

# **A Biblical Guide to the Religions of the World**

**By Dan Jensen (2023)**

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## **Preface**

A lot of Christians, especially new ones, often feel overwhelmed by the complexity of all the different religions in the world. This is understandable as there are literally hundreds of them, and even many of these can be broken down into endless subgroups. Further, here in America, there exists a lot of religious diversity and it can seem impossible to know how to deal with all of the chaos. Even in pockets of the country like where I live (Southern Utah), where there is a dominant religion (the LDS Church), one is still often confronted with many individuals who believe all sorts of various things. The goal of this work is to help Christians see that the overarching picture is actually far simpler than it at first appears. Satan is the author of confusion and he is very good at his craft. But, God is the author of truth and always helps us sort through the confusion if we are willing to really dig into things with His help.

This work is not intended to help Christians better witness to those in other religions. That is a most noble goal of course, but that is not the specific goal of this

work. For those who do wish to better witness to others, I recommend my *A False Kind of Christianity*. It can be found on my website. I further recommend all of the apologetics works by RC Sproul. I don't agree with everything he says, but he is a great starting point for someone who is beginning to feel called to engage in apologetics for the purpose of witnessing. Through his works and my work, you will also be given many other further resources in the process. If you are interested in some very basic tips on how to witness to people in general without getting into a lot of apologetics, see my essay "Tips for Witnessing." It also can be found on my website.

The goal of this work is to help Christians who want to better understand the religious landscape of the world. This work is not intended to give extensive treatments of the various religious categories. If the reader desires that, he or she should begin to research each of the categories further on his or her own. This work is intended to help Christians understand the basics of each major category and how the world is broken up according to these categories.

As far as resources for this book go, I recommend the extensive bibliography at the end of my book *A False Kind of Christianity*. While that bibliography does not cover every religion, I do give resources to many authors who have also written on many of the various religions of the world. And the thorough section on church history will provide you with many works that interact with many of the other religions of the world, and that also provide resources to many of these other religions. On top of that, I also recommend *Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin; *World Religions and Cults* (all 3 volumes), edited by Bodie Hodge and Roger Patterson; *So What's the Difference* by Fritz Ridenour; and *The World's Religions* by William A. Young. The last work on that list is not being written from a biblical perspective as are the other three. It is being written from a neutral perspective, but it still provides a lot of solid basic information. I provide even further resources regarding the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement in my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*, where I cover this movement in more depth. I do not agree with any of these resources (all of the ones referenced in this paragraph and not only the ones on the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement) across the board, especially the way they categorize things. This is one of the primary reasons I am writing this work. But they will give you further information to dive into if you so desire.

I do want to be clear that this book is based on over 20 years of personal research into this subject. And that research includes going over census data on religion from almost every nation where data of that nature is available. Because this work is not a technical work, I cannot present and interact with that research in this work without ruining one of the key goals of this work, namely simplicity. With that said, none of what I present would be vehemently challenged by any sociologist in the field. They might disagree with some numbers and classifications here and there, but most of what I present is fairly standard facts interpreted through the lens of Historic Evangelicalism.

If you don't know what Historic or Conservative Evangelicalism is, I recommend reading my entire "basics" series. It is on my website. While I am defending Confessional Presbyterian theology throughout that series, at almost every point I make clear what is unique to Confessional Presbyterianism and what positions other true Christians hold on certain matters. Therefore, you will come away with a clear picture of what the basics are of true Christianity as a whole and not only Confessional Presbyterianism. This is an extremely important point because it may seem odd that I would title this book as a biblical guide to the world's religions when I do not reference the Bible once in this work. The title holds though, because the backdrop to this work is my "basics" series and I want to make that very clear. And in that series, Christian doctrine is defended from the Bible at every turn.

The true church has had to give itself various labels over the centuries beyond just *Christianity*, in order to distinguish itself from false groups. Today, it largely uses the terms *Evangelicalism*, *Historic Evangelicalism*, *Traditional Evangelicalism*, or *Conservative Evangelicalism*. I prefer one of the last three terms, and I do want to make it clear that I believe Bible-believing Christianity to be largely synonymous with Conservative Evangelicalism today. I also recommend reading my *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today* (this can be found on my website). This will also help you have an even better understanding of Conservative Evangelicalism as a whole.

For my decisions regarding my basic classification of things and certain population estimates given in this work, please read or review chapter 2 of the first book in my "basics" series. I also recommend reading or reviewing that chapter to understand

how I use the terms *religion*, *religious*, *worldview*, *secular*, and *spiritual*. The title of this book uses the term *religions*, as that is what people are most familiar with, but moving forward from here we will primarily (although not exclusively) use the term *worldview* for the reasons stated in chapter 2 of the book mentioned above.

I know a lot of people will struggle with the idea of labeling and categorizing people, something that is central to this work. For further information on why this is absolutely vital to do from a biblical perspective, see my essay "Addressing Heresy." It can be found on my website.

Finally, if you have never received Jesus as your God and Savior, please do so now. You do not know what can happen even in the next few moments, and so there is no time to wait. If you are not ready at this time, but become ready at any time you are reading through this book, please return to this section and receive Him. When you are ready, pray the prayer below sincerely from your heart and you will become a true Christian. It is very, very important to understand that merely saying the words of this prayer will not save you. There is no ritual, whether it be a prayer or anything else, that saves us. You must actually and sincerely mean these words or they will be of no help to you.

"Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that you are God Almighty and the only Savior. I recognize that I am a sinner and I have come to hate my sin. I ask that you come into my life so that I can have an eternal relationship with you, your Father, and your Spirit. I ask that you forgive all of my sins based on what you did on the cross and through your bodily resurrection from the dead. I ask that you cover me with your righteousness. I ask that you give me your Spirit so that you will become number one in my life, far above all else, and so that I will be completely changed. I want to live my life for you from now on, and I can only do that through your Spirit. I understand that I will continue to sin until I die or you come back, so please give me the strength through your Spirit to always seek your help and to continue to ask for your forgiveness. I now know I will spend all eternity with you. I now love you and worship you, and I am so thankful and grateful to you for saving me. Amen."

## **Chapter 1: Breaking Down the World's Worldviews**

### **The Various Categories in Relation to Belief in the Supernatural**

One of the most important aspects to understanding all worldviews is what they believe regarding the supernatural. Now some worldviews allow for various beliefs on this question within their worldview. I know that can be very confusing to many, especially to true Christians. But, it is important to understand that in some worldviews, like Buddhism for example, what one believes about the supernatural is of secondary importance to many other beliefs in the worldview. With that said, below is the basic categorization regarding belief in the supernatural. Each of the categories can then be further broken down, and this will also be seen below. I will present these categories in a list fashion first, then I will explain what all the categories and terms mean. It should be noted that these are the major categories that exist today and have existed throughout history. There are other types of belief regarding the supernatural out there, but they are all very rare today and throughout history.

Major Categories on the Question of Theism:

- 1.) Theism
- 2.) Atheism
- 3.) Agnosticism

Major Theism Categories:

- 1.) Polytheism
- 2.) Monotheism

Major Polytheism Categories:

- 1.) Basic Polytheism
- 2.) Henotheism
- 3.) Dualism

#### Major Monotheism Categories:

- 1.) Unity
- 2.) Trinitarian

#### Major Unity Categories:

- 1.) Basic Unity
- 2.) Deism
- 3.) Monism
- 4.) Pantheism
- 5.) Panentheism
- 6.) Finite Godism (the only reason I do not put *Godism* in quotes here is because the term is being used as part of an official designation for this category)

#### Major Trinitarian Categories:

- 1.) Inconsistent Trinitarianism
- 2.) Consistent Trinitarianism

The first major overarching category has to do with what one believes regarding what is known as *Theism*. This term comes from the Greek term *theos*, which meant *God*. However, it was used in the ancient world to not only describe a supreme being, but also to describe any “god” or “gods.” Because of this, many use the term differently today. I am using the term to describe anyone who believes in the supernatural. Atheism is often used to describe someone who doesn't believe in any “gods” in our society today. However, I think this is too broad a definition. Most people who claim to

be Atheists in our culture today, do not believe in any form of the supernatural and so I think we should use the term to describe all such people.

Therefore, I personally do not use the term *Atheism* to describe many in China, for example, who say that they do not believe in any “gods,” yet do believe in the power of their ancestors to perform “godlike” actions. By “godlike” I mean beings who now have supernatural powers. In true Christianity, there are no other “gods” besides God, and so He alone truly has supernatural powers. Now, of course some people performed miracles in biblical times, and some still do today. And angels were given certain supernatural abilities, and even Satan and the demons retained some of these abilities and can use them when God chooses not to stop them from using them. But, people can only perform miracles when God specifically gives them the power to do so, and angels (including fallen ones) can only do so as God allows. In other worldviews, some entities have supernatural powers and also have a fair amount of autonomy in using these powers. Such entities have “godlike” abilities in my estimation. Obviously they do not have such abilities in reality as these entities don’t even actually exist, but I am saying that many worldviews attribute what I would call “godlike” powers to certain beings, even if they don’t always call these beings “gods.”

Agnosticism is usually referred to in order to describe those who do not know whether any “gods” exist or not. I again feel that this definition is too broad as well. I think it is better to use it to describe those who do not know whether the supernatural exists or not. For those who say they do not know if “gods” exist or not, but who do believe in “godlike” entities or forces, I would place them in a different category depending on what exactly they believe about these entities or forces.

There are different types of Agnostics. There are those who say we cannot know if the supernatural exists or not, there are those that say maybe we can know but that they personally do not know at this time, there are those who say that the supernatural probably exists, and there are those who say the supernatural probably doesn’t exist. It should also be noted that most Atheists would not say that they are dogmatically certain that the supernatural doesn’t exist. Most say that they are very hesitant to be dogmatically certain about almost anything. They would say that they are quite confident that the supernatural doesn’t exist and that this is in fact their personal belief

on the matter. That may sound like Agnosticism at first, but it really isn't. Agnostics would say that they may lean in one direction or another, but would be hesitant to say that they do not believe the supernatural exists. Atheists would say that their personal belief is that the supernatural does not exist, but they aren't 100% certain either. And some Atheists are far more confident and militant in their Atheism than others.

The reason I have not further broken down these two subcategories based upon what I've said about each of them, is that the differences between different types of Atheists and different types of Agnostics are for the most part merely shades of difference, and do not constitute full-blown subcategories. Most Atheists and Agnostics would agree with me on this as well.

Three key terms that you should know regarding Atheism and Agnosticism are *Materialism*; *Naturalism*; and *Secular Humanism*. The first two terms refer to the belief systems that say that nature is all there is. Some try to make distinctions between these two terms, but in my estimation, they are essentially the same. You will often hear people talk about how someone is a very materialistic person. When the term is being used in this sense, it is being used in a non-technical sense to describe someone who is very into material things like houses; fancy clothes; cars; boats; etc. I am using the term here to describe those who do not believe in the supernatural. Because of this confusion, I generally stick with the term *Naturalism*. Because of the way I have defined things, I pretty much equate Atheists and Agnostics with Naturalism. Others don't do this though, so you should be aware of that. Obviously, Agnostics cannot be considered absolutely purist Naturalists since they are at least somewhat open to the possibility of the supernatural. But, most say that we must function as Naturalists until enough evidence has been shown to prove the supernatural.

Naturalism tends to be used more from a scientific perspective, although they of course have strong philosophical connotations. Secular Humanism is being used more from a purely philosophical and moral perspective. It is basically saying that humans alone are the measure of morality. They are saying that we don't need God, or "gods," or any form of special revelation in order to help us with morality. Humanism originally started out as a movement in the true church among Christian scholars who wanted to emphasize the fact that humans are made in God's image and so we are capable of



great things. This sentiment led to the Renaissance and to a lot of developments in a lot of areas. The problem was that too much focus on us as humans is inevitably going to lead people away from God and that is eventually what ended up happening in the Enlightenment. For more information on these topics, you can check out my book on church history if you are interested. It can be found on my website.

Secular Humanism is distinguished from Naturalism because there are some Secular Humanists who do believe in a “god” or “gods” of some sort, such as many Deists. What makes them Secular Humanists is that they do not believe that this “god” or “gods” is very involved in human affairs. They believe that “he,” “she,” or “it” got it all started and then sort of left us to figure things out for the most part. Hence, such folks are not Naturalists, but they are Secular Humanists. Almost all Naturalists though, tend to be Secular Humanists. With this made clear, for the most part, Naturalism and Secular Humanism tend to go hand in hand.

The overwhelming vast majority of Naturalists and Secular Humanists believe in the full-blown theory of evolution. It is important to note that almost all people, whether they realize this or not, believe in the theory of evolution to some extent. Almost everyone in the world today believes in what is known as *microevolution*. This refers to the changes that take place within species or kinds. When most people, like myself, say that they reject the theory of evolution, they are actually only referring to *macroevolution*. Macroevolution is the belief that all life on earth evolved from very primitive life on earth. That is why I used the term “full-blown” above. Naturalists and Secular Humanists (for the most part) though, believe that macroevolution was not guided by any supernatural force or forces. Most of the world rejects this notion. Even though most of the world, either explicitly or implicitly, believes in macroevolution, most believe that some supernatural force or forces guided the process.

Before moving forward, it should be said that I do not believe that anyone actually does not believe in the supernatural. I believe that Atheists and Agnostics only say they don't or say they are not sure. I'm not trying to be rude or judgmental, but from common sense, my experience, and especially from the Bible, I do not believe them when they make these statements.

