



THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Christianity and Other Religions - First of all, there is no need to deny “truth” anywhere it exists and many religious systems contain truth about moral and ethical issues. On the other hand, beside some moral agreement, major world religions have vast differences. The idea that we are all “worshipping the same God” through all of these different theologies and systems is, simply, nonsense (unless God is purposely trying to confuse us and I know that isn’t the case – 1Corinthians 14:33). When it comes to the “core” issue, salvation, the Biblical system tells us that “salvation” came through the Messianic plan God fulfilled using the Jews (John 4:22). Jesus clearly said that He was the only way to the Father (John 14:6) - salvation does not come through any other people or religious system (Acts 4:12).

So, how do we explain the rise of so many religious alternatives? First of all, remember the spiritual dimension to false religion – there *is* spiritual power involved. It was Satan who first questioned God’s goodness, directly contradicted God’s word, ascribed bad motives to God, and offered “godhood” to gullible humans as the reward for rebellion (Genesis 3:1,4,5). Satan still “snatches the Word away from some hearts” (Matthew 13:19), “fills men’s hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3), employs schemes to gain an advantage over us (2Corinthians 2:11), “veils the Gospel/blinds the minds of unbelievers” (2Corinthians 4:3,4), and keeps people enslaved to sin through the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14,15) and its temporary pleasures (Hebrews 11:25). Paul told us that Satan and his workers have long been active in this area – idolatry is actually “demon-worship” (1Corinthians 10:19-21), his evil workers “disguise” themselves (Matthew 7:15,16; 2Corinthians 11:14,15), and a number of false teachings originate from a demonic source and are spread by men who are hypocritical liars (1Timothy 4:1-3).

Second, recognize the human element. At the beginning (Genesis 3), Adam and Eve demonstrated the role that humans play in confusing things. God gave lots of freedoms and one very clear prohibition (Genesis 2:16,17). However (read Genesis 3:1-6), when the first rebel raised a leading question associating God with excessive restriction of freedom, Eve did lose some perspective on the freedom issue (she left out “freely”), forgot what the forbidden tree was concerned with (distinguishing good and evil) and the “tree of life” completely (there were *two* trees in the garden’s midst - Genesis 2:9), added to the restrictions (can’t touch it), and made the punishment less certain! Eve put on a pretty good “clinic” in how to distort and corrupt true religion – reduce, forget, add, change. Rather than speak up as his wife was being deceived, Adam silently stood there and then passively joined in what he knew to be wrong. Then, with eyes “opened” to shame rather than the promised “godhood,” they tried an uncomfortable “cover-up (Genesis 3:7). Finally, when accountability caught up with them, Adam blamed everybody else for what happened (Genesis 3:8-12). To a large extent, we just follow in their

footsteps. God made us to be “upright,” but we have invented a lot of alternatives (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

In general, without revealed guidelines, humans will still express their “spiritual nature” and worship something, even if they make it up as they go along. Egotists worship themselves. Evolutionary materialists wind up worshipping the natural order and its processes. Islam and Mormonism claimed a divine endorsement of polygamy. There is something about us (pride & arrogance?) that would rather “do our own thing” than submit to the Creator and obey Him (Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 21:25). Like sheep, we want to trot off in our own directions (Isaiah 53:6) and even want God to approve of it. A good bit of the religious confusion comes from “man-made” religion and tradition (Mark 7:8,9; Romans 10:1-4; Colossians 2:23), another result of God allowing the nations to go their own ways (Acts 14:11-17). False prophets excel at inventing stuff in their own minds (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:16,26) and stealing phrases/lingo from each other that they attribute to God (Jeremiah 23:30). Yet, they always seem to have a willing audience that “love it so” (Jeremiah 5:30,31) and will follow the baloney salesmen anywhere. Some error comes from people who focus on the wrong things and don’t know what they are talking about (1Timothy 1:3-7). There are men (and women?) out to get a following for themselves at any cost (Acts 20:29,30; Romans 16:17,18). There are deceived people who think themselves so “spiritual” that they are free to ignore God’s Word when they don’t agree with it (1Corinthians 14:37f). There will always be people who welcome only those teachers that tell them what they already want to hear (2Timothy 4:3,4) and there will always be teachers willing to tickle ears for a paycheck (2Corinthians 2:17; 2Peter 2:1-3).

Related to Paul’s warning about rival systems arising from human and angelic sources (Galatians 1:6-9), most of the rival religions arose from the claims of a single man or an alleged angelic visit – Buddhism, Islam, Mormonism, the Moonies, etc. Islam’s *Allah* was transformed from an Arabian tribal deity into a universal God, with Mohammed claiming revelation from an angel (which he at first thought might be a demon) in a cave outside Mecca. Japanese Shinto arose as the worship of the Japanese islands and people. Although men are destined to die only once before going to judgment (Hebrews 9:27), Vedic Brahmanism offered an endless cycle of reincarnations and a works system (Karma) by which people could progress. It was as a reaction to this endless cycle of reincarnations that Buddhism’s “8-fold path” was developed in hopes of breaking out of it. Judaism began on Divine foundations, but was corrupted by idolatry (1360-586 B.C.) and then moved into ethno-centric traditionalism.

Christianity’s exclusive claims are one of two things: either intolerant bigotry or truth! “Tolerating” every religious view as equally valuable, ultimately, is a refusal to take any of the claims seriously.