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**AN OUTLINE OF TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION**  
**FROM THE DAY OF PENTECOST TO THE PRESENT TIME**

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At the request of some to know about the true Christians from the time of the Apostles down to the present time, I will endeavour, by the help of Divine guidance, to give an outline in the following words:

The old proverb says, "Where God builds a temple, the devil builds one in opposition." This was the case in all ages, from the beginning down to the present time. Cain murdered his brother Abel. Abel became a martyr to God, and a good leader of the children of God. And Cain made himself a murderer, and became a leader of the children of Satan, and the false and ungodly church. So it was in all ages, and so it will continue to the end of time.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, came in the fulfilment of time to build a house or church for the shelter and safety of His people. This church of God originated and started at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in the hearts of three thousand souls who heard, and yielded unconditionally to the gospel message given by Christ and the Apostles; and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, were baptized by one Spirit into one body, and became of one heart and one soul. It increased to five thousand; and the Lord added daily unto the church such as should be saved. The promise was given to the disciples, "If you continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." [John 8: 31-32]

The disciples were called "Christians," first at Antioch, then by the name "Apostolic Church." A discipline was given to the Christians, or church, to keep it in order as a pure and undefiled body, without spot or wrinkle. This discipline will be found in Matthew 18: 15-18; I Corinthians 5: 5; Galatians 6: 1; II Thessalonians 3: 14-15.

Those who adhered to this discipline down through all the centuries were the true church. But some soon fell away and instituted theories of their own. Those that apostatized, compromised with the state and joined in the pagan or Roman power that existed, and under the reign of Emperor Nero, started a church at Rome, under the spirit of anti-Christ, contrary to the non-resistant doctrine that Christ and the Apostles taught. They began to set up images and idols and gods, and worshipped them instead of the true God. Those who would not adhere to this worship were persecuted and had to suffer the most cruel deaths; they were tortured, burned at the stake, stoned to death, and had to flee to cliffs and hiding places on account of the true faith.

This false and ungodly church claimed that Peter was their bishop at Rome at the time, but history gives clear evidence that Peter was at Jerusalem then, helping to build up the true church at different places. He never was at Rome, until he was apprehended because of his faith and for

preaching the truth, which they warned him to do no more. But, he did not fear death. When he was sentenced by the Emperor Nero to be crucified, he esteemed himself unworthy of being crucified with his head upward, like his Saviour, and requested that he be crucified with his head downward: which they did, to increase his pain.

The Romans built on the confession that Peter made when asked by Jesus, who he was. Peter was the first to speak. He said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered, "And I say also unto thee, That Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." [Matthew 16: 16-18] He did not build the church upon Peter, but upon the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ." "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [Matthew 16: 19] This was spoken in the presence of all the Apostles and not to Peter alone; which clearly shows that this power was given to the church in general at Corinth to reject and separate unfaithful members, to cast out all leaven that may arise through the weakness of the flesh, and to again restore them if true repentance and acknowledgment is made before the church. This is the binding and loosing given by Christ and the Apostles in the discipline of the Word of God.

The Romans claim this power to bind and to loose was given to Peter alone and handed down to the popes in succession of Peter, and also to forgive sins; which is a great error. Later, they ordained bishops and popes in the church at Rome, and called them, "Fathers." Jesus said, "Call no man your father upon earth: for one is your Father, which is in Heaven." [Matthew 23: 9] And no one on earth can forgive sin, but only God in Heaven. Jesus died for the sin of the whole human race, but God alone is able to forgive sin.

I have given a short outline of the church of Rome. I will now proceed to give a history of the true church and believers down through the dark centuries of persecution, how firm they stood for the true word of God, and whose faith never changed and never will, for, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

The true believers went by different names, depending on existing circumstances, but their faith never changed. They were threatened by severe torture in an effort to make them give up their faith, but they stood firm unto death, and thousands gave their lives for the true faith.

The first believers after the Apostles were in the city of Lyons. They were called, "the poor men of Lyon's." Many were persecuted and they had to flee and were scattered. Next, a man named Albi gathered the flock together and they went by the name of "Albingines." The

true believers baptized only adults upon repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

In the 3rd century, a pope instituted infant baptism claiming children should be baptized to wash away the original sin of Adam, and many were baptized in infancy. Later, many found no grounds for infant baptism, in the word of God, and also that Jesus was baptized when He was thirty years old; and they came to repentance and were re-baptized, which caused bitter feelings with the church of Rome, and increased persecution. These believers were then called "Baptist" or "Anabaptist." Severe persecution followed; history shows that the true believers were almost wiped out, the church was almost entirely obscured, and whenever a Baptist or Anabaptist was found, he was persecuted. We read in history that the blood of believers ran in the streets like water.

