14.

Part 1: Understanding Jesus via the Earliest Church

(Part 2 covers True Christianity via Scripture)

A diamond ring falls in a dirty toilet; will you salvage the ring and clean it, or flush it away? Since Christ's teachings were distorted beyond recognition, some people advocate flushing away Jesus himself. Instead, ignore the distortions, and consider what Jesus actually taught.

Jesus of Nazareth, forceful decisive man of conviction, declared that his followers must obey his hard sayings. He also declared that his followers must love God and humanity. After Jesus' heavenly ascension, God's Spirit empowered Christ's bride the Church with divine authority to accurately spread His teachings.

Yet pride and disobedience dominated, shattering the Church. So appealing to today's leadership is often futile. Besides disagreement on which leaders are right, leaders bow to the secular world. The only leadership in Christianity that is singular, static, and cannot fluctuate is the conglomeration of early churchmen who authored commentary long ago. These Ante-Nicene and Nicene fathers (named after the Nicene Creed of AD 325); are Church leaders and scholars from the first four centuries.
These writings are the greatest, most reliable, and trustworthy source outside "The New Testament" to explain Christ's teachings. The Post-Nicene fathers (Church leaders and scholars who lived in the fifth thru ninth centuries) closely follow. My lines of reasoning that these men are the ultimate human authority to explain Christianity are these:

1) Early Nicene churchmen wrote when there was only one corporate Church, and the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (Timothy 3:15).
2) These early commentators will always have an advantage over everyone who comes after, since they escaped the doctrinal errors which crept in through the centuries. And their positions cannot fluctuate since they're dead.
3) These men read, wrote, and spoke fluent New Testament Greek, the language that all our Christian scriptures are translated from.
4) Some writings purport to be accounts told to the writer by the Apostles or claim apostolic authorship themselves without adequate evidence to the contrary (such as *the Didache* AD 80 & *Epistle of Barnabas* AD 90). Other writings were written subsequently to the apostolic period by immediate disciples of an apostle, or disciple of a disciple.
5) These men subsisted in the original Church's apex and its same culture, which is paramount to their understanding Scripture. That's because most people mistakenly think that Scripture was written in chronological order, especially Revelation and Matthew chapter 24, which are constantly misunderstood. Contrarily, much of Scripture is circuitous, going around concurrently over the same points. These early fathers understood this.

6) Some of these men gave up their lives for their faith (such as Polycarp and Justin Martyr) or gave up wealth and a family to fully concentrate on evangelizing (such as Origen and Jerome). In sharp contrast, today's leaders are often worldly people-pleasers.
7) The papacy shouldn't override these writings. Some authors of these writings were considered popes. Considering the "New Testament" the ultimate authority shouldn't override them either. Some early bishops carefully selected which writings would best explain Christianity; our "New Testament" is simply a compilation of early Church writings that the early Church canonized.
8) Besides revealing the earliest understanding of Christianity, these writings thoroughly explain why the early Church believed what they did. They also reveal what they considered error and thoroughly explain why these positions are in error, such as *Irenaeus Against Heresies, The Apologies of Justin, Tertullian Against Marcion, & The Seven Ecumenical Councils.*
9) Instead of demoting these writings as "apocryphal" or "pseudepigraphal" many of them were regularly promoted and read in Church (such as *the Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, & Epistles of Clement.)* Most canonized writings have no more self-declarative authority than these non-canonized writings.
10) Christendom already acquiesced to the early Church's doctrinal understanding and authority. A striking example is Sunday worship replacing Sabbath Day (seventh day observance) which falls on Saturday. Merely working on the Sabbath supposedly carried the death penalty. So only depending on New Testament quotes that can be construed, who would be confident enough to ignore God's former command? Only Seventh Day Adventists are consistent by completely ignoring early Church authority.
11) Jesus told His apostles: "When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth (John 16:12-14). Jesus said the Spirit would make them accurate witnesses (Acts 1:8) insofar as Spirit Himself spoke through them (Matthew 10:20). Holy Spirit envelops His apostles in Acts chapters 2, 4, and 5. From then, Sir Spirit's supernatural gifts were noted to proliferate amongst the early Church.
12) Unlike Protestant and nondenominational groups which see the Bible as the highest authority, Christian Scripture presents the Church as the highest court of appeals. Catholic and Orthodox churches understand this, but look much different from the Church presented in Scripture. However, the early Church resembles the Church presented in Scripture.
13) Ignoring the early Church's proclamations essentially says that Christianity only partially existed, taking until the year 1850, 1965, or 2000 to fully evolve. Rather, Jesus Christ established His religion in AD 30, which His disciples inherited and passed on. It didn't need to evolve like computer technology and did not scrambled up right away. As a wise master-builder Jesus saw to that. The apostle Paul was also a wise master-builder (Corinthians 3:10).
14) "Jesus did many other things, which if all were written, I suppose the world itself could not contain all those books" (John 21:25). Many things actually were written (the Ante-Nicene fathers, not just one man or book). Besides historical/early Church gospels and epistles, creative writing expressed what writers thought might have occurred. Their merits or lack thereof were sorted and weeded out long ago.
15) Discounting the early Church essentially declares that suddenly, hundreds of Church leaders believed and taught the exact same errors, on dozens of subjects, when they were basically the one and only united Church; a science-fiction type conspiracy theory indeed. Instead, false teaching is known as doctrine which contradicts historical Christianity. *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians 1:3* (AD 105) :…..……the proof of the faith which was preached from ancient times, remains firm in you this day……." *Agatho's Letter to the Emperor,* AD 680: "…… this Apostolic Church of His has

