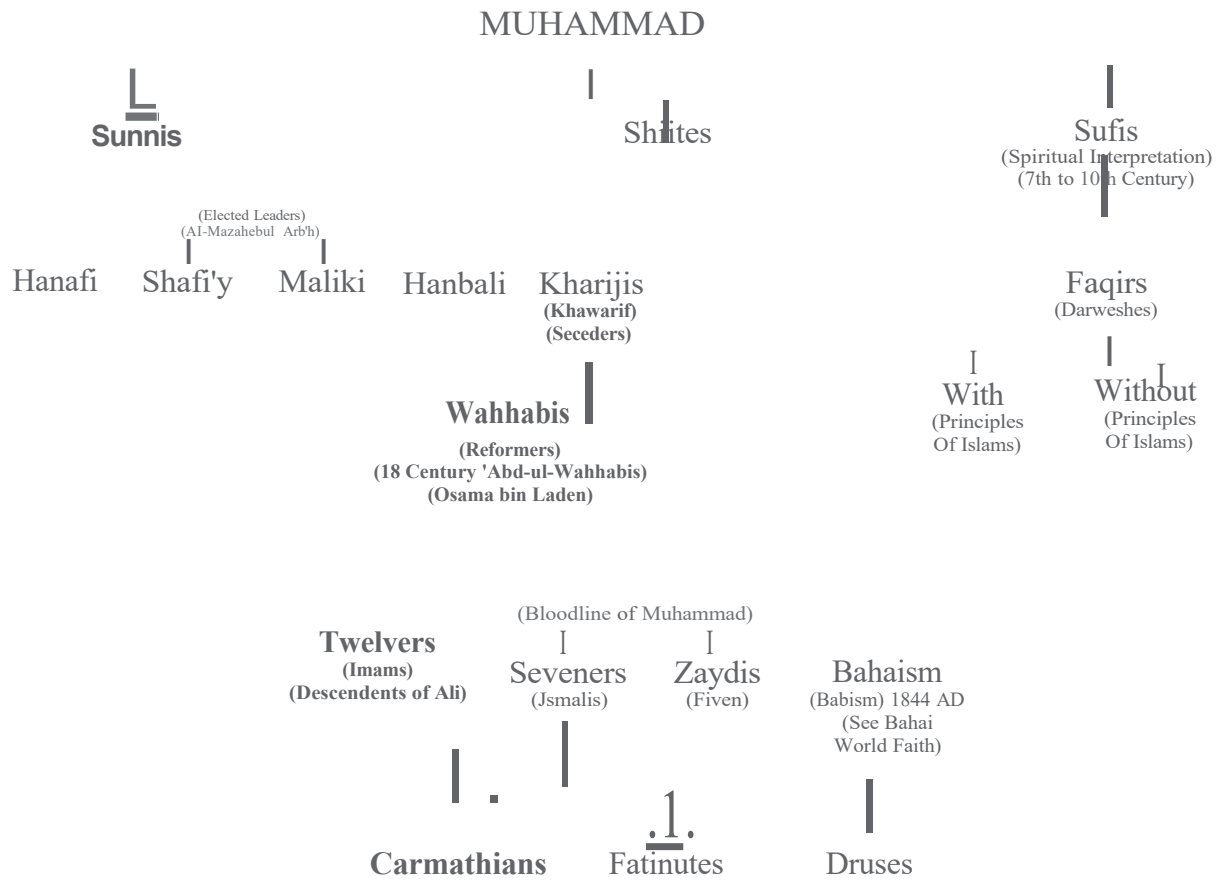
Men or angels that teach a different gospel are accursed. Galatians 1:6-8, *"I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."*

What is the source of knowledge? 2 Peter 1:3 *"His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and Godliness."* And *"called us to glory and virtue."* Notice, we have all things necessary for life and Godliness. That would indicate that there is no need for the Koran as the Muslims claim given by an angel and Mohammad their prophet, an obvious false prophet, misled by an angel. If he said we need more than these 'all things' given by Christ we would have to much, if he said less it would add nothing. If it is not the same it cannot 'confirm' the Torah and the Gospel as it claimed to do.

A final thought, from Jude, verse 3 and 4, *"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it* was *needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which* was *once delivered unto the saints. For certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God. and our Lord* Jesus *Christ*."

The Koran denies that Jesus is the Son of God, and does not fit the story of the seed of Abraham as promised by God and told in the Torah and the Gospel.

ISLAMIC DIVISIONS



Surah 6:158, "Have nothing to do with those who have split up their religion into sects."
Surah 23:50, "Yet men have divided themselves into factions, each rejoicing in its own doctrines. Leave them in their error till a time appointed." Surah 42:13, "Observe the Faith and do not divide yourselves into factions."

CATHOLIC - ORTHODOX

The Church of Christ began to be divided when at the Council of Nicaea, (City of Nice) in the year 325 AD. there was an 'official' recognition for one elder to become a leader over other elders; also called Bishops. These Bishops were to take rule over various districts of the church. The bishops of Rome and Constantinople were given greater honor than the others in 330 AD. when Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople (Istanbul) Turkey. This produced jealousy (Clearly not a Christian attribute) among the older Eastern divisions. There had been three major divisions centered around Rome, Italy, Alexandria, Egypt, and Antioch, Syria. In 400 AD. the Bishop at Rome was first called 'Pope', but not yet regarded as 'head of the church.' There were struggles for control between Alexandria and Constantinople but Constantinople gained prominence at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. Alexandria broke away from the 'organized' church as a result of the decisions at Chalcedon. The separate **Coptic (Egyptian) Alexandrian Church** still exists today and was followed by churches in Ethiopia, Syria, Nestorian (Followers of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople AD 428-431 who maintained that there were two distinct persons in Christ), and Armenian (Northern Turkey) churches. In 476 AD. when the Roman Empire was divided into the Eastern and the Western, the eastern capital was Constantinople (Byzantium) and the western capital was in Rome. The bishops of these cities were then considered leading 'Metropolitans' or leaders of highest rank. In 587 AD. in Constantinople, John Jejunator declared himself "Universal Bishop." In 590 AD. Gregory 1 rebuked him and took the title "Servant of God." In 606 AD. the Emperor of Rome, took title away from John Jejunator and conferred it on Boniface 3 who had declared himself "Universal Bishop." The year 1054 is generally considered the date of the final split between the Eastern and the Western churches. The two Catholic churches had been drifting apart because of political, cultural, geographic, and religious reasons for hundreds of years. There were frequent disputes between the patriarchs of Constantinople and Rome during these years. The dispute continued until in 1054, delegates of Pope Leo IX issued an anathema (solemn curse of excommunication) against the patriarch of Constantinople. That patriarch then summoned a council that excommunicated the papal delegates.

Eastern Orthodox Churches are the major Christian churches in Greece, Russia, Western Asia, and Eastern Europe. These churches have common beliefs and practices. They are normally called by national names, such as **Greek or Russian Orthodox churches.** These churches are independent groups of self supporting churches but have a rank among them under the leader or 'ecumenical patriarch' of the church at Constantinople. The have a rank by seniority starting with the churches of Constantinople in Turkey, Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Damascus, Syria, and Jerusalem in Israel. Others are self governing churches (not self governing by congregation but by area) in Russia, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Albania, Poland, the Check Republic, Slovakia, and Americas. There are other Orthodox mission churches in Canada, Finland, Africa, Japan, not yet self governing.

Members of the Eastern Orthodox Church believe that they continue the tradition of the early Christian church founded by the apostles of Jesus, but their faith is based on doctrinal decisions of seven ecumenical councils, those councils that governed the entire church, the last of which was held in AD 787. The Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed adopted in 381 is

the only creed binding and is used in church services to express the beliefs of the church.

Some differences between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic are:

Orthodox	**Roman Catholic**
(1) Priests can marry before ordination.	Priests are celibate.
(2) Disagree with filioque addition to the Nicene Creed, - The Holy Spirit Proceeds from the father.	Filioque states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father And the Son.
(3) Do not accept Pope's claim of primacy. and control of Christian Churches.	Allows the Pope primacy (monarchy)
(4) Do not accept 'infallibility' of Pope	The Pope receives "Divine Assistance" according to the catholic catechism.
(5) Use of native languages	Until recently conducted mass in Latin.
(6) Singing without being accompanied by Mechanical instruments. Chanting.	In1400's AD. Use of organs became widespread.

Orthodox church buildings are richly decorated with religious art with holy images called Icons and are used as a part of the worship to stimulate faith and piety of the worshipers. This has also been true in the Catholic churches from which the Orthodox separated. The altar is separated from the sanctuary by a screen or partition. The congregation can look thru or over the screen called an iconostasis.

Infants can be admitted into the church by a sacrament of baptism where the body is dipped in water three times, Confirmation is later required before full membership. Other sacraments include 'Anointing of the sick', 'Confession of sins' in the presence of a priest, The 'Eucharist', and 'Marriage.'

Orthodox churches have been members of the World Council of Churches since 1948.

Our questions:

(1) Is one Catholic church as good as another?
(2) Are the reasons for separation of churches based on the Bible?
(3) Where are the churches ranked in the Bible by authority or territory?
(4) Are the edicts of various church councils valid for the basis of church doctrine?
(5) When did Jesus transfer His status as 'head of the Church'?
(6) Who is a priest according to the New testament?
(7) What kind of music was used in the New Testament church?
(8) Should church buildings have elaborate art to stimulate ideas of worship? If some do, shouldn't all? Why?

MENNONITES

During the time that Martin Luther was studying the scriptures and concluding that the Catholic church was in apostasy, and stirred up by the sale of indulgences, other men were also studying and reading the Word and drawing similar conclusions. These men were influenced and encouraged by Martin Luther's action and in the years closely following began reforms and church organizations. Men like Uldreich Zwingli, John Calvin, and Menno Simons began to publish their view of what Christianity should be, and gathered followers.

Mennonites

There were two sources of Mennonites.

The first emerged in Switzerland in the 1520's. (shortly after Martin Luther made his 95 theses known in Germany.)

The first Mennonite congregation was organized in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525 of Swiss Breth en who disagreed with Uldreich Zwingli in his consent to a union of church and state. They also denied the scriptural validity of infant baptism and re-baptized those formerly baptized as infants. Because of this they were labeled Anabaptist or re-baptizers. Anabaptist congregations were organized in Holland by Obbe Phillips as early as 1534. Phillips had baptized Menno Simons, who was a converted Roman Catholic priest. Menno organized more Ana baptist congregations in Holland and his contemporaries gave his name to the movement.

Mennonite faith is based on a confession of faith signed at Dortrecht, Holland, in 1632. In 18 articles these doctrines were documented. Some are listed here:

1. Faith in God as creator;
2. Man's fall and restoration at the coming of Christ;
3. Christ as Son of God, redeeming men on the cross;
4. Obedience to Christ's law in the gospel;
5. The necessity of repentance and conversion for salvation;
6. Baptism as a public testimony of faith;
7. The Lord's Supper as an expression of common union and fellowship (served twice a year);
8. Matrimony only to those 'spiritual kindred;'
9. Obedience and respect to civil government, except in the use of armed forces;
10. Exclusion from the church those who sin willfully with social ostracism for the protection of others in the church;
11. Future rewards for the faithful and punishment for the wicked.

Most observe "foot washing" in connection with the Lord's Supper and salute each other with the 'kiss of peace' (sexes separated in these 2 ceremonies). Most Mennonites refuse to take an oath before magistrates, oppose secret societies, and follow strictly teaching from the New Testament, trying to live after the Sermon on the Mount. Church officers are bishops, (elders), ministers, and deacons.

The Amish movements take the name from Jacob Amman, a Swiss Mennonite bishop of the late 17th century who insisted on a strict conformation to the confession of faith, especially in the ban, or expulsion of members. This brought about a separation in Switzerland about 1693.

For various reasons others separated and now there are many Mennonite groups such as:

Beachy Amish Mennonite churches
Church of God in Christ (Mennonite)
Conservative Mennonite Conference
Evangelical Mennonite Brethren
Evangelical Mennonite Church
General Conference Mennonite
Church Hutterian Brethren
Mennonite Brethren Church of North America
Mennonite Church
Old Older Mennonite
Church Amish Mennonite
Church
Old Order (Wisler) Mennonite
Church Reformed Mennonite
Church

There are also some Unaffiliated Mennonites.

Is one Mennonite church as good as another?

REFORMED

Reformed Churches

When the Belgic Confession was written in 1561 it became the creed of the Re formed Churches in Belgium and Holland. The Reformation was spreading from Switzerland into Holland at a time when the Dutch were in a struggle with Catholic Spain. The churches called Reformed as distinguished from Lutheran, originated in Switzerland under Zwingli, Calvin, and Melancthon. They were reformed in Switzerland, Holland, and Germany; they were Presbyterian in England and Scotland, and Huguenot in France.
Others in Bohemia and Hungary used National names.

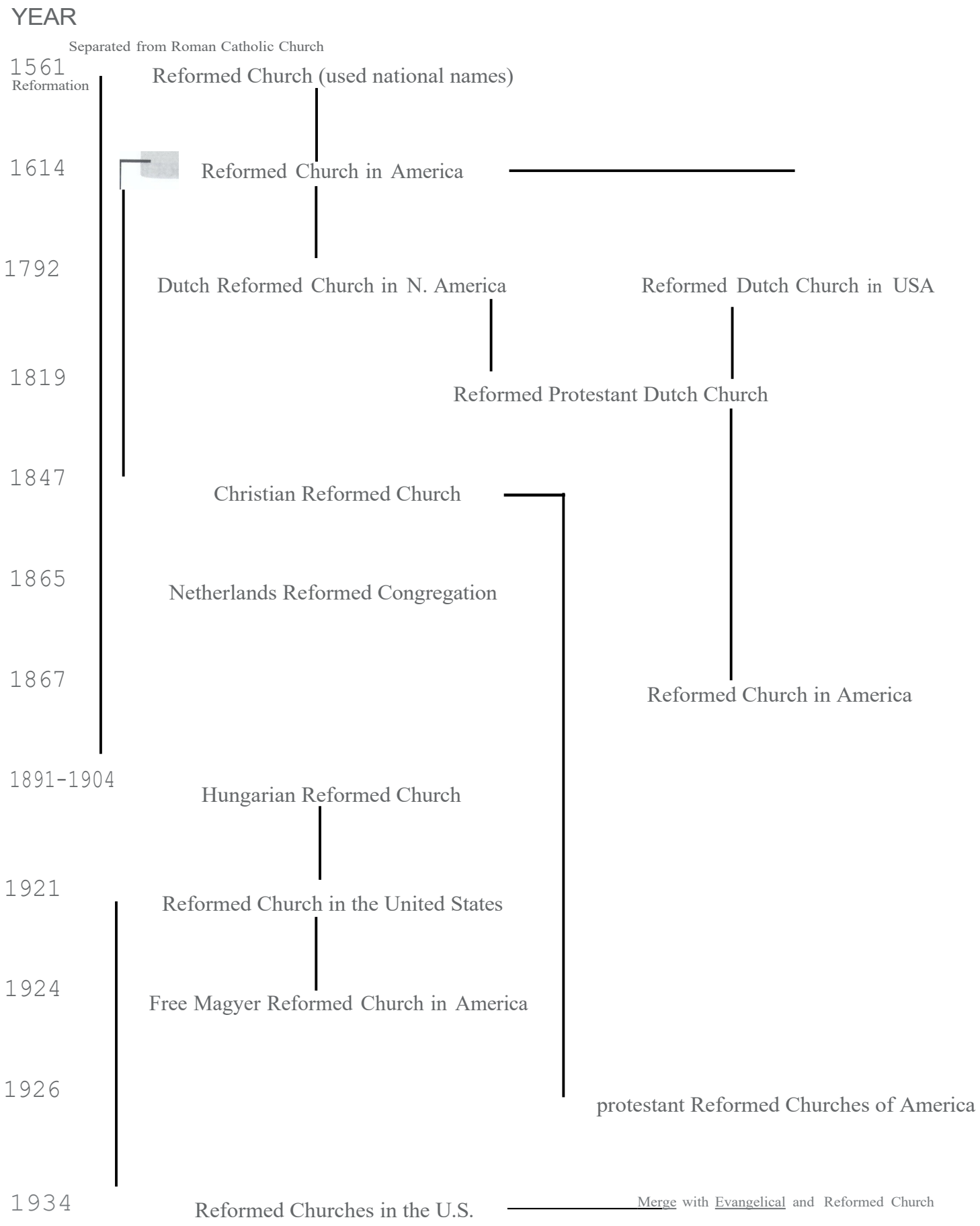
When the Reformed churches moved to America they formed the Reformed Church in America, and the Christian Reformed from the Dutch peoples, Reformed Church in America from the German people, and a group coming from Hungary became the Magyer Reformed Church in America. All of them are Calvinistic and conservative, basing their doctrine upon the Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort (of the Synod of Dortrecht) using a Presbyterian form of government.

We now have:

- Reformed Church in America
- Christian Reformed Church
- Hungarian Reformed Church in America
- Netherlands Reformed Congregations
- Protestant Reformed Churches of America
- Reformed Church in the United States

Is one Reformed Church as good as another?

Reformed Churches



ANABAPTISTS

During the years of the Reformation, and beginning in 1520 and 1525, some religious groups organized that preached against certain church and social practices in Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands, and in Austria. These groups were considered to be on the radical fringes of the Reformation of the 1500s.They believed that the church was a gathering of people united by faith, repentance, obedience to the Bible, and discipline. Because of this stand for obedience to the Bible they limited baptism to those who were believers and old enough to choose membership.

Originally known as the **Brethren, or Swiss Brethren,** they believed that the Bible negated the practice of infant baptism and the celebration of the Mass. Instead they insisted on believer's baptism and a memorial Lord's Supper. Other people called them Anabaptists or rebaptizers because they baptized adults who had been baptized in infancy. These **'Anabaptists'** condemned government involvement in religion, which eventually led to the idea of the separation of church and state. Because other more prominent leaders of the Reformation were involved with leadership in government the Anabaptists were persecuted in both Protestant and Roman Catholic countries. Other reformers such as Huldeich Zwingli of Zurich and Martin Luther, and their followers often used the name Ana Baptist as an expression of contempt for any radial or unorthodox Protestant group. It has always been true that any group that attempts to follow the line of obedience to God's word as the Bible teaches will suffer persecution from the 'established' religions of the day. Jesus told His followers that, in the world you will have trouble.

There were similarities in belief between Anabaptist and Lutherans and Calvinists. All believed in a personal faith in God, as opposed to the ritualism that had been the practice of the established churches. They believed in the right of independent personal judgment, but the Anabaptist differed by being nonviolent and opposing state churches. The state church was organized by geographical areas called parishes and all those born in the area and resident were considered members and babies were baptized and included in the membership. Some Anabaptist did desire to establish Christian communities where all men would be equal and share with one another. These groups were opposed to participation in civil government and the taking of oaths. In this way they were radicals. Some of these groups that formed about 1534 were the **Hutterian Brethren,** founded by Jakob Hutter, **New Zion** founded by Jan Beuckelzoon, and the **Mennonites** led by Menno Simons. Anabaptist groups continued to form under different names, but they did not except or continue the use of the name given to them by others, Anabaptist. The Anabaptist's beliefs survive today in Mennonite and Hutterite religious communities.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The Church of England or Anglican church was established by acts of Parliament in England between 1529 and 1536. King Henry the 8th was angered by the refusal of Pope Clement 7 to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He induced Parliament to enact a series of statutes denying the Pope any power or jurisdiction over the church in his domain. Henry received support for this by a great majority of the English people. Mainly they supported the change because there was no drastic change from the catholic practices to which they had become accustomed.

The Christian church had existed in England since Christianity was introduced into the country. Evidence of its existence is found in writings of Tertullian and Origen in the early years of the 3rd century. English bishops are known to have attended the Councils of Aries in 314 AD, the council of Sardica in 347 and in Ariminun in 360. There are references to the church in what was Roman Britain found in writings of 4th century church fathers. After the arrival of Saint Augustine and his missionary companions from Rome in 597, the Roman influences found their way into the liturgy and practices in the Roman West. During the next four centuries the church in Saxon England had the same lines of growth, development, and apostasy from the original church established as recorded in the New Testament. It followed the same changes as made in churches everywhere in the middle ages when the Bible was not freely available to the people. After the Norman conquest in 1066 AD the influence from the continent of Europe strengthened the connection between the English church and the Roman papacy.

The assertion of power made by Popes from Gregory 7 to Innocent 3 between the late 11th and the 13th centuries was also felt in England, as elsewhere. Clerical influence and privilege were widely extended into secular affairs. Several times during the medieval period, English kings tried to limit the power of the Catholic church, and claimed independent canon law, but without success until Henry the 8th.

In 1382 John Wycliffe completed a translation of the scriptures from Latin to English. In 1528 William Tyndale by his unrelenting efforts put the Bible into the hands of the people. Working with a New Testament printed in Greek by the monk-scholar Erasmas, Tyndale set out to trans late it to English. Tyndale had to leave England, after finding, as he said, "there was no place to do it (translate the New Testament) in all of England." He completed the translation in Hamburg and tried to print it in Cologne, Germany. He had to flee from Cologne with sheets of his partially printed work to Worms. Here he had the printing completed. The first copies were smuggled into England and bought with enthusiasm. Officials of the church spoke out to condemn the translation; copies were obtained and burned in public ceremony; money was subscribed to buy up incoming copies. But, all the opposition could not stop a movement which was happening around the world. It was not difficult for a Pope or a sovereign to control the religion of the people when the people were denied access to the truth, but as copies of the New Testament, and then the entire Bible became available, it was very difficult to control the church.

