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Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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Is Jesus the Only Savior?

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Introduction

One of the most serious obstacles to the Christian faith is the claim that Jesus Christ is the exclusive savior . . . the only way to God. This claim runs counter to the relativism so prevalent on our campuses, and often draws charges that we are "arrogant" and "intolerant."

Yet, this exclusive claim is supported by such biblical passages as these:

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me' (John 14:6).

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

How do we respond to this tension between exclusive statements of Scripture, and the charge of "arrogance" and "intolerance"? Many are proposing that we adjust our position on exclusivism, to avoid such charges. In this outline we will examine the two foremost proposals, and offer support for the exclusive position.

I. Religious Pluralism

A. *What is Religious Pluralism?*

Religious Pluralism is the view that all religions are equally valid as ways to God. Pluralists often refer to the fact that, just as there are many paths up Mt. Fuji, so there are many paths to God. Differences among the religions are superficial; they all lead to the same goal. This is the epitome of tolerance and relativism.

2. *Weaknesses of Religious Pluralism.*

1. The differences in teaching among the religions are fundamental in nature and mutually contradictory.
 - a. The teachings of the major religions about God or "Ultimate Reality" are contradictory. Hindus are pantheists or polytheists. Buddhists are atheists or pantheists. Muslims are theists and unitarian. Christians are theists but trinitarian. These views cannot all be true.
 2. The teachings of the major religions about man and salvation are contradictory. Hindus see man as fundamentally divine, but trapped in this world due to ignorance and bad karma. Deliverance comes from changing our beliefs about reality and our true identity. Buddhists see man as trapped in this world of suffering due to selfish desire. Deliverance from this world comes from extinguishing desire, or seeking the aid of supernatural beings in doing so. Muslims believe man is weak but not sinful in nature, and under God's judgment for his disobedience to His laws. Salvation comes through submitting to the laws of God. Christians believe that man is alienated from God and under His judgment due to his sinful rebellion against Him. But salvation can only come as a result of trusting in what He has graciously done by providing His Son Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for our sin, and by His Spirit changing us from within.
 3. It is impossible to believe that all religions are true, without radically altering our definition of "truth."
2. The distinction that is sometimes drawn between "exoteric" (literal and obvious) teaching of the religions and their "esoteric" (hidden) teaching is untenable. Some pluralists hold that, although there are contradictions on the "exoteric" level, there is an "esoteric" teaching common to all religions.
 - a. How can we really know that this is the case? A "common" mystical experience among followers of various religions is impossible to verify.
 2. If the real meaning of the teachings of Jesus is an "esoteric" one, why did the apostles apparently not know this? Certainly, they would have been in a better position to know this than we. Yet, they betray no such belief.
3. The contention that what matters is not objective teaching but moral and spiritual transformation is untenable.
 - a. Again, how do we really know this is the case? On what authority do we believe this is so?

2. The fact that there may appear to be similarities in some of the effects in the lives of followers of various religions is no proof that they are identical. Jesus drew a strong distinction between external morality and piety, and true internal spirituality (Matt. 5--7).
4. The belief that all religions are true in the sense that they all bring us to God, requires that we believe they are all false in what they objectively teach!

It seems improbable that that which is false could be the means of helping us experience that which is "true"!

5. Religious Pluralism is untenable for the orthodox Christian because it demands that he deny the most important teachings of Scripture.
 - a. Religious Pluralism requires that we abandon belief in the uniqueness of Christ. His claims to deity, and the biblical teaching about His atoning death and resurrection cannot be true, if Religious Pluralism is true.
 2. But if these teachings of Scripture are false, then Religious Pluralism must provide a better explanation for the wealth of evidence which has led so many to conclude that they are true. The evidence cannot be simply swept away!
 3. However, if the evidence is convincing that these teachings are true, then Religious Pluralism must be false!

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