This went on until the year 1100. While several men were together discussing this terrible persecution, one among them fell down dead. This caused great fear in one of them, Peter Waldo, an unconverted man at the time. He became so convicted of his sinful condition, thinking if he had been the one to fall dead, he would have been eternally lost, and he devoted his whole life to reading and obeying God's Word. He was a wealthy man, and spared nothing to expound the truth. He soon found some believers in full fellowship of faith and doctrine, as he was convinced in reading the Word of God, and many came to repentance. They then were called "Waldensian Church." They went by this name up to the 15th century. During these centuries, the church increased to a large number, almost countless, and amidst the severe persecution, scattered throughout Europe, in Spain, Italy, France, Holland and Germany. Some branches had drifted away somewhat from the Apostolic ground, but still went by the name of Waldenses -- as the Mennonites of today have drifted into many different classes, -- **not true** to the name.

In the 15th century, Menno Simon was born in the village of Witmarsen, in the province of Friesland, Holland of Roman Catholic parents, about the year 1496. He was educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood at the Franciscan Monastery. He was admitted to the priesthood in 1524, at the age of 28, and was parish priest for some years thereafter. The martyrdom of one Sicke Snyder, a patient, pious man, who was hanged at Leeuwarden for being re-baptized in 1531, led Menno Simon to make a search of the Scriptures, which he had **never** read, and the results of this search convinced him that Rome was in error, and that he himself was living in sin.

His first conviction was while he handled the bread and wine in the mass, that they were not the flesh and blood of the Lord, as he was taught, but a suggestion of the **devil**. Also, he found **no** ground in the Scripture for infant

baptism. He consulted with some of the pastors on the subject, and after much discussion they had to admit there was **no scriptural foundation** for infant baptism. They taught that children were to be washed from their original sin. He compared this with Scripture, and found that it made baptism take the place of the blood of Christ.

He then renounced the Roman church, and devoted his time to prayer and supplication, that God might lead him to the true way of salvation, and he protested against the evil in the church of Rome. This caused a bitter feeling toward Menno. He became so well-grounded in the truth of God's never-changing Word, that he no more feared man, who threatened him; If he would not give up his error, which they thought he was in, his life would be at stake. He felt that man can destroy only the body, but God is able to cast body and soul into everlasting fire. It soon spread that Menno Simon built strongly on the true Word of God, and published it, wherever he got the opportunity.

Then six or eight men came to him, and as they found they were in full fellowship, and of one heart and soul with him, asked him to be their leader, as the Waldenses, or the true ones, had been almost wiped out on account of their faith. This brought Menno to deep consideration of the responsibilities of being a leader of the truth. After sincere meditation of the many dear souls that were being led astray by false doctrines, he yielded; and some time after was elected to be their minister, and later was elected to be their bishop. Here, the true believers were **called** "Mennonites", and went by the name "Mennonite church." Menno Simon's life was in danger ever after. He had no permanent home, but moved from place to place, so he would not easily be captured. A sum of money was offered to anyone who found or captured him. Some were persecuted who gave him shelter or harboured him. But he did not cease to preach the truth. He died a natural death when 66 years old. He left many books of his life on record, which are very profitable for everyone to read. There is nothing misleading in all his writings.

At the same time, and before Menno's time, some came out from the Roman church on account of the abominations that existed. Namely, Martin Luther, Zwingli and Calvin; -- all Catholic priests. As they could not agree on some fundamental principles, after much discussion, each one went his own way, as I read in their writings. And they had followers which are still in existence, especially in the old country. This reformation took place in the 15th and 16th centuries. Soon after the close of the 16th century, persecution ceased. Something had to be done as the country became so low in population, - so religious freedom was given by the government. After religious freedom was given, divisions existed.

After Menno Simon's death, the true church increased and different ministers and bishops were

ordained, as were needed, according to the plan given by the Apostles to ordain deacons and ministers by lot in order to perpetuate the church.

