

General Definitions :

Religion— a set of beliefs that a supernatural being or power exists over the universe. A concept of God usually practiced by rituals, rights, or traditions.

Denomination— a branch of Christianity united under common faith and practices designated by separate congregations often with a home office or centralized headquarters.

Doctrine— a teaching or principle believed to be truth, law, or policy. (a doctrine of war is a military strategy)

Cardinal (doctrine) - priority, one of paramount importance.
Primary are absolute and non negotiable, secondary are debatable and often a matter of interpretation or opinion.

Heretic— a person who holds controversial opinions and often publicly diverts or debates cardinal doctrines.

Sacrament— a requirement of participation in a duty to manifest the practice of faith. Roman Catholicism practices 7 of these requirements necessary for Salvation.

Ordinance— an authoritative command, order or custom. Most Protestants practice 2, but are not required for Salvation.

Cult— religious group who generally claims compatibility with Christianity, yet violate the two pillars of faith:
The final authority of scripture and the deity of Christ.

Occult— Satanic or demonic in nature. The worship and practice of sorcery, witchcraft, magic, etc.

BUDDHISM (Asian origin)

4 Noble truths = suffering is a way of life
the origin of suffering comes from cravings or desires
suffering is diminished through self denial
it is possible to escape reincarnation through obedience of Buddhist teachings

5 Moral precepts = prohibition of : killing (including animals)
stealing
illicit sexual relations
dishonorable speech (including gossip)
drugs or alcohol use

Worship includes the meditation and homage before certain statues or images. Meditation is practiced by adherents and monks to ascend oneself to a state of Nirvana (a transcendent,

permanent
removal from self consciousness)

The world's most sacred object (according to Guinness), is a 15th century gold Buddha in Bangkok Thailand weighing 5 1/2 tons. It is 10 feet tall and valued at \$38.3 million dollars.

The scriptures of this faith are found in "the teachings of the compassionate Buddha". They include songs, parables, philosophies and various instructions.

One of the paramount doctrines is the teaching of Karma. It is the universal justice experienced by a person's actions and their consequences. One's karma determines such matters as one's species, beauty, intelligence, longevity, wealth, and social status. According to the Buddha, karma of varying types can lead to rebirth as a human, an animal, a hungry ghost, a denizen of hell, or even one of the Hindu gods.

HINDUISM (origin from India)

This is closely related to Buddhism. It is "polytheistic" in nature due to the hundreds of Gods recognized. It began around 1500 BC and has about 700 million adherents. It also believes the concept of reincarnation. After death when the soul leaves the body, it is reborn in another person, animal, vegetable or mineral.

Their sacred writings are called the "Bhagavad-Gita" and teach veda or knowledge. The four Vedas include a collection of 10 poetic books with over 1000 hymns as well as magical incantations and spells.

Renouncing the fruits of your labors is the supreme law of morality. They progressively deny themselves of all material, emotional, and spiritual rewards and property. This has led the nation of India to poverty and subservience.

The Brahmins are the highest class of priest who perform certain sacrifices. They are descendants of the God Brahma (a type of cow or bull). Krishna is a lesser god or human hero often worshiped. The king cobra is also a popular deity.

Mahatma Gandhi was a lawyer and political activist who led a successful peaceful protest to British rule over India in 1947.

The biggest religious crowd ever recorded was in Prayag India in 1995. 20 million Hindus gathered for a festival in one day where they bathed in the Ganges river. The biggest temple in the world was built to honor the Hindu god "Vishnu" around 1100 AD. It covers 402 acres and is located in Cambodia. Another Hindu temple attracts 30 to 40,000 visitors per day and up to 75,000 on New Year's day. It employs 15,000 full time staff members and has an annual budget of \$57 million dollars.

ISLAM (middle east origin)

Allah is the name of the one Islamic god (monotheistic). A follower of Islam is also known as a Muslim. Muhammad is the prophet who wrote sacred writings called the Koran. Some countries that are predominately Muslim, use the Koran as their constitution. This religion started in the 7th century AD and covered the Arab region.

