

Chapter 19 Who is the true God?

Those involved in western yoga will claim that yoga is not a religion. Strictly speaking they are half-right; it is more a methodology with a spiritual goal. But to claim that yoga is purely physical would be wrong, as even a cursory reading of yoga literature will soon make clear. Yoga likens itself to an 'umbrella'; under it and in it and all around it are gathered all the world's religions, belief systems and philosophies.

This is why yoga is so appealing to the West. Because it is supposedly devoid of religion, you can bring to it any religious philosophy you like...even Jesus Christ. In fact Jesus Christ may be worshipped as one of the Hindu gods. But is this the true Jesus?

Followers of eastern religion would claim that Jesus was only a man, equal to other gods and figureheads. They would claim that Jesus Christ belongs no more to Christianity than any other religion. However, the Jesus who appears in other religions is not the true Jesus. There is only one Jesus. He is supernatural God. He became man for a period of time to fulfill God's purpose for mankind, so that through His death on the cross we might be forgiven for our sins and have eternal life. Through God's supernatural power Jesus rose from the dead and became alive again. He lives today and makes a difference in the lives of His followers. This is the true Jesus.

The word 'god' and 'God' have different meanings. A 'god' is something to be worshiped. It can be an object, materialism, a philosophy or "god-in-everything" including self. To a Christian, there is only one person who should be worshiped, and that is God the person, the God of the Bible. Christianity states that Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven. This is criticized by other religions, yet most religions claim that worship of their god is a path to their particular version of the afterlife. Where Christianity differs is in the distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Christianity states that there are absolutes, and these are set down for us in God's word, the Bible.

Why should we trust the Bible?

The Bible is the genuine word of a trustworthy God because:

1. It has not been tampered with. Nor has it evolved or undergone "improvement". It remains the same as originally written because it was complete and perfect from the beginning. It is therefore the exact representation of what God said and did. The Dead Sea Scrolls are evidence of this.
2. It is always historically correct. It has no errors regarding historical personages and events. Secular history and archaeology will not disagree. Any present contradiction will be inevitably resolved through future discovery.
3. It is without scientific absurdity. It affirms experiential science. That is, science that is based on the long established scientific method (able to be repeatedly tested and demonstrated in the present). This is not to be

confused with historical science which cannot be proven as it concerns past events and therefore ineligible for validation using the scientific method. Historical science will always remain untestable theory, unable to be proved. An example is the theory of evolution.

4. All prophetic events that should have been fulfilled have in fact been fulfilled to the letter. As the Bible is thirty-percent prophecy, this measure provides very convincing validation of the authenticity of divine authorship.

Unlike eastern religions, the God of the Bible is a person whom we can know through relationship. The Bible addresses God in the plural, with differing functions. He is actually three persons in one: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Trinity). God has always existed in a personal loving way as three persons. Personal relationship is at the core of existence in God Himself.

God is whole and complete. By His free will, God created our universe and mankind, not out of need, but out of a desire to have us share in the relationships He already enjoyed within the Trinity. Created in the image of God, man has a reason for his need to be in a relationship with some other person; it is inherent in the God-given gift of personality. To be a man (or a woman) alone is to be incomplete. The Trinity answers the questions modern man poses. The Doctrine of the Trinity wasn't invented in order to answer modern man's questions; it has always been there in the Bible. It answers powerfully modern man's questions and solves His problems. The existence of the Trinity means that mankind has been created to communicate with God. A relationship with God includes God speaking to man, and man to God. God can speak to us through the Bible, our thoughts and our conscience. He can tell us true things about Himself and the world. We can speak to God directly through prayer and God will answer. ¹

Francis Schaeffer, author and apologist for the Christian faith said many times: "Man is who he is, no matter what he says he is. He is created in the image of the infinite, personal God who is there." ²

What about the competing gods of other religions? Do many paths lead to Rome? A cursory study of their vastly different natures and attributes will soon show they are not the same as the God of the Bible. Nor are they the same as each other; they are actually many different paths leading to many different destinations! They must be therefore distinctly separate gods. Can they all be valid?

Despite the claims of the religions of the world, there can only be one *true* God. By definition, the term God means the Supreme Being or "the ultimate one." To say otherwise is a contradiction in terms. There cannot be many "ultimate ones", as this denies the very meaning of ultimate, of one being higher than all the others. Only one can be supreme or ultimate. The "Ultimate One" (God) is ultimate in every possible attribute, for example love, kindness, patience, wisdom, truth, power, and servanthood to name a few.

