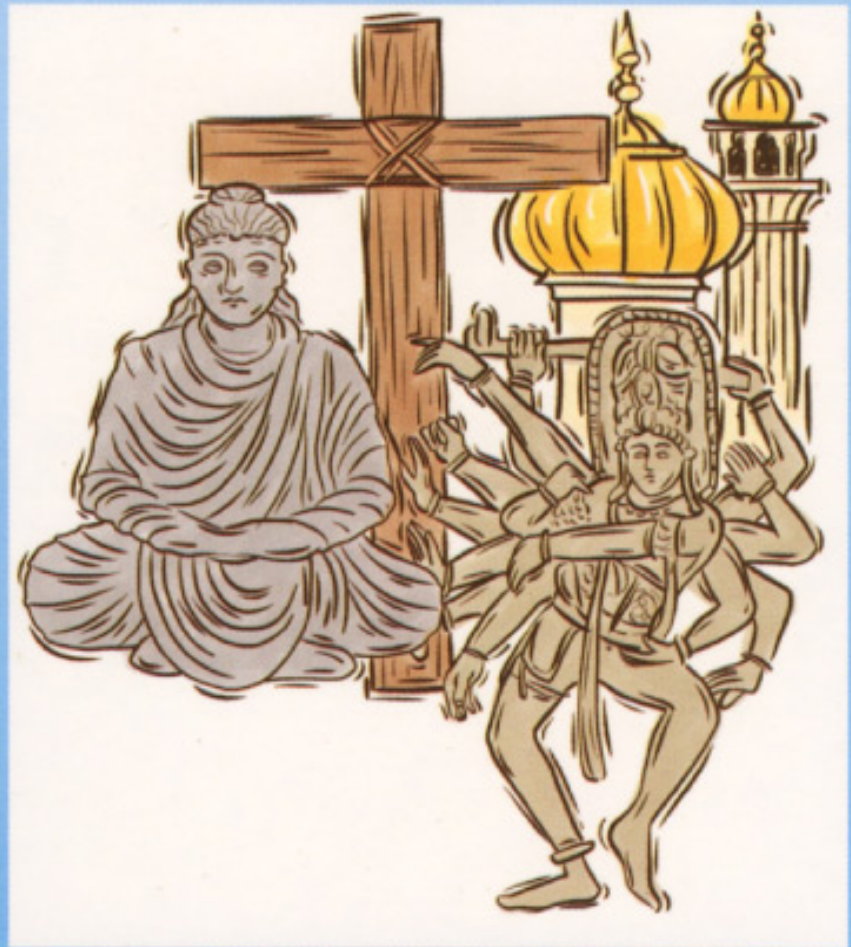


# Religions



**With So Many  
Religions  
Why Christianity?**

Dick Tripp

# With So Many Religions Why Christianity?

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	2
<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Beginning the Search</b>	4
<b>Six truths distinctive to Christianity</b>	5
The character of its founder, Jesus	5
Its analysis of our real problem	7
Its answer to our problems	8
The attraction of the cross	9
The way by which we receive forgiveness	10
A victory over evil and death that has already been won	11
The kind of commitment it asks of its members	12
<b>Conclusion</b>	14

## Foreword

There are several excellent features of this booklet. One of them is the way in which Dick lets people speak of their own finding of Jesus as the way to God and the answer to their searching. Another is the fair way in which key aspects of the religions are described. And, wisely, Dick avoids negative talk about other faiths: such talk usually does little except irritate people or provoke them into rehearsing the long list of supposedly Christian misdoings over the centuries. This is why it is wiser not to say that 'Christianity is unique' but rather (as Dick does) that 'the Christian way' or 'the message of Jesus' is unique.

People of other faiths will react to what this booklet says - and in turn

Christians might well find that visible love, heartfelt prayer and a willingness to apologise for what is widely seen as counter evidence (the Crusades, American TV evangelists, etc, etc), will prepare a smoother way for the Holy Spirit, rather than further argumentation or attempts to explain away the clear evidence that Christians are sinners too! If Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and others do read what follows, we Christians will need to display much of that rarest form of love - listening to the other.

