

Chapter 1 : Only One True Religion | Religious Forums

It might seem obvious that there can only be one true " or at least fully true " religion, since on a number of very important matters the teachings of the religions are not only different but mutually incompatible, so that if one is true it would seem that the others must be false.

Kindle Edition Verified Purchase Anyone who has attempted to reach out to people of different religious backgrounds is probably well aware that many people of different faiths have strong commitments to their own belief systems. Over the years, I have had Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Jewish people, and even atheists try to convert me to their religion or view of reality. I can say without hesitation that they are just as fervent and devoted as any orthodox or evangelical Christian. Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue. Pluralism puts Christ on the same level as other founders of religious traditions Zoroaster, Buddha, Muhammad etc and rejects the exclusivist claims of Jesus. The dialogue partners in this volume are Paul F. The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission , takes the opposite view. I will highlight some of important points from some of the chapters in the book that I consider to be important. In the opening chapter which can be read online Netland says: Let me clarify at the outset what is not included in the assertion that Christianity is the one true religion. Affirming Christian faith as the true religion does not mean that there is no truth or goodness or beauty in other religions. If the Christian faith is true, then any teachings from other religions which are incompatible with essential teachings of Christianity must be rejected. But this does not mean that there are no truths embraced by other religions. Indeed, I think that the Christian faith shares some significant common beliefs with other religions, with some more so than with others. And surely we can and must acknowledge that there is goodness and beauty in other religious traditions as well. Nor, in claiming that the Christian faith is true, am I suggesting that Christians are necessarily morally better people than, say, Muslims or Hindus or Sikhs. Nor am I defending everything that the institutional church has done or represented over the past two millennia. Sadly, there is much in the history of the Christian church that betrays the teachings of our Lord. Furthermore, in claiming that Christianity is the true religion, I am not saying that Christians should not cooperate with other religious communities in a variety of ways to further the common good. Given the very real religious tensions in our world, I think that leaders of the major religions need to be especially vigilant in working to reduce conflict between religious communities and to cooperate together in addressing our many global problems. The Gospel and True Religions S. Mark Heim I found this chapter to be relevant because the author does a fine job of clarifying terms. That person is exhibiting true integrity, not a semblance of it. What is true is authentic. For a religion to be true in this respect means that at its origins and in its ongoing life, it is not hypocritical carried out for reasons other than the ostensible ones , and it is no mere epiphenomenon of some other causal factor as, for instance, if all religion were explained purely as a psychological pathology. In another sense, we use the word to mean verified or verifiable by experience. Analytical philosophers in the twentieth century regarded a proposition as meaningful only if one could specify a set of circumstances that would count as verifying or, in other formulations, falsifying it. For a religion to be true in this sense means that, so far as we can judge, those who pursue it actually achieve the states or conditions it promises. The true is the realizable. In yet another sense, we take true to mean descriptively accurate, at the furthest reach of our epistemological horizon. In this sense, it is not true to say that electrons are in orbits around the nucleus of an atom, analogous to those of planets around the sun, since their behavior is described much more precisely in terms of quantum mechanics. For a religion to be true in this sense would mean that its account of the world within which truth of the first two types are at play is the most accurate and comprehensive one. Keeping these three meanings in mind, I would say 1 that Christianity is not the only true authentic religion, nor is its authenticity necessarily of a different sort than others. But I believe Christianity is the uniquely saving religion. My faith does not rest in generic qualities of Christianity as a religion, but in the decisive saving significance of Jesus Christ for all humanity. There is full communion with God only in communion with Christ. I further believe that one mark of the truest religion or religions is the capacity to recognize and affirm distinctive elements of truth in others. My religion could not be true if it had no means to recognize that others

are as well, in various facets of these three dimensions. We generally use a typology—“exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism”—in the area of religious pluralism. Exclusivism is the view that only one religion is true and all others are false, inclusivism the view that the benefits of the one truest religion can be accessed from within others which are at least partially true. Pluralism is the view that all major religions are independently valid. There is no way to live a Jewish life except the Jewish way. Every other way is false in that it is not truly Jewish. Exclusivism is just common sense. In one sense, inclusivism seems obvious, too. No religion is without its commonalities with others. If honoring your parents has value in Christianity, then it must have value when practiced in another tradition as well. There is truth in both. At one level, pluralism is plainly right. They are all true. The typology originates in an agreement between the most liberal and most conservative theologies of religion that there is and can be only one religious end, one actual religious fulfillment. The typology then chooses up sides on the means to that end: The typology was originally formulated with an implicit focus on Christian salvation as its reference point, though not all religions share the concept or seek its realization. This specifically Christian term, referring to a concrete hope, has been thoroughly blurred into an all-inclusive positive possibility. And the blurring comes from both sides, from exclusivist Christians who assume all possible forms of good subsist in a salvation whose only alternative is utter evil or torment and from pluralist Christians who assume the aims of all religions are essentially identical. The pluralist knows that the particularities of all religions are finally insignificant. The exclusivist knows that the particularities of all religions but one are insignificant. We can illustrate the blurring tendency I am describing by taking a very simple example. In a colloquial way, some picture a resolution to issues of religious pluralism by envisioning an afterlife somewhat on the model of a parliament of world religions. Hick claims that knowledge of the Real his generic term for Transcendent Reality can only be known as it is being perceived. Hence, any truth claims about God are only claims about perceptions of God. For Hick, all knowledge is rooted in experience and knowledge of God and religious truth claims are culturally and historically influenced; and for that reason should not be considered absolute. In response to Hick, the book allows for two essays. I will offer a small snippet here. Hick has claimed that in the end, his pluralistic view will be proven right eschatological verification ; so eventually, it will be decisively shown that many religious doctrines conflicting with pluralism are literally false. Is the Real going to ensure this happens? If so, does this not suggest that the Real is personal rather than impersonal? And why the optimism? Why not argue for an ultimate personal obliteration for all individuals, as some Eastern religions maintain? Or why not the eventual extinction of the human race—“end of story? Why is optimism, rather than pessimism, warranted? One common criticism of Kant is this: How does Kant know that there is a noumenal realm behind the phenomena, and how does he know that the noumenal realm is unknowable? The same applies to Hick: How does Hick know so much about the unknowable Real and that there is a Real at all behind the various religious personae or impersonae? And how one can know that this Ultimate Reality is unknowable? Could we not at least say we know this following about the Real: Moreover, we can genuinely know God and that he is love, as is evidenced by the sacrifice of Jesus 1 John 3: Why not say that religion is a completely human idea or projection—that it has nothing to do with the Ultimate Reality? Why not be a religious skeptic instead of a pluralist? After all, lots of people seem to come to understand the Real in times of war, oppression, and desperation. Why think that the Real has anything to do with religion itself? Why think that any Ultimate Reality exists—“unless Hick has decent reason or evidence to the contrary? If he does offer any such reasons, then he would be at odds with the various religious conceptions of the Real, which means the traditional religionist is wrong. In this chapter, Yandell also offers a critique of the pluralist position. Religions can be differentiated by reference to what pairing of disease and cure their adherents embrace. These claims are either true or false, and typically adherents of a religion suppose that those accepted as normative in their religion are true. While there have been challenges to this general account of things, I believe that—“with sufficient fine-tuning that cannot be done here—“this account is true. A religion, we have suggested, gives a diagnosis of a deep spiritual disease that plagues us all and proposes a cure for it. Devotees of a particular religion are those who accept that diagnosis and seek that cure, and that are serious about doing so. These are not devotees, but they belong to Rdom e. Our focus will be on that to which the devotees are devoted—that to which the

