

“DID GOD REALLY SAY...?”

By Dr. Ted Baehr

Since the beginning of man, the adversary has used language to disrupt and divide.

On several recent trips, I have sat next to some very enthusiastic Christians, who called other Christian denominations other religions. Of course, when these denominations are called other religions and the speaker knows that these denominations believe in Jesus Christ or at least call themselves Christian, then it is easy for the speaker to become confused and believe that all other religions have the same beliefs.

This is the problem with language that changes. When Madison and Jefferson wrote about religion, they were writing about Baptists, Episcopalians and Catholics among other denominations. They were not writing about Buddhism, Hinduism and Shintoism, which are what we now consider to be other religions and which do have very different beliefs than Christians have. This linguistic shift may be confusing more Americans than we know, including such supposedly intelligent people as the justices of the United States Supreme Court.

Older Americans may say “Yes, we are Catholics or Baptists, and you’re Episcopalians or Methodists, but we all believe in the same God. We are just different religions.” Clarity here would be a great help.

Buddhists say that they are non-theistic, that is they don’t believe in God. Hindus are primarily monists. Shintoism is polytheistic. Some religions are totemistic. These are distinctly different religious thoughts.

If Christians would see themselves as Christians first, and then members of Christian denominations second, while other religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism hold other views, it would help clarify some of the problems we face in our contemporary so-called culture wars.