May the reading of this booklet prepare the hearts of many 'for the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6).

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## Introduction

The story is told of a social worker in Nigeria who once visited a youth in one of the back streets of Lagos. On his bedside table he found the following books: the Book of Common Prayer (of the Anglican Church), the Muslim Koran, three copies of Watchtower (the magazine of the Jehovah's Witnesses), a biography of Karl Marx, a book of yoga exercises, and—maybe what he needed most—a popular paperback entitled *How to Stop Worrying!*

When faced with the multitude of religions in the world today, all claiming to believe the truth, it is no wonder that many people are confused. The number of followers of each of the four major religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) run into hundreds of millions. Only about sixteen percent of the world's population is classed as “non-religious”. So if we want to know the truth about God, where do we start?

There are various ways of approaching this problem. One way is to retreat into indifference. How can we possibly know anyway? Maybe they have all got it wrong! Let's wait until death to find out who was right— that is, if there is indeed anything on the other side. Another approach is to assume that all religions are equally valid. It doesn't really matter which we believe as long as we believe in something (or Someone). A cynical historian once said that, to the populace all religions were equally true; to the philosopher all were equally false; to the politician all were equally useful!

The problem with both these approaches is simply that they *are* assumptions. They are not based on any factual evidence and assumptions have a nasty habit of proving wrong. Maybe all religions do not all lead to God, or heaven, any more than all roads lead to Rome. After all some roads lead to London, or New York, or Timbuktu. Even a superficial study of the

world's religions will reveal that they not only teach very different things about God (or gods) but also about how you get on side with him (or her, or whatever)—or whether it is even necessary to get on side with him! Sincerity in our search is essential, but it is possible to be sincerely wrong.

The purpose of this booklet is to assist those who wish to take a third approach, which I suggest is a better one. That is, to start with another assumption, that if God does exist then he would want us to know the truth and has given us ways of finding it out. It is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity that God is longing to reveal himself to us and wants to enter into a loving relationship with us. He also gave us minds to be used. If you start with these assumptions and do some sincere inquiring and still don't find this God, than at least you are no worse off. However, I am hopeful that you will be pleasantly surprised.

### **Beginning the search**

A very good starting point in searching for the truth, if you can do so honestly, is to pray a prayer something like this:

*God, I don't know much about you, but if you are really there I would like to get to know you. I am sincerely prepared to do some honest thinking about you and I want you to guide me in my search for the truth. I am prepared to follow wherever that truth might lead.*

It is important to respect each person's right to formulate their own beliefs, even if those beliefs may be wrong. For that reason I do not wish to criticise any other religion. However, in order to make a choice we must be clear about the differences. Each religion has certain things that are distinctive to that particular religion. In this booklet I have chosen six areas which are distinctive to Christianity. As we go through I will point out some differences with other religions. You, the reader, must decide where you go from there. The six areas I will be looking at concern:

- the character of its founder, Jesus
- its analysis of our real problem
- its answer to our problems
- the way by which we receive forgiveness for our wrongdoing
- the victory it offers over death and evil
- the kind of commitment it asks of us as followers

### **Six truths distinctive to Christianity**

### The character of its founder, Jesus

Sadhu Sundar Singh came to Christianity from the Sikh religion. He travelled around India and overseas, preaching the gospel. The story is told how, at a youth conference, he was questioned by some young people who wanted to know why he had turned to Christianity. What was it that made him change? He said, "My reason for changing was Jesus Christ." They then asked what Christianity offered that his mother's religion did not offer. His simple answer was, "Jesus Christ". They tried another direction and asked what the central doctrine of Christianity was. Again he answered, "Jesus Christ".