adherents adhere. Since the diagnoses and cures differ, and the status of something as cure depends on its providing healing from the disease, religions differ in ways that are significant to their adherents. Conversion to another religion, or abandoning a religion for some secularism, is a major change. It this can be based on religious or moral agreement about some things, so much the better, but Religious Pluralism would rob each religion of what is distinctive of it, and thus no common metaphysical view or literally understood religious doctrine could serve as even potential common ground. My conclusion is that religious pluralism lacks a justifying rationale. This is not a comment on the motives or intentions of anyone. Appeal to motives or intentions for being a religious pluralist will neither refute nor justify it. My claim is that the elements of pluralism are themselves unjustified and indeed are mistaken.

Chapter 2 : Which religion, if any, is the true one?

There would eventually be only one religion and one tradition within that religion left standing. Otherwise, people would be rejecting the will of God. All the other 11, religions and their tens of thousands of denominations or traditions would be phased out.

But while Robert B. But I suppose this can be excused, as there is no doubt that Hick has been the most influential figure in recent discussions of pluralism. There are actually at least two questions at the heart of this book: So this distinction is sometimes blurred, but fortunately it does not go altogether unrecognized. The dialogue between Knitter and Netland raises a number of interesting points. One of the major differences between them is their respective views of the propositional content of religious utterances. While Netland favors straightforward interpretations of doctrinal claims, and argues that, so interpreted, the various world religions are irreconcilable, Knitter proposes that religious statements should be understood symbolically, leaving more room for the possibility that, in some sense, more than one religion can be true. Another interesting point of contention between the discussants is the relationship of religion and violence. Religions that make contradictory and contrary claims cannot all be true, Netland argues. Knitter disagrees, apparently proposing that two contrary alternatives can both be true, even though contradictory alternatives cannot: If they are contradictory, then we simply have to agree to disagree. This reminds me of the well-known Zen Buddhist image and reminder: We may need fingers to point to the moon. But the finger can never be the moon. So yes, our very different religious truth claims are different fingers pointing to the moon. I have found that most, certainly not all, of the contraries—the different fingers—that I have discovered in my exploration of other religions, and especially of Buddhism, have proven to be much more complementary than contradictory. Knitter seems to think that conflicting religious claims are to be seen as alternative symbols or interpretations of some more fundamental reality, and thus they are not truly inconsistent. Following the dialogue is a series of essays by other contributors. Tilley then goes on to evaluate the views of Knitter and Netland with these criteria. Erickson discusses the impact of postmodern thought on the concept of general revelation. Later in the book, Keith Yandell argues that religious pluralism lacks rational grounding, and Nancy Fuchs Kreimer discusses the sensitive issues surrounding the chosenness of the Jewish people. But about midway through the volume, attention turns to John Hick. Hick has a short essay in chapter five that defends his pluralist interpretation of religion, and the following chapter by Paul R. Two contributors, Paul Copan and Doug Geivett, independently attack the epistemic parity thesis—that all the major religions are basically on equal footing in terms of plausibility—by presenting evidential cases for the Christian worldview. Copan, for example, makes a brief case for theism and for the religious uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth. Of course, in a short chapter like those in this book, his case is really only a sketch of what form such an argument, fully-fleshed out, would take. Near the end of his discussion, Copan says: Religious pluralism not only disguises its exclusivism; it also is unwittingly presumptuous and perhaps even condescending. This can be shown in the following way. It seems that for virtually any religious viewpoint p it is conceivable that the world could have been such that a person, not having given p much thought before, might suddenly stumble across compelling evidence for p , and, to their surprise, find themselves persuaded of it, quite independently of how they feel about the matter, or what attitudes they have. Of course, that would be an extreme case. But it reminds us that even in less extreme scenarios it is possible that someone is simply honestly convinced by the evidence available to him that some exclusivist perspective or other is true. Thus it is open to Hick to reply to Copan in something like the following way: I, however, do not have a presumptuous or condescending attitude about the matter; it is simply that I am genuinely and honestly persuaded by the available evidence that my model is correct. He has a degree in art and design, and he is currently studying philosophy of religion. He plans to become a professor. Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue. Fortress Press, p.

Chapter 3 : Is it Plausible that there is only One True Religion? | Religious Forums

William Alston, then, "a statement (proposition, belief) is true if and only if what the statement says to be the case actually is the case." 9 For our purposes, statements, beliefs, and propositions are interchangeable.

