

A) SEARCH FOR ULTIMATE TRUTH – SCIENTISM AND THEOLOGY:

1. **Through the years I've come to believe that the search for "Truth", especially the "Ultimate Truth and Meaning of Life" seems to be something that's hardwired in humanity. Those you are paying attention cannot help but observe the amazing reality of the universe and the simple perfection of the world we live on. From there it is but a short step to desire to make sense out of it and discover our place within it.**

Biblical Scripture says it nicely in the Living Translation:

Psalms 19:1-4a

The heavens tell of the glory of God.

The skies display God's marvelous craftsmanship.

Day after day they continue to speak;

night after night they make him known.

They speak without a sound or a word;

their voice is silent in the skies; yet their message has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to all the world.

Romans 1:19-20

For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts.

From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see God's invisible qualities—God's eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.

2. **As a self-professing "Christian Anthropologist and Spiritual Explorer" it seems I've pretty much always been life-long seeker of Truth and Meaning, I am fascinated by scientific research and also religious faith. The development of historical religions through the ages speaks to a deeply seated need in humanity. In my view, religious faith is not merely superstition it's about engaging with something mystical behind the cosmos. The fact that every culture has a world view and identity anchored in a religious ideology would seem to strengthen the argument that humanity has intrinsic need to understand ourselves and the place in the cosmos we inhabit. The following chronology of religious development seems to provide a clear view of humanity's need for coming to terms with the "Ultimate Truth and Meaning" theologians generally call God. In the Classic Anthropology I learned as a young man, Culture is comprised of three distinct aspects which are: 1) Ideology, 2) Socio-Political Organization, and 3) Technology. The interplay of these three aspects of culture provide a distinctive world-view that integrates the culture. More recently, contemporary anthropologists have borrowed from contemporary scientists the notion of "Scientific Naturalism" in exploring and interpreting the world we inhabit. Scientific Naturalism means that scientific study and inquiry must be explainable solely from phenomena that are 1) naturally occurring, 2) observable, and 3) quantifiable by known scientific methodology. This approach to scientific inquiry would necessarily exclude anything supernatural. Thus, in one stroke science has removed God and any other supernatural or mystical forces from any serious scientific considerations. However, it begs the question... why then is humanity**

so interested in the supernatural? Why has the search for truth, meaning and purpose through the ages led many brilliant people into the realm of mysticism and religion to explain our reality?

3. As an Anthropologist, I understand that science alone does not answer adequately questions posed by mystics. Seems the more we learn and think we know, the more questions arise that science alone as narrowly defined as scientific naturalism can't answer. Anthropologists had thought that "Evolution" would solve all of our questions about the Origin of Life, but instead it has raised more questions. Evolution proposes a creative process that works by "stand alone, hands off, emergent principles" where order and purpose emerge from random actions and chance. However, Creation has increasingly been discovered to have a natural flow that trends toward order, purpose, and symbiotic interdependency. For order and purpose to emerge from random chance and chaos seems intellectually dishonest. From my own study and perspective, the evolutionary process is not adequately descriptive of the natural order, which is observable as neither capricious or random. Astute observers find Creation to be well ordered, integrated, gloriously diverse, and symbiotically interdependent. In my opinion the scientific approach known as "Intelligent Design" which proposes a creative process that works by "externally imposed creative energy" moving through creation, is far more correctly reflective of what can be observed in the natural order. Intelligent Design is made all the more plausible as scientists have discovered numerous "Irreducibly Complex Systems (ICS)" in the natural order. ICS are foundational components of life that could not have been developed in an independent linear process.
- a. One such Irreducibly Complex System includes the genetic blueprint provided by DNA. DNA and its close relative RNA are described by science as the common spark of life as we know it on earth. It is known that DNA alone cannot replicate itself; thus, DNA could not be the first genetic precursor. It is also understood that RNA allows DNA to replicate itself, and that one could not effectively operate in replicating life without the other. In fact, DNA and RNA are necessarily made for one another to allow the replication of life. One cannot work without the other, and neither has a purpose in nature apart from the other. The two necessarily operate together and thus form one of many irreducibly complex systems.
 - b. In contemplating the universe as we know it, Newtonian Laws of gravity and motion both necessitate a pre-existing framework upon which the universe was built. Science understands that gravitational physics and mathematic-geometric laws had to have pre-existed the universe for without them, the universe would be unanchored, unordered, and malfunctional. Additionally, The Laws of Thermodynamics demonstrate a bio-chemical process that moves from the complex to the simple, not the other way around. To move elements into complex compounds requires a significant amount of energy from outside the chemical reaction. Irreducibly Complex Systems can be found throughout the universe and in life on earth. All of this would seem to indicate that a purposeful ethos necessarily precedes and supports the mechanics of causation.
 - c. As discussed above, both astro-geological physics and biochemistry are examples of irreducibly complex systems. This would seem to point the search for Ultimate Truth and Meaning toward a supernatural causative actor.... what we might call the Author of Life... or God. This makes humanity's search for the Ultimate Truth and Meaning in a supernatural realm both reasonable

and understandable. Furthermore, the Historical Timeline of Religious Development that follows in Part B below traces this search by a great number of smart people over a prolonged period of time very interesting. Thus, religion may not necessarily be the blind leap of faith science would suppose.

4. As a Christian Anthropologist, I have come to the discovery that Jesus is the central figure in all of creation and in particular in humanity's development and redemption. From the Garden of Eden where God's desire for relational interaction with sentient beings took root with humanity, to the New Heaven and Earth at the end of the age where God's redemptive plan for humanity finds fulfillment, God is and always has been actively engaged with humanity. Many of these AD Opinion and Discovery articles will help lay out some of the basics of the development of thought in support of humanity's need to find and interact with this Being we call God who the Bible reveals is not an impersonal actor but rather is surprisingly desirous to be known and seeks to enjoy relational intimacy with humanity.
5. The first part of this discovery process outlines our present understanding of the development of world religions throughout redemptive history, meaning the Biblical time between Eden and the New Heaven and Earth. The following article on the Historical Timeline of Religious Development outlines the development of current world religions sequentially throughout the earth. This article was developed by unknown authors and editors and is presented as an open resource on Wikipedia the Free Online Encyclopedia. I thought the authors did well in presenting the gradual process of religious development through the years and decided to build upon it to more clearly show this helps demonstrate humanity's need for discovery of Ultimate Truth. As a Pastor and Christian Anthropologist, I have taken the liberty to both clarify and edit this Wikipedia article. I have left most of the hyperlink resources intact for those who want to dig deeper on any of this material. It might be helpful to explain that my undergraduate degree was in Cultural Anthropology with an emphasis in Archaeology and World Religions; additionally my Master's Degree was in Christian Ministry and Theology with an emphasis on Christian Discipleship. Thus, my educational background uniquely qualifies me for editing and commentary on many of these topics especially on a Christ Centered perspective.
6. The following "Timeline of Religions" is not complete or exhaustive and most likely will require additional research and modification. The focus here is upon the major religious movements that are still viable demonstrating humanity's desire to find and experience the supernatural. There are of course many other lesser known religions without a world-wide impact, or those that have passed into obscurity and are waiting to be rediscovered. However, this timeline is intended to provide a reasonable framework for further discussion and study.
7. Final Thoughts:
 - a. Theologians and philosophers argue with Scientists about a Supreme Being who not only exists but whose creative acts and influences put Creation in motion. Biblical Theologians argue that God created, ordered, and sustains the universe and everything in it. Scientists argue that everything came spontaneously into being with one naturally occurring act after another, and that there is no evidence of God and no need to invent one. However, the History of Religious Development certainly demonstrates that there is ample room for mystery and mysticism amid a desire to experience the supernatural.

- b. Catholic Bishop Robert Barron defines “Scientism” as “The tendency to reduce all legitimate knowledge to the scientific form of knowledge, presuming if science can’t explain it, then it’s not real.” He says, “Something tightens in me whenever scientists pontificate on matters that are more properly philosophical or religious. There is a qualitative difference between science and philosophy or theology. Science seeks after events, objects, and phenomena within the empirically observable and measurable universe. This is the proper purview of science. Philosophy and theology seek after ultimate and final causes. This is the proper purview of philosophy and theology. Science as such cannot adjudicate questions that lie outside its proper purview. Which is precisely why scientists say a lot of silly things when they venture to say things about philosophy and theology.” To hear Bishop Barron’s entire message on the Question of God and Science go to this link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-yx5WN4efo>
- c. I think it’s clear that “Scientific Naturalism” which limits the scope of discussion of Ultimate Truth and Meaning by excluding anything supernatural is intellectually dishonest. To presume there is no reality beyond what science can presently measure and define is utter foolishness. There is much that “we don’t know” and probably even more that “we don’t know that we don’t know.” One thing seems pretty clear to me, that the universe and its cosmic order and magnificent beauty speaks more of an active Creator that beckons to be found, rather than a haphazard series of random events. It would also seem clear to me that we would probably never know Who this Ultimate Reality was unless He revealed Himself to humanity. Scientism and Mysticism are different means of exploring the reality we find ourselves in. Let the discussion begin!
- d. For more on the AD website regarding the supernatural, please visit these articles:
 - i. Intelligent Design – Reconciling Science and Scripture - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%205.1-%20Opinion%20Paper%20-%20Intelligent%20Design%20-%20Reconciling%20Science%20and%20Scripture.pdf>
 - ii. In search of the Historical Jesus - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%205.2-%20-%20Opinion%20Paper%20-%20In%20Search%20of%20the%20Historical%20Jesus.pdf>
 - iii. Contemplating God in Creation - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.6%20Prayer%20Practicum%204%20-%20Contemplating%20God%20in%20Creation.pdf>
 - iv. Contemplating God in Scripture - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.7%20Prayer%20Practicum%205%20-%20Contemplating%20God%20in%20Scripture.pdf>
 - v. Developing Spiritual Vitality - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.5%20Prayer%20Practicum%203%20-%20Developing%20Spiritual%20Vitality.pdf>

B) HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT:

1. PREHISTORY – Though no written documents were produced during this era, much has been discovered through archaeological research, which has provided a glimpse into the lives of these ancients of pre-history:

50th to 11th millennium BCE

- a. 40,000 BCE – The remains of one of the earliest [anatomically modern humans](#) to be [cremated](#) was [buried near Lake Mungo](#) Australia. This is the earliest known evidence of a complicated burial ritual, and evidence of a belief in a supernatural afterlife.
- b. 38,000 BCE
 - i. The [Aurignacian Löwenmensch figurine](#), the oldest known zoomorphic (animal-shaped) sculpture in the world and one of the oldest known sculptures in general, was made. The sculpture has also been interpreted as anthropomorphic, giving human characteristics to an animal, although it may have represented a deity.
 - ii. All convincing evidence for Neanderthal burials ceased at about this time. Roughly coinciding with the time period of the rise of [Homo sapiens](#) [AKA “modern Man”] introduction to [Europe](#) and what appears to be the ensuing decline of the Neanderthals. Individual skulls and/or long bones began appearing, heavily stained with red [ochre](#) and separately buried in preparation for their entry into an afterlife.
 - iii. The oldest discovered “[Venus figurines](#)” appeared in some of these graves. Some were deliberately broken or repeatedly stabbed, possibly representing the murders of the men with whom they were buried or owing to some other unknown social dynamic.
- c. 25,000–21,000 BCE – Clear examples of burials are present in Iberia, Wales, and Eastern Europe. These also incorporate the heavy use of red ochre.
 - i. According to some scholars, Neolithic burials used red ochre pigments symbolically, either to represent a return to the earth or possibly as a form of ritual rebirth, in which the color symbolizes blood and the [Great Goddess](#).
 - ii. Additionally, various objects were included in the graves, including periwinkle shells, [weighted clothing](#), dolls, possible drumsticks, mammoth ivory beads, fox teeth [pendants](#), a panoply of ivory [artifacts](#), “baton” antlers, flint blades etc.
- d. 20,000–15,000 BCE – Indo-European people began migrating from what we know as the Aleutian Island Chain into what is now Alaska through an ancient land bridge that was exposed during an ice-age event. This land bridge has subsequently been buried by rising ocean waters about 10,000 years ago. These peoples are the ancestors of north and south American Indians.
- e. 13,000–8,000 BCE
 - i. Noticeable burial activity continued in Europe. Prior mortuary activity had either taken a less obvious form or contemporaries retained some of their previous burial knowledge in the absence of such activity. Dozens of men, women, and children were being buried in the same caves which were used for burials 10,000 years beforehand.
 - ii. All these graves are delineated by the cave walls and large limestone blocks. The burials share a number of characteristics such as use of ochre, and shell and mammoth ivory jewelry, that go back thousands of years. Some burials were double, comprising an adult

male with a juvenile male buried by his side. These burials were beginning to take on the form of modern [cemeteries](#) honoring and commemorating the dead.

- iii. Old burials were commonly re-dug and moved to make way for new ones, with the older bones often being gathered and [cached](#) together. Large stones may have acted as grave markers. Pairs of ochre colored antlers were sometimes mounted on poles within the cave; this may well be compared to the modern practice of leaving flowers at a grave.

10th Millennium to 1st century BCE

- a. 9130–7370 BCE – This was the apparent period of use of [Göbekli Tepe](#), Turkish for "Potbelly Hill" is an archaeological site in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey and is one of the oldest human-made sites of worship yet discovered – see picture below.



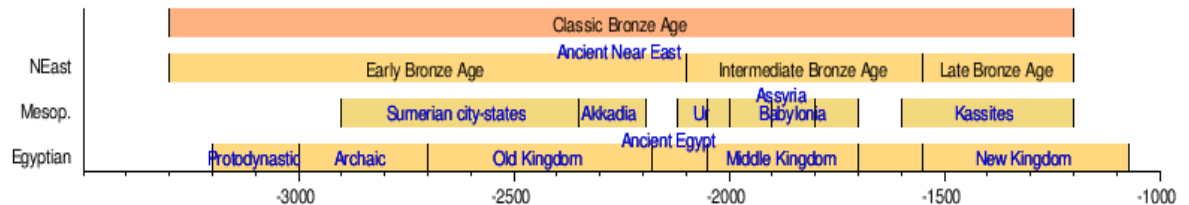
Evidence of similar usage has also been found in another nearby site, [Nevalı Çori](#). This period is also noted as the beginning of the [First Sangam](#) period in [South India](#).

- b. 7500–5700 BCE – The settlements of [Catalhoyuk](#) developed as a likely spiritual center of [Anatolia](#) [Asia Minor]. Possibly practicing worship in communal shrines, with its inhabitants having left behind numerous clay figurines and impressions of phallic, feminine and hunting scenes.
- c. 5500–4500 BCE – The [Proto-Indo-Europeans](#) (PIE) emerged, probably within the [Pontic-Caspian Steppe](#). The PIE peoples developed a religion focused on [sacrificial ideology](#), which means [propitiary] sacrifices for their deity. Such activity would influence the religions and cultures throughout [Eurasia](#).

2. THE ANCIENT ERA – A combination of archaeological research and written evidence gives us a good look at the lives and beliefs of these ancient peoples:

50th to 26th century BCE

- a. 3750 BCE – The [Proto-Semitic](#) people emerged from their generally accepted homeland in the Ancient Near East Mediterranean region.
- i. Proto-Semitic is a reconstructed language ancestral to the historical [Semitic languages](#). A 2009 study proposes that it was spoken from at least about 3750 BCE during the Early Bronze Age:



- ii. There is no consensus regarding the location of the Proto-Semitic [urheimat](#) [homeland]. Scholars hypothesize that it may have originated in [Upper Mesopotamia](#), the [Arabian Peninsula](#), the [Levant](#), or the [Sahara](#). The Semitic language family is considered to be part of the broader macro-family of [Afroasiatic languages](#).
- iii. These early Semitic people would migrate throughout the [Near East](#) into Mesopotamia, Egypt, Ethiopia and the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, an area known as the Levant. The Levant is a term in geography that refers to an area in the Middle East which includes the historical areas of Palestine, Israel and Syria. The Levant is bounded by the Taurus Mountains to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the northern Arabian Desert to the south and Upper Mesopotamia to the east.
- b. 3300–1300 BCE – The [Indus Valley Civilization](#) (IVC) was a Bronze Age civilization (3300–1300 BCE with their mature period 2600–1900 BCE) in the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent, noted for its cities built of brick, roadside drainage system and multistoried houses, as well as for creating artifacts which could be linked to pre-Vedic [Hindu] religions.
- c. 3102 BCE – This was the beginning of [Kaliyuga](#), a new age among the followers of [India's religions](#).
- d. 3100 BCE – The initial phase of what would ultimately become [Stonehenge](#) was completed. It included a circular bank and ditch enclosure of about 110 meters (360 ft) across, evidence shows that it included a timber circle.
- e. 3100–2900 BCE – [Newgrange](#), a prehistoric monument in County Meath, Ireland, located eight kilometers (5.0 mi) west of Drogheda on the north side of the River Boyne. It was built during the [Neolithic](#) period, around 3200 BC, making it older than the as yet incomplete [Stonehenge](#) and the [Egyptian pyramids](#). Newgrange included a 250,000 ton [passage tomb](#) aligned to the [winter solstice](#) in Ireland.
- f. 3000 BCE
- i. Sumerian Cuneiform emerged from the proto-literate Uruk period, allowing the codification of beliefs and creation of detailed historical religious records.
- ii. The [second phase of Stonehenge](#) was completed and appeared to function as the first enclosed cremation cemetery in the British Isles.
- g. 2635–2610 BCE – The oldest surviving [Egyptian Pyramid](#) was commissioned by [Pharaoh Djoser](#).

- h. 2600 BCE – Stonehenge began to take on the form of its final phase. The wooden posts were replaced with bluestone. It began taking on an increasingly complex setup including religious ritual elements including an altar, a portal, station stones, and shows consideration of solar alignments.
- i. 2560 BCE – This is the approximate time accepted as the completion of the [Great Pyramid of Giza](#), the oldest pyramid of the Giza Plateau.

