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**“IF only the gospel of Jesus Christ and obedience to his commands can save from sin, what will be the end of those who know not God as we do, i.e., worshippers of Buddha, Hindus, etc. Have these, and others like them, any hope of pardon on the day of judgement? Furthermore what will God’s judgement be upon those of our culture, who are not members of the church of Christ?**

**THIS is a question of crucial importance when we realise that hundreds of millions of people throughout the world subscribe to many and varied religious groups. To rephrase the question, the questioner is asking, ‘Does not the sincere Buddhist or Hindu worship the same God as we do; or is Jesus Christ the only way to God?’”**

**This question is charged with emotion. I have stayed in far eastern countries and the obvious sincerity, devotion and, indeed, fanaticism shown by adherents to the religions mentioned make one feel, emotionally, that in some way these people cannot be deluded in what they believe,**

but whenever we feel confused in this way, the only thing to do is to resort to the Bible and appeal to its clarity, precision and truth, and this we shall now do.

#### Is Jesus Christ the only Way?

Christians believe he is because the Bible teaches it. Peter healed a lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple. When the high priest asked by what power he had wrought the miracle, Peter said that it was by the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified. He then went on, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Prior to this, Jesus himself had said, "I am the way the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".

Therefore, the christian in Faith cannot but affirm that Jesus Christ is Saviour, and if, as many people suggest, we are all worshipping the same God but in different ways, then so far as salvation is concerned God has made it very clear that the only means of access to Him is through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commands. Consequent upon this Jesus could say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). Yes, Jesus is the only way! Much as we may admire the fidelity and constancy that people in many religious groups may exhibit, we can only say that if they have not obeyed Christ Jesus in all things then they cannot be pleasing to the God of heaven.

#### Differences in World Religion

The fundamental concept of Buddhism is that each person must achieve 'enlightenment' himself; no one else can work it out for him. The Buddha never claimed deity, indeed, it is difficult to see how he could if his teaching was that the individual must work out his own salvation. According to Buddhist beliefs, the ultimate goal for the individual is nirvana, which is a state of extinction of desire. Buddha taught that all pain and suffering came from desire. An individual must try to overcome this desire by following the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment; when he has achieved this he will have achieved nirvana, which is total nothingness. There will be no desire because there will be no life or consciousness.

What then? No God, no Christ, no salvation, no eternal life in heaven, no anything. Whatever nirvana may be, and I am not scoffing here, it is not the way to the God of heaven.

The Hindus also have their nirvana but the concept is different than in Buddhism. The god of the Hindu is Brahman, and nirvana is ultimate reunion with him. He is the all-pervading force of the universe. Nirvana in the Hindu religion is achieved through a continuous cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. This applies not only to the human kingdom but also to the animal and the insect kingdoms. Immediately at death - whether animal, insect or human - there is a rebirth in another form either up or down the scale. If the life has been good, then there is a movement up the scale with less suffering and poverty; if the life has been bad then there is movement down the scale. If a human life has been particularly bad then the rebirth may be as an animal or an insect. As most people know, the cow is sacred to the Hindu, but what we have said regarding insects explains why the Hindu is loath to kill them also.

So what about Hinduism? Brahman instead of God, no Saviour, a process of reincarnation. If the God of heaven is not Brahman, which he undoubtedly is not, then the Hindu also needs to seek Christ before he can be saved.

When we look at the Muslim religion we find that 'Allah' - as the Muslim God is called in the Koran - is not displayed as the father of Jesus Christ. All knowledge comes through Mohammed, and it is significant that Mohammed, like Buddha, never claimed deity. A believer must follow the Five Pillars of Islam, i.e. repeating the creed, pilgrimage to Mecca, alms to the poor, praying five times daily, and keeping Feast of Ramadan. Heaven, to the Muslim, is a paradise of wine, women and song. He refrains from these in life so that he might achieve them in heaven.

I have examined in brief detail Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Islamic religion because these three major non-christian religions claim countless millions of adherents throughout the world.

The tragedy is that none of these religions will give salvation as we understand it. Their great faults are that Jesus Christ is not the Saviour, and that the way to their supposed heaven is by merit. With these ingredients (and others) they cannot be pleasing to the God of heaven.

### What of our Culture?

The sin of sectarianism in the so-called christian world cannot be overlooked. When Paul gathered the elders together at Milelus he warned them, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch" (Acts 20:30,31). You will notice that Paul said that disciples would be drawn away. He also warned that 'of your own selves shall men arise'. It must be acknowledged by all that in apostolic times there was only one church. That church was the church of Christ. (See Matt. 16:13-18). Soon, however, men began to speak perverse things. The apostles doctrine was replaced by the doctrines of men. The Papacy arose followed by a multiplicity of protestant sects. The plain directives concerning baptism were ignored and replaced by unscriptural forms. The clear and simple form of church government as laid down by the apostles was replaced by forms of ecclesiastical organisations. We have now reached the situation were many so-called church leaders are saying that many portions of God's word are myths and fables. Men, indeed, have drawn disciples away from the pure and unadulterated primitive gospel. I think we have to conclude that men who have perverted the true christian gospel in our culture are as guilty before God as those of other cultures.

The restoration of the primitive church and the teaching of the apostles must replace all human and unscriptural elements. Let the words of Peter echo and re-echo around the world. "Repent, and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). This is the only way to ensure our salvation!