In the latter part of the 17th century, there was a Mennonite minister named Jacob Amman. Amman was a rigid literalist, highly suspicious of all innovations. He emphasized plain living to an even greater extent than did Menno Simon. When buttons came into existence in place of hooks and eyes, he objected; also to the new style trousers. He stressed beards and long hair and broad brimmed hats, and felt they should be retained. He separated from the Mennonite church on this account and started a church, and had followers. It was called the Amish church.

In 1784, Sunday school was organized by Robert Raikes at Gloucester, England. Before that time, there was not a Sunday school in the world. Now every town and almost every section has its Sunday school where the Bible is taught.

In 1798, the British and Foreign Bible Society was organized and colleges and edifices were built, to teach one another. The Apostle Paul writes in the 8th chapter of Hebrews, "We shall no more teach one another; know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest." He will write His law into our hearts and stamp it into our minds. The letter can be taught by man in schools, but the Spirit **cannot** be taught. It must come from above, through true repentance and conversion. It is said, "Repent and be baptized, and ye shall **receive the gift** of the Holy Ghost." [Acts 2: 38]

About the same time John Wesley started a church at Gloucester, England, on his own ability, and had followers; they were called "Wesleyans" and later "Methodists."

As the Mennonites settled in different countries, there were about fifty churches. Some consisted of from 500 to 600 brethren. Some differences of opinion about matters of faith arose among the members, which deeply grieved them, and they sought means to restore unity. They called all the churches together, to come to an understanding, and have the schism fully healed. There assembled at Dort, Holland, on the 21st of April, 1632, many of the church leaders, with 50 ministers and deacons present, who deemed it necessary and advisable that a scriptural confession of faith should be drawn up to which all parties should adhere, and on which this peace convention and intended union should be founded and built. It was then accordingly drawn up, publicly adopted, confirmed and signed by 50 ministers and deacons. This confession of faith was not drawn up according to their own opinions, but on the same ground as the discipline given to the Church at Corinth, mentioned

above. The eighteen articles of faith are found in *Martyr's Mirror* and *Mennonite Confession of Faith*. It was then unanimously adopted in all the churches in Alsace and Germany, and was practised by the church until the latter part of the 17th century. The enemy [Satan] had again wrought some disturbances among the members on account of some articles of faith. Some sought a broader view, and deemed it not necessary to hold so strictly to that confession.

Worldliness and light-mindedness caused considerable labour in the church, to no profit. The majority, with some of the leaders, took their own course; and the result was, the faithful ones had to separate, as the Apostle Paul taught, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing...."

[II Corinthians 6: 17] This took place in Lancaster County, PA in the years 1811 and 1812. Those who withdrew from the main body of Mennonites were called "Reformed Mennonites," which name they adopted to distinguish them from the others. The Old Mennonites went on in their course, and soon divisions sprung up among them, and now they are divided into **many** branches. After the faithful ones separated, the others modified their lives and practices somewhat, but not fully, especially in regard to the ban; They were not willing to abide in the doctrine of the Saviour, "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." [Matthew 18: 17] They deemed the ban too strict a course to take. (We should use this discipline in a manner of love, to win such to the Lord, who have gone astray, and not to repel.) Some started to hold Sunday school, and build much on Sunday school and Bible school.

The Reformed Mennonites organized in church order in 1812. The true believers never adopted Sunday school or Bible school down through all the centuries, as it was a human invention, not instituted by Christ and the Apostles. Under the Old Testament, in Israel, if any one instituted any form of religion of any kind that God had not commanded, however pious it seemed to men, it was an abomination in the sight of God, and he was severely punished. Christ said in the last words in Revelation 22: 18, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of this book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life,...."

As many became united with the Reformed Mennonites in PA, they scattered, and colonies originated in Canada and the Western and Southern states [of the U.S.A.]; but they remained the same in faith and doctrine, and still do, as I have experienced in all my travels; they adhere to the confession of faith that was adopted in the

16th century. [Which must correspond in total to the Scriptures.]

Popular religion is on the increase; countless sects spring up, divided against each other. If two can no more agree, they separate, and both have followers. The true believers are dwindling; at some places where there were once large congregations, only a few are left, and in some places, none are left. Evidently, the end of the world is fast approaching, as the Saviour Himself said, when He will come again, He will hardly find true faith on earth. And, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." [Matthew 24: 37] The descendants of Cain increased and became so ungodly that it repented God that He had made man, and He said, "I will destroy man off the face of the earth by a flood of water." But God found faith in a righteous man named Noah, and told him to build an ark for the safety of the righteous.