Theism, as I have defined it, can be broken down into two further subcategories. And these are Monotheism and Polytheism. Monotheism is often used to describe those who believe in only one “god” or God. I prefer not to use the term *God* when capitalized and used alone unless it is describing the one true God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. Using the term too broadly can create a lot of confusion and problems. People in other worldviews who claim to believe in “god,” are not merely believing in God but failing to understand Him correctly. They are believing in a false “god” according to the Bible. This is not to say they don’t believe in the true God at all. All people know that the true God exists deep down. They may not know very much about Him because they have not studied the Bible, but they know He exists on a superficial level, and that they are responsible to seek Him out. When they proclaim the “god” of their worldview, they are not taking the belief they have of God deep down and defining Him as they please, rather they are rejecting Him altogether in favor of a “god” of their own choosing. Therefore, I prefer to say that Monotheists are those that believe in only one supreme being with no lesser “gods” or “godlike” entities or forces in existence, while Polytheists are those that believe in many “gods,” or many entities and/or forces with “godlike” powers.

Polytheism can be broken down into a number of further subcategories. These are: Basic Polytheism; Henotheism; and Dualism. Basic Polytheism is the belief in many “gods,” or many entities and/or forces with “godlike” powers, that are not underneath a supreme “god” or “gods” or forces. Many worldviews through the ages have believed in “gods” along these lines and have said that they are underneath a supreme being, but that we cannot know very much about this supreme being. Hence, for all practical purposes, only the lesser gods exist and this is why these worldviews can be generally classified as being under the umbrella of Basic Polytheism. And many of these worldviews did believe in a hierarchy for these “gods,” but for the most part said that the differences between the different levels of “gods” were ones of degree and not really of kind. In many of these worldviews, they believed in hundreds, if not thousands, of “gods,” but said that they only knew about their own local “gods” for the most part, and only worshiped these local “gods” as part of their worldview.

Henotheism is generally the belief in many “gods” with one higher “god” over the rest. Sometimes though, it may merely mean that the worldview believes in one supreme “god” of this universe or of a specific area. And sometimes it refers to the belief in one main “god” that they focus upon in their worldview, but who may not actually be higher than the rest of the gods. For example, the LDS church teaches that there are technically higher “gods” out there beyond the one that is focused upon, but the LDS Church still falls under the umbrella of Henotheism because they are Polytheists who primarily focus on the “heavenly father” “god” of their worldview.

Dualism is the belief that there exists two primary “gods” or forces that compete against each other. In some cases, these “gods” or forces are equal, while in some cases these “gods” or forces are not equal but are fairly close to each other in power. Often in these worldviews, there are many lesser “gods,” but these lesser “gods” are in some manner subject to one or both of the higher “gods” or forces.

Monotheism can be broken down into two further subcategories. These are Unity and Trinitarian. Unity refers to the belief that the one supreme being exists as one person or force, while the Trinitarian belief is that the one supreme being exists in three persons. For a fuller explanation of the concept of Trinity, see chapter 1 of the second book of my “basics” series. It should also be said that the Trinitarian belief strongly distinguishes the supreme being from the universe or all other reality.

The Unity category can be further broken down into a number of subcategories. They are: Basic Unity; Deism; Monism; Pantheism; Panentheism; and Finite Godism. Basic Unity refers to the belief in only one supreme being who is infinite and strongly distinguished from the universe or all other reality, which they say he or she or it created out of nothing. However, this category is clear that this supreme being is intricately involved in the creation at every point. Now, as true Christians we would argue that the supreme beings of these other worldviews are not actually infinite because it is impossible to truly be infinite as one “god” who is one person. I cannot fully explain why that is the case here as that is somewhat complex, but for now it is important to make that clear. I do fully explain this point in my *A False Kind of Christianity*. You may say, “Well of course their supreme beings are not infinite, because they don’t even exist!” That of course is true, but that is not what I am driving at here. I am saying that even in

concept these alleged supreme beings are not actually infinite. With all that said, those in this category are emphatic that their “god” is the only supreme being with no lesser “godlike” beings or forces in existence, and that he or she or it is infinite.

Deism is the belief in only one supreme being who is infinite and strongly distinguished from the universe or all other reality, but they say that this supreme being created everything and got everything rolling and then sort of sat back and allowed everything to run on its own. Some Deists believe that their supreme being is more involved than others. Some even believe that he or she or it will reward or punish us in an afterlife or something similar. But all Deists agree that their supreme being is not very involved in the created order for the most part.

Monism is the belief that all is one. Sometimes this label is used to describe those who do not believe in the supernatural, but who still emphasize the interconnectedness of all things. This viewpoint was far more common among certain ancient philosophers, but it is rather rare today and I would classify such people as being one somewhat rare shade of Atheism. More commonly, and this is the only way I use the term, Monism is used to describe those who believe that everything is one in a force-like sense. This type of approach to the question of the supernatural is very common in many Eastern worldviews. Many Monists do not believe that the physical world is real. They believe it is an illusion and that all is one as spirit. But Monists, at least as I use the term, are against describing reality as being a “god” in any sense. With that said, they still believe that the one has supernatural powers that we can tap into. In this sense, they believe in the supernatural and that the one is the supreme being in some manner of speaking.

This does become tricky though, because if all is one, then it seems like there can be no supernatural because there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural, they are all one. Most Monists seem to be saying that we can tap into the one in ways that appear to us as resulting in phenomena that are not part of our normal experience. In this very qualified sense, they can be said to believe in the supernatural. Many worldviews that would fall into the Basic Polytheist category have said that all is one. But because they believe that there are many “gods” within the one, I would not call them Monists as I am defining that category.

Many sociologists would not sharply distinguish between Monism and Pantheism (we will discuss Pantheism in a moment). One can make good arguments for this position and so you should be aware of it. It may also seem odd to place Monism within the general category of Theism if they do not believe in any “god” or “gods,” as I have defined the category. One could argue this because as stated earlier, the term *Theism* comes from the word *theos*, which originally meant “god” in Greek. With all that stated, it is important to remember that I believe the term *Theism* has evolved more to mean belief in the supernatural and that is how I use the term.

Pantheism is the belief that all is one as well, however they would say that this one is “god.” Yet, many Pantheists would not necessarily think of this “god” as personal. But, they would still say that this “god” is to be worshiped. I know that sounds odd because technically we ourselves are part of this one “god,” but that is the belief. Many Pantheists also believe that the physical world is not real, being only an illusion and that all is one as spirit. Some would classify certain people and groups as Pantheist even though they believe in multiple “gods.” This is because these people and groups say that all is their one “god,” but at the same time this “god” manifests himself or herself or itself as lesser “gods” that can also be worshiped. These people and groups would say though, that when you are worshiping these “gods,” you are technically worshiping the one “god.” I think it is better and more consistent to classify such people and groups as holding to Henotheism, but who have a lot in common with Pantheism. But, you should be aware of the nuance that technically these groups only believe in one “god” on some level.

Panentheism is the belief that all is in the supreme being in some sense. It is important to understand that this is not always understood to be in an overly literal sense. So, for instance, you have some Panentheists who do believe that the universe is literally within their supreme being the way water is in a water bottle. Most Panentheists articulate their belief in a far more complex and nuanced fashion. Finite Godism is the belief that there exists only one supreme being with no lesser “gods” or “godlike” entities or forces, but that this “god” is finite rather than infinite. It should be said that most Deists, Pantheists, and Panentheists, do describe their supreme being as being infinite. However, this is not found across the board or as emphatically as is the

case with the Basic Unity category. And of course, we as true Christians would say that these supreme beings of theirs are clearly not infinite even in concept.

The Trinitarian category can be broken down into two further subcategories: Consistent Trinitarian and Inconsistent Trinitarian. The first refers to Biblical Christianity, what is today known as Conservative Evangelicalism. The second category refers to those who believe in only one supreme Trinitarian being with no lesser “gods” or “godlike” entities or forces in existence, but who hold to this very inconsistently. That is, they have overt internal contradictions within their worldview. There are many worldviews that fall under this umbrella, but the two biggest are Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Each of them are Trinitarian, but each says that they believe the Bible to be the word of God and yet turn around and deny core teachings of the Bible. Now to clarify, many Liberal Protestants are Inconsistent Trinitarian as well, and Liberal Protestantism is larger than Eastern Orthodoxy. However, Trinitarianism is not universal in Liberal Protestantism as it is in Eastern Orthodoxy.

### **The Ten Major Worldviews**

Below is a list of the ten major worldviews we will cover in this work in list fashion. After this list, I will make some key points, and then in subsequent chapters we will look at each of them more closely.

- 1.) Islam
- 2.) Roman Catholicism
- 3.) Hinduism
- 4.) Buddhism
- 5.) Nature Religion
- 6.) No Religion
- 7.) Liberal Protestantism
- 8.) Conservative Evangelicalism
- 9.) Eastern Orthodoxy
- 10.) The Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement

As I made clear in the second chapter of my first book in my “basics” series, the current world population is about 8 billion people. There are many, many other smaller worldviews than the ones I listed above. However, all of these combined only make up about 100 million people. That makes up only about 1% of the world’s population. 99% of the world’s population falls under one of the ten basic categories listed above. Further, the top 4 categories listed above account for almost 75% of the world’s population. Therefore, if you can have a very basic understanding of only these 10 worldviews, you will understand the basic beliefs of the vast majority of the world’s people. If you only remember the top 4, you will still have a very solid idea of where most people of the world fall as far as worldview is concerned. As said earlier, this is not nearly as complicated a topic as most believe.

I know many of you may be interested in some of the worldviews that are well-known in our culture that are not on this list. Worldviews such as Judaism; the LDS Church; the Jehovah’s Witnesses; and Seventh-day Adventism. I cover Judaism at the end of this work, and the rest are covered in my book on church history (chapter 10).

Next, we will look at where those top ten worldviews are located on the earth. If you are not very familiar with the basics of world geography, I recommend taking a pause here and looking into that more. You do not need to know very much to benefit from the rest of this section. You do not need to know every nation; or state; or major city; or major body of water. All you need to know are the major regions of the world, such as Northern America (not to be confused with the entire continent of North America; I would place Canada, the United States, and Mexico in this category); Central America; the West Indies; South America; Western Europe; Eastern Europe; Russia; the Middle East; North Africa; Central Africa; Southern Africa (not to be confused with the nation that is South Africa); Northeast Asia (in this category, I would place Mongolia; China; Japan; and Korea; some would classify things a little differently though); India and Nepal; Southeast Asia; Australia; and Polynesia. It should be noted that many do not include Turkey and the countries that end in *stan* as part of the Middle East, but I do. Again, you don’t need to know every country in these regions, but knowing some of the major ones would be a good idea. This study can be completed in less than two hours.

Islam is mostly found in the Middle East; North Africa; Central Africa; and in Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Most countries in Southern Africa have a small Islamic presence, with the exceptions of Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique. There are also a fair number of Muslims in India as well. Muslims are also sprinkled throughout Europe through a great deal of migration from the Middle East and North Africa. Roman Catholicism is mostly found in Mexico; Central America; the West Indies; South America; the Philippines; Central Africa; Southern Africa; and Polynesia. There are a fair number of Catholics in Canada; the U.S.; Western Europe; Australia; China; India; and South Korea as well. Hinduism is mostly found in India and Nepal. There are also strong minority populations of Hindus in a number of other countries, but the overwhelming vast majority live in those two countries. Buddhism is mostly found in China; Mongolia; Japan; South Korea; and Southeast Asia.

Nature Religion is mostly found in China; Vietnam; and Japan. Many who practice Nature Religion are found sprinkled throughout South America; Central Africa; and Southern Africa as well. No Religion is mostly found in Canada; the U.S.; Europe; Australia; Russia; Mongolia; China; North Korea; and South Korea. It is also sprinkled throughout the globe, with the exception of large chunks of the Middle East and North Africa. Liberal Protestantism is mostly found in Canada; the U.S.; Western Europe; Central Africa; Southern Africa; and Australia. It is also sprinkled throughout the West Indies and Polynesia. Conservative Evangelicalism is mostly found in the U.S.; the West Indies; Brazil; Nigeria; Kenya; Democratic Republic of the Congo; South Africa; China; India; South Korea; and Polynesia. But Conservative Evangelicalism is sprinkled all throughout the globe. The only places where this tends to not be the case is in certain parts of the Middle East and North Africa. Eastern Orthodoxy is mostly found in Russia and Eastern Europe. Finally, the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement is mostly found in the U.S.; Central America; the West Indies; South America; Central Africa; Southern Africa; China; India; South Korea; Australia; and Polynesia.

### **The Problems of Diversity and Nominalism**



Diversity is a good thing. God clearly loves diversity. So, I'm not saying that diversity is a problem in most areas. However, when trying to classify the world's worldviews, it does create difficulties. This is because many people within a given worldview do not agree with how that worldview should be defined and classified. I discuss this reality in more detail in the second chapter to the first book in my "basics" series. I recommend reading or reviewing that chapter. With that said, it should be noted that all of the descriptions I give in the subsequent chapters describe the beliefs of the overwhelming number of those who claim to be part of the worldview under examination. The only exception to this is the last of the 10 worldviews, found at the end of the last chapter. I must define it according to the Bible and that will become clearer when we get to that chapter. With all that made clear, you should note that there are minorities of people who hold different beliefs from the mainstream views in the other 9 worldviews. It may even be the case that many of these minority groups should be classified as their own distinct worldview and placed within the 1% of people who do not fall under the top ten worldviews as far as numbers go.