That may sound awfully dogmatic and narrow-minded, but the simple truth is that Christianity is the only true religion. Jesus said that He alone was the way to the Father John Christians do not go around saying Christianity is the only way because they are arrogant, narrow-minded, stupid, and judgmental. They do so because they believe what Jesus said. They believe in Jesus, who claimed to be God John 8: Jesus said that He was the only way. He was either telling the truth, He was crazy, or He was a liar. But since everyone agrees that Jesus was a good man, how then could He be both good and crazy or good and a liar? He had to be telling the truth. He is the only way. Christianity is not just a religion; it is a relationship with God. It is a trusting in Jesus and what He did on the cross 1 Cor. The scripture is right when it says in 1 Pet. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that "we take silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man. It should be quite evident that Jesus did not fulfill the prophecies by accident. He was who He said He was:

Chapter 4 : There is no "one, true" religion

Is only one religion true? I doubt that any one religion has everything right. Most religions have so many details that they are bound to have at least one piece wrong.

Is There One True Religion? Where is the truth amid all the confusion? From the November Trumpet Print Edition Three primary religions are considered monotheistic—maintaining belief in one supreme Creator: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. All three revere Jerusalem as a holy city. None agrees fully on the way to worship the one God they all espouse. Logic demands that if there indeed is one God, then it ought to follow that He would define the proper manner in which to worship Him, and reveal that way to man. Yet these religions differ vastly in doctrine and in practice. One of these, Judaism, claims that the Old Testament writings preserved from ancient times by the Jews are the revealed instructions to man on how to worship God. Varying divisions of Christianity lay claim to the same book, the Bible—incorporating both the Old Testament preserved by the Jews albeit in differing versions and the New Testament preserved by the Greeks—as the basis of their religion. Yet they disagree on their interpretation of its teachings. Within each of these religions are many diverse branches, differing on religious beliefs and practices to the point of confusion as to just what it is that represents core doctrine. If religion is, indeed, the opiate of the masses, as Marx declared, then among these religions there is a brand to suit all tastes. Is there one true faith? If not, then based on the assumption of all three of these religions that there exists one supreme God over all, has that God destined mankind to a life of confusion over the very basic questions about His nature, His religion and the reason He created man? These are fundamental questions with which countless generations of thinkers, philosophers, religionists and educationalists have wrestled for 6, years of documented human history. Honest Questions Many men of science refuse to face this most fundamental of all questions about the nature of our being and of the universe. In his subsequent writings, as he proceeds through his eighth decade of life, Johnson occasionally reverts to musings on the metaphysical. But that piece in November stands out for its challenge to skeptics who doubt the very existence of the supreme Creator. Paul Johnson is a deep thinker. He dares to consider questions that most scientists tend to discount due to their inability to come to terms with their outstanding relevance. He dares to consider God! In that same Spectator column, Johnson challenged one of the most brilliant of mathematical minds, Dr. Physicists expect us to believe their claim—that not merely something but everything was created out of nothing, thus breaking the fundamental law of physics. Yet, unlike the men of science whom he derides for ignoring these most basic of questions, he has obviously been honest about his search to find answers. The logical foundation for his quest is this: But what was His motive? What did He hope or intend to achieve? Chances are that many of the regular subscribers to our Trumpet magazine are involved in a similar quest. Johnson, in fact, does get so close to the answer: In other words, to take a leaf out of Herbert W. This reality is a literal extension of the divine Godhead. Johnson expresses this reality thus: We call this collection of divinely inspired writings the Bible. But to the average man, this most published, most translated and most widely distributed book in the world remains an enigma. It is subject to countless individual interpretations. Numerous professional theologians call the concept of its inerrancy into question. Hence the confusing multitude of Christian denominations, each claiming a right to understanding its truths, yet none in complete agreement. The plain truth is, unlike other so-called holy books, the Bible can be proven to be the inerrant Word of God. The most powerful of proofs of its divine source and its consistency in declaring truth is fulfilled Bible prophecy! Request a free copy of our booklet The Proof of the Bible. One whole third of the Bible is prophecy for the future, most of which is being fulfilled in our day. Indeed, we who live in this age are among the most privileged of people, for we are surrounded by and indeed part of the unfolding of the most dramatic of all prophecies in the Bible! For nearly two decades, the Trumpet magazine has exposed the proof of the fulfillment of these prophecies. Month by month, as current events link with history and biblical prophecy, the Trumpet has offered the most dramatic proof of the accuracy of biblical prophecies, some having been originally documented over 3, years ago! Never was it more crucial to convey this message of prophecy to this world. That original divinely commissioned enterprise has historically been

called the Church of God Acts God declared of His Church, at its inception, that it would never die Matthew Thus it must be extant today in its original Spirit-led form, under its God-given manner of government and administration Ephesians 4: Otherwise, God Himself is proven a liar! And God, by His very nature, cannot lie Titus 1: The Way to Life Honest searchers for truth must sympathize with a man of grand intellect such as Paul Johnson: The honesty of such a quest is the very opposite to the dishonest denial of the validity of such questions by the bulk of intelligentsia. Johnson at least has the vision to understand a great overarching truth: Paul Johnson makes just one critical error in his musings on the meaning of life. This presupposes that in order then for the soul not to die, one must find out the meaning of that term sin, then ensure that the soul finds the way of becoming sinless. Such knowledge opens up the way to eternal life! These are questions that still puzzle esteemed thinkers such as Paul Johnson. After decades of searching for the answers, Dr. Indeed, the answer is infinitely simple 2 Corinthians So simple that it can be only understood if we literally take on the mind-set of a childâ€”being willing to be taught by God, wiping our mind clear of all previous bias, and allowing the clarifying light of biblical revelation to reveal the wonder of the meaning of life to us. That conversion is a literal mind-changing, life-changing experience that links the human mind with its Maker, thus opening it up to revelation of God-breathed truth. There is a book that will guide you in your search for the answers to these burning questions. It will lead you to the biblically proven, inerrant answers to these mysteries that have intrigued man for millennia. Request your free copy of *Mystery of the Ages*.

