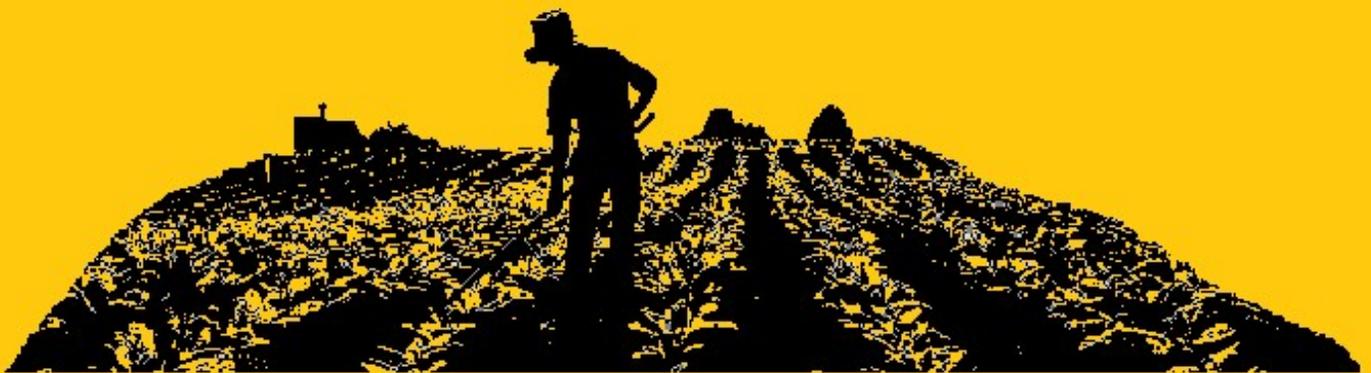


# The Amish

AN EXPERIMENT IN HUMILITY  
AND COMMUNITY



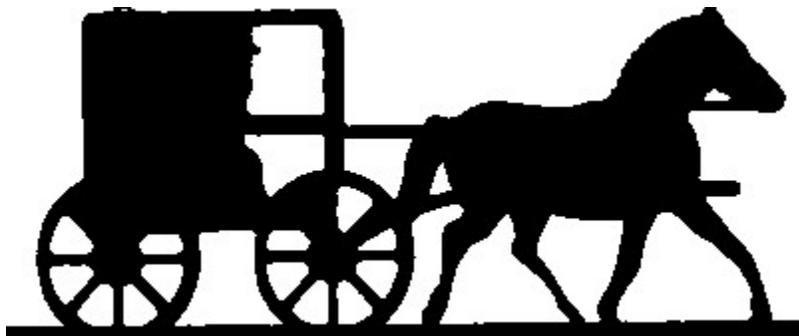
The Amish are a hard working, God fearing society, mysterious and often misunderstood

**BOOKLET ABOUT AMISH AND OTHERS BY:**

**Harold A. Lerch, Sr.**  
Word to the World Ministries

# The Amish

An experiment in humility  
and community



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Ministries**

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...made of one blood all nations [Acts 17:26](#)

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The Amish: An experiment in humility and community  
By Harold A. Lerch, Sr.

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## Mission Statement

The author's overall concern is for the salvation of lost souls. God has provided The Way to all that will accept His grace, and His son Jesus Christ, Messiah and LORD.

God is Creator. He owns us. He alone has the right to give commandments and judge us. God's master plan was redirected because of our sinful ways. His plan for us into eternity is that we follow His Son, the Messiah, who has already come as the Redeemer of sins for all time. Jesus will return to conquer Satan and all our enemies. We who accept Him as our Redeemer will abide with the Conqueror forever.

## Author

The author, Harold A. Lerch, Sr., is a graduate of the Pennsylvania State University, College of Engineering, and is a retired Professional Engineer. The majority of his career was in construction administration and management for a major private-industry corporation. Previously, he was Special Projects Manager for the same corporation, specializing in food manufacturing and material handling.

Lerch is founder of Word to the World Ministries, a concern that publishes and distributes complimentary witnessing resources. The author offers all products as no cost downloads from his website as well as on Google Books.

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## Foreword

Knowing that I write on the subject of Christianity, I was asked by a high school alumni association to put together some information about the Amish. We grew up in the Amish country of Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. Three Amish sects share our region, as distinguished by the colors of their buggy tops.

I decided to add a little bit more about Amish religious beliefs, and how they compare to other Anabaptist churches, to share with anyone interested.

## Dedication

I dedicate this book to Jeanne, my wife for the last near-half century. Jeanne's gifts to me include Harold, Jr., and Joanne, who in turn gave us eight grandchildren. Blessings upon blessings! Jeanne is my best friend.

An old man's grandchildren are his crowning glory. (Proverbs 17:6a).

I wish to honor my parents, the late Ralph H. and Pearl N. Lerch. Without my parents' prayers and direction, my soul might be lost.

To Randy and Maria.

Harold A. Lerch, Sr.

## PART 1: THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT

Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Amish, Mennonite, Brethren, and Evangelical Christians: all have their own way of life based around a religion. All differ based upon interpretation of scripture.

I have lived in Pennsylvania all of my 68 years and have been quite familiar with the aforementioned. There is much interest in the Amish by present society, even to the point of Amish Romance books, a successful and growing literature genre. Perhaps the interest is due to the highly devout involved in the taboo that interests us.

Who are the Amish? This book is intended to give a basic understanding of the Amish and related religions and societies.

### FROM "WHENCE COMETH" TODAY'S CHRISTIANS?

Christianity, of course, began with Jesus Christ. The first Christians were Jews. They called their Church "the Way" at that time. Following the commandments from Jesus as well as Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) scripture, the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles (aka "Greeks"). Eventually, The Way rolled into one church body and established headquarters in Rome. It is generally accepted that the first "world-wide" leader was the apostle Peter, the "Rock" on whom Jesus declared His Church would be built.

Imagine, back as a child, you start a "club" with three people. It really does not take long until two side together against one. As your club grows, some decide they do not like how the leaders handle things, so they leave and start their own clubs.

"The Church" stayed essentially in tact until the eleventh century. There were minor schisms such as the Coptics in Egypt and elsewhere. The first real division was the split between what we know today as Roman Catholics and the various Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe.

The next major separation was the Reformation of the fifteenth century. Protestantism gave rise to all of the denominations we will review in this booklet.

"Heinz 57 Variety" that I am, about half of my DNA is from the former Germanic states. One ancestor is my 14<sup>th</sup> great-Grandfather, Martin Luther (1463-1546). He famously wrote his "Ninety-five Theses," but the three basic beliefs most important to me and to Protestant churches are the following:

1. People can find salvation only by faith in God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus. (The Catholic church taught that faith and good works were needed for salvation.)
2. All church teachings should be clearly based on the words of the Bible.

3. All people with faith were equal. Both the pope and church traditions were false authorities. The church members could read and understand scripture by themselves. (Luther was the first to translate the Bible into a current language (High German)).

### FROM “WHENCE COMETH” THE ANABAPTISTS?

The Amish sprang from the Anabaptist movement. This movement began during Luther's lifetime (remember the three kids who started a club). We need to take a brief look at this movement to understand the Amish.

