

# the irreligious CHRIST

## Part 2: Return Of The Living Dead

Religion in the ancient world had at its very heart ritual. It was a matter of rites and sacrifices and meals and observances and processions and festivals. This was as true of Greco-Roman religion as it was of Jewish religion. But it is apparently within the area of 'lifestyle' that Christians are to establish distinctive characteristics of a specific Christian identity.  
~ Ben Witherington III, *Historian & Theologian*

If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.  
~ James 1:26-27 (NLT)

To prevent our being perverted by contact with other or by mixing with bad influences, Moses hedged us in on all sides with strict observances connected with meat and drink and touch and hearing and sight, after the manner of the Law.  
~ *Letter of Aristeas, 139-142, Jewish Writing from 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE*

Eat not with them ... for their works are unclean.  
~ Jubilees 22:16, *Jewish Writing*

He said to them, "You yourselves know very well that a Jew is not allowed by his religion to visit or associate with Gentiles. But God has shown me that I must not consider any person ritually unclean or defiled."  
~ Acts 10:28 (TEV)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.  
~ 1 Peter 2:9 (NRSV)

For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us. By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new person from the two groups.  
~ *Ephesians 2:14-15 (NLT)*

All who are 'in the Messiah' are the true people of God. And that means Gentiles as well as Jews. ... If we are 'in' the crucified Jesus, that means that our previous identities are irrelevant. They are to be forgotten. We must now learn who we are in a whole new way.  
~ *N.T. Wright, Historian & Theologian*

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.  
~ *John 17:20-21 (NASB)*

Paul insists that "the truth of the gospel" (2:14) is a social reality: the gospel must be embodied in the practices of a community that shares a common life. One can betray the truth of the gospel not only by preaching false doctrine but also by engaging in false practices – particularly practices that fracture the unity of the church.  
~ *Richard B. Hays, New Testament Professor, Duke University*

Religion has not been able to deliver on its promises.  
~ *Celia M. Murray Dunn, Researcher & Author*

Of all the tyrannies that effect mankind, the tyranny of religion is the worst.  
~ *Thomas Paine*

All religions are founded on the fear of many and the cleverness of few.  
~ *Stendhal, Writer*

How can one remain silent about the many forms of violence perpetrated in the name of the faiths – wars of religion, tribunals of the Inquisition and other forms of violations of the rights of person?  
~ *Pope John Paul II*

The Christian religion has left a legacy in western society that fosters sexism, racism, the intolerance of difference, and the desecration of the natural environment. It has attempted to control, contain and confine spirituality, the relationship between an individual and God. As a result, Christianity has helped to create a society in which people are alienated not only from each other but also from the divine.  
~ *Hellen Ellerbe, Historian*

Religion increasingly is tending to degenerate into a decent formula wherewith to embellish a comfortable life.

~ *Alfred North Whitehead, Philosopher*

A religion that serves today's needs and holds tomorrow's promise should not consist of dying forms and cold rituals, but of living hope and friendly righteousness.

~ *Wayland Zwyer*

The Gospel is the announcement that the crucified and risen Jesus is Lord of the world. Those who believe in him, who give allegiance to him, must form a single family. There cannot be divisions based on nationhood or race.

~ *N. T. Wright, Historian & Theologian*

In the book of Galatians we are constantly challenged to reject the wisdom of business as usual – including the business of religion – and to see reality as redefined by the cross.

~ *Richard B. Hays, New Testament Professor, Duke University*

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul pushes the scandalous implications of the gospel to their limits.

~ *Ben Witherington III, Historian & Theologian*

If the world could have been saved by providing good examples to which we could respond with appropriately good works, it would have been saved an hour and twenty minutes after Moses came down from Mt. Sinai.

~ *Robert Farrar Capon, Episcopal Priest*

The truth of the Gospel is not merely a doctrine but a social reality, a truth that must be embodied in the practices of a community.

~ *Richard B. Hays, New Testament Professor, Duke University*

“I don't like religion much, and I am glad that in the Bible the word is not to be found.”

~ *Martin Buber, Philosopher*

If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.

~ *James 1:26-27 (NLT), with apologies to Martin Buber*

Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

~ *Karl Marx*

Religion is a crutch for weak-minded people who need strength in numbers.

~ *Bill Maher, Comedian*

Men never do evil so cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

~ *Blaise Pascal, Philosopher*

The only cure for prejudice is to abolish religion.

~ *G.W. Allport*

With or without religion, good people can behave well and bad people can do evil; but for good people to do evil – that takes religion.

~ *Steven Weinberg, Nobel Prize Winning Physicist*

Religion is the last refuge of human savagery.

~ *Alfred North Whitehead, Philosopher*

Men will wrangle for religion; write for it; fight for it; die for it; anything but - live for it.

~ *Charles Caleb Colton, Author & Pastor*

We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.

~ *Jonathan Swift, Author*

Religion is the masterpiece of the art of animal training, for it trains people as to how they shall think.

~ *Arthur Schopenhauer, Philosopher*

The message of Galatians is that religion in any form suppresses the truth. It is the futility of a world passing away. The “worship” that Paul endorsed was a transformation of everyday experience, evidenced in part by a refusal to accept the religious mind set.

~ *Mark Strom, Theologian*

Galatians teaches us that salvation is never to be achieved by any amount of conformity to rules and regulations, even God-given regulations.

~ *James Montgomery Boice, Theologian*

In Galatians Paul's primary conviction is that salvation is available to all on the same basis, faith. ... This leads to one of the most striking features of Paul's argument – that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, are in the same situation and have the same need.

~ *E. P. Sanders, Historian*

God promised Abraham a worldwide family, characterized by faith. This is the foundation to the message of Galatians.

*~ N.T. Wright, Historian & Theologian*

Paul's point is that just as God is one, so his people should be one and anything that in effect divides Gentiles from Jews and so tends to produce two peoples of God is to be shunned or avoided.

*~ Ben Whitherington III, Historian & Theologian*

From start to finish, Paul in Galatians proclaims that God has acted to set the world right and to rescue us from slavery to human religious programs.

*~ Richard B. Hays, New Testament Professor, Duke University*

The old system in the law of Moses was only a shadow of the things to come, not the reality of the good things Christ has done for us.

*~ Hebrews 10:1 (NLT)*