25th to 16th centuries BCE

- a. 2494–2345 BCE – The first of the oldest surviving religious texts, the [Pyramid Texts](#), was composed in Ancient Egypt.
- b. 2200 BCE – The [Minoan Civilization](#) developed in Crete. Citizens worshipped a variety of goddesses.
- c. 2150–2000 BCE – The earliest surviving versions of the [Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh](#)—originally titled *He who Saw the Deep* (*Sha naqba īmuru*) or *Surpassing All Other Kings* (*Shūtur eli sharrī*)—were written.
- d. 2000 BCE – Abraham the first of the Jewish Patriarchs, was called by God to journey to a new land where God promised that he would become the beginning of a Nation (Israel). Abraham accepted God’s promise by faith and embarked on a 1,000-mile journey from the Chaldean city of Ur to Canaan and Egypt. Abraham’s interaction with Melchizedek [the Priest of El-Elyon, meaning “God Most High” and he was also King of Salem, meaning “City of Peace”]. Melchizedek is recognized by Abraham as part of an existing older order of faith in God whom Abraham has now trusted and was following.
- e. 2000 BCE – The Maya civilization developed within the [Mesoamerica](#) cultural area, which covers a region that spreads from northern Mexico southwards into Central America. Mesoamerica was one of six [cradles of civilization](#) worldwide. Though cultural development began much earlier, it wasn’t until around 2000 BCE that the culture coalesced. Mesoamerican culture was ultimately decimated by Colombian contact in the 15th century CE.
 - i. The Mesoamerican area gave rise to a series of cultural developments that included complex societies, agriculture, cities, monumental architecture, writing, and calendrical systems. The set of traits shared by Mesoamerican cultures also included astronomical knowledge, blood and human sacrifice, and a cosmovision that viewed the world as divided into four divisions aligned with the cardinal directions, each with different attributes, and a three-way division of the world into the celestial realm, the earth, and the underworld.
 - ii. The Maya civilization developed in an area that encompasses southeastern Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize, and the western portions of Honduras and El Salvador. This region consists of the northern lowlands encompassing the Yucatán Peninsula, and the highlands of the Sierra Madre, running from the Mexican state of Chiapas, across southern Guatemala and onwards into El Salvador, and the southern lowlands of the Pacific littoral plain.
 - iii. The territory of the Maya covered a third of Mesoamerica, and the Maya were engaged in a dynamic relationship with neighboring cultures that included the [Olmecs](#), [Mixtec’s](#), Teotihuacan, the [Aztecs](#), and others.
- j. 1,800 BCE – The earliest known Code of Law – The Akkadian Law Code of Eshnunna was written and predates its better-known successor the Code of Hammurabi written around 1,750 BCE. Both were precursors that bear a resemblance to the Mosaic Law which is dated to around 1,580 BCE.

Each established a detailed code of morals and ethics allowing a society the internal governmental order necessary for cohesion to flourish and grow.

- f. 1700–1100 BCE – The oldest of the [Hindu Vedas](#) (scriptures), the [Rig Veda](#) was composed.
- g. 1600 BCE – The ancient development of [Stonehenge](#) came to an end.

15th to 11th centuries BCE

- a. 1500 BCE – The [Vedic Age](#) began in India after the collapse of the [Indus Valley Civilization](#).
- b. 1500 BCE – Anasazi Indians of the North American continent began settlements in the Four-Corners region of Southwest America including Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico.
- c. 1526-1406 BCE – Moses intercedes with Pharaoh for the release of the Jewish nation relegated to slavery. The final miraculous act of the Passover [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover>] finally convinces Pharaoh to release the Hebrew nation. Moses then would become the “lawgiver” who introduced God’s [Ten Commandments](#) to the young Jewish Nation of Israel, and delivers the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land of Canaan [Palestine-Levant]. In a religious landscape dominated by tribal and regional Pantheistic Pagan gods, ancient Israel was the first monotheistic religion.
 - i. “Pantheistic Religion” refers to the belief that God is equal to the entire universe, thereby encompassing all its physical matter as well as the forces that govern it. Such concepts are found in the ancient books of Hinduism, in the works of many Greek philosophers, and in later works of philosophy and religion over the centuries. Much of “Modern New Age Spirituality” is Pantheistic. Pantheism renders a concept of God as being impersonal, and doesn't allow for any difference between the creation and the creator.
 - 1. Pantheism is the view that the world is either identical to God, or an expression of God’s nature. Pantheism comes from ‘pan’ meaning all, and ‘theism,’ which means belief in God. So according to Pantheism, “God is everything and everything is God.”
 - 2. While this may sound like a familiar Theistic concept of God’s immanence, which is the idea that God pervades or is ever-present throughout the universe. However, Pantheism differs from traditional theistic religions in two important ways.
 - a. First, pantheism rejects the idea that God is transcendent. According to traditional Western Monotheistic conceptions, God is an entity that is above and beyond the universe. So, although God may be fully present in the universe, He is also outside of it. Simply put, He transcends the totality of objects in the world. When Pantheists say that “God is everything and everything is God,” this is meant to capture that idea that God encompasses but does not transcend the world.
 - b. A second important difference between Pantheism and traditional Monotheistic religions is that Pantheists reject the idea of God’s “Personhood.” The Pantheistic “God” is not a personal God, meaning the kind of entity that could have beliefs, desires, intentions, or an interactive relational agency.
 - 3. In Pantheism, there was no uniform God and no uniform moral-ethical value structure. Humanity is seen as free to devise their own codes of moral-ethical

conduct without fear of judgment or divine reprisal. Good and bad behavior and conduct may be prescribed by a pantheistic culture, but there is no moral-ethical standard prescribed by God.

- ii. In stark contrast, Monotheistic Israel was the first nation to make absolute moral-ethical choices based upon a universal standard revealed by a “Personal and All-Powerful God” who is relational and seeks intimacy with humanity. Israel’s YAHWEH revealed Himself as the absolute moral-ethical authority whose standard of conduct was prescribed in the Jewish Law modeled after Ancient Near Eastern binding Sovereign-Vassal agreements, complete with blessings and curses for obedience and adherence to the Law.
- d. 1351 or 1353 BCE – [Akhenaten](#) was credited with starting the earliest known recorded form of monotheism in Ancient Egypt. Akhenaten was an ancient Egyptian pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty who ruled for 17 years and died perhaps in 1336 BC or 1334 BC.
 - i. Akhenaten forced his religious reforms on his people. Certainly, as time drew on, he revised the names of the Aten, and other religious language, to increasingly exclude references to other gods; at some point, also, he embarked on the wide-scale erasure of traditional gods' names, especially those of [Amun](#). Some of his court changed their names to remove them from the patronage of other gods and place them under that of Aten (or [Ra](#), with whom Akhenaten equated the Aten).
 - ii. Akhenaten is noted for abandoning traditional Egyptian [polytheism](#) and introducing worship centered on the Aten, which is described as a form of monotheism. While it elevated Aten above the traditional Egyptian Pantheon, it didn't dismiss the other gods but now considered them lesser gods. An early inscription likens the Aten to the sun as compared to stars, and later official language avoids calling the Aten a god, giving the solar deity a status above the other gods in their Pantheon.
 - iii. Akhenaten tried to shift his culture from Egypt's traditional religion, but the shifts were not widely accepted. After his death, his monuments were dismantled and hidden, his statues were destroyed, his name excluded from the king lists, and the traditional religious practice was gradually restored.
 - iv. Although Akhenaten's reforms occurred in the aftermath of the Hebrew Exodus led by Moses, to what extent Judaism's Monotheism influenced Akhenaten's monotheism is likely but uncertain.
- e. 1300–1000 BCE – The "standard" Akkadian version of the [Epic of Gilgamesh](#) was edited by Sin-liqe-unninni.
- f. 1250–600 BCE – The [Upanishads](#) (Vedic texts) were composed, containing the earliest emergence of some of the central religious concepts of Hinduism, which were foundational for both [Buddhism](#) and [Jainism](#).
- g. 1200 BCE – The [Greek “Dark Age”](#) began.
- h. 1200 BCE – The [Olmecs](#) built the earliest [pyramids](#) and temples in [Central America](#).
- i. 1200 BCE – The Anasazi Indians began creating elaborate cliff dwellings throughout the four corners region of the North American Southwest.

- i. These dwellings included “Kivas” or ceremonial gathering places, ritual purification baths, as well as sophisticated astronomical observatories that accurately mark the Solstices and Equinoxes of the solar year. Though simpler and half way around the world, these practices were similar to the British Island Culture that built Stonehenge. The Anasazi also practiced burial and other rituals, and in their late cultural stage they incorporated some of the sacrificial practices likely imported from the Meso-American cultures to the south.
- ii. The Anasazi built magnificent villages such as Chaco Canyon’s Pueblo Bonito, a tenth-century complex that was as many as five stories tall and contained about 800 rooms. The people laid a 400-mile network of roads, some of them 30 feet wide, across deserts and canyons which connected their Pueblos and farming villages.
- iii. The Anasazi [meaning “ancient ones”] are the ancestors of the Hopi and Zuni Indians who continued the Pueblo Culture. For more on the Anasazi see <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/riddles-of-the-anasazi-85274508/#8cKbf87givv6lvyR.99>

10th to 1st centuries BCE

- a. c.1000–970 BCE – King David conquered the Ancient Middle East region [later to be known as Palestine] and established the Davidic Monarchy of the Nation of Israel with Jerusalem as his capital. David’s son Solomon (970-930 BCE) would solidify and fortify the Davidic Monarchy with impressive building projects including the Great Temple of Yahweh ((60 BCE) where Judaism flourished. Solomon also formed alliances with the greater neighboring cultures and brought peace and prosperity to the region. Model of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem center below:



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- b. 877–777 BCE – The life of [Parshvanatha](#), 23rd *Tirthankara* of [Jainism](#).
- c. 800 BCE – The so-called [Greek “Dark Age”](#) named for the fabled Greek poet Homer, ends.
- d. 8th to 6th centuries BCE – The [Chandogya Upanishad](#) is compiled, significant for containing the earliest to date mention the Hindu deity/avataar [Krishna](#). Verse 3.17.6 mentions Krishna Devakiputra as a student of the sage Ghora Angirasa.
- e. c.8th Century BCE – The start of [Zoroastrianism](#) which is one of the world's oldest extant religions, "combining a dualistic cosmology and eschatological monotheism in a manner unique among the major religions of the world". Ascribed to the teachings of the Iranian-speaking prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra), it exalts a deity of wisdom named Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) as its Supreme Being. Major features of Zoroastrianism, such as messianic expectations, judgment after death, heaven and hell, and free will bear a strong resemblance to Judaism and have influenced faiths, including Gnosticism, Christianity, and Islam.
 - a. Zoroastrianism later flourished under the Persian emperors known as the Achaemenids – the emperors Darius (ruled, 522–486 B.C.E.) and Xerxes (ruled, 486–465 B.C.E.) made Zoroastrianism the official religion of their empire.
 - b. Some scholars link the rise of monotheism in Assyria-Persia with the preaching of the 8th century BCE Jewish prophet Jonah son of Amittai in the capital city of Nineveh, which was written in the first half of the 8th century BCE. Events in Assyrian history, such as the trend toward monotheism in the reign of Adad-Nirari III (c. 810-783), or the great plague of the reign of Assurdan III (c. 771-754) would help explain the mass repentance in Assyria/Persia.
- f. 600–500 BCE – The Earliest Confucian writing, [Shu Ching](#), is one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature. It is a collection of rhetorical prose attributed to figures of ancient China and served as the foundation of Chinese religious-political philosophy for over 2,000 years. The Shu Ching incorporates the abstract ideas of harmony and heaven.
- g. 599–527 BCE – The life of [Mahavira](#), 24th and last *Tirthankara* of Jainism.
- h. 563 BCE – [Gautama Buddha](#), founder of Buddhism was born.
- i. 551 BCE – [Confucius](#), founder of [Confucianism](#), was born. Confucianism developed from what was later called the Hundred Schools of Thought from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE), who considered himself a “recodifier and retransmitter” of the theology and values inherited from the Shang (c. 1600 BCE–1046 BCE) and Zhou dynasties (c. 1046 BCE–256 BCE). In the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Confucian approaches edged out the "proto-Taoist" Huang–Lao as the official ideology, while the emperors mixed both with the realist techniques of Legalism.
- j. 399 BCE – [Socrates](#) was tried for impiety.
- k. 369-372 BCE - Birth of [Mencius](#) and [Zhuang Zhou](#)
- l. 300 BCE – The [oldest known version of the Tao Te Ching](#) was written on bamboo tablets.
- m. 300 BCE – [Theravada](#) Buddhism was introduced to [Sri Lanka](#) by the [Venerable Mahinda](#).
- n. c.250 BCE – The [Third Buddhist council](#) was convened by [Ashoka](#). Ashoka sends Buddhist missionaries to faraway countries, such as China, mainland Southeast Asia, Malay kingdoms, and Hellenistic kingdoms.
- o. 140 BCE – The earliest grammar of Sanskrit literature was composed by [Pāṇini](#).

- p. 100 BCE–500 CE – The [Yoga Sūtras](#) of [Patañjali](#), constituting the foundational texts of [Yoga](#), were composed.

3. THE CHRISTIAN ERA [AKA the Common Era] – A plethora of written records as well as archaeological records provide a very reliable view into the life and times of these peoples:

1st to 5th Centuries

- a. c.6/4 BCE – [Jesus of Nazareth](#) was born, lived and taught in Palestine [Israel] and became the central figure of God’s revelation that we know as [Christianity](#).
 - i. 28–29 – [John the Baptist](#) is jailed and then executed by Herod Antipas who governed the region of Palestine as Vassal King under Caesar, while a Roman appointed Proconsul was the military ruler of the region.
 - ii. 30/32 CE – Jesus was executed by crucifixion, buried, and was resurrected from the dead which turned the Greco-Roman world upside down. Sayings of Jesus were written down and shared among Christian followers.
 - iii. 45–95 CE – The Christian Bible was written as a collection of Gospels, history and letters of the Christian founders.
 - iv. 50 CE – The first Christian [Council](#) was convened in Jerusalem to determine how the Jewish and Greco-Roman Christians would live together in community.
 - v. 70 CE – The [Siege of Jerusalem](#), the [Destruction of the Temple](#) and the rise of [Rabbinic Judaism](#).
- b. 220 CE – Though there were signs of Gnosticism as early as the end of the first century AD, [Manichaeen Gnosticism](#) was formed by the prophet [Mani](#) in the 2nd century CE. Gnosticism was an early threat to the nature and character of Biblical Christianity as it added Pagan and Pantheistic elements including spiritual “Secrets” of the Mystery Religions that were popular in that era.
 - i. Gnosticism is a modern name for a variety of ancient Greek philosophical-religious ideas and systems, originating in the ascending Jewish-Christian [milieus](#) in the first and second century AD.
 - ii. These systems believed that the material world is created by an emanation of the “highest God” trapping the [divine spark](#) within the human body. This divine spark could only be liberated by this secret knowledge of “[gnosis](#).” Some of the core teachings of Gnosticism include the following:
 - 1. All matter is evil, and only the non-material spirit-realm is good.
 - 2. There is an unknowable God, who gave rise to many lesser spirit beings called Aeons.
 - 3. One evil, lower spirit being is the creator who made the universe.
 - 4. Gnosticism does not deal with a person’s sin only their ignorance.
 - 5. To achieve salvation, one needs to get in touch with this secret knowledge that can only be imparted from a known master Practitioner and usually for a fee.
 - 6. The Gnostic ideas and systems flourished in the Mediterranean world in the second century AD, in conjunction with and influenced by the early Christian movements and Middle Platonism. After the Second Century, a decline set in, but Gnosticism

persisted throughout the centuries as an undercurrent of western culture, manifesting with the Renaissance as “Western Esotericism” and taking prominence with modern spirituality. In the Persian Empire, Gnosticism spread as far as China with Manicheism, while Mandaeanism is still alive in Iraq.

7. A major question in scholarly research is the qualification of Gnosticism, based on the study of its texts, as either an interreligious phenomenon or as an independent religion.
 - ii. Much of what would become known as the faith embodied in the “Theosophical Society” was built upon these and other Gnostic ideas. See the following link to this form of mysticism https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theosophical_mysticism
 - a. 250 CE – Some of the oldest parts of the [Ginza Rba](#), a core text of [Mandaean Gnosticism](#), were written.
 - c. 250–900 – Classic [Mayan step pyramids](#) were constructed.
 - d. 313 – The [Edict of Milan](#) decreed religious toleration throughout the Roman empire.
 - e. 325 – The first [ecumenical council](#) (the [Council of Nicaea](#)) was convened to attain a consensus on a standard and comprehensive doctrine accomplished through an assembly representing all of [Christendom](#). It established the original [Nicene Creed](#) and fixed the date of [Easter](#). It also confirmed the primacy of the “Sees” or “Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction” of [Rome](#), [Alexandria](#) and [Antioch](#), and granted the [See of Jerusalem](#) a position of honour.
 - f. c.350 – The oldest record of the complete Biblical texts (the [Codex Sinaiticus](#)) survives in a Greek translation called the [Septuagint](#), dating to the 4th century CE.
 - g. 380 – [Theodosius I](#) declared [Nicene Christianity](#) the [state religion of the Roman Empire](#).
 - h. 381 – The second ecumenical council (the [First Council of Constantinople](#)) reaffirmed and revised the [Nicene Creed](#), repudiating [Arianism](#) and [Macedonianism](#). Refer to the AD article on Christian heresies identified by the early church - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%205.6%20-%20Opinion%20Paper%20-%20Christian%20Theology%20and%20Heresies.pdf>.
 - i. 381–391 – Theodosius prohibited paganism within the Roman Empire.
 - j. 393 – A council of early Christian bishops listed and approved a uniform [Biblical Canon](#) for the first time at the [Synod of Hippo](#).

Middle Ages (5th to 15th centuries)

5th to 10th centuries

- a. 405 – [St. Jerome](#) completed the [Vulgate](#), the first Latin translation of the Bible.
- b. 410 – The [Western Roman Empire](#) began to decline, signaling the onset of the [Dark Ages](#).
- c. 424 – The [Church of the East](#) in the [Sassanian Empire](#) (Persia) formally separated from the [See of Antioch](#) and proclaimed full ecclesiastical independence.
- d. 431 – The third ecumenical council (the [First Council of Ephesus](#)) was convened as a result of the controversial teachings of [Nestorius](#) of [Constantinople](#). It repudiated [Nestorianism](#), proclaimed the [Virgin Mary](#) as the [Theotokos](#) (the *God-bearer* or *Mother of God*). It also repudiated [Pelagianism](#) and again reaffirmed the Nicene Creed.