After Henry the 8th died, the influences of religious reform became stronger in England. In1549 the first Anglican Book of Common Prayer was published and it was required by an Act of Uniformity. A second prayer book issued in 1552 reflected the influence of Protestantism from the continent, and was followed shortly by the Forty two Articles, also Protestant influenced. Both were put aside upon the accession, in 1553 of Mary 1, who returned to England and to formal obedience to the Roman Papacy that lasted until her death in 1558.

When Elizabeth 1 succeeded Mary as Queen of England in 1558 most of the ecclesiastical laws of Henry the 8th were revived. An Act of Supremacy defined more cautiously the authority of the Crown in the church, and another Act of Uniformity established the use of a Book of Common Prayer that avoided the Protestant influences of the second prayer book. The visible churches in the middle ages were controlled by the Pope or by a monarch, not by the King of Kings, or the Word of God given in the New Testament. The churches recorded in history were churches controlled by doctrines of men and these doctrines and practices could be changed at the whim of a sovereign or a government. But there was also an element seeking the truth and attempting to follow the Word of God. In this period of time that Word was not readily available to the common man as it was controlled and kept by the powers of the churches in control. The Puritans meanwhile were increasing in numbers and in power and became more insistent in their demands for further reform in the church of England. Many people were tortured or burned at the stake for beliefs contrary to the established church and government. Just being known to disbelieve the doctrine of Transubstantiation would be cause for being publicly burned tied to a stake, and many people observed these atrocities. The people wanted changes in the direction of the Protestantism of Geneva and other cities on the continent. After James 1 became monarch in England in 1603 this agitation for religious change also became a struggle in Parliament. By 1645 the Parliament party was strong enough to outlaw the use of the prayer book.

In 1649, Charles 1 was executed, and the monarchy was temporarily overthrown, but in 1662 under Charles 2, the use of the prayer book revised to its present form, was required by an Act of Uniformity. An attack on the Anglican church was attempted when King James 2 tried to reintroduce Roman Catholicism in England, but James lost his throne to William 3 and Mary 2 in the revolution of 1688. The church was in the power of the government, and corrupted in one direction or another. It has been said that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is easy to see this in the control and power struggles of the church in England.

The doctrine of the Church of England is found primarily in the Book of Common Prayer, which contain the ancient creeds, and in the Thirty Nine Articles, which are interpreted in accordance with the prayer book. The four General Councils of the Christian Church, as well as the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops, is also considered. The Church of England differs from the Catholic church in denying the Roman papacy. The Church of England does allow women to become priests while the Catholic Church does not.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries there have been movements away from and back toward the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Some felt the pull of the work of John Wesley and his followers, many of whom left the Church of England to become Methodists. The foundation of an independent Episcopal church in the United States dates from the American Revolution, when members of the Anglican Church could no longer give allegiance to the mother church in England. Soon an establishment from a number of other churches, centering upon the Church of England was established as the Anglican Communion.

The Church of England now has Anglican churches in many countries of the world because of missions and educational facilities.

We ask: 1. Is the Church of England as good as the Catholic Church?

2. Is the Church of England any different really from the Catholic church?
3. Is a church that follows a common prayer book as good as a church that adheres only to the New Testament as the Word of God?
4. Is a church that tries to keep the Bible from people managing the church according to the Apostle's doctrine which had been published in the 1st century?
5. Is one church as good as another?
6. Who is the king of the church?

EVANGELICAL CHURCH of the AUGSBURG CONFESSION

The Augsberg Confession was a short summary of the religious teaching of Martin Luther. It was written by Phillip Melanchthon, Luther's associate in leading the Protestant Reformation. The Confession was written in **1530.** It was designed to refute the accusation that the Protestants were reviving old heresies, and was prepared for Charles V, the 'Holy Roman Emperor.' It was named for the city of Augsberg, Germany, the scene of a meeting (called a diet) called by Charles V to end religious divisions within the Empire.

Melanchthon wrote the confession to prove that the followers of Martin Luther supported the historic tradition of the established church. He tried to compromise on some controversial is sues, hoping for a reunification of people of the Christian persuasion. He did not try to restore the Lord's church to the original found in the New Testament, but sought to reform the existing church. Luther admired the confession for 'treading lightly' over disputed issues. He also insisted that no further concessions be made. It was entirely too Protestant in tone and the Emperor rejected it. While Malanchthon made some change to it over the years, it was the original version that became the basic statement of faith of what was to become the Lutheran Church.

The Catholic Church had developed an elaborate doctrine of 'merit', earned by works and dispensed by the priesthood. Luther concluded that people are not justified by works after he had extensively studied the Bible. Because he had been a monk he had easy access to a Bible which all people of his day did not have. He saw that many church imposed rites and the sale of indulgences had no foundation in the Bible. He came to understand that *"the just shall live by faith"* and that salvation and eternal life come only by faith in Jesus Christ. He believed that the Bible and not the church officials is the final authority in religion. (Indulgences allowed a person to pay for forgiveness of sins they had committed or were going to commit.)

Over the course of sixty years the enemies of Luther compelled him and his successors to defend their faith in the face of severe persecution. The Augsberg Confession consisted of a number of articles and began by showing similarities and differences between the Catholics and the Protestant positions with emphasis on justification by faith... Then it listed Catholic abuses for which a remedy was demanded. When the Catholics responded refuting much of the Confession, the Protestants answered with an "Apology' that further explained their beliefs. Later other articles were written by Luther that detailed Protestant theology and attacked Catholic teaching concerning such things as the Mass, the Pope, pilgrimages, monastic life, baptism, and justification by works.

The church established by Luther was originally called the Evangelical Church of the Augsberg Confession, or simply the Evangelical Church. Luther did not approve of having his name as a part of this church, but soon it became known only as the Lutheran Church.

PRESBYTERIAN

Presbyterianism began in the theology of John Calvin, the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Geneva, Switzerland. John Calvin established a church government based on the New Testament office of Elder, but did not insist on Presbyterianism as the only form of church government sanctioned by the Bible. This allowed variations of church government, but still following the Calvinistic theology. Some Congregational or Baptist churches have Calvinistic theology, but do not have a Presbyterian form of government. John Calvin did not found Presbyterianism, but he laid the foundations for it in Switzerland, Holland, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. He inspired those in France who became Huguenots, he influenced the Dutchmen who formed the Dutch Reformed Church in Holand, and he gave courage to British Presbyterians in their struggle against Bloody Mary, and taught John Knox who went home to Scotland. Knox and the Covenanters set Scotland afire and made it Protestant and Presbyterian.

Presbyterianism is a form of church government and a theological tradition found in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century constituted four major groups, which were the Lutheran, Anabaptist, Anglican, and Presbyterian and Reformed. As these traditions spread in various countries, when Calvinist formed organized churches in Europe, they called them Reformed, in the British Isles and North America these churches were known as Presbyterian.

The term Presbyterian is from the Greek 'presbyteros' or elder. The New Testament provided for the establishment of a plurality of Elders in all of the churches. The qualifications for these offices are found in combining verses from the Book of Acts, 1 Timothy 3, and 1 Peter 5. These were to be the rulers of the local congregations. Additions to the Bible structure of church government were made by the Presbyterian church in the form of ascending church bodies and courts. Each congregation is governed by a ruling body called a session or consistory composed of the pastor and the elders, who are elected by the congregation. (fhe Bible makes no distinction between the titles, pastor, elder, bishop, overseer, or shepherd, referring interchangeably within the same passages to these titles.) Then each congregation belongs to a presbytery, or classis, which coordinates and governs the activities of congregations within a particular geographic area. The members of the presbytery include all the pastors and elected representatives of the elders from each congregation. Here the Reformation followed the ascending offices of the Catholic churches from whom they had broken away. Presbyteries belong to synods, which are larger geographical units of the church, and a general assembly, or general synod unites the entire church. At each level the church is governed by elected representatives of the people. The churches of the Presbyterian tradition have usually organized according to national boundaries. Within each country they have often had divisions. They are associated in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches, in the U.S.A. the National Council of Churches, and the Consultation on Church Union.

The theology of Presbyterianism has diversity today, but Calvin's theology is still the central source. Calvin's book, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* of 1536 and revised in 1559 has been widely used. Like the religious reformer in Germany, Martin Luther, Calvin emphasized the two central doctrines of the Protestant Reformation; the authority of the scriptures and justification by grace through faith. Also like Luther, Calvin reduced the Christian sacraments

to two - baptism of both infants and adults, and the Lord's Supper. (The Bible authorizes only the baptism of believers.)

John Calvin differed from other Protestant reformers in his understanding of the nature of the Lord's Supper, church government, and the role of law in Christian life. The Lord's Supper was served only occasionally. Worship allowed some flexibility but the sermon was central. Liturgy mostly absent. Currently with the renewal of Reformed influence the sermon is still important but a greater use of liturgy and more regular celebration of the Lord's Supper can be found in many congregations.

John Calvin believed and taught God's sovereignty; the sovereignty of God ruling His universe, Christ in salvation, the scriptures in faith and conduct, and the sovereignty of each individual in the interpretation of the will and the Word of God. These were points that needed to be stressed to people who had known the rule of the Roman Catholic system. Calvin's system has been summarized in five main points; easily remembered using the acrostic, TULIP.

TULIP 5 points of Calvin's doctrine (Calvinism)

TOTAL DEPRAVITY - HUMAN IMPOTENCE
UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION - PREDESTINATION
LIMITED ATONEMENT
IRRESISTIBLE GRACE
PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Man is completely dominated by the sovereign, eternal ruler of the universe. God showed His love for all mankind by the gift of His Son, for the atonement or the reconciling of man to Himself in bestowing His saving grace and forgiveness of sins, on all who seek it. No one is condemned except on the grounds of his own sin. (From the declaratory statement in the Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church.)

What do the points of Calvin's doctrine actually teach?

Total Depravity: Calvin saw that by nature we sin and that the sin of Adam allowed all to fall into sin. God can foreknow what will happen in the future and can determine who will be saved or lost.
Calvin accepted the Catholic teaching on 'original sin.'

Unconditional Election: Calvin was a dictator politically and theologically, he saw God the same way. In Calvin's 'Institutes of the Christian Religion'3.21.7 page 210 "... *that scripture clearly proves this much, that God by His eternal and immutable council determined once for all those it was His pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom , on the other hand, it was His pleasure to doom to destruction."*
(Foreknowledge and predestination are two different things; Calvin saw them as one and taught that man can't fall away. This allows man no choice. What motivation is there to serve God if no matter what you do, you can't change the outcome?)

Limited Atonement: This means that Jesus did not die for everyone. Why would Jesus die for those who were lost?

Irresistible Grace: Since God is sovereign, He decides who will be saved. God selects who will be saved and people change to God's move on their life. You cannot refuse.

Perseverance of Saints: "Once saved, always saved."

Calvin was not only a strong leader in the reformation of the church, but also in other fields such as; education, establishment of democratic forms of government in both church and state, and in individual dignity to man. He improved the moral tone for capitalism, and made the Swiss capital a clean city.

There have been some divisions in American Presbyterianism; some caused by revivalism in the 1740's, some due to slavery, some from theological issues or the conduct of missionary work, some from the War for Independence of the Confederate States.

The northern church became the United Presbyterian Church and the southern church was called Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Other Presbyterian churches include:

- Presbyterian Church in America which merged in 1982 with the Reformed Presbyterian church, Evangelical Synod. (a 1965 merger of the Reformed Presbyterian church in North America, General Synod and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church which had split from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1937.)
- Presbyterian Church of North America.
- Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church
- Bible Presbyterian Church
- Cumberland Presbyterian Church
- Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the United States
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Reformed Presbyterian Church
- Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- Westminster Presbyterian Church
- Associate Presbyterian Church of North America

There are American Reformed churches with Presbyterian government. They are:

- Reformed Church in America
- Christian Reformed Church
- Hungarian Reformed Church in America
- Netherlands Reformed Congregations
- Protestant Reformed Church of America
- Reformed Church in the United States

All Presbyterians follow some degree of confessions including:

- Nicene Creed of 325
- Apostle's Creed of 2nd century
- Scot Confession of 1580

Heidelberg Catechism of 1563
Second Helvetic Confession of 1566
Westminster Confession of 1647
The Shorter Catechism of 1647
Theological Declaration of Barmen from 1934
Confession of 1967

Surely there are some other Presbyterian type churches that have been omitted here, but our question remains the same. **Is one Presbyterian Church as good as another? Are creeds and confessions necessary to understand and define Bible doctrine?**

If a confession or creed contains more than what the Bible teaches, doesn't it contain too much? If it contains anything less than what the Bible teaches, doesn't it contain too little? If it contains exactly what the Bible teaches is it superfluous? Is it necessary? Certainly if it contains exactly what the Bible teaches it would be a good personal confession but would it be needed as a creedal statement?

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TIMELINE

YEAR

Separated from Roman Catholic Church

1529 Reformation — Presbyterian Clturch (Zwingli) — Reformed Presbyterian

1560 Presbyterian Clturch Scotland (Knox)

1572 Huguenots - France (Calvin)

1706 Presbyterian Church (America)

1752 ...1-l===Reformed Pnsbytetian Clturch (North America)

1754 'Aalodallld Presbyterian in America

1782 As9odatecl PN1byterian of Pennsylvania --u-----u,50ciated Presbyterian Church (North Ameriic.al-_.,_.....

1798 Reformed Presbyterian Church

1801 AIIOCiatecl 'JII04otNorth. America

1810 Cumberland Presbyterian Church

1822 Associate Reformed Synod of the South

1833 - Refonned Presbyterian (Old Light)

Refonnecl Presbyterian (New light)

1857 United Synod of the Presbyterian Church -

1858 -------UnitedPresbytmianChureh(NorthAm<ric,a)--------+----------+------

1861 Presbyterian Clturch (Confederate States of America)

1865 Presberian(USA)

1869 Se<ond Cumberland .,_byterian Church (USA)

1906 Cumberland Presbyterian Clturch — Presbyterian Church (USA)

1935 -+-- Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church

1936 Presbyterian Chun:h (America)

(Renamed) Orthodt Presbyterian Church

1937 Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1938 Change)Bible Presbyterian ChurchBible

1956 Bible Presbyterian Church (Columbus Synod) — Presbyterian Church (Collingswood Synod)

1958 United Presbyterian Church (USA)

1961 Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Name

1964 eformed Presbyterian Church (Split Reversed)

1965 Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod — Bible Presbyterian Church (Name Change),

LUTHERAN

We have seen the origins of the Lutheran Church in the development of the Reformation and the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession. We will see as happened in the New Testament Church, what the founder taught and what the church did were not in accord. We will compare some of the Doctrines taught and believed by Martin Luther and what the church bearing his name has practiced and taught.

DOCTRINES OF LUTHER	DOCTRINES OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH
1. **ORIGINAL SIN** From Augustine, assumed it was Correct, did not investigate it.	1. ORIGINAL SIN
2. INFANT BAPTISM On the basis of original sin" He said Unless original sin could be proved, Infant baptism had no basis. Favored IMMERSION for baptism.	2. INFANT BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION
3. BIBLICAL AUTHORITY For church teaching and practice.	3. BIBLICAL AUTHORITY (A thing is allowed if it is not forbidden) Also use Luther's catechisms and three historical creeds.
4. CHURCH NAME - CHRISTIAN (Did not want to begin a sect or have His followers use his name)	4. LUTHERAN or EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
5. CONGREGATIONAL SINGING No choirs, Said nothing on instrumental music. Published hymns for use with organ.	5. SOLOS, CHOIRS, AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
6. PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS 1 Peter 3 and Hebrews 13	6. PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS Some bishops elevated over others and have developed a Synod organization.
7. SALVATION by FAITH ONLY	7. ADULT SALVATION by FAITH ONLY Eternal security
	8. CONSUBSTANTIATION The blood & body of Christ are in a Mysterious manner substantially present In the Eucharistic elements after consecration

CONGREGATIONALIST

Congregational is a term used to designate a particular denomination, and is also used to define a form of church government, in which each individual congregation or local church is self governing.

Congregationalism began with the original churches we read about in the New Testament. This is the way Christianity began. Over time and the development of the Catholic Church and the others in the Reformation, churches developed various forms of hierarchy in church management and control. It was revived in the period of English Puritanism, and then to designate a particular denomination. Many denominations began with some form of congregationalism, but over time control was moved to central organizations even when some authority remained at the local church level. There are some religious bodies that use the term as their name. These include some Baptists, Unitarians, and Christian Churches. The church of Christ has always been congregational from its beginnings in the first century. More recently churches of the Restoration Movement and the Campbellite tradition are still autonomous and completely congregational.

Congregationalism was prevalent in the 17th century among the English Puritans who migrated to New England. Historical accounts trace this congregationalism to Robert Browne, who argued as early as 1582 that the church of England was so corrupt that true Christians should separate from it and form their own autonomous churches. In many places and in many ways not known to history, Christians had to band together in small groups to avoid the penalties of being labeled heretics by the main line churches, and the governments that controlled them. This same thing is happening in Communist or Muslim countries such as China or Saudi Arabia where those "House churches' meet in secret, for fear of being tortured or murdered.

Among those who became the denomination called Congregational, membership was restricted to those regenerated, or spiritually reborn, through a personal experience of con version. This restriction had to be modified and in 1662 by adoption in many New England churches of the Half-Way covenant, privileges were given to persons who were sympathetic with the Congregational church order, but could not give assurance that they had experienced personal conversion. In the Lord's church this was not a problem since those who were obedient to the Word of God, repented of their sins, made a public confession, and were baptized, (immersed in water) showing clearly that they had' personal experience' of conversion.

In 1708 in Connecticut, the adoption of the Saybrook Platform provided for ministerial associations and association of churches of the Presbyterian character. In Massachusetts the early fear of exercise by ministerial associations abated and the 'Great Awakening' about 1740 further eroded the concept of regenerated membership.

Denomination developed separate identities, and organized separately to provide various services to its churches in the 19th century. Congregationalism is only one of the religious bodies that derived from congregational churches of colonial New England. In the years 1805 to

1825 two groups emerged carrying the name congregational. The liberal wing became a separate body called Liberal Christians or Unitarian Congregationalist, and finally just Unitarians. The other wing was called Orthodox or Trinitarian Congregationalist and eventually just Congregationalist.

The Congregationalists developed an increasing sense of denominational identity and held a series of conventions, which resulted in forming a National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States. The denomination has now spread to other parts of the country where people from New England have migrated.

Now, since participating in the Federal Council of Churches and with various mergers and the merger in 1961 with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the denomination is called the **United Church of Christ.** The Evangelical and Reformed churches were of the Presbyterian, rather then congregational make up, and since the Congregational denominations were no longer congregational anymore anyway, it represents very little compromise. Since they have merged one church among them must be as good as any other among them!

BAPTISTS

Baptists are one of the major Protestant churches in the United States. It is claimed among them that they have no founder but Christ and that Baptists have been preaching and practicing from the days of John the Baptist. There have been people holding to what have come to be considered distinctly Baptist principles all across the years. But the church, or 'organized church' they began in England and Holland. (Note: John the Baptist lived in the Mosaic Age before the Christian Church was established.)

When the Reformation came early in the 16th century, scattered groups appeared advocating the convictions of faith which are now Baptist theology. The name Baptist was found in various forms in Germany and Switzerland. Pedobaptists, (who baptized infants and children) Anti Pedobaptists, (who opposed infant Baptism, and Anabaptists (who re-baptized adults who were baptized as children.)

In Holland, Mennonites, followers of the formerly Anabaptist Menno Simons, influenced a group of Baptist Separatists who had taken refuge in Amsterdam from the religious persecutions under James 1; many of them lived in Mennonite homes and one of the leaders, John Smyth was re-baptized with his followers in the Anabaptist or Baptist faith and with them organized the first English Baptist Church in 1609. They refused to be Mennonites because that was a threat to their English heritage. They would be Baptist but not Mennonite. They went back to London and established the General Baptist Church.

In 1638 the first Particular Baptist (British) Church was founded holding to the predestination teachings of John Calvin and preaching limited atonement. In 1641 the immersion Baptist broke away and wrote a confession of faith which is still held by many Baptists. It was this confession which branded these people with the name Baptist.

There are at least 27 Baptist denominations each independent of the others yet bound together in certain principles and doctrines:

American Baptist (in the north)
Negro Baptist
Bible Baptist Fellowship, International
Baptist General Conference
Free Will Baptist
General Baptists
General Six Principle Baptist
Primitive Baptists
Separate Baptists in Christ
Seventh Day Baptists (German 1728)
United Free Will Baptist Church
Bethel Ministerial Association
National Primitive Baptist Convention of the U.S.A.
National Baptist Evangelical life and Soul Saving Assembly of the U.S.A.
General Conference of the Evangelical Baptist Church, Inc.
Duck River (and Kindred) Association of Baptists (Baptist Church of Christ)
Bethel Baptist

Southern Baptist Convention
American Baptist Association
Central Baptist Association
Christian Unity Baptist Association
Conservative Baptist Association of America
General Association of Regular Baptist Churches
Landmark Baptists
North American Baptist General Conference
Seventh Day Baptists
United Baptists
Baptist Missionary Association of America
Two-seed-in-the-spirit Predestination Baptists

Is one Baptist Church as good as another?

