

# BROTHERHOOD

THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE GENERALLY KNOW THEY BELONG TO A FAMILY OF THAT FAITH, SO THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT OF THE FAMILY NEXT DOOR, ACROSS THE STREET OR A

## Is This Religion?

"Appendicitis," a surgeon in Louisville diagnosed. The sick boy's mother, a member of a sect which denies the reality of disease, refused to permit the operation in spite of repeated urging by the surgeon and the father.

In a few days peritonitis set in and the boy died. In distress and anger, the surgeon turned to the mother: "You have killed your own child!"

Was not sectarianism the real killer?

Is killing one's own religion?

A freshman in my History of Civilization wrote that voluntary nonattendance at church on Sunday was the most deadly sin she could commit. Little wonder that moral confusion is great and juvenile delinquency widespread when religious leadership leads our young people to class nonattendance at church with murder, robbery, torture and other major offenses!

The sect to which the student belonged says it is a mortal sin for its members to worship at the church service or Sunday school of another sect. Does real religion threaten people with hell because they meet with a group of godly people in worship?

"We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings and as the final authority in faith and life." This doctrinal statement is subscribed to each year by the members of the board of trustees and faculty of a college in Rhode Island. Some other "institutions of higher learning" and uncounted millions of people agree.

What do blind Biblical believers do with—and to—their consciences when they read such brutal, unethical statements as:

"Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Those, according to the First Book of Samuel, are the instructions which God gave to Saul for the invasion of the homeland of the Amalekites. Saul "utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword" and Samuel personally "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord."

When Elisha left Elijah and made his way toward Bethel, some little children mocked him and called him "bald head." He cursed the children in the name of the Lord and two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the children (II Kings, 2:23-24).

God, if the Bible is inerrant, brought death to all, including babies, except the people and animals in Noah's Ark (Genesis, 7:23), and slew the first-born in every Egyptian family, because Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go (Exodus, 12:29) after God had hardened Pharaoh's heart so he would not let them go (Exodus, 11:10). Surely the slaughtered children were not to blame!

The brutality in the Revelation of John of "things which must shortly come to pass" is so unspeakably brutal that one shudders to think of them.

Would a loving, merciful, just God be guilty of such brutal, unethical behavior as that pictured here and there from Genesis to Revelation? Is it real religion to dishonor God by believing it?

Is it faith or gullibility which leads untold numbers of people to believe: Aaron's rod became a serpent and swallowed up the rods of the Egyptian magicians after their rods had become serpents. Elijah smote the Jordan with his mantle so that the waters parted and he walked

over on dry land. Elijah was taken to heaven by a chariot of fire and horses of fire in a whirlwind. Jonah survived the fish, Daniel the lions, and three officials the fiery furnace. God gave orders to kill witches. The prayer of Elias kept it from raining for three years and six months. Jesus told his disciples they could cast out devils and could pick up snakes and drink poison without being harmed. Jesus told Peter to go to the sea, cast a hook, and he would find (in the mouth of the first fish which came up) money to pay taxes. Jesus said he would return during the lifetime of some persons then living.

Is not basic Biblical theology and sectarian interpretation (which contradict knowledge, offend the moral sense, and insult intelligence) even more harmful than countless isolated brutal, unethical, untrue statements? Adam and Eve, so Biblical theology runs, sinned in the Garden of Eden and brought suffering, death, and damnation to the entire human race. Human beings, on account of their corrupt nature inherited from Adam and Eve, cannot help sinning. They are punished for their sinful nature (original sin) inherited from Adam and Eve and for the sins they commit because of their corrupt nature.

Biblical theology says the suffering and sacrifice of the innocent are necessary to atone for the sins of the wicked. Saint Paul put it this way: "As in Adam all died, so in Christ are all made alive." The original sin of our first parents (which has corrupted the nature of all men) and the sins committed by all other persons are loaded onto the back of the sinless, so innocent, Son of God. As the suffering and sacrifice of the guilty cannot atone, the sacrifice of the innocent is necessary to purchase redemption. In short, the innocent must suffer that the guilty may escape.