Anabaptist means “one who baptizes again.” Their detractors assigned this name because of the practice of baptizing persons when they converted or declared their faith in Christ, even if they had been baptized as infants. The Anabaptist belief is that infant baptism is not scriptural and is therefore invalid. Their claim is that baptizing self-confessed believers was their true baptism. Most main-line Protestant denominations continue to baptize infants, whereas Anabaptists and Evangelicals baptize those who have made “the choice of salvation” for themselves.



John baptizing Jesus

### WHO ARE THE ANABAPTISTS?

The early Anabaptists formulated their beliefs in 1527, a decade after Luther's movement started. The belief that only “Believer’s baptism” is valid defines this movement. Present day “Anabaptists” are those who are in a traditional line with the 16th century movement, which includes the Amish, Hutterites, and Mennonites. Those churches do not recognize the Brethren, Apostolic, or Evangelical Christians as Anabaptist. These are considered later creations.

We will take a brief look at all of these church-societies, beginning with the Amish, as they are our subjects.

### FROM “WHENCE COMETH” THE AMISH?

The Amish came from the Mennonites. We will study this split before we review the Mennonites. In the late 17th century, a Mennonite named Jakob Ammann led an effort to reform the church in Switzerland and South Germany. (Again, remember the three-child club.) This reformation was based on social actions more so than religious beliefs. Ammann (hence the name “Amish) wished to shun those of “weak character” and to hold communion more often, among other small differences.

Discussions failed, so Ammann and his followers split from the other Mennonites. In later years, other schisms among Amish resulted in such groups as the Old Order Amish, New Order Amish,

Kauffman Amish Mennonites, Conservative Mennonite Conference, and Biblical Mennonite Alliance.

## THE MENNONITES

The Mennonite church grew out of a segment of the Anabaptist movement led by Catholic priest Menno Simons. In the early days of the Anabaptist movement, Simons heard of the faction and began to question his Catholic faith. He questioned the doctrine of "transubstantiation" (the conversion of baptismal elements into the body and blood of Christ). He was reluctant to leave the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, in 1536, Simons did leave the Roman Catholic Church and became a leader within the Anabaptist movement.

Mennonites were part of the Protestant Reformation reaction against the rites and theology of the Roman Catholic Church. The primary difference between Mennonites and others was the infant baptism issue. Infant baptism had political meaning, too. Almost every infant born in Western Europe was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Church authorities hunted Simon for the rest of his life. His name became associated with the scattered groups of Anabaptists whom he helped organize. The early movement continued to grow and spread throughout German and Dutch speaking regions of Europe.

The Anabaptists began a belief in the separation of church and state. They thought that requiring church membership at birth such as practiced by the church in Rome was inconsistent with the New Testament. The Anabaptist view was that individuals should join the church only when willing to publicly acknowledge belief in Jesus and the desire to live in accordance with his teachings. The Roman Catholic and early Protestant churches joined forces to fight the movement. Their methods included torture and violent death.

In contrast, the Anabaptists taught peace and forgiveness. The Mennonites continued to expand, although at a slow pace. They practice pacifism to this day.

## WHY DID THEY COME TO AMERICA?

We all learned about this in elementary school history class: "The Pilgrims landed near Plymouth Rock to escape religious persecution. They befriended the 'Indians' and ate a big, turkey dinner. William Penn, a Quaker, set up a colony named 'Penn's Woods' to provide sanctuary for others."

The Catholics persecuted all Protestants. Both Catholics and Protestants persecuted all Anabaptists. This was in part due to differences in the interpretation of scripture, but I think more so for political and economic reasons. The church was missing out on selling a lot of indulgences. Primarily, "Pope Leo X offered indulgences for those who gave alms to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome." In other words, give money to the church and your sins will be forgiven.

Other Catholic doctrines opposed by the Anabaptists included literal adherence to preclusions from the Sermon on the Mount: taking oaths, participating in military actions, and participating in civil government.

Queen Elizabeth I was a Protestant who witnessed persecution by Catholics, especially by Queen Mary (who became known as “Bloody Mary”). She invited the mistreated Protestants to settle her new land. This brought many Western European Protestants and Anabaptists, including the Amish, to Pennsylvania, a colony known for religious tolerance, in the 18th century.

## BY THE NUMBERS

wI had trouble finding how many members Worldwide and nationally belong to each of the movements. I found a good one for Pennsylvania from C. Nelson Hostetter:

### PENNSYLVANIA STATE ANABAPTIST STATISTICS

	Sub-Groups	Congregations, etc	Membership
Amish	10	455	42,305
Brethren	18	461	62,567
Mennonite	19	539	61,849
Hutterite	1	2	430
Anabaptist	3	8	549
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>187,409</b>

C. Nelson Hostetter

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The best I could find worldwide is the following:

Mennonite and Brethren in Christ	1,600,000
Amish	300,000
Russian Amish	20,000
Old Order Mennonite	70,000
Hutterite	50,000

## PART 2: THE AMISH

Once in Pennsylvania, disputes among Amish communities resulted in restructuring and division into sects. The more traditional sects are known as “Old Order Amish.”

### AMISH SECTS

The information I have gleaned indicates there are eleven major “sects” of Amish in the US:

- Penn. Lancaster (Pennsylvania) affiliation
- Ohio Holmes Old Order, Geauga I, Geauga II, Danner, and Schwartentruber
- Indiana Elkhart-LaGrange, Buchanan/Medford, Nappanee, and Swiss
- Iowa Kalona

Near my home of Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, three sub-sects are seen and distinguished by their buggy color. I am unfamiliar with the names and differences, but I have heard the “white tops” referred to as “Nebraska Amish.”

Other sects include the Russian Amish. They moved to South America during communist rule, but are now making their way back to Russia. The Hutterites of the USA and Canada formed independently in Moravia, as an Anabaptist sect separate from the Amish. They also speak a different German dialect.

### CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Although there are a number of sects, core beliefs are very close from sect to sect. Most of the differences tend to deal with customs and daily living rather than basic religious beliefs.

Amish lifestyle varies from community to community as decided by the bishop and the elders. This includes matters such as dress and other rules on technology, etc. Amish believe that children are a blessing from God and stress the “proper” raising of their families. Hard work is considered godly, and some technologies are considered detrimental because they reduce the need for hard work. The Amish believe in salvation by “good works” rather than by grace. So you could be saved today, but tomorrow swear a blue streak while falling off your silo and go to eternal damnation.

There are thought to be over 300,000 Amish in the US. Approximately one-fourth live in Pennsylvania, with slightly less in Ohio and Indiana. Others are found in other mid-Western states. Amish also reside in Canada, Switzerland, and believe it or not, Ireland and Russia!

The Amish only marry on Tuesdays and Thursdays in November and December (after the majority of the farm work is done). They have a daylong church service every second Sunday, rotat-

ing from farm to farm. The men shave until they are married, thereafter growing beards. They do not grow mustaches. One story is that this habit began in the Revolutionary War because they did not want to look like the German mercenaries employed by the British. In fact, this is when many Pennsylvania Germans, not just the Amish, anglicized their names to separate themselves for the same reason. Another story is that the British required soldiers to grow mustaches. The Amish did not want to look like them, either. Another proposed explanation is that all Anabaptists were harassed and persecuted in Europe by soldiers: the soldiers wore mustaches. I wonder if anyone actually knows!

