

# IS CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY THE ONLY WAY?

Or

## Does God Work Through Other Persons And Religions?

Jno.14:1-6; Ac.4:10:12

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### I. INTRODUCTION

1. We are living at a time when religious tolerance and religious compromise is preached and expected in unexpected areas, and pressed more and more in both doctrinal and moral matters.
2. More and more people are saying “No!” in answer to our first question, and “Yes!” in answer to our second question.
3. We are living at a time when Jesus Christ and true Christianity is the most persecuted religion on earth!
4. By Christ and Christianity we mean that which is plainly revealed in the N.T., as Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, and the church belonging to him, of which he is the head and the Savior, and which we can read about in the N.T.
5. By other religions we mean Denominationalism, Judaism, Islamism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.
6. How do we deal with and/or answer those of such religions who claim the Holy Spirit or some other supernatural power, prophet or god is leading them to believe, accept, preach and practice such religions?
7. First let me cite the example of one very liberal Denominational preacher, a United Methodist minister, Rev. Singleton, of Little Rock, AR, the wife of Vic Snyder. To cite and answer her false concepts is in effect to answer in principle all the others.

### II. DISCUSSION

#### A. 1<sup>ST</sup> REV. SINGLETON'S VIEWS STATED

1. Her standard of authority is four-fold, or her tools she uses to answer difficult questions in response to the problems of the day. (All her quotes)
  - a. Scripture
    - (1) While it does not and cannot specifically answer questions about which its writers knew absolutely nothing thousands of years ago, scripture is the story of God's promises to us, not a rigid rule book

- b. **Christian tradition is another tool**
  - (1) It includes church teachings over the last 200 years: the accumulation of creeds, liturgies, prayers, hymns, as well as church history.
  - (2) For United Methodists, it also includes the Book of Discipline and The Book of Resolutions, our own laws and official positions that guide our Christian positions.
  - (3) We do not always agree with persons of other faith traditions (and I do not always), but we do believe that God's Spirit is working with human leaders to speak anew to the church today.
- c. **Experience is a third tool**
  - (1) Experience refers to how the Spirit of God is at work in our lives as a community of faith for one another and for the world.
  - (2) It is not merely about how you or I experience something, but how God's Spirit is at work through us...
- d. **Reason is another tool**
  - (1) Along with experience, John Wesley, our founder, believed that we must apply our ability to reason using the other tools, so that we can make a reasonable statement of our beliefs, and know why we believe what we believe.

- 2. Her views as she expressed them.
  - a. Many...in more conservative Denominations demanded you believe Jesus to be the only way, truth and the life.
  - b. Exclusivists agree that the only way to avoid hell is to know and believe in Jesus.
  - c. I find this view very limited and not in keeping with Jesus' own words and actions of inclusions in the gospels.
  - d. I can imagine Jesus disagreeing theologically with someone, as he often did, but I cannot imagine him rejecting anyone. There is no biblical story that says he does so.

- e. From my perspective, the pluralist position is much more appealing than the exclusivist and fits better the inclusive Spirit of Jesus.
- f. It seems to me that problems arise when we maintain a superior position about the revelation of God in Christ (that it is the defining revelation of God) and measure other religions by an assumption that our revelation is superior.
- g. So what do Jesus' words, "No one comes to the Father except through me" mean?
  - (1) Some think these words mean that no one can go to heaven or have an everlasting relationship with God unless they confess Jesus as Savior and Lord.
  - (2) Yet, **there are other possible interpretations.**
    - (a) First, since Jesus claims to be one with the Father, it is reasonable that no one may come before God and not also come before Jesus. They are one.
    - (b) Second, these words may also mean that God's work in Christ is actually for all people and that God may apply his grace to anyone God chooses, including the faithful **Hindu or Buddhist who does not know Christ and never will.**
    - (c) This last idea is similar to the one expressed by the writer of 1Jno.1:1,2.
    - (d) These thoughts are also similar to that famous line in John's Gospel, "For God so loved the world that he sent his only son..."
- h. I know from the story of scripture that Jesus' picture of God is about inclusive love and crossing boundaries, and that tells me that God is a God that accepts and embraces every person.
- i. Christianity began over two thousand years ago as a claim by heretical Jews that they had met the Messiah.
- j. Christianity is not the only way because clearly others tell us they know God by other religions!

## **B. SINGLETON'S VIEWS SUMMED UP**

1. As to her four-fold standard of authority in religion
  - a. The Scriptures are not a rigid rule book; they are not necessarily inspired of God; the writers didn't always know what they were talking about.
  - b. The Scriptures are not necessarily inerrant; nor all-sufficient.
  - c. The Scriptures plus the traditions, creeds and disciplines of men are our rules of faith and practice, as God by means of his Holy Spirit is working through men today to speak **anew** to the church today.
2. As to her expressed views
  - a. God's revelation in and through Jesus Christ is not superior to, nor the sole standard by which to measure other religions.
  - b. Belief in and confession of Jesus as the Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not necessary for one to enjoy God's saving grace and have everlasting life.
  - c. God's work in Christ is actually for all people, meaning that his saving grace is to be applied to anyone he chooses, including the faithful **Hindu or Buddhist who does not know Christ and never will.**
  - d. Christ and Christianity is not the only way to salvation and eternal life. For God works through other religions that do not believe in Jesus Christ as his Son.