They believe in the account of creation including the accounts of Adam, Moses, and Abraham. Mohammad was a descendant of Ishmael, Isaacs brother. Many claim that Islam is compatible with Christianity because it recognizes Jesus in the gospels. It is now second in size only to Christianity with 1 billion followers.

The Koran rejects the notion of redemption. Salvation depends on a mans actions and attitudes. One who lives according to the truth and the best of his abilities will achieve heaven. Infidels who reject the teaching of Islam will be given no mercy.

Morals are qualified on a degrading scale from 1 to 5. The mandatory first requirements are called pillars. They include a profession of faith, prayer 5 times daily while facing Mecca, giving alms to the poor, fasting, and a pilgrimage to the holy land. Other secondary issues would be recommended while the third category is considered neutral or permissible. Fourth are disapproved actions such as divorce. The fifth, or forbidden behavior includes drinking wine and eating pork.

The “dome of the rock” is a famous landmark in Jerusalem where Mohammad supposedly ascended to heaven.

JUDAISM (origin from Israel)

Jews were first known as Hebrews. It was the language and heritage. Many Jews are scattered throughout the world, but the homeland is the Nation of Israel with Jerusalem being the capitol city. God is known as Yahweh or Jehovah and he revealed himself to Abraham and Moses. The Torah (or law) was given on Mt. Sinai and has been part of Jewish scripture ever since. A total of 613 commandments have been passed down throughout the ages. Legalism tends to lead the theology of most Rabbis thus creating an exclusive disposition.

Due to disobedience to God, the Jews have experienced several periods of exile and/or enslavement by pagan nations. This includes Egypt, Babylon, and Rome.

Rituals, holidays (both weekly and annually), and ceremonies are very important in Judaism. The remembrance of sacred history is retold on many occasions. Covenants are a major part of Gods relationship with the Jewish people. He made them with Abraham, with Noah, and the prophets. They also embrace a modern covenant by awaiting the coming of a Messiah who will deliver the nation and re-establish the earthly throne of King David.

Jews make a habit to pray three times a day as was the custom of sacrifices in Salomon's temple. They cover their head with a cap or prayer shawl out of respect for God, as many meditate at the western wall.

Synagogues are the primary place of worship and they require ten men to establish a congregation. Dietary laws revolve around "kosher" practices that establish clean and unclean foods. Future ambitions include the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem.

MORMONISM (latter day saints)

In 1820 Joseph Smith the founder, claimed that Christ appeared to appoint him as the restorer of the true church. This was necessary because all other denominations were false and the church had been laying dormant for about 1700 years. In the beginning, according to Mormonism, trillions of planets were ruled by countless gods who were once humans like us. One of these gods with his goddess wife had a spirit child named Elohim. Through obedience to Mormonism, he proved worthy to become a god and become our heavenly father. This progression to god status then led to 2 children. One was Lucifer and the other was Jesus, they were brothers! This kind of teaching came about from the discovery of gold tablets by Smith in upstate New York. This prophet is held in the highest honor, even greater than Christ. Final judgment will be decided by Smith, Jesus, and Elohim.

Scripture is not limited to the Bible, but also includes the book of Mormon, Doctrines and covenants, and the pearl of great price. The Bible is only valid when it is translated correctly by the organization. The temple in Salt lake city, Utah, brings thousands of visitors each day and assets are now close to \$30 billion. Funds generate rapidly due to the required tithe, bringing in \$3 million per day. This cult has 11 million members and grows at the rate of 1500 people a day.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS (watchtower society)

In 1879 Charles T. Russell authored 6 of the 7 volumes entitled "Studies in the scriptures" which he claimed without them no one could understand the truths of the Bible. He published the watchtower magazine and prophesied that Christ would return in 1874 to establish his millennial reign. In 1914 the date was again given and proved to be false prophecy. 1918, 1925, 1941, and 1975 were also dates given by the organization and of course were disappointments. Even after such heresy, even when the scripture says that no man knows the day nor the hour when Christ will return, thousands still put their faith in this organization. They attend and participate in the local "kingdom hall" blindly and futile.