Chapter 5 : 6 Responses to Religious Diversity

The dialogue in chapter one was a bit disappointing in that it was kept very short, but overall the book is probably worth picking up if you want to hear some studied perspectives on the question "Can only one religion be true?".

With all of the different religions, how can I know which one is correct? There is no doubt that the number of different religions in the world makes it a challenge to know which one is correct. The challenge of different answers to a particular issue is not unique to the topic of religion. For example, you can sit math students down, give them a complex problem to solve, and it is likely that many will get the answer wrong. But does this mean that a correct answer does not exist? Those who get the answer wrong simply need to be shown their error and know the techniques necessary to arrive at the correct answer. How do we arrive at the truth about God? We use a systematic methodology that is designed to separate truth from error by using various tests for truth, with the end result being a set of right conclusions. Can you imagine the end results a scientist would arrive at if he went into the lab and just started mixing things together with no rhyme or reason? Or if a physician just started treating a patient with random medicines in the hope of making him well? Neither the scientist nor the physician takes this approach; instead, they use systematic methods that are methodical, logical, evidential, and proven to yield the right end result. This being the case, why should theology—the study of God—be any different? Why believe it can be approached in a haphazard and undisciplined way and still yield right conclusions? Unfortunately, this is the approach many take, and this is one of the reasons why so many religions exist. That said, we now return to the question of how to reach truthful conclusions about God. What systematic approach should be used? First, we need to establish a framework for testing various truth claims, and then we need a roadmap to follow to reach a right conclusion. Here is a good framework to use: Logical consistency—the claims of a belief system must logically cohere to each other and not contradict in any way. As an example, the end goal of Buddhism is to rid oneself of all desires. Yet, one must have a desire to rid oneself of all desires, which is a contradictory and illogical principle. Empirical adequacy—is there evidence to support the belief system whether the evidence is rational, externally evidential, etc. Naturally, it is only right to want proof for important claims being made so the assertions can be verified. For example, Mormons teach that Jesus visited North America. Yet there is absolutely no proof, archaeological or otherwise, to support such a claim. Existential relevancy—the belief system should address the big questions of life described below and the teachings should be accurately reflected in the world in which we live. Christianity, for example, provides good answers for the large questions of life, but is sometimes questioned because of its claim of an all-good and powerful God who exists alongside a world filled with very real evil. Critics charge that such a thing violates the criteria of existential relevancy, although many good answers have been given to address the issue. The above framework, when applied to the topic of religion, will help lead one to a right view of God and will answer the four big questions of life: Origin — where did we come from? Ethics — how should we live? Meaning — what is the purpose for life? Destiny — where is mankind heading? But how does one go about applying this framework in the pursuit of God? Narrowing the list of possible questions down produces the following: Does absolute truth exist? Do reason and religion mix? Can God be known? Does God care about me? First we need to know if absolute truth exists. If it does not, then we really cannot be sure of anything spiritual or not, and we end up either an agnostic, unsure if we can really know anything, or a pluralist, accepting every position because we are not sure which, if any, is right. Absolute truth is defined as that which matches reality, that which corresponds to its object, telling it like it is. Some say there is no such thing as absolute truth, but taking such a position becomes self-defeating. If so, then absolute truth exists; if not, then why consider it? Postmodernism affirms no truth, yet it affirms at least one absolute truth: In the end, absolute truth becomes undeniable. Further, absolute truth is naturally narrow and excludes its opposite. Two plus two equals four, with no other answer being possible. This point becomes critical as different belief systems and worldviews are compared. If one belief system has components that are proven true, then any competing belief system with contrary claims must be false. Also, we must keep in mind that absolute truth is not impacted by sincerity and desire. No matter how sincerely someone embraces a lie, it

is still a lie. And no desire in the world can make something true that is false. The answer of question one is that absolute truth exists. This being the case, agnosticism, postmodernism, relativism, and skepticism are all false positions. Some say this is not possible, but "why not? The truth is, logic is vital when examining spiritual claims because it helps us understand why some claims should be excluded and others embraced. Logic is absolutely critical in dismantling pluralism which says that all truth claims, even those that oppose each other, are equal and valid. Applying this law to the claims of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity means that one is right and the other two are wrong. Jesus cannot be both God and not God. Used properly, logic is a potent weapon against pluralism because it clearly demonstrates that contrary truth claims cannot both be true. Logic shows that each belief system has its own set of signs that point to radically different locations in the end. Logic shows that the proper illustration of a search for spiritual truth is more like a maze "one path makes it through to truth, while all others arrive at dead ends. All faiths may have some surface similarities, but they differ in major ways in their core doctrines. The conclusion is that you can use reason and logic in matters of religion. That being the case, pluralism the belief that all truth claims are equally true and valid is ruled out because it is illogical and contradictory to believe that diametrically opposing truth claims can both be right. Next comes the big question: To give it proper attention, you must first ask this question: Why do we have something rather than nothing at all? In other words, how did you and everything around you get here? The argument for God can be presented very simply: You do not get something from nothing. Therefore, a necessary and eternal Being exists. You cannot deny you exist because you have to exist in order to deny your own existence which is self-defeating , so the first premise above is true. Therefore, the conclusion naturally follows "an eternal Being is responsible for everything that exists. This is a position no thinking atheist denies; they just claim that the universe is that eternal being. And everything that has a beginning must have a cause; therefore, the universe had a cause and is not eternal. Because the only two sources of eternity are an eternal universe denied by all current empirical evidence or an eternal Creator, the only logical conclusion is that God exists. Now, this conclusion says nothing about what kind of God exists, but amazingly enough, it does do one sweeping thing "it rules out all pantheistic religions. All pantheistic worldviews say that the universe is God and is eternal. And this assertion is false. So, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and all other pantheistic religions are ruled out as valid belief systems. Further, we learn some interesting things about this God who created the universe. Note also that one of the big questions in life origins is now answered: This leads to the next question: At this point, the need for religion is replaced by something more important "the need for revelation. If mankind is to know this God well, it is up to God to reveal Himself to His creation. Pushing aside minor differences, the two core areas of dispute are 1 the New Testament of the Bible 2 the person of Jesus Christ. Islam and Judaism both claim the New Testament of the Bible is untrue in what it claims, and both deny that Jesus is God incarnate, while Christianity affirms both to be true. There is no faith on the planet that can match the mountains of evidence that exist for Christianity. When it comes to Jesus, one finds a very curious thing about Him "He claimed to be God in the flesh. The New Testament writers affirm this fact over and over again in their writings. Now, if Jesus is God, then what He says must be true. And if Jesus said that the Bible is inerrant and true in everything it says which He did , this must mean that the Bible is true in what it proclaims. As we have already learned, two competing truth claims cannot both be right. So anything in the Islamic Koran or writings of Judaism that contradict the Bible cannot be true. In fact, both Islam and Judaism fail since they both say that Jesus is not God incarnate, while the evidence says otherwise. And because we can indeed know God because He has revealed Himself in His written Word and in Christ , all forms of agnosticism are refuted. Lastly, another big question of life is answered "that of ethics "as the Bible contains clear instructions on how mankind ought to live.

