

## Worldview Apologetics

Dr. James Anderson  
Matthews OPC, Summer 2012  
**Week 8: Pluralism**

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### Pluralism: The Basic Idea

The different world religions are just  
*different perspectives on the same reality.*



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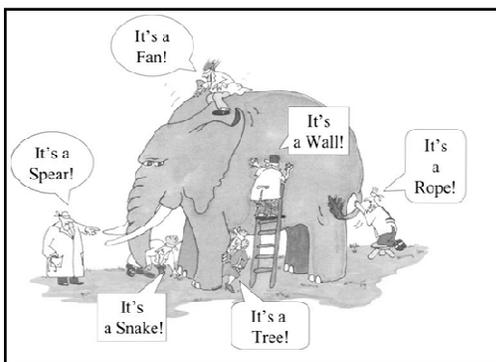
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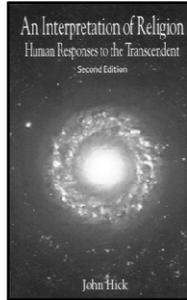
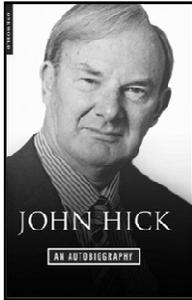
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### Pluralism: Adherents



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### Why Pluralism?

- Dissatisfaction with Naturalism
  - There's more to us than physics and chemistry!
  - Religious experiences must be taken seriously
- Appreciation for global religious diversity
  - There are sincere believers in all major religions
  - No religion could have a monopoly on the truth
- Concern about religious conflict/intolerance
  - Pluralism will promote tolerance and respect

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### Pluralism: Theology

- There is a 'God': "the Real" or "the Ultimate"
  - 'God' is the ultimate transcendent reality
  - 'God' is the ground of all being (existence)
- 'God' is the source of all religious experience
- 'God' transcends all human concepts
  - No human descriptions apply *literally* to 'God'
  - So "the Real" isn't *literally* a personal creator God
- "God is love" is the primary description

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### Pluralism: Anthropology

- We aren't *literally* made in the image of God
  - Traditional creation accounts are mythological
- We are (probably) the products of evolution
  - Human evolution *may* have been guided by God
- We are unique in having religious experiences
- We are uniquely able to reflect on the divine

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### Pluralism: Knowledge

- We can encounter 'God' through experiences
  - But they don't give us *direct* knowledge of 'God'
  - Our experiences can be variously interpreted
- All our descriptions of 'God' are *metaphorical*
  - We cannot know or describe 'God' in *literal* terms
  - Our descriptions reflect our religious traditions
  - Different traditions represent diverse perspectives
  - Particular religious claims are always *relative*
- There is no *literal* verbal revelation from 'God'

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### Pluralism: Ethics

- The core ethical principle is the Golden Rule
  - "Treat others as you would have them treat you."
- All major religions center on this principle
- Religion is more about *practices* than *beliefs*
- Religions are different responses to the divine
  - Ethical distinctives are therefore *culture-relative*
- Religious *tolerance* is a very good thing
- Religious *exclusivism* is a very bad thing

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**Pluralism: Salvation**

- Our basic problem is... *self-centeredness*
  - We do not live by the Golden Rule
- The solution is... *God/Reality-centeredness*
  - We can develop moral maturity through religion
- There are many paths to salvation
  - We should pursue the path that “works best”
- Everyone will be saved in the end – probably!
  - There is a heaven – but there isn’t a hell

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**Tool #1: Consistency**

- Can we say anything *positive* about ‘God’?
- “No!”
  - ‘God’ transcends all human terms and concepts
  - All our descriptions of ‘God’ are metaphorical
- “Yes!”
  - “God transcends all human terms and concepts”
  - “God is the source of all religious experience”
  - “God is love” and “God wants all to be saved”

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**Tool #1: Consistency**

- Does Pluralism offer a *privileged* view of God?
- “No!”
  - All religious views are *particular* perspectives
  - No religious perspective has a *privileged* view
  - Pluralism is just one perspective among others
- “Yes!”
  - Pluralists have the “inside track” on religion!
  - Pluralism isn’t just one perspective among others

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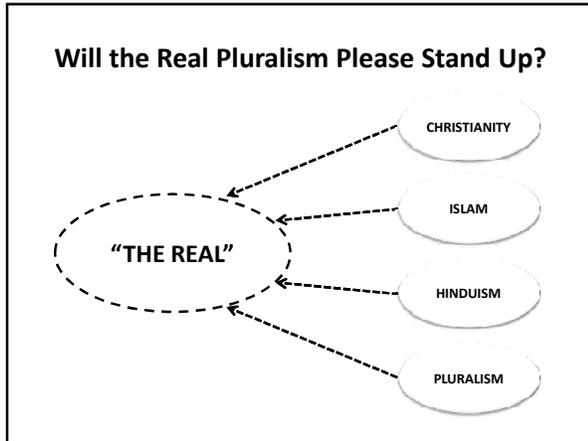
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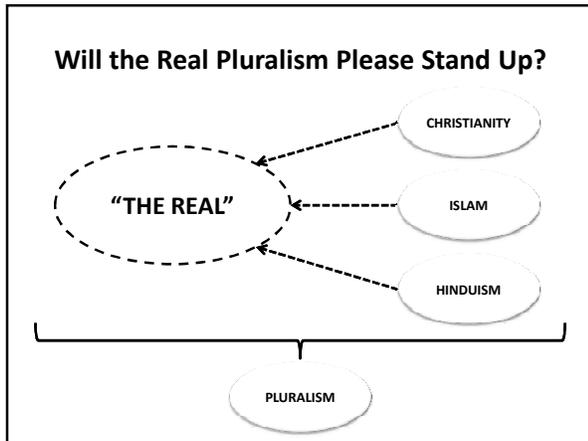
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**Tool #8: Hope**

- How can I know that I will end up in heaven?
  - How can I know that there is a heaven at all?
- Pluralist worldview
  - *Universalism*... but can we know that it's true?
  - The reality is "beyond the veil" (agnosticism)
- Christian worldview
  - *Particularism*... but salvation is offered to all
  - God is personal and knowable through his Word

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