They teach that Jesus was the firstborn of all creation, and a billion years ago he was known as Michael the Archangel. Another fallacy stems from denial of the resurrection. He only materialized in the spirit. Russell goes on to say "the man Jesus is dead, forever dead". Then there is the pagan belief in the trinity, so they say. Salvation of course is not based on faith alone, but coupled with good works. Your salvation can never be certain and only 144,000 will actually go to heaven. (The list is already complete, so forget about it, you don't qualify!) Other faithful witnesses will live forever on Paradise earth. Eternal punishment in Hell can not be true

according to J. W. and no one outside the organization will ever obtain salvation. They will instead be destroyed at Armageddon.

CATHOLICISM

Catholicism errs in the two main pillars of Christianity. First, they claim that the Bible is not complete, infallible, or authoritative. Other books are added such as the apocrypha as well as official documents from Rome by the Pope. The church does not recommend that people interpret scripture for themselves, only priests are authorized for such a task. The Bible does not hold final authority on its own, we must consider traditions of the church and leadership for Gods approval on doctrinal matters. Secondly, Christ's work on the cross is not sufficient alone for redemption or salvation. A person must practice the 7 sacraments required including penance for sins. This is a way of making up for grievous violations of Gods law and keeping from, or getting out of purgatory (a place between heaven and hell for temporary holding until judgment).

The church also practices indulgences whereby a person can pay money to the church to bargain with God. Throughout history, protestant believers were martyred for taking a stand against the political and powerful church of Rome. One more huge problem with Catholicism stems from mass and Eucharist. This is not communion! They claim that these elements actually become flesh and blood, they are not symbolic. Therefore you must participate in mass as one of the sacraments necessary for salvation. Praying to saints (including Mary), is nothing more than man made idol worship and forbidden by God.

THE OCCULT

This is significantly different from a cult. These groups or individuals are Satanic in nature. Their roots come from ancient Babylon and Egypt. They now have their own written Bible which compels followers to break every commandment and make blood sacrifices to Lucifer the Archangel. Meetings or services usually include darkness, secrecy, incantations, spells, and the promotion of evil in general. Signs and symbols include pentagrams, goats heads, and inverted crosses. There are hundreds more.

In 1966 in San Francisco, Anton LaVey founded the church of Satan, a recognized non-profit organization with the U.S. govt. His daughter Zina, takes a strong stand for their cause and has appeared on many talk shows. Soon after, in 1975, Michael Aquino started the "Temple of Set", a closely related promotion of hedonism which says that the pursuit of pleasure is mans only goal of salvation. In the 80's, a widespread scare arose across the country based on fragments of evidence concerning a network of child abductions for ritual sacrifice. Halloween is considered a "high holiday" although many Christians dismiss any coalition of this event with the occult. Many reject the idea that occultism is all due to the presence of evil, and belittle these beliefs and practices to mere superstition.

Young people are lured into its grip by extreme "metal" rock groups, ouija boards, magic, socery, and wica, because of the excitement and power associated with them. Other

participants include fortune telling, palm reading, tarot cards, psychic hot lines, and astrology. Many scary films, movies and even cartoons can condition peoples minds to open the doorway of the occult.

DENOMINATIONS

1.9 billion claim to Christians. 900 million fall into the protestant category.

Denominations are not evil or cultish although they vary widely in doctrine and practices. Every individual has the responsibility, regardless of his/ her traditions, to examine the scripture for themselves. We must be able to distinguish between primary (cardinal), and secondary (debatable) doctrines. Some issues we may agree to disagree, others we must be willing, (like the martyrs) to defend till death. It's a shame that many Christians don't know the difference!

The largest Christian denomination is the Baptist. Although there are many branches, they have over 32 million members worldwide. They were started in 1610 and are considered conservative, fundamental, and evangelical.

Methodists are the second largest. Founded in 1738 by John and Charles Wesley, now has 18 million members and congregations are usually moderate to liberal.