Another problem for classification purposes is that of syncretism. I have discussed syncretism at a number of points in my other works. This is the blending of religions and it is very common. You should be aware of this very pervasive phenomenon. With that clear, most people do have a predominant worldview that guides them. And I believe that it is best to classify people according to this worldview as much as possible. I discussed this concerning Buddhism in my basics series. But, it should be noted that many Muslims and many people who claim some form of "Christianity," especially in parts of Africa, blend their Islam or their version of "Christianity" with forms of Nature Religion.

These folks tend to be among groups that are only recently moving away from the indigenous religions that have dominated their geographic region for thousands of years. With that made clear, most of these people are Muslim or their version of "Christian" in the sense that Islam or their version of "Christianity" is most how they identify themselves and see the world. And the former indigenous practices tend to be incorporated into their lives in a secondary sense. At this point you may ask, "So, are you saying that you would never accept as a brother or sister in Christ anyone who

engages in these indigenous practices?” No, I’m not. For example, a true Conservative Evangelical may sacrifice an animal to Jesus as a way of saying thanks to Him. I think such a practice is deeply unbiblical, and is reflective of an unhealthy syncretism, but I cannot say that such a person is not saved. However, if someone claims to be a “Christian,” and this person has been “walking” with “Jesus” for a while, and he or she still consults witch doctors, I’m sorry, that is someone who has not actually given his or her life to the Lord.

Next, we must address the problem of nominalism. Nominalism describes those who claim to be part of a particular worldview, but they do not live by the worldview. They are religious, but secular. And what often happens with such people, is because they are fairly removed from their worldview, they are often ignorant of a lot of what their worldview teaches. Hence, they often believe in certain things that go against their worldview, and they often vote in ways that are contrary to their worldview as well. So, the question becomes: should we still classify them as being part of their claimed worldview or not? In most cases, we should. This is because most of them know at least a fair amount about their worldview, and still implicitly believe what their worldview teaches across the board. What I mean by this, is that when someone points out to them what their worldview officially teaches, they will usually say that they do in fact believe such and such, they were merely unaware of that teaching. I’ve often talked to ignorant members of the LDS church, or Roman Catholics, as two examples, who will say that they do not believe this or that until I show them that this is what their worldview officially teaches, and then they quickly change their minds. Such people should still be classified as being part of their claimed worldview for this reason.

With all of that made clear, there are those who plainly do not belong to the worldview they claim, despite their claim. For instance, there are Atheists that claim to be part of Eastern Orthodoxy for cultural reasons. But such people are clearly Atheists and are not truly part of Eastern Orthodoxy. Those that fall into this category are quite rare though. Most people who are nominal regarding their worldview don’t want to follow their worldview, but at the same time still feel a connection to it. This can seem very odd to true Christians. In true Christianity, if you are not actually following Jesus, this shows that you are not a true Christian. This however, is not the case in most other worldviews.

Most other worldviews make a distinction between good Catholics and bad Catholics, or good Muslims and bad Muslims, as two examples.

Hence, even when taking into account minority groups and the many nominal people in the world, the overall number projections for each worldview are not terribly affected. You should still be aware of these realities though, as you may come across someone who claims to be Catholic, for example, but has all sorts of odd beliefs. If you are going to witness to someone like that, it is a good idea to explain to him or her what Catholicism actually teaches and then go from there. If he or she does in fact hold to Catholic beliefs without realizing it, you can show him or her where those beliefs contradict the Bible, the very Bible the Catholic Church says it believes. If it turns out this person is really not Catholic at all, you will need to go off the beliefs he or she does believe in.

Don't ever tell anyone what he or she does or doesn't believe. You can certainly gently show inconsistencies in his or her beliefs, but if someone says that he or she believes in something, it is best not to say, "No, you don't. You said you are Catholic and that's not what Catholics believe. So, you don't actually believe that." Allow the person to fully explain what he or she believes, show them any inconsistencies with what he or she is saying, and then after all of this, you can try to explain to him or her how his or her final beliefs don't match the facts. Obviously this can only be done by those who have studied some apologetics. I include all this information here so that those who do wish to engage in that study will have some practical advice, and so that everyone knows that the basic numbers I give for each of these worldviews are still mostly intact while still taking into account that many, many people are not die-hard and/or knowledgeable followers of their claimed worldview.

The final thing to say in this section before moving forward is that some very nominal people still attend church or synagogue or go to their mosque, etc. This can be very confusing sometimes as it would seem that such people are not nominal. It is true that most nominal people do not attend religious services very often. But, there are exceptions. Some will attend fairly regularly, but will not be very engaged with the service or the teachings presented. This is why it is always good to get to know someone before trying to classify him or her. You may have a professing Catholic, for

example, who often goes to mass for cultural reasons, but does not know or care very much about Catholic theology. Such a person may indeed be a nominal Catholic, but such a person may actually technically be a part of the No Religion category without realizing it. This person may argue that point with you if he or she is convinced that he or she is Catholic, but if this person is insistent that he or she does not believe in Catholic doctrine after being shown what the Catholic Church officially teaches, this is someone who is part of the No Religion category who simply mistakenly believes that he or she is Catholic.

### **“Jesus”**

The final item we need to discuss in this chapter is the fact that almost all people in the world today have heard of Jesus and seek to believe Him on some level. The problem is that other than true Christians, people demand that “Jesus” conform to how they want “him” to be. Hence, they are not actually believing in Jesus, but are believing in a pretend “Jesus” of their own making. One of the most important things to understand about this reality for the purposes of categorization, is the difference between someone who claims to be a “Christian” and someone who says that he or she loves or admires “Jesus.” Someone in the latter category should not be classified under one of the many groups that claims to be “Christian.” Someone in the former category should and sometimes you have to get to know a person a little bit in order to know where to place him or her. So, for example, where I live in Southern Utah, there are a lot of Indian Reservations nearby. They are scattered throughout Southern Utah, Southern Nevada, and Northern Arizona. Hence, while they are a minority, there are still quite a few American Indians where I live. Many of them are orthodox, true, Bible-believing Christians. Most of them however, have a broad mixture of beliefs. Many mix elements of the Bible with LDS theology and older American Indian forms of Nature Religion. Almost all though, say they love and/or admire “Jesus.” Across the United States, most American Indians mix elements of the Bible with Catholic theology and older American Indian forms of Nature Religion.

Those that do not claim to be “Christian” should in most cases be classified under Nature Religion. And those that do are usually Liberal Protestant or Roman Catholic whether they realize this or not. They have a Liberal Protestant or Catholic outlook and incorporate older American Indian forms of religion (and around here often elements of LDS theology as well) into their “Christianity.” You may ask, “Who really cares. What difference does it make how we categorize them?” It makes a difference in two key ways. The first is that it helps Christians better understand the worldviews of the world when at times it can seem like utter chaos. The second is that it can be very helpful when witnessing to such people. How one goes about refuting Nature Religion is not the same as how one would go about refuting Liberal Protestantism or Catholicism.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of the Top Worldviews Part 1**

### **Islam**

Unlike most worldviews, where the name given to the followers is derived from the name for the worldview, the followers of Islam are known as *Muslims*. Many Christians used to call this worldview *Muhammadanism*, and the followers *Muhammadans*. However, this is seen as very disrespectful by Muslims and so these terms should be avoided. The term *Islam* can loosely be translated as *peace*. The term *Muslim* can loosely be translated as “one who submits to Allah.” *Allah* is the Arabic name for their “god” in their worldview. However, this is the name all Muslims use across the world, even when speaking another language. It should be noted though, that other worldviews, including true Christians, use the term to describe their “god” or God (in the case of true Christians) if they speak Arabic. And this can cause confusion. Because the term is so different from the term *God* in English, I will use it here to describe the false “god” of Islam. Before moving into the meat of the description of this worldview, I do want to say that a lot of Christians have a very negative view of this worldview because of what happened on 9/11. But you should know that the vast

majority of Muslims around the world are extremely nice; polite; kind; hard working; family-oriented; and good people. There are of course bad Muslims, and there are very dark spots to Muslim history, but that is the case with all worldviews.

Islam was started by Muhammad. His full name was Muhammad ibn Abdullah, but he is generally known as Muhammad. Muhammad was born in AD 570, in the city of Mecca. Mecca was in the land of Arabia at the time, what today is part of Saudi Arabia. His father died when he was still in the womb, and his mother died when he was only six. Therefore, he was primarily raised by his uncle, who was a prominent man in Mecca. Mecca and Arabia in general were primarily Polytheist. But there were Jews, true Christians, and heretical “Christians” around as well; all groups Muhammad had seen and known. Many true Christians at the time were placing far too much focus on Mary, and this was a precursor to the later full-blown worship of Mary that came about within Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, something that is alive and well today. Muhammad was also exposed to this reality as well.

Muhammad eventually married a woman named Khadija, who had a strong influence upon his life. Muhammad developed a strong hatred towards Polytheism and would often go to a cave to pray. On one of these occasions, he was met by a being who became very aggressive with him. Most true Christians, myself included, believe this was in all likelihood a demon. Muhammad said that it was the angel Gabriel, and that is what Muslims believe to this day. But Muhammad himself was very unsure about this encounter, and his wife and his wife’s cousin had to convince him that the messenger was from Allah and that he was a true prophet. They were successful.

Muhammad started to preach his new religion and the “revelations” he was receiving in Mecca. But, he and his few followers were not appreciated in Mecca and were forced to flee to Medina. In Medina, Muhammad and his new faith flourished and he became the leader of the city. This led to a number of battles with tribal groups and Mecca itself. Eventually, Muhammad was able to capture Mecca. Until his death in 632, Islam spread like wildfire throughout Arabia. After his death, it continued to conquer land throughout the Middle East and North Africa. It became a powerful cultural force in much of the world during the Middle Ages. Today, it has around 2 billion followers, and from a biblical perspective it is the largest worldview on the planet.

According to Muslims, around 621 Muhammad flew on a strange creature in his famous night journey, from Mecca to Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, he then ascended into heaven where he discussed with Allah the details of prayer. The Al Aqsa Mosque commemorates where Muhammad came upon arriving in Jerusalem, and the Dome of the Rock commemorates the rock from which he ascended into heaven. Both of these stand upon the Temple Mount, where God originally had Solomon build His Temple.

Two primary groups developed within Islam after Muhammad's death: the Sunnis (85-90% of all Muslims today) and the Shia (10-15% of all Muslims today). A small, but influential group are the Sufi, which make up a mystical form of Islam. Sunni Muslims accept the first four caliphs as the rightful successors to Muhammad. Shia believe that Muhammad appointed his son-in-law to be his successor. Shia Muslims are mostly found in Iran and Iraq today. There are Shia Muslims sprinkled throughout the rest of the Islamic world, but most of the rest of the Islamic world is Sunni.

As stated, Allah is "god" in Islam, and the key doctrine of the worldview is tawhid, which is the absolute unity of "god." Any form of Polytheism is the sin of shirk. The doctrine of the Trinity is considered a form of the sin of shirk. The over emphasis on Mary is considered the sin of shirk. Hence, Islam strongly advocates for the Basic Unity view. Muslims believe in absolute predestination; Allah has ordained all that comes to pass. Confessional Presbyterians like myself, as well as many other Christians, believe that God has ordained all that comes to pass. But it should be said that many Muslim theologians are not always careful to say that Allah only allows evil for his purposes.

According to Muslims, Allah has revealed himself to many prophets throughout history, many of whom wrote scripture. The Torah (the name given to the Old Testament by Jews) is known as *the Tawrat*, and the Gospels are known as *the Injil*. One of these prophets was "Jesus," who was born of the virgin Mary, and will return to the earth. "Jesus," according to Muslims is nothing more than a great prophet though; "he" is not "god" or the "son of god." According to Islam, Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet and only his revelations cannot be corrupted. His revelations were memorized, and then written down, and then collected to make up the Koran. The Koran is Allah's final word and is incorruptible and eternal. It contains 114 chapters, known as *suras*. Muslims also use the Hadith, which is the written record of Muhammad's life, as an

authoritative guide and as an aid in the interpretation of the Koran. The Hadith is made up of sunnah, which are sayings, traditions, and practices from Muhammad. It is important to understand though, according to Muslims, the Hadith is not the word of Allah. Many Muslims also believe in Sharia law, which is the legal code developed by Muslim legal scholars. It prohibits pork and alcohol.

Muslims also believe in angels. Gabriel and Michael are mentioned by name. Jinn are sort of like demons, but not exactly. There is a belief in Satan, but it is not identical to that found in Christianity. Muslims believe in a day of judgment, and in heaven and hell. Salvation is through being a good Muslim. Koran recitation is also a key practice in Islam. Imams in Islam are the leaders, often the worship leaders in the mosques (the places for Muslim worship services). However, the term *Imam*, especially in Sunni Islam, can be used in a broad sense and is not the equivalent of pastor in Christianity.

Muslims believe in what is known as the 5 Pillars of Islam. They are: 1.) The Shahadah; 2.) Prayer; 3.) Charity; 4.) Fasting; and 5.) Pilgrimage. The Shahadah is the Muslim creed. It states, "I testify that none deserves worship except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is his messenger." Muslims must pray 5 times a day, facing the Kaaba. Minor ritual purification is required before these prayers. These are often done at mosques, but they don't have to be done in a mosque, and mosques serve a much larger function than these prayers. Mosques today usually have a minaret (a type of tower, used for various purposes [but usually most specifically for the call to prayer, the adhan], that is either built into or is adjacent to the mosque). All Muslims that can afford it are required to give 2.5% of their annual income. Fasting from dawn until sunset is required every day during the month of Ramadan. All Muslims that are able must make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once. This includes walking around the Kaaba seven times. The Kaaba is thought to be a place Abraham built as a place of worship. The Kaaba is surrounded by the Great Mosque in Mecca. Inside the Kaaba is the Black Stone, which is said to go back to Adam and Eve, and is set in a silver case.