## SCHOOL

Most Amish children attend Amish schools. These are small, one-room buildings with outside play areas and, importantly, outside toilets. The students attend first through eighth grades. When grade eight is complete, the students begin a life of full-time work. A favorite recess activity is baseball or kickball. Boys and girls play together. Young Amish women who might only be out of school a couple years teach them.



## SHARING AMISH RELIGION

I have attempted to discuss religion with the Amish on numerous occasions. They are very reluctant. I sense they suspect I am trying to convert them to other Christianity. They are nothing like the quasi-Christian denominations and sects who go door-to-door “bearing witness” and materials.

## SURNAMES

The chart on the next page lists the “native” German, Swiss, or French name for many of the more popular Amish names.

NATIVE NAME	"ANGLICIZED" SPELLING	MEANING
Beiler	Byler	German. "Measuring stick" - an occupational name for an inspector of measures or a maker of measuring sticks.
Hoch	High	German. Topographic name or for a tall man.
Holly	Hooley	Flemish. "Holy."
Gnaegi	Kanagy	French. Meaning unknown.
Koenig	King	German. In service of a king or head of a craftsmen's guild.
Müller	Miller	German. Literally, one who operates a mill.
Peachey	Bitsche	Swiss German. Meaning unknown.
Schmocker	Smoker	German. Occupational name for a charcoal burner
Stoltzfuss	Stoltzfus	German. A nickname for someone with a haughty gait or who walked with a limp
Joder	Yoder	German. Originated in Switzerland. A shortened version of the name Theodorus.
Zug	Zook	Swiss German. Various meanings.

## AMISH IN THE MEDIA

I am certain there is no Amish Mafia. The TV show was fun yet disturbing. But, those things never happen. Amish are peaceful and inclined to turn the other cheek, not burn your house down.

There are current TV ads for a new TV series about the Amish. They supposedly “cook” Methamphetamines for resale, hit each other, participate in sex scandals, and probably a lot more. That never happens! Maybe there is some “bad egg” somewhere that grows “green corn” (marijuana), but I highly doubt it.

One of the stars of “Amish Mafia,” Merlin Miller, appeared in our area promoting a rock band. A friend took this photo. If you read books about the Amish, romance, etc., it was no doubt written by the English to make a buck by exploiting good people.



## PART 3: AMISH WORK AND TRANSPORTATION

### HORSES AND BUGGIES



Amish gathering straw in Big Valley, Pennsylvania

Old Order Amish do not own cars. Horses and mules do the heavy work. The shape, size, and color of the buggies reflect that group's identity. Most buggy horses are either Standardbreds or thoroughbreds. Often, these are retired racehorses. Single men do not have roofs on their buggies. Occasionally, one might spot a two-wheel "sportster."

The Amish near my home of Big Valley (Kishacoquillas Valley, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania) use two breeds of workhorses. The "palomino-looking" horses are Belgians. The black ones are Clydesdales.



Left: "Black top" buggy. Two horses are unusual.

Right: A family without a buggy top is uncommon.

Note the "yellow top" driving in front.

Photos are from Big Valley, Pennsylvania by the author.



## PLANES, TRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES

Although the Amish use horses and buggies, they will also use modern transportation to get around. Most communities have “English” or Mennonite friends who own motor vehicles. Often, vanloads of Amish can be seen en route to destinations such as a far-away market, hospital, or other distant place. They do use modern doctors when necessary. A buggy trip to the regional hospital 20 miles away is impractical.

Amish workers will often share motorized transportation. For example, many are skilled carpenters and their work is in demand. Groups of craftsmen will meet at a central location, and then be hauled to work site in a motorized vehicle.

In addition to automobiles, trucks, and vans, they will use planes and trains if necessary. They shun modern conveniences for religious purposes, but not to the extent of being impractical.



The family in this rubber-tired little “sportster” is probably from a conservative Mennonite sect. Amish do not use rubber tires. In fact, some of the more progressive Amish do use tractors, but they always have steel tires. This photo was taken in Union County, Pennsylvania by the author.

Many buggies are on the road at night, more than you might think. Pennsylvania requires them to be equipped with flashing electric lights after dusk, and triangular “slow moving vehicle signs” at all times. Most Amish follow the law, but the “White Top Nebraska Amish” in our area refuse to comply. It must be difficult to enforce because it appears that it has not been. This sect uses very dim, red-globed oil lanterns. They are difficult to see. Occasionally, accidents with motor vehicles occur. Often, the horse is killed and sometimes the riders. At least they can call 911 on their cell phones! Yep, they got ‘em!

## WORK & SELF-SUFFICIENCY

It seems that most Amish are farmers. At least, most live on farms. But many have other skills and support themselves in that way. Those on farms seem to do a bit of every kind of farming for the purposes of supporting their families as much by themselves as possible. They have sizeable gardens for the family apart from the commercial growing in their large fields. They even grow tobacco, a good cash crop, although most do not condone the use of tobacco products.



Most Amish have dairy cattle and sell the milk, and keep some for the family. They raise their own beef cattle and pork, chickens (and eggs), turkeys, ducks, and geese. Many also raise sheep for sheering and goats for their rich milk.

Some Amish manufacture buggies and wagons. Some are experts with leather and make harnesses, belts, etc. Some are saddlers. There are small “factories” in Big Valley that manufacture furniture, welded equipment, and other goods. Some operate stores to supply scarce goods to their neighbors, and to the English who like quality goods at reasonable prices.

Women make quilts, dresses, and clothing for the men. “Amish Quilts” are expensive and highly prized, mostly by the English. The women also bake pies and breads. Shoofly pies and “half-moon” pies are in great demand.

Some of the farms offer butchered products such as sausage, “pawn haas” (scrapple), and other meat products. My wife grew up in the middle of all this, lucky for me, because when we began dating I experienced my first taste of “heaven”- “old ham.” This treat is a country cured and aged ham that nothing else can touch. I like horseradish (another Amish product) on every kind of meat. I like the taste and the heat. But I refuse to mask or otherwise ruin the taste of “old ham” with anything. Maybe I will just have some horseradish on the side.

## HEALING

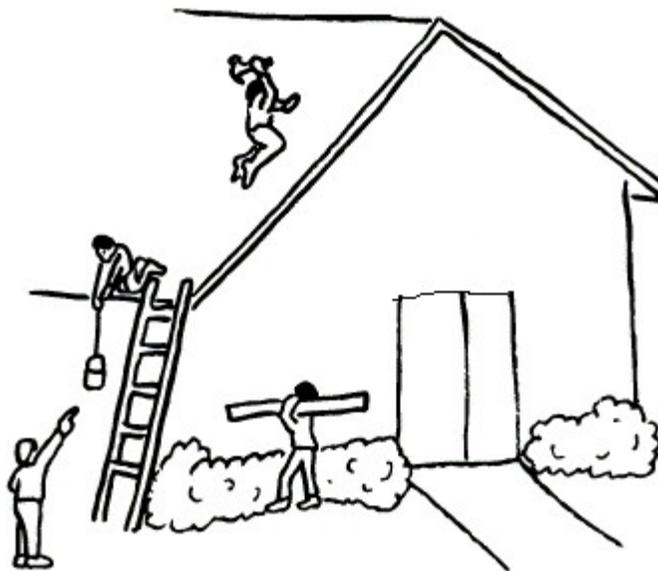
I am a migraine sufferer. According to scripture, God “gave us every herb,” and “every tree that beareth fruit.” He commanded us to subdue the earth. To me, that includes knowing which provisions can cure our ailments. When an Amish woman told my wife that she took a spoonful of horseradish to cure a headache, I tried it. It almost launched me to the moon: it did not cure my headache. I wonder if the Amish woman was serious, or if she is still laughing.

