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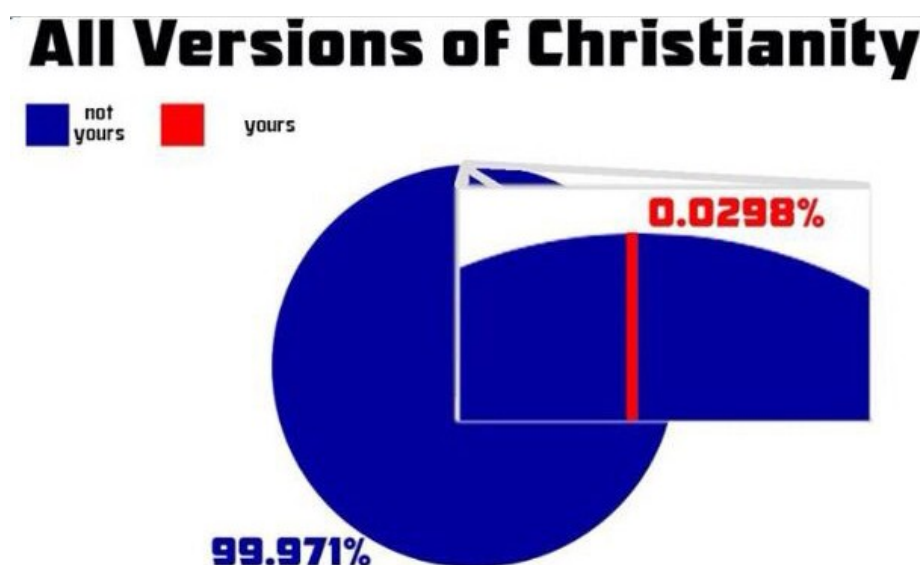
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The **Real** Christianity

Everyone is different. We are born different, grow different, think different, and act different. Diversity is what makes us human; we all complement each other. I have learned to value each and every person for who they are, be they white or black, gay or straight, Catholic or Muslim, male or female. “People are precious, and sometimes we forget that...” (Peretti, 281). I want to isolate a particular group of people and discuss why should not be persecuted. These religious people believe in peace and love. They are known to be moral compasses, yet they are discriminated wherever they go. Some of them are scared or shy to share their faith because of the severity of this discrimination. The world sees them as wrong, but the very way the world sees them **is wrong**. Disagreements about lifestyles are always expected, but there comes a point where disagreement turns into discrimination. Prejudiced hatred and discrimination is a worldwide disease and spans across every aspect of humanity: race, political ideology, customs and culture, religion, sexual orientation, etc. We have turned our differences—our uniqueness—into targets. We’ve become each other’s bullies.

The religious group of people that I spoke of are the Christians. This is not surprising, and anyone would automatically bring all their opinions about the subject to mind, but let’s take a breath and think for a moment. What has formed those opinions? Were they formed instantly or over a matter of years? Have they changed? There are many ways opinions can be formed, but when feelings like prejudice are involved, those opinions start to dictate your actions and words.

I have never been able to bear the thought that I'd hurt someone's feelings. How can people live with hatred against others just because they disagree on lifestyles? Set aside your feelings and opinions and consider what I have to say. I am going to explain to you what a Christian is and why they should not be "hated", but I would like to say two things. Firstly, I am not saying all discrimination against Christians should be stopped. That is impossible; humans will be humans. The Bible even says that Christians will always be persecuted (*Fire Bible*, 2 Tim. 3.12). I simply want to ask the world to mellow out a little. Secondly, I am not going to preach. Just because I quote the Bible doesn't mean I am pressuring you into believing the Christian ideals. Rather, I want you to understand them, as most of the world doesn't even know much **about** Christianity. Perhaps open minds and a new understanding of Christianity will encourage the world to be kinder to everyone.



It is largely because of the misunderstanding about this religion that people persecute Christians. People judge what they see rather than the religion itself. How many people actually know what Christianity is? Not necessarily about "God", but how Christians believe they should act? "I believe that we cannot claim to understand the morality of a group until we can describe

the world of meaning and of relationships, special to that group in its own time and place, within which behavior is evaluated” (Meeks). You have to understand the religion and its foundations before you can judge Christians and Christianity. There are certain things the Bible, the “manual” for Christians, says which lay out these foundations.

You’ve probably heard the Bible being referred to as “God’s Word”; that’s how Christians “know what their God says”. “Man’s opinion really doesn’t count. What counts is what God says”, said Pastor Scott Erickson. Christianity is all about what their God says in the Bible. Some of the most famous words of God are the golden rule, the great commandment, and the great commission. Let’s just focus on these; I will not get into things like alcohol or sexual orientation, as they are too controversial and beliefs about them vary within the Christian denominations. These are the “main points”--the foundation--of Christianity.

