Subject: THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS
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THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS

A new and unusual age of religious pluralism seems to be bursting upon the American scene. The cultural exchange facilitated by means of mass communication and transportation has brought with it a steady influx of strange religious ideas and practices, particularly from the East. Given impetus by the Hippie Movement (a revolt of American youth against traditional religious and social norms stemming from a disillusionment with the materialism of the age), this Eastern influence has made its presence felt in the rapid growth of interest in yoga, transcendental meditation, psychic experiences, and occultism of all forms. The West's increasing fascination with Eastern thought and practice is reminiscent of Isaiah's description of decadent, eighth century B.C. Judah: "Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished [Heb. 'They are full from the East'] from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers" (Isaiah 2:6). This explosion of eastern religious ideas upon American soil has won the acceptance of many within the scientific community, sparked a "human potential movementâ€• bent on realizing personal godhood (remember the serpent's age-old lie: '...ye shall be as gods' [Gen. 3:5 â€œFor God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.â€•]?), foisted a pantheistic world view upon minds that were largely, though imperfectly, conditioned by a Judeo-Christian one, and-most alarmingly-reshaped the thinking of some in Christendom to embrace a less-than-Biblical view of Jesus Christ.

The existence of religious pluralism has presented a new challenge to believers in America and has rendered necessary a bold reaffirmation of the UNIQUENESS OF JESUS. Is our Lord to be regarded merely as a highly proficient guru in a long line of Eastern adepts or is He, as the Scriptures declare Him to be, God in the flesh? Is faith in Jesus Christ the only way of salvation, or is Christianity merely one way among many religious paths that share a common essence and which ultimately lead to the same destination? In what sense is the Biblical teaching concerning the resurrection of Christ and the believer unique and superior to the oriental concept of reincarnation and eventual absorption into the "Universal Soul"? These questions, and others, must be satisfactorily answered if we, as conscientious believers, are to "keep the FAITH" (2 Timothy. 4:7 â€œI have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faithâ€•) and effectively repel the influence of the pagan religions of the Orient.

Almighty God-Not Just Another Guru

From Islam to Hinduism and from Buddhism to Baha'ism, the religions of the East are united in their contention that Jesus Christ is not uniquely Divine. Dr. Hobart E. Freeman, distinguished

author and Bible scholar, has written concerning Baha'ism's attitude toward Jesus: "He was not unique, according to Baha'ism. He was a prophet, but only one of many whom God has sent into the world at certain times to witness to their generation. Christ was the prophet of the Christians, as Moses was the prophet of the Jews. Others were such religious leaders as Mohammed, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius." (Hobart E. Freeman, Every Wind of Doctrine, (Warsaw, IN: Faith Ministries and Publications, 1974), p. 74.) Such a deluded evaluation of Jesus is characteristic of devotees of the drug culture, Hinduism, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity (falsely so called), Mind Science, yogis, etc., and is increasingly conditioning the mindset of Western civilization. No longer a bastion of conservative Christianity, the West is increasingly looking Eastward for spiritual direction and is, in the process, losing its appreciation for the unique and absolute Deity of Jesus Christ.

Despite, however, this alarming trend, the Bible is unflinching in its declaration that Jesus Christ is, in fact, God (e.g., John. 1:1 â€œIn the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.â€•). To deny this Biblical testimony to the absolute Divinity of Jesus Christ is to strike at the very foundation of Christianity, which is squarely built upon the understanding that God has assumed humanity for the purpose of suffering and dying as the sacrificial Lamb of God (1 Timothy 3:16 â€œAnd without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.â€•; Hebrews 2:9, â€œBut we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.â€• 14 â€œForasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;â€•; John. 1:29 â€œThe next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away {beareth} the sin of the world.â€•; 1 Corinthians 5:7 â€œPurge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed {is slain} for us:â€•). In fact, it is the Divinity of Jesus that gives His sacrificial death its saving power; for the blood of a mere man, being sinful can not save from sin! (Romans 3:23 â€œFor all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;â€•), By virtue of the virgin birth, God side-stepped the universal stain of original sin and assumed a real, though sinless, humanity. (Isaiah 7:14 â€œTherefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuelâ€•; Matthew 1: 22&23 â€œNow all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.â€•) It was in virtue of His unique person (simultaneously both Divine and human), that He could offer Himself as a sinless sacrifice dying on the Cross in our stead (1 Peter 2:24 â€œWho his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.â€•). This is why the apostle Paul could refer to Christ's shed blood as the very blood of God: "...feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28 â€œTake heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath

made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.â€•). A denial of the Deity of the Lord Jesus is therefore a repudiation of the saving power of His sacrifice, without which men everywhere are doomed to the torments of eternal punishment (Mark. 16:16b â€œbut he that believeth not shall be damned.â€•; John 3:36 â€œHe that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.â€•). If one refuses to believe that Jesus is the great "I Am" (Exodus 3:14 â€œAnd God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.â€•) of the Old Testament then he will certainly die in his sins (John 8:24 â€œI said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.â€•). It is therefore no small matter when men begin to think of Jesus as somehow less than Divine, as do the Cults, Liberals, and all Eastern religions. In attempting to rob Jesus of His unique Divinity men tamper with the truth of God's Word, and expose their souls to grave peril.

THE WITNESS OF THE WORD OF GOD

If we are to rescue the Biblical concept of Christ's unique Divinity from the pluralistic religious influences that are presently molding the mind set of contemporary society, we must recover what the Scriptures plainly teach concerning this important subject. The following should serve to illustrate the wealth of undeniable Biblical evidence pointing to the absolute deity of Jesus Christ:

JESUS: UNIQUELY AND ABSOLUTELY DIVINE

EXPRESSLY DECLARED TO BE GOD:

John 1:1 â€œIn the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.â€•
John 20:28 â€œAnd Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.â€•
Romans 9:5 â€œWhose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.â€•
Philippians 2:6 â€œWho, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
Titus 2:13 â€œLooking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;â€•
1 John 5:20 â€œAnd we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.
Isaiah 9:6 â€œFor unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.â€•
1 Timothy 3:16 â€œAnd without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.â€•

Hebrews 1:8 â€œBut unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.â€•

CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF THE UNIVERSE:

John 1:3 â€œAll things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.â€•
10 â€œHe was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.â€•
Colossians 1:16-17 â€œ16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. â€•
Hebrews 1:2-3, 10 â€œ2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:â€•

THE OBJECT OR WORSHIP:

Hebrews 1:6 â€œAnd again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten {unique} into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.â€•
Matthew 14:33 â€œThen they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.â€•
28:9 â€œAnd as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.â€•
John 20:28 â€œAnd Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.â€•

EXERCISING THE DIVINE PREROGATIVE OF FORGIVENESS:

Mark 2:5-7 â€œ5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.
6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,
7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?â€•

Colossians 3:13 â€œForbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel {complaint} against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.â€•

JESUS: THE ONLY WAY, OR ONE WAY AMONG MANY?

"...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."(John 14:6).

â€œFor there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;â€• (1 Timothy 2:5).

Due to the current drive to develop dialogue between major world religions in the interest of world peace, the message of the above-mentioned passages, which have been historically interpreted as asserting explicit faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation, is being increasingly questioned. Here again, the pressure to formulate a "pluralistic theology," so as not to offend or alienate worshipers of other religions, has been keenly felt by both Catholic and Protestant alike.

It seems as though modern man, with his obsessive aversion to religious intolerance and his frequent dislike of those who claim to know the truth (contra John 8:32 â€œAnd ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.â€•; 1 Timothy 2:4 â€œWho will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.â€•; 1 John 4:6 â€œWe are of God:[he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.â€•), is intent on re-interpreting Christianity in an effort to embrace adherents of native religion the world over. In so doing, he downplays the importance of Jesus' uniqueness and seeks for some common denominator around which world religions can rally. Despite this search for a "common essence" among world religions, Biblical Christianity remains essentially and unchangeably at odds with every religious alternative in that it unequivocally states that its message is God's final saving Word to mankind (John 1:17 â€œFor the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.â€•; Hebrews 1:1 â€œGod, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,â€•). Apart from a knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9 â€œThat if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.â€•), all men are doomed to an eternity of conscious torment (Mark. 16:15-16 â€œ15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.â€•) here we see that salvation is conditioned upon faith in the gospel and not upon dutiful observance of native religion; (cf. also John 3:36 â€œHe that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.â€•; John 8:24 â€œI said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.â€•; John 14:6 â€œJesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.â€•; Romans 1:16 â€œFor I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.â€•; 2 John 9 â€œWhosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.â€•).

