

# THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

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**Floral Heights  
Church of Christ  
1814 Buchanan  
Wichita Falls, Texas  
76309  
(940) 322 - 1650**

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## **Elders:**

**Mike Chancellor  
(322 – 6374)**  
**Tom Witherspoon  
(766 – 5368)**

## **Deacons:**

**Joe Cronin**  
**Jim Hall**  
**David Witherspoon**

## **Preacher:**

**John C. Robertson**

## **Preconceived Religion**

There are currently an estimated 10,000 separate religions being practiced in the world today. One of those 10,000 religions is Christianity. Within the Christianity religion there are approximately 33,000 denominations. When considering the 9,999 other religions that have varying branches as well it is apparent that man's spiritual ideology is going in thousands of different directions. Religion is a belief in and reverence for a supernatural power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe (American Heritage Dictionary 1044). Throughout history man has sought to understand his existence. The all encompassing question to solve continues to be, "where did we come from and how did this world come to be?" Religion seeks to solve this problem for man. Time and geography have produced a plethora of ideas.

### **Man's Quest to Know His Origin**

The Australian Aborigines believe the Sun Mother to be responsible for the creation of the world by waking it at the beginning of time. The Hopi Indians believe that the Sun God and the Earth Goddess were the first two original deities that created all things. Some Japanese believe the creation account of Shinto. Shinto tells of five deities responsible for creating the heavens and earth. The beginning of our world, according to Shinto, was in the form of liquid drifting about like a jellyfish. Eventually, these five gods die as a single god and then two emerge; i.e., Izanagi-no-mikoto (God) and Izanami-no-mikoto (Goddess). The two deities are joined in marriage and have a god Mikohiruko. After this first deity they have many others together such as the god of land, god of the seas, god of the rivers etc.

### **World Religious Thought**

To go back in time is to find origin of religious thought. If we look to **Africa** we would find the origins of Vede, the sacred symbol for Voodoo. Over one million people in America are currently practitioners of Voodoo. Said worship entails dances to draw down divine energy to the worshipper. When studying the religion of **India** we would run across Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Jainism was established by Mahavira (599 – 527 BC). Jains practice asceticism and believe in the transmigration of the soul from one body to the next after one dies. If one is considered an offender they may find themselves in the body of an insect, reptile, or bird. Hindu worshippers find themselves involved in "darsan" (the worship of

## Local News:

### Gospel Meeting Time!

Our Gospel meeting began Friday evening and continues through today! The theme of our meeting is, “**Why I Left**”:

**Friday (Jim Hall)** – *Why I Left the Baptist Church.*

**Saturday (Joe Cronin)** – *Why I Left the Catholic Church.*

**Sunday AM (Mike Chancellor)** – *Why I left the Liberal Church of Christ.*

**Sunday AM Class (John Robertson)** – *Preconceived Religion.*

**Ron Cribbs** – *Why I left the World.*

Please Keep **Tolene Witherspoon’s** family in your prayers (i.e., the Duty’s). Tolene’s brother Clifford Duty has been diagnosed with bone marrow cancer and Jim Duty is having another bout with prostate Cancer.

**Continue to pray for our shut-ins:**

**Stella Davidson**  
696-1030 (Home)

**Calvin York**  
692-0489 (Home).

**Bessie Murphy**  
4600 Taft Blvd, Apt. 538

sight). Hindu people consider the act of looking upon various images (deities) as an ultimate act of worship. A visit to India may be culture shock to many Americans due to the immense amount of graven images that the Hindus look upon. Mark Twain traveled through India in the last decade of the nineteenth century. He made the following observation in relation to the multitude of idols, “And what a swarm of them there is! The town is a vast museum of idols – and all of them crude, misshapen, and ugly. They flock through one’s dreams at night, a wild mob of nightmares.” Hinduism rests its belief system in the concept of “Brahman.” No one seems to be able to adequately define Braham other than it is the existence of all things and people of every place.