At one point in the Bible, Jesus is asked what the most important commandment is for Christians to follow. His answer: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (*Fire Bible*, Matt. 22.37-39). “Everything else is hung on these two things” (Erickson, “The Greatest”). So every other commandment in the Bible is based on the love of God and the love of others.

Loving God means obeying Him; “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (*Fire Bible*, Jn. 14.15). Christians, according to their own book, are required to love and obey their God. Society should accept that. Christians will like their God and probably talk about him; don’t you talk about people that you love or like? Everyone talks about their friends and family, what they have done or said; it’s normal human behavior.

It's also normal human behavior to share our opinions. The Bible says additionally, "'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation'" (*Fire Bible*, Mk. 16.15). Fact: Christians are going share what they believe, just like we all do. Something that society should recognize is that preaching is not judging. Just because someone preaches what they believe does not mean they think you are a bad person, will try to change you, will want nothing to do with you, or won't treat you the same as anybody else. Preaching's just preaching; it's teaching, sharing, and yes, caring.

The second part of the passage is about loving the people around us, which goes hand in hand with the famous golden rule, which is also from the Bible. Christians are meant to love everyone; why should anybody hate them in return? It's not nice, plain and simple. We're a cruel people. Christians are not. Christians are also supposed to model themselves after their God.

Pastor Scott Erickson tells of the Christian God's love:

"God loves everyone. He loves the Buddhist, he loves the atheist, the Islamist, he loves the Mormon, the Methodist, the Catholic, the Pentecostal, he loves the Baptist, he loves all of us. He loves the abortionist, the terrorist, he loves the Jew, he loves the Greek, he loves the Indians, he loves the Italians, he loves the Asian, he loves us all" (Erickson, "The Greatest").

If Christians are to model themselves after their God, loving others the way the Bible says he does is the least they will do.

It does not stop at love; the Bible also talks about something called the "fruit of the Spirit", which is basically a list of the characteristics of their God. It says the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (*Fire Bible*, Gal. 5.22-23). To model themselves after their God, Christians would ideally strive to

enhance these characteristics in themselves. Among those, what is worthy of persecution? What can be said against peace, kindness, joy? Food for thought.

Joy: many Christians attest that the more they engage in their Christian lifestyle, the more joyful they are. People around such Christians will testify to their happiness and positivity. Even basic psychology and modern counselors recommend religious activities for depression, stress, and multiple disorders. Besides, everyone strives for joy. It is not a bad thing to obtain, and certainly not a deplorable Christian characteristic.

Peace: peace should be a definite aspect of Christian attitudes, like the famous Mother Theresa demonstrated with her lifestyle. While disagreements are a given and world peace is hopeless, a peaceful demeanor can make the most out of every situation. Peace promotes compromise and can settle a disagreement quicker and easier than anger. We all know this, we just need to enact it.

Patience: Christians should exercise patience with everyone and in every situation. This will also help maintain peace. Patience goes hand in hand with self-control and can contribute to the joy of others. Christians often use it when under discrimination or in a conflict, as it is necessary when discussing their religion; we all know that saying the wrong thing can set someone off. Patience prevents that by promoting peace and giving both parties time to think about what they want to say.

Kindness: Christians should show kindness to all people, regardless of differences in culture, race, religion, etc. Kindness is generosity to the homeless, helping a coworker, doing the laundry for your spouse. Nothing can be said against kindness. Many people in society say that taking care of the homeless is a bad thing, and it is close to being outlawed. Since when is

kindness against the law? “Have courage and be kind” (*Cinderella*) is a phrase that many people should live by; you can’t go wrong with kindness.

Goodness: goodness is virtue and moral excellence, not necessarily a certain set of “rights”. If you hold yourself to a set of morally acceptable standards and do well at following those standards, it is considered goodness. The fruits of the Spirit in general contribute to overall Christian goodness.

Faithfulness: faithfulness, or “sticking to it”, is an important part of Christian living. They are faithful to their God, which is obvious, but they’re also supposed to be faithful to others. This is shown in kindness and the likes. Faithfulness is being devoted to something, like a job or a goal, not just a person or a god. It can also be faithfulness to a set of standards, like the “fruit of the Spirit” and Biblical commandments.

Gentleness: gentleness, both in actions and attitudes, is another fruit that coincides with the others. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (*Fire Bible*, Prov. 15.1). Gentleness is like self-control, patience, or peace, but it has a softer touch, like it is given with love and care.