What is unique about Jesus Christ? One of the best short summaries about Jesus in the New Testament is found in the first three verses of the letter to Hebrews: **"Long ago in many ways and at many times God's prophets spoke his message to our ancestors. But now at last God sent his Son to bring his message to us. God created the universe by his Son, and everything will someday belong to the Son. God's Son has all the brightness of God's own glory and is like him in every way. By his own mighty word he holds the universe together. After the Son had washed away our sins, he sat down at the right side of the glorious God in heaven."**

This passage tells us that God is distinct from his creation and yet has chosen to communicate with us, his created beings. Sanatan Dharma, orthodox Hinduism, believes that the ultimate reality is essentially unknowable and that all religions of the world are mere guesses at truth. This is a common view. The celebrated agnostic, Herbert Spencer, maintained that no one has ever been known to penetrate the veil which hides the mind of the Infinite. The Infinite could not be known by finite minds, therefore his agnosticism was secure (the word *agnostic* comes from a Greek word meaning "not to know"—the Latin equivalent is *ignoramus!*).

All this sounds perfectly reasonable. However, it ignores the question of whether *God* may choose to make himself known to *us*. This is exactly what Christianity claims he has done. Christianity is therefore a *revealed* religion. It is about God revealing himself to us in historical acts, through chosen people, and supremely in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the story of God's search for us, not our search for God. A Japanese, Susuma Uda says:

*Whenever sight is lost of the Biblical revelation, people's religious imagination will end up eventually blending either God and nature (Shinto) or God and self (Buddhism).*

The blending of God and self is also very apparent in New Age teaching.

This passage from Hebrews also tells us that God's most complete revelation of himself is through a historical person, Jesus Christ. He is often spoken of as the Son of God in the New Testament. This Jesus is not only the one through whom God created the universe and who now sustains it. He is also described as **“like him in every way”**. This is just one of a number of places in the New Testament which emphasise that Jesus shares the very nature of God, who exists as the three Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words, in the person of Jesus, God himself has visited this planet. As John puts it he, **“became a human being and lived here with us”** (John 1:14)<sup>1</sup>.

In entering into our experience Jesus became fully human. In the New Testament, the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us the story of his life on earth. A good starting point in our search for the truth is to read one of these gospels through and see the picture they give of Jesus. We see there a wide range of both his divine and human qualities. He grew up normally from a child to adulthood. He attended the wedding feast in Cana and mingled with the guests, rejoicing with those who rejoiced. At that same feast he turned the water to wine revealing his divine glory (John 2). As a tired and thirsty traveller he rested by the well in Samaria, but as the divine Saviour he told the Samaritan woman the secret sins of her life (John 4). He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, but then declared his authority as the Giver of Life by raising Lazarus from the dead. He suffered desertion, betrayal and an agonising death, but was proved to be the divine Lord by his resurrection from the dead.

This appearance of the Creator God in history as one who is both fully human and fully divine is unique to Christianity. Jesus is a very different figure to the Buddhist *bodhisattvas*, enlightened beings who have postponed their own ultimate escape from suffering after many reincarnations, and have chosen rebirth to serve humanity. The Dalai Lama believes that Jesus Christ is the highest *bodhisattva*. However, the Bible presents him as the creator of the universe and the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth is given.

Jesus is also very different to Hindu *avatars*. These are beings who are said to have appeared at various times in human history. The most important, in terms of devotion accorded to them, are Krishna and Rama. They are incarnations of the god Vishnu, one of the most prominent of the many named gods of Hinduism. The Christian claim, however, is that God has revealed his true character fully and finally in the person of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> If you wish to explore further the evidence that Jesus was indeed God, I have dealt with this in some detail in a separate booklet, *Is Jesus Really God?*

**“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). “We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true...He is the true God and eternal life” (I John 5:20).**

If this is true then it presents a problem in relation to other religions. This is highlighted in the ministry of a well known missionary in India, Dr. E. Stanley Jones. Jones often lectured to Hindu audiences having Hindus as chairmen of the meetings. On one such occasion the chairman was a chief minister of state. During his introduction he said, “I shall reserve my remarks for the close of the address, for no matter what the speaker says, I will find parallel things in our own sacred books.” At the close of the meeting he was at a loss for words. Dr. Jones had not presented “things”; he had presented a person, Jesus Christ; and that person was not found in their sacred books. As someone has put it, “Christ is the crisis of all religion.”