never turned away from the path of truth in any direction of error…… for this is the rule of the true faith……"

LINK► https://www.biblestudytools.com/history/early-church-fathers/

Early Church verses "Modern Righteousness"

Someone exclaimed that going back to the early Church was a poor idea, because most churches mentioned in Scripture were engaged in gross misbehavior or had faulty thinking. However, that's a big misunderstanding. Considering the estimated number of Christians in that first century, with their estimated number of congregations, the number of congregations mentioned in Scripture is far less than one percent. (2,3) Since very few churches needed letters of admonition, first century churchgoers accurately reflected true Christianity. One product of Modernism is the theory of Ongoing Revelation. A layperson's answer to my asking, Why don't we just follow the early Church? was "They didn't know what we know now." Besides sounding arrogant, this simplistic answer seems blasphemous. Holy Spirit came and guided the Church into all truth; read John 16:13. So don't think God didn't know what we know now!

I then sat down personally with a Catholic priest and asked, "Why not follow the early Church one hundred percent doctrine-wise?" His much better response was "The early Church had no women teaching over men because women were uneducated and considered pieces of property. Jesus Himself was considered a radical back then for even having women followers. The Church for over a thousand years advocated killing children with severe birth defects. The Church believed the earth was flat, the Church supported slavery, et cetera. In essence, people are reluctant to change old ways of thinking. Knowledge progresses when God's Spirit reveals things when humanity is ready for it." However, what did subsequent research into the priest's explanation reveal?:

Slavery: Three answers to the priest's contention are: Adequate prison systems were often non-existent in ancient times; slavery often replaced incarceration. In that case, slavery actually trump our system, wherein law-abiding citizens work to support vegetating criminals. Secondly, although the early Church sometimes accepted slavery, "slavery" had a different meaning back then. "Slaves" had days off, could get married, and had other rights. We may consider ourselves "wage slaves." Thirdly, whenever the Church flourished, the kind of slavery where people were worked to death or had no rights disappeared. Christians often bought slaves to rescue them from cruel masters, convert them to Christianity, and save their souls.

Flat Earth-ism: There are no theological implications in believing that Earth is flat. Besides, most people were without the ability to travel great distances. Therefore falling off the earth was not a concern. So this is a non-issue.

Women: *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,* which repeatedly claimed apostolic authorship throughout, gives its reason for women not teaching over men in chapter seven: God created man as an authority over women period. Catholic scholars conveniently late-date *The Constitutions,* not only voiding apostolic authorship but making the authors into liars. Besides, where's the documentation stating the reason women couldn't teach over men was that they were uneducated pieces of property?

Children left to die because of severe birth defects: Concerning this most serious issue, thankfully the priest was confused. The pagan Romans did that. In extreme contrast, Christians did not, and worked diligently to help the poor and unfortunate.