### **Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy**



Because Eastern Orthodoxy is so similar to Roman Catholicism, we will be combining it with our treatment of Roman Catholicism here. Both of these groups were true churches at one time, therefore they do have a number of similarities with Biblical Christianity. Both believe the Bible to be the word of “god;” both believe in the basic attributes of “god;” both believe in the “Trinity;” both believe that “god” created everything from nothing; both believe in some form of predestination and providence; both believe in angels and demons; both believe that “god” created humans as male and female in “his” image; both believe that “Jesus” exists as one person with two natures; both believe that “Jesus” was born of the virgin Mary; both believe that “Jesus” performed the most astonishing miracles the world has ever seen; both believe “Jesus” died on the cross for our sins; both believe that “Jesus” was raised from the dead; both believe that “Jesus” ascended into heaven; both believe “Jesus” will return; both believe in the final judgment; both believe in heaven and hell; both believe in the new earth; both believe in the 10 Commandments; both believe that abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are deeply sinful; both believe that sex outside of heterosexual marriage is sinful; and both believe in the importance of prayer and Bible reading.

Despite these similarities that are holdovers from when these two organizations were true churches, both of them have strayed badly from the Bible, and both hold to two doctrines that are overtly heretical. Thus, they are unfortunately apostate and false churches. They are other worldviews, and are not part of true Christianity today. Because of all that has just been said and the fact that both are Trinitarian, they are both therefore firmly in the Inconsistent Trinitarian category as stated earlier. I say much more about the history of these movements in the final chapter of the first book in my “basics” series, and I say a great deal more about them in my book on church history.

Both of them have elaborate doctrines of church government that go well beyond what the Bible teaches in my strong estimation. At the top of the Catholic system is the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. Eastern Orthodoxy is broken down into sub-churches. The biggest of these are: the Russian Orthodox Church; the Romanian Orthodox Church; the Greek Orthodox Church; and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Both add books to the Bible that in my strong estimation are not Scripture. Both add many sacraments to baptism and the Lord’s Supper that are in my strong estimation not sacraments. Both

believe in praying to the “Saints,” something that is horribly unbiblical in my very strong estimation. And Roman Catholicism believes in Purgatory, something that they say the overwhelming vast majority of “Christians” must undergo after death before they can be let into heaven to purify them of their sins. Again, in my strong estimation, this is a terribly unbiblical teaching.

As bad as all of the above doctrines are, none of them quite rise to the level of heresy. There exists some faint biblical evidence for each of them, and many great Christians in the Middle Ages believed in some of these teachings. The next two teachings we will examine do rise to the level of heresy. They represent blatant denials of the authority of the Bible despite the fact that both groups claim to believe the Bible. These two teachings are the worship of Mary and the belief that we are saved by faith and good works. You may think it harsh to condemn these worldviews when they have so much in common with Biblical Christianity. But the gospel is that we are saved by faith alone in the work of Christ alone. See the three chapters on salvation in the second book of my “basics” series to see that this is absolutely the case. And Paul made it abundantly clear that to deny the gospel is to condemn one’s self (Galatians 1). You have no right to say that God is wrong here. Now to be clear and fair, both groups deny that they worship Mary. With that said, the titles they give to her and their daily practice contradicts this claim. See chapter 2 of the second book in my “basics” series, where I point out all of the titles that are used for Mary. Finally, Roman Catholicism is the second largest worldview on the planet from a biblical perspective at about 1.5 billion people. And Eastern Orthodoxy is the ninth largest at about 200 million people.

## **Hinduism**

The seeds of Hinduism trace back to around 2000 BC, around what is today India. The first period of development is the pre-Vedic period. This was primarily the period of the Dravidians. The Vedic period was from around 1500 to 800 BC after the Dravidians were conquered by the Aryans. The post-Vedic period (approximately 800-500 BC) marks the transition from Vedic religion to full Hinduism. There are

denominations (sort of), movements, and schools of thought within Hinduism, but there is heavy overlap and often not clear lines of demarcation as in other worldviews.

Hinduism is basically Henotheist, but it is not a simple form of Henotheism at all. Hinduism believes in a supreme being that is known as Brahman. But Brahman can be thought of in a Pantheist sense, a Panentheist sense, or other senses as well. Hinduism allows for freedom on this question, but most Hindus lean in a Pantheist direction. Not a full Pantheist direction because there are hordes of lesser “gods” in Hinduism, but regarding Brahman itself, most see it in a Pantheist fashion. With all that made clear, all Hindus believe in the supreme Brahman and in many lesser “gods” as well. Now most Hindus believe that these lesser “gods” are merely manifestations of Brahman, so there is a sense in which there is only truly Brahman for most Hindus. However, I would still classify Hinduism as basically being Henotheist, because for all practical purposes the many “gods” are worshiped and distinguished from each other and are only pointing to one or more aspects of Brahman.

The primary scriptures of Hinduism are known as the Vedic literature, which are said to have been revealed to seers (seers are loosely like prophets). The Vedic literature is broken down into many categories, the most important being the Upanishads, which are the Vedic literature focused on meditation, philosophy, and spiritual knowledge. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most popular works in Hinduism, and is regarded by many Hindus to be scripture.

In the Pantheist tradition regarding Brahman, most say all is maya, which means that all, including evil, is an illusion. According to these Hindus, all is Brahman and Brahman the infinite is manifested as the illusory finite world. Those not in this tradition, would still say that the finite world is the finite manifestation of the infinite Brahman. All Hindu traditions place a major emphasis on what is known as *atman*. This term roughly means *soul*. The Atman of Brahman is the ultimate soul of all things. It is often said, “Atman is Brahman, the soul of the world is the soul of The One.”

The Purusharthas are the 4 goals of human life according to Hindus. They are: 1.) Dharma; 2.) Artha; 3.) Kama; and 4.) Moksha. Dharma refers to ethics or righteousness and is the chief of the 4. Artha refers to the pursuit of wealth for the good of society. Kama refers to pleasure. Moksha refers to the relief from sorrow, suffering,

and samsara (the birth-rebirth cycle). Karma (not to be confused with Kama) is closely connected with Moksha, as it is seen that one's Karma largely determines one's next life. Karma is sort of a "reap what you sow" principle that is always operative in the world. There are three primary paths to Moksha: 1.) Dharma; 2.) Jnana (the path of knowledge); and 3.) Bhakti (the path of passionate devotion to one or more of the gods). Most choose the last option. Many elaborate worship practices are associated with trying to fulfill these 4 goals, especially Moksha (particularly if one chooses Bhakti). The priests or Brahmins play a crucial role in facilitating these worship practices.

In Hinduism, all living things have an atman, which is the true self. The self is believed to be eternal and this is why it passes on to another incarnation after death or is absorbed into Brahman through Moksha. One can be reincarnated into an animal or insect. Cows are not gods (despite that misconception among many Westerners), but Hindus are vegetarians and consider the cow to be a symbol of life. Therefore, cows must be protected. There are many "gods" and "goddesses" within Hinduism and these are seen by most Hindus as manifestations of Brahman. The two most famous "gods" are Vishnu and Shiva. The two most famous "goddesses" are Durga and Lakshmi.

The caste system is also very important in Hinduism. There are 4 classes. They are: 1.) the teachers and priests; 2.) warriors and kings; 3.) farmers and servants; and 4.) laborers. Outside of the caste system are the untouchables. Untouchables have traditionally been treated horribly within Hinduism. The caste system is often thought of as highly connected to reincarnation and karma. Today, there are approximately 1.3 billion Hindus. Hinduism from a biblical perspective is the third largest worldview on earth today.

## **Buddhism**

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama. He was born around 480 BC, and died around 400 BC. He was born and raised either in or near Nepal. According to Buddhists, he was a prince and his father wanted to shield him from human suffering so that he would become a great king and not a religious leader. But he eventually saw the "four sights" and this changed everything. The four sights were an old man; a diseased

man; a corpse; and an ascetic (who inspired him). Then he renounced his life in pursuit of truth. First he studied the Upanishads, then engaged in extreme asceticism. Neither brought him happiness. So he sat under a tree for 40 days until he reached enlightenment or Nirvana. He was later called *the Buddha* because of this experience. Gautama rejected most of Hindu theology and was strongly rejected as a heretic by the Hindu leaders. But he did strongly retain the belief in reincarnation and the need to be liberated from this reality. Because of this, Buddhism retains certain key terms from Hinduism, so make sure you have read the section on Hinduism above in order to properly understand this section.

There are three primary types of Buddhism: 1.) Theravada (formerly known as Hinayana); 2.) Mahayana; and 3.) Tantrism. Theravada teaches that only monks can attain Nirvana; the lay people can only hope to be reincarnated as monks. Mahayana teaches that anyone can attain Nirvana, and that those who do, become “gods” and saviors, who can aid people on the Eightfold Path. Tantrism is also known as Tibetan Buddhism because of its strong ties to that region. It is a blending of the first two types, along with additional occult practices (for more information on the occult, see my book on church history [pages 163-164]). It is dominant in Tibet and in many parts of Nepal. A very popular form of Mahayana in the West is Zen. This form emphasizes meditation and looking within because everyone is the Buddha.

The 4 Noble Truths are the foundation of Buddhism. They are: 1.) Suffering is universal in the realm of samsara; 2.) This suffering comes from desire; 3.) This suffering can end by the letting go of desire; and 4.) The Eightfold Path is the way to the cessation of desire and suffering. The Eightfold Path represents the Middle Way between asceticism and decadence. The Eightfold Path is: 1.) right viewpoint; 2.) right aspiration; 3.) right speech; 4.) right behavior; 5.) right occupation; 6.) right effort; 7.) right mindfulness; and 8.) right meditation.

Buddhism allows for a lot of freedom on the question of how to exactly categorize and understand the supernatural. This question was not seen as being of paramount importance to Gautama. Many say that he was essentially an Atheist or Agnostic, but that isn't actually the case, at least not as I have defined those terms. He certainly believed in the supernatural insofar as he believed in samsara and reincarnation. With

that said, it is true that regarding the question of a supreme being or “gods,” he said he didn’t know and that it did not matter all that much to his teaching. This is why Buddhists today embrace some form of Theism, but the form very much depends on the individual Buddhist or school of Buddhism. Gautama himself can be loosely defined as a Monist. This is because he did emphasize the interconnectedness of all things and believed in the supernatural to some extent. He would have said that samsara and reincarnation are components of the greater whole.

Because of the relative looseness of Buddhism (although it should be said that in certain parts of the world, many Buddhists are every bit as rigid and dogmatic as those found in other worldviews), many combine Buddhism with other worldviews, or at least other elements from other worldviews. This is why, as I make clear in the first book of my “basics” series, that classifying certain Buddhists can be tricky. Many people, especially in China, are basically Buddhist in their worldview, but may not claim that label on a census or survey. This is because they blend so many other elements into their worldview. Many would claim to be Atheists because they do not believe in a supreme being or in any “gods,” but would not be Atheist as our culture understands that term or as I have defined it. In my estimation, a person should be classified as a Buddhist if that worldview forms the backdrop for most of his or her beliefs. And that applies to a lot of people in China who are not formal adherents of Buddhism. This does not mean that if you are witnessing to someone who falls into this category that you should call him or her a Buddhist to his or her face if he or she does not want to be called a Buddhist. We should be as polite as possible and avoid offending people as much as possible (the “as possible” statements here are important because the gospel by its nature offends people and I’m not saying you should avoid that). With that said, if someone falls into this category, you should know what you are dealing with, and that is a person who for all intents and purposes is basically a Buddhist.

When classifying things in this manner, Buddhism is the fourth largest worldview on the planet, making up approximately 1 billion people. Even if we only go by those who are explicit adherents of the worldview, we are still looking at anywhere between 500-700 million people worldwide. Therefore, having a basic understanding of the

worldviews covered in this chapter provides you with a basic understanding of the worldviews of almost 75% of the world's population.

### **Chapter 3: Overview of the Top Worldviews Part 2**

#### **Nature Religion**

Nature Religion refers to the worldview that is made up of all the various groups that worship nature as their primary form of worship. In the ancient world, Jews and Christians referred to this worldview as *Paganism*. Many people today call this worldview *Folk Religion* or the many subgroups *Folk Religions*. Others call this worldview *Indigenous Religion* or the many subgroups *Indigenous Religions*. Now it must be said that almost all worldviews use elements of nature in their worship. Even true Christianity uses water, bread, and wine or grape juice in the sacraments as part of our worship of God. The key difference though, is that we are not worshipping those things themselves, but are only using them as aids in our worship of God. It should also be said that many worldviews or individuals within certain worldviews also worship elements of nature as part of their religious or spiritual practices. However, these worldviews and individuals do so only in a secondary sense. Nature Religion refers to those who worship nature as their primary form of worship.

Nature Religion is very, very broad and includes many, many subcategories that we cannot cover in this book. Because of this broadness, those in this worldview are not uniform in how they answer the question regarding the supernatural. None are Atheist; Agnostic; Basic Unity; Deist; or Trinitarian; but past that there is a lot of diversity. Most forms of this worldview throughout history have either adopted Basic Polytheism or have leaned heavily in that direction for all practical purposes. With that said, many other variations exist. What they all do have in common though, is the worship of nature as their primary form of worship. Sometimes this is because a “god” or “gods” are thought to be nature; sometimes it is because a “god” or “gods” are thought to be in

nature; and sometimes it is because a “god” or “gods” are thought to be so connected or associated with nature that the worship of nature is appropriate. And sometimes this worship is directed to the universe as a whole; sometimes it is directed to the earth as a whole; sometimes it is only directed to parts of the universe; and sometimes it is only directed to parts of the earth. But, as long as the worship of nature is the primary form of worship, the worldview of Nature Religion is present.

