



"Men quite gladly believe what they want to believe."
—Julius Caesar

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Why So Many Religions? (Part One)

It is difficult to know how many religious organizations populate this earth, but the number is very high. A number of years ago, a national magazine listed over 1,200 Christian denominations just in the United States! How can such a thing be? Is there not a [God](#) in heaven? Why has He not intervened to remove the confusion and set things straight? This circumstance exists because God has granted mankind free-moral agency, and simultaneously, He has withheld His hand from removing the confusion until such time as He decides enough is enough. Until then, we must bear with it and work our way through it.

A few verses will help us perceive what is happening, even though they offer no solutions in and of themselves. [Judges 21:25](#) reports, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." When God does not directly intervene, and no uniform and authoritative standard exists, chaos rules as everyone does pretty much as he pleases. On a simpler, more personal level, [Proverbs 16:25](#) reveals what each person chooses to do when he feels free to exercise his free-moral agency apart from God's guidance: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Many sincerely religious people believe they are Christian, in [contact with God](#), and pursuing the right course of religious action, yet in reality their belief and practice may be entirely wrong! Does it seem right that the God who created this awesome universe, and especially this wonderful home we call earth, would do so without having a specific purpose in mind, as well as a specific plan for accomplishing that purpose? If so, why are researchers able to count over 1,200 different corporate groups, each differing doctrinally to some degree?

There may be a number of correct answers to this question, but we will focus on just one—an extremely important one concerning what a person believes. All of these Christian groups claim to believe and use the Bible as the primary source of their religious belief and practice. The Bible claims that the God of creation is its Author, and that it contains the way to fulfill God's purpose in one's life. Notice that the "way" is singular. If all are using the same Book, why are there apparently 1,200 different ways, as evidenced by so many groups?

Recently, a letter that passed over my desk will help illustrate why there is so much confusing diversity. It was written by a sincere and well-educated person who claimed to be Christian yet who rejects a clear biblical truth:

Many reasons are there to explain the fragmentation of Christian religion, but the main one is, that mankind wants to incorporate the wisdom of the biblical elders into earthly everyday living. Wisdom of the Bible, be that the Old Testament or the New, is different from knowing and reciting their words, verbatim by book, chapter and verse. If one decides to interpret literally every message from God (as most fundamentalists do), the end result is continuous schisms, as from Orthodox Judaism to Reformed Judaism, to (the Big One) Christianity, to Catholicism to Protestantism followed by the myriads of Protestant sects.

Since most of the times the reason of the formation of another "religion" is mere human vanity of one strong religious leader not being able to compromise on the details with another, I merely

chastise the latest, and most trivial reason for the formation of yet another religion, based mainly on the idea of the designation of the Holy [Sabbath](#) on a day called "Sunday" or "Saturday."

I believe the message from God to "keep ONE day out of seven for rest, contemplation, study and worship, may be interpreted as "the Seventh" day of one's earthly existence. God the Creator had a "first day" of creation, and He rested on the "seventh" day. As you well know, we are still in God's "seventh Day" of rest, in as much as God no longer creates, but the "creation of God" transforms itself from one version of existence into another...The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy, does not pertain to human defined days of the Calendar." (All punctuation is the letter writer's.)

As sincere and as well educated as this person is, he still does not believe the Bible but human reason. Consider: Is God truly the Bible's Author, the One who inspired the men who actually wrote down the words in a book or scroll? Does that God say what He means, or is He just suggesting? Is God sovereign over His creation, upholding and protecting the laws and principles contained in His Word, so that inattention on His part will not cause further confusion?

Did [Jesus](#), mankind's Savior, who was God in the flesh and never sinned, believe the Bible? Did not Jesus' teaching coordinate perfectly with what had previously been written? [Malachi 3:6](#) and [Hebrews 13:8](#) both say God does not change. If He did, it would truly throw humanity into confusion!

[Luke 4:16](#) makes plain that Jesus' custom was to keep the Sabbath. Clearly, He had no problem with which day God commanded nor with the calendar His countrymen used, which is still available to us today. The apostle Paul also kept the Sabbath in perfect alignment with Jesus' example and God's command. He also taught the keeping of it to the Gentiles to whom he preached. Apparently, the writer of the above letter has greater wisdom than these two outstanding Christian leaders. In addition, he also ignores the obvious witness of the Jews keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath from time immemorial.

The letter writer has devised his own standard, choosing his own way, and according to [Proverbs 16:25](#), he is on a path toward death, despite his obvious sincerity. Adam and Eve did not believe God, and neither did Cain. They set the pattern that all of mankind has followed with lock-step regularity to this very day.

This essay, as brief as it is, captures the essence of the major problem between mankind and God. We simply do not by nature believe Him ([Jeremiah 10:23](#)). Other factors influence why we do not readily believe, but when all is said and done, it comes down to this simple truth. Belief in God is what separated Abel from Cain, Noah from those who drowned in the Flood, and Abraham from others who walked the earth in his day. The same principle is at work today. Belief will separate true Christians from [this world](#)

- John W. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Willingness to Believe](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Americans (indeed most of the industrialized world) tend to be skeptical, cynical, and jaded, demanding mountains of evidence before becoming convinced of anything. We run the risk of losing our childlike credulity, becoming calloused, hardened, and stiff-necked like our forebears on the Sinai, even though God Almighty supplied a plethora of evidence in His desire to create in His people a humble, teachable spirit. We need to emulate Abraham, who strengthened and confirmed his faith when he stepped out in childlike credulity. We believe, obey, then understand. The proof comes after we believe. Following the apostle Paul's admonition in II Corinthians 4:18, we place the preponderance of our trust in the eternal things we cannot see rather than the temporal physical things we can see.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Faithful Thomas!

by Martin G. Collins

The apostle Thomas has been called "doubting Thomas" for centuries. But was he really doubting? In Martin Collins' sketch of his character, we find there is more to Thomas than we may have known!

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