QUAKERS - FRIENDS

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY of FRIENDS. George Fox, born in 1624 and lived until 1691, sought after spiritual truth and peace in an environment where the church and state controlled religious action and thought. Failing to find spiritual truth in the churches of his time he found peace in a new, intimate and personal relationship with Christ. He said: *"When all my hopes in (churches and churchmen) were gone, then I heard a voice which said,* ***"There is one, even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition."***

"The Inner Voice or Inner Light, a voice available to all men. Every member of the Friends, commonly known as 'Quakers' is the church, every heart is God's altar and shrine. They have nothing to do with outward forms or ceremonies, rituals, or creeds. Their fundamental belief is that divine revelation is immediate and individual, all persons may perceive the Word of God in their soul, and friends endeavor to heed it."

Quakers emphasize human goodness because of a belief that something of God exists in everyone. They do recognize the presence of evil and work to eradicate it as much as possible. Friends try to live in accord with Christian principles of truth and sincerity. They avoid luxury, with simplicity in dress, manners, and speech.

Quakerism was revolutionary, and was treated as a revolution by the state Church of England, where it originated. They insisted in freedom of speech, assembly, and worship, apart from the state church. They objected to the theology and doctrines of the state church and thought it wrong to have to pay taxes to support the state clergy. This was taken as rebellion by the state. Many Quakers were whipped, jailed, tortured, mutilated, or murdered, in the period of 1650 to 1689. Some Quakers died in prisons. In America laws were passed to keep them out, and many were whipped, until the toleration act of 1689.

They would take no oaths in court, made no distinction between men and women or social classes, they condemned slavery, and would not tip their hat to king or commoner. The names they took such as Children of Light, Children of Truth, Friends of Truth, and finally Religious Society of Friends generated ridicule and some fierce opposition. In reference to their agitated movements before moments of divine revelation, they were popularly called Quakers.

Membership qualifications are based on moral and religious grounds, and the willingness of the prospect to realize and accept the obligations of membership. Meetings for worship are held once or twice a week, and are intended to help them feel God's presence as a guiding light or spirit in their lives. In these meetings, members measure or compare their insights and beliefs against others in the meeting. The meetings generally have no prarranged pro gram, liturgy, or rites. The more recent meetings of some of the Friends do use paid ministers and conduct a programmed or semi- programmed worship.

The administration of the society is regulated by meeting for business. Monthly Meetings are held by one or more congregations. One or more Monthly Meetings form a Quarterly Meeting, and the Quarterly Meetings within a defined area form a Yearly Meeting. The decisions of the Yearly Meeting are the highest authority for doctrinal or administrative items raised within the jurisdiction. The Friends World Committee for Consultation is the International organization of the society.

There have been some differences of opinion among the friends over doctrine. About 1827 the American Quaker minister Elias Hicks questioned the authenticity and divine authority of the Bible and the historical Christ, some Friends seceded and were known as Hickites. The Society then became known as Orthodox Friends. Then an evangelical movement led by a British Quaker, Joseph Gurney aroused opposition and a new group called the Orthodox Conservative Friends resulted led by John Wilbur. This group emphasized the strict Quaker ism of the 17th century. With these changes many changed their dealings with the world by abandoning their mode of dress and speech, and hostility toward the arts and literature, and the strict Quakerism of the 17th century is very small today.

Is one Quaker as good as another?

For every 'denomination' there is that difference that separates it from all others. Most denominations in what is called Christendom have some claim to be following God. It is not God who is the cause of religious differences or confusion in our world. *"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace,* as *in all the churches of the saints."* **(1 Corinthians 14:33)** Man is not the source of religious knowledge and should recognize that God's Word as given in the Holy Bible does contain religious authority.

Jesus Christ was given all authority by the Heavenly Father (Matthew 28:18) Moses prophesied in **Deuteronomy 18: 15-19,** *"The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee* a *Prophet from the midst of thy brethren, like unto* me, *unto Him you shall hearken."* Peter applied this prophecy of Moses to Jesus in **Acts 3: 19-26,** *"Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers,* a *prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto your brethren, like unto* me; *him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear the prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yes and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after,* as *many* as *have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindred's of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities."*

Here we have the word of God *"since the world began"* through the children of the covenant with God and the prophets telling of the *"seed"* which is Jesus the son of God. This is the seed and the Word we have been following through the chapters of this book. During the lifetime of George Fox that Bible, while in rather short supply, was available, and in the years since it has been available. The time for the 'inner voice' is over.

Jesus was given all authority in heaven and in earth. On the mountain when He was transfigured in the presence of Moses, Elias, Peter, James, and John, the voice out of the cloud said, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I* am *well pleased, hear ye Him."* The time of the prophets and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are past, and we need to hear what Jesus has to say, and through the Holy Spirit the words of His apostles as recorded in the New Testament. There will always be divisions and changes in a church or assembly where everyone has an 'inner light', 'inner voice', or spirit to guide him rather than the written Word of God as recorded in the Holy Bible.

Hebrews 1:1-2, *"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto* us *by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom He made the worlds."*

Failing to find spiritual truth in the churches at any time should not result in 'new revelation' or 'inward light' but a search in the scripture will result in finding what God has established in the church of His Son Jesus. Nothing new can come of this search; the words have been the same for almost 2000 years. The churches may not have found this truth, but everyone who seeks the truth with an honest heart and open mind will find the same church the apostles knew in the first century and which is still in the world today.

"There is* one, *even Christ Jesus that can speak* to *thy condition. [11]

UNITARIAN

Unitarian thought goes back into the early centuries of the Christian Church. Unitarianism denies the doctrine of the trinity, that God exists in three persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Unitarianism teaches that God exists in one person only. Beginning in the middle of the second century and toward the end of the third century, teachers called Monarchians taught this doctrine.

During the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, some questioned the doctrine of the Trinity again. Unitarian belief was not tolerated in most countries, but was allowed in Poland. Unitarian refugees primarily from Italy found welcome in Poland from **1548 to 1574.** There they formed a separate church, which flourished until the middle of the 17th century. Here in Poland the Unitarian group grew separate from the Reformation Movement.

After **1740,** the Unitarian point of view was being considered and studied in New England, and in **1796,** King's Chapel in Boston, Massachusetts officially adopted Unitarianism and left the Episcopal Church. Following this, other churches also became Unitarian. By **1815** the name became used more often, and 120 Congregational churches adopted Unitarian principles.

In England at this time some suffered martyrdom on charges of teaching or practicing the Unitarian doctrine. It was not until the passing of the Toleration Act in **1813** that people were allowed to adopt Unitarian opinions publicly.

The American Unitarian Association was formed in **1825** and a national conference was add ed in **1855.** Local congregations retained independence. In **1961** the association joined with the Universal Church of America to form the ***Unitarian Universalist Association,*** which has its headquarters in Boston.

In **1942** the character of the Universalist Church of America was changed to read, *"To promote harmony among adherents of all religious faith, whether Christian or otherwise."* They desire no doctrinal statements, or creedal tests. Universalism is to be harmonious among Christians or Non-Christians, naturalists, humanists, mystics, and all who can find significance or meaning in a universal approach to life. Joined now in their new association neither Unitarians nor Universalists have lost anything of their original ideologies, theology, or purposes. No minister, member, or congregation is required to subscribe to any particular interpretation of religion, religious belief, or creed.

Unitarian doctrine has no formal creed, but is guided by the constitution of the General Conference, which has stated, *"These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding in accordance with his teaching that practical religion is summed up in the love to God and love to man."* Denying the Trinity and holding to the oneness of God, they deny the deity of Jesus. They have no belief in everlasting punishment, or the concept of original sin. They believe in the ultimate salvation of all souls, and believe in a divine nature of man, believing that Christ was divine only in that same way, as all men are. Hell and eternal punishment are not consistent with the concept of a loving and all powerful God.

Heaven is not a place, but a state of being. Unitarians do not hold the Bible to be infallible. There is tolerance for individual belief and democratic principles in seeking truth. They celebrate the Eucharist, not as a sacrament, but as a commemoration of the death of Jesus, and a spiritual expression of communion with him. They adhere to the rite of infant baptism,

and do not restrict baptism to adults.

With no official statement of faith or any particular belief and wide differences of belief and practice in the same organization, how can we know if this religion is as good as any other? If Jesus Christ is not divine and not the seed of the promise, as we have found throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, then there is no hope of life eternal in heaven or fear of hell. There is no religion any better than any other, and everyone can believe whatever they want, until the day they die and learn the truth from God Himself, and will bow to Jesus, the Son of God, who was not considered here to be divine. If the line of the promise found in the Bible from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 has no substance, than there is no religion with substance or worth putting our time and energies into.

BRETHREN

The Disciples of Christ were called **Brethren** in Luke 8:21 and the Apostle Paul writing the Epistle to the churches of Galatia referred to them as Brethren. When referring to the church it was called the Church of God, the Body of Christ, Church of Christ, or the **Bride of Christ.** (1 Corinthians 1:2, Acts 20:28, Colossians 1:24, Matthew 16:18, Romans 16:16, Romans 7:4, and Revelation21:9)

When a group of Christians in Schwarzenau, Germany in **1708** established an organization called **Brethren** they took the New Testament literally and tried to put its teachings into practice in every detail of living. They were soon given the name **'Dunke s'** because of the practice of immersion in baptism in which the believer was immersed three times, once each in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

This group was persecuted in Germany and was reorganized in America in **1719** at German town, Pennsylvania. The denomination had its headquarters in Elgin, Illinois. They have been known for their desire for peace, temperance, brotherhood, and simple living. The brethren beginning in Germany were known for many years as **German Baptist Brethren.** One group came to America in 1719, led by Peter Becker to free land offered by William Penn. They were joined by another group from Germany in 1729 led by Alexander Mack.

Generally, these 'Dunkers' or Brethren were former Baptists who followed the Pietistic theology of the 17th century. The Pietists were mostly of Lutheran origin but were not happy with the formal worship and ritual in their state church. These Brethren spurned the idea of Apostolic Succession. They practiced a 'love feast' which was the serving of the Lord's Supper preceded by a ceremony of foot washing. They dressed very plainly, refrained from worldly amusements, refused to take oaths, engage in lawsuits, or go to war. In doctrine the Brethren adhered to the New Testament and accepted no creeds. The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God and the New testament provides the only rule of faith and practice. They believe and baptize in the name of the trinity, and in future rewards and punishment. Faith, repentance, and baptism are the conditions for salvation. Their practice was to follow closely the teachings of the Bible and the primitive simplicity of the New Testament Church. Exception may be in a central organization as developed to control and organize the churches, and in the use of instrumental music in worship.

In organization they have Moderators and Pastors in local congregations, above this are established Districts, and an annual conference of delegates from the churches. Then there is an 'Upper House' known as the Standing Committee made up of delegates from the districts. A General board, elected by the annual conference, supervises the general church program.

They have become a member in the World Council of Churches and the national organization in the United States.

The Plymouth Brethren originated with a group opposing the Established Church in England and Ireland sometime about 1800. They began meeting for fellowship and prayer and used names from the scripture and were called Christians, Believers, or Saints. Because they had the largest meeting in Plymouth, England, they organized with the name, Plymouth Brethren. They had no connection to the Brethren from Germany who had organized earlier. They also set up their meetings based on the New Testament, recognizing

no clergy or laity. They had a strong emphasis upon the imminent rapture of the church. Differences arose in the Plymouth assembly and a division occurred in **1848** into the **Exclusive Brethren** and **Open Brethren.** The Open brethren wanted to receive all persons sound in faith even if some had come from an assembly where error was taught. The exclusive Brethren held that this disqualified the assemblies from the 'Circle of Fellowship', the joint body holding corporate unity made up of leaders making decisions for all constituent assemblies. In America, additional divisions occurred and became eight bodies of Plymouth Brethren in the U.S.A., designated by Roman Numerals. In **1848** another break resulted in the establishment of the **Church of God (New Dunkers.)**

Disputes in organization brought about two smaller groups. The **Old Order, or Yorker Brethren in 1843** and the **Brinsers or United Zion's Children in 1855.** This name was changed in **1954 to United Zion Church** and is located mostly in Pennsylvania.

About **1875** a considerable number of Anabaptists and Pietists fleeing persecution in Europe came to Pennsylvania and in cooperation with other denominations developed a fellowship called **United Brethren in Christ. A** group near the Susquehanna River had a disagreement with this fellowship over requirements in Christian ordinances, and this resulted in the formation of the **"Brotherhood by the River" or River Brethren.**

The **Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers)** left the church of the brethren because the Conservative Dunkers were too conservative, **The Old Baptist Brethren (Old Older Dunkers)** left it because they considered it not conservative enough. The issues were Sunday Schools, salaried ministers, missions, higher education, and church societies. They withdrew in **1881.** The Progressive branch was organized in **1882.**

A dissenting group formed in **1889** over an issue of discipline rather than doctrine is called the **Church of the United brethren in Christ.**

In **1926** a small group of conservatives withdrew and formed the **Dunker Brethren Church.**

In **1939** multiple divisions occurred resulting in the **Ashland Group** and the **Grace Group.** The Grace Group became known as the **National Fellowship of Brethren Churches.** Both groups carry the name of Brethren Church and operate under the same charter with different annual conferences held. The Ashland Group in Ashland Ohio and the Grace Group in Winona Lake, Indiana. The Grace Group has taken on a doctrine more nearly the Calvinistic viewpoint in theology. Churches are grouped into geographic districts which hold annual conferences.

Amos 3:3 asked the question, *"Can two walk together unless they have agreement."* The concept of following close to the New Testament is an excellent ideal and frequently required in the Word of God.

The church of the New Testament was called by various names, but in every case it is the church belonging to Jesus Christ. The same church is called *'Church of God'* in First Corinthians 1:2 and Acts 20:28. In Colossians 1:24 and in Ephesians 5:23 the church is referred to as the *'Body of Christ'.* In Matthew 16:18 and in Romans 16:16 it is called the *'Church of Christ',* and in Romans 7:4 and Revelation 21:9 it is the *'Bride of Christ'.* The believers were called *'Disciples'* in John 15:8 and Acts 11:26, caiied *'saints'* in Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians i :2 and

Philippians 1:1, called *'Brethren'* in Luke 8:21 and Galatians 6:1, called *'Children'* in Galatians 3:26 and 1 John 2:1, and called *'Christians'* in Acts 11:26, Acts26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16. The church of Jesus Christ consists of those persons found listed in the Lamb's Book of Life as mentioned in Revelation 20:12. Christians belong to Christ and are included in His church which is His bride. Names used to identify His church on this earth should be consistent with names used in the scriptures, but because of our legal systems, and to make them legal entities within communities, sometimes the names of the Christians are used to identify the name of the church comprised of Christians. The name Brethren is such a name.

Our question: **Is one church of the brethren as good as another?** Are any of the churches of the Brethren still following the New Testament as they did at one time in history? Are they truly trying to *"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* as directed in Jude, verse three?

METHODIST

Methodist, beginning in **1729,** when a group of students at Oxford University in Eng land, began to assemble for worship, study, and Christian service. Their fellow students began to call them the Holy Club or Methodists referring to the methodical manner or church ritual and their sense of Christian duty.

Within this group were John and Charles Wesley. John preached and Charles wrote hymns that are still well known today. Together, along with George Whitefield they brought about a spiritual revolution. The Wesley's were sons of a clergyman of the Church of England. The members of the 'Holy Club' also called "Bible Bigots", or "Bible Moths.' They stood their ground against jeering students and went out to preach and pray with the poor and desperate 'commoner' of England. They preached in prisons and ghettos to the bitter and hopeless people of British society.

The theology of the Wesley's followed the doctrines of Armenians rather than the Calvinistic emphasis on predestination. This indicates that although God knows that some people are intended for hell, and some for heaven, Jesus will separate the 'Sheep from the Goats,' and people are still free to follow or reject the 'gospel', the good news of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Preaching the doctrine of salvation through faith, John Wesley quickly had an enthusiastic following among the English working classes, for whom the formal, established Church of England had little appeal.

Opposition by the English clergy and the established church prevented the Wesley's from speaking in the churches, so Methodists meetings were often conducted in open fields. These meetings led to a revival of religious fervor through out England, especially among the poor. John Wesley's message and his work among the poor encouraged a social consciousness that was retained by his followers and is still a Methodist tradition. In recent times the 'social gospel' has taken a forefront over the gospel of salvation, repentance and forgiveness of sins.

The Wesley's came to Georgia in the Americas in 1736. John was sent by the society for the Propagation of the Gospel, to be a missionary to the 'Indians'. Charles became a secretary to General Oglethorpe. They were there for about two years and did not consider it successful.

Between **1739** and **1744** the organization of Methodism came together. There was phenomenal growth of membership in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. They had a great impact upon British society. Wesley did try to keep the movement within the Church of England, but so many members from among the un-churched made a separate organization imperative. In **1739** Wesley drew up a set of general rules of conduct and delineation of the Bible. In **1784** a deed of Declaration gave legal status to the annual conference. In **1791,** after the death of John Wesley, Methodism in England had a name as a recognized church, the **Wesleyan Methodist Connection.**

Soon after John Wesley's death in 1791, his followers began to divide into separate church bodies. During the 19th century many such separate Methodist denominations were formed in Great Britain and in the United States. Each of these groups maintains a version of Wesleyan tradition. In **1881** an Ecumenical Methodist Conference was held to coordinate Methodist groups though out the world. These conferences are held every five years and are known as the World Methodist Conference.

1787-1816 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Black members in Philadelphia withdrew from the church, where segregation was forced upon them. They established an independent organization called the **African Methodist Episcopal Church. (AME)**

1796 New York City. A group in New York City became the **African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church** protecting discrimination in the church on John Street. The first church building, built in 1800, was called Zion; the word Zion was later made a part of the denominational name. This name was approved at a conference in 1848.

1805-1813 Wilmington, Delaware. The **Union American Methodist Episcopal Church** was one of the first Negro bodies to establish an independent Methodist Church. A group of members left the Asbury Methodist Church in 1805. They worshipped in homes and outdoors until 1813 when they built their first church building. At first they incorporated as the **Union Church of Africans.** Defections from this membership caused the formation of another group called **The African Union Church,** which forced a name change to the **Union American Methodist Episcopal Church.**

1810-1829 England and U.S.A. The **Primitive Methodist Church, U.S.A.** had its initial organization in England under the direction of Lorenzo Dow. Dow was an American camp meeting revivalist who went to England to hold a series of meetings, which resulted in forming a number of societies of converts. The leaders of these societies were dropped from the Wesleyan Connection and formed the **Primitive Methodist Church.** Four missionaries came to America in **1829** and settled in New York City, and Philadelphia. Doctrinally, modified Wesleyan Articles of Religion are accepted.

1830. Baltimore, Maryland. The **Methodist Protestant Church** organized in protest to almost total rule of clergy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the exclusion of laymen from councils.

1845. Louisville, Kentucky. The **Methodist Episcopal Church,** South was organized. This church had to be organized to accommodate slave holders especially in Georgia where slaves were inherited by both men and their wives, and the laws of Georgia did not allow them to free the slaves. Bishop Andrew, a Georgian, owned slaves through inheritance and so did his wife. The general conference held in New York City requested than he give up his office as long as he was a slaveholder. The Southern delegates rebelled and a provisional plan of separation formulated. Organization of the new church occurred in 1845.

1852. Georgia. The **Congregational Methodist Church** was formed by a group withdrawing from the Methodist Episcopal Church; South in objection to certain features in the movement and travel of bishops and ministers. Two thirds of its membership had withdrawn to join the Congregational Church by 1888. Local pastors are called by local churches, and district conferences grant licenses and ordain ministers.

1852. Forsythe, Georgia. **First Congregational Methodist Church of the U.S.A.** This group claims to be the parent body from which the Congregational Methodist Church dissented to form its own organization, withdrawing from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The disagreement was that the system of movement of bishops and ministers lacked Biblical authority and democratic principles.

1860. Pekin, New York. The **Free Methodist Church of North America** is a more conservative group among Methodism. They were 'read out" of their churches for their differences and organized the Free Methodist Church, They call for a return to primitive Wesleyan teaching. No one may be received into membership without an experience of confession and forgiveness of sin. A strict adherence to the general rules of Methodism is demanded. Membership in secret societies is forbidden. While having in the name 'of North America,' they have become a world fellowship and have had conferences in Egypt, Japan. And North America. They have foreign missions in many countries around the globe.

1866. A union of two churches known as the African Union Church and the First Colored Methodist Church was named the **African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church, Inc.** Doctrine is in accord with most of Methodism, but there are no bishops. Ministers and 'laymen' are equal in annual and general conferences.

1870. New Orleans, Louisiana. The **Colored Methodist Episcopal Church** was formed by agreement between white and Negro members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, when a commission from the Negro membership asked to have a separate church of their own. Doctrine is the same as the parent church.

1881. The **New Congregational Methodist Church** originated over an administrative quarrel in the Georgia conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The dispute occurred about the consolidation of some rural properties in the southern section of the state. Organization is on the general plan of the Congregational Methodist Church. Some congregations have since united with the Congregational Methodist Church. Government is a combination of Methodist and Congregational systems, with an episcopacy rejected. Congregations call and elect their own pastors, but there are the usual local, district and general conferences. This church also practices foot washing which is unusual for Methodists.

1885. Charleston, South Carolina. The **Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal Church** was begun by withdrawal from the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The cause of division was a dispute over election of ministerial delegates to the general conference. Intended at first to be non-Episcopal, they did adopt the complete system of the Methodist Episcopal Church in general conferences held in 1896 and 1916.

1907. Jacksonville, Florida. The **Independent African Methodist Church** was formed by twelve ministers who left the African Episcopal Church following disputes with the district superintendents of that church. They wrote a new book of church discipline, doctrines, and laws which is revised from time to time by the general conferences. The 25 articles of religion that it contains remain unchanged. It is interesting to note that changes are made to doctrine and practices of a church while the New Testament remains unchanged for over 1900 years. The laws and doctrine of the Lord's church are still the same as when written, but men organize churches and change rules, government, and even doctrines from time to time.