The only major exception to what was said above is the worldview of Hinduism. Many Hindus worship nature as their primary form of worship because they are Pantheist or Panentheist in regard to Brahman. The difference is that this viewpoint and practice is not universal in that worldview. Therefore, Hinduism is distinguished from Nature Religion in general for this reason. In Nature Religion, any worldview that does not see the worship of nature as essential and primary is practicing false religion to some extent. Hence, Hinduism is seen as something fundamentally different because it allows for those who reject nature worship. Hindus also see themselves as fundamentally different from Nature Religion in general, despite how many within their worldview worship nature in a primary sense, because they insist that people need to worship Brahman specifically according to certain prescribed Hindu practices.

Now it may not seem all that fair to lump all nature worshipers together into one broad worldview when many within the worldview are so committed to the distinctiveness of their sub-religion. The thing is though, most nature worshipers, by and large (certainly not down to the last person), see all nature worshipers as being one on some level. This does not mean they see their specific (often local) “gods,” beliefs, practices, and traditions as being somewhat unimportant. The vast majority see all such things as being extremely important and take a lot of pride in these matters. However, most do not see these “gods,” beliefs, practices, and traditions of their sub-religion as being the sum of all truth. Especially in the ancient world, different groups within Nature Religion would commonly adopt and borrow “gods” and practices from neighboring groups and tribes.

None of this means that all those within Nature Religion get along perfectly. Often tribal warfare is common, and was especially common in the ancient world. But this usually did not have to do with religious or worldview matters alone. It often had to do



with cultural or resource issues. One tribe might hate the “gods” and practices of another tribe because the two tribes were at war with each other, but by and large most within Nature Religion see other groups within Nature Religion as worshiping nature according to the traditions that have been handed down within their culture. Finally, this does not mean that those in Nature Religion believe that anything goes. While there is a great deal of diversity, freedom, and tolerance within this worldview, those within it would still see the worship of nature as being of fundamental importance.

Before wrapping up this section, it should be said that most forms of Nature Religion believe in what is known as *animism*. This is the belief that spirits infuse almost all aspects of nature. Hence, many in Nature Religion believe that trees, flowers, water bodies, etc., all have a spirit or soul. Animism takes many different forms that I cannot fully cover in this work, but it should be noted that this basic belief is very, very common among those in the Nature Religion worldview. Some actually equate animism with Nature Religion, but I don’t think that is totally accurate. However, there is no question that animism is extremely common among those within this worldview.

Nature Religion was the dominant worldview across the earth for most of human history. It was not until the full rise of Hinduism that this began to change. Then with the dawn of Buddhism and later Christianity things began to really change. Islam; Roman Catholicism; Eastern Orthodoxy; Liberal Protestantism; and the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement, all branched off from Biblical Christianity. With that said, because of the massive size of Chinese Folk Religion, it is still a formidable worldview today at around 500 million people. Some would give it an even higher place as many whom I would classify as Buddhist could be classified as being part of Chinese Folk Religion, which is a subcategory of Nature Religion. When this is done, Nature Religion could be as big as around 700 million people.

### **No Religion**

No Religion refers to all those who do not belong to any organized religion or worldview. A lot of people mistakenly believe that this only refers to Atheists and Agnostics, but that isn’t the case. Atheists and Agnostics, especially as I have defined

those terms, make up a very small percentage of this worldview. Most within this worldview are often called “Spiritual but Not Religious.” It is important to note that this phrase is using the terms *religious* and *spiritual* in a way that is different from how I use those terms. I believe that everyone is religious as everyone has a worldview. And most people have spiritual beliefs, but many of these people are still secular in that their spiritual beliefs do not play a huge role in their daily lives. I use the term *spiritual* to primarily refer to those who actively engage with their worldview that has spiritual beliefs as part of it. As said earlier, I make all of this clear in the second chapter of the first book in my “basics” series.

Regardless how one uses such terms, it is important to understand that most in this worldview do believe in the supernatural, and that is what the phrase above is driving at. Most within that subcategory are actually very secular though (and thus most within the overarching worldview of No Religion are secular), but still hold to some spiritual beliefs. Many others though, have an approach to things where the spiritual plays a key role in their lives, they merely do not think more formal worldviews are necessary or helpful. And that latter point is what unites all in this worldview; the belief that formal worldviews are not necessary. Many within this worldview believe that formal or organized religion is a positively harmful reality.

Now to be clear, many who get lumped into this category by many sociologists are actually part of a smaller religion or worldview, such as the New Age or Neo-Paganism. This often happens because those worldviews are not terribly structured and often talk about how they dislike organized religion. But, the New Age and Neo-Paganism, along with a lot of other smaller worldviews that are not very structured, are nevertheless formal worldviews (whether they want to see this or admit this or not). Hence, if someone officially considers himself or herself a part of one of these worldviews, then he or she should not be classified as No Religion. With all that made clear, many in the No Religion category only dabble in these smaller worldviews (some dabble and combine elements from many of them and from some of the larger ones as well), and are correctly considered part of the No Religion category.

It may seem odd that Atheists and Agnostics are placed within this broader worldview when so many are so opposed to any views that embrace the supernatural.

At first, it may seem like Atheists and Agnostics should be placed in a completely different category altogether. In my estimation, based on my experience in interacting with and witnessing to Atheists and Agnostics over the years, I think most Atheists and Agnostics would deep down actually prefer to be their own overarching category, with Atheism and Agnosticism being the two chief subcategories. Having made that clear, most sociologists place them within this broader category and most Atheists and Agnostics do not object to this very much outwardly. I believe that the reason for this is so that they can be part of a broader group with much larger numbers than would be the case if Atheism and Agnosticism were separated from this broader worldview. And I think they prefer this so that they can have more clout in the culture wars. Because of all of this, I continue to place them within this broader worldview.

Throughout most of human history, this worldview was always a tiny, tiny minority. Now many within this worldview would argue that far more people were probably actually a part of this worldview, but would not say anything because they would be so ostracized within their village, tribe, or culture. And I would agree with this. Nonetheless, it is very hard to tell how big this worldview ever was up until recently because of the reasons stated above. This worldview though, has grown exponentially in the past 300 years, especially in the last 100 years. Today it has grown to around 500 million people worldwide. And many would say the number is much higher because they would include many in China who practice Buddhism and/or Chinese Folk Religion, but who do not do so in a completely formal manner. When looking at things from that possible perspective, the numbers could be as high as 800 million people today.

When interacting with those in this category, don't be surprised by how eclectic this worldview can be, especially among those that do not consider themselves Atheists or Agnostics. They will often blend all sorts of beliefs; practices; customs; traditions; and elements from almost all of the different worldviews. And then their own personal opinions often get blended in as well. This is one of the primary reasons true Christians often feel like they cannot tell what religion or worldview most people are, it seems like there is an endless number, practically one per person on the earth. This is especially the case in the U.S. and countries like ours because there are so many people who fall under this category. In certain parts of the country, they are the dominant worldview.

Also, many Liberal Protestants can be very eclectic as well, and on the surface often don't seem very much different from those in this worldview. Because there are so many Liberal Protestants in our nation as well, this also fuels the confusion. And then there are many others who are nominal in their worldview (especially nominal Catholics), who also can be extremely eclectic in their beliefs as well. This creates even further confusion. But, Liberal Protestants really are something different and we will discuss them below, and remember what was said earlier about nominal folks. Often when you begin to gently pin nominal people down and start to explain to them what their worldview actually teaches, they begin to not be so eclectic. Sometimes that isn't the case, and when that happens, such a person is more than likely actually a part of the No Religion worldview whether he or she realizes it or wants to admit it or not. With all that said, underneath the surface that often looks like a wild kaleidoscope, there is a basic foundation to all of those within the overarching worldview of this section. And that is the firm belief that organized or formal religion is unnecessary. Again, many would say that it is also unhelpful, and many others would go so far as to say that it is harmful. But all would agree that it is unnecessary.

Before moving forward, I know a lot of you may be saying right now, "I am a true Christian and I don't like organized or formal religion. In fact, I believe that organized religion is unbiblical. Are you saying that I'm not a true Christian and I'm part of the No Religion worldview?" No, I am not at all. I do not like religion at all either, at least as that term is usually used in our culture. As true Christians, we know that it is all about our relationship with Jesus, and I made this very clear in chapter one of the first book of my "basics" series. With all that made clear, true Christianity, as part of our relationship with Jesus, does include non-negotiable core beliefs; commands; customs; practices; and rituals. And these go well beyond the only core belief of the worldview under examination in this section that one can believe pretty much whatever he or she wants. In this sense, like it or not, true Christianity is a formal religion.

### **Liberal Protestantism**

Liberal Protestantism was started by Friedrich Schleiermacher in the early 1800's, although a lot of people in Western Europe had already been moving in a Liberal Protestant direction behind the scenes for about 100 years. He was a German theologian. His new worldview spread rapidly throughout Western Europe, and then to the rest of the countries where there had been a strong Historic Protestant population. Today, the worldview has approximately 500 million followers worldwide. This worldview was marked by those who still wanted to have some connection to "Protestantism," while being able to reject the doctrine of inerrancy. I put *Protestantism* in quotes because they did not want to follow true Protestantism as it had existed since the Reformation, but they still wanted to be connected to "Protestantism" culturally.

Before moving forward, it needs to be said that Liberal Protestantism does not mean "Protestants" who are liberal politically. The "liberal" here refers to liberal theologically from a Historic Protestant perspective. They were straying from Traditional Protestantism and were liberal in this sense. Many Liberal Protestants are very conservative politically. And a good chunk of the true church today votes for the more liberal party. Many do so for economic reasons despite strongly disagreeing with the more liberal party on many social issues. Even though most true Christians tend to vote conservative, especially in America, this does not mean that we can say that all those that don't are heretics. Now, if someone does in fact believe that it is not a sin to engage in homosexual acts, for example, that is someone that has indeed embraced heresy. But, even here we need to be very careful. Some true Christians have voted in favor of same-sex marriage on the basis of the fact that they believe the government should not legislate morality too much. The key factor here though, is that they still believe homosexual acts are sinful and that no one living in that lifestyle is a true Christian. While I vehemently disagree with their voting choice, I cannot call them heretics.

With that made clear, what Schleiermacher's worldview led to was an approach to the Bible where one can pick and choose what he or she is going to believe from it. To be fair, Liberal Protestants reject this criticism. They say that they believe in the spirit of the Bible, whereas we as Conservative Evangelicals (Historic Protestants) allegedly take the Bible too literally and are therefore interpreting it incorrectly. Many Liberal Protestants say that they also believe in the holy books from other religions to some

extent. Many say this about certain books from heretical groups, especially some of the early Gnostic writings (I go over Gnosticism in my book on church history if you are interested). But, most will still say that the Bible is the highest authority as far as holy books are concerned. The fact of the matter though, is that Liberal Protestants believe almost anything under the sun, thus showing that the criticism at the top of this paragraph is fully valid. I discuss the history of Liberal Protestantism in a little more detail in the final chapter to the first book of my “basics” series. I also say a great deal more about it in my book on church history. Liberal Protestantism is broken up into different schools of thought, and the most popular and aggressive today is known as *Progressive Christianity*. My book, *A False Kind of Christianity*, is about this particular movement.

It should be noted that not all people on the planet today who claim to be “Christian” and are theologically liberal are Liberal Protestant. There are liberal Catholics, liberal LDS folks, liberal Seventh-day Adventists, etc. And by *liberal* here, I mean liberal theologically and not necessarily politically. For example, there are orthodox Catholics that are liberal politically. And there are theologically liberal Catholics who are conservative politically. With all that made clear, these theological liberals either have to keep their views largely to themselves or consciously function outside of their claimed worldview. Hence, they really aren’t part of their claimed worldview. Most really fall under the category of No Religion while still believing in elements of their claimed worldview. This is because most non-Protestant claims to Christianity usually have formal organizational structures. Hence, if you speak out too loudly against the doctrines of the religion or worldview, you will be kicked out.

I do want to say quickly in order to avoid being accused of not completely representing the facts, that there was a more openly liberal (theologically) Catholic movement that still has influence within the Catholic Church today. But, this movement was primarily liberal when it came to inerrancy (inerrancy was certainly the doctrine of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages; but over time it came to be seen as less and less important because the Church itself defines doctrine since the time of the Reformation); how the Bible came together; on certain political matters; and on certain issues that are not official Catholic dogma (but where most Catholics believe and

practice a certain way). These “liberal” Catholics still had to believe established Catholic doctrine in order to remain a Catholic in good standing. No such guardrails existed for Liberal Protestantism.

Protestantism did not believe that the church needs to have a formal organizational structure that encompasses the entire church. They saw very little biblical justification for such a belief. This is why Conservative Evangelicalism (Historic Protestantism) has no overarching formal organizational structure that covers the entire movement or worldview. This does not mean that the subgroups within the true church cannot have formal organizational structures. Most do in the form of denominations. But the worldview as a whole does not have one. This made it much easier for people to still claim to be “Protestant” while rejecting actual Protestant doctrine, especially the doctrine of inerrancy.

As I said in the previous section, often when you come across those in this worldview, they can sound almost no different than many in the No Religion category. Their beliefs tend to be an amalgam of beliefs from various worldviews with their personal opinions heavily mixed in as well. Most have never even heard the label *Liberal Protestant*. But, whether they realize it or not, historically that is the worldview they are within. Generally speaking, if a person claims to be “Christian” and does not claim to be Catholic; Eastern Orthodox; LDS; or Seventh-day Adventist; but believes he or she can interpret the Bible however he or she wants, that person is probably Liberal Protestant.

