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Dear Collegian,

CHRISTIANITY – WHAT IS IT?

Someone once called Jesus Christ “the man nobody knows.”

The same may be true about the faith which He founded. The name is generally known. The idea of Christianity and even Christian civilization has been heard by most that live in the west. The real nature of Christianity, **what it is**, is however, still obscure with many. Most have heard but do not understand. One who does not understand the Gospel, who is confused about Christianity, is in life’s greatest peril – the peril of losing his eternal soul.

So, the question “What is Christianity,” is among the most important that any man or woman will face in all of life. **Everything** depends upon a proper answer and understanding of this question.

It would, in considering this vital issue, be best to first answer the issue of what Christianity is **not**. Popular misconceptions have so fogged the landscape that we do well to clear the air by discussing the general impressions of people which are not, in fact, Christianity.

What It Is Not

Christianity is not a building. There are hundreds of thousands of church buildings across the world. They vary in style, size, architecture and the names over the doorway. The most visible image of Christianity, the one seen by the most, is in the form of church buildings, large and small, which are passed by the world as it goes its way. The world defines these buildings as “churches,” not suspecting that they are merely buildings and the true Church, essential Christianity, is something different from all of this. We all do well, therefore, never to be beguiled by the size or attractiveness of a building as inevitably thereby representing the reality of Christianity. Many buildings that used to be known as “churches” are now echoing chambers, mute mausoleums of a reality which once was and has now ceased to be.

Christianity is not an organization. There is no doubt that organizations that claim an affiliation with Christianity have proliferated in our time. There are hundreds of denominations, hundreds of thousands of individual churches and man related organizations which call themselves Christian. These come in the form of evangelistic associations, missionary societies, literature distribution agencies, radio broadcasts,

television networks – the list could go on for many pages. Christian organizations have mounted in their impact upon our society and have become one of the chief image-makers for Christianity in our time. It, therefore, is understandable that the world may think of Christianity as being “that denomination,” “that church,” “that message which I heard on television,” etc... Despite all this, we need to dispel these thoughts from our minds. Christianity is more like an organism than it is something which is humanly organized. It is certainly not an organization.

Christianity is not a government. Through the ages of history, many political parties have organized themselves and called themselves Christian, a’ la the Christian Democratic Party of Germany. There are many others. It is probable that these political parties were formed in sincerity, hopeful of representing a political point of view which would be consonant with the opinions of religious people across a given land. Nevertheless, despite very close involvement with government things in our time, Christianity is not, itself, a form of civil authority.

Christianity is not a civilization. We all use today the popular expression “Christian civilization” and well we should, in a sense. We do have an area of the earth, Western civilization, which is the embodiment in external fact of the moral principles of Christianity which is available in civil form in the world today. By contrast to eastern mysticism and paganism, the West has been formed as an outgrowth of the activity of the Church and the preaching of the Bible. So, Christian civilization is not a forbidden term. We must remember, however, that civilization and Christianity are two different things.

The most popular concept in our world today is that Christianity is a certain kind of religion by contrast to other “great religions” of the world. This, however, is not strictly speaking true. If we define religion as man’s attempt to find God, know Him and worship Him, then, by this standard, Christianity is not a religion. At least, it **must** be said that it differs dramatically from **all** the so-called great religions of the world.

But the opinion that Christianity is a religion persists. Many, in thinking about “the Christian religion” have derivative requirements which come to mind. A very popular impression is that Christianity is a religion that tells us to do better. Others hold Christianity to be a religion which warns us to join church in order to be saved. Others have the impression that Christianity is a religion with certain ordinances which are required on man’s part in order for him, eventually, to go to heaven. In the confusing religious milieu of our time, Christianity, in the minds of many, has become but a further source of confusion. That confusion needs to be dispelled. It is best dispelled by facing the truth in answer to the question, “What is Christianity?”

The Truth

Christianity is, first of all, **the truth of God** given to man. Different from the “religions” of the world, Christianity begins with divine revelation rather than human reason, human piety or human need. Christianity insists that God is and that He has revealed Himself to man. Apart from this divine revelation, we could never know God, no matter how hard we sought after Him. But the fact is that there is none, really, that seeks after God (Rom. 3:11).