Horseradish aside, some Pennsylvania Germans use traditional healing called “Powwowing,” “braucherei” in Pennsylvania Dutch. The word powwow is Native American, but the traditional medicine and folk healing charms originated in the culture of ethnic Germans from Europe. The practice includes a wide range of healing rituals used primarily for treating ailments in humans and livestock, as well as securing physical and spiritual protection, and good luck in everyday affairs. Not just for the Amish, many quaint Pennsylvania Germans used this practice at one time.

I recall a time when my mother had pain in her arm. The next-door neighbor came over and said, “Let’s powwow for it.” Mom did not believe in this, but she did not want to hurt her feelings. They held hands “cross-armed” to “reverse the electricity.” Mom’s arm still hurt.

## BARN BUILDING

Amish men are known for their ability to build new barns, and build them fast. I have witnessed the occasional demise of a barn due to fire or natural events. The Amish community comes together *en masse* to erect a new one. It is quite an event.



## PART 4: PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS

I am “Pennsylvania German.” Commonly, we are referred to as Pennsylvania Dutch. That does not mean that I am Amish, Mennonite, Brethren, ride a horse, speak “Dutch,” or live on a farm. I once owned a horse but was not very good at it.

### PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN: GERMAN FOREBEARS

“The Pennsylvania Dutch” is a cultural group formed by early German-speaking immigrants to Pennsylvania, and their descendants. The word “Dutch” does not refer to the Dutch people or Dutch language, but to the German settlers, known as Deutsch (in standard German) and Deitsch (in the principal dialect they spoke, Palatine German). Most emigrated, in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the Americas from within the Holy Roman Empire, which included areas that were later to become Germany and Switzerland. Over time, the various dialects spoken by these immigrants fused into a unique dialect of German known as Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania “Dutch.”

### LANGUAGE

The language spoken by Amish and other Pennsylvania Germans is a form of “Low German.” Their Bibles are written in High German. At one time there were countless German dialects. This changed when Martin Luther translated the Bible into a High German dialect and integrated spoken language in the Germanic states. (Germany was not a unified country until 1874.)

Martin Luther’s reformation movement provided a basis on which the Anabaptist movement could form. Some of Martin Luther’s descendants settled in Pennsylvania. Johann Adam Wagner (1711-1773) was the seventh great-grandson of Martin Luther and relocated from Germany to Berks County, Pennsylvania. His Son Elias Wagner (1760-1804) relocated to the Beavertown, Snyder County, area. Many Central Pennsylvania Wagners and Gosses can trace their lineage to this family.

Pennsylvania Dutch speakers word phrases in English in a way that sounds amusing to us, such as “make the door open.” In German one would say, “Macht das tur zu.” The Dutch speakers use the German syntax and simply substitute English words. Some favorites:

- How’d it make? (How did it work out?)
- It’s making down (rain).
- It’s really putting down (snowing).
- The roof leaks, still.
- Let me see that “wunst.”
- The kids are not being have (behaving).
- The roads are melting.
- I have choir practice. (I am going to the chiropractor’s.)

- And, of course, the standard exemplar: throw the horse over the fence some hay.
- You “face” your mother (look like her).

The Pennsylvania Dutch maintained numerous religious affiliations, with the greatest number being Lutheran or German Reformed, but also with many Anabaptists, including Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites. The Anabaptist religions promoted a simple lifestyle, and their adherents were known as Plain people or Plain Dutch. This was in contrast to the Fancy Dutch, who tended to assimilate more easily into the American mainstream. Other religions were also represented by the late 1700s, in smaller numbers.

## HOUSE KEEPING

The following excerpt is from “History of the Lerch Family 1560-1942,” 1942 Public Domain:

Thinking of our Ancestors how they toiled; first [they] had to clear the land from trees, from the wood, then prepared and built their homes, with no seed drill, grass cutting machine, or self-binder, no factory to make their clothes, but had to sow flax, cut it, bleach and prepare it for the linen material. Raised sheep, cut the wool, washed and bleached for weeks near a stream sometimes two miles away from their homes, and went on horseback twice a day to sprinkle it. They had to do that because they had no big cisterns [three] hundred years ago and the limestone well water would not answer the purpose.

First, they raised the cattle. In butchering, they gathered the tallow, melted it, and poured it in forms called candle forms. This process is used now, as candles are always in use around the holiday seasons.

Their floors were mostly bare [earth], but were scrubbed bright and clean, decorated with silver sand every Saturday. No bakers came around, and there was no need for a tin can opener. They dried most of the berries, apples, etc. They even made their coffee from oats and some bran and wheat. They had bags full of dried tea, and other needful things. But they had to do it. Think of the blue Mondays [laundry day]. Rubbing first, by hand, next they rubbed on a smooth board. To boil their soap they would splash water on wood ashes (for they had no coal) and strained them. That they called lye, and made very good and healthy soap [with lard].

They knitted their stockings, mittens, made their shoes. The writer saw shoes where the hair of the animal was still on the inside of the shoes, while the outside were of nice leather treated with a liquid called shellac made from the sap of certain trees, They were neat, sewed and strong and nice.

In summer they went barefooted, even to Church and Sunday School. They would wear Shaker sunbonnets, made of linen, and pasteboard. When frost, and cold weather would set in, they would wear warm woolen stockings and shoes. Carriages and buggies were scarce. The women, as well as the men had riding horses, to go to Church and business places. Stones measuring 27 to 30 inches [tall] were permanently placed for them to alight and get on their horses. They used

wooden baking troughs, or molds, with covers where the bread was kneaded. After it was baked, they scraped the dough from the mold and then by putting water on it made the paste resembling yeast to start the next bread.

It was in the Eighteenth Century that people learned to bake wheat bread and pies. Before, it was barley and rye. They would get one dress a year. The flax was woven into a fabric, after the women spun it, at home. The dress worn Sundays the previous year would then be the weekday dress. The same principle was carried out in footwear. Often one pair served for weekdays and Sundays. Every Saturday evening they would thoroughly clean, and grease them with sheep tallow prepared for that purpose, and those were strict “rules.”

In addition to the Pennsylvania Germans, that state was heavily settled by the Scotch Irish. The latter were Protestant Scots who relocated to Northern Ireland, and later to Pennsylvania. Most of this state’s history comes from these two groups.