Chapter 6 : Philosophy of Religion | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Three primary religions are considered monotheistic—maintaining belief in one supreme Creator: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. All three revere Jerusalem as a holy city. None agrees fully on the way to worship the one God they all espouse. Logic demands that if there indeed is one God, then it.

The Trinity is the belief in Christianity that God is one God in essence but three persons: Despite at least one earlier local synod rejecting the claim of Arius, this Christological issue was to be one of the items addressed at the First Council of Nicaea. The First Council of Nicaea, held in Nicaea in present-day Turkey, convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in 325, was the first ecumenical [50] council of bishops of the Roman Empire, and most significantly resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine, called the Nicene Creed. With the creation of the creed, a precedent was established for subsequent general ecumenical councils of bishops synods to create statements of belief and canons of doctrinal orthodoxy—the intent being to define a common creed for the Church and address heretical ideas. One purpose of the council was to resolve disagreements in Alexandria over the nature of Jesus in relationship to the Father; in particular, whether Jesus was of the same substance as God the Father or merely of similar substance. Christian orthodox traditions Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and most Protestants follow this decision, which was reaffirmed in at the First Council of Constantinople and reached its full development through the work of the Cappadocian Fathers. Christians overwhelmingly assert that monotheism is central to the Christian faith, as the Nicene Creed and others, which gives the orthodox Christian definition of the Trinity, begins: According to Roger E. Olson and Christopher Hall, through prayer, meditation, study and practice, the Christian community concluded "that God must exist as both a unity and trinity", codifying this in ecumenical council at the end of the 4th century. They also hold to the doctrine of a man-god Christ Jesus as God incarnate. These Christians also do not believe that one of the three divine figures is God alone and the other two are not but that all three are mysteriously God and one. In support of this view, they cite early Christian examples of belief in subordinationism. God is a universal god rather than a local, tribal or parochial one; an absolute who integrates all affirmative values and brooks no evil. Judaism uses the term *Shituf* to refer to non-monotheistic ways of worshiping God. Though Muslims venerate Jesus Isa in Arabic as a prophet, they do not accept the doctrine that he was a begotten son of God. Sabians According to the Quran, the Sabians were a monotheistic religious group. The former linguistic explanation is Sabians are often identified with Mandaeanism, a small monotheistic community which lives today in Iraq and call themselves Yahyawiya Arabic: Muslim scholars traditionally viewed them as followers of the prophets Noah and Yahya i. Human primitive understanding of God is achieved through his revelations via his divine intermediary Manifestations. The purpose of creation is for the created to have the capacity to know and love its creator. Atenism Pharaoh Akhenaten and his family adoring the Aten. He raised Aten, once a relatively obscure Egyptian Solar deity representing the disk of the sun, to the status of Supreme God in the Egyptian pantheon. Evidence of this appears on three of the boundary stelae used to mark the boundaries of this new capital. The date given for the event has been estimated to fall around January 2 of that year. In shifting his court from the traditional ceremonial centres Akhenaten was signalling a dramatic transformation in the focus of religious and political power. It may also have coincided with the death of his father and the end of the coregency. In addition to constructing a new capital in honor of Aten, Akhenaten also oversaw the construction of some of the most massive temple complexes in ancient Egypt, including one at Karnak and one at Thebes, close to the old temple of Amun. Key features of Atenism included a ban on idols and other images of the Aten, with the exception of a rayed solar disc, in which the rays commonly depicted ending in hands appear to represent the unseen spirit of Aten. Aten was addressed by Akhenaten in prayers, such as the Great Hymn to the Aten: The details of Atenist theology are still unclear. The exclusion of all but one god and the prohibition of idols was a radical departure from Egyptian tradition, but most scholars see Akhenaten as a practitioner of monolatry rather than monotheism, as he did not actively deny the existence of other gods; he simply refrained from worshiping any but Aten. It is known that Atenism did not solely attribute divinity to the Aten. Akhenaten continued the cult of the Pharaoh, proclaiming himself

the son of Aten and encouraging the Egyptian people to worship him. It has features of monotheism in that Heaven is seen as an omnipotent entity, a noncorporeal force with a personality transcending the world. Still, later variants such as Mohism BCEâ€™c. Heaven ordered the sun, the moon, and the stars to enlighten and guide them. Heaven ordained the four seasons, Spring, Autumn, Winter, and Summer, to regulate them. Heaven sent down snow, frost, rain, and dew to grow the five grains and flax and silk that so the people could use and enjoy them. This has been so from antiquity to the present. The ruler of China in every Chinese dynasty would perform annual sacrificial rituals to Shangdi, usually by slaughtering a completely healthy bull as sacrifice. Although its popularity gradually diminished after the advent of Taoism and Buddhism, among other religions, its concepts remained in use throughout the pre-modern period and have been incorporated in later religions in China, including terminology used by early Christians in China. Despite the rising of non-theistic and pantheistic spirituality contributed by Taoism and Buddhism, Shangdi was still praised up until the end of the Qing Dynasty as the last ruler of the Qing declared himself son of heaven. Indigenous African religion[edit] The Himba people of Namibia practice a form of monotheistic panentheism , and worship the god Mukuru. The deceased ancestors of the Himba and Herero are subservient to him, acting as intermediaries. Although a pantheon of spirits exists, these are lesser spirits prevalent in Odinani expressly serving as elements of Chineke or Chukwu , the supreme being or high god. Waaq is the name of a singular God in the traditional religion of many Cushitic people in the Horn of Africa , denoting an early monotheistic religion. However this religion was mostly replaced with the Abrahamic religions.

