



# Seeking Undenominational Christianity

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## The Long and Winding Road



# The Long and Winding Road

The long and winding road  
That leads to Your door  
Will never disappear  
I've seen that road before  
It always leads me here  
Lead me to Your door  
Let me know the way

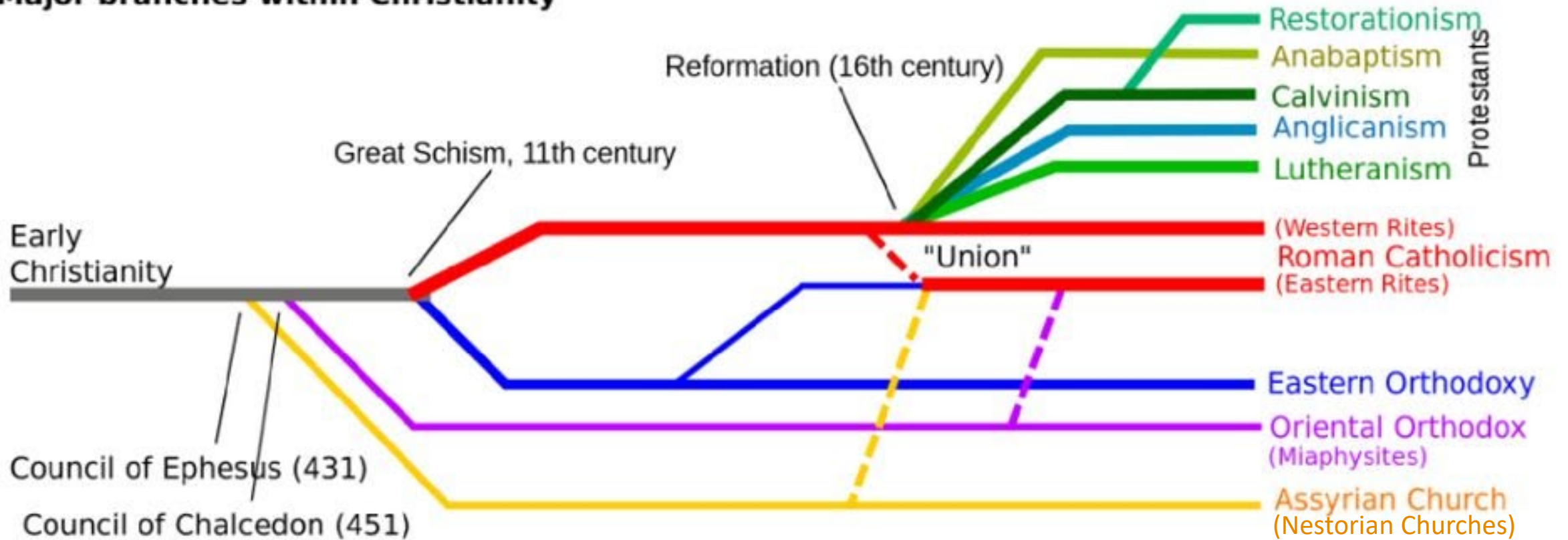


## John 17:20-23

<sup>20</sup> “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

# Major denominations of Christianity

## Major branches within Christianity





# Early Schisms – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Centuries

- Gnosticism - ~200 A.D.
  - Special Knowledge; Dualism: material world is evil, spiritual world is good.
- Marcionism – 144 A.D.
  - The Law was the enemy of Grace and the God of the O.T. was a different being and opposed to the God of Jesus. Paul was the only true apostle.
- Docetism – 325 A.D.
  - Branch of Gnosticism - Jesus' body was only an illusion.
- Montanism – 175 A.D.
  - Reaction to legalism, formalism, and reliance on human leadership (bishops)
  - Reliance on the Holy Spirit for guidance and emphasis on the spiritual gifts as evidence of a true Christian.



# 3<sup>rd</sup> Century Schisms

- Neoplatonism - ~240 A.D.
  - A type of mysticism, attempting to harmonize pagan philosophy and Christianity; Re-absorb into the “great force” through mental contemplation.
- Manichaeism – 250 A.D.
  - Mixed the teachings of Zoraster, mystery religions, and Christianity; conflict between the mother of light and the king of darkness; emphasis on asceticism.
- The Ebionites – ~212 A.D.
  - Judaizing Christians that held Moses was equal in authority to Christ; reduced Christianity to a legalistic system and held Paul’s writings in contempt.
- Monarchianism (Modalism) – 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries
  - One God in one person. Jesus was a temporary manifestation only in appearance as a person. Father and Son were same person.