Because Christianity represents divine truth in the world, the Church is not in this world to conduct a forum. Properly understood, Christianity is a very arrogant faith. It does not go around saying, “What do you think?” and “What is your opinion?” It speaks with the authority of an inspired Bible and punctuates its sermons with the declaration, “*Thus saith the Lord.*”

It is, therefore, popular for Christians occasionally to say that Christianity is “the religion of the Book.” If one would discover the basis of Christianity, he must not look at culture, at religious practice, or even, finally, at the lives of people who claim to be Christian. The Bible says, “*Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That you might be justified in Your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged.*” (Rom. 3:4).

It follows, therefore, that one becomes a Christian by believing the truth of God. His organizational affiliation has, in the last analysis, **nothing** to do with his essential Christianity. The Bible calls Christianity “the faith.” This means that it is a body of truth that must be believed in order that a person may be saved. What do Christians believe in order that a person may be saved? What do Christians believe that is the basis of their faith? Particular points of the Christian faith include the following:

1. God is.
2. God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. God has created the universe separate from Himself.
4. God has created man in His own image.
5. Man has sinned against God.
6. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to die for the sins of the world.
7. The way of salvation, therefore, is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died for sin on the cross. The Gospel, the imperative message of Christianity, is the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

The Life

Next, let us note that Christianity, beside being the truth of God, is the life of God in the lives of men. Christianity presents the marvelous truth that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Therefore, the Christian is not one who has merely moved through the emotion of a moment. He is one who has accepted eternal life in the Lord Jesus. Because of this, he has a new standing before God, that of sonship, that of perfection. The Christian, therefore, knows that Christianity is not something he attends or joins, but something he **is**. This life of God makes it possible for the believer in Jesus to see and be a part of eternal things. So it was that Jesus Christ expressed an absolute imperative when He said, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3).

This is why we insist that Christianity is not, in its essential form, a religion. Religion speaks of practicing and posturing in order to please God and be confident of salvation. Nothing is further from the mind of a Christian. The Christian knows that Jesus Christ has pleased the Father on his behalf and he is “*in Christ*” and therefore has the promise of eternal life. The believing Christian knows that form and ceremony have no saving significance.

Christianity is the **only** way of salvation. This is the sticking point as the world examines the faith of the Gospel. Many people are willing to “include” one or another faith as a part of their hope. Christianity makes no such allowance. It categorically demands that the person who would be in heaven someday must place his sole and exclusive faith in Jesus Christ, alone. The Bible clearly teaches, “*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). Jesus, when He said He was the way, the truth and the life, also said, “No man comes to the Father, but by Me.” (Jn. 14:6).

Despite the way Christianity is misrepresented by some of its naive exponents, Christianity is not a pluralistic faith. It does not teach a multiple number of ways of salvation, but only one. That one way is Christ and the finished work on the cross. Jesus Christ, alone, makes the only valid offer of salvation available to man in this world and in all of time. So, misconceptions of Christianity such as faith plus works, faith plus religious ordinances, doing good plus church membership as the way of salvation are not Christianity at all, they are subversive and confusing.

When we consider the nature of Christianity, many, we trust, will ask the question, “How can I be a Christian?” The way that question was asked in the Bible was when the Philippian jailer said, “*What must I do to be saved?*”

The answer given to him by the great Apostle Paul was essentially simple. Paul said to his questing soul, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved (Acts 16:31).* So, we have life’s most important question, “How can I be saved?” We also have life’s most pointed answer, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Thinking people, however, will continue to ask, “What does it mean to believe in Christ?” The answer is that to believe in Christ means to believe two essential points. It means to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and then to believe in the sense of accepting the fact that His death on Calvary’s cross was the atonement for salvation. Saving faith, therefore, is first of all faith in the deity of Christ.

Saving faith is, secondly, faith in the blood of Christ. The atonement for sin which was sufficient to take away the iniquity of us all is in the form of the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

What is Christianity? It is the doorway to life, the only bridge from earth to heaven. This very day you can become a Christian. You can be assured of heaven by faith in Jesus Christ.

This article was taken from the writings of Dave Breese and edited by the Christian Destiny Staff.

“WHY IS CHRISTIANITY TRUE?” *by Dave Breese*

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