Presbyterians are known for the doctrine of Calvinism. A belief that people are pre-destined according to the founder John Calvin. This church has 3 million and started in 1540.

Lutherans began a following soon after Martin Luther proclaimed the reformation in 1530. 5.5 million members make up one of the original protestant congregations.

Pentecostals and Charismatics make up a group of about 4 million worldwide. Many separate divisions include both denominations and non-denominational movements. They are characterized by spiritual gifts, especially that of "speaking in tongues" and started in the early 1900's.

There are now over 300 different denominations.

DOCTRINES

I once heard a Pastor say, "we don't teach doctrine here, it's to divisive". This statement can only come from a platform of ignorance. Giving him the benefit of doubt, doctrines are the subject of many debates. However, arguments are usually the result of poor communication, ignorance, assumptions, and a lack of social skills, not Biblical interpretation. A doctrine is only a written statement of what we believe. Without them we become naive, superficial, or in denial.

Many people just don't want to be pinned down with the truth. The majority of church members could not recite even a few doctrines about their faith. How can we live it or communicate it if we don't clearly understand it? How can we keep from division and chaos without a written statement of faith? How can people defend themselves against false religions or cults if they don't know the truth?

Most of us settle for conclusions about God based on traditions. We believe what our

parents taught us, or what they neglected to teach us. Others are naïve and trust people who are nice and sincere. Millions of people are sincere, but sincerely wrong. I challenge you to study your church history, doctrine and practices as though your life depends on it!

Your eternity does!

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS

False teachers:

Matt. 7:15 _____

1 Tim. 4:1,2 _____

Gal. 1:8 _____

2 Cor. 11:3,4— 13,14 _____

2 Peter 2:1-3 _____

Authority of scripture

2 Tim. 3:16 _____

2 Peter 1:20,21 _____

FOUNDATIONS CONTINUED—

World religions

Acts 17:22 _____

Josh. 24:14,15 _____

Works:

Eph. 2:8,9 _____

Rom. 3:21-28 _____

Defense:

1 Peter 3:15 _____

2 Tim. 2:14-18 _____

Acts 18:4 _____

Acts 17:11 _____

SHAKEN FOUNDATIONS ?! ...

George A. Marsden wrote a book that stated 85% of the students in one of Americas largest seminaries stated that they did not believe in the innerancy and infallibility of scripture.

Sociologist Jeffery Haden took a poll of 10,000 clergymen in 1987. They were asked if they believed in the inerrancy and inspiration of scripture. Here are the results:

- 95% of Episcopalians said no.
- 87% of Methodists said no
- 82% of Presbyterians said no.
- 77% of Lutherans said no.
- 67% of Baptists said no.

People tend to discredit anything and everything until there is no standard of truth, until there are no absolutes.

This sad commentary explains why people are so confused about doctrine.

Other religions have “sacred” writings and hold them in the highest esteem. Everyone seems to be searching for truth, but until Christians come into unity and submit to the final authority of God’s word, the world will continue to look elsewhere.

HUMANISM

Humanism is the religion of self centered, egocentric, and narcissistic thinking. It was established by “the Father of progressive education” John Dewey in 1933. He wrote the Humanist Manifesto and this has been recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court as a bona fide religion. Even though the so called separation of church and state

doesn't allow religion in school, this is taught and promoted freely.

Some of the doctrines are as follows:

1. The universe is self-existing and not created.
2. There are no moral absolutes. What's wrong for me may not be wrong for you.
3. Man is only a species of animal, resulting from the continuous process of evolution.
4. Modern science rejects any notion of the supernatural.
5. The promotion of social well being and the fulfillment of the "here and now" must replace the concept of some eternal reward (or judgment).

In 1983 on page 26 of "the Humanist magazine", we read the following quote:

"The battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith... it must become an arena of conflict between the old and the new— the rotting corpse of Christianity... and the new faith of humanism!"

There was a time in scripture that seems very similar.

Judges 21:25 - everyone did what was right in his own eyes!

RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD— Encarta Encyclopedia

Modern life has posed acute challenges to traditional religions. In the 1960s membership in mainstream Christian denominations began to decline. For a large number of people in modern societies, religion is neither good nor bad but simply irrelevant, given the many alternative ways to find meaning in various forms of cultural pursuits, ethical ideals, and lifestyles. These challenges to religion are partly a result of the prestige of science. The sciences describe a universe without reference to deities, the soul, or spiritual meaning. Other factors that have contributed to a decline in religious participation in the modern world include the presentation of religion as a prescientific form of superstitious thinking, as a source of political control and as a confirmation of established patriarchal values, or as an emotional crutch. In addition, many families are no longer able to maintain stable religious traditions because they are disconnected from traditional, supportive religions or as a result of mixed or nonreligious marriages. Another influence has been the loss of community and social commitment that has followed in the wake of increased mobility. Social uprooting can lead to religious uprooting because religious affiliation is closely related to social ties.

DOCTRINES CONT.

Salvation—	Rom. 10:9
Deity of Christ -	Matt. 16:15-20
Trinity -	Matt. 3:16,17
Creation—	Gen. 2:1,2
Baptism—	Matt. 3:13-15
Communion—	1 Cor.11:23-26
Sanctification / Holiness—	Lev. 11:44
Resurrection—	1 Cor. 15:12-17
Judgment -	Rom. 14:10-12
Heaven --	Rev. 21:10-27
Hell -	Rev. 20:15
Return of Christ—	1 Thess. 4:16
The Church—	Rom. 12:3-8

DOCTRINES OF THE APOSTLES:

Hebrews 6:1-3

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and faith in God, instructions about baptisms, the laying on of hands, The resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. REPENTANCE— | Matt. 3:8-11
Acts 20:21 |
| 2. FAITH— | Matt. 14:31
Rom. 8:28 |

3. BAPTISMS— Luke 3:3
Mark 1:4-8
4. LAYING ON OF HANDS—Acts 8:17,18
1 Tim. 4:14
5. RESURRECTION— John 5:28,29
1 Thess. 4:16
6. JUDGMENT— 2 Cor. 5:10
Rom. 2:1-6

QUIZ (true or false)

-
- ___ 1. Jesus became God after living a sinless life.
- ___ 2. Jesus and Lucifer were brothers created at the same time.
- ___ 3. The Bible is complete and needs no additional truth.
- ___ 4. The Bible has some errors about history.
- ___ 5. Trusting Christ and doing good works leads to salvation.
- ___ 6. God exists in three parts which make up three gods.
- ___ 7. Heaven is a literal place, Hell is a metaphor.
- ___ 8. The Bible is too hard to understand for just anybody.
- ___ 9. Jesus never claimed he was God.
- ___ 10. There are 66 books in the “cannon” of scripture.
- ___ 11. The old testament is just as important as the new.
- ___ 12. The apocrypha is not inspired or infallible.
- ___ 13. People who are not saved will spend eternity in Hell.
- ___ 14. We must never disagree on secondary issues.
- ___ 15. Jesus was 50% God and 50% man.
- ___ 16. We can never really know that we are completely saved.
- ___ 17. All Protestants agree on secondary issues.
- ___ 18. Jesus was not born of a Virgin.
- ___ 19. There is nothing wrong with setting dates for
Christ’s return.
- ___ 20. Cults don’t usually expect you to join their organization
- ___ 21. It is common for a cult to be founded by one man.
- ___ 22. Other books are considered infallible and inspired
besides the Bible.
- ___ 23. We can evolve into a lesser god in eternity.
- ___ 24. Sacraments are required for salvation.
- ___ 25. As long as we go to the right church, it doesn’t matter if we know the doctrines.
- ___ 26. The two most important things are the Bible and faith in
Christ.
- ___ 27. Jesus always existed, he was not created.

- ___ 28. Any religion is ok if you are sincere.
- ___ 29. Cults have many good and moral people as members.
- ___ 30. Hindus believe in reincarnation.

12

12