Quoting Bishop Fulton J. Sheen: "Let's examine whether or not our boasted theory of intellectual progress is true. What were Christians thinking about in those early centuries? What doctrines need-

ed clarification when intellectual combat was sharp? In early centuries, controversy centered on such lofty and delicate problems as the Trinity, Christ's Incarnation, and union of two natures in the person of God's Son. Yet the last doctrine defined in 1870 was man's capability to use his brain and acquire knowledge of God. Now if the world is progressing intellectually, should not God's existence have been affirmed in the first century, and Trinitarian delineations have been defined in the nineteenth? In the order of mathematics this is like defining the complexities of logarithms in the year 42, and the simplification of the addition table in 1942."4

Various attempts to discredit the early Church not only fail, Modernist "ongoing revelation" destroys confidence in the Church, since we'd never know whether or not our current understanding is valid, since the Spirit may not have revealed vital information. And why on Earth would it take humanity 1,800 years to understand the Gospel? Therefore this dung-heap of "ongoing revelation" truly stinks. And just following the current Pope or Patriarch, who often bow to popular opinion, is an alibi for being irresponsible. Ongoing Revelation is a Pandora's Box.

Yet Protestants have their own Pandora's Box. Their "Just following the Bible" often means only following select passages, using private interpretation, or using modern Bible perversions which reflect Modernist teaching. If enough people are uncomfortable with or disapprove of something, it becomes "false," "wrong," or "offensive", creating contradictions such as being antiabortion (prolife) and supporting dubious wars (pro-death). Popular opinion dictates policy.

And who would dare say that the early Church's famous saints lacked the core essential elements? Therefore, let's just follow the early Church. Quoting *Barnabas 6:1,* AD 100: Understand then, my beloved children, that the good God hath before manifested all things unto us……" *Vincentian Canon of AD 434* says "……..we take the greatest care to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all."

Tried and True Christianity

Paul said "The Church is the pillar and ground of truth" (Timothy 3:15), but he was referring to the first century Church. Without revisiting the early Church, there is no trustworthy foundation. Early Church father Irenæus in *Irenaeus Against Heresies Book III Chapter 4* AD 185 said "Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant discourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear regarding the present question?" (the exact opposite of an ongoing revelation). This is because "They had perfect knowledge" *(Chapter 1).*

Some fancies may arrive and never leave Christendom, sticking to it like old bubblegum. But if they weren't there from the beginning, they must be extraneous. In the mustard seed parable, the kingdom of Heaven is a great tree; historically, it grew like in the parable. But seeds have identical genetic makeup to their tree. You don't add or take away from essential components, and the tree (essentially the mystical Church) is always firmly rooted. The birds can be seen as extraneous, fickle components flying in and out. What was believed in the earliest centuries is your Christianity, since Jesus presented every doctrine needed to achieve and maintain salvation and live the Christian life to His Apostles, who passed it down. Besides, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Many won't be satisfied with these explanations; arguing that the earliest fathers and councils disagreed in their quest to eliminate Jesus from being God (Arianism), negate the body's significance (Gnosticism) and other things. But although there's never one hundred percent agreement on

anything, there's usually a *consensus.* For example, a couple of men in earliest times argued that Jesus lived to be over fifty. Yet we now all agree that His earthly life was around thirty-three years, per early Church consensus. Some demanded that males be circumcised, another idea defeated by consensus. Those who complain about majority positions in the historic Church often insist that minority opinions are true, without giving adequate explanation. Since Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself, let's determine what the Spirit's original message was. Frustrating though it is, God isn't the author of confusion (Corinthians 14:33). Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you (Matt.7:7-8). You shall know the truth, which shall make you free (John 8:32).

Hesitancy/Resistance

Numerous groups belittle the early Church, but when the early Church agrees with them, they quote her. Others distort or manipulate early Church teachings, using only selective quotations which seemingly support their beliefs. Sometimes only half a quotation is used, cutting off the other half. Furthermore, divergent churches like quoting Augustine, who was opaque and easily misinterpreted. Quoting him can make one appear sophisticated and profound, yet present false ideas.

