

Religious Division Is Not Of God

by Bill Crews

Do the fact, extent, and consequences of religious division disturb you? All religions cannot be right, but all can be wrong. If any one is right, all others would have to be wrong. To say that all are right is even worse than saying that all are good. To say that one is good as another and that it doesn't really matter which one a person embraces as long as he is honest, doesn't make sense. [In recent years we have been hearing some people say, "I'm not looking for any religion; I'm just looking for a relationship with God (or Christ.)" This is non-sense because no one can have a right relationship with God without accepting the religion of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. And the New Testament speaks of "*pure religion*" (James 1:27) and "*vain religion*" (James 1:26).]

Religion is not a matter of personal taste, or personal preference. It is not a matter of what suits, or satisfies, or appeals to the individual. It is a matter of right and wrong, of truth and error, or divine revelation and human philosophy.

In the Bible the ancient religions of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, Canaan, Phoenicia, Greece, Rome, etc. are all condemned. Bel, Baal, Molech, Milcom, Dagon, Ishtar, Asherah, Zeus, Hermes, Diana (Artemis), Jupiter, Mercury, etc. are all labeled false gods and goddesses, and to worship them was to commit idolatry. Only Jehovah is God; only His word is truth. Today far more than half of the earth's population of 7.7 billion people are claimed by such pagan religions as Muslimism, Hinduism, Bhuddism, Taoism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Animism, Lamaism, Atheism, etc., but numbers cannot change the fact that these are all false religions. Many who profess to be Christians are hopelessly divided and not following the New Testament. At one time the Jewish people were God's chosen people, and their law (the law of Moses) was of God (both the temporary means to a great end (Christ and His new covenant). When Jesus, the promised Messiah or Christ and the world's Savior, came to earth, He found the Jews divided into Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians, Zealots, and other groups, but He did not endorse any of that division.

Today more than 2.3 billion people are classified as "Christians" (followers of Christ), but these are claimed by hundreds of different "Catholic," "Protestant," and independent churches. It is that division that is the most tragic of all. When the religion of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah; the only begotten Son of the true and living God, burst forth upon the world in the first century, beginning at ancient Jerusalem and spreading into the nations, who would have thought that such division would or could come? Yet, it is the subject of New Testament prophecy — Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Then, the followers of Christ were one in name or designation, faith, doctrine and practice. Read Ephesians 4:1-6 (one God and Father, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one body/church, and one hope) and 2:11-22. Jesus prayed that all those who believed in Him through the word preached by the apostles might be one, just as He and the Father were one (John 17:20-21). Jesus condemned religious division as destructive (Luke 11:17). Religious division is classified as a work of the flesh that will keep one from inheriting the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). It is identified as a sign of carnality and immaturity and as a practice of those lacking in spirituality (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Not only is division condemned; unity is also enjoined (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:1-4).

Men have written religious creeds, invented religious doctrines, founded and named religious bodies (churches), all the while giving God credit for it all or, at least, expecting God to accept it all. We need to be concerned about religious division. We need to reject human names and designations, human doctrines and creeds, and human organizations and practices. We need to get back to the Bible, God's book.

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