

The Exclusive Nature of Christianity Pt 1

By William Craig

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There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved. Thus, the earliest apostles of Christ believed, and thus they preached. In fact, the entire New Testament is pervaded by the conviction that salvation is exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul, for example, in his letters, uh, describes the exclusive salvation which is to be found through Christ alone. In Ephesians chapter two, in verse twelve for example, he asks his Gentile converts to recall their pre-Christian days and to remember what they were like. He says, remember that at that time you were separated from Christ, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. And the burden of the opening chapter of uh, Paul's letter to the Romans is to show that this desolate condition is the general situation among mankind. In Romans chapter one in verse twenty, Paul explains that God's eternal power and deity are visible to all persons everywhere through the created order around us. And in chapter two verse fifteen, Paul says, moreover, that God's moral law is written on the heart of every person, so that every individual, no matter what is geographical or historical circumstance, is responsible for at least recognizing that there is an eternal creator of the universe to whom he is morally responsible, and under whose moral law he stands. In verse seven of chapter two, Paul explains that God freely offers eternal life to anyone who will respond in a positive fashion to this general revelation of God in nature and in conscience. He says to those who, by, uh, well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will give eternal life.

But in chapter one verses twenty-one to thirty-two, Paul unfortunately explains that the mass of humanity do not respond positively to God's general revelation in nature and conscience. Instead, they ignore the Creator and flout his moral law, plunging themselves into a state of spiritual darkness and moral, uh, turpitude, alienated from the life of God and in need of his forgiveness and cleansing. Paul's conclusion comes in chapter three of Romans, verses nine to twelve, when he explains that all persons everywhere, regardless of their circumstances, find themselves therefore under the power of sin. He says, none is righteous. No, not one. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And to make the situation worse, in chapter three verses nineteen to twenty, Paul explains that no one can redeem himself out of this status of moral guilt and alienation from God by means of righteous works or good living. If God were to judge us by our deeds, everyone, Paul says, would ultimately be lost. But then comes the solution to the problem in chapter three versus twenty-one to twenty-six. God through Jesus Christ has provided a means of escape. Through Christ's sacrificial death, God's forgiveness and moral cleansing is available to us. Christ died in our place. He took the death penalty for sin that we deserve, and thus God's forgiveness and love is freed up to be bestowed upon us. For all who respond affirmatively in faith to Christ and in trust, in his sacrificial death. And thus the sacrifice of Christ is the only means of salvation. The logic of the New Testament is very clear. Given the universality of sin and the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice, then it follows logically that there is no salvation apart from Christ.

Now, this doctrine was as scandalous in the polytheistic world of the first century as it was uh, or is rather today, at the end of the 20th century. In the Roman Empire, all of the different gods of the different peoples were thought to be equally valid. In time, however, as the Christian religion

became the state religion of the Roman Empire, this scandal of the exclusivity of salvation through Christ alone receded. Indeed, for medieval theologians like Augustine and Aquinas, one of the very marks of the true church was its catholicity. That is to say, its universality. For these theologians, the very fact of the institution of the Church universally existing among mankind and believed upon everywhere, was a testimony to the truth of the Christian religion. The demise of this doctrine came with the so-called expansion of Europe, which refers to that three centuries of expansion and exploration between about 1450 and 1750. Through the voyages of men like Marco Polo, uh, Christopher Columbus and Magellan. New civilizations and new worlds undreamt of were discovered, and it was found that far from being the universal religion of mankind, Christianity was confined largely to Europe, to a corner of the globe, and that there were whole civilizations who had not so much as even heard of Jesus Christ, much less believed in him. And this realization had a twofold impact upon people's religious thinking. First of all, it tended to relativize religious beliefs. No one religion could now claim to be the universal religion of mankind. Rather, it seemed that every society, every civilization or geographical area had its own religion which was suitable to it. And none of these could plausibly claim to be the religion of mankind.

