

Pure Religion, where do you find it?

Christ came to teach people how to worship ["in spirit and truth" (John 4: 22-23)] which is "pure religion!" He was trying to save people from religious formalism (idolatry) which was present in His day and is idolatry in our day too. In this pursuit, the world has made a religion out of Christ, which is ok if we embrace and immerse ourselves into the "spirit of the law" and not the "letter of the law."

If you were to just take the teachings of Christ, the first two great commandments... to love God [that means to love godliness and holiness] with all your heart, might, mind and strength and then love our neighbor and self with those same attributes [of godliness and holiness], the world would be a perfect place and dishonesty and immorality and war would not exist in us or outside us. Anyone can embrace "pure religion" if they want to be true to themselves and a true disciple of Christ! But most people get caught up in the "form and structures" of organized religion (ego) and make that their "God" of worship and it becomes their own nemesis; when they condemn or find fault with others who are not following their particular form of formalism; and hence they fall into the very pit they are trying to save others from. This is how we can tell if this is going on:

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but *deceiveth his own heart*, this man's religion is vain. *Pure religion* and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*" (New Testament | James 1:26 - 27)

It does not really matter what external drama has played out in all organized religions as they came forth, all the negative stories that have surfaced then are still surfacing today. What really matters is that we recognize our own personal accountability to "divine nature" as recorded in 2 Peter:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

“And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

“And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (New Testament | 2 Peter 1:4 - 9).

How are we “purged from” our “old sins?” This can only happen when we immerse ourselves into “divine nature;” it is then that our “old sins” are literally “purged” out. “For if these things [a divine and holy character] be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of ...Christ.”

In my opinion, anything more or less that this cometh of evil and is silly gossip. Why do we judge the "form and structure" (formalism) of religions which has no power or authority to save a single soul from their sins, lies, false gossip or bearing false witness of our neighbor? Simple answer, ego. Why not concern ourselves with the "spirit of the law" [See LDS Bible Dictionary, “Holiness”] that sanctifies and purifies the souls of men!

I see many people with real anger issues deep down inside and insecurities that keeps them from the truth because they have bought into false beliefs which damn any soul [1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Nephi 28:15] and the “cunning craftiness” of men [Ephesians 4: 14; D&C 76: 75]. Many understand the surface of truth but the real depth of truth has been pushed down in their souls. As long as people continue finding fault with the "forms and structures" of any religion, they will always fall into their own pit. You see "pure and undefiled religion" is never found in demeaning lies about the prophet Joseph Smith (or any other person), or demeaning lies about the Book of Mormon or any of the forms and structures of any religion. Let me say something about “forms and structures;” they are here to awaken us from our deep sleep, so that we can see and understand the “Spirit of the law.” "Pure religion" is immersing ourselves in holiness of character or as Peter put it "divine nature." We should choose to honor and respect every person and

their divinity and potential to become perfect as Christ and Father (Mathew 5: 43-48). I pray for all and hope all will come to see that truth! It matters not what religion we belong to or don't belong to... what matters is what divine attributes are we manifesting in our words, our thoughts and our deeds that bring us into the presence of godliness and holiness of character that we may become more like Christ and Father in Heaven, which is "pure religion."

I have had my own faith crisis (tests) with some doctrines of Mormonism (forms and structures) and discovered I can remain in "pure religion" and tell my story (share my witness of the truth), my beliefs that the Prophet Joseph shared, when he taught from Lectures on Faith, and what Christ taught in his teaching! This alone has grounded me to what I believe was and is the very foundation of "pure religion," because Lectures on Faith teaches the importance of becoming in character and attribute as divine, holy and godly as one can be! This is the same message that Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Both were killed by the egos of fallen man and many others have died too, for sharing these principles!

Be "one" and if ye are not "one" (in divine nature, pure perfect love) then ye are not mine! The "forms and structures" of all religions in general teach this truth of becoming "one" by immersing ourselves in divine nature (the attributes of godliness)... If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, we will understand that every ordinance and ceremony within the "forms and structures" of all religions are leading us to holiness of character, that perfect love of godliness! But what does our fallen nature do? It gets caught up in the formalism of religion (a type of idolatry) and we go to war, debate and have arguments over it. It makes no sense to me. If what we do in or out of religion (or our worship of God) does not bring us into "holiness of character" [that perfect love of virtue] ourselves, then we may know of a certainty, that what we are doing is not of God (godliness)!

I see "religions" (which is a community of people) like beautiful wild flowers in a mountain meadow, each one has its beauty and place in the mountain meadow (the world). The fragrance of the flowers is the Holy Spirit, which is the aroma of divine nature [perfect love] and we are each attracted to it or dislike it. The choice is ours to smell the "breath of life" and "put on" the new man (the attributes of godliness in our lives) or partake of the fallen and carnal nature of our own ego. God is love (divine nature personified in us) and "love is the fulfilling of the law"

[Romans 13:10]. God bless everyone in this self-discovery journey! A journey that brings one to the understanding of “I AM THAT I AM” [Exodus 3: 14]. The same truth Moses learned on Mount Sinai. ¹

¹ Essay by Ken Card, last edited 2/14/2021 See other essays on my website www.MarriageAndPolygamy.com