

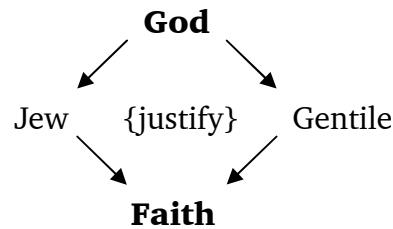
## **The Exclusiveness of Christianity**

### **Introduction:**

1. 9/11 was a watershed event in the history of the U.S. and the world.
2. One of the more subtle effects has been an accelerated demand for a non-judgmental God. Because the terrorists were religious extremists, there has been a backlash against religious convictions deemed harsh, exclusive or intolerant. Religious groups that are more tolerant and accepting of others on an equal basis are politically correct. This is “religious pluralism.” According to this philosophy, all religions are culturally relevant and inherently equal.
3. Ironically, much of the cry for religious tolerance comes from so-called Christian quarters. Consider the comments of Joseph C. Hough, Jr., president of Union Theological Seminary in New York. “Acknowledging That God Is Not Limited to Christians”:
  - a. “What is essential for Christian faith is that we know we have seen the face of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not essential to believe that no one else has seen God and experienced redemption in another place or time.”
  - b. On a “new theology of religions”: “It would begin with the recognition that religion is something that we human beings put together in an effort to give some cultural form to our faith. Our faith is a response to the experience of the presence of God. Religion, our rituals, our music, even our theology, is a human attempt to express what we have experienced. Since we have only our human language and symbols to use in expressing our faith, religions differ as much as cultures differ. Therefore, we want to be careful about claiming that one religious form is the only one that is authentic or real.”
  - c. “I am a Christian who strongly believes that God has always been and now is working everywhere in every human culture to redeem the world. I believe that there is ample evidence in the best of the world’s religions, including our own, that God’s work is effective. Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and others have been and are being transformed by a powerful vision of God that redeems them with hope and infuses their religious practice with compassion, justice and peace. Wherever there is peace and movement toward peace, where there is justice and movement toward justice, God is present and working.”
4. Obviously, Mr. Hough does not see Christianity in any *exclusive* sense; it is just another religion that God is using to bring harmony to humanity. Mr. Hough views religion in social and political terms only; he has lost sight of the true meaning of *redemption*.

## 1. One Faith of Jew and Gentile

A. Rom 3:29-30 – Paul declares that God will justify both Jew and Gentile by *faith*.



1. This is not just *any faith*, or faith in anyone or anything, but “*He might be the justifier of the one who has faith **in Jesus***” (Rom 3:26).
2. Religious pluralists want to lop off “in Jesus” and insert “in Mohammed,” “in Buddha,” “in Brahma/Siva/Vishnu,” or in any other god of man’s choosing.
3. Jesus recognized the same basic quality of faith in all men. When the centurion demonstrated his trust, Jesus marveled, “*I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel*” (Mt 8:10). Then He immediately added, “*And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*” (8:11). That is, Jesus foresaw that many other Gentiles would demonstrate faith, not just in *anyone or any god*, but in **Him**.

B. Eph 2:11-17 – Paul asserts that *true* peace is not by treaties or diplomacy but by Jew and Gentile being reconciled to God “in **one body** through the cross” (2:16).

1. The “*unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph 4:3) grows from the acknowledgment of “*one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism ...*” (4:4-6).
2. This is the “mystery” that God had been working out through the ages: “*that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the **same body**, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel*” (Eph 3:3-6).

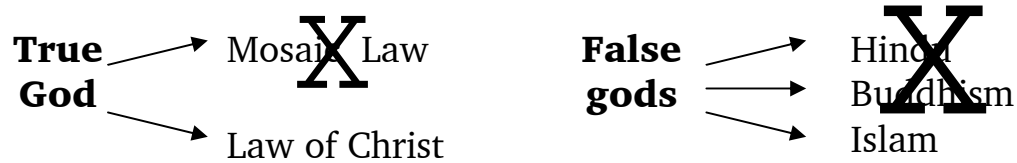
C. Gal 3:26-27 – “*For you are all sons of God **through faith in Christ Jesus**, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek ...*”. The only children God recognizes are those who have faith in Christ.

## 2. Jesus and a Multiplicity of Faiths

A. Did Jesus teach that *any* faith of *any* culture in *any* god will do?

1. Jesus did not acknowledge false gods. He told the Samaritan woman “*you worship what you do not know*” (Jn 4:22). Even though she had some knowledge of Messianic promises (Jn 4:25), Jesus indicated her worship was vain.

2. Further, Jesus told the Jews that their worship of the true God via the Mosaic system would no longer be acceptable (cf. Jn 4:21-24). Consider the diagram:



3. If God would no longer accept worship according to a law/covenant that originated with Him; i.e., the Law of Moses, how much less would He accept worship that originated in the minds of men and based upon false gods?

B. The new testament is perfectly plain on the exclusiveness of Jesus:

1. Jesus: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one** comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn 14:6).
2. John: *“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and **this life is in His Son**. He who has the Son has life; **he who does not have the Son of God does not have life**”* (1 Jn 5:12).
3. Paul: *“It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you ... in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who **do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**”* (2 Th 1:6, 8).

C. The main issue has to do with *redemption*. Religious pluralists talk about the *cultural relevance* of various religions, but they have little to say about *atonement for sin*. In Jesus Christ something is found that is vital to a relationship with God not found anywhere else: a vicarious sacrifice that takes away sin.

1. In rejecting Christ, *“there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”* (Heb 10:26).
2. *“For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”* (Jn 8:24).
3. *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Ac 4:12).

### 3. Observations

- A. We must not compromise: Jesus was **not** just “another prophet” but the Son of God, Immanuel (God with us), and He is the only Savior from sin. He is the only one who has declared the Father, the only mediator and intercessor and the only Judge of all men.
- B. We must not deny Jesus in any way, lest He deny us (Mt 10:32-33). Let us *“always be ready to give a defense”* of the hope within us (1 Pet 3:15). Our hope is Jesus.