Secondly, it also made Christianity's claim to exclusive salvation through Christ alone, seem narrow and cruel. Enlightenment rationalists often taunted Christian theologians with the prospect of sixteen million Chinamen going to hell, because they hadn't believed in Christ when they had not so much as even heard of Jesus Christ. In our own day, the influx into Western nations of, uh, immigrants from former colonies, as well as the advances in telecommunications which have served to shrink the world to a global village, have heightened our awareness of the

religious diversity of mankind. We now know that somewhere between fifteen and twenty-five percent of the world's population has yet to hear the Gospel of Christ for the first time. And the result of this, uh, realization upon Christian thinking has been that the main line churches have largely lost their sense of missionary calling. Today, the modern mission's movement has been reinterpreted not to bring the Gospel of salvation to the lost and dying peoples of the world, but rather, it is a sort of social, uh, improvement to better the socioeconomic lot of persons in the Third World nations. If you will, a sort of Christian Peace Corps. I think nowhere is this reinterpretation of the goal of Christian missions more evident than in the documents of the ascetic, uh, Second Vatican Council, uh, promulgated during the 1960s. In the documents of Vatican two, the council declares that those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. For example, Jews are especially dear to God. But the plan of salvation also includes all who acknowledge the creator, including Muslims.

People who by conscience strive to do God's will can also be saved. And so the church declares that Catholics should now pray for the Jews, not for the conversion of the Jews. And it declares that the church also looks upon Muslims with esteem. Missionary work is to be directed only toward those who are still bound up in the worship of idols. Thus, the documents of Vatican two suggest that there are great multitudes of people in the world who consciously reject Jesus Christ and yet who are saved, who are recipients of salvation, and therefore they are not appropriate subjects for evangelization. And what we are now seeing is an evangelical compromise on this same score. For example, Clark Pinnock, a prominent evangelical theologian, in an address to the American Academy of Religion in San Francisco in November of 1992, declared, I am appealing to evangelicals to make the shift to, to a more inclusive outlook, much the way the Catholics did

at Vatican two. Pinnock expresses great optimism that large numbers of the unevangelized will in fact be saved, despite their having no knowledge of Christ. He says God will find faith in people without the person even realizing that he or she had it. He even entertains the possibility of people being given another chance after death, uh, even if they rejected Christ during this lifetime. Once they're freed from the effects of sin that blinded them, he writes, Imagine it: People are raised from the dead by the power of Jesus' resurrection, free of whatever had obscured the love of God and prevented them from receiving it in life. God is a serious lover who wants everyone with no opportunity to respond to his offer, to have one.

No sinner is excluded who, having been included in salvation by God but lacking opportunity to respond to grace. Now Pinnock faces squarely the question. Doesn't this inclusivistic outlook undermine both the rationale and the urgency of world missions? And Pinnock says, no, it does not. For three reasons. Number one, he says, God has called us to engage in missionary work and we should obey. Well, this answer certainly gives us a reason to follow God's command. But of course, it doesn't provide any reason at all why God would issue such an apparently pointless command. If large numbers of the unevangelized are already saved, then why give up fifteen to twenty-five of the best years of your life, and maybe even sacrifice your life itself, to go share the Gospel with people who are already recipients of salvation? Uh, Pinnock's answer simply is, a blind obedience to a command which seems to lack any rationale. Second, he says, missions is broader than just securing somebody's salvation. Well, in other words, you're sort of back to the Christian Peace Corps idea. Third, he says missions should be positive. It's not just an ultimatum, believe or be damned. Well, of course, it's not just an ultimatum like that. But nevertheless, it's hard to deny that any urgency to the task of world mission seems to be largely removed by his

inclusivistic outlook. And I find it tragically ironic that just as the church is on the verge of completing the task of world evangelization, perhaps in this generation, that it should be her own theologians which should threaten to trip her at the finish line. The theological fallout of this inclusivistic attitude is even more serious, if possible.

Here, a good example would be my doctoral mentor, John Hick. Professor Hick began as a relatively conservative theologian. His first book was called *Christianity at the Center*. But as Professor Hicks began to study comparative religions and to meet personally various, uh, Hindus and Buddhists and, uh, proponents of other world religions, he could not bear the thought that such good and decent and loving people should be going to hell. It just seemed unconscionable to him, that that could be the case. But he realized that that meant, therefore, that Christianity could not be the exclusive way of salvation. All of the world's great religions must be legitimate avenues and paths to God. But if that is the case, then what do you do with Jesus Christ? For Professor Hick, the answer was that Jesus Christ cannot be who he claims to be or whom the Bible rather claims him to be. Rather, the notion of Jesus Christ as God incarnate must be a myth, a fable, a fairy tale. And thus he wrote a book entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate*. In this book. He writes the following: Understood literally, the Son of God, God, the Son, God incarnate language, implies that God can be adequately known and responded to only through Jesus, and the whole religious life of mankind beyond the stream of Judaic Christian faith is thus, by implication, excluded as lying outside the sphere of salvation. This implication did little positive harm, so long as Christendom was a largely autonomous civilization, with only relatively marginal interaction with the rest of mankind. But, with the clash between the Christian and Muslim worlds, and then on an ever-broadening front, with European colonization throughout