1939. Kansas City The **Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South,** and the **Methodist Protestant Church,** reunite under the name **Methodist Church.**

1939. North Carolina. **The People's Methodist Church** follows the conservative and holiness teachings. The founders of this church left the Methodist Church at the time of the merger of the three major Methodist churches.

1939. The Southern Methodist Church is the same doctrinally as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South from which it came. They opposed the merger of that church with the Northern Methodists on grounds of 'infidelity' and apostasy found therein. They attempt to perpetrate the faith of John Wesley. They have no bishops, but they have the usual annual and general conferences. Local churches own their property, and call their ministers on their own.

1942. Ash Grove, Missouri. **The Fundamental Methodist Church** also having been known as the **Independent Fundamental Methodist Church** was begun in **1942** and organized in **1948.** Dissatisfaction with a merger of three major Methodist churches in **1939,** and the conviction that the primitive Wesleyan principles and theology would suffer, led to withdrawal and establishment of this new church to hold to the 'fundamental' teachings of Methodism. There are no bishops in this church, but has a district superintendent and a secretary. Government is more representative than in most other Methodist groups. Ministers and laymen have equal voting at annual conferences.

1946. Memphis, Tennessee. The **Evangelical Methodist Church** in 'fundamental' in doctrine, evangelistic in program, and congregational in government. This church withdrew from the Methodist Church to protest the autocratic government and the tendency toward modernism. They oppose the substituting of social, educational, or other varieties of cultural 'salvation'. Local churches control and own their own property and choose their own pastors. They are not truly congregational, having district superintendents and various district and general conferences. They have an international Headquarters in Wichita, Kansas.

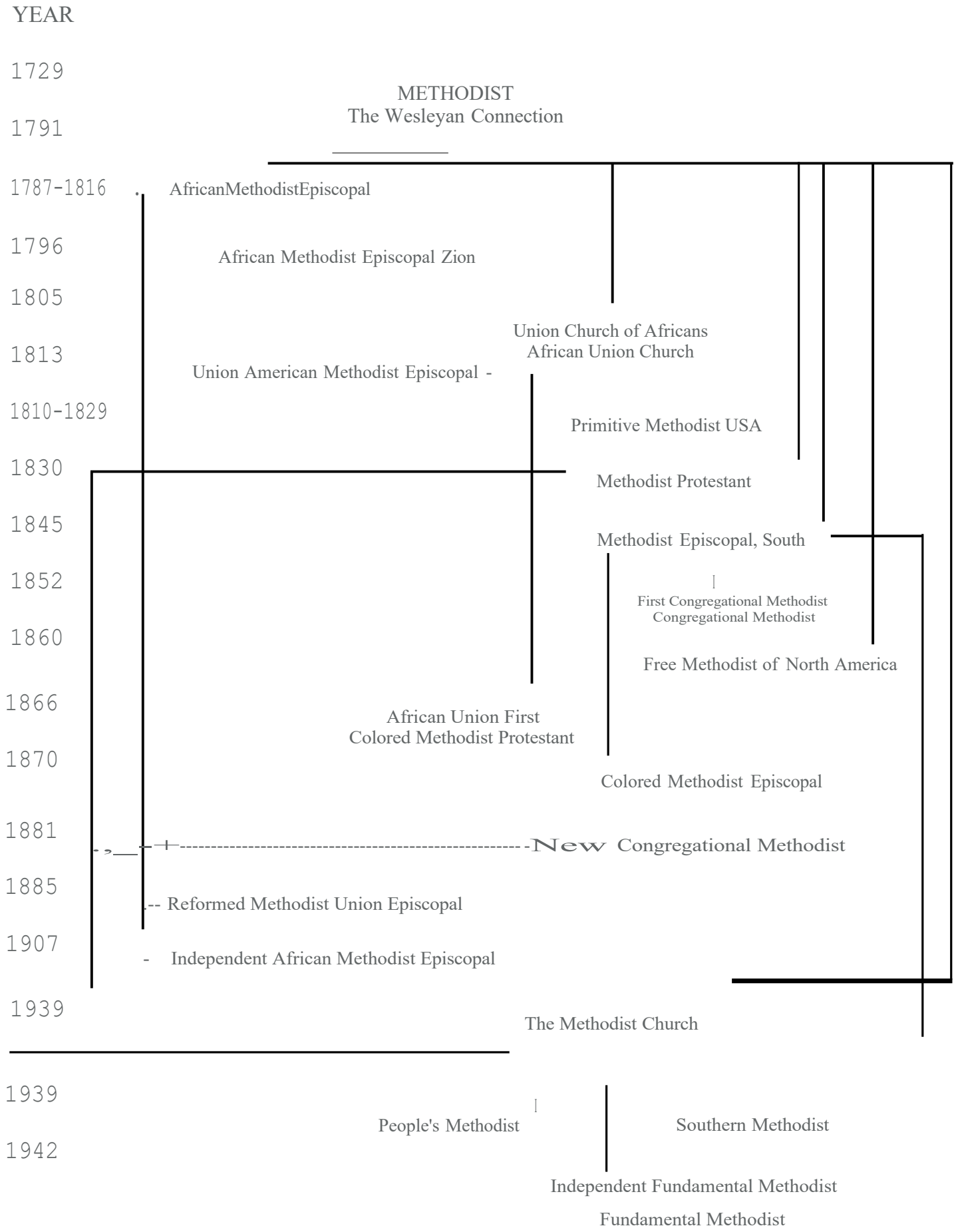
1950. Laager, Tennessee. **The Cumberland Methodist Church** is a small group who with drew from the Congregational Methodist Church in protest of matters of doctrine and form of government. It has a general board as chief administrative body and elects a president instead of a bishop.

1968. Dallas, Texas. **The Methodist Church** and the **Evangelical United Brethren,** both of Methodist background came together as **The United Methodist Church.**

1984. Memphis, Tennessee. **The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church** is a name change made at the general meeting of the **Colored Methodist Episcopal Church** which has existed since **1870.**

How many Methodist churches are there? How many do we need? How many are following Articles of Faith written by men? How many are following John Wesley? How many as Christians are following Jesus Christ? Is one Methodist Church as good as another? Do we need a few more Methodist churches? Would more Methodist churches improve Christianity?

Methodist Timelines



NEW JERUSALEM

There are two organizations of 'Swedenborgians', one is called **The General Convention of the New Jerusalem,** and the other is called **The General Church of the New Jerusalem.** Both have their roots from the writings and religious system of Emmanuel Swedenborg, who lived from 1688 until 1772.

Emanuel Swedenborg was a Swedish scientist, philosopher, and theologian. Swedenborg made many contributions to mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology. In 1745, Swedenborg claimed to have experienced supernatural vision and began to study theology. He devised a religious system based on an allegorical interpretation of the scriptures according to instructions he claimed to have received from God. In 1757 he maintained that the last judgment occurred in his presence, and that the Christian Church era had come to an end. A new church as foretold as the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation was then created by divine dispensation. Swedenborg had earlier written on the subjects of his views of the derivation of matter, and his explanation of the relationship between matter and the soul. Now, according to Swedenborg, the natural world derives its reality from the existence of God, whose divinity became human in Jesus Christ. The highest purpose is to achieve conjunction with God through love and wisdom.

Followers of Swedenborg, also known as Swedenborgians, accept his theological writings as being divinely inspired. He never intended to found a new religious denomination. Where have we heard this before? In 1787 his followers in England were organized as a separate sect by the British printer, Robert Hindmarsh.

The reading of Revelation 21 tells us about the New Jerusalem, and the reading requires that some other events should have happened if it occurred in 1757. It should have created a world much different to what we are living in now. Let us look at Revelation 21:1-5. *"And I saw* a *new heaven and* a *new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more* sea. *And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared* as a *bride adorned for her husband. And I heard* a *great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said to me, write: for these things are true and faithful."*

Did death and pain come to an end in 1757? Are tears a thing of the past? Are former things passed away? Were Swedenborg's interpretations according to instructions received from God? Has the Christian Church era come to an end?

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In **1773 The Reformed Episcopal Church** was organized in New York City by priests and members of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Their debate and contention was with the ritualism, priesthood, and the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper in the elements of bread and wine. All believers are the 'royal priesthood'. Worship still uses the prayer book, but was revised to remove objectionable elements relating to the priesthood. The Reformed Episcopal Church was formed before and separately from the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church is the Church of England as organized in the United States after the Revolutionary War. The Anglican Tradition was brought to America in 1607 by the settlers at Jamestown, Virginia. This church was strong in New York and Pennsylvania and had some followers in the south and in the rest of New England. Because of the revolution, the ties to the Church of England were strained. Many of the clergy in New York favored Great Britain, but loyalty to the colonies during the revolution secured vast holdings. These were secured by the bishop of New York. When political independence was finally achieved, the ties that had bound the Anglican congregations to the Church of England were severed. The churches had previously required bishops to be consecrated and approved by the Church of England. A new organization would be required now. Many of the Anglican churches were now known as Protestant Episcopal or Protestant Catholic churches. In 1785 a convention of delegates from the various Anglican churches petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury to obtain permission from parliament to consecrate American bishops. They received this permission in 1787. A little prior to this, in 1784, a clergyman from Connecticut accepted consecration from bishops in Scotland.

In **1789** all the congregations sent delegates to a convention held in Philadelphia. An independent denomination was formally organized at this convention and called the **Episcopal Church.** An explicit statement was prepared that the new church did not intend to depart 'in any essential point of doctrine, discipline, or worship' from the Church of England. This convention also ratified a constitution and adopted, with some variations, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. In 1801 a version of the 39 Articles of religion was approved, as modified to conform to the political changes in the new nation.

In practice, the Episcopal Church follows both the Roman Catholic and Evangelical traditions, and with certain modifications is the same as the Church of England. The Bible is the sole criterion in matters of principle, but only as interpreted in modern biblical 'scholarship.' The Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed are accepted as statements of faith. The 39 Articles of Religion are held to be of historic interest, but not essential as doctrine. Infant baptism and pouring for baptism instead of New Testament immersion are included in the Articles of Religion and the Common Book of Prayer.

The government of the Episcopal Church is democratic. Areas form parishes, with city, state, or regional names. Parishes form dioceses. A general convention consists of a house bishops and a house of deputies. The orders of ministry are deacons, priests, and bishops.

Members recognize the apostolic origin of the episcopate, but all do not accept the claim that the episcopate in its present form is identical in function with that which is found in the Nevv Testament.

Divisions have occurred over the issues of the admission of women to holy orders, (1970s), a revised book of Common Prayer (1979), and recent social issues including the position of the church relating to human sexuality.

The denomination is a member of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, the World Council of Churches, and is active in the Ecumenical Movement, attempting to achieve a more unified Christian church. In recent years, there has been an interest in a closer relationship with non- Christian bodies.

Our questions are; Is the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Articles of Religion, and the Common Book of Prayer as good a guide for religion as the original New Testament would be alone? Is the Episcopal Church as good as the Church of England, the Catholic Church, or the Evangelical churches? Is one church as good as another? Why are they necessary?

UNITED BRETHREN

United Brethren in the United States are found in two churches; **The Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Old Constitution),** and the **United Christian Church.** The **Evangelical United Brethren Church** which is now merged into the United Methodist Church was until these mergers, one branch of this body. Originally one group, they were a church that finds its roots in the work of Phillip William Otterbein and Martin Boehm. This work was done among the German people in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland. These men were elected bishops at a conference in September, **1800,** which created the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. This church was strongly Methodist in government, doctrine, and practice. Their discipline was modeled after the Methodist Discipline.

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church were merged into the Evangelical United Brethren at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1946, and has since merged again into the United Methodist Church. Have any of these mergers brought the church any closer to the doctrine of the New Testament? Have these churches agreed to accept the doctrines of men and agreed to disagree, on matters of doctrine on which they were originally founded?

CHURCH OF THE CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

The church of the Christian Association was a part of what is now referred to as the 'Restoration Movement'. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many efforts were made to reform the church and move away from Catholic doctrine and dogma. Many of the Christian Association was a part of what is now referred to as the 'Restoration Movement'. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many efforts were made to reform the church and move away from Catholic doctrine and dogma. Many churches were established to refute salvation by works and control of the scriptures by the church fathers of the day. That era was called the 'Reformation,' or 'Reformation Movement' . The Reformation of the 16th century began with the 95 Theses posted to a Catholic Church door by Martin Luther in 1517, followed by John Calvin, the Anabaptists and the Puritans. These efforts were called 'protestant' because they were a protest to the existing apostate church, and not a restoration of the original, as established in the New Testament. There had been several groups over the early centuries that used the Bible as authority and opposed the 'established' church. Among these were the Paulicians of the 7th century, Waldensians, and the Albigensians of the 12th and 13th centuries. These groups suffered severe persecution from the 'established' churches.

Independent churches began to spring up around the year 1800, not to protest the Catholic Church as 'Protestants', but to restore the church to what it was in the first century, and follow the New Testament as closely as possible. The United States was a new country and people were moving into new territories rapidly, and new congregations and churches were being established on the frontier, as new towns were being formed. Many persons began to re-think the foundations of their religion.

The history of the Christian religion included much apostasy and restorations. There have been many attempts to go back to the Bible on some points and many divisions had occurred as people tried to be faithful to God's word. There have been many attempts to keep people from reading the Bible and knowing the Bible, as a means of controlling the church and its people. There are two things we have had to keep in mind as we study religion. One is the serpent, the devil who was present with Adam and Eve and is present with us today, tempting us in the same ways. The second thing to remember is what Jesus said about His church. Matthew 16: 18b " ... *I will build my church; and the* gates *of hell shall not prevail against it."* Since its establishment in AD 33 the Lord's church has existed somewhere, in dungeons, in homes, in secret, and sometimes in the world's favor, even as the apostate churches of the world were the only churches of prominence.

One of these movements for restoration took place in the United States during the 19th century. This movement had many roots as men from New England and the frontier areas, and men who moved from Europe had the desire to return to the Bible as the Word of God, and to adhere to it exclusively. Their concern was to do what God requires, and not what the teachings of men had begun to require. When they saw a need for change and restoration it was then necessary to accomplish this on the basis of what God desires, and had expressed through the writings of the Bible. The restoration movement will never be complete, but will only continue as people continue the effort to restore the New Testament pattern and resist new or the same old apostasies and departures from the word that have caused so many divisions and denominations in the past.

A restoration sprang up in many places from within various religious bodies. In North Carolina, in the years **1790 to 1800,** James O' Kelly pleaded for the New Testament to be the only creed and discipline. He left denominationalism and took the name Christian. Abner Jones in Vermont preached that sectarian names and creeds should be abolished, around the year 1800.

Barton W. Stone was born in Maryland in 1772. His mother moved to Virginia and he came into contact with fanatical religion. He was not impressed with this, but was greatly impressed when he heard a Presbyterian Preacher, James McGready, and a sermon on 'God is Love'. He received his license to preach and was called to preach at Cane Ridge and Concord Kentucky. He was having some problems with Presbyterian doctrine and the Westminster Confession of Faith, but said he could preach as long as it agreed with the Bible. As he taught the Bible he began to part with Calvinism. Stone attended a camp meeting in Logan County, Kentucky in 1801 conducted by McGready, and was amazed. In August 1801, Stone began a revival and people came from far and near to participate. About 30,000 people attended from many religious affiliations. This revival lasted 6 or 7 days and thousands turned to God. Many among the Presbyterian leadership did not agree with Stone's ideas or his methods. One preacher who had accepted ideas similar to Stone's was tried for heresy. Stone and others saw what might happen to them and withdrew, forming their own Presbytery, calling it the Springfield Presbytery. Stone soon saw that he could no longer support Presbyterianism and realized that even the organization of the Springfield Presbytery was wrong. He knew that he could only preach those things that advance the Kingdom of God, and accepted the Bible as the only basis for authority. He would use the name 'Christian' only and accepted immersion as the only mode of baptism. Churches began to spring up over a wide area rejecting all authority but the Bible and using only the name ' Christian'. In **1832,** the converts of Stone and the disciples of Alexander Campbell joined together and the restoration movement in the United States was a reality.

Alexander Campbell was a student of the Bible , trying to follow it without letting his family training or prejudices interfere with what he was learning. He was able to articulate ideas found in the Bible to others orally and through written word. Alexander Campbell was from a strict Anti-Burger Seceder Presbyterian family. His father, Thomas Campbell was a Presbyterian Preacher. His mother was a strong Christian influence. They worshipped God faithfully in their home and memorized a portion of Scripture every day.

Thomas Campbell moved from Scotland to the United States for health reasons. He called for his family in 1808, the family left by ship for America, but the ship wrecked.

Alexander returned to Glasgow and studied for a year and then the family again left for America. In America, Alexander met men and ideas that changed his life. He began to doubt the views of the Seceder group. Thomas and Alexander shared ideas both had arrived at indpendently and Thomas wrote his 'Declaration and Address'.

Alexander Campbell began a rigid study of the Bible under the guidance of his father. He studied Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, along with church history. In 1810 he began to preach and received many invitations to speak. His sermons expressed some of the following points:

- Denominations possess the essence of Christianity, but new reformation is to persuade people to abandon human ideas and adopt the Bible as authority.
- Each congregation should be self governing.
- There is no distinction in the Bible between clergy and laity.
- Infant Baptist is without direct scriptural authority, but a matter where forbearance

- Possibility that the **Christian Association** would have to become a distinct church if others do not accept the overtures for reform
- The idea of having a *"thus saith the Lord"* might lead to abandonment of things thought to be precious.

Infant baptism became a major issue within the Christian Association. Some of the members of the Brush Run church were convinced that immersion was the only mode of baptism shown to us in the Holy Scriptures. Thomas Campbell consented to immerse, and in 1812 both Alexander and Thomas Campbell were convinced that immersion is the only mode of baptism.

The Campbells did not wish to form a new religious organization, so they joined the Baptist in the Redstone Association. They believed the Baptist to be as close to what they believed. They told the Baptist what they believed and were accepted by a large majority. But problems began to surface when sermons taught that Christians are not under the Old Testament, and Christians are guided by the New Testament. Teaching about the Lord's Supper, the Sabbath, the union of church and state, and imitation of Jewish customs upset many within the Association. They left the Redstone Association and joined with the Mahoning Association of Baptist, most of whose members were friendly to Campbell's views.

Alexander Campbell became known as a defender of adult baptism by immersion in opposition to infant baptism. This led to debates, especially with Presbyterians. Campbell converted many to believing in immersion by using Scripture and the authorities of Presbyterianism. Alexander began to publish ' The Christian Baptist' paper in 1823. The Christian Baptist was to "espouse the cause of no religious sect, excepting the ancient sect "Called Christians first at Antioch". Its sole object shall be the eviction of truth, and the exposure of error in doctrine and practice." It began with a series of articles on the "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things." The paper urged abandonment of such things as creeds, unscriptural words and phases, and theological theories. Articles taught the primitive practice of weekly Lord's Supper, fellowship, simple order of worship, and independence of each congregation under plurality of elders and deacons. The paper also dealt with missionary societies, Sunday Schools, synods, presbyteries, conferences, and various church practices as to whether they were consistent with the New Testament. There was a call for universal Bible Study as the means for restoration. Because of the Christian Baptist publication, and its subject matter, the Mahoning Association became defunct; it melted away as people did study the Bible and formed congregations consistent with its teachings.

Alexander Campbell began a series of debates with Presbyterians again. A debate with W.L. McCalla ended when McCalla refused to answer Campbell's arguments on baptism. In Cincinnati on April 13, 1829, Campbell debated with Robert Owen on the evidences of Christianity. Owen was prepared to argue historical religion. Campbell argued New Testament Christianity. Finally on April 17, Owen conceded Campbell the remainder of the time, and Campbell spoke for twelve hours. There were other debates, one with a Catholic named Purcell.

Campbell visited Nashville Tennessee and converted many people in 1830. On December 30 of that year he preached to most of the preachers in that city. A debate was conducted with Dr. Obadiah Jenkins resulting in the baptism of 30 people. Campbell believed that Christian education played an important part in the Christian religion. Bethany College was opened in 1841.

The center of the Restoration movement was in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. From this center various preachers spread thought-out the middle of the United States. Walter Scott preached in Ohio and was a convert of Alexander Campbell. Others who had been associated with Bar ton W. Stone or the Campbells were John Johnson, Jacob Creath, and 'Raccoon' John Smith. Down to the south in Tennessee and Alabama those who learned from Barton Stone began to preach. Among these were Abner Peeler, John Mulkey, Frank Palmer, J.E. Randolph, and J.E. Matthews. Among the converts of J.E. Matthews was Tolbert Fanning who was baptized near Florence, Alabama in 1827. Fanning made several trips with Alexander Campbell and in 1836 went with him though the Northeast and Canada. Fanning organized what became Franklin College and also established a magazine called the Gospel Advocate in 1855 which is still in publication today.

The organization of the Christian association of Washington, Pennsylvania in 1809 was never intended to be a church. It was only a part of a larger movement to restore people to the New Testament church which had been in existence since the day the Apostle of Jesus Christ, Simon Peter, preached that sermon as recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter two, and the Lord's church was established. This movement resulted in many congregations of the church of Christ, and in 1906 Christian churches, and a denomination called the Disciples of Christ resulted from divisions in the matter of the use of instruments in worship and missionary societies. The Christian Association was also dissolved somewhere in this process.