- e. 449 – The [Second Council of Ephesus](#) declared support for [Eutyches](#) and attacked his opponents. Originally convened as an ecumenical council, its ecumenical nature was rejected by the [Chalcedonians](#), who denounced the council as [latrocinium](#).
- f. 451 – The fourth ecumenical council (the [Council of Chalcedon](#)) rejected the [Eutychian](#) doctrine of [monophysitism](#), adopting instead the [Chalcedonian Creed](#). It reinstated those deposed in 449, deposed [Dioscorus of Alexandria](#) and elevated the bishoprics of [Constantinople](#) and [Jerusalem](#) to the status of [patriarchates](#).
- g. 451 – The [Oriental Orthodox Church](#) rejected the [Christological](#) view put forth by the Council of Chalcedon and was excommunicated.
- h. 480–547 – [Benedict of Nursia](#) wrote his [Rule](#), laying the foundation of Western [Christian monasticism](#) giving rise to the Benedictine Monastic Order.
- i. 553 – The fifth ecumenical council (the [Second Council of Constantinople](#)) repudiated the [Three Chapters](#) as [Nestorian](#) and condemned [Origen of Alexandria](#).
- j. 570–632 – The life of Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh, Muslim Prophet and founder of [Islam](#).
 - i. Muhammad was an illiterate trader who experienced visions of the angel Gabriel about revelations from monotheistic God, Allah. He gathered a group of followers with whom he shared these visions.
 - ii. Muhammed lived in a pluralistic society which included the monotheisms of Judaism and Christianity. He drew heavily from these traditions regarding both Christians and Jews as “people of the Book.”
 - iii. Muhammed’s preaching encountered stiff opposition in Mecca from the Polytheistic majority of the city. In 615 he moved to Medina where in 629 he united previously warring tribes and began a conquest of the region. He mobilized an army reported to be 10,000 strong and marched on and conquered Mecca.
 - iv. Being illiterate he preached his messages verbally in a “stream of consciousness” fashion to his followers who wrote down his teachings.
 - v. In 632 Muhammed became ill and died.
- k. 632–661 – The [Rashidun Caliphate](#) heralded the Arab conquest of Persia, Egypt and Iraq, bringing Islam to those regions.
- l. 650 – The verses of the [Qur'an](#) were compiled in the form of a book in the era of Uthman, the third [Caliph](#) of Islam.
- m. 661–750 – The [Umayyad Caliphate](#) brought the Arab conquest of North Africa, Spain and Central Asia, marking the greatest extent of the Arab conquests and bringing Islam to those regions.
- n. 680–681 – The sixth ecumenical council (the [Third Council of Constantinople](#)) rejected [Monothelitism](#) and [Monoenergism](#).
- o. c.680 – The division between [Sunni](#) and [Shiites Muslims](#) developed.
- p. 692 – The [Quinisext Council](#) (also known as the *Council in Trullo*), an amendment to the 5th and 6th ecumenical councils, established the [Pentarchy](#).
- q. 712 – [Kojiki](#), the oldest [Shinto](#) text, was written.
- r. 716–936 – The migration of [Zoroastrian \(Parsi\)](#) communities from Persia to India began, caused by the Muslim conquest of their lands and their ensuing persecution.

- s. 754 – The [latrocinium Council of Hieria](#) supported [iconoclasm](#) – meaning the rejection and destruction of any pictorial or statuary deemed contrary to sanctioned faith. At the time, icons and statuary representations were seen as a means of veneration of pictorial representations of Biblical and church events as a means to enhance worship. It is a misconception by many evangelical Christians that “veneration” is the same as “worshiping” with regard to icons or statuary – they were simply a visual means of connection that greatly helped what was at the time an illiterate population. This same error has plagued many other faiths including Islamic.
- t. 787 – The seventh ecumenical council (the [Second Council of Nicaea](#)) restored the veneration of icons and denounced [iconoclasm](#).
- u. 788–820 – The life of Hindu philosopher [Adi Shankara](#), who consolidated the doctrine of [Advaita Vedānta](#).
- v. c.850 – The oldest extant manuscripts of the vocalized [Masoretic text](#), upon which modern editions are based, date to 9th century CE.

11th to 15th centuries

- a. c.1052–c.1135 – The life of [Milarepa](#), one of most famous [yogis](#) and poets of [Tibetan Buddhism](#).
 - i. Tibetan Buddhism applies [Tantric](#) practices, especially [deity yoga](#), and aspires to [Buddhahood](#) or the rainbow body. Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet has four major schools, namely [Nyingma](#), [Kagyu](#), [Sakya](#) and [Gelug](#) (developed out of [Sakya](#)). The [Jonang](#) is a smaller school, and the [Rimé movement](#) is an eclectic movement involving the Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma schools. Among the prominent proponents of Tibetan Buddhism are the [Dalai Lama](#) and [Panchen Lama](#), the leaders of Gelug school in Tibet.
 - ii. Tibetan Buddhism comprises the teachings of the three vehicles of Buddhism: the Foundational Vehicle, [Mahāyāna](#), and [Vajrayāna](#). The Mahāyāna goal of spiritual development is to achieve the enlightenment of buddhahood in order to most efficiently help all other sentient beings attain this state. The motivation in it is the *bodhicitta* mind of enlightenment — an altruistic intention to become enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings. [Bodhisattvas](#) are revered beings who have conceived the will and vow to dedicate their lives with *bodhicitta* for the sake of all beings. Widely revered Bodhisattvas in Tibetan Buddhism include [Avalokiteshvara](#), [Manjushri](#), [Vajrapani](#), and [Tara](#).
 - iii. Buddhahood is defined as a state free of the obstructions to liberation as well as those to omniscience. When one is freed from all mental obscurations, one is said to attain a state of continuous bliss mixed with a simultaneous cognition of emptiness, the true nature of reality. In this state, all limitations on one's ability to help other living beings are removed. Tibetan Buddhism claims to teach methods for achieving Buddhahood more quickly (known as the Vajrayāna path).
- b. 1054 – The [Great Schism](#) between the [Roman Catholic](#) and [Eastern Orthodox](#) churches was formalized. Though the official reason was theological, the real reason was political.
 - i. The theological basis of the split were the issues of the source of the sending of the Holy Spirit, whether He was sent by the Father or the Father and the Son; whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the [Eucharist](#).

- ii. The political basis of the split had to do with the [Bishop of Rome's](#) [Pope's] claim to universal jurisdiction over the church; and the appropriate place of the [See of Constantinople](#) in relation to the [Pentarchy](#).
- iii. The Great Schism occurred with the eastern branch's refusal to submit to the west by swearing allegiance to the Pope in Rome. Eastern Orthodox ultimately split into Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and Coptic [Egyptian Orthodox].
- c. 1095–1099 – The [First Crusade](#) led to the capture of Jerusalem.
- d. 1107–1110 – [Sigurd I of Norway](#) led the [Norwegian Crusade](#) against Muslims in Spain, the [Balearic Islands](#) and in [Palestine](#).
- e. 1147–1149 – The [Second Crusade](#) was waged in response to the fall of the [County of Edessa](#).
- f. 1189–1192 – In the [Third Crusade](#) European leaders again attempted to reconquer the [Holy Land](#) from [Saladin](#).
- g. 1202–1204 – The [Fourth Crusade](#), originally intended to recapture Jerusalem, instead led to the [sack of Constantinople](#), capital of the [Byzantine Empire](#).
- h. 1206 – The [Delhi Sultanate](#) was established.
- i. 1209–1229 – The [Albigensian Crusade](#) was conducted to eliminate Catharism in [Occitania](#), Europe.
- j. 1217–1221 – With the [Fifth Crusade](#), Christian leaders again attempted (but failed) to recapture Jerusalem.
- k. 1220–1250 – Archaeological evidence demonstrates that the Anasazi Indians in the North American Southwest experienced some form of environmental calamities that decimated their thriving culture. In the process it appears they left their ancestral solar and nature worship, and adopted religious forms from the Kachina Cult of Meso-American Tribes. This change involved ritual sacrifice. By the 1400's huge Pueblos were being constructed including 2,500 rooms. The Anasazi survived whatever calamity overtook them and appear to have abandoned the rituals of sacrifice and returned to their solar and nature worship. The Anasazi later morphed into the Hopi and Zuni cultures of the American Southwest.
- l. 1222–1282 – The life of [Nichiren Daishonin](#), the Buddha of the [Latter Day of the Law](#) and founder of Nichiren Buddhism. Based at the [Nichiren Shoshu](#) Head Temple Taisekiji (Japan), this branch of Buddhism teaches the importance of chanting the mantra *Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō*.
- m. 1228–1229 – The [Sixth Crusade](#) won control of large areas of the Holy Land for Christian rulers, more through diplomacy than through fighting.
- n. 1229 – The [Codex Gigas](#) was completed by [Herman the Recluse](#) in the [Benedictine](#) monastery of Podlažice near Chrudim.
- o. 1244 – Jerusalem was sacked again, instigating the [Seventh Crusade](#).
- p. 1270 – The [Eighth Crusade](#) was launched by [Louis IX of France](#) but largely petered out when Louis died shortly after reaching [Tunis](#).
- q. 1271–1272 – The [Ninth Crusade](#) saw several impressive victories for Edward over the Baibars. Ultimately the Crusaders were forced to withdraw, since Edward had pressing concerns at home and felt unable to resolve the internal conflicts within the remnant Outremer territories. It is arguable that the Crusading spirit was nearly "extinct" by this period as well. It also foreshadowed the imminent collapse of the last remaining crusader strongholds along the Mediterranean coast.