the Earth, the literal understanding of the mythological language of Christian discipleship has had a divisive effect upon the relations between that minority of human beings who live within the borders of the Christian tradition, and that majority who live outside it and within other streams of religious life.

He writes, transposed into theological terms, the problem which has come to the surface in the encounter of Christianity with the other world religions, is this. If Jesus was literally God incarnate, and if it is by his death alone that men can be saved, and by their response to him alone, that they can appropriate that salvation, then own, the only doorway to eternal life is Christian faith. It would follow from this that the large majority of the human race so far have not been saved. But is it credible that the loving God and father of all men has decreed that only those born within one particular period of human history shall be saved? Dr. Hick thinks the answer is no. And therefore he rejects the incarnation and the deity of Christ as a myth. Jesus of Nazareth was just another good human prophet and religious genius, uh, such as Muhammad or Buddha or Moses. So the fallout from this, uh, relativization of religious beliefs I think is serious indeed. What is the Christian to say to all of this? Does Christianity make God out to be cruel and unloving? Well, in order to get at this problem, I think we need to take a step back, and ask ourselves, what exactly is the problem really supposed to be here? What is the difficulty? Is it just the idea that a loving God would not send people to hell? Is that the problem? Well, no, I don't think that is the problem. You see, the Bible makes it quite clear that God desires the salvation of all people, and that he excludes no one. Second Peter, three nine, and First Timothy two four, say clearly that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. God's desire is that all persons be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth.

And thus the Scripture says that God draws all persons to himself, and He desires the salvation of every individual. Anybody who therefore makes a free and well-informed decision to reject Christ seals his own fate. He is, in a literal sense, self condemned. He's like a prisoner on death row, pardoned by the governor, who freely rejects that pardon and prefers to die instead. He is literally self condemned, and God deeply mourns his loss. He is not saved only because he rejects and repudiates God's best efforts to save him. So I don't think it's simply the problem that a loving God wouldn't send people to hell. In a sense, God doesn't send anybody to hell. People who freely, uh, reject Christ, sent themselves. So is it then instead the idea that a loving God wouldn't send people to hell because they were uninformed or misinformed about Christ? Is that the problem? Is that what it's supposed to be? Well, again, no, I don't think that is the problem because the Bible, again, indicates pretty clearly that God won't judge people who have never heard the Gospel on the basis of whether or not they have placed their faith in Christ. That would be manifestly unfair. It would be unfair to judge people who've never heard of Christ on the basis of whether or not they've trusted in Christ. Rather, the scripture indicates that God will judge people on the basis of the information that they have; on the basis of the divine light that they have received. Namely, God's general revelation of himself in nature and in conscience. All persons are therefore responsible to at least acknowledge a personal creator of the universe to whom they are morally responsible and whose moral law they have broken and before whom they are therefore guilty and in need of forgiveness and moral cleansing in their lives.

And as I said earlier, Paul indicates that if persons will respond to this general revelation in faith and repentance, God will give them eternal life. Romans two seven says, that anyone who seeks

for glory and honor and immortality, God will give eternal life. And I believe that that is a sincere and genuine promise. That doesn't mean that persons can be saved apart from the work of Christ, apart from Christ's death on the cross. Rather, it would mean that certain persons who have no conscious knowledge of Christ could be the beneficiaries of Christ's death, because they do respond to the information that they have. And so God applies to them the benefits of Christ's death without their conscious knowledge. They would be in a way, like certain figures in the Old Testament who obviously never heard of Christ, but who were saved because they responded appropriately to the information that they did have. And thus salvation is accessible to all persons everywhere in the world. Unfortunately, as we've seen, uh, the vast majority of mankind do not respond affirmatively to God's general revelation in nature and in conscience. Rather than worship and serve the creator, they turn away to worship and serve gods of their own making. And rather than obey the moral law, they plunge themselves into immorality and darkness. So that while perhaps a few, uh, we can hope, might be saved through their response to general revelation, I think that the Bible gives little grounds for optimism. But the point is that salvation is truly accessible for all persons. God has given sufficient grace to everyone everywhere to be saved, if only they will respond to it.