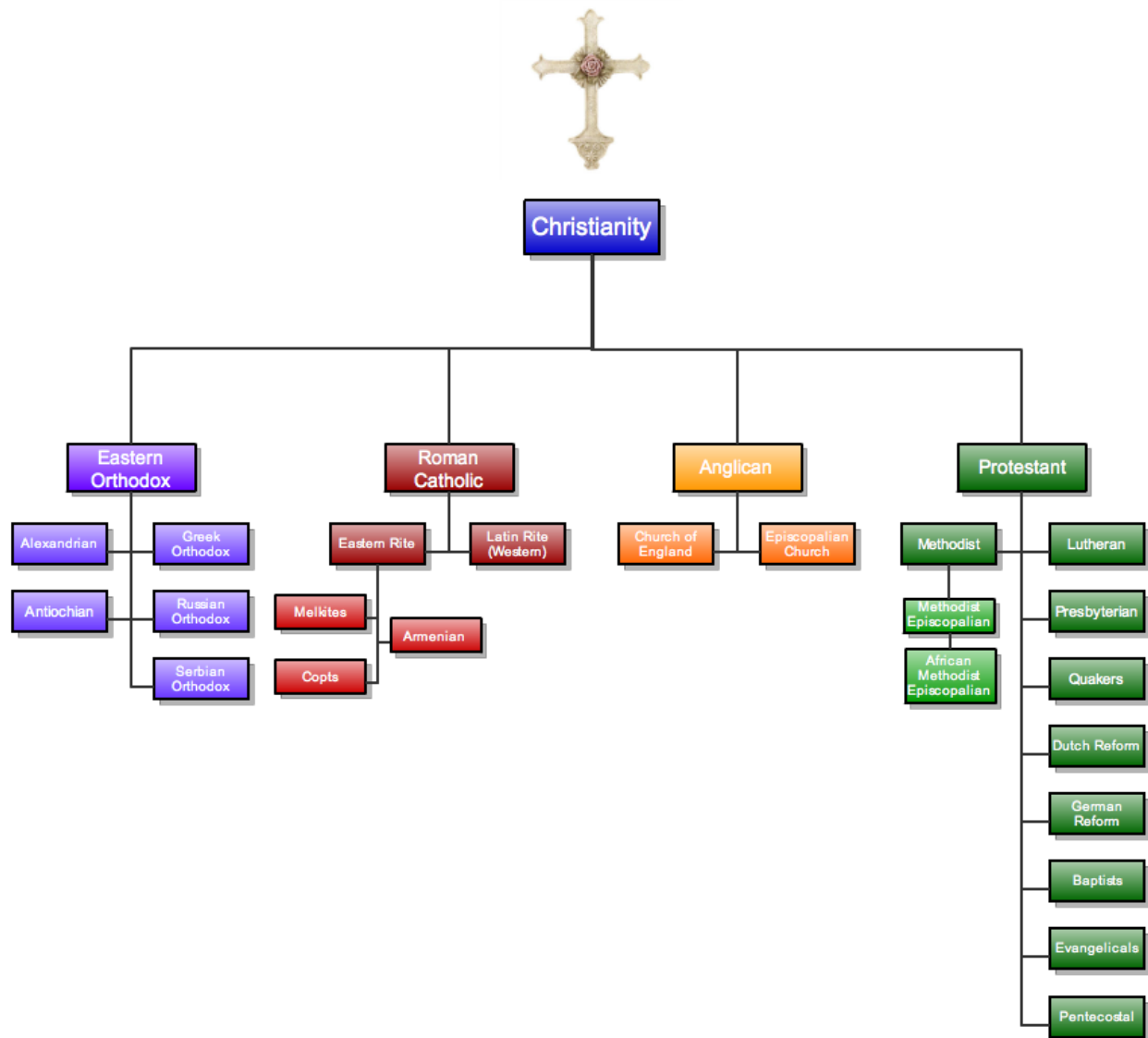
Self-control: Christians should always exercise self-control; they shouldn’t discriminate or act out in anger. This is necessary to hold all the fruits of the Spirit together. It does not only apply to tough situations; self-control is what you use **to** love, be happy, be peaceful, be patient, etc. These attitudes and actions are a choice. That is what self-control amounts to.

There you have it: the basic foundations of Christianity. Christians are good people that have a different set of standards than everyone else. According to their standards, they are loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, self-controlled, and they obey their God.

There is nothing wrong with this attitude and lifestyle. I have shared this because I want society to know how to spot a Christian, because not every Christian follows the standards.