"Nondenominational" groups who claim to restore original Christianity often quote the early Church. But where the early Church reflects Catholic theology, it is ignored. Catholics and Orthodox in turn love to appeal to the early Church to support their doctrine. But when they are shown to deviate, they claim to have advanced beyond the early Church. Yet this would justify Protestants, who could say they are even more advanced, justify non-Christian religionists, who could say they are more advanced yet, while Atheists could say that they are the most advanced.

Some uphold Ante-Nicene teachings but discount the Nicene and post-Nicene fathers because they post-date Constantine, who allegedly corrupted the Church. Yet although the Ante-Nicene fathers present an outstanding overview of Christianity, sometimes only one or two quotes on a given topic were preserved, sometimes none.

Therefore the post-Nicene fathers may be necessary to clarify the early Church's position on certain issues. Since the Church was still one until around AD 800, and Scripture teaches that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, I expect documentation showing that the post-Nicene fathers deviated from the ante-Nicene fathers to support the ante-Nicene only claim.

After the West broke from the East, then yes, the credibility of any one Church branch is irreparably damaged since there's more than one representation of Christianity, but not before. In fact, only extremely rare individuals do not balk at one or more aspects of Christianity. What the Church believed throughout history is well-documented. For an introduction to the early Church, see David W. Bercot's *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* and his books *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up?* (5) and *Common Sense: A New Approach to Understanding Scripture.*(6) I also recommend *Jesus or Christianity.*(7) Hendrickson Publisher's encyclopedic *Ante-Nicene Fathers,* and *Nicene Fathers First & Second Series* serve for advanced research.

Modern Knowledge/Opinions/Dogmatic Assertions

Christianity is not an exact science or mathematical formula. It is heavily emotion-based, and allows for freedom of individuality. However, by deviating too much we end up with a different religion altogether. I shall hereafter explain when and how departures from early Church views are legitimate.

First, understand the difference between the early Church's opinions and their dogmatic assertions. Some dogmatic assertions were the distinctive gender roles of men and women, their view on marriage, obedience being integral to the Gospel, the imperative of honesty, and other beliefs considered nonnegotiable. Some common opinions were that Earth was only around 4,500 years old; there were only six planets in the solar system, and other scientific misunderstandings. These questions are irrelevant to living the Christian life. However, today's Christians should be scientifically astute to avoid looking silly to skeptics and having their message rejected thereby.

Sometimes modern knowledge and wisdom is needed for practical living. For example, people used to help the homeless by bringing them into their own homes, but today's homeless, with the proliferation of cigarettes and drug-induced states, can destroy your home. I once had a homeless friend who flicked his cigarette butt into an open car window. The resulting fire gutted the whole car. Today volunteers at homeless shelters can supervise the destitute and make sure they work towards self-betterment.

True Ongoing Revelation

All Christians believe in new revelation, as God revealed more to Christians than He did to those living in Moses' time. However, that was always supported by numerous miracles witnessed by hundreds of people. Other sensible reasons to differ from earlier believers are documented personal experiences or scientific proof. For example I differ from the early Church's view of the Bible due to scientific facts. However, Protestant, Catholic, and non-denominational believers deviate from the early Church without bothering to support their defiance of early churchmen with any extraordinary claims.

On rare occasion someone claimed to experience the miraculous. However, such experiences did not point away from the early Church. Sometimes they pointed towards the early Church, such as a Unitarian having a vision which inspired him to become a Trinitarian. Claims of mundane internal movements of the Spirit and modernist Bibles which reinterpret traditional texts smacks of personal whims and emotional hankerings. Therefore, modern Christianity is bollix and heretical.

Why Else did People Deviate from Jesus' Original Teachings?

Besides resisting Christ's teachings, early Christians must have lacked love; otherwise they would not have split to begin with. Scripture repeatedly refers to the Church as Christ's body and family. Christians were not only admonished to love their neighbor as themselves, they were to fervently love their brethren in Christ, be knit together in love, and greet fellow believers with a kiss. Men whom the apostle Paul converted to Christianity were his "sons."