#### **Its analysis of our real problem.**

What is the greatest problem we face? The Buddhist would say that it is our suffering, and Buddhist teaching is primarily a response to this. The Bible does have a great deal to say about suffering. However, it tells us that we have a greater problem still, the problem of our wrongdoing. The common word for this in the Bible is “sin”. Indeed, it is sin which is one of the major causes of our suffering. For this reason Buddhism becomes a religion of enlightenment, whereas Christianity is a religion of salvation.

To come up with the right answers we must ask the right questions. The fundamental question which the Bible asks (and answers) is, “How do you reconcile sinful human beings with a holy and a righteous God?” Humans were created in the “image” and “likeness” of God. We were given God-like qualities of a spiritual nature which enable us to enjoy a loving relationship with him. In this respect we are radically different from the animal world. Hinduism, Buddhism and New Age teaching blur this distinction.

Love must always involve freedom to choose and we have abused that freedom. **“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to their own way” (Isaiah 53:6).** As a result of our rebellion and stubborn independence from God we have all become morally flawed. As Jesus put it, **“Out of your heart come evil thoughts, vulgar deeds, stealing, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, greed, meanness, deceit, indecency, envy, insults, pride, and foolishness. All of these come from your heart, and they are what make you unfit to worship God” (Mark 7:21-23).**

All religions and cultures have their ethical codes. There is a built-in consciousness in humanity of right and wrong which points to our origin as

beings created in the image of God. The problem is that none of us fully lives up to what we believe. C. S. Lewis, professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at the University of Cambridge, illustrating the point from Greek, Roman, Chinese, Babylonian, ancient Egyptian and Old Norse sources, demonstrated that there was a “massive and immemorial agreement about moral law.” The problem, he said, was that there was also a “massive and immemorial inability to obey it.”

The result is that we are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), separated from God (Isaiah 59:2) and are his enemies (Romans 5:10). In contrast, God is morally perfect, described in the Bible as being “holy”. He is so pure that no sin can dwell in his presence (Habakkuk 1:13). The moral gulf between us and God is such that we cannot bridge it simply by trying to be good (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5). Such a deep problem demands a more radical solution. Before we can consider a satisfactory cure to our basic problem we must have an accurate diagnosis.

#### **Its answer to our problems.**

Islam recognises the problem caused by our sins in our relationship to God, but comes up with a different solution that depends on our own moral efforts. However, the Bible declares that the problem is too great for that. It could only be solved by God's action, not ours. And God has resolved it in a most wonderful way. He came in the person of Jesus Christ to take upon himself the penalty for our sins through his death on the cross. In other words, Jesus came not merely to reveal God's character, and teach us his truth, but to *reconcile us to God*. **“Christ died once for our sins. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you to God”** (1 Peter 3:18). **“But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful”** (Romans 5:8). **“For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his risen life”** (Romans 5:10). Christianity is not the story of our search for God. It is the story of God's search for us and the depths to which he was prepared to go to bring us back to himself.

Because this was the main purpose of his coming, the New Testament letters give far more attention to the death and resurrection of Jesus than they do to the manner of his coming into the world or the wonderful life that he lived. It is God's love, demonstrated so powerfully in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, that makes forgiveness a possibility. It is here that the uniqueness of Christianity become most clear. Other religions either deny the need for forgiveness or give inadequate attention to how it may be achieved. This is one of the reasons that music and singing are prominent in



Christian worship. It flows out of the gratitude of hearts that know they are forgiven.

### **The attraction of the cross**

Dr. Michael Green, writer, evangelist and adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury, asks a pertinent question:

*Where else in the religions of the world do you hear of a God who undertakes salvation for his people by personally bearing responsibility for their wickedness, and allowing it to crush him?*

Themes of the suffering, wounded god do appear in some pagan literature, but in the cross of Jesus we have it in reality.

Jesus, in referring to his coming death, said, **“I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself”** (John 12:32). As this is such a significant point in Christianity I would like to give some examples of its effect on the lives of three people from differing religious backgrounds.

