

Why Religious Seekers Should Start with Christianity!

Reasonable, open minded, religious seekers would do well to begin an investigation of available religious traditions by considering the truth claims of Christianity. The Christian religion is replete with historical evidence, acknowledges and presents a solution to the reality of evil and suffering, teaches the free gift of God's salvation based on His grace, and is centered in Jesus Christ, a person of history recognized by nearly every world religion.

Many of us are familiar with the television series "CSI", in which a team of forensic specialists investigate various line of evidence in an attempt to solve a particular crime, say burglary. Suppose that a new CSI detective were to be instructed in the science of solving crime. Suppose also that one method of training involved a hypothetical crime scene, one in which blood, DNA, fingerprints, and the criminal's journal and plan of escape were all found at or near the crime scene, one consistent with other recent burglaries in the area. Suppose also that an alternate method of instruction offered little physical evidence to rely upon, and what evidence there was only added confusion. The burglar stole a set of encyclopedias and some jewelry, but left the cash that was in the same safe as the jewelry. She left a note at the crime scene, but the note is encrypted with a form of code that seems almost random. Furthermore, the crime is oddly inconsistent with other recent crimes in the neighborhood.

Clearly, the first method is preferable to the second both for crime solving and training the new CSI detective. Multiple lines of evidence narrow the range of suspects, and familiarize the rookie with the methods of investigation. Christianity is like that. Thousands of ancient documents detailing first hand accounts of the life of Jesus and the early church exist, some dating to within two hundred fifty years of the life of Christ, with one fragment as early as 125

AD. As ancient documents go, nothing compares to the documentary evidence for the life of Christ.

One of the New Testament writers, Luke, has long been lauded for his accuracy in some of the minute details of the political, religious, and social realities of the first century Roman Empire. Other non-Christian sources from the first through the third centuries offer corroborating evidence of Jesus and the earliest Christians. These textual evidences then are both internally and externally consistent and verified.

Contrast the evidence for the truth of Christianity with that of the rising popularity of eastern type religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and new age spirituality. One of the hallmarks of several of these traditions is the denial of any objective reality. How does one consider physical evidence for such a claim? Wouldn't the claim itself lack objectivity? Like the CSI rookie in our second scenario, we find ourselves lacking the tools for important discovery and verification. This is not in keeping with our daily experience. We rely on things being what they actually are from the first cup of coffee in the morning to the traffic light at the busy intersection, to the final exam ending the academic year and heralding summer!

Christianity acknowledges the reality of evil and suffering in the context of free moral agents exercising their will to act. Evil acts are neither an illusion nor the unavoidable results of some fatalistic determinism. Human beings are ultimately accountable for their actions, and this is consistent with our legal and governmental policies. Furthermore, humans experience genuine moral guilt. Most often, we know when we have acted wrong. This is understood in the Christian doctrine of sin, and it has proven time and again to be an intractable problem for us humans. Therefore, most religious traditions embrace some form of release or forgiveness from this condition, and the means of this restoration typically involves human initiative and effort. For

some a rigorous system of penance is employed to no particular physical or spiritual comfort, while in others a continuous cycle of life and death offers a promise of karmic balance. In other words, what can humankind do to assuage this sense of guilt and overcome the evil impulse, and better still, be “right with” God? The Christian response is—nothing!

Salvation is the free gift of God, offered by God according to God’s own free will. It is an expression of the creator’s grace and mercy to the human creature. Salvation or human rescue cannot be earned or achieved apart from the Grace of God. It can only be received and that in an instant! This salvation is the true “nirvana”, or “shalom”, or “peace with God” and is accomplished with and through Jesus Christ, perhaps the most widely recognized person in history and world religion.

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Wicca—each of these religions affirm either the moral goodness or wisdom of Jesus. In those traditions, Jesus is a prophet, teacher, avatar, or wise man; but he is the locus of Christianity. As such, Christian holy texts, or scriptures (the bible) are the greatest source of historical and biographical information about him. I have previously mentioned the abundance of those texts. In them, you will learn of his origins, his teachings, his many signs and wonders, and of his death, burial and resurrection. If the wisdom and love of Jesus is such that so many religious traditions refer to Him in some peripheral sense, is it not most practical to consider that account of Jesus which identifies him as the source from which all peripheral things proceed? Or shall we be content to study only effects and not causes?

I have offered a number of reasons why a seriously minded religious seeker should, in all wisdom and practicality, begin at Christianity. The search for religious truth is no different than the search for truth in any area of life, and should be attended by the same rules of evidence,

reason, and logic. Honest seekers will find the explanatory power of Christianity resonates deep in the human mind, body and spirit.

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