## LERCH

My surname is German. It means “lark” (the songbird). We came to Pennsylvania in 1738, so we qualify as Pennsylvania Germans. My grandfather, Alfred Lerch, was born in Berks County in 1878. Children learned Pennsylvania Dutch as their first language at that time, and that included Grampa. We lived in Mifflin County then and would take Grampa to Berks County every year to visit cousins. They spoke Dutch the whole time so I was quite bored. When Grampa was a young man, he got a job in Philadelphia working for a German Baker. He learned “High German” during his tenure. When I was small, he used to recite John 3:16 for me in both languages. They both were Greek to me.

Grampa lived in an apartment above the family business when I was a boy. Remember that Germans pronounce “J’s” like “Y’s.” Sometimes, when the Pa Dutch speak English, they really butcher some of the words. One evening, I went up to the apartment to visit. Grampa asked me if “Chaimps” was in the store. I asked, “Who?” Grampa repeated the same sentence, so I again asked, “Who? Chaimps?” Then Grampa said, “Chaimps not Chaimps! Chim! Uncle Chim!” Oh, Uncle Jim!

## PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH CRAFTS

Pennsylvania Germans began painting decorative stars in circles on their barns in the 1800’s. They were really just an adornment. A century later, these “hex” paintings were offered to tourists for a bit of extra profit. The Dutch realize that superstitions are associated with certain hex sign themes, but no self-respecting Dutchman would think these keep the evil spirits away. You could think of them as the Twentieth Century’s Amish Mafia TV shows. Neither the Amish nor the Mennonites use hex signs.

There are wonderful Pennsylvania Dutch craftsmen; but most of the products they make and sell in stands along the highway are simply to separate “English” from his money.

## PART 5: BRETHREN & APOSTOLIC CHURCHES

### BRETHREN

Church of the Brethren, or German Brethren was organized in the early eighteenth century in Germany. The Brethren were a merging of certain Lutherans and Anabaptists. They consider the New Testament as their only creed. The church takes a strong stance for pacifism along with the other historic peace churches (Mennonites and Quakers). Distinctive practices include the following:

1. Believer's baptism (by immersion three times).
2. A "love feast," which includes feet washing, a fellowship meal, and communion.
3. Anointing for healing.
4. The holy kiss (a kiss on the cheek). *Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.* (Romans 16:16 RSV)

The first Brethren congregation was established in the United States about a decade later, in the early eighteenth century. They became commonly known as "Dunkards" or "Dunkers," (from the Baptism rite). They were more formally known as German Baptist Brethren. The Church of the Brethren represents the largest denomination. Other branches include the First Brethren and Grace Brethren.



Many Brethren churches are quite plain

Older churches had two entrance doors, one for men, and one for women. The men and women also sat on opposite sides of the church.

The Brethren organizers believed that the Lutheran and Reformed churches were taking liberties with the “true Christianity” revealed in the New Testament, so they rejected established liturgy, including infant baptism and existing Eucharistic practices. The founding Brethren were broadly influenced by “Radical Pietist” understandings of a nondenominational church of awakened Christians. This church would fellowship together in purity and love, awaiting Christ's return. Mennonites referred to them as the New Baptists (German: Neue Täufer).

I do not belong to any denomination by my own choice, but my family has been profoundly influenced by The Brethren Church because of my elders who found salvation while attending a Brethren church.

## THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The Apostolic Christian Church is a worldwide Christian denomination in the Anabaptist tradition. Its theology is Arminian (named for theologian Jacobus Arminius). That is, they reject Calvinism\* (predestination). There are probably fewer than 10,000 members worldwide.

Apostolic Christian Church practices:

- Believer’s baptism.
- Closed communion.
- Greeting other believers with a Holy Kiss.
- Singing without music.
- Veiling of women during services (in most churches, but not all).
- Only men are ordained.
- The Lord's Supper
- The “laying on of hands.” This practice is a formal method of invoking the Holy Spirit (for baptisms, confirmations, healing, blessings, and for ordaining ministers, elders, and deacons).

## WHOSOEVER WILL

\*Calvinism: John Calvin held the view that God has actively chosen some people for damnation as well as others for salvation. I reject this view because I do not think God would have chosen me for salvation. *And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Revelation 22:17)

## PART 6: EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

### EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

Evangelical Christians (aka Evangelicalism or Evangelical Protestantism) are those who wish to proclaim their faith to others. We believe certain things in according to our interpretation of the Bible. If a Bible story sounds like a real, literal story, that is how we accept it. If the story sounds like a parable, it is a parable. Like allegory- then allegory! We find it important to accept the entire Bible as canon and truth. Otherwise, what parts are real and what are not?

Our core belief is the Gospel message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ's atonement. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Evangelicals also believe in the conversion or “born again” experience in receiving salvation. “Born-again Christian” comes from Jesus’ words to a Jewish leader, Nicodemus, who was seeking knowledge. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* (John 3:3.)

Almost every time I here “Evangelical Christian” or “Born-again Christian” referred to on television, we are thought of as back-woods, white supremacist, uneducated, Jew-hating lunatics who worship snakes and roll around the church aisles. In fact, these things are the opposite of who we are.

Mickey Rooney, Gary Burghoff, Kirk Cameron, Lynda Carter, Aaron Rodgers, the Mannings, Tim Tebow, Mike Tomlin, Orel Hershiser, President(s) Bush, Julius Erving, and countless other well-known people are born-again Christians.

- Most of us believe that somehow, some way, the biblical creation account is valid.
- That we are all one “race.” *“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”* (Acts 17:26.)
- Recognize that the Jews are God's Chosen People, and that Jesus came first to them.
- Most of us live in big cities and do not own guns.
- Some charismatic congregations do “lift up snakes,” speak in tongues, and dance. The vast majority does not.

The Evangelical movement began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in English-speaking countries and since then has become known worldwide. I wrote the following Gospel tract. It explains our core belief very well:

### THE DOOR

The aged door in the picture on the next page was once the beautiful entrance to my Mother’s childhood home. It is testimony to the fact that in the beginning, God wound-up His creation,

which is now winding down. By three steps one could enter Mom's home, and by three steps one can enter Heaven:



Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were a door to Heaven that we could open at will? This door could eliminate all of our troubles and sorrows by simply allowing us to unbolt it and enter God's domain. Actually, "the door" is at our fingertips and within our reach. Jesus said, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*" (Revelation 3:20 RSV.) Jesus added, "*He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*" (Revelation 3:21 RSV.)

