

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

IS CHRIST THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

The second question, which is a corollary or slight variation of the first, is this: “Doesn’t the sincere Muslim or Buddhist or Hindu worship the same God as the Christian, but under a different name?” In other words, “Is Jesus Christ really the only way to God?”

Neither sincerity nor intensity of faith can create truth. Faith is no more valid than the object in which it is placed. Believing doesn’t make something true, per se, and refusing to believe a truth cannot make it false. The real issue is the question of truth. Let’s compare Islam and Christianity as an example.

In the moral and ethical realms we can find many similarities between them, but the two faiths are diametrically opposed on the most crucial question: Who is Jesus Christ? Islam denies that Jesus Christ is God the Son. It denies that He died on the cross and rose from the dead. Christianity, on the other hand, affirms and focuses upon the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for our sin and then rose from the dead. Both faiths cannot simultaneously be true at this particular point. One is correct; one is incorrect. If the crux of Christianity is false, our faith is worthless.

This question about other religions has some emotional aspects which we need to try to overcome when we discuss it. We want people to realize that Christians are not being bigoted and prejudiced or presumptuous when they say that Christ is the only way to God. As Christians we have no other option because Jesus Christ Himself has said this. Although one may choose to believe whatever he wishes, he has no right to redefine Christianity in his own terms. If we’re going to be faithful to Jesus Christ we must take our stand on what He said. Quite obviously, if He is God this is the only answer. Acknowledging this, no one should feel that if we were only less bigoted our “fraternity” could get together and change its membership rules. That suggestion misses the point altogether. We’re dealing with truth that has come to us by revelation, through the invasion into human history of God Himself in Jesus Christ.

An illustration has often helped to make this point clear. In some areas of life, the penalties for breaking laws are socially determined. For instance, there’s a stop sign on the corner. By vote the community can decide on a \$5, \$10, or \$50 fine for going through the sign. Or it can abolish the fine. The penalty is not determined by the act of going through the stop sign; the legal penalty is not inherent in the violation.

But in some other aspects of life, such as in the physical realm, we find laws that are not socially determined. Suppose our community passed a unanimous resolution to suspend the law of gravity an hour a day, from 8:00 to 9:00 A.M. Who would join me in jumping off the roof to try it out? Suppose we passed the resolution three times? I still wouldn’t get any takers. We do not determine socially the penalty for violating the law of gravity; the penalty is inherent in the violation. Even if we passed motions till the cows came home, the fact would remain that if you jumped off the roof someone would have to pick you up with a shovel!

In the moral realm, as in the physical, there are laws that are not socially determined. We discern these laws from what God has revealed about the inherent law

of the universe. Dorothy L. Sayers offers some further helpful thoughts on this subject in *The Mind of the Maker*.