This is true even if the person claims to be part of a Conservative Evangelical denomination (and even if he or she actually attends a Bible-believing church that does not do a good job with church discipline). For instance, there are countless people in the Old South that claim to be Southern Baptist (a solid Conservative Evangelical denomination), who never go to church and do not believe huge portions of what the Bible teaches (many do go to church though, churches that do not do a good job with church discipline). Frustratingly, such people will still be classified as Conservative Evangelical on a census because they claim to be Southern Baptist. This is why you will often hear about how the Evangelical population in our country is around 25% of the population. In all actuality, the true Evangelical (Conservative Evangelicalism)

population in our nation is much closer to 10%. Most of that alleged 25% is actually Liberal Protestant.

Many cultural “Protestants” like myself growing up, or cultural “Evangelicals” like the ones described at the end of the previous paragraph, will often say that they believe the Bible is without errors if you press them, even if they have never heard of the official title *inerrancy*. This would have described myself growing up. However, it is quite clear in practice that they do not believe in inerrancy as they do not submit to huge swaths of the Bible and make no attempt to justify not submitting in these areas. Most of the time, they have never even read or heard of these areas of the Bible that plainly contradict their beliefs and practices. When witnessing to a person who falls into this category, gently but firmly keep taking him or her to the parts of the Bible that clearly contradict his or her beliefs. When this is done, most will admit that they do not in fact believe the Bible to be without errors and thus show their true Liberal Protestant colors.

Such people must be distinguished from those who claim to be some form of “Protestant,” but who claim to believe in inerrancy and understand the doctrine, yet believe in something that clearly contradicts the Bible. While they clearly contradict the Bible, they do attempt to justify their interpretations of the Bible where the Bible is clearly contradicting them. They often use all sorts of fancy sounding arguments, but at the end of the day, it is obvious that they are twisting the Bible into a pretzel if you are paying close attention. Such people are rare, but they do exist and they are not technically Liberal Protestant despite often having a lot in common with Liberal Protestants on certain doctrines. These people are part of much, much smaller worldviews.

Returning to the fact that often your average Liberal Protestant doesn’t sound all that different from your average No Religion adherent, what separates your average nominal Liberal Protestant from your average No Religion individual is that the Liberal Protestant will still very clearly claim to be a “Christian” who holds to the authority of the Bible on some level. The No Religion individual may say how much he or she loves “Jesus,” but he or she will not adopt the label “Christian” to describe himself or herself. And countless No Religion individuals place no stock in the Bible whatsoever. Further, most Liberal Protestants still hold to some form of Monotheism. There is variation



regarding what type of Monotheism, but most hold to some form of it. Whereas in the No Religion worldview, almost every type of view can be found regarding the question of the supernatural.

Now with that made clear, it should be said that many Liberal Protestants, especially Progressive Christians, try to combine Trinitarianism with other forms of Monotheism. The most common combination is Panentheism with the doctrine of the “Trinity.” I do not generally categorize such people as being Inconsistent Trinitarian because they tend to hold to the “Trinity” so loosely. I categorize them as Panentheist because that tends to be their primary category when it comes to categorizing the supernatural. With that clarified, despite these combinations almost all Liberal Protestants are still Monotheists. And that is not the case with the No Religion category.

Throughout most of the world, the vast majority of Liberal Protestants are very, very nominal. This is how I was raised and how I lived until I started going to church around the age of 14. I had never heard of Liberal Protestantism though, I thought we were Episcopalian and that was that. That’s what my mom said we were, we attended Episcopal churches every so often, and I was baptized as an Episcopalian. I don’t think my dad ever considered himself Episcopalian, but went along with it for the sake of my mother. He did consider himself a Christian in a very loose sense though, but I am not sure if he still does today or not. I had no idea there were devout, Bible-believing, true followers of Jesus that were Episcopalian. In fact, the Episcopalian tradition is part of the broader Anglican tradition, and in parts of Africa some of the most passionate followers of Jesus are Anglicans. I had no idea about any of this. I thought all people who claimed to be Episcopalian were like us. If you had told me that many Episcopalians (the Conservative Evangelical ones) are not even the same religion as many other Episcopalians (the Liberal Protestant ones), I would have thought you were a very confused individual. Similar realities exist for most Liberal Protestants around the world.

With all that clearly laid out, there are of course millions of more devout Liberal Protestants. They regularly attend and participate in very theologically liberal churches. But even these tend to not fully understand the history behind their overarching worldview. Hence, for example, you may have someone who thinks of himself as a

devout “Lutheran” because he attends a “Lutheran” church. But he may not realize that his church is part of a very liberal “Lutheran” denomination that is very distinct from sound Conservative Evangelical ones. I’m not saying this individual does not realize he is theologically liberal. He of course does. But, in many cases he may not realize all of the different nuances that I have described in this paragraph and throughout this section. With all that said, there are certainly many, many Liberal Protestants who do understand all of these issues. And some of the most knowledgeable and vocal Liberal Protestants today are Progressive Christians. They are very aggressive in their efforts to criticize the true church and in trying to convert young Conservative Evangelicals. They often twist facts and are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Obviously, all false teachers are wolves in sheep’s clothing, but Progressive Christians are some of the worst on the planet today. You should be very aware of them. In my book *A False Kind of Christianity*, I list some of the major teachers in this movement, and I refer you to more of them in my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

Next, it needs to be said that many Liberal Protestants, especially in the United States today (especially among Progressive Christians), adopt a great deal of the New Age movement. Many ignorant Catholics and many in the No Religion category do so as well in our nation. The New Age movement has had a huge effect upon our culture since the late 1960’s. Trying to fully define and classify this movement is a very difficult task. I say a great deal more about it in my book on church history if you are interested (final chapter).

Finally, one of the most frustrating realities in the true church today, is that far, far too many otherwise excellent scholars; theologians; church historians; apologists; pastors; and Bible teachers; will not classify Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Liberal Protestantism as their own separate worldviews. They largely see them as cancers within the true church, but as still being part of the true church on some level. They will often fully admit that many, if not most, within these movements are not saved. But, because the first two groups and many churches and denominations in the last group give at least lip service to the early major creeds of the faith, they say these groups cannot be considered completely different worldviews. Many treatments on the religions of the world won’t even address them, or will only address the first two. Now,

these teachers will almost always address these movements very firmly in other works, and we should be grateful for this. However, this is still not a strong enough position. The biblical view is to see these groups as fully fledged false worldviews. Period.

And I am not saying anything radical or judgmental. This was the view towards the first two groups among true Christian Protestants going all the way back to the Reformation. This only started to really change in the last 100 years. And this was the view towards the last group among true Christians ever since the inception of Liberal Protestantism. That also only began to really change in the last 100 years as well. This change is reflective of how weak the church is today unfortunately. And I have consistently found that these views almost only exist among the leaders of the church today. Almost any time I fully explain these things to the laity within the church, regardless of which branch they are within, they almost always agree with me without hesitation and are often shocked that so many leaders within the church compromise in this area.

#### **Chapter 4: Overview of the Top Worldviews Part 3 and Conclusion**

##### **Conservative Evangelicalism**

As I said in the first book of my “basics” series, there exists a very small number of true Christians today that are not Conservative Evangelicals. With that made clear, Conservative Evangelicalism basically represents the true church on earth today. You should be aware of the fact that many people unfortunately use the term *Evangelical* in all sorts of very loose ways. I get how frustrating this is, but as I’ve also said in my other works, Satan is the author of confusion and so we have to deal with this reality. I also fully understand how annoying it is that we have to use any terms at all to describe ourselves as true Christians other than the term *Christian* itself. Once again though, because Satan is the author of confusion, this must be done. For more information on how people loosely use the term *Evangelical*, see chapter 11 of my book on church

history. For more specific information on the history of the term, see the last chapter of the first book of my “basics” series.

There is a sense in which the spirit of Conservative Evangelicalism goes all the way back to Adam and Eve. The term *Evangelical* has to do with the gospel. The gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ (the term *gospel* means *good news*). Therefore, a true Evangelical is someone who believes in the hope that can only come from the Messiah (for a fuller explanation of the concept of *Messiah*, see chapter 3 of the second book in my “basics” series). So, even though the technical term was not used until later in church history, even Adam and Eve believed in the promise of the Messiah. God had revealed to them (as recorded in Genesis 3; especially verses 14-15) that He was going to send them a deliverer, who would be the descendant of Eve and would destroy the work of Satan. This was the first promise of the Messiah. It is clear from continuing on in Genesis that Adam and Eve were restored to God. We know from the New Testament that this means they were saved. Therefore, clearly they believed this promise about the Messiah from God. Those true followers of God before the time of Jesus were not called *Christians*, but they were Christian in spirit as they looked forward to the promise of the Messiah/Christ. The same is true of them concerning the title *Evangelical*. All true followers of God have been Evangelical in spirit even though that term was not used until later in church history.

You should be aware of this as many will try to say that Evangelicalism did not start until the Reformation, or the Great Awakening, or really until the early 1900's. But all of this is wrong. True Evangelicalism is simply Biblical Christianity. And Biblical Christianity in spirit refers to all those throughout history that have followed the one true God. It is true that not all followers of God have had the same amount of revelation. This is why the term *Christian* was not used until the Messiah had actually come. But, all true followers of God have always believed in whatever revelation God had given to His people at whatever particular period of time they were living in. There is a sense in which even those true followers of God today who are not Conservative Evangelicals on paper are still genuine Evangelicals in spirit. This is because even though they unfortunately don't believe in *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone is the word of God for us today), they do believe in the true Messiah (Jesus) and we believe that God will correct

them eventually when it comes to *sola scriptura* (even if not in this life). For more information on the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, see the first book of my “basics” series.

With that basic history in place, today there are about 200-400 million Conservative Evangelicals on the planet today. If you add up all of the ten branches of the Christian tree that I list in the 2nd chapter of the first book of my “basics” series, it adds up to about 300 million people. And I believe that is a pretty close estimate, but some would put the number higher than that at closer to 400 million. And the reason I say the number could be as low as 200 million is because it is hard to tell how many professing Conservative Evangelicals are actually saved today. I discuss this factor more in the conclusion to this work. But, I think at the very, very least there are 200 million genuine Conservative Evangelicals on earth today.

You should be aware of the fact that you will often see very different numbers from those that are not truly Christian if you do some research on this yourself. This is because often many Liberal Protestants and those in the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement will get lumped in with us if they merely claim to be “Evangelical.” Often this is not because the researcher is trying to be inaccurate. If someone is not a Bible-believing Christian, he or she is simply going to include as “Evangelical” anyone who claims to be “Evangelical” the same way I would include anyone who claims to be Muslim as being Muslim. Other times though, the researcher really is either being dishonest or incompetent and is not trying to deal with classifications and the numbers very carefully.

And sometimes you will see some researchers include “Pentecostals” and “Charismatics” as a separate entity from Evangelicalism. They will often do this because traditional Pentecostals and traditional Charismatics have so much in common. So, those two will often get lumped together as one movement. However, because so many professing “Charismatics” are Catholic or Liberal Protestant, it doesn’t make much sense to include that “movement” as being part of Evangelicalism. The problem with this classification route is that there are many Pentecostals and Charismatics that are absolutely Evangelical in their theology in the traditional sense of the term *Evangelical*. As I’ve said in my other works, I call them Confessional Pentecostals and Confessional Charismatics.

Hence, I have seen numbers for the “Pentecostal-Charismatic” movement as high as 600 million, and the same researcher will give numbers for Evangelicals at around 300-500 million. And this often comes from a researcher who is actually not trying to fudge the data. The problem is that a huge percentage of that 600 million above is actually Catholic, Liberal Protestant, or Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic. Yes, these folks do hold to the distinctive doctrines of either the true Pentecostal movement or the true Charismatic movement, but they also hold to doctrines that firmly place them outside of Biblical Christianity. Now, that is not true of all of them. Many of them are true Christians and are true Conservative Evangelicals as well. And the 300-500 million number for Evangelicals above is often skewed (again not always intentionally) because the researcher is often including Liberal Protestants in that number that claim to be “Evangelical,” but in actuality are trying to take over Evangelicalism with their Liberal Protestant heresies. This is especially true of the Progressive Christian movement.

To make matters even worse and more confusing (I so apologize for how messy Satan makes all of this), sometimes there is a good researcher who really is trying to make these fine distinctions between Liberal Protestantism; true Evangelicalism; true Pentecostalism; true Charismatic Christians; etc.; and is often getting the numbers more correct, but he or she will still often get thrown off by the fact that there are many true Conservative Evangelicals and true Conservative Evangelical churches that are part of Liberal Protestant denominations (these are often called the *Mainline* “Protestant” denominations in the United States). The reason this has happened is because most Liberal Protestant denominations were godly Evangelical denominations at one point. Hence, many of the true churches stayed within them in order to try to reform them and bring them back to the truth. I do not believe that they should do this as I believe it only leads to compromise and confusion in these true churches, but if they really do believe the Bible (as many of them do), we must accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

With all of that fully clarified, when one really takes the time to carefully make all of these distinctions and break things down very accurately, as I have done over the past 20 years, it is clear that the true and actual number of Conservative Evangelicals today is anywhere between 200-400 million people. Now, I understand that about now

you are probably saying, “Oh my goodness, this is so complicated and confusing. Please tell me I don’t have to try to explain all of this every time I tell people what I believe!” The answer is you absolutely do not. When someone asks you, as I’ve said in my other works, all you need to say is that you are a Bible-believing Christian. You can absolutely leave it at that. And if someone asks you to clarify what all that means, I recommend you follow the advice I give in my essay “Tips for Witnessing.” And if you struggle to remember everything we have gone over in this subsection for your own knowledge, feel free to review this section as often as needed. And remember, even if you don’t remember all of the nitty-gritty details of this section (or any of the sections in this work), my hope is that breaking down all of the world’s religions and worldviews into these ten overarching categories will be very helpful to you.