MORMON

IS THE BOOK OF MORMON FROM GOD?

We could have asked this question of the Koran which the Muslims believe. It too was said to be given by an angel. The Book of Mormon is the 'cornerstone' of the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon Church).** Mormons consider the Bible, Book of Mormon, Book of Doctrines and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and sayings of Joseph the seer, the guides in faith and practice. They believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly, and also believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God.

Joseph Smith claimed he translated the Book of Mormon from the original record written on golden plates through stones called Urim and Thummin, attended by the angel Moroni and guided by divine power, free from error. He published the book in 1830 in New York.

The Book of Mormon tells the story of America settled by a colony directly from the Tower of Babel to about the 4th century after Christ came to earth. It also claims that Christ came to this continent after His resurrection and planted the Gospel here in its fullness.

The Latter Day Saints claim that the Bible and the Book of Mormon go 'hand in hand' and both testify that Jesus is the Christ, the savior of the world. The Latter Day Saints are a split from 1844, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. There is a reorganized Latter Day Saints in Missouri.

Mormon -alleged Nephite prophet; father of Moroni, the 'resurrected personage', or angel who appeared to Joseph Smith multiple times in 1823 to 1827 and guided him to the Nephite records.

The Book of Mormon has many obvious grammatical and historical errors.

Joseph Smith was to be born of their seed in the direct line of Joseph of Egypt through Lehi and his son Joseph, but according to Mormon all the Nephites were slain, except Moroni, and only Lamanites remained on this continent and their ancestors are the various 'Indian' races. Joseph Smith was of English ancestry. His mother's biography gives his ancestors for 6 generations to England. Mormons claim that this prophecy had a spiritual fulfillment in Joseph Smith. There is nothing spiritual about a prophecy that Joseph Smith was to be "the fruit of thy loins" which is repeated about 14 times in 2 NEPHI 3.

The Book of Mormon is claimed to have been engraved on golden plates about 1600 years ago by a man named Mormon, with his son Moroni giving it some finishing touches and in AD 20 hiding the plates under a stone near the site in Palmyra, New York where these plates were received, under the guidance of the Angel Moroni, by Joseph Smith in 1827. The Book of Mormon then is a very old book. It has many words, phases, and expressions which are modern, having no known equivalents in any ancient language, and it has references to discoveries, facts, ideas, and concepts which were unknown to the period which it covers. It mentions a 'compass' for which there is no record that any people of antiquity ever used,

It has an 'ass' and a 'horse' in this continent, which were not here until the Spaniards came about 480 years ago. It is also interesting that many scriptures repeating what the Bible says are written in the King James English which was not translated until 1611.

Is one book as good as another? Is the Book of Mormon a counterfeit? It does contradict the Bible! Alma 46:13-16 has a band of Christians, true believers in Christ, who belonged to the Church of God, who took upon them gladly, the name of Christ or Christians; several centuries before the coming of Christ. Acts 11:26 says, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." The book of Mormon alleges that the Nephite who lived centuries before Christ's coming understood completely information concerning Him which were given to us in the gospel; the identity of His mother, his miracles, temptations, crucifixion, resurrection, etc. such as neither man nor angel ever possessed until Christ was glorified. The Apostle Paul said it was a mystery. Read Ephesians 3:3-5, 9 and Colossians 1:26. The book of Mormon claims to be consistent and friendly to the Bible; it tends to undermine it instead.

The Latter Day Saints do not accept Christ as the final prophet through whom God is speaking today as the Bible teaches. They do not accept the New testament as the final covenant. It is a different gospel.

Joseph Smith claimed God revealed to him that 8 years is the age of accountability. Mormon children are baptized at age 8. Infant baptism is denounced as a false practice.

Boys in Mormonism are ordained in the Aaronic Priesthood at age 12 as deacons.(Aaronic priests in the Bible had to be of the tribe of Levi.)

Boys in Mormonism are ordained in the Melchizedek Priesthood at age 18 as elders.(The Bible gives qualifications of elders as married with faithful children.)

Seventy - Second of three steps of Melchizedek Priesthood at age 18. This is an office, not a number.

High Priest is the highest step in the Melchizedek priesthood of the Mormons.

The subtitle printed on copies of the King James Bible by Mormons is 'Another Testimony of Jesus Christ.'

The 'Pearl of Great price contains 13 articles of faith to express the teachings of the Mormon faith. It was the third document authored by Joseph Smith and one of the 'standard works' of the Mormon Church (source of Polytheistic and racist doctrines of Mormonism.)

Doctrines and Covenants - The Book of Commandments. A collection of 65 revelations said to have been given to Smith and his associates published in 1833, has had more than 2500 changes and additions, is said by Mormons to be inspired.

Word of Wisdom - Dietary regulations of Mormons included in Doctrines and Covenants as a revelation from one of the Mormon gods; must be kept or one cannot enter the highest of three Mormon heavens.

"As man now is, God once was, as God now is, man may become." - The goal of Mormonism, which is to become God, and to express the nature of God, which Mormons allege is that of a glorified human. There is also a "Mother god" in Mormon teachings.

"Baptism for the dead." A practice of Mormon 'proxy baptism' in which a living person is immersed in water by a Mormon priest to affect the salvation of a deceased person who died without baptism.

Blood Atonement - Mormons teach that there are sins for which the blood of Jesus cannot atone. Among these are murder, adultery, apostasy, and unspecified sins against Mormons. To be forgiven their blood must be "spilled on the ground." The blood of the sinner plus the blood of Jesus is an adequate atonement.

The Book of Mormon is said to be inspired and is the book to guide the western world; the Bible being only for the Eastern world. The text has been corrected/ changed in more then 5500 instances since the original edition in 1831.

Ezekiel 37 (Two Sticks) - Mormons allege the 'two sticks' represents 2 books - the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The sticks are the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah, God calls them "Two Nations" which shall become united.

Alma 7:10 says Jesus was born at Jerusalem. The Bible says Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 and Luke 2: 1-7.

God was once a man, but became God (Elohim). (As we have been asking, "Where did that man come from then?") God has a physical body as does His wife. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate gods. Other gods exist also. Jesus, a separate God from God from the Father, was created as a spirit child by the Father and mother in heaven. He is the elder brother of all men and spirits, not just Christians. His body was created by sexual union between Elohim and Mary. Jesus was also married. (Can we ask, what kind of relationship will He have when the church becomes His bride?) His death on the cross did not provide atonement for sin, but does not provide everyone with resurrection.

There is no salvation outside of the Mormon Church . Salvation is by works, including faith in the church leaders, the Mormon baptism, tithing, and rituals. Salvation is being exalted to godhood. Eventually nearly everyone will go to one of three levels of heaven. Murderers and apostates go to outer darkness. Baptism on behalf of the dead is also practiced.

Young men make a two year commitment as missionaries, visiting door to door. No alcohol, tobacco, coffee, or tea is used. The church members enjoy an extensive social network.

(The church of Jesus Christ of Latter saints was founded by Joseph Smith, not Jesus Christ.)

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES FROM THE BIBLE

Hebrews 1:1-2 *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."*

Galatians 1:6-8 *"I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another. but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we,* ***or an angel from heaven*** *preach any other gospel unto than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."*

Galatians 1:9-12 *"As we said before, so say I again, If any preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek top please men? For if I pleased men (still continued to please men) I should not be the servant of Christ. But I* ***certify*** *you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of* me *is not after men, For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ."*

2 Peter 1:3 *"Seeing that His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness."*

John 16:13 *"Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth is* come, *he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to* come."

Jude 3 *"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for* me *to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."*

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The Disciples of Christ is a Protestant denomination in the United States. The first state convention and societies meet in 1839. The first national convention was held in 1849. Its full name is Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. The denomination developed during the restoration movement during the 1800's. Its founders were of Presbyterian back ground including Thomas and Alexander Campbell in Pennsylvania and Barton W. Stone in Kentucky.

The consensus of this movement was that Christians should unite in the simple faith in Jesus Christ, and that doctrines, creeds, and practices of denominationalism should be abolished. The group lead by Barton Stone in Kentucky organized under the name "Christians". In Pennsylvania, Thomas and Alexander Campbell advocated closer relations with Christians whether Presbyterian or otherwise and desired the Bible as the basis for faith instead of church creeds. He was censured for this and formed 'The Christian Association of Washington County, Pennsylvania. Thomas Campbell published a 'Declaration and Address' which was to become the basis for the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ.

The concept was taught that every church should be independent and autonomous, that creeds, clerical titles, authority and privilege of men had no justification in scripture. The Lord's Supper was to be served every Sunday and baptism is for believers only and by immersion under water.

Alexander Campbell worked in close fellowship with Barton W. Stone who used the name 'Christian' to identify the group. Campbell used the name 'Disciples'. In 1832 the Christians and the Disciples merged and become known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Conflict arose among the Disciples during the second half of the 19th century. The differences between 'conservatives' and 'progressives' caused the conservative Disciples to withdraw in protest against the development of missionary societies and the use of instrumental music in worship, for which they could find no scriptural authority. **By 1906** the seceding groups had separated into independent Churches of Christ, remaining true to scriptural authority, while the Disciples followed the path of denominationalism.

In 1968, a restructuring plan was adopted that resulted in mission, education, and other church agencies being coordinated through a general assembly. A general board was established, but local churches still retained their property rights, independence in selecting preachers, and determining worship and programs of work. The Disciples now participate in the National and World Council of Churches, The Consultation on Church Union, and have global missions coordinated by the United Christian Missionary Society.

ADVENTISTS

The **ADVENT** is the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Christ has promised to return and most Christian do believe He will return . William Miller was influential in high lighting this teaching and even set a date of sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844 that it would occur. Miller became a Baptist in 1816 and began a study of prophecies in Daniel and Revelation and concluded by calculating weeks as years the time of the advent.

When the advent failed to occur as he predicted many of his followers left him, but some waited for a new date Miller had set of October 22, 1844. Some of his followers sold their property and settled all accounts , praying and waiting for the Lord's return. When that date came and went some applied a 'spiritual' return to it. There was a wide difference of view point and many questions were reviewed as they wait for the resurrection and return of Christ. Who are to arise, the righteous and the wicked or only the righteous? Is there to be eternal punishment of the wicked or annihilation? When should the Sabbath be celebrated, Sunday or Saturday or not at all? Over these questions and others Adventists, as organized bodies became divided into four major groups.

1. Seventh-day Adventists
2. Advent Christian Church
3. Church of God (General Conference)
4. Primitive Advent Christian Church

ADVENTIST NOTES

Seventh-day Adventists are the largest group of Adventist and are present through out most of the world. They trace their beginnings back to the 1840's and convictions on the Sabbath back to the Seventh Day Baptist of New England and Europe.

Seventh-day Adventist are Premillennial. They expect 3 separate resurrections.

1. The righteous dead at the beginning of the Millennium. (1000 year reign of Christ on this earth)
2. The unrighteous dead at the end of the Millennium. (The righteous to be reigning with Christ)
3. The Great White Throne Judgment.
   There is no scripture that supports Christ's Millennial reign on this earth. Jesus said in John 18:36, *"My Kingdom is not of this world."* - The kingdom is now - Luke 9:27 and Colossians 1:13.

They claim modern prophecy and that 9 of the gifts in1 Corinthians 12 are available today. (1 Corinthians 13:8-10 says these gifts *"shall* cease", *"be done* away".)

They have a church manual of 27 beliefs of which 13 must be believed and one must sign a statement that they believe these prior to immersion in water for baptism to become a member of SDA. (No one baptized into the Lord's church in the examples given in the Book of Acts had to sign anything to become a Christian.)

They teach that God will utterly destroy the wicked by burning them to extinction in the Valley of Hinnom south of the City of Jerusalem in Israel following the final judgment.

Armageddon - Revelation 16:16 - SDA have made this a 'literal' battle which must be a 'spiritual' battle because of the imagery used to describe it.

Forgiveness of sins - accomplished by Christ in the atonement at Calvary according to SDA, but insufficient to accomplish final salvation until combined with the blotting out of sins, which will be accomplished by Satan at the end of the age. (No basis for this found in the Bible.)

Foot washing observed in connection with the Lord's Supper, observed quarterly.

Investigative Judgment - SDA claim that Jesus entered the sanctuary of heaven October 22, 1844 to read the books of the lives of all persons born from creation until judgment to enable him to render a righteous verdict at the "Great White Throne Judgment," the third judgment.

SDA along with Jehovah's Witnesses contend that this present earth will never be destroyed, but will endure eternally. 2 Peter 3:10 says it will "be burned up" "the elements shall melt with a fervent heat."

Tithing - 10 percent of income bound as a law of the church .

The Seventh Day Adventist say Saturday is the day of worship as given in the 10 Commandments.

Is the law binding on Christians today?

The law is fulfilled.	
Jesus said He would fulfill the law.	Matthew 5:17-18
Jesus said He had fulfilled the law.	Luke 24:44-47
Paul said Jesus had fulfilled the law.	Romans 10:4
We are separated from the law.	
We are dead to the law.	Romans 7:4
The law was temporary.	
"Until the seed should come. [11]	Galatians 3:16,19,23-24
The law ended when Christ died!	
"the law of commandments. [11]	Ephesians 2:15
"nailing it to His cross. [11]	Colossians 2:14-17
The law was removed and replaced.	
God made a new covenant.	Hebrews 8:8-13.
New 'Testament"	Jeremiah 31:31-34
	Hebrews 9:15-17
1st taken away to establish the 2nd.	Matthew 26:28
The law was never given to Gentiles.	Hebrews 10:8-10
	Exodus 19: 1,6,25:
	Deuteronomy 5:1-3;
	Psalms 147:19-20;
	Romans 3:1-2

All of the law would pass at once.

Not one jot or tittle... 'till all' Matthew 5:17-18 Fulfilled all the law, prophets, & psalms Luke 24:44-49

Jesus fulfilled both 'moral' & 'ceremonial' laws.

Moral = 10 Commandments Romans 7;4

Ceremonial = feast, fasts, foods. Colossians 2:14-17 Now we have the 'law of Christ!' Galatians 6:1-2

BAHA'I WORLD FAITH

Babism preceded the Baha'i faith and is a religion that developed as a branch or offshoot of the Shite sect of Islam. At Shiraz, Persia in **1844** Mirza Ali Muhammad became known as the Bab which in Persian means 'the gate', because he was considered the gate, or door to spiritual truth.

Bab declared that the prophets were a divine manifestation of God Himself, and that he, the Bab, was also one of these prophets. He claimed to be equal to Muhammad in importance, and that he was the one to proclaim an ever greater 'Manifestation'. Nineteen years after the founding of Babism this greater one would appear.

The Bab wrote a new holy book called the **Bayan** or Revelation. This book was to supersede the Koran. Babism conflicted with many principles of Islam. It forbade polygamy and the use of concubines. It proclaimed that a time was coming in which all religions would be united under one spiritual leader.

As Babism spread, the Shah, Nasr-ed Din, was persuaded that the teachings of Babism would be destructive to the state, and initiated persecution of the Babists. The Babists revolted but after a two year civil war, were put down. The Bab was imprisoned and executed in 1850.

After the death of the Bab, his religion continued to be taught in Persia and the middle east. In 1863, 19 years after the Bab predicted a divine figure would appear, Mirza Hoseyn Ali Nun, called Bahaullah, proclaimed himself to be that 'Manifestation'. On the basis of Babism, he founded a new religion called **Bahai.**

The Persian government continually persecuted Bab factions and Bahaullah was tortured and imprisoned for the rest of his life. Bahaullah sought to establish a universal religion. He taught moral and social improvement and his ideas were spread by hid son Abbas, later called Abd ul-Baha. Abd ul-Baha was also a political prisoner for many years, but in 1908, when parts of the Ottoman Empire were overthrown, he was set free. He then traveled to Europe and North America introducing his father's teachings. He taught the Bahai faith as a set of principles including social aims. These social ideas included abolishing racial and religious prejudice, equality of the sexes, use of an international language, education, and a universal faith.

The writings of the Bab, Bahaullah, and Abd ul-Baha are sacred literature of Bahai. The head quarters of Bahai were in Haifa, Israel. There is a Bible interpreted spiritually, to conform to Bahai theology.

God is an unknowable divine being who reveals Himself through 'manifestations' who are prophets or religious leaders including Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and of course Bahaullah.

Jesus is one of the many manifestations of God. Each manifestation supersedes the previous as new teachings are presented about God. Jesus then, is not God, had no resurrection from the dead, and is not the only way to God as He claimed to be. (Wouldn't this make Him a liar

and a fraud rather than a manifestation from God?) Jesus return to earth was in the form of Bahaullah. The spirit of truth then refers to Bahaullah.

Salvation is by faith in the manifestation of God, Bahaullah, and knowing and living by Bahaullah's principles and teachings. Meetings are called 'spiritual assemblies'.

Have we had more recent manifestations such as Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church, or L, Ron Hubbard and Scientology, or the New Age Movement, or shall we be looking for another manifestation? What happens to the other manifestations that were happening at about the same time as Babism in the 1800's such as Mormonism, The Great Awakening, or the Restoration Movement? Should we be looking for new ideas in religion or should we be looking back to the origins of religions and the manifestations given by God? Is there no truth to the words in Hebrews 1:1? *"God who in time past spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, has in these last days spoken to us by His* Son, *whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."* John 14:6, *"Jesus said to him, (Thomas) I am the way, the truth* , *and the life, no man can* come *to the father (God) but by* me." If Jesus is acknowledged as being a prophet, but His words are not true, then He was definitely a liar, and not a manifestation of God. If His words are true as He claimed, then He is the way to God and needed no further person such as Bahaullah to manifest God for Him.

Is the Bahai religion as good as any another?

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

The **Christian Reformed Church** was founded **in1857** in the United States by Dutch Protestants. The doctrine is Calvinistic, and similar to the Reformed Churches, but the membership was Dutch, while the Reformed Church had mixed ethnic membership. The name Christian Reformed Church was adopted in **1904.** They separated from the Dutch Reformed Church after being in the United States for a while. The Headquarters for this church has been in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Doctrines of the Old Testament were mixed with the New Testament teachings in creating the 'reformed' doctrines and traditions. The Heidelberg Catechism was taught and memorized. Worship, doctrine, and government followed the canons, creeds, confessions, and catechisms established at the Synod of Dort in 1618 and 1619. Doctrine favors the teaching of John Calvin, and accepts and practices of infant baptism and quarterly observance of the Lord's Supper. The Ten Commandments were read and the Apostle's Creed was recited by the whole congregation each week. Admonitions against worldliness included abstaining from strong drink, playing cards or throwing dice, dances, theaters, and fairs. They called Sunday the Sabbath and were to go to church and rest only on that day. Other activities on Sunday were considered "desecrating the Sabbath". Over the years many members have chosen to ignore these admonitions and have been participating in all of these 'vices'.

The Reformed Church followed the path of accepting a position in the broader Protestant world, but the Christian Reformed sought to remain true to the Dutch heritage and separated from American Christianity and culture, and this did slow its process of conforming to it. In the early years of the Christian Reformed Church there was the use of a 'motto', "In isolation is our strength". Despite this original character, the Christian Reformed Church went though the process of Americanization as the Reformed Church had only lagging behind by a few generations. The immigrant church experienced transition and change by gradually adopting ways that it had once shunned and avoided. Examples of this are Sunday Schools, instrumental music using organs and pianos, entertainment by choirs, soloists, and singing groups, and hymns in worship where once only Psalms were sung. Slowly, the Christian Reformed Church followed the path of its 'older sister', the Reformed Church.

SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army is a religious organization as well as a charity. It was a religious organization first founded by a Methodist preacher along Methodist doctrinal lines. He began mission work in the streets and tried to send his converts to organized churches, but they were not accepted there. (This can still be a problem in churches which form themselves into fraternities and are reluctant to allow open membership of people not of their race or social status. In the General Epistle of James in the 2nd chapter there are warnings against partiality.) He began his Christian Mission to keep his 'volunteers' and later changed 'volunteer army' to Salvation Army.

The doctrines of the Salvation Army are orthodox Trinitarian. They emphasize a Holy God, a Holy Bible, and a holy people, The members affirm that they have surrendered themselves to God. Doctrines are Arminian rather than Calvinistic holding that the love of God is as wide as His universe, and that He gives His gifts freely to all. A recruit may be 'sworn in' and may advance to the rank of officer through training. The form of government is like the military with Lieutenant to Major, and a Commissioner. Each officer is an ordained minister, with both men and women serving as officers, The Salvation Army works with all races, creeds, or ages, to foster love of god and to provide for the needy.

The salvation Army was founded in 1865 in London, England by the English Minister William Booth. It moved toward being international when a group of its members moved to the United States in 1880 and established a branch in New York City. From there the movement spread to many parts of the world. The International Headquarters have been located in London, Eng land; the United States has had headquarters in Verona, New York and Alexandria, Virginia.

The 'Army' has operated in about 100 countries, providing religious services, moral education, counseling, and social services. It operates hospitals, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, camps, day care centers, and other social services.

Many people who contribute to the Salvation Army think of the organization as a charity. People of all faiths contribute to the good works done for social causes and to help the needy. (Some members of the Salvation Army have been members of other religious organizations at the same time not considering the Army a religious body but only a charity.) Occasionally members still preach on sidewalks, streets, and outdoor places teaching things from the Bible which are fundamentally Christian. The official publication of the salvation Army is called the 'War Cry'.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

A native American religious movement founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1872 in Pitts burgh, Pennsylvania. Russell had been both a Presbyterian and a Congregational but was uncertain of his faith. He met and studied with Adventist and was impressed by the teachings of the second coming of Christ and His Kingdom.

