

as your personal savior? Does it mean that Jesus can save you so long as he deems you worthy? And do good works count toward salvation or not?

Hitler quoted Jesus and referred to himself as a Christian, but some Christians say that he was “really” an atheist, despite what he said. How do they know? They say that Hitler didn’t behave like a Christian, so he wasn’t a “real” Christian, no matter what he said.

What about someone who wears a crucifix, goes to church, prays to God, believes in Jesus, and is the member of a gang or mafia family? Is this a real Christian? Is this a Christian, but not a “good” Christian? What about someone who never goes to church, never prays, has never read the Bible, but was raised Christian and believes Christianity to be true? Where is the line drawn?

If, after 2,000 years, Christians can’t even decide who the Christians are, perhaps you can see why some atheists question the whole enterprise.

To download additional tracts or purchase a copy of Ask Yourself to Be Moral, please visit blog.iamanatheist.com



WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



©2009 D. Cancilla. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License

that they are distinct. Some believe that there were no prophets after Jesus’ time, while others believe in holy books newer than the Bible or have leaders who say that they can speak directly for God or perform miracles in his name. The Mormon church differs from the Protestant church so much that Protestants are sometimes surprised to learn that Mormons consider themselves Christian. Some people believe that the Catholic church — by worshipping saints, following the Pope, and allowing salvation through good works — has shown itself to be something other than Christian. Some people go so far as to say that Catholics are doing Satan’s work. Christians say that they follow the teachings of Jesus, but they don’t agree what this means. Does it mean self denial and service to others? Putting God first? Doing what Jesus would do? Doing what Jesus would want you to do? There is no consensus. Christians generally agree that salvation can be had only through Jesus. But does this mean accepting Jesus

Y OU MIGHT HEAR people say things like “Most Americans are Christians” or “That group is anti-Christian,” but do we really know what the word “Christian” means? In general, a Christian is a theist who identifies themselves as a Christian and follows the teachings of Jesus. The problem is that, beyond this, even Christians can’t agree who is and is not a Christian. Take Thomas Jefferson, for example. Jefferson believed in God and tried to follow the philosophy of Jesus, and Christians occasionally use him as an example of a Christian founder of the United States. But Jefferson was a deist who didn’t believe in a personal deity, and he specifically rejected those portions of the Gospels in which Jesus worked miracles. If he is a Christian, then he’s a Christian only in the broadest sense of the word. There are many different branches or sects of Christianity, and they differ so much that some are not considered Christian by others. For example, some churches believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are different aspects of one being, while others believe

YOU MIGHT HEAR people say things like “Most Americans are Christians” or “That group is anti-Christian,” but do we really know what the word “Christian” means?

In general, a Christian is a theist who identifies themselves as a Christian and follows the teachings of Jesus. The problem is that, beyond this, even Christians can't agree who is and is not a Christian.

Take Thomas Jefferson, for example. Jefferson believed in God and tried to follow the philosophy of Jesus, and Christians occasionally use him as an example of a Christian founder of the United States. But Jefferson was a deist who didn't believe in a personal deity, and he specifically rejected those portions of the Gospels in which Jesus worked miracles. If he is a Christian, then he's a Christian only in the broadest sense of the word.

There are many different branches or sects of Christianity, and they differ so much that some are not considered Christian by others. For example, some churches believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are different aspects of one being, while others believe

that they are distinct. Some believe that there were no prophets after Jesus' time, while others believe in holy books newer than the Bible or have leaders who say that they can speak directly for God or perform miracles in his name.

The Mormon church differs from the Protestant church so much that Protestants are sometimes surprised to learn that Mormons consider themselves Christian.

Some people believe that the Catholic church — by worshipping saints, following the Pope, and allowing salvation through good works — has shown itself to be something other than Christian. Some people go so far as to say that Catholics are doing Satan's work.

Christians say that they follow the teachings of Jesus, but they don't agree what this means. Does it mean self denial and service to others? Putting God first? Doing what Jesus would do? Doing what Jesus would want you to do? There is no consensus.

Christians generally agree that salvation can be had only through Jesus. But does this mean accepting Jesus

as your personal savior? Does it mean that Jesus can save you so long as he deems you worthy? And do good works count toward salvation or not?

Hitler quoted Jesus and referred to himself as a Christian, but some Christians say that he was “really” an atheist, despite what he said. How do they know? They say that Hitler didn't behave like a Christian, so he wasn't a “real” Christian, no matter what he said.

What about someone who wears a crucifix, goes to church, prays to God, believes in Jesus, and is the member of a gang or mafia family? Is this a real Christian? Is this a Christian, but not a “good” Christian? What about someone who never goes to church, never prays, has never read the Bible, but was raised Christian and believes Christianity to be true? Where is the line drawn?

If, after 2,000 years, Christians can't even decide who the Christians are, perhaps you can see why some atheists question the whole enterprise.

To download additional tracts or purchase a copy of Ask Yourself to Be Moral, please visit blog.iamanatheist.com

©2009 D. Cancilla. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com

QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM:

INSTRUCTIONS

We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on blog.iamanatheist.org. Thanks!