Fellow believers were supposed to be closer to one another than even their immediate families. Study Christian Scripture carefully. Those who lack closeness drift apart and therefore tend to disagree on what they consider true. And if the truth had been sufficiently supported, we wouldn't be in the predicament we are in now and wouldn't need to rehash these things. Complete love and dedication to God and loving our fellow compatriots in Christ would end all deadness, conflicts, coldness, corruption, deviations, and splits.

Reasons why Modern Christianity is Apostate

Arrogant Foolishness: A) Pontificating in unloving fashion and shunning those who struggle with sin instead of ministering to them; B) dubious claims: If our life is going well, "God blessed us" (offends those who God supposedly didn't bless); if others are doing badly or poorly, "They are cursed" or "lack faith."

Bible Balderdash: Private Scripture interpretation and perverted Scripture translations engender diluted or counterfeit Christianity, infighting, and divisions.

Cult of Personality: A) Rock star Christians and "super-saints"; B) Devout believers who lack charisma are rejected.

Deadness: A) Being fans of Christianity not followers; B) Picking and choosing which elements we want to follow. While early believers prayed constantly, we seldom pray today. While early Christians discussed sin in depth and how to combat it, along with penance, we focus on being uplifted and only confess sins to God or not at all.

Ending Marriages: Unnecessary divorce is traitorous to God's plan; Christ considered unscriptural remarriage as adultery; annulments are an unscriptural innovation. See XXVIII.Marriage: Expose' under Divorce and Remarriage.

Fast Food Christianity: A) spreading a diluted gospel to as many as possible as quickly as possible; B) spreading crutch Christianity: churches become filled with troubled people hungry for comfort instead of primarily being interested in working righteousness.

Gyno-centricity: Feminism harms or destroys man/woman relationships; women's equal rights are unscriptural, unscriptural, unscriptural. This was completely fair, in that men were under compulsion to have more responsibility and care for and cherish women. See XXXI-XXXII.Women's Rights.

Heresies: A) belief only: denying the necessity of baptism, works, churchgoing, and ongoing repentance;
B) The idea Once Saved Always Saved endangers believers with a false sense of security. Instead, we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).
C) Belief that someone has the full measure of the Holy Spirit, and therefore "speaks as God."
D) A dozen other heresies here and there.

Ignorance: A) Ignorance over what our real problems are; B) ignorance of the original faith or Christianity's important points.

Jettisoning Original Christianity for So-called Progressive Revelation: See Early Church VS. "Ongoing Revelation" in this chapter.

Kingdom Confusion: Realizing that the kingdom of God/Heaven and the Church are one and the same entity is foundational for understanding Christianity.

Love of Fellow Believers Lacking: People prefer non-Christian friends and relatives over the Church family; believers marry and go into business with non-believers. Today, some cannot even find friendship at church.

Money-Waste: erecting expensive buildings (the early Church met in private homes) and supporting foreigners who will squander the money.

Needless Complications: While Jesus' disciples lived simple lives yet were morally strict, today's believers have superfluous bureaucracy and gadgetry, yet are morally lax. We are being crushed by the steel jaws of technology.

Oppositions of Science: A) accepting unsubstantiated Big Bang and neo-Darwinist theories destroys or weakens faith. God lovingly creating everything perfectly is replaced with God causing an explosion, from which a hodgepodge of life-forms evolved; B) believers are ignorant of or resist legitimate science and biology.

Political Correctness: A) being afraid to proclaim the full truth "to avoid being judgmental"; B) adopting popular ideas over traditional ideas. Early disciples were politically incorrect while our political correctness and other harebrained schemes stem from the radical sixties.

Quit Backstabbing: A) People quickly shun fellow congregants who offend them instead of properly handling offenses (Matt.18:15-16); B) treating other churches and their members as enemies when we are just as heretical as they are.

Ridiculous Claims: A) Some people supposedly don't act on their desires. Instead, "God sends or moves them." So if we slip on a banana peel, God sent us to the floor. If we cough or sneeze, God must have moved us; B) fake healing; C) modern "tongue speaking" causes confusion, the opposite of Scripture's spiritual gift.

Singles Problems: A) lack of ministry to singles (true singles who are never married with no children); B) singles with little or no hope of being married idolize marriage instead of forming lasting friendships with other Christian singles; C) men are forced to be forever single or marry late; then we wonder why we're drowning in sexual immorality. While special people were honored as singles, today's singles are disparaged and their needs ignored.