Dr. Kali Charan Chatterjee wrote:

*It has often been asked of me why I renounced Hinduism and became a disciple of Christ. My answer is that I was drawn almost unconsciously to Christ by his holy and blameless life...The excellence of his precepts as given in the Sermon on the Mount and his love for sinners won the admiration of my heart...But the doctrine which decided me to embrace the Christian religion and make a public profession of my faith was the doctrine of the vicarious death and sufferings of Christ. I felt myself a sinner and found in Christ one who had died for my sins —paid the penalty due my sins...this was the burden of the thought of my heart, Christ has died, and in doing so, paid the debt which we could never pay.*

Toyohiko Kagawa, a Japanese Christian leader and dedicated social worker who was imprisoned for his Christian principles during World War II, said:

*I am grateful for Shinto, for Buddhism, and for Confucianism. I owe much to these faiths...Yet these three faiths utterly failed to minister to my heart's deepest needs. I was a pilgrim journeying upon a long road that had no turning. I was weary. I was footsore. I wandered through a dark and dismal world where tragedies were thick...Buddhism teaches great compassion...but since the beginning of time, who has declared, 'this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for remission of sins?'*

Dr. David Rahbar, a Muslim scholar, wrote a letter to Muslim and Christian friends to explain why he had become a Christian. After some discussion about the justice and mercy of God and whether it is consistent

with a God of love merely to sit in heaven and be our judge, he says, with considerable insight:

*Only in love does justice transcend itself and become loving sacrifice: giving what is due and then giving more...In our search for the truly worshipable, we must therefore look in human history for a man who loved, who loved humbly like the poorest, who was perfectly innocent and sinless, who was tortured and humiliated in literally the worst manner, and who declared his continued transparent love for those who had inflicted the worst of injuries on him. If we do find such a man, He must be the Creator-God Himself. For if the Creator-God Himself is not that supremely suffering and Loving Man, then the Creator God is provenly inferior to that Man. And this cannot be...*

*Such a man did live on earth nearly two thousand years ago. His name was Jesus...When I read the New Testament and discovered how Jesus loved and forgave His killers from the Cross, I could not fail to recognise that the love He had for men is the only kind of love worthy of the Eternal God...*

*The Creator-God and Jesus are one and the same being. May all people know that truly divine love.*

A missionary friend has shared the following story with me. A Chinese teacher invited her to his home for lunch so that they could talk about life after death. "I believe there is life after death," he said. "If we have lived a good life we are rewarded by being reincarnated into a happy and prosperous situation. If we have done wrong we are punished by having to come back as a dog or some other low form of life." "But what," my friend asked, "if sins could be forgiven?" The teacher replied quietly, "If sins could be forgiven, that would make all the difference in the world!"

### **The way by which we receive forgiveness**

If forgiveness is possible through God's action in sending his Son to die for us, then how do we receive it? The first step is simply to admit our need of it. This is the point at which pride often becomes the biggest stumbling block to true conversion, even to some who take the name of "Christian". As the theologian Emil Brunner put it, in all other religions

*...people are spared the final humiliation of knowing that the Mediator [Jesus Christ] must bear the punishment instead of them...They are not stripped absolutely naked.*

Anglican scholar, John Stott adds:

*But the gospel does strip us naked (we have no clothing in which to appear before God), and declares us bankrupt (we have no currency with which to buy the favour of heaven).*

The New Testament speaks of the “grace” of God. This is a wonderful word that means his *undeserved* goodness and favour. It cannot be merited or earned. It can only be received by faith as a gift. **“You were saved by faith in God’s kindness. This is God’s gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn’t something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about.”** (Ephesians 2:8,9). Though there are glimmers of some understanding of grace in other religions it is only fully developed in Christianity. Elsewhere there is always the emphasis that it is only by human effort, in keeping the required standards of that particular religion, that one can be saved, or reborn, or achieve fulfilment.

A Buddhist story which starts off so like the parable of the Prodigal Son, spells out this contrast very clearly. The boy comes home and is met by the father, and then has to work off the penalty for his past misdeeds by years of servitude to his father. However, in the New Testament the father sees his son coming in the distance, runs to meet him, flings his arms around him and then throws a party. There is great rejoicing (see Luke 15).

