

Welcome to our quarterly newsletter

Welcome to the third edition of the What about RELIGION? quarterly newsletter. This is the best way for you to keep up-to-date with our ongoing research about religion facts. Enjoy the reading!

We will do our best every three months to give you the more interesting facts about the religions of the world, in a objective way.

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this issue

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50 000 RELIGIONS?

The wide array of current religions, plus the many that died in the past, are impossible to count. As a blind guess, I estimate the grand total at perhaps 50,000. Alongside major world faiths are hundreds of branches and thousands of small sects, cults, and tribal folk groups in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. There are tens of thousands of religions on Planet Earth today excluding all the religions that came and went (and are now lost) during the first 190,000 years of Homo sapiens,^f a Psychology Today report says.

Scholars list multitudes of new faiths created just since the start of the 1800s: Mormons, Baha'is, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Moonies, Hare Krishnas, Adventists, talking-in-tongues Pentecostals, Scientologists, rattlesnake-handlers, New Age mystical groups, Rastafarians, Unity Church, Urantia, Christadelphians, and on and on—plus a flood of Asian sects.

Gordon Melton of the Institute for the Study of American Religions told The New York Times that forty to fifty new religious movements emerge each year in the United States alone.

This zoo of supernatural worship has one common quality: It's all based on fictional fantasy—untrue claims—in other words, lies—Gods, devils, heavens, hells, visions, prophecies, saviors, blessed virgins, angels, demons, apparitions, miracles, holy visitations—none of this church stuff is actually real. It's all concocted by the human imagination. Spirits don't really exist.

(Exception: Some Asian religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, and Confucianism are mostly philosophical, making few supernatural claims.)

What
about
RELIGION?



Something is wrong with Homo sapiens

James A. Haught

There are 33 000 separate sects of Christianity

Religions have bizarre variety: from Aztecs sacrificing humans to an invisible feathered serpent to monks chanting "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna"; from Thugs strangling victims for the many-armed goddess Kali to Pentecostals erupting in uncontrollable glossolalia; from Muslim suicide-bombers sacrificing their own lives to some Hindus praying over models of Shiva's erect penis;

from Sufi "whirling dervishes" to Canada's Dukhobors (Spirit Wrestlers), who stage naked protests and burn buildings; from Voodoo priestesses sacrificing chickens to Raélians who espouse open sex and think humans were created by space aliens.

There are 33,000 separate sects of Christianity, according to the World Christian Encyclopedia. Many of them differ radically.

What does it all mean? I think it means that supposedly logical

humans have a streak of lunacy—pure irrationality. Why on earth do people invent magic tales and declare them real and even turn violent to defend them?

All supernatural religions are absurd because they proclaim "truths" that aren't true. As educated modern people become more knowledgeable, the absurdity grows more obvious.

Something is wrong with Homo sapiens. If our species were truly rational, it wouldn't concoct 50,000 fairy tales and waste whole lifetimes on them.

Existentialists contend that humans are a bit crazy. Thousands of wars seem to confirm it, as does the manufacture of religions

worshiping imaginary gods. Five centuries ago, Montaigne wrote: UMan is certainly stark mad. He cannot make a worm yet he will make gods by the dozen."

Even the Bible (II Kings 17:29) asks in perplexity: "Howbeit that every nation made gods of their own?"

From the secularhumanism.org magazine, written by James A. Haught