And thus, I don't think that the problem is the difficulty of persons being judged because they're uninformed or misinformed about Christ. God is fair, and will only judge them on the basis of the light that they have. Rather, it seems to me that the problem before us tonight is this. If God is all knowing, then even before he created the world, he knew who would receive Christ and be saved, and who would reject Christ and be lost. But in that case, several very difficult questions arise. Number one, why did God bring the Gospel to people who he knew would accept it, if they

heard it, even though they reject the general revelation that they do have? Let me give you an example. Imagine a Native American, uh, Indian, say, uh, let's call him Walking Bear. Living on the North American continent during the Middle Ages, before the advent of, uh, missionaries. And let's suppose that Walking Bear looks out at the created order around him, the beauty of the stars and the intricacy of nature, and he senses that all of this has been made by the Great Spirit. And moreover, he looks into his own heart and he senses the moral law, uh, upon his heart. He realizes that the Great Spirit has made all men as brothers, and that we should live in love and harmony with each other. But instead of worshipping the Great Spirit and following him, let's suppose that Walking Bear ignores the Great Spirit and instead, uh, plunges himself into Spiritism. And rather than follow the moral law, he lives a life of rapacity and violence and hatred. In such a case, Walking Bear would be justly condemned before God for having failed to respond to God's grace and general revelation in nature and conscience.

But let's also suppose that if missionaries had reached Walking Bear with the Gospel, that he would have responded freely to the Gospel, and been saved. In that case, his damnation seems to be the result of bad luck, the result of historical and geographical accident. He had the misfortune, through no fault of his own, to be born at a time and place in history where the Gospel was not preached. If only he had been born later or in another time or in another land, he might have heard the Gospel and been saved. In that case, his salvation now is, or damnation, is simply the result of an accident. And isn't this incompatible with the love and the justice of God? Secondly, even more fundamentally, we could ask, why did God even create the world if he knew that so many people would freely reject Christ and be lost? Why not just refrain altogether from creation? And thirdly, even more radically. Why didn't God create a world in which

everyone freely places their faith in Christ, and is saved? I'm not suggesting that this be a robot world or a puppet world, but did God simply create the world with people in it who he knew would freely place their faith in Christ and be saved. Why didn't he create a world of universal salvation? What's the Christian supposed to say in answer to these questions? Is Christianity in fact logically incoherent? Does it declare that God is loving and omnipotent, and yet at the same time, cruel and unloving? Well, in order to get at these three questions, I think we need to do a logical analysis more closely of the problem before us tonight. Basically, what the Pluralist is saying here, is that it is impossible for God, on the one hand, to be all-loving and all-powerful, and yet, on the other hand, for some people never to hear the Gospel and to be lost, that somehow these two truths are logically incompatible with each other.

It's impossible for God to be all-loving and all-powerful, and yet for some people never to hear the Gospel and be lost. But why, we may ask, should we think that this is impossible? After all, there's no explicit contradiction between these two. So if the Pluralist is assuming that there's some implicit contradiction here, he must be assuming some hidden premises which would serve to bring out this implicit contradiction and make it explicit. But what are those premises? Well, I've never seen any pluralist exhibit what those hidden assumptions or premises are. But let me take a stab at what I think they might be. It seems to me that the pluralist is making two hidden assumptions. Number one, he is assuming that if God is all powerful, then he can create a world in which everyone hears the Gospel and freely is saved. He's assuming that if God is all-powerful, then God can create a world in which everybody hears the Gospel, and is freely saved. Secondly, he seems to be assuming, that if God is all-loving, then he would prefer a world in which everybody is saved, or everyone hears the Gospel and is saved, over a world in which

some people are lost. If God is all-loving, then he prefers a world in which everyone hears the Gospel and is saved over a world in which some people are lost. Now, since God is both all-loving and all-powerful, it would therefore follow that he prefers a world of universal salvation, that he can create a world of universal salvation, and that therefore he would do so, and thus, it is impossible for God to be all-powerful and all-loving, and yet for some persons never to hear the Gospel and be lost. But, we may ask, are these two hidden assumptions necessarily true? They have to be necessarily true in order for this contradiction to come out. And I don't think these two assumptions are necessarily true. Take a look at the first one with me. If God is all powerful, can,

