

# DOD RELIGION

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3. "Conspiracy of silence" in religion prevents a mutual evaluation of beliefs and practices in a frank exchange of ideas. We tend to look upon each person's religion as his private affair about which others must keep silent even when they think they see weeds in the other's religious garden. It is tragic beyond measure to remain silent when you see your neighbor eating poisonous toadstools for mushrooms, as when I watched my next-room teacher sinking steadily toward death reading a sectarian manual rather than call in competent medical aid. When she was in or near the coma before she died, the coreligionist with whom she had lived said sweetly that she was getting along nicely. Sectarianism refused to admit that disease was real even as it took another victim.

All of us are victims of the conspiracy of silence (religious toleration, so-called) because others may not help each of us detect and discard the evils of one's own sect. The "conspiracy" seems as prevalent among educated people (who should be in a position to help separate the good from the bad) as among others. The President of the West Liberty State College of West Virginia writes that certain religious "discussion" groups "should never border on denominational creeds to the point of implied criticism or questioning of beliefs." Evaluation is taboo because sectarianism does not wish to be subjected to it no matter how kindly, wise, and pertinent the evaluation.

4. Many lines of communication are closed to those who would evaluate sectarianism. The usual Sunday morning broadcast did not come through on Easter. The speaker had questioned the Resurrection of Jesus, so the station had cut him off the air. Another station indicates that only a person who qualifies as "a properly accredited spokesman for a significant group" may broadcast on religious topics whether radio time is free or paid for.

A newspaper refused to run the ad, "Which is Wiser? To remain divided into the hundreds of religious sects into which we happened to be born, or to unite in an inclusive Brotherhood to replace existing sects?" on the ground that "Our publisher feels that the interests of the greatest number of our readers are best served by avoiding controversial subjects of a religious nature."

When I submitted an ad of my *Toward World Brotherhood to World Report*, my check was returned with the comment: "We do not think, however, that our columns can be available for this type of advertising, since we are quite sure it will involve us in a controversy with other sects. If you feel there is some other way of writing your copy so that the controversial angle will not appear, then we'd be perfectly happy to run it." Is there any field except sectarianism where a great national magazine feels it must avoid a controversial issue?

Calling itself "Holy," a sect considers any "attack" on it too wicked to be tolerated in the public press. Would any but a group unsure of itself deny its critics the opportunity to sell their points of view in an open market of ideas? Is that which must protect itself by such censorship really worth protecting?

5. Fear silences critics of sectarianism. The president of a college for women in Virginia wrote that she had found *Toward World Brotherhood* extremely stimulating and helpful, and had quoted it at several points in a series of lectures at a neighboring college, but she refused (at a later date) to be quoted. She coupled the refusal with "my best wishes for success in your undertaking." She indicated frankly that she would like to give permission to be quoted, but did not dare. A teacher in a graduate seminary of the Methodist Church said *Toward World Brotherhood* was full of sound wisdom, but she refused to be quoted.

People who are in a position to be hurt by sectarians hesitate to say a good word for Brotherhood Religion publicly lest they be punished.

Immature childhood, impressionable childhood, reluctance to examine and evaluate beliefs and practices, conspiracy of silence, restricted communication, and fear are reinforced by religious zeal, blind bigotry, isolation, the good name of religion, and strong organization. Protected by these and other defenses, the sectarian evil persists.

## Brotherhood Religion Is Inclusive Religion

The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man seem best suited for the guiding principles of Brotherhood Religion. The Fatherhood and Brotherhood bind all mankind into one family—the family of God the Father. Fatherhood and brotherhood are as inclusive as humanity; all may share freely and fully in the religion based on them. The fatherly attitude of God toward all His children calls for a brotherly attitude on the part of all His children toward one another as well as a reverently responsive attitude toward God the Father. The loving Father is devoted to His children so that when you serve any person you please and worship God, Brotherhood Religion, doing what it can to serve everyone in community, nation and the world, is brotherly love in action.

