

**TCA:ICT?**

**Thinking Critically About:**

**"Is Christianity True?"**

# Thinking Critically About: “Is Christianity True?”

**Podcast #4:**

**Is there just ONE Christian worldview or many?**

# Introduction to Your Host

## My Name:

Bradley Bowen

## My Role:

Your host and guide for this series of podcasts on  
**Thinking Critically About: “Is Christianity True?”**

## My Educational Background:

- BA in Philosophy from Sonoma State University (in Northern California).
- MA in Philosophy from the University of Windsor (in Windsor, Ontario, just across the border from Detroit, Michigan).
- Completed all requirements for a PhD in Philosophy from UC Santa Barbara (on the central coast of California) except for completion of my doctoral dissertation.
- Main interests in philosophy: critical thinking, philosophy of religion, and ethics.

# The Main Question at Issue

## **QUESTION 1: Is Christianity true?**

This is the main *question at issue* that I will investigate in this series of podcasts.

## **QUESTION 2: How can we answer Question 1?**

In this series of podcasts, I will try to answer Question 1 by *thinking critically* about Question 1.

## **QUESTION 3: What is *critical thinking*?**

“critical thinking” is (roughly speaking) thinking that is careful, judicious, objective, and fair.

## **QUESTION 4: Why should anyone care whether Christianity is true?**

In Podcast #1, I gave ten reasons why we should care about whether Christianity is true or false. In Podcast #2 I replied to ten objections against my view that we should invest some time into thinking critically about Question 1.

## **QUESTION 5: What is Christianity?**

Before we can rationally evaluate Christianity, we need to clarify what we mean by the word “Christianity” in this context. In Podcast #3, I examined five key claims about Christianity in order to clarify what the word “Christianity” means in this context.

## **QUESTION 6: Is there just ONE Christian worldview or many?**

Although there are many versions of Christianity, I will argue in this podcast that there is just ONE Christian worldview.

# Claim 5: “There are MANY Christianities.”

There are clearly *many versions* of Christianity. The major categories are: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant denominations. There are significant differences in religious beliefs and religious practices between Catholics and Protestants and Eastern Orthodox Christians. There are many denominations of Protestant Christianity, and those Protestant denominations also disagree with each other about various religious beliefs and practices. So, it is true that there are *many versions* of Christianity available today.

HOWEVER, there is also *widespread agreement* on a number of *basic Christian beliefs* between Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and several major Protestant denominations:

**Orthodox Christianity has similarities and differences with the two other large branches of the Christian faith, which are Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The three share beliefs on certain core doctrines such as the sinfulness of man, the Trinity, and the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

(<http://www.religionfacts.com/eastern-orthodoxy>)

# Christians in the USA

“In 2007, there were 227 million adults in the United States, and a little more than 78% of them – or roughly 178 million – identified as **Christians**. Between 2007 and 2014, the overall size of the U.S. adult population grew by about 18 million people, to nearly 245 million. But the share of adults who identify as Christians fell to just under 71%, or approximately **173 million** Americans, a net decline of about 5 million.”

*(America's Changing Religious Landscape, p.7)*

# Christian Subgroups

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## Christians Decline as Share of U.S. Population; Other Faiths and the Unaffiliated Are Growing

	2007	2014	Change*
	%	%	%
Christian	78.4	70.6	-7.8
Protestant	51.3	46.5	-4.8
<i>Evangelical</i>	26.3	25.4	-0.9
<i>Mainline</i>	18.1	14.7	-3.4
<i>Historically black</i>	6.9	6.5	–
Catholic	23.9	20.8	-3.1
Orthodox Christian	0.6	0.5	–
Mormon	1.7	1.6	–
Jehovah's Witness	0.7	0.8	–
Other Christian	0.3	0.4	–

# Critical Thinking Defined

Here is an excellent definition of "critical thinking" from two leading experts on critical thinking:

**Critical thinking is that mode of thinking--about any subject, content, or problem--in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.**

*(The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools, p.1, by Dr. Richard Paul and Dr. Linda Elder)*



# Critical Thinking In These Podcasts

- I plan to make full use of the concepts and tools of critical thinking in my investigation of Question 1.
- When I do make use of a concept or tool of critical thinking, I will point that out and will often provide some *explanation and guidance* about that concept or tool.
- As a result, anyone who listens to these podcasts will be able to *become a critical thinker* or to strengthen their critical thinking skills, habits, and knowledge.

