

IS CHRISTIANITY ALONE FULLY TRUE AND IS JESUS CHRIST REALLY THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?—Part 5

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Finding the One True God

Last time we asked the question: If God exists and there is only one true God, then how do we find Him?

In evaluating this topic, we will examine four issues:

- 1) What may be termed a distillation approach to the uniqueness of Christianity,
- 2) Why Christianity isn't intolerant or narrow-minded for teaching there is only one way to God,
- 3) The quality of the evidence for the truth of Christianity,
- 4) The Christian claim and the incarnation.

We will examine these in turn.

1. The distillation approach

In order to begin to answer a question as controversial to the pluralistic or secular mindset as this one, sometimes it is easier to boil things down to their lowest common denominator to help us see how unique Christianity really is. One way is to examine salvation concepts. Martin Luther was right when he said that, in the end, there were only two religions in the world, the religion of works and the religion of grace.

We could examine all religions that exist today and then go back through history and examine all religions that have ever existed and we would find that there is no exception—all religions teach salvation by works. Christianity is the only religion that teaches salvation solely by grace. This simple fact makes it stand entirely apart from other religions. It also necessitates an answer to the question, "Why out of thousands of religions is there only one that teaches salvation by grace?" How do we logically explain the origin of only one religion that teaches grace? In other words, how did mankind ever *acquire* a religion of pure grace with salvation as a *free* gift when the natural, unyielding bent of the human heart is one of self-justifying works and earning one's own salvation? Why does one religion stand out like a floodlight in a group of candles?

The most reasonable answer is divine revelation. The one true God has revealed the one true way of salvation in the Bible. Obviously, He didn't reveal it in the scriptures of other religions since they contradict the Bible's most basic teachings and God does not contradict Himself nor is He a God of confusion (Titus 1:2; 1 Cor. 14:33).

In essence, observers of religion and critics of Christianity must explain why there *is* one religion of grace amidst universal religions of works. It can only be because the one true God who exists is a God of grace (Eph. 1:7; 2:8) that we find a single religion of grace among the many that oppose it.

A related distillation approach would be to evaluate different concept of origins. Christian philosopher Dr. Francis Schaeffer takes this approach in *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. How do we attempt to explain our existence? In terms of concepts of origins or explana-

tions of reality, though there are hundreds of religions and philosophies, when reduced to their most common elements, there are only a relatively few options:

1. *The finite personal*—e.g., creation by the gods.
2. *The infinite personal*—e.g., creation by a God such as the Muslim Allah.
3. *The infinite impersonal monistic*—e.g., creation (self-emanation) by the Brahman of Hinduism.
4. *The materialistic impersonal*—e.g., creation by chance, i.e., the theory of evolution. (Matter is eternal; the “big bang,” etc.)
5. *The infinite personal Triune*—creation by the God of the Bible.

Schaeffer’s whole point is that only when you begin with the Christian view of origins can you adequately explain the universe as we know it in terms of metaphysics, epistemology and morality. Metaphysics deals with the nature of existence, truth and knowledge; epistemology with how we know; and morality with how we should live.

The problem with options 1 through 4 is that they cannot fully or adequately explain and/or logically support these key philosophical doctrines. For example, in point #1, the mythical and bickering, capricious and copulating finite gods (whether of the ancient Greeks and Romans or the modern Hindus and Buddhists) aren’t big enough to create the world, let alone provide us with the infinite reference point we need in order to have an absolute truth or to justify meaning in life. Sartre was correct in stating man required an infinite reference point for life to have any meaning. He “didn’t” believe there was one, which is why he stated, “Man is absurd, but he must grimly act as if he were not”³³ and “Man is a useless passion.”³⁴ On the other hand, the infinite personal triune God of the Bible is big enough to create the universe and big enough to provide man with an infinite reference point.

The problem with #2 is that such a God seems ultimately dependent upon his creation in order to express the attributes of his own personality. In other words, for all eternity this god would be alone with himself. With whom does God communicate? Who does he love? Such a God is “forced” to create and is subsequently *dependent* upon his creation for expressing the attributes of his own personality—and is, therefore, not a *truly* independent or free divine Being. A concept of a god who is dependent on something else is hardly an adequate concept of God. The Christian view of origins solves this problem because the triune God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit had no need to create in order to express His attributes of personality. The members of the Godhead communicated together, loved one another, etc., for all eternity and are never dependent upon their creation for anything.