Chapter 7 : The True Religion (All parts) - The Religion of Islam

In reality, the true religion is the religion that opens your heart to God and helps you rise to a state of consciousness in which you can see and fully accept that you are indeed a son or daughter of God who is worthy to enter your Father's kingdom.

What are we to make of this? There are six basic responses to religious diversity: Religious exclusivism The dominant view. Most people think that only their religion is correct and provides the way to salvation. Some exclusivists think that other religions are partly true, or even that God is working within all religions. But exclusivists contend that they alone have the worldview that corresponds to reality. One merit of this view is consistency: Religious inclusivism It seems arbitrary and cruel that billions of people would miss out on salvation just because they were born into the wrong religion. One answer to this is religious inclusivism. According to inclusivists, only one religion is fully true, but true religious seekers of all religious traditions will find salvation, at least in the afterlife. One difficulty with this view is that each religion has tended to claim exclusive truth. One objection to both inclusivism and exclusivism is that there is no neutral way to decide which religion is correct, or privileged. Some have replied that religion is a matter of faith, not rational assessment. This view is called fideism. Some experience it as a personal God, others as Brahman, others as a plurality of deities, and so on. How we experience the Ultimate Reality depends on our culture and education and modes of thought. A society that has rabbits but not ducks will look at the picture on the right and see a rabbit. A society that has ducks but not rabbits will look at the same picture and see a duck. But then, if Ultimate Reality is experienced in such diverse ways, what can we say of Ultimate Reality itself? Is it personal or impersonal? Is it good or evil or indifferent? Moreover, it is hard to see how a Theravada atheistic Buddhist could be experiencing the same Ultimate Reality as a fundamentalist Muslim. Religious relativism Another view is that religions are true or false only in relation to the broader worldviews of their adherents. The main defender of this view is Joseph Runzo. This has some advantages of pluralism. For example, it offers a stronger account of the beliefs of each tradition, for it says they are each making true claims. But religious relativism conflicts with what religions themselves teach. Muslims do not teach that Allah is the only God with respect to the worldview of Islam. If you think relativism is incoherent, you are not alone. Agnosticism The agnostic sees a bewildering array of belief systems about undetectable realms and magical beings and despairs that we could ever know which one of them is true, if any. He thinks religious truths, unlike scientific truths, are unknowable. Atheism I am an atheist, though not because of religious diversity. But how could an all-loving God do something so unloving, so unfair? A third response is to say that we all deserve eternal torture, and God is welcome to choose, for his own purposes, which of us he will save. Which theory better explains vast religious diversity? An all-loving God wishes to clearly reveal his means of salvation to the world. People evolved to see agency where it is not because mistaking wind in the grass for a lion is better for your genes than mistaking a lion for wind in the grass , and this manifests itself differently from culture to culture. The latter, I think. Religious diversity does not make 1 impossible, but it does make it very unlikely. Meister himself derived his list from the works of Joseph Runzo and Harold Netland.

Chapter 8 : Monotheism - Wikipedia

Only one religion (or Religion) can make claims that are all true. For example, consider the area of religion. Since each of the hundreds of conflicting theological or ecclesiastical positions is different in some respect from all the others, we know before we begin any examination of those positions that only one of them has the possibility of.

True religion is the one that opens your heart to God - no religion can guarantee salvation - kingdom of God is a state of consciousness - the belief in one true religion came from the serpentine consciousness - the false outer path - you cannot make a deal with God - salvation is not still-stand - you must constantly transcend yourself in order to ascend - path to Christhood is the key - Question: What is the true religion? If you can answer any of these please do. I tried Christian chat but they believe Christianity is the one, as I always have, but what if its not? Answer from ascended master Jesus through Kim Michaels: As you will see from my answer to another question , there is indeed more than one true and valid religion. I am sure you can see that the process of getting from your current state of consciousness to the state of consciousness that I am talking about must take place inside yourself. We are not talking about becoming a member of an outer organization, swearing allegiance to its outer doctrines or participating in its outer rituals. There simply is no organization on earth that can guarantee your salvation. There never was such an organization and there will be no matter how many claims are made to the contrary. One of my most important statements, as they are found in the current Bible, is the statement that the kingdom of God is within you: Luke, Chapter 17 You will see that I said that the kingdom of God comes not with observation. It cannot be found through outer activities; it can be found only by purifying your heart and transforming your state of consciousness. So the right religion for you personally is the one that opens your heart to God and helps you manifest the higher state of consciousness that truly is the kingdom of God, the inner kingdom. On my website , and during my mission in Galilee, I called this state of consciousness for the Christ consciousness. However, you can use any name you prefer, because the name is not important. It is the state of consciousness itself that is important. There are many of the religions found on earth that have indeed produced people who attained the consciousness that allowed them to enter the kingdom of heaven. There are also people who have attained this state of consciousness without belonging to any formal religion. You will note that I said that blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. When you purify your heart, you attain the state of consciousness that allows you to see that you are one with God because God created you as an individualization of himself. This realization can come only when you attain conscious contact with your Christ self and your I AM Presence. Contrary to the beliefs held by so many orthodox people from virtually every religion, God is not concerned about which religion you follow. In fact, I can assure you that the entire idea that there can be only one true religion never originated from God or from the ascended masters. It originated with the serpentine consciousness that wants to prove God wrong, as Mother Mary has explained in her beautiful discourse. This entire serpentine state of consciousness, which I often refer to as the dualistic mind, wants to believe that there is an outer salvation, an automatic salvation, a guaranteed salvation. This is the false path that I talk about in another discourse and which the Bible refers to in the saying that there is a way that seems right unto a man but the ends thereof are ways of death [Proverbs You will see that I often chastised the lawyers, the scribes and the Pharisees for following and promoting this outer path. You will see that I chastised people for doing their alms in public and for giving their prayers in public. I warned about rote repetition, not because repetition is wrong but because a ritual that is performed without engaging and opening the heart has little value in the eyes of God. The serpentine mind wants you to believe that salvation can be attained through outer means; that it is a mechanical process. In other words, if you follow certain rules and believe certain doctrines, then God simply has to save you. So many religious people are literally trying to strike a deal with God, yet God gives salvation freely to all who will accept it. As explained in my parable about the wedding feast [Matthew The wedding garment is the Christ consciousness, and nothing less will gain you entry to the kingdom of God. The serpentine mind also wants you to believe that once you have attained salvation, it is a state of no change and you need never strive again. Yet in reality, God is the eternal creator. God never stands still because God is