### THE THREE STEPS

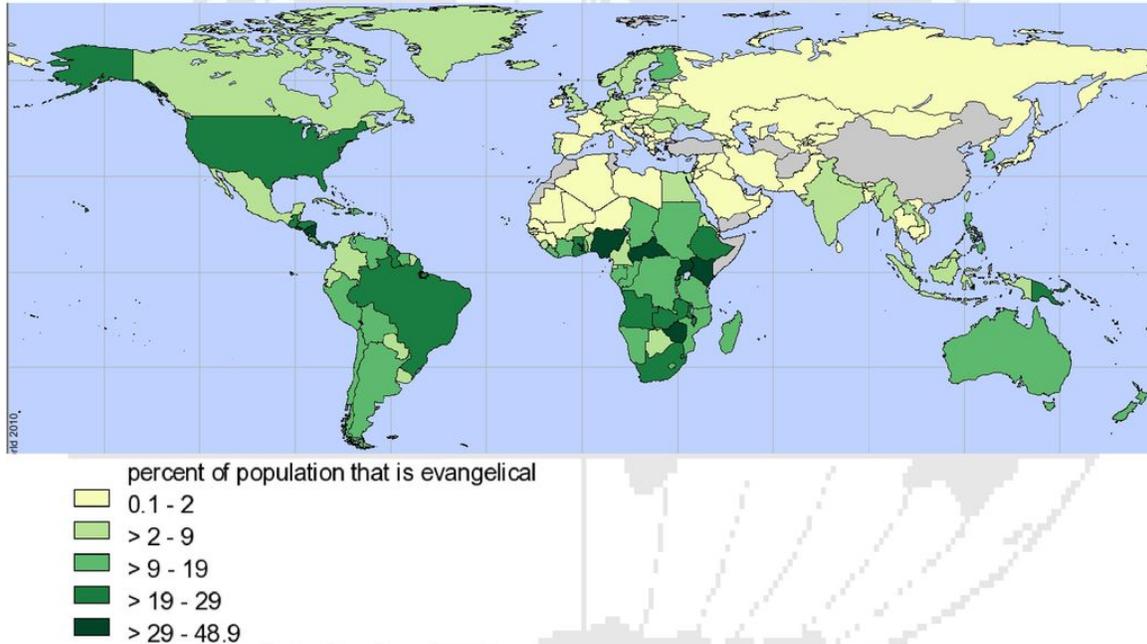
1. **Confess your sins.** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9 KJV.)
2. **Believe in Christ.** *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* (Acts 16:31b KJV.)
3. **Ask Jesus into your Heart.** *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:* (John 1:12 KJV.) Jesus can and will save you from your sins, and make a place for you in Heaven: *In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* (John 14:2-3 RSV.)

If you would like to enter the door to Heaven, pray, "*Dear Father in Heaven, I know I am a sinner and have sinned against you. I am sorry for my sins and sinful nature, and ask that you will forgive me. I accept Jesus now as my Savior, who shed His blood for me. I give my life to you and will strive to live for you. Thank you, LORD, for saving my soul. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.*"

## THE EVANGELICAL WORLD

The Evangelical movement is growing:

### Percent Evangelical Christian

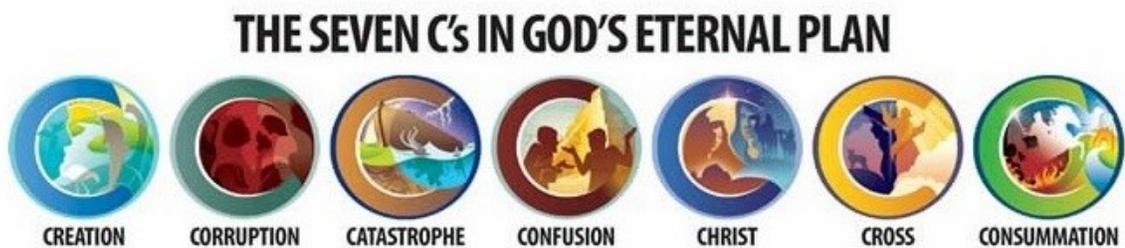


Via MissionInfoBank and Operation World, 2010

<https://goo.gl/images/ucissT>

## THE SEVEN C's

Creationist and Apologetics ministry Answers in Genesis uses the “Seven C's of History,” as in the graphic below, to describe all time.



Answers in Genesis, Florence, KY USA <https://answersingenesis.org/>

It is a handy, brief-format tool to remember the Bible's chronology:

1. Special Creation by an omnipotent, omniscient God
2. First Sin, and Judgment by God on a corrupt earth
3. A global flood renews the earth
4. Scattering all peoples over the earth
5. The Messiah, come to earth to teach and to save
6. Death and Resurrection of the Messiah pay for our salvation
7. The consummation of God's plan: judgment and death versus salvation and eternity

## PART 7: RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

The world sure has come up with a bunch of different belief systems. Long, long ago, the “3-child clubs” must have had quite a few squabbles!

### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR RELIGIONS?

Judaism	18,153,000	
Roman Catholic	1,042,501,000	
Protestant	382,374,000	
Orthodox	173,560,000	
Anglican	75,847,000	
<b>TOTAL JUDEO-CHRISTIAN</b>	<b>1,692,435,000</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>TOTAL ISLAM AND BAHA’I</b>	<b>1,020,114,000</b>	<b>18%</b>
Hindu	751,360,000	
Buddhist	334,002,000	
Traditional Chinese	140,956,000	
Sikhism	19,853,000	
Shamanism	10,854,000	
Confucianism	6,230,000	
Jainism	3,927,000	
Shinto’s	3,336,000	
<b>TOTAL EASTERN</b>	<b>1,270,508,000</b>	<b>23%</b>
Other “Christianity”	195,470,000	
Tribal Religions	99,736,000	
Other and new religions	142,948,000	
<b>TOTAL OTHER</b>	<b>438,154,000</b>	<b>8%</b>
Non-religious	912,874,000	
Atheist	241,852,000	
<b>TOTAL NON/NO GOD</b>	<b>1,154,726,000</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>5,575,947,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

All of the following descriptions of world religions are excerpted and condensed from *Compton’s Interactive Encyclopedia*.<sup>1</sup> These will give a notion of what has transpired from within our human minds aside from concepts such as golden calves:

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted and condensed from *Compton’s Interactive Encyclopedia*. Copyright © 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 The Learning Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Mormons. Mormon teaching states that God had originally evolved from mankind. Therefore present humanity could become gods. Contrary to Christianity, Mormon belief asserts that the three persons of the Godhead are three separate beings. Jesus Christ appeared on Earth to save mankind, but each person's salvation depends on the quality of his own life. A baptism by immersion is practiced, and there is also a baptism on behalf of the dead. Mormons believe it is possible for dead ancestors to participate in salvation.

Jehovah's Witnesses hold beliefs that differ markedly from those in traditional Christian denominations. They believe in a God, Jehovah, who sent Jesus Christ to Earth to make it possible for mankind to obtain eternal life. The divinity of Jesus is denied, as is the existence of the Holy Spirit as a separate person of the Trinity. By the late 1980s the Witnesses had more than 3,700,000 members worldwide and were doing work in more than 200 countries and territories.

Seventh-Day Adventists. The Old and New Testaments of the Bible both foretell the advent (coming) of a Savior, or Messiah. When He appears, as an agent of God, the wicked will be punished and a new Heaven and Earth created. This expectation is called Adventism. In a sense, all Jews and Christians are Adventists. But they disagree on whether Jesus Christ was the Messiah that was promised in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Seventh-Day Adventists believe in the second coming of Christ, baptism by immersion, and observing the seventh day (Saturday) as Sabbath. Originated about 1844; expenses of ministry are met by a tithing system. They have extensive foreign missions.