# The Elements of Thought

There are eight elements of thought that critical thinkers use to analyze their thinking and the thinking of others. The elements of thought are basic and applicable to all of our thinking. Here are the elements of thought:

- ***Question at Issue***
- ***Purpose of the thinking***
- ***Points of View of the thinking***
- ***Assumptions in the thinking***
- ***Implications & Consequences of the thinking***
- ***Information used in the thinking***
- ***Concepts used in the thinking***
- ***Interpretations & Inferences in the thinking***

*(The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools, p.2)*

# Universal Intellectual Standards

There are many intellectual standards that critical thinkers use to evaluate their thinking and the thinking of others. Some intellectual standards are basic and applicable to nearly all of our thinking. Here are some basic and widely applicable intellectual standards:

- **Clarity**
- **Accuracy**
- **Precision**
- **Relevance**
- **Depth**
- **Breadth**
- **Logic**
- **Significance**
- **Fairness**

*(The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools, p.9)*

# The Intellectual Standard of CLARITY

## Clarity:

Could you elaborate further on that point? Could you express that point in another way? Could you give me an illustration? Could you give me an example?

Clarity is a gateway standard. If a statement is unclear, we cannot determine whether it is accurate or relevant. In fact, we cannot tell anything about it because we don't yet know what it is saying. For example, the question "What can be done about the education system in America?" is unclear. In order to adequately address the question, we would need to have a clearer understanding of what the person asking the question is considering the "problem" to be. A clearer question might be "What can educators do to ensure that students learn the skills and abilities which help them function successfully on the job and in their daily decision-making?"

*(The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools, p.7)*

# Claim 4: “A Religion is basically a worldview.”

The “Doctrinal and Philosophical” dimension of a religion is only one of the six dimensions mentioned by Ninian Smart, but in my view it is *the most basic* dimension of a religion. It is this dimension of a religion that makes a religion something that could be true (or false).

The heart of this dimension is *a worldview*, a philosophy of life. Thus, the most basic and most important aspect of a religion is the *worldview* associated with that religion. If the worldview is false, then the religion is false. If the worldview is true, then the religion (basically) is true. So, when a Christian apologist claims that “Christianity is true.”, what this means is that “The Christian worldview is true.”

Christianity is something that could be true or that could be false, because the *most basic and important aspect* of Christianity is *the Christian worldview*, which is something that could be true or that could be false. Christianity is NOT a relationship. Christianity is *a religion*, and a religion is basically *a worldview*.

# A Worldview is a Philosophy of Life and a Problem-Solving Scheme

A worldview is a *philosophy of life*, and thus includes the three main aspects of philosophy:

- *Ethics*: How should we live? What constitutes a good life or a well-lived life?
- *Metaphysics*: What sorts of things and beings exist? What is the basic structure of reality?
- *Epistemology*: What can we know? How do we know what we know?

A worldview is also a very general *problem-solving scheme*; it provides answers to basic problem-solving questions:

- What are the most basic and important *goals* of human life?
- What are the most basic and important *problems* preventing humans from achieving those goals?
- How can humans best *resolve or mitigate* those problems and *achieve* those goals?

NOTE: Unlike Ninian Smart, I use the term “worldview” to refer to ONLY the philosophical/doctrinal dimension of a religion (or of secular analogues to religions).

# The Buddhist Worldview

Like Christianity, there are three main branches of Buddhism. There are some significant differences in religious beliefs and practices between these different versions of Buddhism.

However, there are some basic beliefs shared by all three branches of Buddhism. The shared beliefs are clearly and logically summarized in *The Four Noble Truths*. I consider them to constitute *the Buddhist worldview*. Because of the clarity and logic of these core Buddhist beliefs, they can be used as a MODEL for the analysis of other religions, especially to get at the core beliefs of a religion or *the worldview* associated with a religion.