constantly creating. The only way God can create is to transcend itself and its sense of identity. Therefore, as a son or daughter of God, you are meant to be a co-creator with God, and therefore you cannot stand still either. You must be willing to constantly self-transcend, and this is indeed the key to the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, you can never stand still while on earthâ€”and neither can you stand still in heaven. You cannot simply find a church that you define as the one true church, accept its doctrines and follow its rituals and then think you will make it to heaven. You must continually strive to expand your understanding of the spiritual side of life, to purify your heart and to raise your state of consciousness, so that you can express more of your divine individuality every day. There are people who have made great strides on the spiritual path for decades and who come to a point where they feel like they have done enough, and now is time to relax and rest on their laurels. Because of the downward pull of matter itself, combined with the serpentine consciousness, such people will immediately, and often without realizing it, begin to slide back into a lower state of consciousness. If they are not alert, they can eventually lose much of the spiritual attainment that they had gained through their decade-long efforts. The true religion is one that opens your heart to God and keeps it open, so that you can continue to transcend yourself and express more of God every day. I am aware that many orthodox religions promote the serpentine lie of an outer salvation. Yet within all of those churches there are still people who manage to see beyond this lie and open their hearts to me and to God. I honor such people no matter which religion they follow, and I only hope that more and more people will discover the inner path to Christhood. This is truly the key to transforming the old, stale religions into living churches that can once again be open to the winds of the Holy Spirit. God is a Spirit and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth [John 4:

Chapter 9 : Is Christianity the One True Religion? - Mar 17, - Bible Answer Man with Hank Hanegraaff

Exclusivism is the view that only one religion is true and all others are false, inclusivism the view that the benefits of the one truest religion can be accessed from within others which are at least partially true.

Either the universe had a beginning or it did not. If it did, either that beginning was caused or it was not caused. If it was caused, either the cause was personal or it was impersonal. Based on these dilemmas, the argument can be put in the following logical form: Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence. The universe began to exist. Therefore, the universe has some kind of cause of its existence. The cause of the universe is either an impersonal cause or a personal one. The cause of the universe is not impersonal. Therefore, the cause of the universe is a personal one, which we call God. This version of the cosmological argument was bolstered by work in astrophysics and cosmology in the late twentieth century. On one interpretation of the standard Big Bang cosmological model, the time-space universe sprang into existence ex nihilo approximately 13.8 billion years ago. Such a beginning is best explained, argue kalam defenders, by a non-temporal, non-spatial, personal, transcendent cause—namely God. The claim that the universe began to exist is also argued philosophically in at least two ways. First, it is argued that an actual infinite set of events cannot exist, for actual infinities lead to metaphysical absurdities. Since an infinite temporal regress of events is an actual infinite set of events, such a regress is metaphysically impossible. So the past cannot be infinite; the universe must have had a temporal beginning. A second approach begins by arguing that an infinite series of events cannot be formed by successive addition one member being added to another. The reason why is that, when adding finite numbers one after the other, the set of numbers will always be finite. The addition of yet another finite number, ad infinitum, will never lead to an actual infinite. Since the past is a series of temporal events formed by successive addition, the past could not be actually infinite in duration. Nor will the future be so. The universe must have had a beginning. Many objections have been raised against the kalam argument, both scientific and philosophical, including that there are other cosmological models of the universe besides the Big Bang in which the universe is understood to be eternal, such as various multi-verse theories. Philosophical rebuttals marshaled against the kalam argument include the utilization of set theory and mathematical systems which employ actual infinite sets. Teleological Arguments Teleological arguments in the East go back as far as C. In the West, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics offered arguments for a directing intelligence of the world given the order found within it. There is an assortment of teleological arguments, but a common theme among them is the claim that certain characteristics of the natural world reflect design, purpose, and intelligence. These features of the natural world are then used as evidence for an intelligent, intentional designer of the world. The teleological argument has been articulated and defended at various times and places throughout history, but its zenith was in the early nineteenth century with perhaps its most ardent defender: In his book, *Natural Theology*, Paley offers an argument from analogy: Artifacts such as a watch, with their means to ends configurations, are the products of human design. The works of nature, such as the human hand, resemble artifacts. Thus the works of nature are probably the products of design. Furthermore, the works of nature are much more in number and far greater in complexity. Therefore, the works of nature were probably the products of a grand designer—one much more powerful and intelligent than a human designer. Those offered by David Hume—in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* are often taken to be archetype refutations of traditional design arguments. Among them are that the analogy between the works of nature and human artifacts is not particularly strong; that even if we could infer a grand designer of the universe, this designer turns out to be something less than the God of the theistic religions especially given the great amount of evil in the world; and that just because a universe has the appearance of design, it does not follow that it is in fact designed; such an event could have occurred through natural, chance events. A more recent version of the design argument is based on the apparent fine-tuning of the cosmos. Fine-tuning arguments, whose current leading defender is Robin Collins, include the claims that the laws of nature, the constants of physics, and the initial conditions of the universe are finely tuned for conscious life. Consider the following three: While each of the individual calculations of such constants may not be fully accurate, it is argued that the significant