### C. SINGLETON'S VIEWS ANSWERED

1. Her four-fold standard of authority in religion refuted.
  - a. The one divine standard of authority in religion is the written word of God, the Father, which was given to the Son, Jesus Christ, his one official spokesman in this age, Deut.18:18,19; Ac.3:19-24; Heb.1:1-3; Mt.3:16,17; 17:1-5.
  - b. Which word the Son received and gave to his Apostles by means of the Holy Spirit, Jno.12:48-50; 17:6-9; 14:25,26; 16:7,12-15.
  - c. Which word the Apostles received and revealed to all men through their preaching and in their written word in the N.T., Jno.17:14,20; Mt.28:16-20; Mk.16:14-20; Lk.24:36-53; Ac.1:1-8; Ac.2:1-4,14-38 (Cf. Jno.20:19-23); 1Jno.1:1-5; Gal.1:11,12; Eph.3:1-5.

- d. This is the one gospel of which there is no other; the one faith, which the Apostles of Christ preached, Gal.1:6-9,20-23; Eph.4:4-6; 1Cor.4:16,17; 1Cor.15:1-3; 2:1ff.
  - e. Thus all truth was revealed, with no authority given to anyone to add to it or substitute for it, 1Cor.4:6; Gal.1:6-9; 1Pet.4:11; Rev.22:18,19.
  - f. This word, the Scripture, inspired of God –God- breathed –by means of the Holy Spirit, made sure his inspired spokesmen know what they were talking about, 2Tim.3:16,17; 2Pet.1:20,21; Mt.10:16-20.
2. The N.T. refutes her expressed views about Christ and Christianity by plainly declaring:
- a. That salvation is in Jesus Christ, in his name, and in no other, 2Tim.2:10; Ac.4:10-12.
  - b. That all spiritual blessings are in the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph.1:3.
  - c. That Jesus Christ has but one church belonging to him, of which he is the head, the Savior, and to which he adds all the saved, Mt.16:13-18; Eph.1:22,23; Col.1:18,24; Eph.4:4-6; 5:23-27; Ac.2:47.
  - d. That in order to be saved one must believe in and confess his faith in Jesus Christ and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, Jno.3:16-18; 8:24; Mt.10:32,33; Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:21-41; 2Th.1:6-10; Heb.5:8,9.
  - e. That only those who do the will of God as taught by Jesus Christ will enter the kingdom of heaven, Deut.18:18,19; Ac.3:19-24; Heb.5:8,9; Mt.7:21-27.
  - f. That Christ and Christianity is the only way, Jno.14:1-6; 6:44-47; 8:24; 3:14-18,36.

### III. CONCLUSION

1. The N.T. leaves no doubt that the answer to our first question – Is Christ and Christianity The Only Way? – is “Yes!”
2. It also leaves no doubt that the answer to our second question – Does God Work Through Other Persons And Religions? – is “No!”
3. All such religions, including Denominationalism, are simply various human choices offered without divine authority, which the Apostle Peter in 2Pet.2:1, by inspiration, marks as “***damnable heresies***” and is the inspired answer to Rev. Singleton, et al.

4. “Heresies” of 2Pet.2:1 means “a choosing, a choice”
  - a. Vine,II,217: “denotes a choosing, choice; then, that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects...”
  - b. The word “heresy” and the word “sect” comes from the same Greek word. Example, Ac.24:5 (sect) and 24:14 (heresy).
  - c. Peter says there are false teachers among you who bring in “damnable heresies” telling you that you have a “choice”; that you are not limited to what “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” as mentioned in the previous section of 2Pet.1:20,21.
  - d. Thus he is saying, these false teachers are offering you a choice different from and contrary to a thus saith the Lord.
  - e. This, of course, is what Singleton, all the Denominations and other religions are doing and defending!
  - f. Peter further says:
    - (1) By doing so they are “denying the Lord that bought them,” V.1.
    - (2) They “bring upon themselves swift destruction,” V.1.
    - (3) As a result, “many shall follow their pernicious ways (lascivious doings),” “follow their sensuality,” or license in the physical sphere, in whatever appeals to the senses, make such things a part of their worship and practice, V.2.
    - (4) “By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of,” which, of course, is what happens by all such who accept and follow such heresies, V.2.
    - (5) “Through covetousness they with feigned words make merchandise of you,” they will exploit you; they market you, V.3.
    - (6) Judgment and damnation is in store for them, V.3.
5. In contrast, as we have seen, God offers only **ONE WAY, ONE CHOICE OF ONE SAVIOR, ONE CHURCH, ONE SAVING GOSPEL.**