The Buddhist and Hindu principle of *karma* (cause and effect, paying off our guilt through countless cycles of rebirth) or the Muslim belief that our good deeds are weighed up against our bad deeds, are poles apart from grace, the free forgiveness that Jesus offers through his death, which we don't deserve at all and can never earn. Bishop Stephen Neill summed it up in a wonderfully succinct quotation. “In Hinduism, the doctrine of karma says ‘You sin, you pay’. In the gospel, God says ‘You sin, I pay.’”

Though Jesus asks for high moral demands of his followers, and a commitment to him as Lord of their lives, neither good works nor commitment can contribute anything at all to our forgiveness and our reconciliation to God. We are reconciled to God by coming in simple trust to Jesus, confessing our unworthiness and humbly and gratefully accepting what he has done on our behalf. In gratitude we offer our lives to him in return. This is what the New Testament understands by faith. It provides the basis for a new relationship based on love and total acceptance. The motivation for loving and serving God and others then becomes the outflow of a grateful heart for what has already been received.

**A victory over evil and death which has already been won.**

After a Muslim in Africa was converted to Christ, his friends asked him why he became a Christian. He answered, “Well, it's like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go; and there at the fork were two men, one dead and one alive. Which one would you ask the way to go?” The fact that Christ was alive attracted him to Christianity. Of the four major world

religions that are based on a personality, rather than on a philosophical system, only Christianity claims that its founder came back to life after death.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is at the heart of Christianity and is referred to repeatedly in the New Testament. Paul declares, **“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins”** (1 Corinthians 15:17). Both the death and the resurrection of Christ are presented as a complete victory over evil. His sufferings on our behalf make our escape from the condemnation of sin possible. **“If you belong to Christ Jesus, you won’t be punished”** because God **“set you free when he sent his own Son to be like us sinners and to be a sacrifice for our sin”** (Romans 8:1,3). His resurrection is proof of his claims to be the divine Son of God. It is also proof of his victory over the powers of evil, which are the cause of death. He is **“declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead”** (Romans 1:4). It is also the guarantee of his final victory when he will return to judge the world. God **“has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead”** (Acts 17:31).

If we trust the risen Christ as our Saviour and yield our lives to him as Lord, then we become **“co-heirs with Christ”** of his kingdom (Romans 8:17). His resurrection will be the guarantee of ours. **“God did this so that in the future world he could show how truly good and kind he is to us because of what Christ Jesus has done”** (Ephesians 2:7). The future he longs for us to be part of is one of personal fulfilment, relationships with God and others, service and joy. This is in marked contrast to the Buddhist *Nirvana* which implies the loss of individuality. The word *nirvana* comes from a Sanskrit word *nirva* which literally means “to extinguish”, though Buddha himself never affirmed this.

If we reject the reconciliation which Jesus won, at tremendous cost to himself, then we are left to our own resources. We must endeavour to work out our own salvation by good deeds, either over innumerable lifetimes, as some religions declare, or in this one short life. Both of these, according to the Bible, are impossible. The Bible also warns us that, **“We die only once, and then we are judged”** (Hebrews 9:27)<sup>1</sup>.

### **The kind of commitment it asks of its members**

C. S. Lewis once said:

*The moment a man seriously accepts a deity, his interest in “religion” is at an end. He’s got something else to think about.*

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<sup>1</sup> If you wish to explore further the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and some of its implications, may I commend my booklet *Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead?*

The “something else” that Lewis is referring to is actually *encountering* this God, and all that this implies, rather than merely adopting certain religious practices. This is certainly true of Christianity when rightly understood. The ultimate question we face in dealing with the God that Christians proclaim is not whether we can believe the truths about him, or live by the standards he demands, or want to practise certain religious observances, but whether or not we *want to get involved with him – to really meet him*. Christianity *has* its doctrines and code of ethics, but basically being a Christian means living in a *relationship* with the risen Lord.