He organized the people he studied with and incorporated the Millennial Dawnists with him self as president. The headquarters were moved to Brooklyn, New York in 1909 and were called the International Bible Students, and Russellites. They were not known as **Jehovah's Witnesses until 1931.** The governing body is called the **Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society** headed by a board of seven ministers. Local congregations are organized as affiliated branches which are devoted to the distribution of literature. All members are ministers. They are trained by the local congregations. They also conduct large regional and national assemblies at which many of the new members are baptized by immersion.

Worship is conducted in local 'Kingdom Halls'. Witnesses are opposed to all established branches of religion and are not called churches. They have a strong missionary zeal as all of them are ministers. They pay for all of the literature that they distribute themselves. (If they cannot get the convert to buy it.) Members devote 15 hours a month to ministry. Pioneers are required to give at least 100 hours a month, and Missionaries devote 150 hours+ and are sent to foreign lands or isolated areas to form new congregations. All Pioneers provide their own support with some getting small amounts of support.

The *Watchtower* is a periodical they publish on alternate weeks. *Awake* is published on the other alternating weeks. *Make sure of things* is a pocket size doctrinal guide for Jehovah's Witnesses recommended for those learning their teachings. *The New World Translation* is a special Watchtower translation of the Bible published in 1960. It differs significantly from standard version translations. The cross on which Jesus died is called a 'Torture stake'. In John 1:1 *"and the Word was God"* becomes *"and the Word was* a_ *god".* Errors of Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be demonstrated from it nor does it support their doctrine. Those who sincerely study the Bible have been known to defect or were excommunicated.

Russell predicted that Jesus Christ would return in 1914. When He did not, it was claimed that He came silently and unseen. Revelation 1:7 says *"every eye shall see Him."* In October 1966 Awake published a prophecy that the Millennium would begin in 1975, saying other dates had been set and failed but this new date would not fail because *"now we have the evidence - all of it!"* They lost a few members and baptized less but they explained the error of the prophecy was a lapse of time between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve, and that the millennium would begin when that brief period of time relapsed.

144,000 - also called 'Bride Class' is a term referring to 'super saints' among them who will be rewarded eternally in heaven with Christ. Ordinary saints receive their rewards on a rejuvenated earth.

Revelation chapters 7 and 14 mention these 144,000, but the number is made up entirely from the various tribes of Israel. (These tribes are clearly listed in the New World Translation also.)

This is ignored and only the number 144,000 is taken to be literal. Their evidence that they are in the 144,000 is a purely subjective 'inner witness', or feeling.

They teach that God will utterly destroy the wicked by burning them to extinction in the Valley of Hinnom south of the city of Jerusalem in Israel following the final judgment. This is taken from Adventist teachings.

Baptism - immersion in water is required as an act of dedication, unnecessary for salvation, most often administered during the annual Convention to enjoy press coverage and encourage others.

Armageddon - Revelation 16:16 -Viewed as a 'literal' battle which will occur the plain of Esdraelon below Mount Megiddo in Palestine. Jehovah's Witnesses, being conscientious objectors, cannot participate, but will be joyful spectators.

Lord's Supper - Observed annually on the 14th of Nissan (Passover) at 7:00 PM on whatever day that falls. All are required to be present but only the anointed, or 144,000 are allowed to partake. They call the feast the "Memorial" since they refuse to call Jesus 'Lord', maintaining that He is a created being as an archangel. (They cannot deal with Psalms 90:2, Micah 5:2 or Acts22:16 - Jesus is Lord from everlasting.)

Jehovah's Witnesses along with Seventh Day Adventist contend that this present earth will never be destroyed, but will endure eternally. (2 Peter 3:10 say it will "be burned up" "the elements shall melt with a fervent heat.")

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

For Christian Scientists there is no bad or evil. Sin, discord, pain, sickness, and death- these things do not exist except as illusions or wrong ideas in our minds. God is all that He has made, and living by divine principle of perfect harmony, we never experience any of these evils. (Understanding God scientifically - having full knowledge) Calamity and death do not exist, all problems solved, and we can succeed in business, reform our characters, think positive thoughts, and "pass on" instead of dying.

God is defined as all that exists, as spirit, mind, life, soul, truth, love, and the conceiver of all that exists. (Not a personality as Jesus taught) Since God is all and God is Spirit, matter does not exist! If matter does not exist, neither does evil! The only real thing is God, and God is good. Whatever is not of God exists only in wrong thinking! God is also in man so man shares God's perfect goodness and indestructibility.

The claim to be 'scientific' separates them from 'faith healers' - It is not God's miracles but harmony to God's universe and spiritual law. When we properly understand God and this law, the mind is free of error and the person is well.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE is a religion based on the writings Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) as she applied the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, especially those dealing with healings in the New Testament. Her book, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" was published in 1875 under the name Mary Baker Glover. She was married in 1843, but her husband died within a year. Poor health, separation from her only child and other misfortunes caused her to turn to the Bible for relief and guidance. She searched for laws of spiritual healing. In 1877 she married Asa Eddy, a third husband who helped her in establishing Christian Science. The book 'Science and Health' she claimed was the final revelation from God and the key to understanding the Bible. She also claimed the Bible has many mistakes in it. Where have we heard this before? Was it Muhammad, Joseph Smith, or Charles Taze Russell? Which one is the final revelation from God? Do we need another revelation? The New Testament claims to provide all things *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* as recorded in **2 Timothy 3:16-17.** Why do we need more?

Mary Baker Eddy was born in Bow, New Hampshire. She attributed a sudden recovery from a severe injury in 1866 to her "glimpse of the great fact' that life is in and of the spirit who is God. She established a church in **1879** in Bow, New Hampshire and taught others that through prayer they could avail themselves of this spiritual law and dispel sickness, the operation of God's power. In 1881 she moved to Boston, Massachusetts and the membership of her church grew rapidly, and it spread around the country from there. Later it moved to foreign countries also. She was the 'Pastor' of her church. The Lord's Church requires that 'pastors' (also called shepherds, elders, or bishops) are to be *"the husband of one wife"* in **2 Timothy 3:2** indicating they are male.

The church was reorganized in **1892** and named **THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST.** The organization is prescribed in the 'Manual of the Mother Church' written in 1895 and last revised in 1908. Mary Baker Eddy was the author of this book also. Churches are designated as branches of the 'Mother Church.' Doctrines and worship follow the principles provided by the author in the book science and health which was revised several times. Churches hold weekly testimonial meetings, at which members relate experiences of healing and regeneration. Church services use readings from the Bible and 'Science and Health.'

They use no ordinances like baptism or the Lord's Supper. Christian Science avoids the use of doctors of medicine and have Practitioners to help people pray through the false reality of illness.

In 1898 she founded the Christian Science Publishing Society and has written and edited many publications. In 1908 she founded the Christian Science Monitor, an international daily newspaper.

CHURCHES OF GOD

There are many churches and religious bodies that use the name **Church of God.** Many of these are small independent groups. Some use another distinctive word to identify and distinguish themselves from other churches of God. Words like Holiness, Adventists, Apostolic, or the name of a city are used for this purpose. There were Churches of God in England in **1664** with a Seventh Day Baptist connection.

In **1948** a Division in the Church of the Brethren resulted in the establishment of a church called **Church of God (New Dunkers).**

The Church of God with headquarters in Anderson Indiana began about **1880.** It was a movement toward Christian unity and the New Testament preferring not to be considered a 'denomination' among existing churches, but rather identifying with the visible and invisible church in a free fellowship of believers. Doctrines of this church include belief in the divine inspiration of the scriptures, forgiveness of sins through the atonement of Christ, repentance of the believer, an experience of holiness, the personal return of Christ without millennial reign, the Kingdom of God is established now, there will be a final judgment and resurrection of the dead with reward for the righteous, and punishment for the wicked, Baptism is by immersion in water. They believe the church is the body of Christ, made up of Christians, sects and denominations are an obstacle to unity, unscriptural, and should be removed. They also believe that God desires this restoration of the New Testament ideal in His Church, and that this restoration should be based on spiritual experience and not on creedal agreement. If we give this some thought we find most of what this church professes to be in line with what the New Testament teaches. Restoration though, would have to be spiritual experience based on the written Word of God and not personal spiritual experience which can come from spirits not of or from God. The General Ministerial Assembly meets annually in convention and camp meeting at Anderson, Indiana. The church is governed by a congregational system and maintains the idea that God governs His Church, but they agree that human organization is quite necessary and ministers meet in voluntary state and regional conventions, which are mainly advisory.

A group which was organized in Monroe County, Tennessee in August, **1886,** was first known as a Christian Fellowship and was called the **Christian Union,** Richard Spurling was the leader of this group. In May, 1902 this group was reorganized under the name **Holiness Church.** A. J. Tomlinson joined them in 1903 and was elected as General Moderator in 1909. He was impeached in 1923 and withdrew forming the **Tomlinson Church of God** which later was changed to the **Church of God of Prophecy.** This group was headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee and was under the leadership of Milton Tomlinson after 1943. Homer A. Tomlinson organized a group under the name **Church of God** in Queens Village, New York, which later headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama. A small group left the Church of God of Prophecy in February 1957 led by Grady Kent and formed the **Church of God of All Nations,** headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee.

In **1886** a split occurred in the followers of Richard Spurling and claims to be the **'Original Church of God.'** This group too is in Cleveland, Tennessee. This group believes the whole Bible, 'rightly divided' and that creeds that bind the conscience are not scriptural, yet they

follow the doctrines of repentance, justification, and regeneration as defined by Martin Luther, and sanctification as defined by John Wesley. They believe in the 'filling of the Holy Spirit' evidenced by 'speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance' even though in rightly dividing the bible the gift of tongues was to cease along with the other miraculous gifts as recorded in 1 Corinthians 14.They baptize by immersion in water, partake of the Lord's Supper, give free will offerings, and perform foot washing. Local congregations, following the apostolic pattern, are self governing. The church recognizes Ephesians 4:14 in organization using ministers, apostles, deacons, extorters, evangelists, bishops, and teachers. It would be difficult to use apostles since all of the Lord's apostles are long deceased, but the use of the written word from the apostles is still relevant.

The Church of God (Apostolic) was organized in **1896** at Danville, Kentucky by Elder Thom as Cox. This group was first known as the Christian Faith Band, and then was incorporated in 1919 under the present name. Admission to this church is only after repentance for sin, confession, and baptism. This differs from those following a Protestant line of thought which use baptism for some other purpose and make the claim that salvation occurs before bap ism. The Bible clearly says that baptism is "for the remission of sins" and that "baptism does now save us."(Refer to Acts 2:38 and 1 Peter 3:21) They also teach holiness and practice foot washing and the Lord's Supper. There is a General Assembly as the governing body with officers called the Apostle or General Overseer, and Assistant Overseer, District Elders, Pastors, Evangelists, and Preachers.

The Church of God and Saints of Christ began in Lawrence Kansas in **1896** by William Crowdy. Crowdy had been a Baptist deacon who claimed visions from God and a divine com mission to bring the truth of God to the world. Here we have another person establishing a church on vision rather than the previously established Word of God in the Holy Bible. Why is it that all these people bringing 'truth' can conflict with previous 'truth' and the written Word? Crowley became the first bishop of this church. They believe that their church is built on the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of the Jewish tradition. Jesus Christ is their chief cornerstone. There is an executive bishop as the head of the church and the bishop's council. There is a Board of Presbytery, a body of 12 men which is the law-making body, and an Ecclesiastical Council, and under these work district officers, deacons, teachers, and missionaries. Local churches have overseers and are divided by districts and each has an Evangelist who assists the bishop of that district's denominational National Business assembly, and Religious Assembly, called Passover, which is held annually. Both of these are under the guidance of the Executive Bishop.

In **1897** C.H. Mason and C.P. Jones were rejected by Baptists in Arkansas for an over emphasis on holiness which includes sanctification evidenced by 'signs of speaking in tongues' as Holy Spirit baptism. Doctrine stresses speaking in tongues, repentance, regeneration, justification, sanctification, a gift of healing as an evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with 'holiness' considered a prerequisite to salvation. Their ordinances include baptism by immersion, foot washing, and the Lord's Supper. There are Presiding, Assistant Presiding, and State Bishops, District Superintendents, Pastors, Evangelists, Deacons, and Departmental Presidents. The name of this group is **Church of God in Christ.**

The Church of God (Adventists) began first in Michigan separating themselves from the Second Advent Church during a debate over the name of a press being established in Battle

Creek, Michigan. Some wanted the name Church of God while others wanted the name Seventh-day Adventist. Division occurred when the Adventist name was chosen, and this eventually resulted in two groups with the same name; one group in Denver, Colorado with a press at Stanberry, Missouri, and the other group In Salem, West Virginia. Headquarters were first established in Stanberry, Missouri in **1900.** AN. Dugger, who was prominent in establishing the Salem Church, went to Jerusalem forming still another Church of God called **Jerusalem "the World Headquarters of the Church of God."** These churches observe the seventh day as a Sabbath, practice foot washing, and avoid pork in their diet. On the end time they are Premillenialists. There is a General Conference meeting biannually.

In **1914** another church was organized and it was chartered at Alachua, Florida in 1923 as the **Church of God by Faith, Inc.** Officers consist of a Bishop, and an Executive Secretary. A General Assembly meets three times a year. Doctrines include regeneration, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost and with fire, speaking in tongues.

In **1927,** Herbert W. Armstrong, a business man of Quaker and Methodist background, became a member of a Church of God in Oregon. He was ordained by the Oregon Conference and established a local congregation in Eugene, Oregon. He began a radio broadcast in 1934 and a monthly bulletin called *'The Plain Truth'.* The church was incorporated under the name of the broadcast as **"The Radio Church of God"** and the broadcast later became known as *"The World Tomorrow".* The headquarters were eventually changed to Pasadena, California where the church had founded a college in1947. The Corporate name of the church was changed in **1968 to The Worldwide Church of God.** Doctrines from the Old Testament and New Testament are mixed and selected. There is belief that Jesus is deity, but the Trinity and the Person of the Holy Spirit is denied. Salvation is by faith in observance of some legalistic Old Testament rituals, The Saturday Sabbath, Jewish feasts, and dietary laws are observed. (The use of the word Sabbath originally was the seventh day of the week. Many Christians had begun to use the word to mean 'day of rest' the now Sunday, the first day of the week is also being referred to as a Sabbath by some.) The church believes the 10 tribes of Israel migrated to northwest Europe and England, and are now the English speaking world. Anglo Saxons of England and the United States are believed to be the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. We are all members of God's family. Christmas and Easter are considered Pagan holidays. The Worldwide Church of God is the one true church, and the gospel it teaches is the only true gospel. Doctor Armstrong taught that the Bible interprets itself, but he is recognized as the true interpreter by his followers. No collections are taken at the Saturday services because the church is supported by three tithes. Each member gives one tenth of annual income to the general fund for the work of the church, and a second tenth of income is given for personal religious obligation which includes a requirement for members to spend eight days each summer at regional conventions. A third tenth is given for widows, orphans, and other destitute persons. There has been dissent to the third tithe and the question of remarriage of divorced persons. A defection brought about the formation of another church called the **Associated Churches of God.** Here there is no requirement for a third tithe and divorced persons are permitted to remarry and remain members of this church. Local church congregations are autonomous. (Refer to separate chapter on the Worldwide Church of God.)

In **1968,** fourteen bishops of the Church of God in Memphis withdrew from that church to form the **Church of God in Christ International.** Their disagreement was of policy and authority in

the government of the church and not doctrine. Their doctrine is Wesleyan, emphasizing grace, a full baptism by the Holy Ghost, and speaking in tongues.

Sometimes in reviewing churches set up by men there are some confusing and even contradictory statements and teachings, In **The Manual of the Church of God or Sanctified Church** headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, of 1953, is the statement; *"The Manual of the Church of God or sanctified Church is the Supreme Law, authority of the entire body or church . All members of said church, whether bishop or board or pastor or layman, shall be governed by and obey said Manual"* Then on the same page within the Preface after listing various scriptures it reads... *"We conclude that all things should be governed by the word of the Lord - as all things will be judged by the word of the Lord. St. John 12:48.* [11] **Is the Church of God to be governed by a manual written by men or by the Word of God?**

The New Testament church among other names was referred to as **The Church of God.** There were local congregations in various places and we read of the Churches in Asia, etc. These are not different churches, or different kinds of churches, but congregations of the body of Christ, the Christ of Christ or Church of God. They were to be of one mind, under one faith, one baptism, on Lord, one God and Father of all. They were to speak the same things. Everything needed to conduct a Christian life and a congregation of the Lord's people was given to us in the New Testament Epistles, and Jude verse three says *"you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all) delivered to the saints.* [11]

Churches using the name Church of God today are divided; as Adventists using the Old Testament Sabbath, some claim Holiness and Pentecostal gifts of tongues or prophecy, some follow Wesleyan or Calvinist teachings, and some deny the scriptures teaching on remarriage. Our question:

Is one Church of God as good as another?

CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE.

In 1881 in New York City, New York, the Reverend A.B. Simpson originated the **Christian and Missionary Alliance.** Simpson was a Presbyterian minister but left that church to carry on an independent evangelistic work among the unchurched. Why is it that when people feel the need to evangelize they find it difficult to bring the converts into the established church? Who else would you evangelize? Certainly there would be very few prospects among those who are already members of the church!

The Christian and Missionary Alliance was divided into two bodies at first, one for local work and one for foreign work. In 1897 the two works were combined. Work is carried on in districts in the United States and Canada. Each of the churches are self governing and engaged in missionary work and evangelistic activities. There is an overall general conference which meets annually in various places in the United States or Canada.

The Alliance is strongly evangelical and considered fundamentalist. The Alliance stands for a literal inspiration of the Bible and the atoning work of Jesus Christ. While holding to the Bible there is also a belief in supernatural religious experience. They believe in the 'Premillenial' return of Christ, Spirit baptism, and practical holiness with a separation from the world. They have no written creed as such, but hold to a gospel of Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and coming Lord.

UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST

In 1889 at a general conference of the United Brethren held in York, Pennsylvania, a dispute arose over proposed changes in the church constitution concerning permitting members to join lodges or secret societies. One of the dissenting groups which opposed these changes formed the **Church of the United Brethren in Christ.** It is interesting to think about a united group of brethren having within itself a group leaving to form an other group of united brethren. Would not this act alone indicate that they were not united? The dissent was one of discipline and not of doctrine. In doctrine this group has in common their belief in the Trinity, humanity, and atonement of Christ. Their manner of living was along scriptural lines, avoiding alcoholic drinks, baptism, and observance of the Lord's Supper.

They hold local, annual, and general conferences separately from the United Brethren. Ministers, district superintendents, general church officials, and bishops meet with church delegates to conduct these conferences. Both men and women are eligible to work in the ministry. Missionary societies work in the areas of evangelism and church aid in the United States and in many foreign countries. They work with other evangelistic groups and denominations, while maintaining loyalty to the old constitution.

UNITY, SCHOOL of CHRISTIANITY

There is an organization that has School in its name and Christianity in its name, but does not acknowledge Jesus as God. Jesus was just a man who had a 'Christ' consciousness. Christ is a state of perfection that can be in every person. Christ has been reincarnated many times before. Jesus did not die to be a sacrifice for any person's sin, nor did He rise from the dead physically, and He will never return to earth in any physical form.

Charles and Myrtle Fillmore founded this organization in **1889** in Kansas City, Kansas, USA. It has been headquartered in Unity Village in Lees Summit, Missouri.

Millions of pieces of literature are printed each year. Unity Magazine, Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, and Lessons of Truth, are among their publications. Their Bible is interpreted with the 'hidden' meanings.

God is understood as an invisible and impersonal power. The word 'God' is interchangeable with things such as 'Principle', 'Law,' 'Being', 'Mind' or 'Spirit'.

The Holy Spirit is the concept of law of God in action. The power of God is a thought in the mind of man. The Holy Spirit is not a person. Each person is a Son of God, in this way Jesus was also a Son of God. There is no evil, devil, sin, poverty, or old age. A person is reincarnated until these truths are learned, and the person becomes perfect.

Death is a movement to a different body until the enlightenment is achieved. There is no literal hell, or heaven.

There is no link to the line of God's dealings with man though Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, or the covenant with the people of Israel. Since God is impersonal, these things could not develop into a line of promise of the savior, the seed of the woman, which we have been following. The religion, while including the word Christianity in its name, does not follow in any way the teaching of Jesus Christ or His disciples. This religion has a mix of eastern religions teaching reincarnation, but little reality. This religion gives us very little hope, since there is no promise of heaven, or a future with God.

CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST, HOLINESS

The **Church of God in Christ Holiness** is a protestant denomination that was organized by two Baptists, C.P .Jones and C.H. Mason. The church was organized in Arkansas in **1895.** The headquarters of the church has been in Memphis, Tennessee.

The church places a strong emphasis on sanctification, or holiness, which like other holiness or Pentecostal groups is deemed essential to salvation. The theology of this church is Trinitarian and the Holy Bible in held as the main religious authority, and is literally interpreted. Speaking in tongues is considered a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Practices include the Lord's Supper, foot washing, and baptism by immersion in water.

The Church of God in Christ, Holiness has a highly organized structure with boards, commissions, and a national convention that meets annually.

PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

Pentecostal Churches are a large variety of religious organizations which have a common belief in the experience of holiness as evidenced by 'speaking in tongues', (that is speaking in an unknown tongue), an 'infilling of the Holy Spirit' using ecstatic utterances frequently unintelligible to the listeners. There is the concept that this is what happened to the Apostles of Jesus Christ as recorded in Acts 2 of the New Testament in the Holy Bible. Speaking in unknown tongues in the New Testament was acceptable and necessary as everyone heard in their own language then while the speaker was speaking in only one tongue.