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Are these two hidden assumptions necessarily true? They have to be necessarily true in order for this contradiction to come out. And I don't think these two assumptions are necessarily true. Take a look at the first one with me. If God is all powerful, can he create a world in which everyone hears the Gospel and is freely saved? It seems to me that that is not necessarily true. Now, I think we would agree that it's within God's power to create a world in which everyone hears the Gospel. Granted. But, so long as people are free, there's no guarantee at all that in such a world, everyone would freely respond to the Gospel and be saved. It is logically impossible to make someone freely do something. That's a logical impossibility. And therefore there is simply no guarantee that in a world in which everyone hears the Gospel, that everyone would freely receive salvation and be saved. In fact, when you think about it, there's really no guarantee at all that in such a world, the balance between saved and lost would be any better than it is in the actual world. In fact, it's possible that, uh, in any world of free creatures which God could create, some

people would freely reject his grace and be lost. And so long as that is even possible, so long as that is even possible, it shows that that first assumption is not necessarily true. And therefore the argument for religious pluralism is simply invalid. But more than that, what about the second assumption? Is it true that if God is all loving, then he would prefer a world in which everyone hears the Gospel and is freely saved, over a world in which some persons freely reject him? Well, again, that just doesn't seem to me to be necessarily true.

Let's suppose for the sake of argument that there are possible worlds, uh, which God could create in which everyone hears the Gospel and freely accepts it. Let's grant that for the sake of argument,. Does God's being all loving compel him to prefer one of those worlds over a world in which some people freely reject him and are lost? Well, not necessarily I think. So let's suppose that the only world in which everyone hears the Gospel and freely responds to it, have other offsetting deficiencies. For example, suppose that the only such worlds are worlds containing only a handful of people, only four or five people. And if God were to create any more people, then at least one of them would have freely rejected Christ and been lost. Must God prefer one of these sparsely underpopulated worlds over a world in which multitudes of people freely respond to his grace and are saved, but also some freely reject his grace and are lost? Well, it, it just seems to me that that's not necessarily the case, that God must prefer one of these sparsely populated worlds. So long as God gives to every person that he creates sufficient grace for salvation, then I think he's no less loving for preferring a more populous world in which multitudes freely receive, receive his grace and are saved, even though that means that contrary to his desire, some people would also freely reject his grace and be lost. So neither of the two assumptions made by the pluralist objector is necessarily true. So long as these alternatives are

even possible, it shows that his argument is simply, logically invalid, and that therefore no inconsistency has been demonstrated between God's being all-loving and all-powerful, and some persons not hearing the Gospel and being lost.

But we can do actually more than that. We can go one step further. We can actually show that it is entirely possible that it is consistent, that God is all-powerful and all-loving, and that many persons do not hear the Gospel and are lost. As a good and loving God, God wants as many persons as possible to be saved, and as few people as possible to be lost. His goal then, is to create a world which achieves an optimal balance between saved and lost, to create no more of the lost than is necessary to achieve a certain number of the saved. But it's entirely possible that the actual world contains such an optimal balance. It's possible that in order to create this many persons who will be saved, God also had to create this many persons who will be lost. It's possible that had God created a world in which fewer people go to hell, that even fewer people would have gone to heaven. It's possible that in order to achieve a multitude of saints, God also had to accept a multitude of sinners. Now, someone might object to this alternative by saying that an all-loving God would not create people who he knew will be lost, but who would have been saved if only they had heard the Gospel. But how do we know that there are any such persons? It's reasonable to assume that many people who never hear the Gospel would not have accepted it, even if they had heard it. That seems to be a very reasonable assumption. Many people who never hear the Gospel would not have responded to it even if they had heard it. Suppose, then, that God has so providentially ordered the world that all persons who never hear the Gospel are precisely such people.

