

Principles of Christianity

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Christianity is built on the old conservative convictions that represent the righteous way of life. On several occasions when Christians voice these convictions, secular people and sometimes adherents of other religions perceive the believers as being judgmental and intolerant of alternative beliefs and lifestyles¹. People are currently living in a postmodern culture. Postmodernism has encouraged skepticism among the people, and as a result, tested conventions, ethics and morals are increasingly becoming rejected in favor of modern ideals. Fluid and fluctuating perspectives that do not recognize the existence of absolutes characterize the postmodern ideals². Postmodernism tends to perceive much as subjective rather than objective. Postmodern views everything as relative, and that which is true for one person may not be for the other.

¹The statement that Christianity is intolerant and judgmental is true to some extent depending on the one's perspective. Christians are under instructions to judge and form opinions to help tell the difference between right and wrong². Accomplished Christians should serve as the perfect examples of tolerance; however, it does not mean that one should stand for nothing. According to Philippians 2:15, a Christian should be able to stand for something for one that stands for nothing could easily fall for nothing, in addition, a Christian is meant to serve as an example of the teachings of Christ to the world⁵. Similarly, premarital sex according to the Christian doctrines is sinful². From this point of view, Christianity seems to subject the followers to a form of moral rigidity while enslaving them to moral systems that are outdated. As a result,

¹ Burns, John. *The Principles of Christian Philosophy.*, 3rd ed. Longman, 1832.

2. Elizabeth, Stuart, and Thatcher Adrian. *Christian Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender.* Gracewing. 1996.

3. Macquarrie, John. *Principles of Christian Theology.* SCM press, 2003.

followers have their happiness and progress diminished, hence terming Christians as puritanical moralists and priggish by nature.

²The Bible presents contrary perspectives with regards to the opinion that Christianity tends to suppress basic human desires as well as the freedom to live fulfilled lives. While writing his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul stated, “*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*”⁵ Similarly, the gospel of John records Jesus saying that he came so that the people may live life to the full⁵. In relation to the sentiments expressed of Jesus, Christians all over the world continue to rejoice and celebrate the joy and derived from their faith. Contrary to the secular belief, the Bible communicates a message of liberation and freedom, which consequently leads to the experience of uproarious and irresistible joy³. Therefore, there is a need to explain the perceived gap between the perception of Christianity as suppressive to human desires and freedom and the idea of Christian freedom and liberation. With respect to the perceived gap, it is important to note that Christianity does not impose moral codes on its believers⁴. Since the beginning of Christianity, self-identified believers look enslaved while joylessly identifying with moral codes to which they do not have a full understanding². Besides, they exercise their faith in moralistic and legalistic ways, and find joy in the destruction of the happiness of other individuals². However, whether the Christians who are self-identified exhibit such attitudes should not be the salient question, but whether the belief system rationally calls for or implies such attitudes. An examination of the issue points to

4. Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature. International

Symposium. *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the dead sea scrolls*. Brill, 1998.

the fact that Christianity does not impose the moral codes on the believers¹. The moral thought of Christianity as a system of belief demonstrates a desire for beauty, freedom, and happiness.

³The negative opinions and prejudices against the moral claims of Christianity are in part due to the general tendency of human beings to resent restrictions and rules, whether political, religious, cultural or otherwise⁴. People tend to perceive restrictions as being destructive of freedom and unfair. On the contrary, constraints and confinement are not destructive to liberty, but a means to liberation³. That is freedom cannot be defined as the total absence of restrictions, rather it is the establishment of the right rules. The correct rules are those that can foster liberation as well as conform to the reality of the world and that of the human nature. Efficient rules are beneficial to the individuals that they govern and have the ability to produce greater scopes of the human abilities, power and a deeper fulfillment and joy⁴. Even though the thought of liberating restrictions appears paradoxical, rules are necessary for guiding human action and determining the right ways of living.

Christianity has strict rules against sex. Rather than prohibiting Christians from practicing sex, sexual restrictions are meant to preserve human dignity as well as the body that is perceived as the temple of God. According to the Christian doctrines, sex was created by God to be practiced among the married people². However, the Bible strictly prohibits premarital sex and sex outside marriage. This is because the Christian doctrine considers sex as a powerful and mysterious thing that should be subject to particular limitations, such as marriage³. According to the bible the body of a human being is important to God. Thus, it should be cared for and used for serving him. According to the doctrine, “*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual*

5. The Bible. *The Bible. English Standard Version*. Good News Publishers, 2016.

immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness.”⁵ The verse is seconded by St. Paul when he stated that sexual sin is trespass against one’s own body, therefore, Christians should stay away from sexual sin since it affects the body more than any other sin.⁵ Similarly, the Bible expresses a strong stand against extramarital sex. Believers are required to honor marriages and maintain faithfulness to each other for those who commit adultery will face the wrath of God.

Even though it comes across as judgmental and intolerant, Christian believers are instructed to serve as examples to the world. Serving as examples imply that they have to defend their beliefs and the biblical principles upon which their faith is based. In addition, Christians must stand up for their faith whenever necessary, but in a manner that is loving¹. However, the people from outside the religion often misunderstand the doctrine that guides the Christian faith and tend to oppose or react aggressively or angrily towards Christianity. According to the Bible Christians need to be discerning at all times. It is important to always choose that which is right and identify the good among themselves⁵. In this regard, the Bible requires adherents of Christianity to, “*Judge with right judgment.*”⁵ Right judgment in Christianity is important since it allows the believers to recognize the righteous practices and ways of life. It is important to note that judgment in Christianity does not happen for purposes of forming opinions about others, but to help Christians differentiate right from wrong so as to be able to lead righteous and fulfilling lives⁴. Right judgment helps Christians stay away from sin so that they can inherit the kingdom of God. The bible states that Heaven is reserved for those who are spiritually strong enough to resist or be intolerant all forms of evil.

In short, an understanding of the religion indicates that Christianity does not suppress human desires and freedom. This is because the restrictions are put in place for purposed of improving the quality of human lives. On the other hand, Christianity can be either judgmental or

not depending on one's perspective and level of understanding of the principles of the religion. However, right judgment is necessary for ensuring righteous living.



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