

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND WHAT IS IT NOT !

THE CONFUSION

“Christian faith is something from the past!” That is the opinion of many people today. But... is that really true? This article shows why we cannot do without it.

The idea that the Christian faith belongs to the past is usually based on an incomplete and incorrect understanding of what the Christian faith actually is. After all the centuries since Christ walked the earth, the image of what it is has become so blurred that today, in almost every conversation about it, it is first necessary to clearly define what we are actually talking about. And also: what are we not talking about? Because being mistaken about this is not an option!

Enjoy reading!

WHAT IT IS NOT

CULTURE

The image people have of the Christian faith is, of course, almost entirely shaped by the culture they live in. Northern Europe tends to think of Protestant churches. Southern Europe thinks of the Catholic Church. When you bring up this topic, you can almost literally see church towers appearing in someone's mind. But the Christian faith is not the product of a culture; nor is it the same as a culture. It has influenced culture in some parts of the world, but the faith itself stands apart from it.

IT IS NOT “WESTERN”

As a result, the Christian faith is often seen as something Western. Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists shouldn't be bothered with it, people say—they have their own truths.

IT IS NOT “UNSCIENTIFIC”

The modern generation tends to view faith as something unscientific. Religion, values, and opinions are, according to many young people, not part of the scientific realm but of the emotional one—something that might provide a bit of meaning if you feel you need it. In their view, faith and science do not go together. Faith is “in the clouds,” while the educated, scientific person has the facts in hand.

That is why spirituality is popular. The idea that everything can be scientifically explained, that everything is matter, and that we can never truly know the meaning of the universe or of our lives has greatly impoverished Western people. As a result, they look for spiritual things that might bring some balance to their lives. The Christian faith, for many today, is just one of those spiritual options—personal, non-binding, and certainly not something that should still be proclaimed in our post-Christian society as the one truth.

That people think this way about the Christian faith is very understandable. Anyone born today enters a world in which Christian elements exist only on the margins—a kind of cultural heritage that may soon become too expensive to maintain. The modern person therefore feels “of this time” rather than a person of the past. Moreover, they are hardly given the opportunity to be properly informed about the faith of their ancestors.

But are these views correct? To answer that question, we will later in this article discuss what the Christian faith actually is.

IT IS NOT “RELIGIOUS”

Anyone who defines religion as belief in a deity or deities will, of course, be supported by the dictionary. It describes religion as an idea about the supernatural, shaped by a particular culture. As many cultures, so many religions. If we adopt that definition, then everything we consider Christian would naturally fall under it. However, we will see that reality is quite different.

Anyone who reads the Bible discovers that the Christian faith is not a spiritual, mystical, optional, and purely personal activity for people who happen to feel the need for it. Nor can it be reduced to a beautiful but no longer relevant piece of Western heritage. Those who read that Book discover that it presents a fundamental worldview—one that was not only meant for past, more credulous generations, but still forms the indispensable foundation of our entire reality today. A foundation on which every person, consciously or unconsciously, relies every day. Why this is so will be discussed below.

Whoever reads that Book also discovers that many cultural forms of Christianity have very little—often nothing at all—to do with what the Bible actually teaches. For example, we read nothing about Christian priests who stand between God and people, providing church members with what they need to earn heaven. We read nothing about dead “saints” to whom we should pray. Nothing about a purifying fire we must pass through after death in order to be cleansed and made fit for heaven.

We read nothing about baptizing babies in order to make them Christians. We read nothing about a non-committal faith or subjective feelings on which belief should be built.

Nowhere do we read that “as long as you live a good life, everything will turn out fine.”

TRUTH AND TRADITIONS

Two thousand years is a long time—long enough to invent and add an almost endless list of ideas to what the Bible teaches. Those who do not question much will soon fail to see the differences between truth of traditions.

Most of us have grown up and become lost in that vast forest, where the Bible and traditions have been so mixed together that we can no longer speak of the original Christian faith. Catholicism is the most well-known example of such a forest. Millions within that world may still know their inherited religious traditions, but show great unfamiliarity when it comes to the Book of the Christian faith—the Bible. Those who do read that Book discover that many things long considered “Christian” are, in fact, not Christian at all.

THE CONSEQUENCES

The confusion that has arisen over all these centuries is enormous. When it comes to the Christian faith, the majority of people “cannot tell their left hand from their right.”

Confusion leads to ignorance, lack of motivation, and indifference—and that is very understandable. Why would you still wonder whether something might be important or true if you live in a world that has told you from a young age that these are matters only relevant to your grandparents? And if you have had a university education (something your grandparents may never even have heard of), you were probably already told in your very first lecture that Christianity is only of any use to the faculty of history.

What that old Bible tells us, however, is very different from the idea modern people have—or want to have—about it. And those who seriously reflect on this will also discover that the biblical message alone provides us with a foundation on which we can build and understand reality.

WHAT IT IS

The Christian faith is the understanding that God exists and that He has spoken. He has done so in the Bible, which He had written down by fallible people, yet over which He Himself has maintained complete control—right up to this day.

The Christian faith is the belief that starts from the complete truth of the Bible, precisely because it speaks about and from the only possible source of truth and absolutes. All systems of thought that do not start from the fact that God exists as the sole source of truth and absolutes—and that He has made this known to us—whether they are atheistic views or non-biblical religious traditions, are subjective, changeable, and unprovable.