- r. 1320 – [Pope John XXII](#) laid the groundwork that would lead to the future [witch-hunts](#) with the formalization of the persecution of [witchcraft](#).
 - i. Witchcraft (AKA soocerery and modern Wicca) broadly means the practice of and belief in magical skills and abilities exercised by solitary practitioners and/or groups. Witchcraft is a broad term that varies culturally and societally, and thus can be difficult to define with precision, therefore cross-cultural assumptions about the meaning or significance of the term should be applied with caution.
 - ii. Witchcraft often occupies a religious divinatory art, and often includes a medicinal role and is often present within societies and groups whose cultural framework includes a magical world view. However, this should be differentiated from “Medicinal and Herbal Healing” practices utilizing herbal plant lore instead of arcane magical arts.
 - iii. Simply stated, magic is a means of influencing or coercing the spiritual realm to achieve the will of the magic Practioner.
- s. 1378–1417 – The [Roman Catholic Church](#) split during the [Western Schism](#).
 - i. The **Western Schism** (AKA the **Papal Schism** and **Great Occidental Schism** and the **Schism of 1378**), was a split within the Catholic Church lasting from 1378 to 1417 in which two or three men since 1410 simultaneously claimed to be the true pope. Driven by politics rather than any theological disagreement, the schism was ended by the [Council of Constance](#) (1414–1418) and for a time these rival claims to the papal throne damaged the reputation of the office.
 - ii. The affair is sometimes confused with the *Great Schism* involving the more enduring East–West Schism of 1054 between the Western Churches answering to the See of Rome and the Orthodox Churches of the East.
- t. 1415 – The death of [Jan Hus](#) who is considered as the first reformer of the [Western Christianity](#). This event is often considered as the beginning of the [Reformation](#).
 - i. Western Christianity consists of the [Latin Rite](#) of the [Catholic Church](#) (in contrast to the [Eastern rites](#) in communion with [Rome](#)) and a wide variety of [Protestant denominations](#). The name "Western Christianity" is applied in order to distinguish these from Eastern Christianity.
 - ii. With the expansion of European colonialism from the Early Modern era, Western Christianity spread throughout the Americas, much of the Philippines, Southern Africa, pockets of West Africa, and throughout Australia and New Zealand. Thus, when used for historical periods after the 16th century, the term "Western Christianity" does not refer to a particular geographical area but is rather used as a collective term for the expansion of the Catholic Church, the Protestant denominations, and the other forms of Christianity that trace their lineage to Western Europe.
- u. 1469–1539 – The life of [Guru Nanak](#), founder of [Sikhism](#).
 - i. Sikhism from *Sikh*, meaning a "disciple", or a "learner"), is a monotheistic [dharmic](#) religion that originated in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent about the end of the 15th century.

- ii. It is one of the youngest of the major world religions, and the fifth-largest. The fundamental beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the sacred scripture [Guru Granth Sahib](#), include faith and meditation on the name of the one creator, divine unity and equality of all humankind, engaging in selfless service, striving for social justice for the benefit and prosperity of all, and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder's life.
- iii. In the early 21st century there were nearly 25 million Sikhs worldwide, the great majority of them (20 million) living in Punjab, the Sikh homeland in northwest India, and about 2 million living in neighboring Indian states, formerly part of the Punjab.
- iv. Sikhism is based on the spiritual teachings of [Guru Nanak](#), the first Guru (1469–1539), and the nine [Sikh gurus](#) that succeeded him. The Tenth Guru, [Guru Gobind Singh](#), named the Sikh scripture [Guru Granth Sahib](#) as his successor, thereby terminating the line of human Gurus and making the scripture the eternal, religious spiritual guide for Sikhs.
- v. Sikhism rejects claims that any particular religious tradition has a monopoly on Absolute Truth.
- v. 1484 – [Pope Innocent VIII](#) marked the beginning of the classical European witch-hunts with his [papal bull Summis Desiderantes](#).
- w. 1486-1534 – [Chaitanya Mahaprabhu](#) popularized the chanting of the [Hare Krishna](#) and composed the [Siksastakam](#) (eight devotional prayers) in [Sanskrit](#). His followers, [Gaudiya Vaishnavas](#), revere him as a spiritual reformer, a Hindu revivalist and an avatar of [Krishna](#).

4. EARLY MODERN ERA:

16th Century

- a. 1500 – In the [Spanish Empire](#), Catholicism was spread and encouraged through the positive institution of the [missions](#) and the negative [Inquisition](#).
 - i. A Christian mission is an organized outreach effort to spread [Christianity](#). Missions often involve sending individuals and groups, called [missionaries](#) for the purpose of sharing one's faith with others.
 - ii. Outreaches often involves service work notably humanitarian work, especially among the poor and disadvantaged to improve their life and bring hope and a future to those less well off.
 - iii. The Spanish missional outreach was imbedded with the exploratory efforts of the Conquistadores, and as such their motives have been challenged by modern sociologists.
- b. 1517 – [Martin Luther](#) posted *The [Ninety-Five Theses](#)* on the door of [All Saints' Church, Wittenberg](#), Germany. Though Luther's intention was to reform Catholicism which had become corrupted by the political ruling classes it inadvertently launched the [Protestant Reformation](#).
 - i. Although there had been earlier attempts to reform the Catholic Church – such as those of [Jan Hus](#), [Peter Waldo](#), [John Wycliffe](#), and [Girolamo Savonarola](#) – Luther is widely acknowledged to have started the Reformation with the *Ninety-five Theses*. Luther began by criticizing the practice of the sale of [indulgences](#), insisting that the Pope had no authority over [purgatory](#) and that the Catholic doctrine of the [merits of the saints](#) had no foundation in the Bible.

- ii. The Reformation incorporated doctrinal changes such as a complete reliance on Scripture as the only source of proper belief ([sola scriptura](#)) and the belief that [faith](#) in [Jesus](#), and not good works, is the only way to obtain God's pardon for sin ([sola fide](#)). The core motivation behind these changes was [theological](#), though many other factors played a part, including the rise of nationalism, the Western Schism that eroded loyalty to the Papacy, the perceived corruption of the Roman Curia, the impact of [humanism](#), and the new learning of the [Renaissance](#) that questioned much traditional thought.
- iii. Reformation movements throughout continental Europe gave birth to Protestantism, and gave rise to various [Anabaptist](#) movements. Radical Reformers, besides forming communities outside state sanction, often employed more extreme doctrinal change.
- iv. The Catholic Church responded with a [Counter-Reformation](#), initiated by the [Council of Trent](#) in 1545, and a new order, the [Jesuits](#), founded in 1540. [Northern Europe](#), with the exception of most of [Ireland](#), came under the influence of Protestantism. [Southern Europe](#) remained Catholic. [Central Europe](#) became a site of a fierce conflict that culminated in the [Thirty Years' War](#).
- c. 1526 – [African religious systems](#) were introduced to the Americas, with the commencement of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
- d. 1534 – [Henry VIII](#) separated the English Church from Rome and made himself [Supreme Head of the Church of England](#).
- e. 1562 – The [Massacre of Vassy](#) sparked the first of a series of [French Wars of Religion](#).

17th & 18th Century

- a. 1699 – [Guru Gobind Singh](#) Ji created the [Khalsa](#) in [Sikhism](#).
- b. 1708 – [Guru Gobind Singh](#) Ji, the last [Sikh guru](#), died after instituting the Sikh holy book, the [Guru Granth Sahib](#) Ji, as the eternal Guru.
- c. 1770 – [Baron d'Holbach](#) published [The System of Nature](#) said to be the first positive, unambiguous statement of [atheism](#) in the West. Although atheism was promoted as the absence of belief in a God or Deity, it placed humanity and humanism as the highest and only authority. The Humanist Manifesto (1933 & 1973) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanist_Manifesto_I] though not openly intending to provide an alternative religion with humanity as the center of the universe, did exactly that. The acceptance of “Scientific Naturalism” as the standard for scientific inquiry totally rejects any supernatural agency as scientifically unprovable and therefore irrelevant. Thereby kicking God and the supernatural to the curb of modern thought.
- d. 1781 – [Ghanshyam](#), later known as Sahajanand Swami/Swaminarayan, was born in [Chhapaiya](#) at the house of Dharmadev and Bhaktimata.
- e. 1789–1799 – In the [DeChristianisation of France](#) the Revolutionary Government confiscated [Church](#) properties, banned [monastic vows](#) and, with the passage of the [Civil Constitution of the Clergy](#), removed control of the Church from the Pope and subordinated it as a department of the Government. The Republic also replaced the traditional [Gregorian Calendar](#) and abolished [Christian holidays](#).
- f. 1730–1740 – The First Great Awakening (Evangelical Revival) was a series of [Christian revivals](#) that swept [Britain](#) and its [Thirteen Colonies](#) of America. The revival movement had a permanent impact

on [Protestantism](#) as adherents strove to renew individual [piety](#) and religious devotion. The Great Awakening marked the emergence of Anglo-American [evangelicalism](#) as a trans-denominational movement within the Protestant churches. In the [United States](#), the term *Great Awakening* is most often used, while in the United Kingdom, it is referred to as the *Evangelical Revival*.

- i. Building on the foundations of older traditions—[Puritanism](#), [pietism](#) and [Presbyterianism](#)—major leaders of the revival such as [George Whitefield](#), [John Wesley](#) and [Jonathan Edwards](#) articulated a theology on revival and [salvation](#) that transcended denominational boundaries and helped create a common evangelical identity.
 - ii. Revivalists added to the doctrinal imperatives of [Reformation Protestantism](#) an emphasis on providential outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Extemporaneous preaching gave listeners a sense of deep personal conviction of their need of salvation by Jesus Christ and fostered introspection and commitment to a new standard of personal morality.
 - iii. Revival theology stressed that religious conversion was not only intellectual assent to correct Christian doctrine but had to be a "[new birth](#)" experienced in the heart. Revivalists also taught that receiving the [assurance of salvation](#) was a normal expectation in the Christian life.
- k. 1791 – [Freedom of religion](#), enshrined in the [Bill of Rights](#), was added as an amendment to the [Constitution of the United States](#), forming an early and influential secular government.
- g. 1791–1850 – The [Second Great Awakening](#), was a [Protestant](#) Pentecostal [revival](#) in the [United States](#).
- i. The Second Great Awakening reflected a personal relational devotion to and connection with God and was characterized by enthusiasm, emotion, and an appeal to the supernatural. It rejected the skepticism, [deism](#), and [rationalism](#) left over from the Enlightenment. At about the same time, similar movements flourished in Europe. [Pietism](#) was sweeping German countries. Evangelicalism was waxing strong in England.
 - ii. The Second Great Awakening occurred in several episodes and over different denominations; however, the revivals were very similar. As the most effective form of evangelizing during this period, revival meetings cut across geographical boundaries, and the movement quickly spread throughout Kentucky, Tennessee and southern Ohio. Each denomination had assets that allowed it to thrive on the frontier. The Methodists had an efficient organization that depended on itinerant ministers, known as "circuit riders" who sought out people in remote frontier locations. The circuit riders came from among the common people, which helped them establish rapport with the frontier families they hoped to convert.