Transience: While Christians spent their lives in a localized area, people frequently move away, which destroys relationships or prevents their formation, which prevents love coming from those relationships. This also eliminates accountability.

Unspiritual: We often cannot tell the difference between todays' secularized Christians and non-Christians as far as dress, speech, or manner of life; laxity with gambling, drinking, reveling, alternative lifestyles, and other worldliness; romance before one's relationship with Christ.

Voluptuousness: Materialism, a form of idolatry, engenders soft, easily offended believers, ignorance, and being uncaring towards substantial problems. Early believers condemned the pursuit of material goods; their mansion was in Heaven. Yet many believers today pursue material goods and "home improvement" while being concerned about maintaining class status.

Warmongering: pro-war ideology; the earliest Church opposed and avoided war and military service, unlike today's believers who support dubious war and military actions (instead of legitimate ones).

Xtra Nonsense: A) Church recreation centers, day care centers, gymnasiums, et cetera; B) Instead of everyone singing, only choirs sing while others blast pipe organs, electric guitars, and other instruments; C) Strange unheard of doctrines waste people's precious time and sidetrack believers.

You Need Authority: A) Early Christians understood the importance of enforced godly policies, while today's believers want separation of Church and State. Now we have government sanctioned immorality while Christian policies are being dismantled; B) The Church had apostolic succession while today's leaders are often chosen by popular vote or are self-appointed.

Zionism: A) Christian believers support Israel who opposes Christianity, accept judaizing, have Christian /Jewish alliances; B) mating the Old Testament with the New and defending corrupt Hebrew texts. Early churchmen rebuked judaizers and insisted that salvation was in Christ alone. The Old Testament was separate from the New for Christianity's first 1,200 years.

In conclusion, ALL modern churches are at least partially apostate; they must repent!

Comparing JESUS with today's "Christians"

While Jesus was empathetic, selfless, meek, and humble, many believers are thoughtless and self-centered; church leaders are often egotistical. While Jesus was bold, straightforward, and completely consistent, believers are secretive, won't say what they mean, contradict themselves, and change their story "to save face."

Jesus was self-sacrificing and benevolent, spending His entire life ministering to others and embracing the unloved. However, we make excuses for not serving others and have no time for others. Many live alone and nobody visits them. While Jesus taught complete spiritual healing, we have a mixture of spiritual and psychiatric "healing."

While Jesus read minds and hearts, taught to turn the other cheek, and taught an appropriate procedure to deal with offenses, believers misunderstand and misinterpret you, get offended over small matters, hold grudges, and if offended, gossip or shun you.

While Jesus taught to put God before everything, believers put family, career, houses, cars, sports, sexuality, or hobbies first. While Jesus taught to be a good influence on others, areas with high percentages of believers have higher rates of crime, unwed mothers, illiteracy, and unemployment than areas with lower percentages of believers. Many advocate mere belief and nothing more, which resembles believing in mathematics while never learning to count.

Quoting authoress Barbara Ehrenreich: "Today Jesus makes His appearance only as a corpse; the living man, the altruistic (I substituted altruistic for "wine-guzzling") vagrant and precocious socialist;

is rarely mentioned, likewise anything He ever had to say. Christ crucified dominates, perhaps the true business of modern "Christianity" is to crucify Him again and again so He can never get a word out of His mouth."8

John the Baptist, greatest among men, was a social oddity; a disheveled single man who ate bugs; but always presented the harsh truth no matter what. Likewise, the early Church fathers primarily engaged in constructive criticism and calls to repentance. They felt that most people needed admonishment, not encouragement.

Today's popular religious leaders are the opposite, unless admonishing people to give money. Various show-boaters and rock star Christians have the world's friendship. However, "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Also, we cannot tell whether or not anyone is truly saintly by simply being in their presence. We know true Christians by knowing them for years, and seeing that their lives are consistent with historical Christian principles. Summarily, the Church was easily distinguished from the world, while today we often can not tell the difference between believers and unbelievers. Church groups are funneling down the drain into Unitarian Universalist-style communes of self-glorification, humanistic morality, and whatever theology. However, with fervent love in our hearts, we can find agreement and revitalize true Christianity.