Before plunging forward, I know that many of you about now may be thinking, “Who is he to fudge the numbers? Aren’t the facts the facts?” The facts are indeed the facts, but the interpretation of those facts varies depending on the researcher or scholar. There is no one universally recognized way to define the terms *Christian*; *Protestant*; *Evangelical*; *Pentecostal*; or *Charismatic*. I am therefore interpreting things according to the Bible. But, not everyone does that and you should be aware of that fact.

You may say, “But it’s not like the Bible gives us a definition of *Protestant*, for example.” This is true. But, from a biblical vantage point, the original people that were called Protestants were clearly true Christians who were trying to call people back to the truth of God’s word. A Liberal Protestant who believes that the Bible is filled with errors will say that he or she thinks of himself or herself as a “Protestant” because he or she appreciates the fact that the Reformers were calling people away from Catholicism, but that he or she believes that “Protestantism” needs to be brought up to date big time. When Liberal Protestants do this they are interpreting the data in a way that is not in accord with the Bible precisely because they don’t believe all of the Bible. While I, and other true Christians, are going to say that while certainly we want to bring correction here and there where the Reformers were wrong as they were products of their time and culture like the rest of us, we of course also want to leave the basic spirit of original Protestantism intact precisely because it was overall such a biblical movement. That is to interpret the history of Protestantism biblically.

With the history and numbers of Conservative Evangelicalism carefully broken down, let us now look at the beliefs of Conservative Evangelicalism. For a fuller exposition of the beliefs of our faith, see my “basics” series and my book on the denominations and movements found within Conservative Evangelicalism today. Here, I can only give a very basic summary as I have done for the other worldviews in this work. It is so important to understand that I will be leaving out a number of absolutely essential teachings. But, what this summary will briefly do is present the basic gist of how our faith differs from the other worldviews discussed in this work.

We believe that there is only one true and living God. We believe that He is absolutely infinite, both in goodness and greatness. He is thus absolute infinite and invisible spirit. He can however reveal Himself through created things like He did with the burning bush to Moses. We believe that He created all things; that He is absolutely distinguished from His creation; He deeply loves all of His creation and is intimately present to it at all times; and that He guides all things. We believe that He is Triune. Thus, we are the only worldview that holds to Consistent Trinitarianism. We believe that the three persons of the Trinity are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God has revealed many truths to us through nature and the academic subjects. But, we believe that when it comes to the really important questions of life, God has spoken to us only through His word. We believe that His word is only found in the Bible for us living on earth today. We believe the Bible to be the 66 books of the Traditional Protestant Bible. We believe that the Bible tells us what to believe and how to behave before our great God. Some of the most essential teachings of our faith regarding our behavior before God, because they are so controversial in our day, are that abortion, suicide, and euthanasia are all forms of murder; all sexual acts and thoughts outside of monogamous heterosexual marriage are sinful; and that there are only two genders, male and female. We also believe that Christians must only marry other Christians.

We believe that all humans have been created with immense dignity and worth, because humans alone were made in the image of God. However, we also believe that humans are sinners. We believe that the ultimate punishment for sin is hell. Hell is a real place of eternal conscious punishment. Some Conservative Evangelicals believe



that hell will have actual fire in it. But, most believe this to be a metaphor for how awful hell will be. All of us believe that hell will be a place of punishment for ever and ever.

We believe that the second person of the Trinity, the Son, came to earth to save humans from their sin. We believe that He added a human nature to His person, so that after the incarnation (the act of becoming human), He is now one person with two natures. These two natures are His God nature and His human nature. These two natures can never be separated or mixed together. But, they are not two persons who are merely connected to each other. This person was given the name Jesus and He is the promised deliverer, who was prophesied throughout the Old Testament. This deliverer was known as *the Messiah*, or *Christ* in Greek. This is why He is often known as Jesus Christ. In His divine (God) nature, He is totally God. He knows all things; He has all power; He is present everywhere; and He cannot change. In His human nature, He is totally human. In that nature, He does not know all things; He does not have all power; He is only present in one place at a time; and He changes (although not in holiness). The Son needed to become a full human being in order to take our place as far as our punishment is concerned. But, because God cannot change it is very important to understand that the Son did not morph and change into a human being. He simply added a human nature to His person.

Jesus was conceived as a human being in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. While on earth Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist; He was tempted by Satan; He performed miracles unlike any that had been seen before; He healed many; He anointed His twelve disciples as the original twelve apostles; He preached and taught God's word; He deeply loved and cared for people; He challenged the corrupt religious leaders who had become false teachers among God's people; He was gloriously transfigured; He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem; He instituted the Lord's Supper; He was betrayed by Judas; He was arrested, illegally tried, tortured, and brutally crucified by the Jewish and Roman leaders in Israel; He died upon the cross; He was pierced in His side that led to blood and water flowing out that proved He was truly dead; He was buried in a cave tomb; He rose from the dead; He appeared to His disciples and over five hundred witnesses; He instituted Christian baptism; and He ascended into heaven where He is now. It is extremely important to understand that the

resurrection of Jesus was not just another miracle of His. This was His way, and the Father and the Spirit's way, of saying that the work of Jesus on the cross had been fully accepted by God. This is why the resurrection of Jesus is called our victory.

On the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sin. What this means is that God punished Him on the cross instead of punishing us in hell as we deserve. Because of this, God can deliver us from the penalty and the power of sin. This deliverance is often called *salvation* in the Bible. We receive this salvation by faith alone. When we receive Jesus by faith alone, God forgives us of all of our sins and the Holy Spirit changes us into holy and righteous people who long to obey God's commandments. This means that faith (in the saving biblical sense) does not only mean believing in the truths of God's word. That is certainly an essential component of saving faith, but one can believe every word of the Bible and still not want to be a holy and righteous person as God defines those things. One must specifically trust in Jesus to save him or her from both the penalty and the power of sin.

However, God does leave a remnant of our sinful nature within us that we must battle against every day until we die or Jesus comes back. When God saves us from the power of sin through the Spirit, we enter into an eternal and intimate relationship with God whereby we love Him far above all else. This fulfills us and brings us eternal joy. This is the ultimate purpose of life, to have this eternal and intimate relationship with God above all else. God will save us from all sickness and poverty eventually, but those are secondary blessings we will receive in the next life. Here on earth, we must suffer greatly for the glory of God. We believe that we grow in our relationship with God through many means that God has given us in His word, but we believe that the primary way we grow is through prayer and Bible reading. We speak to God in prayer, and God speaks to us through the Bible, His word.

As true Christians, we must join a local Bible-believing church. Here we will pray together; sing worship songs to God; hear the Bible taught and preached; give our money offerings to God; and be baptized and receive the Lord's Supper or communion. Worship services can be lively, but they are not to get out of control and must be performed with reverence.

One day Jesus will return to earth and set up the final judgment. He will send Satan and the demons (who are real fallen angels that do all in their power to harm humans, especially true Christians), and all unbelievers to hell in body and soul (not the fallen angels as they do not have bodies). He will give true Christians and the good angels their rewards for their behavior in this life, and they all will live with Him (in both body and soul [not the angels who don't have bodies]), on the new and perfected earth forever.

### **The Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement**

Despite my very real disagreements with the Confessional Pentecostal and Confessional Charismatic branches of the true Christian tree as a Confessional Presbyterian, they are godly movements. Both of them have been zealous to spread the gospel around the world and have been very effective at doing so, and so they deserve the thanks of all true Christians. The movement under discussion in this section is diverse and can be split up into a number of subgroups. With that said, what unites all of them in spirit is a desire to corrupt the godly movements above for their own wicked ends. They know that many people are drawn to the godly movements above because of the strong belief in miracles today and the passionate worship of God through intense worship music found in those godly movements. Hence, they know that if they can look and sound "Pentecostal" and/or "Charismatic," they will draw in a lot of followers and that is precisely what they have done. Because they claim to be "Pentecostal" and/or "Charismatic," this movement, like Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, does hold to many true Bible teachings on paper. That fact though, only makes the deception of the movement all the more effective. No one leader started this movement; there has always been a number of false teachers associated with this movement from its inception around the start of the 20th century when Pentecostalism first came on the scene.

It should be said that I am using the term *movement* to describe this worldview only because that is how they see themselves. They do not see themselves as a separate religion the way many heretical groups do. They see themselves as part of the

broader Christian church and do all in their power to convince true Christians of this so that we will compromise with them and so that many will be more open to their teachings and practices. If you look up this movement online, it may not come up. This is because the title I have given it is my own. Others have given it titles such as *Hyper Pentecostal* or *Hyper Charismatic* or the *Prosperity Gospel/Theology/Movement*. Other names are also often used. There is no uniform way of describing this worldview among godly scholars and theologians in the true church and you should be aware of this. Many of the names are not the best because they only focus upon one large facet of the movement. Many godly scholars and theologians in the true church do not even classify this worldview as a separate worldview because they do not understand how big it has become. Many will only talk about it as a dangerous cancer within many wings of the church. But, they are mistaken and this is beginning to change, especially due to the *American Gospel* (1) documentary. I highly recommend this documentary to you.

And the movement itself calls itself “Pentecostal” or “Charismatic” or both. But, it is a religion and an extremely false and dangerous one at that. You should also be aware of the title *Neo-Charismatic* and similar titles as well. These titles should be avoided though as they are used far too broadly. Far too often both good Christians and heretics get lumped together under the umbrella of that title. For more information on the title I have given this worldview and the titles just discussed in this paragraph and the previous paragraph, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

The leaders of this movement are some of the worst wolves in sheep’s clothing in all of the history of the church over the past two thousand years. The movement often spreads right alongside the true church, especially in parts of South America, Africa, and Asia. Many people who have been raised in cultures that have not been extremely exposed to true Biblical Christianity often cannot tell the difference between this movement and the true church. This worldview has grown to around 100 million people and continues to grow rapidly. It is the most dangerous movement on the planet today.

I cannot cover all of the heresies of this worldview in this book and I have a lot more to say about it in my book *Doctrine: Going Deeper*. What we will do here is cover some of the more basic heresies that are found in the movement. It is important to note that not all churches in the movement hold to all of the heresies I will detail here,

although some indeed do. But all churches in this false worldview hold to at least one of the false doctrines I will describe now. And again, they are all united in spirit because they are all seeking to corrupt and use the godly branches of Confessional Pentecostalism and the Confessional Charismatic churches.

Many in this movement deny the essential doctrine of the Trinity. As true Christians, we worship the one and only true Triune God of all things. Most within this worldview fall under the Inconsistent Trinitarian category, but some fall under the Basic Unity category because of their denial of the Trinity.

Many in this movement teach that “god” wants all of “his” children to be healthy and wealthy at all times. They teach that if we as “Christians” are not healthy and wealthy, this must be the result of disobedience or a lack of faith or both. Many in this movement teach that as “Christians” we are little “gods” because we are sons and daughters of “god.” They say that because of this we can perform “godlike” actions if we have enough faith. Some even go so far as to say that “god” “himself” works according to faith and that “he” created the world by “his” faith, and so we are to model ourselves after this. Many will say that if you name and claim something you want, no matter how extravagant, if you have enough faith it will be given to you. Some have even gone so far as to say that we as “Christians” are as much an incarnation of “god” as “Jesus.” It is honestly hard to get more blasphemous than that. Many teach that “Jesus” put aside all of “his” divine attributes in the incarnation and only functioned in “his” human nature with the power of the “spirit.” They say that because “Jesus” is our ultimate example, we can therefore do the same things “he” did, including reading the minds of people, clearly something Jesus could only do because He is God.

Many teach that worship services should be absolutely out of control. Many advocate making animal noises; convulsing uncontrollably; laughing uncontrollably; running around; being thrown down or “slain” in the “holy spirit;” and that miracles should be happening all the time. In order to fulfill that last point, they will often have con men as pastors and/or worship leaders, who engage in deceptive practices to make it look like miracles are taking place. Many tv preachers are a part of this movement and many of them have been exposed for this very thing. When people who are paralyzed or have similar ailments are brought to these services, they are carefully kept away from

the front so that these con men will not be exposed as they are always unable to heal such people. Many place far more emphasis on the “revelations” that are given to these leaders than they do on the Bible. Many of these leaders say that they have visited heaven or hell or both.

Many leaders in this movement are anti-intellectual, push conspiracy theories, and do not emphasize the importance of going to church. Many followers of this movement do not make any attempt to be part of a local church on any level, and only watch their favorite tv preachers. Because the leaders of this movement claim to be “Evangelical” or “Pentecostal” or “Charismatic,” or some combination thereof, many in the world believe that true Christians are united with these false teachers and false churches. Because of this, this movement has brought horrific embarrassment and shame upon God’s true people.

Another huge problem is the many indigenous churches throughout the world, especially in parts of South America, Africa, and Asia. Africa is the biggest problem and many of these churches are called African Initiated churches. *Indigenous* refers to churches that were started by natives rather than by missionaries. Obviously, these original natives had contact with missionaries or others who had contact with them as that is how they first heard about Christianity, but the actual churches and movements were not started by missionaries themselves. Before diving into this subcategory, it is important to dispel the myth that orthodox Christians are only against these churches because we are white. I grow so sick and tired of this narrative. While I am white, there are millions of orthodox Christians in this country and all around the world that are not white. Hence, this accusation is nothing but slander. Countless orthodox churches around the world are indigenous. Most tend to be part of the Confessional Pentecostal, Confessional Independent Bible, or Confessional Charismatic branches of the Christian tree. I couldn’t care less if a church is indigenous as long it is Bible-believing.