Among churches that are Pentecostal in practice are:

- Assemblies of God
- Calvary Pentecostal Church, Inc.
- Church of God of Prophecy
- Church of God in Christ
- Elim Fellowship
- Emmanuel Holiness Church
- International Pentecostal Assemblies
- International Pentecostal Holiness Church
- Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.
- Pentecostal Church of Christ
- Pentecostal Church of God of America, Inc.
- Pentecostal Fire-Baptized Holiness Church
- Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist Church. Inc.
- Pentecostal Oneness Church
- Pentecostal Holiness Church
- United Pentecostal Church International.

Many of the Pentecostal churches grew out of the Methodist and Baptist backgrounds. The earliest Pentecostal church grew out of the Holiness Movement of the late 1800's. An independent Holiness preacher, Charles Fox Parham, is believed to have begun the Pentecostal revival in 1901. Speaking at his Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, Parham claimed that such speech indicated "true baptism in the spirit". The first Pentecostal church was the Church of God (Cleveland Tenn.). This church which had been a holiness church accepted Pentecostal teaching about spirit baptism in 1906. Some groups trace their roots to a revival led by A.J Tomlinson, an American Bible Society Salesman who founded the Church of God in 1903. In 1917 the Pentecostal Movement divided into several independent groups. Some of the larger groups of Pentecostal churches now belong to the Pentecostal World Conference, an international conference.

Pentecostal worship tends to be highly emotional and filled with a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Some expect other spiritual gifts, such as healing of the sick. Pentecostal churches differ greatly from one another in their interpretations of faith and practice. Certain beliefs are held in common such as, the premillenial return of Christ, speaking in tongues, and baptism, usually by immersion. With the Lord's Supper many groups practice foot washing. Many other small groups identify with the Pentecostal movement but do not call themselves Pentecostal. Some identify with the term 'charismatic', and many protestants and Roman Catholics have claimed to have experienced Spirit Baptism.

The Apostles of Jesus Christ did have spiritual gifts, being able to speak in tongues that others could understand; they had gifts of healing and prophecy as well.

As recorded in First Corinthians chapter 13, the Apostle Paul said prophecies and tongues shall cease, and vanish away. Is there a need for speaking in tongues today? Who can understand them? The Apostle Paul continued in chapter 14 to clarify the position on tongue speaking and spiritual gifts and said "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

There are many Pentecostal churches.
Is one Pentecostal church as good as another?

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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

The major representatives of the Holiness Movement along with the Pentecostal church es are the Church of God of Anderson Indiana, and the **Church of the Nazarene.**

The Church of the Nazarene is a protestant denomination created by a merger of three in dependent holiness groups. It was organized at Pilot Point, Texas in 1908.Originally named Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, the word Pentecostal was dropped in 1918.The name change was done to separate any connection with Pentecostal groups 'speaking in tongues', as this practice was not endorsed by the Church of the Nazarene. The international headquarters have been at Kansas City, Missouri. The principle governing body of this denomination is a general assembly. There are administrative departments for world missions, local missions, publication, evangelism, benevolence, education, and the ministry.

Members of the Nazarene church adhere to a Methodist line of theology as taught by John Wesley. A major doctrine is of entire sanctification, or Christian perfection. This is also the doctrine of holiness churches. The sacraments of Baptism (by sprinkling, pouring or immersion) and the Lord's Supper are recognized, as is the Second coming of Christ. The Holy Bible is used as the sole religious guide.

Is the Church of the Nazarene as good as the Methodist Church from which its doctrine derives? Is the Church of the Nazarene as good as the Holiness churches of which it originated when it merged? **Is one church as good as another?**

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Christian Church resulted from divisions in **1906** in the matter of the use of instruments in worship and missionary societies, and separated from the Christian Association and Disciples of Christ. They were a part of the Restoration Movement and in **1832** when there was merger of the group called Christians and the group called Disciples they were known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.)

Churches of Christ are governed by what the Bible says. **Christian Churches** are governed by what the Bible does not say! The instruments of mechanical music used in the Christian Churches are an example. They are used in worship because people enjoy them and the Bible does not specifically forbid them. 1 Corinthians 10:1-3, -Verse 10, *"Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same things and that there be no divisions among you: but that you be perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment."* We can obey this command only by being guided by the same source, the Bible, and returning to the 'old paths'. When people decide they desire something and have made up their minds to have it, then often a different way of looking at the scriptures is necessary. Our Lord prayed for Unity in John 17:20-21. To have unity we must accept what the Bible says and refrain from what it does not say!

If there are to be no divisions among Christians is anything that divides God's house a major thing? Can very small changes led to significant apostasies over time? The Christian Church has left the line of Truth, not holding to scriptural authority in organization, doctrine, or worship. Preachers are often called 'Pastors'. In God's organization there is a plurality of elders in charge of a congregation. In many Christian Church preachers take charge of the church too. Some take a title that only belongs to God, and are called 'reverend'. The Missionary Societies have also corrupted the New Testament organization taking on the function and responsibility of the church, without church oversight. These are separate organizations usurping the work of the church. They are not the church. Some recognize 'holy weeks or holidays'. Some have made women elders on church boards in Christian Churches. {The Bible says that a woman is not permitted to *"have dominion over a man."* 1 Timothy 2:12. God says the elder must be the husband of one wife. 1 Timothy 3:2)

Small changes occurring periodically lead to new traditions. Many now receive into fellowship the unimmersed or those immersed for the wrong purpose. Some now have a ceremony for the dedication of babies which in church history has led to infant baptism.

The division between Churches of Christ and Christian Churches began when a melodeon, a musical instrument was introduced into the church of Midway, Kentucky in 1859. From this simple change and departure from God's word has come a jazz orchestra to sway the crowd and join the head crooner while barefooted girls dance through symbolizing supplications, humility, and prayer.

Recently along with the cornets and saxophones the crowd sways and tap dancers and crooners do songs like "I Love to Tell the Story" or "My faith looks up to Thee" and the congregation applauded as young men and women demonstrate the latest dance steps to interpret the message.

To refrain from the use of instruments in worship is to respect the Word of God. Again we repeat scriptures which tell us of the authority of Christ and the Word given for our instruction:

Hebrews 1:1-2, *"God, who at sundry time and in various manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom He made the worlds."*

Jude 3, *"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."*

2 Timothy 3:16-17, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Should the manner and mode of worship be determined by the custom or vote of the local congregation or by a respect for the standard established in the words of the New Testament? Did God say "Use your natural talents" to worship? Are innovations of instruments and dance consistent with New Testament teachings?

ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The worldwide movement for cooperation and unity among Christian churches is called the **Ecumenical Movement.** A search for unity has become a major concern of Christian churches during the 1900s. Protestants began meeting to explore closer cooperation in 1910 at The World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh. The desire for unity is not new. The New Testament written by the Apostles of Jesus Christ frequently wrote of the need for unity, that we all be one, but also warned that certain teachers would come into the church with false doctrine and false gospels. In 1848, a group in London, England formed the Evangelical Alliance to give Christians an opportunity to unite in friendship and discussion. This began a trend toward the Ecumenical movement.

Beginning as early as 325A.D. there was a meeting, called a council, at Nicaea. There were representatives who attended from churches throughout the known world. Other councils were held many times over the years. These councils did not bring unity but provided a forum for debate and dissent. Some resulted in the creeds of men and brought people further from the truth found in the New Testament.

Even the word church has come to mean different things to different people depending on their association with, or their knowledge of, a particular denomination. With more than 300 different kinds of churches they have found it necessary for each to be identified by some other word than just the word 'church'. The term 'ecumenical' for the Roman Catholic Church became a concern for Christian unity and a renewal of that church. To the Catholic viewpoint, church unity could mean nothing less than a return of all other religious groups to the "one true church". To Independents the one true church does not include Catholics or Protestants, but only Christians who follow the New Testament exclusively. To Protestants who have advanced the idea of the modern ecumenical movement the term has applied not only to Christian unity, but more broadly to the worldwide mission of Christianity. The endeavor for unity was to be applied in the areas of evangelism, service, and doctrine. These three aspects are furthered through the World Council of Churches which became an entity in 1948.

In Stockholm, when the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work was convened to study the application of the gospel to industrial, social, political, and international affairs the movement proceeded under the slogan "service unites but doctrine divides". In 1927 in the meeting of the First World Conference on Faith and Order, the conference concluded that "it is God's will that Christians have unity, and while we may justify the beginnings of disunion, we lament its continuance."

Ecumenism claims some progress since the 1970s. Consolidation of Protestant churches has progressed more rapidly. There have been increasing consensus of doctrinal questions that were once highly disputed, and there is growing cooperation at all levels. There has been dialog between Christian. Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic. In the areas of peace, international disaster relief, the Roman Catholic and World Council of Churches have pooled resources; in the United States Christian churches have joined with Jewish groups to achieve racial justice.

The Leadership of the Ecumenical Movement made clear that they do not seek a unity that

would ignore basic theological differences. There are some major obstacles, such as the desire of some to use women in ministry that the Bible assigns to men; there is the problem of Papal authority and the authority of the various classis and synods. There are moral issues such as contraception, divorce and remarriage, abortion, homosexuality, and the general fear of big church control.

After almost a century of Ecumenical efforts and talk of unity, the direction of the churches is still a matter of what man can do to unify and work together for social and political causes. There is not much movement toward the unity that was taught by the Apostle Paul in returning to the source of truth and away from the doctrines and traditions of men. The effort is not about what God has done, or what God requires of us. The closest efforts toward unity were done by groups such as the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and also the restoration movement of the 1800's where the call was to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent, and to remain independent of the large apostate churches. Until the Bible becomes the only guide for the rule and practice of the church and all agree to abide by the New Testament as the source and origination of the church, can there be unity of the Lord's church? There may be unity of religious organizations but can they represent the Lord's church? Jesus is and must be the head of His church. If all men submitted to Him, then would there be unity? How many churches would there be then? How many churches did Jesus establish? Why do mere men desire to control the Lord's church? Would it not be more in keeping with the commandment of Jesus Christ if men were to serve the church and their fellow man instead of setting up organizations of control?

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

The Worldwide Church of God was founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in **1934** in the state of Oregon, USA. There are splinter groups but the main headquarters has been in Pasadena, California.

The Worldwide Church of God publishes a monthly magazine called *"Plain Truth",* assorted booklets and a Bible. They have had a Television program for many years called *"The World tomorrow".*

Originally Herbert Armstrong denied the Trinity, defining God as a family of individuals, but still one infinite and eternal God. More recently Worldwide Church of God leaders have accepted a Trinitarian concept of God.

Jesus is God in human form. Herbert W. Armstrong suggested that Jesus was to return in 1975, but obviously this teaching is no longer supported. Recent doctrinal changes include a belief that Jesus was raised from the dead spiritually and physically, but some still follow Armstrong beliefs. The teaching about the Holy Spirit has changed some also. The Holy Spirit is now viewed as personal, rather than impersonal.

Salvation is by grace, the unmerited favor of God. Members ought also to recognize Old Testament Sabbath and feast days, along with dietary prohibitions, avoiding pork or shellfish.

After death resurrected believers will live on the new earth. The unsaved will face judgment.

The Worldwide Church of God has undergone some changes as leadership changed. Church doctrines vary and some are changing toward a more liberal Biblical view. Former Armstrong concepts such as not using professional medical treatment and the teaching of deity for mankind, or the Anglo-Israelism doctrines have been mostly abandoned.

When changes are made in a church, shouldn't those changes be in the direction of what the Bible teaches in the New Testament, rather then the opinions of church leaders? What other authority can there be for a religion that follows the path of what God has been doing in His dealings with man from the beginning until now?

COMMUNITY CHURCHES

The term **Community Church** can apply to many variations of individual church- es and without any specific organization or pattern. The most recent movement of Community Churches are patterned after the large, fast growing church called Saddleback Valley Community Church in Southern California, began by a Baptist preacher named Rick Warren, and the Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois.

These churches have attracted many because of their 'interdenominational' outlook of doctrine, hype, and jive song. entertainment, (Musical bands and drama) emotional appeal, and strong sense of involvement. Hand waving and applause are frequently used to create enthusiasm. Praise teams or multiple song leaders are used as 'Worship leaders'.

There is often a concise statement of the congregational objectives, based on Biblical principles. They teach love for the Lord and for your neighbor, making disciples, baptizing them, and educating them for discipleship. Disciples are organized to form 'Circles of Commitment', a plan to bring the 'un-churched' and members closer and closer to the 'core' of the church. The circles from the outside in are: Community, Crowd, Congregation, Committed, and the Core.

At each step of the development process, members are asked to make a commitment.

First: Committing to membership, knowing Christ, and making a covenant of membership.

Second: Committing to spiritual maturity, and making a covenant of maturity.

Third: Committed to ministry, serving Christ, and making a covenant of Ministry.

Fourth: Committing to a life ministry, and making a mission covenant.

Some congregations that do not feel comfortable about signing a covenant statement don't do it, but use an educational program stressing steps of involvement to teach every member to be a minister.

Small groups are a key to the concept. Bible study, bringing in visitors, and meeting each other's needs are part of the small group functions. 'Institutionalism' and 'traditionalism' are considered problems.

Advertising to the community, and visiting in the community to follow up mailings is done in an effort to build a 'crowd' and to find 'seekers' ... There are support groups, service groups, and Bible study groups.

Community churches support denominational holidays and celebrations with others such as, Methodists, Christian Churches, Presbyterian, and Baptist, as well as Billy Graham campaigns, since their doctrines are similar. Justification is by faith and baptism is not held to be strictly necessary for salvation.

They extend the name 'Christian' to include denominations which do not practice immersion, accept infant baptism, embrace creeds, and confessions of faith.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The World Council of Churches was founded in 1948 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It has become an international organization made up of more than 320 Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox churches that promotes ecumenical fellowship, service, and study. 'Ecumenical' is a word which means the whole household of faith, embracing all races, all nations, and all branches of the church. The council is defined in its constitution as a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and savior according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The name *'Christ'* comes from the Greek word Christos, which for the Jews was *Messiah,* and refers to the Savior promised from Adam to Abraham and his seed, and prophesied throughout the Old Testament of the Holy Bible.

The council works to promote cooperation and unity among all the churches of the world. The Roman Catholic Church which has not been a member of the council does cooperate in a number of its programs. The activities of the council include education; worldwide missionary and evangelical work: promotion of world peace, social and racial justice; and aid to refugees, the sick, and the underprivileged. Since 1961 when the Eastern Orthodox churches were voted in there has been some concern that the sympathies of the council has favored people from communist countries and have been unable to help in some other areas where struggles against communism existed. One of the problems of the church at large over time has been the union of church and state and the politics of the state over ruling the church. Would the World Council to be effective and meet its stated goals have a need to avoid political entanglements?

The principle authority in the World Council of Churches is an assembly of delegates, which meet every seven years. There is a 150 member central committee which meet annually, and a permanent secretariat, headed by a general secretary. These offices administer the programs of the council. Decisions of the council are not binding on member churches. The council has headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

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UNIFICATION CHURCH

The **Unification Church** which is officially the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity is a religious movement founded by Korean minister and writer, Sun Myung Moon. It was founded in South Korea in 1954.

Sun Myung Moon began his religious career as a Presbyterian minister, but he was expelled from the Presbyterian denomination because of his unorthodox teachings. In 1954 he found it necessary to flee from North Korea and went to South Korea where he established the Unification Church.

The key writings are the Divine Principle and the Outline of the principle by Sun Myung Moon. Moon wrote the Principle after intensive study of the Bible, ancient Korean Shamanism, and Chinese Tai ji lore. Moon maintained that through the agency of a "Lord and Lady" of the Second Advent, which was Moon and his wife, a holy kingdom would be established on earth. Moon taught that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ prevented Him from establishing His own kingdom through marriage and procreation. The Lord and Lady of the Second Advent were to fulfill the purpose of Christ and also save the world from the satanic influence of Communism.

Moon taught that God is both positive and negative. God created the universe out of Himself; the universe is His body. God does not know what will happen in the future and is Himself suffering. God is dependent on human beings, especially Sun Myung. There is no belief of a Trinity. Jesus was a perfect man, but not God. (An obvious conflict since Jesus claimed to be God, if not He was a liar, not a perfect man.) The virgin birth of Jesus is denied. The mission of Jesus was to unite the Jews behind Him, find a perfect bride, and begin a perfect family. The mission of Jesus failed. This is why the Second Coming of Christ is being fulfilled in Sun Myung Moon who will finish the mission. The Holy Spirit is a female who works with Jesus in the spirit to guide people to Sun Myung Moon.

The Unification Church is a highly disciplined organization. Members are active in missionary and humanitarian work. Members often live in communal housing, and obedience and acceptance of the True Parents, Moon and his wife, eliminates sin and results in perfection. (Communal ＝ communism?)

Members sold candy and flowers on the street to raise money. A characteristic practice is the performing of mass wedding ceremonies for members. One mass wedding claimed 30,000 couples. An effort is made by Moon to unite couples of different racial backgrounds.

After death a person goes to the spirit world. There is no resurrection. Everyone who follows Sun Myung Moon will be saved. It is said that even Satan could be saved if he followed Moon. Members believe that Jesus bows down to Sun Myung Moon and that Moon is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Lamb of God.

Can a religion that mixes Christian, Chinese, and Korean philosophies be as good as any other religion? Could there be evidence of an anti-Christ movement in this religion? Are there any hints of blasphemy toward Christ here? Can a religion that depends on an individual human be relied on many years after that individual has died? Has this mission to save the world from communism been completed?

SCIENTOLOGY

Scientology is a religion began in California in 1954 by an American Science Fiction Writer L. Ron Hubbard. The headquarters has been in Los Angeles, California, USA.

Scientology is based on the book Dianetics written by L. Ron Hubbard. Dianetics is a method of psychotherapy that Hubbard developed. He also wrote the book The Modern Science of Mental Health in 1950 which has been a good seller. These books claim to provide techniques for better mental health by confronting memories not entirely accessible to the conscious mind.

Religious officials known as auditors help members to improve their mental health by con fronting subconscious memories of painful experiences, which provoke irrational behavior. Members pay to attend seminars as a part of this process. Weekly meetings are ceremonies using technological talk and observe the birth of the founder and the anniversary of the book Dianetics.

Scientology does not consider God as Supreme Being. Everyone is an immortal spirit with unlimited powers over its universe, although not all are yet aware of this.

Jesus, is rarely mentioned, was not the creator, and not in control of supernatural powers, and did not die for the sins of others. Jesus was not cleared from mental defects.

There is no sin or hell or need for repentance. Salvation is freedom from reincarnation. Working with the Auditor on hang-ups can achieve this clear mental condition.

Scientology, if it is a religion at all, is of little use to those who do not need psychotherapy. With Scientology as its name we would expect some basis of science in its teachings. Scientific proofs for Hubbard's theories remain demonstrated in the scientific community.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

There are a number of groups calling themselves a united church. There is one group known as **The United Church of Christ.** Sometimes confused with the Church of Christ when the word "United' is omitted. This church resulted from a merger of four denominational bodies; **United Church of Christ, Congregational Church, Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ) and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.** Their constitution was adopted in Philadelphia in July 1961.

Recently there were television Advertisements that referred to this church as "the Church of Christ" leaving the word 'United' omitted. This Ad suggested that churches other than the United Church of Christ stand at their doors and refuse to admit certain ethnic groups and homosexuals into their buildings. This Ad may be exaggerated to make a point, but it is untrue and misleading. True churches of Christ will welcome all to attend services. No one is denied entrance into a worship service. It is hoped that all will come, and if they are not Christians, that they will hear the gospel message, obey it, repent from the ways of the world, and be saved. If the Ad from this denomination means that some people are denied fellowship or membership in the church, this can be true. A person, to be a member of the Lord's church, must believe in Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, repent of past sins, (change the lifestyle) confess faith in Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of those sins, and at this time the Lord adds this person to His church. Unless one has been born again into God's family, he is not in the church of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that *"the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God"* and he included in the number, *"fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners."* This is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Paul says, *"And such were* some *of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God."* Sins can be forgiven and all can become members of the body of Christ, but under His terms. No one who refuses to repent of their sins can be forgiven or be members of the Lord's church. You can be a member of some man made denominational organization, because of the regulations established by that denomination, but that does not connect you to God or the Lord's church, which we have been following by time line since the creation of man and the establishment of God's plan for man *"before the foundation of the earth."*

If believers were united the world would believe. Jesus prayed for unity as recorded in John17. In verse 21 He said,"...*That they all may be one, even as thou Father, art in* me, *and I in thee, that they also may be one in Us,* ***that the world may believe*** *that thou didst send Me."* (American Standard Version)

Is disunity and apostasy the cause of so many variations in Christianity? Is this why we do not have a true united church of Christ? Shouldn't all churches be part of the united church of Christ?

NEW AGE

New Age is a religious concept which as been generated in more recent times, although no specific founder or date is recorded, and no specific organization is claimed. New Age is a 'movement' of a broad based mixture of spiritual, social, and political ideas. It seems to have a common goal of changing individuals and their society by a spiritual awareness process. The New Age is called a Utopian vision, to achieve an era of harmony and progress. Its influence reaches into activist groups, businesses, and professional group as well as the individual. The movement strives for unity and peace.