The true believers dwindled down to eight souls, and were found worthy to enter the ark; all the rest perished in the flood. After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah that He would no more destroy the world with a flood of water, but with a deluge of fire and brimstone; and He set a bow in the clouds as a token of the covenant He had made, and every time He puts a bow in the clouds, it is a remembrance of His promise.

Jesus came to build a house or church for the safety of His flock. He said, "I am the good shepherd. My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me; but a stranger they will not follow." He said, "I am the door of the sheepfold; he that entereth in by the door shall find pasture. But he that entereth not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, is a thief and a robber." [10th chapter of John]

Now all that do not heed the calls of grace, in this day of grace, and obey the heavenly message, and become willing to enter the door, the Ark of safety, Jesus Christ and His church, and remain outside the door, will have to perish with all the wicked and ungodly men in that lake of fire and brimstone, which, as we read in Revelations, is the second death.

Referring back to the 15th and 16th centuries, ancient history gives an account that Menno Simon and Martin Luther co-operated favourably for a considerable time. Later, Luther gave way to infant baptism, swearing of oaths and bearing arms. He concluded the government were God's ministers, ordained by God for the punishment of the evil and protection of the good, and in time of war should protect the king and country. Menno Simon did not submit to this. He stood the ground of non-resistance and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." [Acts 5: 29] This caused their separation. But before Luther's death, he

acknowledged his error. We read in Daniel Musser's book, "The Reformed Mennonite Church," page 177, that poor Luther himself, toward the close of this life, became so disgusted with the carnality of his own people at Wittenberg, that he left it, intending never to return to them: but by the persuasion of the elector, and others, he was prevailed upon to return. John Wesley says that before his death, Luther uttered those melancholy words, "I have spent by strength for nought; those who are called by my name, it is true, are reformed in opinions and modes of worship; but in their hearts and lives, in their tempers and practice, they are not a jot better than the papists."

John Wesley also confessed the folly of his followers in not obeying his counsel against the gaiety and fashions of his day. We also read in Daniel Musser's book, pages 506 and 507, "This," said Wesley, "is a melancholy truth. I am ashamed of it; but I know not how to help it. I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that it is not my fault. The trumpet has not given an uncertain sound for nearly fifty years last past. I have borne a clear and faithful testimony. In print, in preaching, in meeting the society, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I am, therefore, clear of the blood of those that will not hear; it lies upon their heads. Let your dress be cheap, as well as plain, wear no gold, otherwise you do but trifle with God, and me, and your own souls."

These were the words of Wesley. We do not doubt that Wesley was earnest in his preaching, but the fruit of his followers is proof that he did not see far enough as a faithful shepherd and watchman. His own language gives evidence that he let the sheep climb up some other way, and not by the door. The Saviour said, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. But an hireling, his voice they know not, and will not follow."

In viewing the divided state of professed Christianity with a spiritual eye, where is the evidence that Jesus died on the cross at Calvary? The melodious song which the shepherds heard on the plains of Bethlehem was, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, good will to men." Jesus came on earth to gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Paul's message at Corinth to the believers, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." [I Corinthians 1: 10]

It takes a sober, well balanced mind to detect the evil at the present time. The majority of professors in this time are intoxicated by the enchanted wine that is continually poured out by the Babylonian woman, of which we are warned in the 17th chapter of Revelation. The woman was drunken with the blood of the saints; and the

nations were drunken with the wine of her fornication. Every class of professors takes its own way, leaving the cross at Calvary. If one class does not suit us, we can easily accept another, with a cross to bear. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." [Matthew 16: 24]

These are all warnings given in the word of God, that we should all prove ourselves; whether we have entered in by the door of the strait and narrow way, which leads to eternal life and happiness, or whether we are still on the broad way which leads to eternal destruction. We have to choose between these two ways. At the time of Noah, those who chose to remain outside the ark, had to bear the consequences that followed. After Noah and his family entered the ark, there was another opportunity given of seven more days, but no one responded to the call. At the end of the seventh day, the door was shut and all outside had to perish.

We are given this lifetime to make the choice. As Noah preached 120 years, what was coming to pass, all had ample time to consider. So we must make a decision in our lifetime. Today may be the last opportunity, as we have no promise of tomorrow. May none of us wait until the door is closed.

This is an outline of true and false religion as near as I could gather from ancient writings. I hope it may be to the praise and honour of God, and to the benefit of our eternal salvation.

-A.H.