I will briefly present *The Four Noble Truths* here, and then outline the logical structure of them. The logical structure will be used later to outline *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity, or what I consider to be *the worldview* associated with the Christian religion.

# The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism

**“Buddhism’s core teachings, delivered by the Buddha in his first sermon... . The first truth (the Existence of Suffering) states that human life is characterized by *dukkha*, which is usually translated as suffering but also means unsatisfactoriness. The second truth (the Origin of Suffering) says that suffering is caused by clinging, which is caused in turn by ignorance, particularly by ignorance of the impermanence of things. The third truth (the Cessation of Suffering) says that the chain of cause and effect that produces suffering can be reversed, resulting in liberation from suffering or nirvana. The fourth truth (the Path to the Cessation of Suffering) outlines the way to nirvana via the Eightfold Path of Buddhist practice.”** (*Religious Literacy*, by Stephen Prothero, p.151)



# The Logical Structure of *The Four Noble Truths*

1. *Symptoms of Disease*: What are the *most basic problems* of human life?
2. *Diagnosis of the Disease*: What is the *root cause* of those problems?
3. *Cure for the Disease*: What is the *solution* to those problems?
4. *Prescribed Treatment for the Disease*: How should we *implement or utilize* the solution?

# Summary of Christianity #1

Stephen Prothero, a comparative religion scholar at Boston University, summarizes Christianity this way:

**Christians see sin as the core human problem and describes liberation from sin as salvation. The key to salvation, which brings with it eternal life in heaven, lies in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. The Jesus story is recorded in the New Testament, which along with the Old Testament constitutes the Christian Bible and is interpreted through church documents such as the Nicene Creed of the fourth century. ...over the centuries Christians have debated precisely who he [Jesus] was (and is). The dominant view, expressed in the Nicene Creed, has been that Jesus is “very God of very God”—one of the three persons (with the Father and the Holy Spirit) of the Trinity—and that his death on the cross somehow makes salvation possible. ...** (*Religious Literacy*, by Stephen Prothero, p.168)

# Summary of Christianity #2

[Christianity] is also a religion with a story. Christians refer to this story as the gospel.

...

...the narrative arc typically runs from sin to salvation. Ever since Adam and Eve...humans have committed sins. ...sin refers more generally to the human propensity towards wrongdoing and evil. According to the Bible, everybody sins...and sins have consequences, including conflict with other people and separation from God. Sinners cannot be admitted to heaven or granted eternal life, and there is nothing they can do on their own to merit salvation from sin. But happily... rescue was made possible as Jesus was dying on the cross. On that day...a sinless Jesus took our sins upon Himself. Three days later...He demonstrated God's power over sin by rising from the dead. The "good news," therefore, is that anyone who hears this story, confesses her sins, and turns to Jesus for forgiveness can be saved. Or, as the Bible puts it, "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

*(God Is Not One, by Stephen Prothero, p.71-72)*

# ***The Four Basic Beliefs of Christianity***

## **1. What are the most basic problems of human life? (Symptoms of Disease)**

Alienation or separation from God, conflict and disharmony between people, suffering, physical death, and in the next life: divine eternal punishment.

## **2. What is the root cause of the most basic problems of human life? (Diagnosis of Disease)**

Sin (wrongdoing and disobedience to God and the human propensity towards wrongdoing) causes separation from God, conflict and disharmony between people, suffering, physical death, and ultimately results in eternal divine punishment.

## **3. What is the solution to the most basic problems of human life? (Cure for the Disease)**

Out of love and mercy for human beings, God sent his son Jesus to die on the cross and to rise from the dead in order provide salvation from sin, to atone for our sins, to reconcile us with God, and to provide eternal life to human beings.

## **4. How should we implement the solution to the most basic problems of human life? (Prescribed Treatment for the Disease)**

If one repents of one's sins, and believes in Jesus as the divine savior of humankind who died for our sins and rose from the dead, then one's sins will be forgiven by God, and the process of salvation from sin will begin, ultimately completing when Jesus raises the dead and gives eternal life in heaven to those who believed in him.

