



# Pluralism

“I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.”

Gandhi

## PLURALISM (AS DEFINED BY WIKIPEDIA):

- As the name of the worldview according to which one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and thus that at least some truths and true values exist in other religions.
- As acceptance of the concept that two or more religions with mutually exclusive truth claims are equally valid. This posture often emphasizes religion's common aspects.
- Sometimes as a synonym for ecumenism, i.e., the promotion of some level of unity, co-operation, and improved understanding between different religions or different denominations within a single religion.
- As term for the condition of harmonious co-existence between adherents of different religions or religious denominations.

## INCLUSIVISM? EXCLUSIVISM? RELATIVISM? PLURALISM?

“The position which I have outlined is exclusivist in the sense that it affirms the unique truth of the revelation in Jesus Christ, but it is not exclusivist in the sense of denying the possibility of the salvation of the non-Christian. It is inclusivist in the sense that it refuses to limit the saving grace of God to the members of the Christian Church, but it rejects the inclusivism which regards the non-Christian religions as vehicles of salvation. It is pluralist in the sense of acknowledging the gracious work of God in the lives of all human beings, but it rejects a pluralism that denies the uniqueness and decisiveness of what God has done in Jesus Christ.”

### From Leslie Newbigin's "The Gospel in a Pluralist Society"

**Exclusivism:** Salvation is ONLY available through Jesus Christ - those who have never heard the gospel are eternally LOST. Salvation is only found through the Christian Church.

**Pluralism:** Other religions are *legitimate* means of salvation. People are able to find salvation in various religions and in many ways.

**Inclusivism:** While salvation is *ontologically* founded on the person of Christ, its benefits have been made universally available by the revelation of God...

**Or, another way: 1) No religion is true. 2) Only one religion is true. 3) Every religion is true. 4) One religion is the true one in whose truth all religions participate.**

**Possible Topics:** Inter-religious dialogue. What's the point of interfaith dialogue? Are all religions the same? How do we respectfully have conversations? What does this mean about salvation? Is everyone going to heaven? Karl Rahner's idea of "anonymous Christians."

## Thoughts on Pluralism: <http://bit.ly/h04hm>

"I don't like the practice of rejecting (or trying to alter) other ideas or cultures simply because they are other...But I am similarly uncomfortable with the notion that pluralism must involve complete acceptance of other ideas and cultures simply because they are other as well...True pluralism engages, and learns, and wrestles with justice - and in doing so extends God's love to all."

**Julie Clawson** (<http://pomomusings.com/2009/04/08/julie-clawson-on-plurality/>)

"Embracing theological pluralism, that notion that others might be on to something and that "I" am not totally correct, is difficult because faith is needed to embrace theological pluralism. If God's will cannot be abrogated, if God saves, if God sanctifies, if death cannot stop God - diverse theologies do not represent threats to the Gospel. If we reject theological pluralism - we may end up rejecting the One in whom we place our trust."

**Tony Hoshaw** (<http://pomomusings.com/2009/04/15/tony-hoshaw-on-plurality/>)

"For me, pluralism is a given. It just IS. Multiple religions/belief systems exist and they're not going anywhere. The question is, what do Christians do about it? I heard a message by Samir Selmanovic a year or so ago and his answer to that question is the one I hold to. First and foremost, Christians should be about love. And yet, more often than not, when you ask non Christians if they feel loved by Christians, their answer will be a resounding "no". Selmanovic argued, that is because Christians (by and large) do not genuinely listen and they will not genuinely receive from the other. We have to be willing to come with an open posture to the other, with a willingness learn something. If we can't do that, we might as well not even bother trying to "show them love", because they won't feel it."

**Makeesha Fisher** (<http://pomomusings.com/2009/04/17/makeesha-fisher-on-plurality/>)

"Christians who immerse themselves in the spiritual practices of their tradition and follow Jesus with acts of selfless service to others discover that they have very much more in common with serious practitioners of other religions than they have differences. While these differences exist, and should be respected, they are trivial compared to the shared spiritual experiences of people across religious boundaries."

**Rev. Jim Burklo** (<http://pomomusings.com/2009/04/21/jim-burklo-on-plurality/>)

"For if there is one law that we can be most certain of, it is the law that binds people of all faiths and no faith together. It is no coincidence that it exists in Christianity and Judaism; in Islam and Hinduism; in Buddhism and humanism. It is, of course, the Golden Rule - the call to treat one another as we wish to be treated. The call to love. To serve. To do what we can to make a difference in the lives of those with whom we share the same brief moment on this Earth."

**President Barack Obama** (<http://pomomusings.com/2009/05/23/barack-obama-on-plurality/>)

"But my confidence is in Jesus and his gospel - my confidence is not in us and our religious systems or institutions. I don't think any religion - including my own - "owns" Jesus or has proprietary rights on his gospel of the kingdom of God. The good news taught by and embodied in Jesus is, I am discovering, far better than the half-good/half-bad version many of us were taught."

**Brian McLaren** (<http://pomomusings.com/2009/05/29/brian-mclaren-on-plurality/>)