Part 2: Just Read the Bible?

Many contradictory beliefs are held by those who consider the Bible a complete, self-sufficient revelation. Supporters of each contradictory belief have prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance besides. Since simply reading the Bible and praying for spiritual wisdom is problematic, one minister, who claimed that the Bible is all-sufficient, had over a thousand commentaries to foster bible knowledge, and suggested that everyone have their own library. If everyone did so, with over two hundred pages per book, times fifty congregants, that's a whopping ten million pages of extra-biblical material for just one congregation to understand the Bible.

Ignoring historical interpretations breeds irrational ideas no matter how many study aids you have. "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose…….. Oh what a goodly outside falsehood hath!"---- Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice Act I, Scene III.(9) That is why we need the early Church fathers to guide us. However, Scripture still holds center stage. Therefore, be warned about:

Modern Translations

There is always a correlation between your beliefs and practices and the translation you use. Now people falsely claim that the King James Version uses unintelligible Old English, while 20th-21st century translations use fine-tuned modern English. Actually, Old English was used prior to AD 1100; Middle English was current from 1100 through the 1400s. The King James's 1600s-1700s English is technically considered Modern English.10

Classical Elizabethan terms (thee, thou, saith, et cetera) are easily understood. Sometimes they are more efficient: goeth equals am going, hopeth equals ongoing hope. Also, substituting common English sometimes causes incorrect rendering of tenses. Even the consistent rendering of words in contemporary versions is a step backwards, creating flatness. The King James's checkered translation and obscure and unique words make memorization easier.

►Underlying Texts: More significantly, the manuscripts underlying traditional translations are disputed. Contemporary translations wholly or partly adhere to Westcott and Hort's theory of textual criticism created in the mid-1800s. Westcott and Hort relied on codexes: unbound sheets of parchment written in Greek. If none of the codexes had a passage which traditional Bibles had, the passage was excluded. If most codexes lacked a passage from the traditional text, the passage was marginalized. These excluded and marginalized verses and verse sections amount to two books of material. The traditional text is abandoned on the pretext that no original manuscripts exist and every codex is much older than the received text that traditional Bibles translate from. Seemingly, critical scholars purified Scripture by excluding spurious material added later. Correct? Not so fast.

The horse is older than the automobile. Even a one year old horse is conceptually much older than a Model T Ford. That's because she is a duplication of her ancestors over thousands of years. Likewise, the text underlying the old King James lineage of testaments duplicates texts which passed down through the centuries. We know this because early churchmen quoted the passages that the codexes excluded.

Since documented early Church support of the traditional text comes from writings dating from AD 100-275 and the codexes date from AD 275-400, we know that Westcott and Hort's Critical text doesn't restore Scripture, it robs it of around 180 verses worth of material. Besides, codexes sometimes contradict each other; most are incomplete.

Original manuscripts weren't preserved because constantly using old manuscripts quickly wore them out. Instead of forever relying on them, they were reproduced, as horses reproduce. We never depend on a thousand year old horse. That codexes outlasted all other manuscripts actually speaks against their value. We would expect the most reliable manuscripts to be constantly used, and thus disintegrate, while less reliable manuscripts would be rarely used, thus spared from wearing out, and thus be the oldest existing texts.11

Thankfully, after the printing press was invented, Desiderius Erasmus gathered together the scattered New Testament manuscripts, publishing them in one convenient volume in 1516 (The Textus Receptus or Received Text). Far from initializing his own book, Erasmus spared others from continually hunting down manuscripts. And the personal life of Erasmus or King James is irrelevant since they were not the translators.