# Argument for just ONE Christian Worldview

**1. *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity constitute a Christian worldview.**

**THUS:**

**2. IF *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity are accepted by the Catholic Church, by Eastern Orthodox Churches, and by many major Protestant denominations, THEN there is just ONE Christian worldview.**

**3. *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity are accepted by the Catholic Church, by Eastern Orthodox Churches, and by many major Protestant denominations.**

**THEREFORE:**

**4. There is just ONE Christian worldview.**

# Two Initial Tests

1. Many Christians have recognized that John 3:16 provides a very brief summary of the gospel, of the core beliefs of Christianity. So, if *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity represent *the Christian worldview*, then they should line up well with the content of John 3:16.
2. The *Nicene Creed* is a widely accepted summary of the Christian faith that is accepted by the Catholic church, by Eastern Orthodox churches, and by a number of major Protestant denominations. So, if *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity represent *the Christian worldview*, then they should line up well with the content of the *Nicene Creed*.

# John 3:16 (in context)

**<sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.**

**<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.**

**<sup>17</sup> “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.**

# Analysis of John 3:16

**“For God so loved the world...”**

The phrase “the world” in this passage clearly means *human beings*.

**“that he gave his only Son,”**

In what way did God *give* Jesus? In part this means that Jesus was *sent by God* (see verse 17) to become a human being (*the doctrine of Incarnation*), but this also refers to Jesus’ death on the cross for the sins of human beings (*the doctrine of Atonement*), as indicated in verses 14 and 15: “so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (i.e. on the cross) “that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

**“so that everyone who believes in him”**

This indicates that *faith in Jesus* is a requirement for obtaining salvation.

**“may not perish but may have eternal life.”**

This indicates some of the primary problems faced by humans: *physical death* and divine *eternal punishment* for sin in the next life.



# The Problem of SIN in John 3:16

This passage does not explicitly talk about SIN as the disease or root cause of basic human problems.

- However, there is a fairly clear reference to the idea of SIN in verse 17: “**God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world**”. There is an implied expectation here of *condemnation from God*, because of the sinfulness of human beings.
- Also, the implied reference to SIN is clear because previously in Chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, Jesus was described as “**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29).

Therefore, although John 3:16 does not explicitly state that SIN is the root cause of basic human problems, it assumes and implies this to be the case.

# The John 3:16 Test

John 3:16 is widely accepted as a very brief *summary of the gospel*, a statement of the core beliefs of the Christian religion. Read in context, this verse corresponds well with *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity:

- **It specifically refers to death and divine condemnation as basic human problems.**
- **It implies and assumes that SIN is the root cause of these basic human problems.**
- **It indicates that Jesus' life and especially his death on the cross made eternal life and salvation from sin possible.**
- **Finally, it indicates that faith in Jesus is a basic requirement for obtaining salvation and eternal life.**

Therefore, *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity passes the first initial test; it lines up well with John 3:16.

# The Nicene Creed

Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Oriental Orthodox Christianity, Anglicanism, and many major Protestant denominations accept the *Nicene Creed*.

<http://www.religionfacts.com/charts/denominations-beliefs>

Because of the widespread acceptance of the *Nicene Creed*, we might well be able to identify a *single Christian worldview* in spite of the fact that there are *many versions* of Christianity.

If the *Nicene Creed* expresses or implies religious beliefs sufficient to characterize a *Christian worldview*, then it would be reasonable to consider that worldview to be THE Christian worldview, a worldview shared by Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Oriental Orthodox Christianity, Anglicanism, and by many major Protestant denominations.

# Test #2: The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed does not clearly and directly answer the general problem-solving questions that structure a worldview. So, in order to show that there is just ONE Christian worldview, I will analyze the Nicene Creed in order to show that it does assume or imply answers to the basic problem-solving questions that constitute the logical structure of a worldview.

If the Nicene Creed does assume or imply particular answers to the basic problem-solving questions, then, because this creed is widely accepted by all of the main branches of Christianity, we can reasonably conclude that there is just ONE Christian worldview, even though Christians disagree about many significant religious issues. This will show that although there are *many versions* of Christianity with significant differences, there is just ONE *Christian worldview*, which is widely accepted by various Christian churches and denominations.