Faith or Church action, depending on the sect to which one happens to belong, is the chief way to get the benefit of the saving power purchased by the sacrifice of the innocent Jesus. Many zealously quote the Gospel of Mark: "He that believeth not shall be damned." Some say they have the keys to the kingdom of heaven—the power to forgive sin. Some say baptism washes away sin and that the unbaptized infant is "lost."

It helps a lot to have the Son of God, the Mother of God, or the saints to ask the Great Judge to go easy on you.

The human race evolved from lower forms in groups so that the Garden of Eden on which Biblical theology rests never existed. Nevertheless, religious leadership (even when it is no longer crude enough to cling to the Garden of Eden story) clings to the Biblical theology which grew out of and is meaningless apart from that story.

Would a just God punish a person for original sin or any other sin that he could not help committing? Or substitute the sacrifice of an innocent person for the sins of the wicked any more than an honest judge in our courts would knowingly execute an innocent person and let the guilty go free?

Would a just heavenly Judge be influenced by his Son or Mother to let the guilty off easy (any more than an honest judge in our courts would go easy on the guilty because of pressure from his son or mother) whether the pressure were given freely or originated in prayers purchased singly or by the hundreds at wholesale on Mother's Day or Father's Day?

Does the brutal, the unethical, the untrue or the exploitive become religion when believed or practiced by a sect? Must our religious life be weighted down and the high objectives of all religions be defeated by these evils? If these evils are not a part of real religion, is it not possible to organize a religion which is free from the obviously brutal, obviously unethical, obviously untrue, and obviously exploitive? Brotherhood Religion tries to do this.

## Why The Sectarian Evil Persists

The school physician in Bridgewater, Massachusetts advised that a boy's tonsils be removed on account of their diseased condition. The youngster said his tonsils would be all right without an operation, for his pastor had told his parents to have his throat blessed in a neighboring city where there was a bone from the arm of Saint Anne.

The pastor readily admitted to the school nurse that he had advised the visit. He said the educated member of his Church did not believe in such miraculous cure but encouraged the uneducated to do so in order to hold them.

"The end justifies the means" is the excuse with which informed sectarian leadership salves its conscience when it puts things over on the uninformed "for the own good." As membership in a sect is a main "good" in the eyes of its leaders, there is a great temptation for sectarian leaders to hold uninformed members by unwholesome means.

The senselessness of sectarianism is shown by the fact that sectarian preference is due to a blind acceptance tradition rather than to a search for truth. The Christian Jew, Moslem, or other sectarian did not choose his sect; it was stamped into him by indoctrination in childhood much as a calf is branded on a Western ranch. The great and inexcusable tragedy is that men and women of the highest intelligence in non-religious fields and of the greatest good will remain divided and in conflict because they refuse to evaluate or to listen to others' evaluations that which they accepted in immature and inexperienced childhood.

Most of us would now be members of a different sect if we had happened to be born into it. Knowing this, the intelligently religious person ceases to believe blindly that his sect is the one true (or even the superior) religion. He is ready to merge his sect with others into an inclusive religion. If his sect refuses to merge, he individually joins the inclusive religion. The inclusive religion is free to select the best features of all sects. It is free to reject the evils of each. In this way the inclusive religion is better than Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or other exclusive sect which requires the acceptance of its tradition good and bad. Brotherhood Religion is such an inclusive high-class religion, free from the sectarian evil.

Five factors play a major role in the persistence of the sectarian evil:

1. Immature, impressionable childhood enables a person to get acceptance of beliefs and practices far below what a mature mind would accept. Indoctrination drops points of view into the impressionable minds of children and gets blind acceptance. Habit takes over.

2. Sectarrians are reluctant to examine and evaluate their beliefs and practices. Emotion and sentiment stand in the way. Loyalty to family or reluctance to hurt parents causes many people to cling blindly to their fanatical religion. Fear that God will punish or that fellow sectarians will criticize, bars the way to discarding the old or seeking a better way (The greater the ignorance, the greater the fear). Inertia makes it easier to cling to old ways than to look for a better one. Most sectarians seem to doubt that they are able to evaluate religion and recognize new religious truth and a better religion.