

# WHY BELIEVE

REASONS FOR FAITH

## Pulling Down Pluralism

*Do All Religions Actually Lead to the Same Goal?*

*Pastor Cary Schmidt • Wednesday Growth Group • May 28, 2014*

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ACTS 4:12

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

### INTRODUCTION

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**Religious pluralism:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Religious imperialism:** \_\_\_\_\_

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“Religious pluralism argues that absolute truth claims are always totalitarian—one short step from the confidence that says “I am sure” to the tyranny that says, “Therefore I must be obeyed.”—Karl Popper, 20th century Austrian-British philosopher

“Religion is a poisonous virus of the mind and would be better irradiated completely.—Richard Dawkins, atheist, author

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“ Past disobedience to Christ on the part of those who have taken up the sword is not going to be mended by a disloyalty that soft-pedals or compromises the sovereign claims of Christ for fear that those claims will give offense.—David Gooding, Irish, Old Testament scholar, presently in his nineties

**Truth cannot be imposed by force.** Truth must be allowed to convince without coercion. Jesus gave absolute claims to truth, but also the absolute command to love even our enemies! It was His desire that men and women come to TRUST and LOVE God, and TRUST AND LOVE are two things that cannot be induced by force. They can only be WON!

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“ There is only one religion, but there are a hundred versions of it.—George Bernard Shaw, 19th century Irish playwright

“ Religions are culturally conditioned... simply creations of imagination.—Gordon Kaufman, professor of divinity, Harvard, died 2011

## 1. DO \_\_\_\_\_ MATTER?

### **Four false assumptions of pluralistic thinking:**

- The main objective of all religions is to stimulate good behavior.
- All religions basically agree on what “good behavior” is.

- All religions agree that this is their main objective.
- All religions will accept that distinctive doctrines are unimportant.

**Question 1: Is the main objective of all religions to get people to behave well towards one another?**

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**Question 2: Would all religions agree that the production of good behavior is their main objective?**

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**Question 3: Would all religions accept that their distinctive teachings are of minimal importance?**

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“ Nothing can both be and not be in the same respect.—Aristotle, 4th century Greek philosopher

“ Once we know a tree is a birch tree, we automatically know, without any further information, that it is not an oak tree.—Bertrand Russell, 20th century British philosopher

“ When a man says that thinking in terms of an antithesis is wrong, what he is really doing is to use the concept of antithesis to deny antithesis—Francis Sheaffer, 20th century, Presbyterian pastor

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**KEY POINT!**—Belief systems that prohibit, shame, or avoid questions are merely advertising that those beliefs are weak and vulnerable to exposure!

2. DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO THE \_\_\_\_\_?

Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam

**What do they teach about God?**

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**What do they teach about the material world?**

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**KEY POINT!**—To say they are all true is to say that NONE of them are true, and that there is NO TRUTH!

**What answer do they provide for the problem of human guilt?**

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## What do they teach about salvation?

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*“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”*  
(1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

*“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”* (Romans 5:1–2)

*“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”*  
(Romans 3:23–26)

## 3. THE METAPHOR OF RELIGION AS A

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**A gate at the beginning**—the ritual, experience through which you pass to start the journey

**A gate at the end**—leads to paradise at the end of the journey

**A path in-between**—the path through life that has many ups and downs.

**Crucial dynamic**—at the final gate there is an assessment, and whether you get through that gate, depends upon merit! It depends on the progress you’ve made along the way.

**Crucial Question:** At what stage of the journey is “acceptance” received? Only in Christianity is acceptance given at the BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY!

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”  
(John 5:24)*

*“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18)*

This is completely counter-intuitive to most people and all religions except Christianity!

Christianity is not a scheme of obtaining merit with God. It’s the entering into of a relationship with God!

**The gate at the start of Christianity is NEW BIRTH!** It’s a gift that doesn’t depend on works, but it becomes the source of good works and character. Those good works are not a condition of acceptance, but a fruit of it! (As a spouse or child seeks to please another...)

The Christian answer to the problem of human guilt and salvation is **UNIQUE!**

“ Of all the great founders of religions, Christ is the only one who will come alongside us, claiming to be our Creator incarnate, come to deal with the problem of the guilt of our sin by means of His sacrifice on the cross so that we can receive forgiveness and peace with God.—David Gooding

“ To ask why must we think that Christ is the only way to God is to miss the point completely. For Christ does not, in that sense, compete with anyone for the simple reason that no one else claims to deal with this fundamental problem. He is the only one in the running. How can it be narrow-minded or arrogant to accept from Christ what no-one else offers?—David Gooding

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## CONCLUSION: THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE—TRUTH

**Truth is not merely an academic matter**—it has an indisputable authority that demands and requires submission.

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**The heart of the problem** with pluralism is that pluralism is one-dimensional. Culture is pluralist about values but not about facts! Pluralism believes religion is PURELY about philosophy or moral value.

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“ The story of the empty tomb cannot be fitted into our contemporary world-view, indeed into any world-view, of which it is not the starting point!—Lesslie Newbigin, 20th century British theologian

**Christianity—ALL ABOUT FACTS and NOT  
MERELY ABOUT VALUES!**

We Christians truly have a duty to speak the truth  
in love!

*“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things,  
which is the head, even Christ:” (Ephesians 4:15)*

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