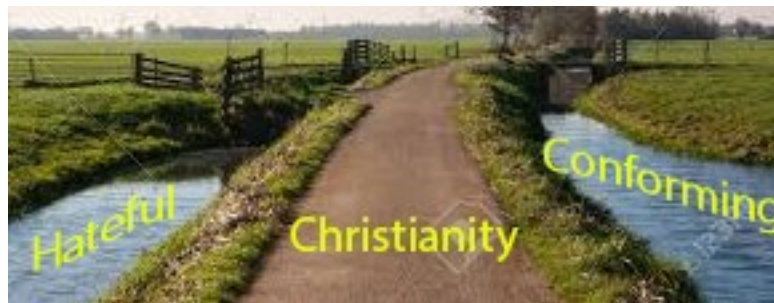
Christians aren't perfect. In fact, and this may come as a shock, **nobody** is! It's another normal part of being human. Christians are not always going to follow their foundational beliefs perfectly, and I believe this has confused society. Perhaps it's because society thinks that Christians either are supposed to be perfect or think that Christians believe themselves to be perfect. Christians will always slip up with their religious standards; there is no perfect Christian. This explains why there are so many denominations, sets of beliefs and customs, out there. Christian beliefs have evolved so much that some probably shouldn't be in the category of "Christian". "American Christianity has changed" (Dalrymple). It is diverse now. It's no wonder society is confused.

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One of the motivations for the evolution of Christianity is society itself. The church has always changed with the flow of society's norms; changing cultures distract Christians from their beliefs. For example, if Christians are living in a city that becomes predominantly Buddhist, the beliefs of the Christians there will start changing, integrating Buddhism into those Christian ideals. This could form a new denomination or even a whole new religion, a thorough combination of Christianity and Buddhism, similar to Chrislam.

One of the things I have noticed is that many Christians these days either discriminate against the world or conform to it. I call these attitudes the extremes, the abnormal Christian behavior that perhaps shouldn't belong in Christianity. It is best described as a road with two ditches, the road being Christianity and the ditches not. In this case, the "extremes" are the ditches. Both of these extremes occur because of spiritual immaturity, which is "a deficit of knowledge and not of sympathy or interest" (Sanderson). These people can still be caring, act Christian, and be interested and engaged in Christianity, but the lack of knowledge about Christianity and habitually not following the instructions laid out in the Bible is what causes these people to stray from their Christian standards. What is wrong/un-Christian about these extremes?



The Bible states, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world" (*Fire Bible*, Rom. 12.2). This means that Christians should not be doing whatever society is doing, but rather, they should follow this "moral compass" of standards that their beliefs give them. If the Bible hypothetically stated that we should not drink milk, Christians shouldn't drink milk just because they see society drinking milk. Christians need to stay true to their instructions and not let social customs draw them from their foundations.

The other extreme is an obvious abnormality, as it is what I am discussing in general today. Christians should not discriminate people of other beliefs and habits, no matter how different they are. If Christians should be like their God, then they would understand that "Christ is not the

God of war and hate” (Sanderson) and would not hate or fight, either, since they are supposed to model themselves after their God. I have seen so many heated debates—even between Christians!—about slightly different beliefs like the controversial topics of homosexuality, abortion, alcohol, and pre-marital sex. The people that do this are not peaceful and tend to drive non-Christians away, rather than converting them. Do not assume that these obnoxious, offensive Christians are the real thing; they are the “extremes”.

Can you see now why Christians should not be hated? The ones that follow the foundational rules in the Bible are peaceful, loving, kind, and respectful to your own beliefs. The others, the extremes, are just confused, like society.

It’s possible that if society changed, Christianity wouldn’t be so bad. It seems like the extreme “hateful” group of Christians grew the more society discriminated Christianity in general. If society were kind and peaceful and respected Christians’ beliefs, maybe it would encourage those extreme Christians to get back to their normal. Maybe they won’t be “fun” or fit in with the world, but that is the point; we are all unique. The world isn’t always peaceful, but Christians are meant to be peacemakers. For those people that believe in world peace, Christians are the key to that. The world isn’t always kind, but Christians can offer light here and there. The world has forgotten how to love. Christians can show us how again.

No one should be allowed to bully; that is really what discrimination is. We all know that bullying is not always physical; it is often words that hurt us the most. The fight is not just in the Middle East. It is here, it is everywhere. The LGBTQ group in public schools started out as a club against the bullying of the “queer”, but expanded to bullying in general. Why can we not care this much about religions? Instead of fighting the discrimination of Muslims, we should discourage the discrimination of religion, race, gender, etc. in general. We have the right to

religion, just like we have the right to be gay or nerdy or Democrat. We're always focused on making the world a better place, but we're going about it in all the wrong ways.

“Our culture has accepted two huge lies: The first is that if you disagree with someone's lifestyle, you must fear them or hate them. The second is that to love someone means you agree with everything they believe or do. Both are nonsense. You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate” (Warren). You don't have to agree with someone to love them. You don't have to support someone's decisions to hang out with them. You can be friends with a Christian without feeling pressured to believe the way they do. Christians are to be friends with everybody, no matter their religion. Christianity is not just a religion; it is a positive way of living life. There is nothing wrong with that. We should not let society blind us into thinking that Christians are bad or that we should treat them differently. We should cherish any shred of decency that we have left in this world, and Christians, though some may consider them to be prudent, may be the epitome of this decency.

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