19th Century

- a. 1801 – The French Revolutionary Government and [Pope Pius VII](#) entered into the [Concordat of 1801](#). While Roman Catholicism regained some powers and became recognized as "the religion of the great majority of the French", it was not afforded the latitude it had enjoyed prior to the Revolution and was not re-established as the official state religion. The Church relinquished all claims to estate seized after 1790, and the clergy was state salaried and was obliged to swear allegiance to the State. Religious freedom was restored.

- b. 1819–1850 – The life of Siyyid 'Alí Muḥammad Shírázī (Persian: سید علی محمد شیرازی) [Bab](#), the founder of [Bábism](#).
- c. 1817–1892 – The life of [Bahá'u'lláh](#), founder of the [Bahá'í Faith](#). The Bahá'í Faith is a religion teaching the essential worth of all religions, and the unity and equality of all people. Established by Bahá'u'lláh in 1863, it initially grew in Iran and parts of the Middle East, where it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception. Currently it has between 5 and 7 million adherents, known as Bahá'ís, spread out into most of the world's countries and territories.
- d. 1823 – The Mormon Prophet [Joseph Smith](#) saw the [Angel Moroni](#) and prophesied of what is now the [Book of Mormon](#).
 - i. During the [Second Great Awakening](#), the east coast region was a hotbed of religious enthusiasm. Between 1817 and 1825, there were several camp meetings and revivals in the Palmyra area. Although Smith's parents disagreed about religion, the family was caught up in this excitement. Smith later said he became interested in religion and as a teenager, he may have been sympathetic to [Methodism](#). With other family members, Smith also engaged in [religious folk magic](#), which was a relatively common practice in that time and place. Both his parents and his maternal grandfather reportedly had visions or dreams that they believed communicated messages from God. Smith said that, although he had become concerned about the welfare of his soul, he was confused by the claims of competing religious denominations.
 - ii. Years later, Smith claimed to have received a vision that resolved his religious confusion. In 1820, while praying in a wooded area near his home, he said that God, in a vision, had told him his sins were forgiven. According to his later accounts, Smith was visited by an angel named Moroni, while praying one night in 1823.
 - iii. Smith's revelations led to the founding of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) with faith and practices including polygamy and an emphasis on sex in this life and the after-life which made them unpopular with mainstream Christian Denominations. Smith wrote extensively, and his revelations were gathered into the Book of Mormon and other books. LDS faith is highly patriarchal and repressive of women. In this regard, LDS bears similarities with Islam.
- e. 1830s – [Adventism](#) was started by [William Miller](#) who as a Baptist preacher was caught up in the [Second Great Awakening](#) in the United States. From his study of Daniel chapter 8 prophecy, Miller taught that Jesus return to earth in the Second Advent would occur in 1844. The failure of this second advent was called the Great Disappointment. These events paved the way for the Adventists who formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They contended that what had happened on October 22 was not Jesus' return, as Miller had thought, but the start of Jesus' final work of atonement, the cleansing in the heavenly sanctuary, leading up to the Second Coming.
 - i. Adventism belief includes that Saturday is the proper day for worship, and individual churches theologies differ on whether the [intermediate state](#) of the dead is [unconscious sleep](#) or consciousness, whether the ultimate punishment of the wicked is [annihilation](#) or eternal torment, the nature of immortality, whether the wicked are resurrected after the millennium, and whether the sanctuary of Daniel 8 refers to the one in [heaven](#) or one on

- earth. The movement has encouraged the re-examination of the whole Bible. The [General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists](#) has compiled that church's core beliefs in [the 28 Fundamental Beliefs](#) (1980 and 2005), which use Biblical references as justification.
- ii. Adventists are considered by some to be a separate Protestant Denomination, while many evangelicals consider them to be a cult because much of the basis of their theology flows from Miller's miss-interpretation of Scripture. The teachings of William Miller, rejected traditional Christian beliefs of the "immortal soul" and a literal hell and interpreted scriptures in the books of Daniel and Revelation to predict that Christ would return in 1874.
- f. 1835–1908 – The life of [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad](#), the founder of the messianic [Ahmadiyya](#) Movement in Islam.
 - g. 1836–1886 – The life of [Ramakrishna](#), saint and mystic of [Bengal](#).
 - h. 1841 – [Satguru Ram Singh Ji](#) created the [Namdhari](#) sect within the Sikh religion.
 - i. 1844 – [Joseph Smith](#) was murdered on 27 June, resulting in a [succession crisis in the Latter Day Saint movement](#).
 - j. 1875 – The [Theosophical Society](#) was formed in New York City by [Helena Blavatsky](#), [Henry Steel Olcott](#), [William Quan Judge](#) and others.
 - i. The Theosophical Society was officially formed in [New York City](#), United States, on 17 November 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, William Quan Judge, and others. It was self-described as "an unsectarian body of seekers after Truth, who endeavor to promote Brotherhood and strive to serve humanity."
 - ii. In the early months of 1875, Olcott and Judge had come to realize that, if Blavatsky was a [spiritualist](#), she was no ordinary one. The society's initial objective was the "study and elucidation of [Occultism](#), the [Cabala](#) etc."
 - iii. After a few years Olcott and Blavatsky moved to India and established the International Headquarters at [Adyar](#), in Madras (now [Chennai](#)). They were also interested in studying [Eastern religions](#), and these were included in the Society's agenda.
 - k. 1879 – [Christian Science](#) (AKA Christian Scientist) was granted its charter in Boston, Massachusetts. Christian Science is a set of metaphysical beliefs and practices. It was developed in 19th-century New England by [Mary Baker Eddy](#), who argued in her 1875 book [Science and Health](#) that sickness is an illusion that can be corrected by prayer alone. The book became Christian Science's central text, and by 2001 had sold over nine million copies. The Bible is considered as a secondary text subject to Eddy's interpretation. Christian Science is considered a cult by main-stream Christian Denominations.
 - l. 1881 – [Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society](#) was formed by [Charles Taze Russell](#), initiating the [Bible Student movement](#). It is the main legal entity used worldwide by [Jehovah's Witnesses](#) to direct, administer and disseminate doctrines for the group and is often referred to by members of the denomination simply as "the Society".
 - i. Critics including Raymond Franz, Edmond C. Gruss and James Penton have accused the society of being authoritarian, controlling and coercive in its dealings with Witnesses. Franz, a former Governing Body member, has claimed the Watch Tower Society's emphasis of the term "theocratic organization" to describe the authority structure of Jehovah's Witnesses,

- which places God at the apex of its organization, is designed to exercise control over every aspect of the lives of Jehovah's Witnesses and condition them to think it is wrong for them to question anything the society publishes as truth. The Watch Tower Society has been accused of employing techniques of [mind control](#) on Witnesses including the direction to avoid reading criticism of the organization, frequent and tightly controlled "indoctrination" meetings, regimentation, social alienation and elaborate promises of future rewards. Apart from life stories, the authors of all Watch Tower Society magazine articles and other publications are anonymous and correspondence from the society does not typically indicate a specific author or personal signature.
- ii. In about 1869, a 17-year-old Russell attended a meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and heard Advent Christian preacher Jonas Wendell expound his views on the Bible and prophecy. Wendell was influenced by the teachings of William Miller and rejected traditional Christian beliefs of the "immortal soul" and a literal hell and interpreted scriptures in the books of Daniel and Revelation to predict that Christ would return in 1873. Russell became convinced that God would reveal his purpose in the last days of the "Gospel age" and formed an independent Bible study group in Pittsburgh. He rejected Adventist teachings that the purpose of Christ's return was to destroy the earth and instead formed the view that Christ had died to pay a "ransom price" to atone for sinful humans, intending to restore humans to Edenic perfection with the prospect of living forever. Like Wendell, he rejected the concept of "hellfire" and the immortal soul.
 - iii. Jehovah's Witnesses are considered a cult by main-stream Christian Denominations.
 - m. 1889 – The [Ahmadiyya Muslim Community](#) was established.
 - n. 1893 – [Swami Vivekananda](#)'s first speech at The [Parliament of World Religions](#), Chicago, brought the ancient philosophies of [Vedanta](#) and [Yoga](#) to the western world.
 - o. 1899 – *Aradia (aka The Gospel of the Witches)*, one of the earliest books describing post [witchhunt](#) European [religious Witchcraft](#), was published by [Charles Godfrey Leland](#).

