

Religious Pluralism: A Christian Response

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Religious *pluralism* is the belief that every religion is true. It is to be distinguished from *relativism* which claims each religion is true to the one holding it but not to others. *Inclusivism* claims that one religion is explicitly true, and all others are implicitly true. *Exclusivism* is the belief that only one religion is true and others opposed to it are false.

Orthodox Christianity is a form of exclusivism since it claims to be the one true religion. Whether or not this claim can be substantiated, three prior questions must be addressed: 1) What is truth? 2) Is truth objective? 3) Are all religions true? Then, and only then, can we address the question: 4) Is Christianity the true religion?

The Nature Of Truth

What is truth? Without going into all the various theories of truth that have been proposed, let us look at the view of truth assumed in the claim that Christianity is the true religion: the correspondence view of truth. This position is the common sense, ordinary understanding of

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the term truth. It claims that truth is what corresponds to reality. This view is not innovative; it has a venerable tradition, dating back to the great philosophers and on into the modern world. A sampling of citations will suffice to make the point.

The History Of The Correspondence View Of Truth

The correspondence view of truth affirms that truth is that which corresponds to reality. It asserts that a true statement matches its object. It is, in everyday language, a statement that tells it like it is. Early proponents of this view included the great philosophers from antiquity.

Plato wrote, "So if some such assignments of names take place, we may call the first of them speaking truly and the second speaking falsely. But if that is so, it is sometimes possible to assign names incorrectly, to give them not to things they fit but to things they don't fit. The same is true of verbs. But if verbs and names can be assigned in this way, the same must be true of statements, since statements are, I believe, a combination of names and verbs."¹ Aristotle added, "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be."² Augustine concurred, "For if that which is be spoken, truth is...

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