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Century Departures from the Pattern

- Doctrine of Original Sin
  - Tertullian (160-220 A.D.) – Every Soul Shares Adam’s guilt
  - Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (248-258) – Even infant who had committed no actual sin need forgiveness for the inherited sin from Adam.
  - Augustine (412 A.D.) - Because of inherited sin all infants need Baptism
- Baptism
  - Tertullian believed it should not be performed before adolescence.
  - Cyprian was the first to approve but did not urge it.
  - After Augustine, infant baptism became common.
  - During the third century baptism became a ritualistic ceremony performed by the bishop twice a year.
  - First know case of sprinkling was 251 A.D.



# Some Other Early Departure Ideas

- Millennialism
  - Cerinthus taught that after the resurrection Christ Kingdom would be established on earth (early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century).
  - Polycarp said John, who wrote Revelation did not hold this view.
  - Perhaps a carryover from some Jews who expected a temporal Messiah
- Asceticism and Celibacy
  - As a result of the Gnostic emphasis that all matter is evil, some Christians were led to asceticism.
  - This led to considering normal human process such as eating nourishing meals, marrying, and childbirth as evil.
  - This led to the expectation of minister to remain unmarried and to the development of hermits by the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

# Development of the Canon – General Acceptance of Inspired Writings

- Determined by individual churches, through the prompting of the H.S., to be genuine based on origin and agreement with apostolic teaching.
- By 175 A.D. at least twenty of the New Testament books were generally accepted as inspired by most churches.
- By the time of Origen (250 A.D.) the twenty-seven books we have in the N.T. were accepted.
- Origen tried to add Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermes but that did not stand the test of time.
- Eusebius (326 A.D.) held to the 27, and from Athanasius (367 A.D. on there was little controversy.



# Ecumenical Councils

- Council of Nicaea- 325 A.D. – 318 bishops of churches attended
  - Constantine called it to settle controversy over the nature of Christ to achieve a spirit of unity. Resulted in a creed that denounced Arianism.
- Council of Constantinople – 381 A.D. - 115 bishops attended
  - Emperor Theodosius called. Confirmed that Christ was human as well as divine and declared the holy spirit as equal member of the Godhead to counter the teaching of Macdonious, bishop of Constantinople.
- Council of Ephesus – 431 A.D.
  - Theodosius called to counter teaching of Nestorius that the divine nature was not united with the body of Jesus. From that time on “Mary, the mother of God” was commonly used. This later led to the exalting of Mary.



# Ecumenical Councils (cont.)

- Council of Calcedon- 451 A.D.
  - Emperor Marcian called to counter the teaching of Eutyches that after the incarnation, the two natures of Christ were fused into one-the divine (Monophysitism). They also decreed the bishop of Constantinople was equal in rights and powers with the bishop of Rome.
- Council of Constantinople – 553 A.D.
  - Emperor Justinian called to counter Monophysitism again.
- Council of Constantinople – 680 A.D.
  - Emperor Constantine Pogonatus called to counter Monotheletism (Christ had only a divine will).
- Council of Nicea – 787 A.D.
  - Emperor Constantine VI called to settle a disturbance over the use of images (icons) in the church.

# Some Later Departure Ideas

- Growth of Episcopacy – One head elder, called Bishop.
- Establishment of Catholicity – Organization could demand conformity and a pattern of doctrine.
- Sacredotalism – A priestly class to serve between God and man
  - Ordained
  - Conduct services
  - Administer Baptism
  - Offer the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice to God
- Increase in Sacraments
  - Confirmation service for children
  - Penance
  - Ordination
  - Unction



# Some Later Departure Ideas (Cont.)

- Rise and Growth of Papacy
  - Based on mutual support with Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire
  - Encouraged by the rise of Mohammedaism
- Monasticism
  - Influenced by Gnostic philosophy
- Simony – purchase of Church offices
- Indulgences - buying forgiveness
- Hagiolarty – worship of departed saints



# Discussion

- What caused the disunity in the Christian church in its first millennium?
- Why did the development of the Canon not bring unity to Christianity?
- Why did the creeds and ecumenical councils not resolve the conflict between the groups?
- Is the return to the practice of Christianity like we read about in scripture a good idea worthy of effort? Why?
- What can we do to work toward unity of believers?