The problem is that many of these indigenous churches and movements are taking advantage of the fact that many people in these regions are very new to Christianity. They also take advantage of the Pentecostal and Charismatic beliefs that God does provide certain revelations today beyond the Bible. This allows the leaders to say that “god” told them all manner of nonsense. Many place almost all of the focus on

the “holy spirit,” and many have said that one or more of their leaders is an incarnation of the “holy spirit.” Many of these groups practice polygamy and incorporate blatant Pagan beliefs and worship practices into their faith. Many of these groups did not originally have any connection to Pentecostal or Charismatic beliefs, but today countless ones have incorporated and abused beliefs from these movements and have thus become part of the overarching heretical movement under discussion in this section.

Now, many of these indigenous churches and movements do not have any connection to Pentecostal or Charismatic theology and are therefore not a part of this broad heretical movement, but are smaller stand alone heretical movements that won't be covered in this work. And the reason Africa is such a problem has nothing to do with my alleged personal prejudice or the alleged personal prejudice of any other white Christian. Christianity has grown extremely rapidly in Africa over the past 100 years. The largest percentage of true Bible-believing Christians is in Africa today and this is a wonderful and beautiful reality and fulfillment of God's promises. Not surprisingly though, Satan is working over time in this part of the world to try to counter the amazing work of God there.

You may ask, “Ok, but are you not still being a little prejudiced when you did not fully condemn all of the syncretism of the medieval church in Europe in your book on church history?” This is a very fair question. But, if you read that work carefully I do say that a lot of heretics had in fact infiltrated the church with their full-blown syncretic heresies. I merely said that the medieval church as a whole never formally and dogmatically embraced the worst of the syncretism. It is true that certain very false and dangerous doctrines in my estimation were adopted, such as praying to the “Saints.” As bad as that doctrine is though, there is at least some minor biblical justification for it. The Bible does talk about how we are one as Christians and how the souls of many Christians are now in heaven. This doctrine is not the same as the fully Pagan doctrines of many of these indigenous churches.

Finally, many in the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic worldview have said that “apostles” are still in operation today. Therefore, these “apostles” are given tremendous amounts of authority in these churches as the true apostles were given in the early

church. Their “revelations” are given huge amounts of authority and emphasis in their churches. And some in this movement have even produced a Bible translation based upon this alleged authority, the Passion Translation. This is not a normal Bible translation where scholars get together and try to translate the Bible into the common English of our day as best they can. These false teachers say that this translation is being done through “revelation” and therefore it makes this translation have a higher authority than other translations. The problem is that this translation gets things wrong from the original biblical languages all the time, but in the minds of many in this movement, we cannot question this translation because it is being produced by “revelation.”

Before moving forward to the conclusion, I want to make it clear that many true Christians, not only Confessional Pentecostals and Confessional Charismatics, do believe that in revivals or in certain services, Christians can get pretty lively. They are often ok with some of the behavior I described earlier, such as out of control laughter. There are times when we feel so overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, it can cause us to act in ways we would not normally act. In such moments I have had shivers, and I have wept with joy despite the fact that I’m not normally much of a crier. But these true Christians are always careful to say that such experiences are not the norm and should never be manufactured. Hence, when the false teachers get up and start to lead their church in “holy laughter” or “holy barking,” this is plainly heresy.

And many true Christians do emphasize such things as miracles, dreams, visions, and even certain revelations today. However, they do not try to force these things and they are not deceptive about them. Further, they don’t allow such things to become the focus. The focus of these true churches is always on God, Jesus, the gospel, and the Bible. And the overwhelming vast majority of these true churches are careful to say that their revelations are not the full word of God. And even the very rare true churches that would say that some of their revelations are on the same level as the Bible (the few non-Conservative Evangelical churches today), are still extremely careful to say that all such revelations must be interpreted in the light of the Bible, and that any supposed “revelations” that contradict the Bible must be immediately rejected. The false teachers are not careful in these ways. Many true Christians also believe that apostles



still exist today in the sense of church planters or evangelists or something along those lines. But, they do not believe that anyone exists in the church today along the lines of the official apostles of the early church. They understand that no one today has that level of authority. The false teachers say and/or act otherwise.

This movement is absolute poison and you should be very aware of it. In my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*, I break down this movement in more detail.

## Conclusion

Biblical Christianity (Conservative Evangelicalism) is made up of around 300-400 million people worldwide. However, it is very important to distinguish between what theologians call *the visible church* and *the invisible church*. The visible church refers to all of those who seem to be Christian outwardly. The invisible church refers to those that are truly saved in their hearts. We can never know exactly how many are in the invisible church because we can never know the heart of someone else with infallible certainty. With all that made clear, we can look at the overall health of the church at any given point of church history and make certain assessments. When the church is really healthy, most in the visible church also seem to be part of the invisible church as well. We can safely say this because apostasy is so much less common during these seasons. Apostasy refers to people falling away from the faith. Some true Christians believe that a true believer can walk away from Jesus. Others, like myself, believe that a true Christian will never fall away, and that those who do fall away were never genuinely saved in the first place even if they seemed to be saved. Either way though, all true Christians agree that many people who do seem saved for a time eventually fall away and this is called apostasy. Where the church is persecuted, false Christians tend to fall away pretty quickly.

I want to be as clear as I can be when I say that I love the church. I love God's people and I seek to defend the church wherever, whenever, and however I can. I am not remotely trying to be negative when I say that right now the church is not in a very healthy place overall from a worldwide perspective. There are a lot of lukewarm Christians who do not know the Bible nearly as well as they should, and there are a lot

of false teachers and churches that have seeped into otherwise true and godly denominations and movements. Because of this, apostasy is very, very common in our day. And because of that, we have to unfortunately say that the visible church today is probably quite a bit bigger than the actual invisible church today. The invisible church today is probably closer to 200-300 million people.

Now in some ways that might not seem like a lot of people when compared to the world's population, but in other ways we should not lose sight of how many people that really is. If you read my first book of my "basics" series, you saw that at the time of Elijah there were only about 7 thousand people who truly knew God. Elijah lived around 800 BC. So in less than 3 thousand years the true people of God have gone from only 7 thousand to at least 200 million people! At that number, we constitute one of the ten major worldviews on the planet. And we are found in every corner of the world among every type of people group, in fulfillment of God's word. 200 million people is larger than the population of every single country on the planet right now except for the top 7 countries in the world according to population, and there are over 200 countries in the world today. 200 million people is almost two thirds of the entire population of the United States. So, while God's true church will always be a remnant, God has been so faithful in growing her around the world the past 3 thousand years. Let us praise and worship the one true God for His amazing faithfulness!

I sincerely hope that this work has helped you to better understand the religious/worldview landscape around the world and how the true church of Jesus Christ fits into that landscape.

### **Appendix: Judaism**

I am including Judaism as an appendix in this work because this religion on a very superficial level is so familiar to most people in our culture. Many true Christians wonder what exactly this worldview teaches. Further, there is a lot of confusion among far too many true Christians regarding the relationship between Judaism and Biblical

Christianity. Far too many true Christians, even many leaders who absolutely should know better, believe that we worship the same God as the Jews. These leaders say the Jews have merely not come to understand that Jesus is the Messiah yet. These true Christian leaders are careful to say that Jews do not know God in their hearts and are not saved because they have rejected Jesus, but that there is a sense in which we worship the same God because they believe in the Old Testament. This is false and these true Christian leaders need to stop saying this.

Just because Jews claim to believe the Old Testament in no way means that they actually do believe it. Muslims; Catholics; LDS folks; etc.; all also say they believe the Old Testament as well. And yet, these true Christian leaders do not say that we worship the same God as those in these worldviews for the most part. Many of these true Christian leaders would respond to me by pointing out that groups such as Islam and the LDS Church believe that the Old Testament has been terribly corrupted. Thus, they are different from the Jews. But, Catholics don't believe this and yet many of these same true Christian leaders would not say that we worship the same "god" as Catholics. And of those who would say this, it is important to understand that both Catholics and Jews do not actually believe the Old Testament even if they say that it has not been terribly corrupted textually.

Jesus plainly fulfills the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Therefore, to reject Him is to reject the Old Testament and thus the God of the Old Testament as well. The Old Testament plainly tells us to listen to all that the future great prophet (Jesus) tells us (and Catholics admit that Jesus is this future great prophet as the Messiah), and Jesus tells us that we can only be saved by faith alone (which Catholicism rejects). Hence, Catholicism rejects Jesus and therefore does not believe in the Old Testament either. Some true Christians will ask, "Ok, so are you saying that the heroes of the faith in the Old Testament did not actually worship God? Because they did not have faith in Jesus either because He was not born yet!"

I appreciate this question very much, but it reflects a deep misunderstanding of how revelation works. These heroes did worship and accept Jesus in a sense. They worshiped Yahweh, and Jesus is Yahweh. They were worshiping the Triune God even if they did not realize it. Yes, the doctrine of the Trinity had not yet been revealed, but the

God they were worshiping was the Triune God nonetheless. They were worshiping the second person of the Trinity (who would become Jesus) even if they did not realize it. And had God revealed the Trinity to them, they would have of course accepted that doctrine without hesitation. That is not the same thing at all with the Jews of today. They passionately reject Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity in spite of the fact that the same God of the Old Testament has revealed Jesus as the Messiah and the doctrine of His Triune nature.

With all that cleared up, let's dive into the actual history and beliefs of this worldview. It should first be noted that Judaism is actually pretty small as far as numbers go. There are around 15 million ethnic Jews worldwide. An ethnic Jew is someone who is a descendant of Abraham to one degree or another. But, many ethnic Jews are not part of the worldview of Judaism, and many others are actually Christians (they are known as Messianic Jews). The actual worldview of Judaism is only made up of around 8-10 million people. And even many of these are very, very secular. There are only about 5-6 million highly spiritual Jews in the world. And while most of these are also ethnic Jews, there are Gentile converts as well. Many of the smaller worldviews that are not part of the top 10 are a lot bigger than the worldview of Judaism. Again though, I include the worldview here as an appendix because so many Jews live in the United States and have always had such a huge impact upon our culture. Most Jews live either in Israel or the United States. From here forward, when I use the terms *Jews* and *Jewish*, I am using them only to refer to those who are a part of the worldview of Judaism.

When Jesus first came on the scene, the people of God (the Israelites) were in a very similar state to that of the Catholic branch of the Christian tree at the time of Martin Luther. Cultural religion and corruption were rampant. The two biggest groups as far as the leadership was concerned were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Both of these groups were extremely corrupt, both doctrinally and morally. This is why Jesus so often chastised them and preached against them. Even though many Israelites did receive Jesus, most rejected Him. Thus, most of the Israelites became a new and false religion, namely Judaism. And when the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, the only major group among the leadership that was left intact was the Pharisees. Therefore, Judaism was

largely the continuation of the false religion of the Pharisees. The name *Pharisee* eventually died out as there was no longer any need for it as they were the only gig in town. The Pharisees had been known as the teachers of the Israelites going back to the time of Jesus. The word *rabbi* simply means *teacher*. The rabbis became the leaders of Judaism and remain so to this day.

Judaism does not refer to the Old Testament as the *Old Testament* because it does not believe in the New Testament. It refers to it as the *Tanakh*. Judaism does say that these books are inspired by “god,” but in reality these books are interpreted by other Jewish documents and by the particular rabbis in each branch of Judaism. Judaism often refers to the *Torah*. This word refers to *the law*. Most often, it is referring to the Pentateuch, but sometimes it is used in a much broader sense. The primary document of Judaism outside of the Tanakh is the Talmud. While this work is not considered scripture, it is given tremendous weight as it is believed to contain the oral law of “god,” going all the way back to the Pharisees.

Judaism is emphatic that there is only one “god” and that he exists as only one person. They believe him to be the “Yahweh” of the Tanakh. Jews worship in buildings known as synagogues. These religious services are led by the rabbis. There are three primary branches within Judaism today. The first is the Orthodox branch. This branch is the closest to how Judaism existed and functioned throughout most of its history from the time right after Jesus until very recently. This branch devoutly observes the Sabbath, the Jewish holidays, and the food laws of the Tanakh. This branch also believes in the historicity of most of the Tanakh. The second branch is the Conservative branch. Despite the name, this branch is the moderate branch within the worldview today. The third branch is the Reform branch. It is the liberal branch within the worldview today. Many within this branch are still devout and are not secular in the sense that they regularly attend synagogue and practice many Jewish ceremonies, but are far more loose regarding the beliefs and practices mentioned above. This is not to say that there are no secular Jews within the latter two branches, there certainly are many. It is only to say that not all within the latter two branches are secular. Now, many (most actually) devout Jews within the latter two branches are liberal politically. But, they are not completely secular as I have tended to use that term throughout my works.

Most Jews are skeptical regarding beliefs such as miracles; angels; Satan; demons; heaven; hell; the soul; the afterlife; salvation; etc. Even those who believe in the historicity of most of the Tanakh, often tend to interpret the miraculous in many of those narratives in a more naturalistic fashion. This is one area where Judaism as a whole has very much strayed from its Pharisee roots. However, there is diversity here. Many Jews are far more open to certain elements in the list above. But, all of Judaism as a whole is far more focused on this life than most other worldviews. Almost all Jews, but especially the Orthodox, are awaiting a future Messiah other than Jesus.