Therefore how can there be a multiplicity or panoply of 'gods'? Do they share around amongst themselves the godly attributes?? If so, they must be deficient in some way. But God cannot be deficient, meaning none of them would be the "ultimate one". No! Logic demands there can be only one "ultimate one" while all others must be the "lesser ones". It follows therefore that these deficient "gods" are not God at all. They are false gods, pretenders to the title of "supreme being" and are actually spirits. For the Christian, spirits are malevolent, while spiritual beings are angels whose role is to serve God.

Only the Judeo-Christian faith offers eternal life with God, as a free gift. This is known as grace; God rewards us with eternal life even though we do not deserve it. All other faiths or religions offer their ultimate goal to the adherents through the good works of their adherents. Striving is involved here - one's own personal efforts and sacrifices. For the Christian, the personal sacrifices required by other religions don't apply. God Himself has taken care of the Christian's shortcomings (sin). He made the necessary sacrifice on behalf of the believers in Christ. This is a substituting sacrifice.

The Bible requires faith in the free gift of salvation offered, not good works. The means, by which a believer in the Bible reaches the God of the Bible, can never be good works. No matter if an infinite number of good works were performed, the aspirant could never reach the God of the Bible.

Eastern religion deals with the issue of forgiveness in a very practical way. Followers of eastern religion believe that it is just and right that each person pays for their own sin. The way to a higher state of consciousness, and therefore 'god', is earned through meditation and acts of service. Those who do not take efforts to achieve this state, pay the price by re-entering the world as a less-valued being. This is the point of reincarnation. Paying the penalty for one's own sin seems logical. And so does the idea of acts of service to compensate for our wrongdoing. It is a natural human tendency to draw up a list of checks and balances, with good points on one side and bad points on the other, and how pleasing it is to be able to work at earning enough good points to outweigh the bad. But this is not Christianity. Christianity deals with the issue of forgiveness in a supernatural way.

God, in His supernatural wisdom, has made a plan that transcends human thinking patterns. C. S. Lewis said, that Christianity is something that mankind "could not have guessed," but that, once revealed, is recognizable as indisputable truth.³

The idea of the one true God, sending His Son to take on the sins of those who will accept His forgiveness, is inconceivable to the natural mind. Yet those who take the step of faith and accept God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ, discover a supernatural release from guilt, a weight removed and a new freedom. All this, without having to pay penance. The only requirement is humility.

The Bible tells us that the "points system" only leads to pride. And pride is the biggest hindrance to a relationship with the true God. God says that the only way to eternal life is through accepting the forgiveness offered by His Son, Jesus Christ. There is a reason for this. Accepting God's forgiveness and asking God to take control of our life through a personal relationship with Him, involves humility. No longer are we in control. God is in control. Humility is the very thing that God requires, because lack of it is pride, and pride is the stumbling block, the barrier between man and God.

Denying self, in the Christian context takes on a different meaning to denying self in the form of eastern religion. For the Christian faith, denying self is saying, "Yes God, you are in charge of my life. Not I, but You Lord. You are the person in charge of my life." For eastern religion, denying self means self-sacrifice, denial of materialism and worldly pleasures, acts of service, kindness and goodness for the sake of humanity, all for the purpose of becoming 'god'. Goodness and god are one. There is no personal God. God is just an impersonal force of goodness.

To understand the true God, we must understand the first book of the Bible, Genesis. Our world today is not the perfect world God originally created. God gave man free will, and unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose to use their free will to disobey God. From that time on, the creation has paid the price. We all sin, and we all pay the price of guilt. Only Christianity can free us from guilt, not through personal compensation, but through acknowledgement of the price that Jesus Christ has paid for us through His death on the cross.

Salvation by God's grace is a total work, dealing with the past, the present and the future. Christ's death made possible God's forgiveness of our sins. When we give our life to Christ, God cancels out our past sins, changes our present life as we have a relationship with the true God, and gives us hope for the future. This hope is eternal life; Jesus promises us a home in heaven with Him after we die.

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you." (John 14:1-2)

Cancellation of sin does not mean that we no longer sin. However as a person maintains a relationship with Jesus Christ and endeavors to understand the Bible, God works His cleansing power in our lives. We cannot be perfect, but perfection is not a condition for salvation. Only God is perfect and only a perfect God can save us from our sins. As the Holy Spirit teaches us the true meaning of the Bible, can we receive strength to resist temptation, and our desire to be obedient to Jesus Christ, grow.

1. Parkhurst Jr., L. G., Francis Schaeffer - the man and his message, U.S.A., 1985, p.147
2. Ibid, p.159
3. Noebel, D. A., Understanding the Times, U.S.A., 1996, p. 18