The problem with #3 is that although God is infinite, God is impersonal and therefore there is no basis for explaining the origin of personality or any logical reason for personhood to have absolute meaning. This explains why, in both Hinduism and Buddhism, the personality is seen as an “enemy” and is finally destroyed by absorption into Brahman or Nirvana. Not only the material creation but human existence per se, body and personality, are either an illusion, as in Hinduism (*maya*) or so empty and impermanent, as in Buddhism (*sunyata*), that they are ultimately meaningless. In the end, man per se is a hindrance to spiritual enlightenment and must be “destroyed” to find “liberation.” As Dr. Frits Staal comments in “Indian Concepts of the Body,” “Whatever the alleged differences between Hindu and Buddhist doctrines, one conclusion follows from the preceding analysis.... No features of the individual personality survive death in either state.”³⁵ But is an impersonal “immortality” truly relevant when it extinguishes our existence forever? Is it even desirable?

In monistic systems there is also no way to explain the diversity within the creation. If “God is one,” then diversity—all creation—is by definition part of the illusion of duality. That includes all moral views, all human hopes and aspirations, and all else that matters.

The infinite triune God of the Bible addresses this issue as well. Because God *is* personal, human personality has genuine and eternal significance. The only kind of eternity that has any meaning, or gives this life any meaning, is an eternity of *personal* immortality. And because Christianity involves a philosophy of religious dualism, God is the creator of a *real* creation. The creation is not simply the illusory emanation of an impersonal divine substance. As result, there is no necessity with facing the very destructive consequences of nihilism.

The problem with #4 is that we have very similar problems to point #3. Ultimate reality is still impersonal, although not a divine substance. Ultimate reality is dead matter. Where does anyone find any dignity when our own self-portrait is the cold atoms of deep space? In the end, after a single life, we die forever. Although such a fate is infinitely more merciful than the endless reincarnations and final dissolutions of Hinduism and Buddhism, it is still far too nihilistic and despairing for most people to live out practically.

Famous philosophers and social commentators have stated the logical results. For example, Albert Camus said, “I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd.”³⁶ Andy Warhol declared of his six-hour film showing a man sleeping, “It keeps you from thinking. I wish I were a machine.”³⁷ Nietzsche informs us that the inhumane aspects of man “are perhaps the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity...can grow” and then proceeds to destroy everything by having the Madman state:

Whither is God? I shall tell you. We *have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while?... What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives.

Who will wipe this blood off us? ³⁸

Walter Kaufman comments that “Nietzsche prophetically envisages himself as a madman: to have lost God means madness; and when mankind will discover that it has lost God, universal madness will break out.”³⁹ As Leslie Paul observed, in the end, evolutionarily speaking, “All life is no more than a match struck in the dark and blown out again. The final result...is to deprive it completely of meaning.”⁴⁰

Regardless, it is utterly impossible to rationally explain the origin of life materialistically on evolutionary or any other grounds. Books such as W. R. Bird’s *The Origin of Species Revisited* (Philosophical Library, 2 Vols., 1993), Michael Denton’s *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Adler & Adler, 1986), A. E. Wilder-Smith’s *The Natural Sciences Know Nothing of Evolution* (Master Books, 1981), Phillip E. Johnson’s *Darwin on Trial* (InterVarsity, 1993), James Coppedge’s *Evolution: Possible Or Impossible?* (Zondervan, 1973), and many others should prove this to any thinking person who does not allow naturalistic philosophical biases to dominate his worldview.

Only when we begin with the Christian religion—an infinite and personal triune concept

of origins—do we *logically* have an explanation for things—human personality, the desire for meaning in life, personal immortality, a real creation having both unity and diversity, a transcendent basis for absolute morality, etc.

For example, just as there is unity and diversity in the Godhead—*three* centers of consciousness in *one* divine essence—so there is unity and diversity in the creation. Whether we speak of men, trees, butterflies or snowflakes, every category of life is “the same but different.” All men, trees, butterflies or snowflakes are alike but no two are identical. In one sense, God has not only made man, but the creation itself “after His image.”

In conclusion, the fact that Christianity logically and adequately explains more about the facts of our existence than any other religion argues, in part, for biblical Christianity being the true religion. Other reasons will be given as we continue this discussion.

(to be continued)

NOTES:

33. Cited in Clark Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 9.
34. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Methuen, 1957), p. 566.
35. Frits Staal, “Indian Concepts of the Body,” *Somatics*, Autumn/Winter 1983-1984, p. 33.
36. Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, A. Bower, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 16, from Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), p. 37.
37. Cited in Clark Pinnock, *Live Now Brother* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 18.
38. Walter Kaufman, *Nietzsche* (NY: Vintage, 1968), p. 97 citing Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), p. 125.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Leslie Paul, *The Annihilation of Man* (NY: Harcourt Brace, 1945), p. 154 from Arthur Custance, *A Framework of History* (Doorway Paper, #29 Ottawa, 1968), p. III.