The third major religion of India is Buddhism. Buddha was originally born by the name Siddhartha Gautama in Nepal 563 BC. Buddha believed that “the way to salvation lay in peaceful meditation which could only be compromised by the distractions of physical discomfort. One night, meditating beneath a tree, he finally broke through all the barriers of ignorance and attachment and became enlightened. The title *Buddha*, meaning the Awakened One, applies to him from that moment in his life onward.” (History Today / Jan. 2002; The Beginnings of Buddhism)

Turning from India we move to **East Asia**. China and Japan have a long history of accepting religious ideology of Confucianism and Taoism. “These two indigenous traditions, along with Buddhism comprise what have come to be called the ‘Three Ways of Thinking’ in China” (Religions of China and Japan / World Religions pp. 77). Kung Fu Tzu, founder of Confucianism, was born in 551 BC and died 479 BC. “Soon after his death in 476 BC, a small number of these followers dedicated themselves to recording what they could remember of his teachings and to preserving the texts of history and poetry that he was alleged to have edited” (Confucius / 1993; The Wilson Quarterly). Lao Tzu was the traditional founder of Taoism. Those following Taoism “have practiced asceticism in the hope of gaining everlasting life.” (World Religion / 1998; Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion)

The **western world** is primarily “Christian.” As stated above, there are currently an estimated 33,000 denominations of Christianity. Christianity is a broadly used term that comprises people who “profess belief in Jesus as Christ or follow the religion based on his teachings” (AHD 271). The immense diversity of religious beliefs ought to cause one to question the validity of any given system of faith. The academic world sets out to explain and encourage peace among all belief systems based upon the concept of plurality. “Plurality accepts as fact that there is a great diversity of religious beliefs. Plurality accepts the irreconcilable aspects of religions without being blind to their common aspects. Pluralism affirms neither that the truth is one nor that it is many. Pluralism adopts a nondualistic, advaitic, attitude that defends the pluralism of truth because reality itself is pluralistic.” (The Intrareligious Dialogue / 1978)

### What does all of this Prove?

To some it may prove historical religious chaos. When Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Muhammad, Joseph Smith, Charles T. Russell,

and many others defined religion from their perspective people followed because they were searching for direction in life. The many faces of religion throughout history seem to reveal two things. First, man is interested in his origin and eternal abode. Secondly, man is in search of direction to obtain that desired information. The above articles quoted from do not mean that simply because diversity exists absolute truth cannot be known. The flaw with most all belief systems is that it either originated with man or falsely claims to be of divine origin. How can so many claims to divine origin lead to so many different beliefs? The world's answer may be in their different gods, objectives, and eternal abodes for people of different faiths.

Elijah, when speaking to the Israelites who had fallen in apostasy to Baal, said "*How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him*" (I Kings 18:21). The Bible records historical world religious activities on a regular basis. The Egyptians had their gods (Ex. 12:12) and we read of Baal, Molech, Diana, Artemis and Marduk. We read of people worshiping these various deities on high hills, under trees and so forth (II Kings 16:4; Hos. 4:13). We read of people sacrificing their own children in fire to deities (II Kings 16:3). What does all this prove? People have always striven after a spiritual connection. The etymology of the word "religion" seems to prove this. Religion is a derivative of the Latin *religare* which means to bind. There is an apparent connection between the individual worshipper and the binding to a deity. Whatever choice an individual makes in religious beliefs better be certain. Let us acutely examine and distinguish myth, fiction, man's dreams and ideas from reality. Let us take a look at the world we live in and conclude that there is but one God who has created the universe and revealed His will to us through His word (Acts 17:22-28).

### **Preconceived Religion**

Religious ideas originating in the mind of man will never save a soul (Matt. 15:9). True direction in life is to be found in the one creator of all things. The Bible gives records of men who had preconceived religious ideas and the consequences thereof. One can scarcely afford to make a mistake in the religious direction taken. We are given one life to live and it is evident that we will not be able to leave the realm of the dead and have another chance. Whose expectations will be realized in the realm of the dead? What is the source of those expectations? Jesus said Matt. 21:25 that there are two sources of authority (heaven and men). What will you and I bind ourselves to?

### **Consider Bible examples of people who had preconceived religious ideas:**

- Nadab and Abihu (if God did not command it who did?) (Lev. 10:1-3).
- Miriam and Aaron (Numb. 12:1-8).
- Korah (Numb. 16:1-3).
- Jannes and Jambres (II Tim. 3:8)
- Saul (I Sam. 15:13-15)
- Israel (Malachi 1:7-8).
- The Jews during Jesus' day (Matt. 11:16-18; 17:10-13; 20:11-16; I Pet. 2:6-8)

Today, preconceived religious thought continues to thrive. The blueprint for God's church has been delivered yet many are not satisfied with it and thereby reject the Lord's teachings regarding it. They decide to follow their own design rather than God's. The "Christian" religious world today is going in 33,000 different directions. The world is religiously confused because they have not established faith within through a genuine study of God's word. They expect the church to entertain, to solve all their financial and psychological woes, provide single groups to find a mate, build them a home, buy them groceries, give them gas money, pay child support, pay utility bills, provide daycare for their children, provide secular education, take care of their elderly, feed the homeless, etc.).

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