Brotherhood Religion aims to unite all persons of good will in an intelligent religious life. A person of any religious background is welcome. The religious experiences of all are pooled in the enjoyment of a common religious life and in the search for greater religious truth. Brotherhood Religion is not bound by an authoritative inerrant Scripture, Founder, or Church. It is a democracy where every member is encouraged to contribute his points of view freely. In this way it distills religious wisdom from every source as it promotes Brotherhood in as many ways as possible. Brothers believe that religion should and can be of uniformly high quality. There is no place in Brotherhood Religion for the brutal, the unethical, the untrue, or the exploitive.

Brotherhood is desired the world around so that Brotherhood Religion naturally appeals to people of every community and nation. Methods of worship and work would differ from place to place according to the culture of a people, but brotherliness would be the keynote everywhere.

Brotherhood Religion concentrates on brotherliness, so is far better suited to achieve it than the sects which spend much time and energy on pet schemes of salvation and other nonbrotherly behavior.

Brothers have the maximum of personal satisfaction through their religion. Their personal relationship to their Father and to one another is close, warm, and satisfying as they work together to serve one another and those who have not yet become Brothers.

## Just Another Sect?

Is Brotherhood Religion just another sect to divide religious people still further? There is a vast difference between a sect with its excluding, binding, authoritative tradition (built up over the centuries about a personal Savior or a chosen people) and an inclusive Brotherhood, modern in outlook and knowledge, where varying points of view are adjusted in the search for a fuller brotherhood. A sect is blindly propagandic; Brotherhood Religion is truth-seeking.

A sect is a group of people with closed minds who propagate what it already "knows" is the truth. As it already has the truth, there is no point in looking for it. As each sect zealously practices and teaches its own tradition, sectarian walls which divide the sects grow thicker and higher. Each sect, huddled within its sectarian fortress, defends its "sacred truths" from "enemies" within and without. It refuses to accept anything contrary to its tradition. Little, if any, advance is made by the sects toward one another or toward religious truth.

Brotherhood Religion is a group of religious people with open minds who try to find, accept, and practice religious truth from any source. Brothers do not live in a closed sectarian fortress where they must defend everything—good and bad. They compare points of view. A Brother is ready to have his points of view challenged—wants to learn as well as to teach. He believes that an earnest, intelligent search yields far more religious truth than the blind acceptance of the tradition of any sect. As each Brother or group of Brothers searches for the truth and finds some, each draws closer to the truth, so closer to the others.

Brotherhood Religion dissolves barriers. It is the natural meeting place for all religious people. It is expected to absorb the membership of various sects as well as to draw in people not connected with any sect.

## Starting A Brotherhood

Any person who believes in Brotherhood Religion may start a Brotherhood. The idea is contagious. As friends and acquaintances become interested, a small informal Brotherhood may be organized.

A Brotherhood may be as small as two or three people who worship or work together. Once started, it grows as more people learn of its purpose and activity.

At first, the Brotherhood might meet informally in the homes of members. Friends might be invited to drop in. Notices of the meetings might be inserted in local papers as news items or advertisements.

Students in a school or college may organize a Brotherhood. As they free themselves from the narrow sectarianism in which they were indoctrinated in childhood, a Brotherhood offers an excellent opportunity for a higher, fuller religious life.

Brotherhood Religion can use the brotherly achievements of various sects. Literature, songs, ritual, methods, and other items may be used freely when they promote or can be revamped to promote brotherliness. In time, Brotherhood Religion will develop an extensive culture.

The individual Brother, the small informal Brotherhood, or the large fully organized Brotherhood can spread the Brotherhood Religion idea. When sectarians learn that a uniformly wholesome religion is available, many will prefer it.

The exchange of experience among Brothers and Brotherhoods brings helpful information and encouragement. Until such time as a center of information has been organized, I shall be glad to get information from and to give information to Brothers and others who are interested in Brotherhood Religion.

Joseph L. Arnold,

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