The New Age Movement is based on Eastern mystics, some Hinduism, and Paganism or Gnosticism. Gnosticism itself is mixed with Greek and Oriental philosophy from the period of the first century AD. It teaches that knowledge, rather than faith is the greatest good and through knowledge salvation can be attained. There is a mix of Bible passages used, Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist writings; even some Native American beliefs. Astrology, mysticism, and magic, have a place in the New Age. It can include meditation, yoga, astrology, trances, hypnosis, tarot cards, and contact with spirits.

The modern movement has more recent roots in 19th century spiritualism and the 1960 'counterculture.' Organized religions and materialism were rejected in favor of Eastern mysticism and direct spiritual experiences. The movement bought together feminists, ecological, spiritual, and human potential groups and created a large market for books, magazines, workshops, and tape recordings as well as healing and meditation aids, natural foods, and crystals.

Crystals are used to get into harmony with God, for psychic healing, contact with spirits, or developing a higher consciousness. Everything is God and everyone is God. God is an impersonal force or a principle. People themselves have an unlimited power and need to discover that potential. Techniques for self improvement and an idea that an individual is responsible for and capable of everything from self-healing to creating the world, have found applications in counseling, health care, sports, corporations, and even some armed forces. Attitudes about the environment, our families, our work, medicine and cures, and world peace have been debated because of ideas associated with the New Age Movement. Since man is divine he can experience psychic phenomena and contact beings not of this earth.

Jesus is not the one true God or savior. He was a spiritual model who tapped into divine power in the same way that anyone can. He did not rise physically but rose to a higher spiritual realm. Human reincarnations occur until one reaches that level as impersonal force or principle equated as God. There is no eternal life as a resurrected person, and there is no literal hell or heaven.

There is a need to offset bad karma with good karma; the result is a future state from the acts done in the present life. To do this one can tap into supernatural power through meditation, self awareness, and spirit guides. Self awareness achieved is to be reborn.

Is the New Age Movement any better than the Paganism, Hinduism, or other philosophies on which it is based? Does it hold any promise better than the covenant God gave to Abraham? Is this the ultimate religious experience we seek? Isn't this New Age only a new application of the old ages?

CONCLUSION

IS ONE RELIGION AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

IS ONE CHURCH AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

IS ONE GOD AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

IS ONE DENOMINATION AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

IS ONE PRESBYTERIAN AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

IS ONE BAPTIST AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

Many honest and sincere people believe that one church is as good as another, and there are many who believe all religions are good and God will save us all. There are many who claim to use the Bible as the source of their faith and believe that we can be saved from any church. There are many churches and many religions as we have seen in our study. Catholics and Protestants are divided and subdivided by names, doctrines, creeds, form of organization, or worship style.

However, there are still some people who do not believe that one religion or church is as good as some other. They have noticed that conflicting creeds, practices, and organizations are not in harmony with the Bible and cannot be justified by scripture. It is a fact that, both from the Bible and from history, it can be shown that the church of Jesus Christ was established several centuries before Catholic churches or Protestant churches were established and divided by various creeds, doctrines, practices, and organizational structures.

Is one church as good as another? How can we answer this when **Jesus Christ has** only **established** one church? This is recorded in the New Testament. Jesus has only one church! We are either in it or we are not. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 *"Upon this rock I will build my church."* He did not offer options and denominations but only one church. This is the universal body of Christ, and the Lord adds to His *"church daily such as should he saved."* Acts 2:38 and following. Those who accepted the terms of salvation enjoyed the remission of sins and the Lord added them to His church. (The church)

He did not add them to the church of their choice. There was no choice. Today as people obey the same gospel, they are not added to a denomination but to the original, the only church of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12: and verse 13 we read, *"For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body."* (Only one, the same one all Christians have been baptized into for over 2000 years.) Ephesians 2:16... *"What He* (Christs *might reconcile both unto God in one body on the cross."* This united both Jew and Gentile into Himself, *'in one hotly."* Ephesians 4:4, *"There is one body, and one spirit...one Lord. One faith, one baptism."*

The same passage that says there is one Lord and one faith shows us that there is only one body. Christ is the head, the body is the church, and Christians are the members. The church is not divided into parts, denominations, or parties, but there is one church universal; those who the Lord added to His church.

We cannot be in Christ and out of His church. The whole church is united in Christ as one body. All are to be united to the one Lord, hold to the same faith, believe and practice the same gospel, and worship in the same way. This is the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17.

Unity can never be attained in the religious world as long as people believe that 'one church is as good as another', or that a person can be saved by joining...any church. Unity can only occur among those who obey

the same gospel and practice those things taught in the New Testament by Christ and his apostles, in the same manner as the apostles practiced.

Every denomination has a human founder and most have a human head. There are headquarters in various cities of denominations, teaching different doctrines, with different organizational structures, and various forms of worship. Denominations divide and confuse people. One contradicts another.

The Lord's church is undenominational, non-denominational, and anti-denominational, neither Catholic or Protestant. It is just what it was years ago in the first century, and the conditions of salvation are the same.

Is one church as good as another? Is one religion as good as another? The Bible answers this question as an emphatic 'no'. The church that Jesus gave His blood for is far superior to every denomination, and every other religion.

There has, in every age been those who would not follow God's way, or wish to distort His way.

Remember that third party in the garden of Eden. Today there are those who use religion for political gain. There are those who use religion to motivate others to perform acts of terror among their own people and people of other nations. What kind of people would commit such violent acts against innocent, unsuspecting people? Why would people fly airplanes into ships and buildings? They are called religious fanatics. They believe that their god, either the emperor deity, or Allah, or some other deity, will give them a reward for killing others. There are Muslims active today following their brand of religion in what they call 'Holy War." They have little regard for human life, even their own. They wait for ideal opportunities to attack and inflict casualties. There is another kind of religious terrorism that has been going on for centuries. Churches torn apart by groups of people who do not want to follow God's way, but desire conquest and control of churches. They appear to have little concern for what God's word requires, but rather create their own denominational ideas and creeds, and interpretations of **scripture.** They want to change the church to be like **some** religious neighbors, or to some ideal or pattern that makes them feel good. In the process of changing the church to their own image, they destroy works that have accomplished much good for many years, and have followed God's path while doing these works. They divide congregations, devour church resources, and steal buildings from the faithful to satisfy their personal idea of what religion should be. Like the Muslim terrorist, these religious terrorists are devious in their methods, sowing discontent, and gaining control of others. Once they believe they are strong enough and have their 'leaders in place' they make their move. It does not matter how many are hurt in the takeover. The Apostle Paul gave warning that these things would happen when he spoke to the Elders at Ephesus as recorded in Acts 20: 28-32, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you shepherds, to feed the church of God, which He hue purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch..."* This is not new... Solomon about 3000 years ago stated that God hates those who sow discord among the brethren as recorded in Proverbs 6:16-19.

CAN ONE CHURCH EVOLVE INTO MANY?

Do we remember what Jude 3 says? Repeated again: *"You should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* And remember Ephesians 4:4, *"there is one body. and one. spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*."

There are many other religions and variations of Christianity which are not reviewed here. They all exist outside of the requirements of the scriptures as we have just read. It is not necessary to review all variations because they do nothing to bring us closer to the truth, but rather tend to further confuse the line of God's dealings with man and the establishment of His church.

It is difficult in this generation for people to seek truth, as they have been led to believe that 'truth is relative' and the 'point of view' and 'ethnic myths' should be considered in determining what is. Some teach that there is no truth. The attack on truth has also resulted in eliminating standards in the classroom. Who can determine that one student's work is better than another's?

Without a standard for truth, anything can mean almost anything else you want it to mean. War is peace, freedom is slavery, and fairness and merit mean bigotry. Criticism of anything can be considered censorship.

There has to be a standard for what is true. There are things unquestionably true. Could you do business if mathematical tables did not work out the same every time? Would it be all right with you if you bought two loaves of bread for a dollar a piece and the merchant said you needed to pay him six dollars? No, you would pay two dollars plus any fixed amount of taxes, and both you and the merchant would **agree** that this was the true and correct amount for the transaction. If your child was vomiting, delirious, and running a dangerously high fever, (if it is true that there is a point at which a fever can be known to be dangerous) you would rush the child to a medical facility. If, at this facility three doctors were available to examine your child. Suppose the first Doctor says, *"Your child has viral meningitis and must be put into isolation and treated immediately with antibiotics or he will die before the day is over."* The next Doctor says," *"Your child has 24 hour flu and just needs a shot to bring the fever down. I suggest you take him home and try not to worry anymore."* The third Doctor comments, *"Well, there are two different ideas about your son's illness and who am I to say who is right?" I suggest that we be guided by love and respect each other's opinion."* What would your reaction be to an absurd situation as this? Would you be satisfied with a 'solution' like this if the life of your child was at stake? Would you insist on learning what the truth of your child's condition is? Would you want to be sure that the proper treatment is given to find the path to healing and restored health? Would you put a premium on finding and knowing the truth? Would you be content to grant each Doctor his opinion and let everyone just walk away while **your** child lay in critical condition, and possibly dying**? We** put a premium on knowing the truth in medicine, in engineering, mathematics, and other pursuits where error can cost lives, or much destruction. There can be little second guessing in the design of an airplane, ship, automobile, or sky scraper. Why would it be any less important to find the truth when it comes to spiritual questions, and matters of religion?

We have to learn the truth. The truth in mathematics is in a Mathematics book. The truth in religion is, as we have followed from the beginning, in God's Word as recorded in the Holy Bible. If man wants the truth, we must go where the truth is. God sent truth to man with an expectation that man would understand it and follow it. The only truth that can save our souls from eternal damnation is found in the Holy Bible. Jesus said that all men could know the truth. The church is said to be the *"pillar and ground of the truth."* The Bible presupposes both the existence of objective truth and man's ability to find it, and know it.

If the Bible is not the Word of God what else do we have to give us direction for life? What else do we have to give us hope of eternal life with God? What other book claims to be the Word of God that gives us a look at beginnings of things and the end of things on the earth? What other book gives us an insight into the mysteries of God and the powers of evil in the universe?

Faith in the authority of the scriptures is supported by physical evidences in history, archaeology, and science. The prophecies recorded in the Old Testament hundreds of years before they were fulfilled are numerous, and

were fulfilled accurately. The scripture written by over forty persons over many centuries, in various countries and cultures, still provide a complete story without contradiction. Without the scriptures as the foundation of the truth people interpret their own feelings as religious authority, and claim that God revealed Himself to them in these experiences. With variations, this is found in Calvinism, Pentecostals, Joseph Smith, Mohammed, and other charismatics. Emotions are the foundation of many of these religions, and they do not connect to the Gospel story from the beginning to end.

People need to think for themselves in matters of religion. It is not safe to follow what friends or relatives believe or teach, without checking the facts. There is a phenomenon called 'group think'. Why does an entire family get into a car and travel to town when only one member of the family wants to go? Why does a company begin a new business policy when people working for this company do not believe in the policy, but a manager has noted that many other businesses have adopted this policy. Most people are not even aware that 'group think' is occurring. Many other people are afraid to speak their minds and don't want to appear as an 'outsider' from the group or are insecure about taking a contrary position.

The result is that 'group think' often causes people to agree to do things just because others are doing it, not because they have checked the facts or understand why they do things. What God said is important, not what a group of friends or relatives have said!

If a person is seeking the truth in the denominational world, he would be confused. When seeking or questioning any doctrine, "forget everything you have ever read, or been taught, and read and study the Bible for yourself, and God will show you what truth is, and what is not. Read and study searching for the truth without believing you already know what is true. **Clear** your mind and **start** over and do **not try** to **make** the **scripture** fit **any certain doctrine. It makes a tremendous difference in your** understanding. In l Corinthians 8:2 it reads, *"if any man thinks he knows anything he knows nothing yet as he ought to know."*

One of the apostasies which have developed since the reformation and the rise of denominations is the teaching that salvation occurs before baptism. Evangelicals and Calvinists have developed this idea to justify infant baptism, pouring instead of immersion, baptism for membership, and saved by faith 'only' doctrines. Catholics have performed infant baptism from about 1200 AD. The New Testament teaching on baptism is very plain. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, *"All power is given unto me* in heaven *and in earth. Go ye, therefore and teach all nation. ,baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*" In Mark 16:15-16 it is recorded this way, "Go *ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to ever) creature, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall bed clammed."* Peter speaking in Acts 2:38 stated the reason for baptism, *for the remission of sins."* And Phillip demonstrated the method while teaching the Ethiopian Eunuch when the Eunuch expressed belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God in Acts 8:38 *"they went both into the waiter, both Phillip and the Eunuch and he baptized him."* Acts 8:12 tells us when they were baptized. "*When tied believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."* Romans 6: 1-6 shows the parallel to the death, burial . and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:27 says *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* Just as in mark 16:16 when Jesus said, *"he that believeth riot shall be dammed"* it would be assumed that they that didn't believe refused baptism, here in Galatians 3 we can assume that those not baptized have not put on Christ. Ephesians 4:5 says there is only 'one *Lord, one faith, one baptism. "* That would exclude all others also. **Is one baptism as good as another?** Colossians 2:12 speaks of baptism as a burial. *"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through faith of the operation Of God, who raised Him from the dead."* Peter made it very plain that baptism is in the plan. 1 Peter 3:21 when comparing Noah being saved by water explains that *"The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of*

a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' How much more plain and simple could it be?

Over the years, doctrines and worship of God, which were clearly shown to us in the scriptures, are being replaced by doctrines and worship ideas that are designed to please man rather than to please God who is the object of worship.

Rich Halverson, a long-time chaplain to the United States Senate, said, *"In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centering on the living Christ. Then it moved to Greece where it became a philosophy. Then* it *moved to Rome where it became an institution. Next it moved to Europe where it became a culture. Now it has moved to North America where it has become and Enterprise."* Christianity has led many people to use it to seek power or monetary reward to a greater degree over the centuries. People have changed their view of Christianity, but Christianity has never changed. The exact words recorded by the Apostles which taught and guided the early church are the same now. The gospel of Jesus Christ has never changed since the day it was introduced as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The message has not changed; people's belief systems and teachings of men have changed frequently. Christianity has not moved, people have moved away from its original teaching and provided their own. Only the straight and narrow way leads to life. Jesus said it in Matthew 7:13-14, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is thy gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it. "*

IS MAN'S DOCTRINE AS GOOD AS THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES?

Remember that third party in the Garden of Eden. He is still active. Matthew 15:9, *"But in vain do they wo0rship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* 1 Peter 5:8, *"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he many devour."*

Everyone must choose a religion, or choose none, but they **will make a choice**.

IS ONE CHOICE AS GOOD AS ANOTHER? GO teach!

What do we need to know after we have chosen to follow Jesus and have given our life to God and were baptized into Christ?

We know that Jesus has purchased us with His own blood, built His Church and is the Head of His church. Refer to Acts 20:28, Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 5:23. The New Testament tells of the new law which He has given personally and thru the inspired words printed by His apostles and disciples.

He is the foundation and "the rock" on which His church has been founded. He began fulfilling prophecies in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2: 2-3) in the time period prophesied (Daniel 2: 31-45) around A.D. 33 in Jerusalem.

Romans 16:16 has the name Church of Christ, and this fits what Jesus said as recorded in Matthew 16:18 "I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Acts 2: 47 tells us that those baptized would be added to the Lord's church. The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved!

His church has been described as a Kingdom (Mathew 6:19 and Colossians 1:18) This body, His church. Ephesians 1:22 -23 tells us He is the head of His church which is His body, the church. The church is also called the church of God) 1 Corinthians 1:2, and called the House of God in 1 Timothy "15.

Baptized believers (Mark 16:16) both men or women (Acts 8:12) who have been baptized and repented of sin (Acts 2 38) professing Jesus as Christ (Romans 10: 9 -10) and were obedient in being buried in water, 'baptized' (Romans 6: 1-6 / Colossians 2:12)) are added to His church membership. These have come from every nation. Acts 1:34-35)

The congregations of the Lord's church are to worship each first day of the week, (Sunday) (Acts 20:7) in spirt and in truth. (John 4:24) Each congregation is independent. (Acts 14: 23) Obligated to Jesus our Lord and Savior. (1 Peter 5: 1-4) Ruled by Elders, also called shepherds, pastors, bishops, or presbyters. Served by deacons. (1 Timothy 3: 813) Taught by teachers (Hebrews 5:12-14) and preachers (Romans 10: 13-15) and served by each member differing according to the talents given and the opportunities to show merry and kindness, or to teach. (Romans 12: 4-8)

Worship will include **Praying,** (Acts 2: 42) 1Corinthians 14:15) **singing,** (Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16) musical Instruments, although used in the former covenant, have not been authorized here in the New Testament church. The Lord's supper is taken to remember the sacrifice and death of our Lord on the cross which was done by His sacrifice on our behalf in forgiveness of sin. And preaching and teaching is for our edification and to praise and honor our creator. The worship should teach us all to take the gospel to the lost world (Mark 16:15 and Matthew 8: 19-20) To rescue fallen Christians. (James 5: 19-20) To help the poor or weak, (Galatians 6:10) and learn more of the word of God. (2 Timothy 2;15)

All of God's word is valuable for our understanding of why God made this earth and put humans on it. The Old Testament tells of God's ways of dealing with mankind, and tells us of his power and purposes. The New Testament tells us of our salvation and the Kingdom of God in this age and how we must prepare for the afterlife in Paradise part of Hades, then Heaven, and how to avoid the alternative punishment in Hades and in hell with the evil and his fallen angels.

There are two Gospels told in the New Testament. The first is the good news that the kingdom of God is coming, in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The remaining books and letters are the Gospel that (Good News) that the kingdom has come, and the law of Christ is to be followed.

No human creeds, disciplines, or catechisms, are needed when teaching and preaching only from what the Bible / New Testament has for us to obediently follow. Jude verse 3 and 4, *"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for <u>the faith which was once for all</u> <u>delivered to the Saints</u>." "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord, Jesus Christ."* N**o man-made additions or exceptions** are needed.

Members are called "saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2) They are referred to as 'Brethren." Acts 15: 22-23. Members are often just called "members" and also the title 'Christian." Acts 11: 26 & 26: 28, and 1 Peter 4:16. They are called "Children of God in Romans 8: 16. And in one occasion referred to as priests. Peter 2:9. This is true as we conduct our worship to God in Christ, following the patterns of the items of worship shown to us in the what the early New Testament churches were told to do, and did do.

The only true church of the New Testament is not a denomination, nor does it sprout demonization's from the works and ideas taught by men over the course of time, including the 'Reformation" or the "Restoration" times, with men trying to return to the Gospel way. It is the Lord's church and He has only one church! Jesus established His church hundreds of years before any denominations existed. He compared religions of men to plants and said; Every plant, which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up. (Matthew 15:13)

Jesus also said as recorded in Matthew 15: 9, **"But in vain do they worship Me. teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**."

Our conclusion that the only church belonging to our Lord is the church which He, using the apostles and disciples putting in writing had established. Once for all. (Jude 3 and 4)

Shall we examine ourselves in the faith?

Does your religion go back to Jerusalem, founded in AD 33 (Date + or -?)

Do the laws of your religion come from the New Testament laws, only?

Is your church a fulfillment of prophecy?

Did it begin with Power as in Acts chapter l and 2?

Does your religion have a biblical name? With each church (congregation) an independent church, and part of the 'body of Christ.

Romans 10: 17 *"So then faith* comes *bv hearing and hearing by the Word of God"* John 8: 24 "*I said therefore unto you, that you will die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins',"* Belief and faith are critical and necessary. Repentance must *occur.* Acts 17: 30, *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, (winked at) but now commands all men everywhere to repent. "*

Do you profess Jesus to be the Son of God? Acts 8: 35-39, *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they crime to some water, And the eunuch said," See, here is* water, *what hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." So, he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit caught Philip when they came up out of the water*, the Spirit caught Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit caught Philip away, so the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing."

Baptism, (immersion) for the remission of sins is required. Acts 22:16, And now, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, **calling on the name of the Lord**." Baptism is not for joining the Lord's church, it is for remission of sins (forgiveness). 1 Peter 3:21- "baptism now saves us." We did not join the church for Acts 2:47 says "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

John 16: 33, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (trouble) but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

Revelation 2:10, "Do not fear any of these things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested and you will have tribulation ten days. **BE Faithful** until death. And I will give you the crown if life.

James 1:2 and 4, **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers (many temptations**). ***Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh Patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be prefect and entire, wanting nothing.***

KEEP THE FAITH, BUT ALSO GIVE IT AWAY!

AND THE DEVIL WON'T WIN!

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RELEVENT SCRIPTURES

2 TIMOTHY 3: 16-17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

EPHESIANS 2:2 "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: "

EPHESIANS 6: 12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

1 COR. 10: 1-13 Vs 10; "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you: but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement."

2 COR. 6: 14-17 " Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"---Vs 17 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean: and I will receive you."

EPH. 5: 11 "and have no fellowship with the unfrultful works of darkness, but rather reprove (expose) them."

GAL 1: 6-8 "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto ll!l01ber **gospel·** Which js not another: but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ But though we, **or an angel from heaven** preach **any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

GAL 1: 9-12 "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preaches any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for ii I yet pleased men. (still continued to please men) I should not be the servant of Christ. But I **certify** you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after men. For I neither received It of man, neither was I taught It, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.

MT. 15: 6b-9 "Thus have you made the commandments of God of none effect by your tradition. You hypocrites,

well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, (IS. 29:13) This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

REV.22:18-19 "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away form the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"

JUDE 3 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you , and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered **unto the saints"**

1 JN.5: 20-21 "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Amen.

MT. 7: 14 "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.• Heb. 1: 1-2 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom

He made the worlds."