# The Nicene Creed and The First Basic Belief of Christianity

*Physical death* is implied to be an important human problem in the last section of the Nicene Creed:

**We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.**

Though death appears to be the end of life, Christians believe that we have the opportunity to return from death in the future and to have a happy and eternal life. The Nicene Creed does not specifically mention *hell* or *eternal punishment*, but these concerns are implied by the explicit reference to divine judgement:

**He [Jesus, the Son of God] will come again to judge the living and the dead...**

Will Jesus be judging a *beauty contest*? Will he be judging who are the *most intelligent* or *best informed* persons? Christian believers who are familiar with the Gospels know that divine judgment is concerned with the *goodness* or *badness* of a person's actions and intentions. In Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus describes the day of judgement, and concludes with these words: "And these [people] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46). Concern about divine judgment thus suggests concern about avoiding *divine eternal punishment*. This concern about divine judgment also relates to the problem of *alienation* or *separation from God*.

# The Nicene Creed and The First Basic Belief of Christianity

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

The word “catholic” here means *universal*. The word “Church” does not refer to a building, but to the community of Christian believers. We know from history that Christians are not always unified, and do not always get along with each other, but this line in the Nicene Creed represents a Christian ideal: a group of people who are unified and harmonious because of their love and obedience to God, and their love for one another. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34&35)

There is also an indication in the Nicene Creed of the problems of violence, injustice, and oppression in human interaction:

**For our sake he [Jesus, the Son of God] was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried.**

Since Jesus is viewed as divine, one could see this as representing conflict between man and God; Pilate and the Roman soldiers are human beings who torture and kill God incarnate. But Jesus is also viewed as *fully human*, as a Jewish peasant, as an innocent man who is tortured and killed on the command of a powerful and wealthy Roman ruler, for no good reason. The crucifixion of Jesus is thus, in part, a potent reminder of the conflict and disharmony *between human beings*.

# The Nicene Creed and The Second Basic Belief of Christianity

Although the focus of the Nicene Creed is on affirming the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, it does make an explicit reference to sin:

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

This requires some clarification. What are “sins”? Who needs “forgiveness of sins”? Who is doing the forgiving? In the Christian scriptures, sin is wrongdoing or disobedience to God. God expects and demands that human beings be good and obey his commands. When a person is bad or disobeys God, then God is unhappy with that person. According to Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (Romans 3:23). Jesus said “No one is good but God alone.” (Mark 10:18). So, human beings are in need of God’s forgiveness.

As we saw previously, the Nicene Creed refers to a future day of divine judgment:

**He [Jesus, the Son of God] will come again to judge the living and the dead...**

If God does NOT forgive a person’s sin, then things will turn out very badly for that person, because they will then receive *eternal punishment* from God. This is a very great danger, and thus human beings are *in need of rescue*, or what Christians call “salvation”. The Nicene Creed thus again alludes to SIN as a root cause of human problems, when it speaks of *salvation*, which brings us to *The Third Basic Belief of Christianity*.

# The Nicene Creed and The Third Basic Belief of Christianity

The reference of the Nicene Creed to *salvation* not only alludes to SIN as the root cause of basic human problems, but also points towards the solution to this problem--the life and death of Jesus:

**For us men [i.e. humans] and for our salvation he [Jesus] came down from heaven...and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again...**

Although the Nicene Creed does not describe or explain these key Christian doctrines, it does point to them: (1) the Incarnation (God the Son became a human being), and (2) the Atonement. The Creed assumes here that Christian believers have some familiarity with the New Testament scriptures. Note that Jesus was crucified “For our sake”, which given the previous lines of the Creed, presumably means “for our salvation”.

Christians understand that this means salvation from sin and death and eternal punishment. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, John the Baptist refers to Jesus as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). The night before he was crucified, Jesus points to his death as (somehow) making possible the forgiveness of sins: “This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28). Paul, the Christian missionary who wrote most of the New Testament, wrote that “Christ died for our sins...” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Paul also wrote that Christian believers “are now justified by his [God’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.” (Romans 3:24&25). The New Testament clearly teaches that the suffering and death of Jesus was essential to God’s plan to rescue human beings from sin and the problems caused by sin, and the Nicene Creed is clearly pointing to this doctrine of atonement.