A simple example of this is the widespread idea that “if you live a good enough life, you have a chance at eternal life.” This idea is found in many religions—from Catholicism and Islam to numerous animistic belief systems. The Bible does not teach this idea at all, and Christians therefore reject it.

WHY IT IS TRUE

We have already seen that the Christian worldview can be summarized as: God exists, and He has spoken. And that alone forms the basis for being able to know and understand our reality—no matter where in the world we are born or live.

If God, as the only possible source of Truth and Absolutes, has not spoken, then we as human beings cannot know anything—not even whether we *can* know anything. If we take human beings as our starting point, then we have nothing absolute—only subjective, changeable, and incomplete opinions. That cannot provide a foundation for truth, logic, morality, knowledge, and science—things that everyone, whether religious or not, uses every day.

Those who think that we no longer need God or the Christian faith today, and that we now live independently of such things, are mistaken. Everything we do is based on His existence and the fact that He has spoken.

The Christian faith and worldview is the only worldview that can account for reality as we know it. All other worldviews and religions provide an insufficient foundation for that. Their gods are too small.

This is discussed in detail on my blog:

<https://thecreedofmodernman.blogspot.com/>

WHAT DO CHRISTIANS BELIEVE?

The Christian message has nothing to do with human ideas about God or with spirituality. In short, this is what the Bible tells us:

- God is God. He never began to exist but is eternal.
- God is the Creator of everything that exists.
- God made humanity—not the other way around.
- God has made it known to every person that He exists.
- God has revealed Himself as a Trinity in the Bible and has had everything recorded there that we as human beings need to know.
- Apart from Him, no other gods exist. God has nothing to do with human ideas about Him.
- God created humanity in His own image and gave people the responsibility to live for Him and with Him.
- Humanity refused this and chose its own way.
- Humanity replaced God with man-made religions, idols, and self-made philosophical systems. In modern society, human beings have placed themselves in the position of God.
- The consequences are catastrophic—too many to list here. We see them daily on the news and in our own lives.
- God is just and must therefore judge and ultimately punish everything He considers wrong. The Bible even says He has appointed a specific day for this. That date is on His calendar and known only to Him.
- In His love, however, God has provided one single way of escape from that coming righteous judgment.

- His Son Jesus came voluntarily into this world and paid for our personal guilt by dying on the cross.
- God wants people to come to understanding by admitting that they are guilty and can never make up for their personal guilt before God on their own.
- God wants people to place their full trust in the fact that Jesus has paid the penalty in their place.
- After three days, Jesus literally rose from the grave.
- Whoever acknowledges their guilt and relies solely on the fact that Jesus paid for it with His death is acquitted from the coming judgment.

A Christian, therefore, is not someone who tries to live as well as possible in order to eventually be accepted by God—that is religion. A person cannot save themselves through good works, religion, baptism, or anything else. They must be *saved*.

A Christian is someone who no longer fears the future, because they are saved from the coming judgment, since Jesus bore that judgment in their place.

From the moment of conscious conversion, a person becomes a child of God. From then on, they desire nothing more than to do good out of gratitude for their salvation, to the honor of their Creator and Savior.

- A Christian is someone who is completely forgiven.
A Christian is someone who may now call God their Father.
A Christian is someone who is completely certain that they will be with God in heaven.

The Bible tells us what the future will bring: Jesus will return, as He promised. He will come to take His children to be with Him forever. Those who have rejected Him will themselves be rejected.

Jesus said: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** — Gospel of John, chapter 14, verse 6

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If the Bible does not come from God, but is simply a piece of religious heritage—made up and written down long ago by some religious people—then truth does not exist. The visible reality we live in offers us no truth at all. Everything here is temporary; everything dies and disappears. There is nothing absolute here on which we can build our understanding of reality.

And yet, we do operate on the basis of absolutes and truth—and rightly so. But for that, we must always “borrow” from God, the only source of absolutes and truth—and the One whom every person knows exists.

Whoever comes to that realization can no longer treat it as something optional or merely philosophical. They must, as quickly as possible, abandon their impossible non-Christian worldview and acknowledge the God of the Bible. The Bible itself calls this “repentance.”

Because if someone tells you that your house stands on a foundation full of holes and cracks—and that there is a real chance the roof could collapse on you tonight—then you would be wise to move out immediately!

DO THIS TODAY:

Tell God that you admit you are a sinner and that you cannot save yourself when you stand before Him. Tell Him that you are sorry for everything He calls sin—whether it is lying, stealing, swearing, adulterous thoughts, hatred, or contempt.

Tell Him that you believe Jesus took your guilt upon Himself on the cross and paid for it with His life in your place.

If you do this, you are completely forgiven, you have become a child of God, and you have eternal life!

QUESTIONS?

I can imagine that this short blog may have raised quite a few questions. That was the intention. Feel free to ask them, and I will try to answer them as clearly as possible.

You can do so via my email: **presupper27@gmail.com** Alex van Nes, Genk, Belgium

WHO ARE WE?

We are people from different churches who accept the Bible as the only source of Truth. Therefore, we do not belong to Catholicism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, or any other group that accepts additional sources of truth alongside the Bible.

Most of us belong to evangelical churches in Flanders and the Netherlands.