►Contemporary Versions Rewrite Scripture: Most significantly, contemporary translations often paraphrase passages. Not for increased clarity; they make Scripture reflect biased sectarian viewpoints. Compare the American Standard of 1901, the most accurate word for word English translation relying on modern textual criticism (Westcott/Hort, et al.), with today's popular translations:
12**LINK►** https://ebible.org/asv/

Many do condemn the 1950 New World Translation used by Jehovah's Witnesses, for its rendering such passages as John 1:1's the Word was God into the Word was a god. But there have been over a dozen such "Unitarian" bibles, from Thomas Belsham's 1808 New Testament to those produced in the 19-70s, which mirror the New World Translation. Even the "most accurate" contemporary translation, the New American Standard, removes Christ's deity in several passages, changes references to worshipping Christ into merely bowing before, and has many other deletions and distortions.(12) Even the so-called "New King James" often omits the terms hell, repent, God, damnation, blood, and distorts other passages, making its translation from the Textus Receptus almost irrelevant.13

Most updated bibles twist passages to make full salvation at the point of belief, belief only, or once saved always saved. Passages on divorce and homosexuality are sometimes purposely altered.

Some have gender neutral pronouns, supporting a feminist agenda. By removing the word yet from John 7:8, numerous translations make Jesus into a liar (compare with John 7:10). Some translations change Satan's name before he fell, Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12) into morning star, a title for Christ.(14) The wildly popular New International Version (NIV) sometimes removes Christ's deity, virgin birth, Christ's blood, and several references to worshipping Christ. It diluted and perverted the Lord's prayer (Luke 11:2-4). It has many other distortions.15

An especially bad NIV perversion was translating the underlying Greek word sarx (traditionally translated "flesh") into "sinful nature" 28 times in Christian scripture. This is the opposite of the Christian goal of having a new sinless nature. Bolstering the idea that this was a mistranslation was the NIV publisher's subsequent removal of "sinful nature" in an updated edition (TNIV). But since the TNIV has a massive amount of other word changes, this should also destroy the TNIV's credibility. Interestingly, the same company to first publish the NIV (Zondervan) simultaneously published Anton La Vey's Satanic Bible.(16) The popular New Living Translation is even more inaccurate.(17) And while Scripture admonished servants to obey masters, contemporary translations change the word servant into slave. Although the underlying word doulos seems better translated slave; that should be overruled since common sense should tell us that slavery is wrong.

Per Catholic bibles, the Latin Vulgate, a received text translated by Saint Jerome from earlier texts around AD 390, was official for over one thousand five hundred years. In a shocking turnaround, it's now defrocked (the Douay-Rheims of 1610, based on the Vulgate, is still recognized as the most accurate Catholic translation). Now today's English Catholic versions use the same underlying Westcott and Hort Critical Text text as the NIV. Besides, these Catholic perversions also rewrite Scripture (poorly). The most popular English Catholic version, the New American Bible (NAB) dilutes and distorts many passages such as the beloved twenty-third Psalm, has heretical footnotes in some copies, and is a third rate translation overall. This perversion is a "wolf in calfskin."18

Some "Bibles," such as Thomas Jefferson's dissection, the Reader's Digest Version, the Cabbage Patch Version, and Rappin' with Jesus are butchered cows. Some people even pick the translation whose wording best fits their view on a certain subject, bounce to another if its wording conflicts on another subject, and keep bouncing around. Imagine a High School teacher assigning a book report, then passing out different translations of the book to different students instead of one uniform translation. Since having multiple translations of a book causes confusion, why laud having a superfluous number of Bible translations?

Some reply "The Devil focuses his attack on Christianity; that's why it's scrambled up." However, since "Greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4) Satan should have been overruled. Instead, Christendom's apostasy is due to corrupted texts, private interpretation which produced millions of independent popes, and Modernism, where millions of people influence the bishops and produce similar results to private interpretation. Actually there is no bibliolatry. Rather, private interpretation of any religious book is a form of self-worship; "Thus saith I." Private interpretation by any one sect is a form of group-worship; "Thus saith we."

SOLUTION

ooo Only use the most accurate Scripture translation in your native language.

ooo The "Old Testament" has been superseded. Strictly reading and studying the "New Testament" solves most of the problem. Everything needed to obtain salvation and live the Christian life is mentioned in New Testament canon.

- To understand difficult passages clearly, or when disputes arise, we have the early Church, which preserved and documented the original interpretations.
- Always apply logic, not emotion.
- To help us live out our faith, we have prayer and fellow Christians. Simple!

~Earnestly contending for the faith that was once and for all delivered (Jude 3)~