20th Century

- a. 1901 – The incorporation of the [Spiritualists' National Union](#) legally representing Spiritualism in the United Kingdom.
- b. 1904 – [Thelema](#) was founded by [Aleister Crowley](#).
- c. 1905 – In France the [Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State](#) was passed, officially establishing [state secularism](#) and putting an end to the funding of religious groups by the state. Becoming a place of [pilgrimage](#) for neo-druids and other [pagans](#), the [Ancient Order of Druids](#) organized the first recorded [reconstructionist](#) ceremony in [Stonehenge](#).
- d. 1908 – The [Khalifatul Masih](#) was established in the [Ahmadiyya Muslim Community](#) as the "Second Manifestation of God's Power".
- e. 1917 – The [October Revolution](#) in Russia led to the annexation of all church properties and subsequent religious suppression. The [1917 Constitution of Mexico](#) made Mexico a secular state.
- f. 1920 – The [Self Realization Fellowship](#) Church of all Religions with its headquarters in Los Angeles, CA, was founded by [Paramahansa Yogananda](#). Central to Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings, which embody a complete philosophy and way of life, are scientific techniques of concentration

and meditation that lead to the direct personal experience of God. These yoga methods quiet body and mind, and make it possible to withdraw one's energy and attention from the usual turbulence of thoughts, emotions, and sensory perceptions. In the clarity of that inner stillness, one comes to experience a deepening interior peace and awareness of God's presence.

- g. 1926 – [Cao Dai](#) founded.
- h. 1929 – The [Cristero War](#), fought between the secular government and religious Christian rebels in Mexico, ended.
- i. 1930 – The [Rastafari movement](#) began following the coronation of [Haile Selassie I](#) as Emperor of [Ethiopia](#). The [Nation of Islam](#) was founded in Detroit, Michigan.
- j. 1932 – A neo-Hindu religious movement, the [Brahma Kumaris](#) or "Daughters of Brahma", started. Its origin can be traced to the group "Om Mandal", founded by Lekhraj Kripalani (1884–1969).
- k. 1931 – [Jehovah's Witnesses](#) emerged from the [Bible Student movement](#) under the influence of [Joseph Franklin Rutherford](#).
- l. 1939–1945 – Millions of Jews were relocated and murdered by the [Nazis](#) during the genocide known as the [Holocaust](#). Nazi Germany actively engaged the practice of Eugenics as a set of beliefs and practices that aims at improving the genetic quality of a human population, specifically the Aryan Race. Such programs included both "positive" measures, such as encouraging individuals deemed particularly "fit" to reproduce, and "negative" measures such as marriage prohibitions and forced sterilization of people deemed unfit for reproduction. People deemed unfit to reproduce often included people with mental or physical disabilities, people who scored in the low ranges of different IQ tests, criminals and deviants, and members of disfavored minority groups. The eugenics movement became negatively associated with [Nazi Germany](#) and the [Holocaust](#) when many of the [defendants](#) at the [Nuremberg trials](#) attempted to justify their human rights abuses by claiming there was little difference between the [Nazi eugenics](#) programs and the [U.S. eugenics](#) programs.
- m. 1947 – First nation in the name of Islam was created called Pakistan. British India was partitioned into the Islamic nation of [Pakistan](#) and the secular nation of India with a Hindu majority.
- n. 1948 – The modern state of [Israel](#) was re-established on the traditional Biblical homeland for the Jews.
- o. 1954 – The [Church of Scientology](#) was founded by [L. Ron Hubbard](#); and the neo-Pagan Witchcraft [Wicca](#) was publicized by [Gerald Gardner](#).
- p. 1956 – [B. R. Ambedkar](#) founded [Navayana Buddhism](#) (Neo-Buddhism). And Ambedkar converted to Navayana with his more than 500,000 followers.
- q. 1959 – The [14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet amidst unrest](#) and established an exile community in India.
- r. 1960s – Various [Neo-Pagan](#) and [New Age](#) movements gained momentum.
- s. 1961 – [Unitarian Universalism](#) was formed from the merger of [Unitarianism](#) and [Universalism](#).
- t. 1962 – The [Church of All Worlds](#), the first American [Neo-Pagan](#) church, was formed by a group including [Oberon Zell-Ravenheart](#), [Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart](#), and Richard Lance Christie.
- u. 1962–1965 – The [Second Vatican Council](#) was convened.

- v. 1965 – [Sri La Prabhupada](#) established the [International Society for Krishna Consciousness](#) and introduced translations of the [Bhagavad-Gita](#) and Vedic Scriptures in mass production all over the world.
- w. 1966 – The [Church of Satan](#) was founded by [Anton LaVey](#).
- x. 1972–1984 – The [Stonehenge free festivals](#) started.
- y. 1972–2004 – [Germanic Neopaganism](#) (aka Heathenism, Heathenry, Ásatrú, Odinism, Forn Siðr, Vor Siðr, and Theodism) began to experience a second wave of revival.
- z. 1973 – [Claude Vorilhon](#) established the [Raëlian Movement](#) and changed his name to [Raël](#) following a purported extraterrestrial encounter in December 1973.
- aa. 1975 – The [Temple of Set](#) was founded in [Santa Barbara, California](#).
- bb. 1979 – The [Iranian Revolution](#) resulted in the establishment of an [Islamic Republic](#) in [Iran](#).
- cc. 1981 – The [Stregherian](#) revival continued. "The Book of the Holy Strega" and "The Book of Ways" Volume I & II were published.
- dd. 1984 – [Operation Blue Star](#) in the [holiest site of the Sikhs](#), the [Golden Temple](#) in [Amritsar](#), led to [Anti-Sikh riots](#) in [Delhi](#) and adjoining regions, following the assassination of [Prime Minister Indira Gandhi](#).
- ee. 1985 – The [Battle of the Beanfield](#) forced an end to the [Stonehenge free festivals](#).
- ff. 1989 – Following the [revolutions of 1989](#), the overthrow of many [Soviet](#)-style states allowed a resurgence in open religious practice in many [Eastern European](#) countries.
- gg. 1990s – [Reconstructionist Pagan](#) movements ([Celtic](#), [Hellenic](#), [Roman](#), [Slavic](#), [Baltic](#), [Finnish](#), etc.) proliferate throughout Europe.
- hh. 1993 – The [European Council](#) convened in [Copenhagen](#), Denmark, agreed to the [Copenhagen Criteria](#), requiring religious freedom within all members and prospective members of the [European Union](#).
- ii. 1998 – The [Strega Arician Tradition](#) was founded.

21st century

- a. 2000 – The [Palestinian Authority](#) created the [Second Intifada](#) in Israel and the [Palestinian territories](#). Although largely political in nature, the uprising centered on religion.
- b. 2001 – 21 terrorists from [Al-Qaeda](#) killed 2,977 on [September 11, 2001](#) in the name of [Islam](#) against the [United States of America](#). [Osama Bin Laden](#) claimed responsibility and praised the attacks.
- c. 2001 – In England and Wales, 390,127 people (almost 0.8%) [stated their religion as Jedi](#) on the 2001 Census forms, surpassing the numbers of Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists, and making it the fourth largest reported religion in the country. In the same census, 2.6% of the population of Brighton claimed to be Jedi.
- d. 2006 – [Sectarian rivalries exploded in Iraq](#) between [Sunni and Shiite Muslims](#), with each side targeting the other in terrorist acts, and bombings of mosques and shrines.
- e. 2008 – [Nepal](#), the world's only Hindu Kingdom, was declared a [secular state](#) by its Constituent Assembly after declaring the state a Republic on 28 May 2008.

- f. 2009 – The [Church of Scientology in France](#) was fined €600,000 and several of its leaders were fined and imprisoned for defrauding new recruits of their savings. The state failed to disband the church owing to legal changes occurring over the same time period.
- g. 2011 – [Civil war broke out in Syria](#) over domestic political issues. The country soon split along sectarian lines between Sunni, Alawite and Shiite Muslims. War crimes and acts of genocide were committed by both parties as religious leaders on each side condemned the other as heretics. The Syrian civil war soon became a battleground for regional sectarian unrest, as fighters joined the fight from as far away as North America and Europe, as well as Iran and the Arab states.
- h. 2014 – A supposed Islamic [Caliphate](#) was established by the self-proclaimed [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant](#) in regions of war torn [Syria](#) and [Iraq](#), drawing global support from radical [Sunni](#) Muslims. This was a modern-day attempt to re-establish Islamic self-rule in accordance with strict adherence to [Shariah](#)- Islamic religious law. In the wake of the Syrian civil war, Islamic extremists targeted the indigenous Arab Christian communities. In acts of genocide, numerous ancient Christian and [Yazidi](#) communities were evicted and threatened with death by various Muslim Sunni fighter groups. After [ISIS](#) terrorist forces infiltrated and took over large parts of northern Iraq from Syria, many ancient Christian and [Yazidi](#) enclaves were destroyed.

5. CONCLUSION – THE SEARCH FOR ULTIMATE TRUTH PART 1:

In the above review of the history of religion, the plethora of faiths and faith-based movements throughout human history in my view adequately demonstrates humanities fundamental need to come to some understanding of the “Ultimate Truth” or the “Supreme Being” theologians call God. The questions of philosophy and theology while it informs the logic of ultimate truth, this understanding is certainly beyond science as we now know it and seductively beckons humanity from the realm of the supernatural and mystical. That humanity intrinsically understands that the such a supreme being exists is well presented by Bishop Robert Barron in his excellent video “What Christians Mean by God” – follow the link provided - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_Yjue8MXAI

In the next opinion article “The Search for Ultimate Truth Part 2,” we will look at some of the major faith’s understanding of who God is and what ultimate Hope awaits the Practioner of each faith.