Christian Science accepts many of the basic doctrines of Christianity, including belief in one God, the authority of the Bible, and the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It departs from traditional Christianity in regarding Jesus primarily as an example of the divine sonship of God that is present in all humanity. It also denies that God creates the world of matter. Matter is viewed instead as a perception. Reality--life, will, and mind--is spiritual. Hence the illnesses and misfortunes of the flesh are problems that are related only to the material aspect of life. Christian redemption is a rebirth out of the physical into the spiritual, from the material into the real. This is a lifelong process: Christian Science has a full-time healing ministry engaged in by people called practitioners. The curing of disease through prayer is regarded as a necessary element in salvation. Followers are not compelled by the church to use spiritual healing.

Islam. In the year 610, the first of many revelations came to Muhammad from God by way of the angel Gabriel. The message Muhammad received told him that there was but one God, not many gods, as most Arabs believed. This God was creator of the world, and He would one-day judge mankind. Judaism and Christianity were already spreading the idea of one God. Muhammad saw his task, therefore, not as something new, but as a continuation and conclusion. He was the last in a succession of prophets stretching from Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, to Jesus who proclaimed the oneness of God, or Allah. But Islam was never incorporated into either Judaism or Christianity. It became a new religion and a new civilization as well. The revelations that Muhammad received were collected into the Koran. Islam teaches that there is one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe. This God, Allah, is compassionate and just. Because He is com-

passionate, He calls all people to believe in Him and worship Him. Because He is also just, on the Last Day He will judge every person according to his deeds. On the Last Day, all the dead will be resurrected and either rewarded with Heaven or punished with hell. God has sent prophets to communicate His will. These prophets, all mortal men, were elected messengers to whom God spoke through an angel or by inspiration. The life of each Muslim is always within the community of the faithful: All are declared "brothers to each other," with the mission to "enjoin good and forbid evil." Within the community, Muslims are expected to establish social and economic justice. They are also expected to carry their message out to the rest of the world. In the early Islamic community, this meant the use of force in the form of jihad, or holy war to gain political control over societies and run them in accordance with the principles of Islam. During the decades following the death of Muhammad certain essential principles were singled out from his teachings. These have come to be called the five pillars of Islam: the basic creed, prayer, pilgrimage, fasting, and the charitable contribution.

Hinduism is the major religion of the Indian subcontinent. It dates back more than 3,000 years. More than 90 percent of the world's Hindus live in India. Significant (populations) may be found in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and smaller numbers live in Myanmar, South Africa, Trinidad, Europe, and the United States. Hinduism is unlike any other religion. It is difficult to define with any precision. Its origins are lost in a very distant past. It does not have one holy book but several. There is no single body of doctrine. Instead there is a great diversity of belief and practice. There are many sects, cults, theologies, and schools of philosophy, and all of them find a home within Hinduism. It is a religion that worships many gods. Yet it also adheres to the view that there is only one God, called Brahman. All other divinities are aspects of the one absolute and unknowable Brahman. Another feature of Hinduism is belief in reincarnation. Associated with this belief is the conviction that all living things are part of the same essence. Individuals pass through cycles of birth and death. This means that an individual soul may return many times in human, animal, or even vegetable form. What a person does in the present life will affect the next life.

Buddhism The religion of about one eighth of the world's people, Buddhism is the name for a system of beliefs developed around the teachings of a single man. The Buddha, whose name was Siddhartha Gautama, lived 2,500 years ago in India. There is no one single "bible" of Buddhism, but all Buddhists share some basic beliefs. Buddha means "the Awakened or Enlightened One," and all Buddhist teachings try to share the Buddha's experience of awakening to truth. Having led an indulgent life as a young man, Siddhartha Gautama decided to pursue a course of bitter self-denial. Yet he felt that this brought him no closer to the truth he sought than the rich life he had led. One day he felt close to reaching his truth, and he sat down under a tree now known as the Bo tree. There he attained the bliss and knowledge he had been seeking. The Buddha wanted to make his inspiration about the nature of life available to others for their betterment. He worked his experience into a doctrine known as the Four Noble Truths, the basis of all schools of Buddhism. The Buddha taught for almost 50 years after his Enlightenment. He did not write a word of his teachings. No one during his lifetime put anything he said in writing. His original teachings were handed down from one generation to the next by word of

mouth.

Sikhism The Punjab region of northern India is home to Sikhism. The word Sikh means "disciple." Adherents consider themselves disciples of the founder, Guru Nanak, and his nine successors (guru means "teacher"). Roots of the movement he founded were in the Hindu cult of devotion to Vishnu and in the practices of the Muslim mystics called Sufis. Nanak taught that there is one God who is creator of the world. This God is completely unknowable except to those who can perceive Him in His creation. Such perception can only come to those who reject loyalty to the world and its values. Nanak laid out a path to salvation that was a simple devotional discipline of meditation. The goal was release from the cycle of birth and death. This cycle refers to Nanak's doctrine of reincarnation: the soul is born many times into the world before it is finally released to find unity with God.

Shamanism, religion of the Ural-Altaic peoples living from Bering Strait to borders of Scandinavia; found in varied forms among Eskimos and American Indians; based on belief that good and evil come from ancestral spirits, gods, and demons that can be influenced by the priest or medicine man (shaman).

Confucianism For more than 2,000 years the Chinese people have been guided by the ideals of Confucianism. Its founder and greatest teacher was Confucius, whose humane philosophy also influenced the civilization of all of eastern Asia. With teaching and with wise sayings, Confucius tried to bring people to a virtuous way of life and a respect for the teachings of the wise men of older generations. He always said of himself that he was a "transmitter, not a maker." He collected and edited the poetry, the music, and the historical writings of what he considered the golden age. Confucius laid no claim to being more than a man. Yet when he died he was revered almost as a god. Temples were erected in his honor in every city of China. His grave at Kufow became a place of pilgrimage.

Jainism is one of the major religions that developed within the ancient civilization of India. The name of the religion derives from the term Jina, meaning "victor" or "conqueror." The goal of Jainism is the spiritual progress of the individual through a succession of stages until he is able to conquer and renounce dependence on the world and the self. Thereby the individual is freed from all contamination by the material world. Followers of Jainism believe that the world, space, and time are eternal and uncreated. There is a center containing a region of souls in which all living things--people, animals, gods, and devils--exist. Below this region is a series of hells--places of punishment and torture, and above the region are levels of heavens and celestial areas in which souls live once they are liberated from bodies. All reality in the universe is divided into two parts: living substances called souls and nonliving substances. The soul possesses unlimited perception, knowledge, happiness, and power. But once a soul is entrapped in matter--such as the human body--these faculties are limited by location in space, contaminated by the senses, and subject to the chain of cause and effect, birth and death. The means of liberation for the soul is yoga, a discipline of self-control and meditation. The chief concept that guides behavior in Jainism is ahimsa, the principle of nonviolence and non-

injury toward all living things. This has led to a belief in the equality of all souls and to the freedom to associate with anyone.