In addition, it is well to remember that Christianity did not begin within the social context of a religious vacuum. The apostles of our Lord Jesus encountered a largely unsympathetic world teeming with varying religious sentiments, as is attested by the Ephesian mob's hysterical cry "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" and by the various objects of worship that dotted the landscape of religious Athens (Acts 19:28 â€•And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.â€•; 17:22-23,29 â€œ 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions {gods that ye worship}, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.â€•). Theirs was -as ours is- an age of religious diversity. And yet in the very midst of this pluralistic environment these servants of God were bold to declare that God wanted Gentiles to "turn from these vanities unto the living God" (Acts 14:15 â€œAnd saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:â€•)

Can one honestly imagine the Apostle Paul, who traversed sea and land to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation in Christ, seeking some common bond between the gospel and the gross idolatrous religion that was the order of his day? Even to ask such a question is to expose the absurdity and sheer nonsense of seeking to develop dialogue with the pagan religions of the world! To those searching for sure salvation our response must ever be, as was Paul's: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31)

There is, moreover, another consideration that points to an irreconcilable conflict between Christianity and other "faiths." In citing the very commissioning words of the resurrected Jesus, Paul reveals the motivating purpose of his apostolic mission to the Gentiles as being: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me " (Acts 26: 18). Plainly, the apostle, as did his Master, considered the Gentile world to be groping in a satanically induced darkness and in dire need of the forgiveness, spiritual inheritance, and sanctification that is only to be found in Jesus! Why else would Paul brave the perils of a heathen world to bring them a message that was so often offensive to their religious sensibilities? (2 Corinthians 11:26 â€œIn journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;â€•; 1 Corinthians 1:23 â€œBut we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;â€•) If steadfast devotion to their native religions was sufficient for salvation, why even bother to evangelize?

Obviously, an intelligent faith in Jesus as God and Savior is essential to salvation. Moreover, such

faith is produced by hearing the gospel faithfully proclaimed by men sent from God. The inspired words of Paul, himself a champion of the UNIQUENESS OF JESUS, should forever settle the question of whether non Christian religions can be a way of salvation and serve to underscore the urgent need of telling a lost and dying world about Jesus: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord [Jesus] shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how: shall they believe in him of whom they have not: heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? (Rom. 10:13-15a). No man comes to the Father except through Jesus (John. 14:6 â€œJesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.â€•). Buddha, Mohammed, Hinduism, or any other religious alternative will simply not suffice--ye must be saved by calling on the name of the uniquely divine Son of God.

Resurrection, Not Reincarnation

Reincarnation is (transmigration-rebirth as an animal, plant or insect is a broader term. See Hobart Freeman, Every Wind of Doctrine (Warsaw, IN: Faith Ministries and Publications, 1974). p.229.), the erroneous belief that all men are involved in a series of rebirths into successive lives in which they fulfill the Law of Karma until they are (either through spiritual enlightenment or religious self effort) absorbed into a nebulous "World Soul," is a characteristic feature of Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, and of certain cults (e.g., Theosophy, New Thought, and Unity School of Religion)

Such a concept, however, is fraught with unscriptural presuppositions. For one, the law of karma, upon which the alleged cycle of rebirth is based, is none other than an oriental version of "works-salvation " (see in refutation: Romans 3:20 â€œTherefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sinâ€•; Galatians 2:16 â€œKnowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.â€•; Ephesians 2:8-10 â€œ8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained {prepared} that we should walk in them.â€• Titus 3:5 â€œNot by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.â€•). Secondly, successive rebirth implies many earthly opportunities to attain salvation and is therefore in direct opposition to such passages as Luke 16:19-31 â€œ19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and

said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.â€•; 2 Corinthians 6:2 â€œ(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)â€•; and, most obviously, Hebrews 9:27, which reads: "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" [emphasis mine]. Also, the dignity of human individuality is denied, since man is viewed as but an extension of an all embracing, impersonal force (a pantheistic concept of God) and could just as easily be reborn as an acorn, earthworm, or caterpillar!

In stark contrast, the Bible asserts the bodily resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28:6 â€œHe is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.â€•; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 â€œ15 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory {hold fast} what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.â€•) and the eventual resurrection (or change for those who are still alive when Jesus returns) of every born-again believer (1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 52 â€œ20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. :52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.â€•; Philippians 3:21 â€œWho shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.â€•). The bankruptcy of Eastern thought is nowhere more apparent than at this crucial point. In place of the conscious and eternal existence of the soul in a glorified body like unto Christ's, it has substituted a dreary, unconscious absorption into an intangible something. Sadly, its adherents remain without substantial hope and without God in the world; the tombs of its

venerated founders are unable to ever remotely suggest the expectation embodied in the angel's morning message, "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said" (Matthew 27:6).

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