When we accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, then the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead,<sup>1</sup> literally comes to live in our human bodies. As Paul puts it, “**your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit**” (I Corinthians 6:19). One of the ways this is described in the New Testament is being “**born again**” or “**born of the Spirit**”. Without this we can neither enter nor see the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5). Sometimes this is spoken of as receiving Christ ((John 1:12), opening the door of our lives to Christ (Revelation 3:20), or as Christ coming to live in us (Colossians 1:27).

In this relationship he is the Lord or Senior Partner and he asks for unconditional surrender to his leadership. To grow in the relationship we must continue to exercise trust and obedience. Jesus said, “**If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross each day and follow me**” (Luke 9:23). In other words, because he died for us he asks us to die to our own selfish desires and ambitions and to give him the central place in our lives. In response to his love for us, shown supremely through his death on the cross, we offer our lives in humble gratitude to him.

Sadly, it is possible to adopt Christian beliefs, seek to live by Christian standards, take part in Christian religious observances, and still not be really Christian! The heart of Christianity is commitment to a Person and enjoying a living relationship with that Person. If we took Buddha out of Buddhism, or Mohammed out of Islam, or the founder of any other religion out of that religion, and could still receive their teaching from some other source, little would be changed. But if we took Christ out of Christianity there would be nothing left because Christianity begins by entering into a relationship with the living Christ and receiving the gift of eternal life from him.

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<sup>1</sup> I have sought to explain the Christian understanding of the Trinity, God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the booklet, *Understanding the Trinity: A Look At the God Revealed in Jesus Christ*.

## Conclusion

Michael Green, drawing on his considerable experience as an evangelist, and the resources of much recent writing on the relation between Christianity and other religions, says in *Evangelism Through the Local Church*:

*No faith would enjoy wide currency if it did not contain much that was true. Other faiths therefore constitute a preparation for the gospel, and Christ comes not so much to destroy as to fulfil. The convert will not feel that he has lost his background, but that he has discovered that to which, at its best, it pointed. That is certainly the attitude I have found among friends converted to Christ from Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. They are profoundly grateful for what they have learned in those cultures, but are thrilled beyond words to have discovered a God who has stooped to their condition in coming as the man of Nazareth, and who has rescued them from guilt and alienation by his cross and resurrection.*

In the book of Revelation, John has a glorious vision of the future in the kingdom of God. **“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’...For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”** (Revelation 7:9-17).

Throughout the Bible the lamb is the animal of sacrifice. Lambs were offered daily in the temple for the sins of the people. In Revelation, the book that looks forward to the final consummation of God's plans for his people, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb 27 times. It is because he loved us and sacrificed himself for us, that we will have the right to enjoy the blessings of his kingdom, in which he will share the worship that is given to God the Father. In this present world he longs to do many things: forgive our sins; enable us to grow into the sort of people he wants us to be; give us strength to face whatever life may bring; give us a purpose to live for; accompany us on the journey with the sense of his loving presence; to grant us experiences of joy and the assurance of glory to come.

If this is the kind of “religion” you are looking for, then I suggest you get alone with God and pray. If the following prayer echoes the thoughts of your heart then use it as a guide:

*God, I want to know you.*

*I acknowledge that I am a sinner. I have broken your moral laws and I do not deserve your love.*

*And yet I believe you do love me and sent your Son to die for my sins.*

*I ask you to forgive my sins and come into my life.*

*I accept Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. I accept your gift of eternal life.*

*I do not deserve it, but I thank you for it.*

*In gratitude I offer my life to you.*

*Help me to grow in my love for you and for others, and to serve you faithfully for the rest of my days.*

If you have made this commitment, or wish to know more about Jesus before you do so, then I suggest you get a copy of the New Testament (part of the Christian Bible) and read through the first four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John which tell the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. There are several good modern translations. The Good News translation is the simplest to read and was originally written for those who speak English as a second language. The New International Version and the New Revised Standard Version are very readable and are among the most accurate. Ask God to give you understanding as you read it. May God bless you in your search for truth.