In that case, anybody who never hears the Gospel and is lost, would not have received the Gospel and been saved even if he had heard it. No one could therefore stand before God on the Judgement Day and say, All right, God. So I didn't respond to your revelation in nature and conscience. But if only I'd heard the Gospel, then I would have believed. And God will say to that person, no, I'm sorry. I knew that even if you had heard the Gospel, you wouldn't have believed in it. And therefore, my judgment of you on the basis of nature and conscience is neither unfair nor unloving. And thus it's possible that God has created a world which has an optimal balance between saved and un, and unsaved, and that those who never hear the Gospel and are lost would not have believed in Christ and been saved, even if they had heard of him. I want to emphasize that so long as this scenario is even possible, as long as it's even logically possible, it proves that there is no incompatibility between the existence of an all-loving, omnipotent God, and some persons not hearing the Gospel and being lost. So I'm not saying that this is necessarily factually true. I don't know that. But as long as it is even possible, it shows that these truths are entirely logically consistent with each other. Now, let me head off a possible misunderstanding that might be arising in some of your minds. Someone might say at this point, well, then why should we engage in Christian missions then, if all of the people who are unreached would not believe in Christ even if they heard of him. Well, that question is based on a misunderstanding. The question forgets that we're only talking about people who never hear the Gospel.

You see God in his providence can so arrange the world that as the Gospel spreads out from first century Palestine, God providentially places in its path Persons who he knew would freely respond to it and be saved if they heard it. In his love and mercy, God guarantees that no one

who would believe in the Gospel and be saved if he heard it remains ultimately unreached. Once the Gospel reaches a people, then God providentially places there, persons who he knew would respond to it if they heard it. He ensures that those who never hear it are only persons who wouldn't have accepted it if they did hear it. And thus we're prepared, I think, to give possible answers to those three difficult questions that prompted our inquiry this evening. Number one, why didn't God create a, a, why didn't God create a world in which everyone would freely receive Christ and be saved? Answer, it may not be feasible for God to create such a world. If such a world were feasible, then God would have created it. But given his will to create free creatures, God had to accept the fact that some persons would freely reject him and be lost. Number two, why did God create the world when he knew that so many people would freely, uh, reject Christ and be lost? Answer, God wanted to share his love and fellowship with created persons. He knew that this meant that many would freely reject him and be lost. But he also knew that many others would freely respond to his offer of salvation, and be saved. And the happiness and the joy of those who would want to freely accept him and be saved, should not be precluded by those who would freely reject him and be lost.

The lost should not be allowed to have a moral veto over God's ability to create persons who would freely want to find his salvation and come to know God. But God has providentially ordered the world to achieve an optimal balance between saved and lost by maximizing the number of those who would freely accept him, and minimizing the number of those who do not. And finally, number three, why didn't God bring the Gospel to people who he knew would accept it, even though they reject the light of general revelation that they do have? Answer, there are no such people. God in his providence has so arranged the world that those who would

respond to the Gospel if they heard it, do in fact hear it. Those who would not respond, or rather those who do not respond to his revelation in nature and conscience and never hear the Gospel, would not have responded to it even if they did hear it. And thus no one, no one is lost because of historical or geographical accident. Everyone who wants or even would want to be saved will be saved. Now, these are only possible answers to the questions that have prompted our inquiry tonight. But one reason I find this solution so attractive is that I think it's very plausible as well. Indeed, I think it fits very nicely with the biblical teaching In Acts chapter seventeen verses twenty-four to twenty-seven, Paul says, the God who made the heavens and the earth and everything in them does not dwell in temples made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything. Since he gives to all men life and breath and everything, from one nation he made, or rather from one man, he made every nation of men.

And he determined the exact times and places that they should live. He did this in order that they might seek after him, and feel after him, and perhaps find him, for he is not far from every one of us. For in him, we live and move and have our being. It seems to me that what Paul says there is exactly, uh, in harmony with the solution that I've shared this evening. So in conclusion then, it seems to me that the presence of other world religions does not undermine the Christian Gospel of salvation through Christ alone. On the contrary, I think that what I've shared this evening helps to put the proper perspective on Christian missions. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the whole world, trusting that God has so providentially ordered the world, that as we go out sharing the Gospel, God has providentially placed in our path, persons whom he knew would receive the Gospel if they heard it. And thus there are literally divine appointments out there waiting for you and for me. Our compassion toward those in other world religions is

expressed not by pretending that they are not lost and dying without Christ, but rather by our supporting and making every effort ourselves to share with them the life-giving message of the Gospel of salvation through Christ.