number of them, coupled with their independence from one other, provides evidence of their being intentionally established with conscious life in mind. Objections to fine-tuning arguments are multifarious. According to an anthropic principle objection, if the laws of nature and physical constants would have varied to any significant degree, there would be no conscious observers such as ourselves. Given that such observers do exist, it should not be surprising that the laws and constants are just as they are. One way of accounting for such observers is the many-worlds hypothesis. In this view, there exist a large number of universes, perhaps an infinite number of them. Most of these universes include life-prohibiting parameters, but at least a minimal number of them would probably include life-permitting ones. It should not be surprising that one of them, ours, for example, is life-permitting. Much of the current fine-tuning discussion turns on the plausibility of the many-worlds hypothesis and the anthropic principle. There are other versions of the teleological argument that have also been proposed which focus not on fundamental parameters of the cosmos but on different aspects of living organisms—“including their emergence, alleged irreducibly complex systems within living organisms, information intrinsic within DNA, and the rise of consciousness—in an attempt to demonstrate intelligent, intentional qualities in the world. If successful, the cosmological argument only provides evidence for a transcendent first cause of the universe, nothing more; at best, the teleological argument provides evidence for a purposive, rational designer of the universe, nothing more; and so on. Natural theologians maintain, however, that the central aim of these arguments is not to offer full-blown proofs of any particular deity, but rather to provide evidence or warrant for belief in a grand designer, or creator, or moral lawgiver. Some natural theologians argue that it is best to combine the various arguments in order to provide a cumulative case for a broad form of theism. Taken together, these natural theologians argue, the classical arguments offer a picture of a deity not unlike the God of the theistic religious traditions and even if this approach does not prove the existence of any particular deity, it does nonetheless lend support to theism over naturalism which, as used here, is the view that natural entities have only natural causes, and that the world is fully describable by the physical sciences. Along with arguments for the existence of God, there are also a number of reasons one might have for denying the existence of God. If the burden is on the theist to provide highly convincing evidences or reasons that would warrant his or her believing that God exists, in the absence of such evidences and reasons disbelief is justified. Another reason one might have for not believing that God exists is that science conflicts with theistic beliefs and, given the great success of the scientific enterprise, it should have the last word on the matter. Since science has regularly rebuffed religious claims in the past, we should expect the claims of religion to eventually become extinct. A third possible reason for denying the existence of God is that the very concept of God is incoherent. And a fourth reason one might have is that the existence of God conflicts with various features of the natural world, such as evil, pain, and suffering. The Challenge of Science Over the last several hundred years there has been tremendous growth in scientific understanding of the world in such fields as biology, astronomy, physics, and geology. These advances have had considerable influence on religious belief. When religious texts, such as the Bible, have been in conflict with science, the latter has generally been the winner in the debate ; religious beliefs have commonly given way to the power of the scientific method. It has seemed to some that modern science will be able to explain all of the fundamental questions of life with no remainder. Given the advances of science and the retreat of religious beliefs, many in the latter half of the twentieth century agreed with the general Freudian view that a new era was on the horizon in which the infantile illusions, or perhaps delusions, of religion would soon go the way of the ancient Greek and Roman gods. With the onset of the twenty-first century, however, a new narrative has emerged. Religion has not fallen into oblivion, as many anticipated; in fact, religious belief is on the rise. Many factors account for this, including challenges to psychological and sociological theories which hold belief in God to be pathological or neurotic. In recent decades these theories have themselves been challenged by medical and psychological research, being understood by many to be theories designed primarily to destroy belief in God. Another important factor is the increase in the number of believing and outspoken scientists, such as Francis Collins, the director of the human genome project. But despite this orchestrated opposition arguing the falsity and incoherence of theism, it has proved rather resilient. Indeed, the twenty-first century is reflecting a renewed interest in philosophical theism. The Coherence of Theism Philosophical challenges to theism have

also included the claim that the very concept of God makes no sense—that the attributes ascribed to God are logically incoherent either individually or collectively. There are first-rate philosophers today who argue that theism is coherent and others of equal stature who argue that theism is incoherent. Much of the criticism of the concept of theism has focused on God as understood in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but it is also relevant to the theistic elements found within Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and certain forms of African and Native American religions. The question of whether theism is coherent is an important one, for if there is reason to believe that theism is incoherent, theistic belief is in an important sense undermined. The logical consistency of each of the divine attributes of classical theism has been challenged by both adherents and non-adherents of theism. Consider the divine attribute of omniscience. If God knows what you will freely do tomorrow, then it is the case now that you will indeed do that tomorrow. But how can you be free not to do that thing tomorrow if it is true now that you will in fact freely do that thing tomorrow? There is a vast array of replies to this puzzle, but some philosophers conclude that omniscience is incompatible with future free action and that, since there is future free action, God—if God exists—is not omniscient. Another objection to the coherence of theism has to do with the divine attribute of omnipotence and is referred to as the stone paradox. An omnipotent being, as traditionally understood, is a being who can bring about anything. So, an omnipotent being could create a stone that was too heavy for such a being to lift. But if he could not lift the stone, he would not be omnipotent, and if he could not make such a stone, he would not be omnipotent. Hence, no such being exists. A number of replies have been offered to this puzzle, but some philosophers conclude that the notion of omnipotence as traditionally defined is incoherent and must be redefined if the concept of God is to remain a plausible one. Arguments for the incoherence of theism have been offered for each of the divine attributes. While there have been many challenges to the classical attributes of God, there are also contemporary philosophers and theologians who have defended each of them as traditionally understood. There is much lively discussion currently underway by those defending both the classical and neo-classical views of God. But not all theistic philosophers and theologians have believed that the truths of religious beliefs can be or even should be demonstrated or rationally justified. Problems of Evil and Suffering

a. Logical Problems Perhaps the most compelling and noteworthy argument against theism is what is referred to as the problem of evil. Philosophers of the East and the West have long recognized that difficulties arise for one who affirms both the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God and the reality of evil. David Hume, quoting the ancient Greek thinker Epicurus —

B. Is he [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? Is he able, but not willing? Is he both able and willing?