Shintoism Shinto seems to be as old as the Japanese people and nation. Shinto is a loose system of beliefs and attitudes held by most Japanese about themselves, their families and clans, and their ruling powers. The word itself means "the way of *kami*," and while there is no precise English equivalent, *kami* refer to superior powers, either natural or divine, which are revered by followers of Shinto. The *kami* can be neither known nor explained, but they are believed to be the source of human life and existence. The *kami* reveal truth to people and give them guidance to live in accordance with it. Shinto does not have regular weekly services. Devotees may visit the shrines any time they want to. Several festivals during the year bring believers together for varying purposes. Some festivals celebrate the events of an individual's life from birth to old age. Shinto has neither a known founder nor sacred books. Its two chief books are 'Records of Ancient Matters' and 'Chronicles of Japan', written in 712 and 720 respectively. They are compilations of the ancient oral tradition of Shinto, but they deal as well with other historical topics. The core of the mythology centers on the Sun goddess, Amaterasu O-mikami, whose descendants unified Japan under the authority of the first emperor, Jimmu Tenno.

The God of the Bible has the only story that can stand on its own.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the  
Son: and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is  
now, and ever shall be:  
world without end. Amen.*

Harold A. Lerch, Sr. P.E.-Ret'd

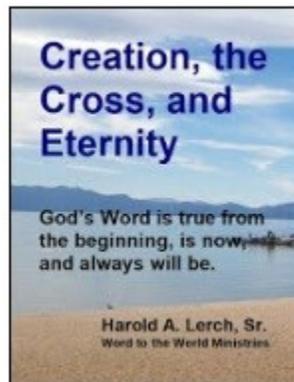
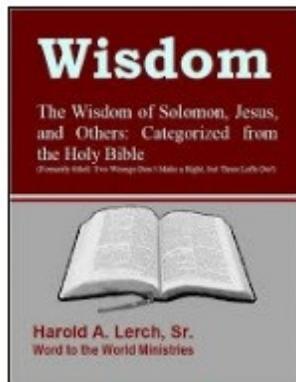
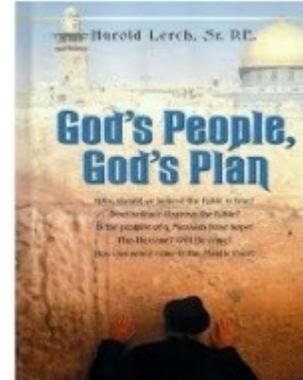
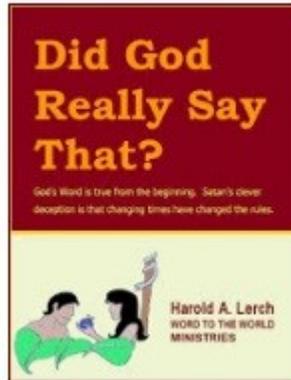
## Recommended Reading

I recommend other books that I have written, which provide information about the Bible, science, and salvation. All are available on Google Books AT NO COST:

### APOLOGETICS

*Did God Really Say That?*  
*God's People, God's Plan*

These books explain why the Bible can be trusted, and why we can believe the creation account. God made us, He owns us, and we must follow his commandments.



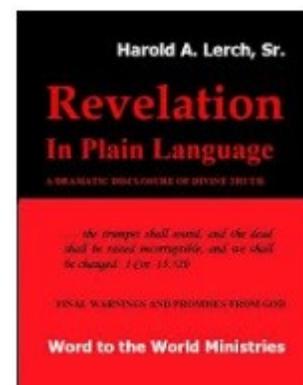
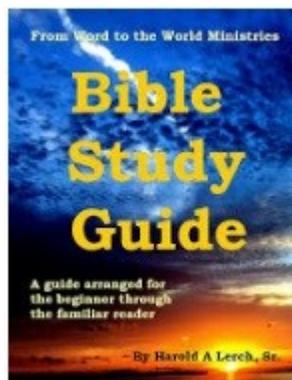
### WISDOM & TRUTH

*Wisdom* includes the wisdom of King Solomon, his father David, Jesus, and others. *Creation, the Cross, and Eternity* explains just that!

### BIBLE STUDY & COMMENTARY

The *Bible Study Guide* with commentary contains sections for Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced readers.

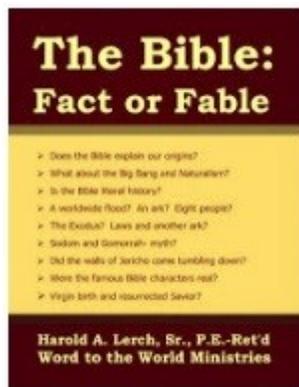
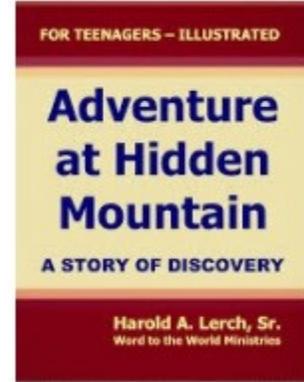
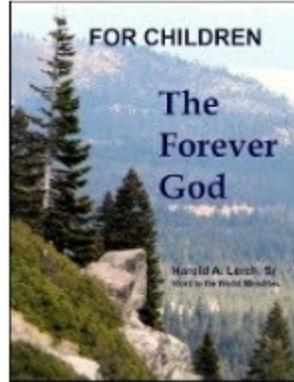
*Revelation in Plain Language* is a commentary that explains this mysterious book (in plain language).



## CHILDREN AND TEENS

*The Forever God* is written for young children as a story of the “entire” Bible. Scripture is included as a help to parents.

*Adventure at Hidden Mountain* is fiction for teens. The text and appendices include information on scripture and science.

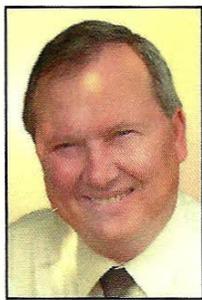


## DO HISTORY AND SCIENCE PROVE THE BIBLE WRONG?

This text, *The Bible: Fact or Fable*, explains how modern science and archeology are confirming the validity of the Bible.

The author recognizes that God's Word has not changed from the beginning. Satan continues his deceptions. His great tool of our age is the lie of evolution. This book challenges that lie, and explains to readers that the foundations of the Christian faith, beginning with the creation, still stand. The author writes in an enjoyable style and includes Scripture passages within the text to effectively explain how one's belief regarding origins affects our daily lives six thousand years later.

Most of Lerch's books are written for Christians and Jews who want to learn how science fits with the fact that God created everything from nothing in six days, as God inspired Moses to record. Christians and Jews worship the same Creator God, and the Jews are part of God's master plan. Our Jewish friends might be interested in why Christians accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah.



### **HAROLD A. LERCH, SR., P.E. RET'D**

graduated from the Pennsylvania State University, College of Engineering, and is a Professional Engineer. He had been employed in construction administration and management for a major private-industry corporation for the last twenty years. Prior to that he was Special Projects Manager for the same corporation, specializing in food manufacturing and material handling.

Harold and his wife of nearly 50 years, Jeanne, reside near Middleburg, PA. Their grown children, Harold, Jr. and Joanne, have blessed them with eight grandchildren: Mariah, Rochele, Christian, Drew, Kylee, Alex, Shelly, and Gabriele. Lerch is founder of Word to the World Ministries, a concern that publishes and distributes complimentary witnessing resources.

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