# The Nicene Creed and The Fourth Basic Belief of Christianity

Although Christians believe that salvation is a free gift from God, made possible by the suffering and death of Jesus, the Son of God, they also believe that human beings are NOT automatically saved, but must willingly accept the gift of salvation, and that this involves repentance for sins, and faith in Jesus as the divine savior of mankind who died on the cross to atone for our sins, and who rose from the dead a short time later.

The requirement of faith in Jesus is not explicitly stated in the Nicene Creed. However, the whole point of this, and other traditional Christian creeds, is to publicly express such faith:

**We believe in one God, the Father...**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit...**

Also, the one explicit mention of “the forgiveness of sins” in the Nicene Creed speaks of “baptism”:

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

Baptism is a ritual of initiation, for becoming a Christian. It involves either being immersed into water or sprinkled with water. But Christians familiar with the New Testament understand that baptism is a public expression of repentance of sins and faith in Jesus as the divine savior of humankind. In his first major evangelistic sermon, Peter links baptism with repentance and faith in Jesus: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven...” (Acts 2:38).

# The Nicene Creed and The Fourth Basic Belief of Christianity

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament scriptures, also links baptism with repentance and faith in Jesus. Once when Paul was explaining the gospel he said this: “ ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 19:4&5).

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul links baptism with faith and forgiveness of sins: “when you were buried with him [Jesus] in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses... God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses...” (Colossians 2:12&13).

Thus, although the Nicene Creed does not explicitly state that repentance and faith in Jesus is a requirement for salvation, in pointing to the ritual of baptism, the Creed implies the need for each person to respond appropriately to the gospel in order to receive the gift of salvation from sin. The New Testament clearly specifies repentance and faith in Jesus as the appropriate way to respond, and to accept the gift of salvation.

# The Nicene Creed Test

The Nicene Creed is the most widely accepted traditional creed. It provides a statement of faith that is accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, by the Eastern Orthodox churches, by Anglicanism, and by many major Protestant denominations. Read in the context of the New Testament, the Nicene Creed corresponds well with *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity:

- **It implies that death and divine condemnation are basic human problems, and (reading between the lines) it suggests that disharmony between humans is also a basic problem.**
- **It implies and assumes that SIN is the root cause of these basic human problems.**
- **It indicates that Jesus' life and especially his death on the cross made eternal life and salvation from sin possible.**
- **Finally, in linking baptism with forgiveness of sins, it implies that repentance and faith in Jesus are basic requirements for obtaining salvation and eternal life.**

Therefore, *The Four Basic Beliefs* of Christianity passes the second initial test; it lines up well with the content of the Nicene Creed.

# Confirming the “One Christian Worldview” Theory

In this podcast, I have argued that the *Four Basic Beliefs* line up well with the famous *John 3:16 passage* from the Gospel of John, and also with the *Nicene Creed*, an ancient Christian creed that is accepted by the Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox churches, Anglicanism, and by many major Protestant denominations.

This, however, is not proof of the theory that *there is just ONE Christian worldview*. In order to firmly establish this theory, I will need to examine and analyze the creeds, catechisms, statements of faith, and official doctrines of the Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox churches, Anglicanism, and various major Protestant denominations to confirm that the *Four Basic Beliefs* are as widely accepted as I believe them to be.

If, in my investigation of this issue, I discover that there is *a significant portion* of the Christian population in the USA who belong to churches or denominations that accept some *specific alternative worldview*, then I will report back in later podcasts about the existence of that alternative Christian worldview.

# Closing Remarks

## The Next Podcast:

In Podcast #5, I will consider Question 7:

**How should we evaluate the truth of the Christian worldview?**

## Thank You:

Thank you for listening to my third podcast of the series *Thinking Critically About: "Is Christianity True?"*. I hope that you will join me again for future podcasts as I continue to investigate this important question.

## The Intellectual Standard of CLARITY is important:

**"Clarity is a gateway standard. If a statement is unclear, we cannot determine whether it is accurate or relevant. In fact, we cannot tell anything about it because we don't yet know what it is saying."**

*(The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools, p.7)*

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