

he cannot know, and he cannot say that he cannot say. In claiming that the mystical cannot be spoken, one speaks about it.

Among Wittgenstein's legacies, none is more deadly than the conventionalist view of meaning. All meaning cannot be relative. If it were, the statement "All meaning is relative" would be meaningless. Like other attempts to deny objective meaning, Wittgenstein had to assume the objective meaning of his statements in order to deny there was objective meaning to such statements. For this and many other reasons, *conventionalism, which was at the heart of his view, is both untenable and unaffirmable.

Sources

- T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.
- Augustine, *Against the Academics*.
- N. L. Gendler and W. Carls, *Philosophy of Religion*.
- E. Gibson, *Linguistics and Philosophy*.
- Plato, *Cratylus*.
- L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.
- , *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wolfe, Christian. See COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

World Religions and Christianity. Orthodox Christianity claims to be the true religion. So do Islam and other religions. Even Hinduism and Buddhism (see HINDUISM, VEDANTA; ZEN BUDDHISM), in spite of their eclectic veneer, claim to be true. However, since there are mutually exclusive truth claims among these religions, it is obvious that they cannot all be correct. For example, some religions are monotheistic, such as traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Others are pantheistic, such as Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and Christian Science. Paganism, neopaganism, and Mormonism are polytheistic (see POLYTHEISM). These have incompatible views of God. In the final analysis, only one can be true, and the others must be false.

Uniqueness of Christianity. The uniqueness of Christianity is found in its singular claims about God, Christ, the Bible, and the way of salvation. While there are other monotheistic religions, Christianity claims to have the true view of God—trinitarianism (see TRINITY).

A Unique View of God. No other religion in human history is explicitly trinitarian. *Plato had a triad in ultimate reality of the Good, the *Demiurgos*,

and the World Soul. But the Good was neither personal nor one God in essence. The World Soul was not personal. The three did not share one nature. Neoplatonism had a One, a *Nous*, and a World Soul (*see* PLOTINUS). But this series of emanations is not three distinct persons in one essence. Neither the One nor the World Soul is personal. The One has no essence or being. Only in the Christian Trinity is there one God in essence who is expressed eternally in three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18).

Christians claim that this view of God is the true view of God and that there is no other God (1 Cor. 8:4, 6). Other views are either false views of the true God (as Judaism) or false gods (as in Hinduism). The Islamic view of God is false because it insists that there is only one person in the Godhead.

The Jewish (i.e., Old Testament) view of God is of the true God, but it is incomplete. It rightly insisted that there is only one God (Exod. 20:2–3; Deut. 6:4). The Old Testament allowed for a plurality within the unity of God (Ps. 110:1) and sometimes spoke of God's Son (Prov. 30:4). Once all three members of the Trinity are mentioned in one passage (Isa. 63:7–10). But the Old Testament never explicitly delineates the members of the Trinity as three persons in one God, sharing the same essence. The Old Testament Jewish God is the true God revealed explicitly in his unity. It is revelation in progress. The God represented in all other religions is false. These gods are incompatible with the Bible's view of God. It is the exclusivity of Christianity that this view alone is true.

A Unique View of Christ. No other world religion believes that Christ is the unique Son of God, God himself manifested in human flesh (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF). Orthodox Christianity alone confesses that Jesus is fully God and fully human, two natures in one person. Other religions pay homage to Christ. But none considers him to be God incarnate. To Buddhism and Hinduism he is a guru showing a path to ultimate reality (Brahman). Islam acknowledges him as one of several prophets (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL OF). To Hinduism the incarnation is really a *reincarnation of Krishna. But there are significant differences between Krishna and Christ. Krishna is only a temporary incarnation. He is not an incarnation of a monotheistic God but of a pantheistic God. There is no real comparison between the Christian concept of Christ and that of any other religion. Some religious movements and cults have adopted a view of Christ's deity. But each has added its own unorthodox beliefs to destroy the truth claims made in

Scripture. One form of Buddhism even has Buddha dying for our sins. But this is far from Christianity and is foreign even to the nature of indigenous Buddhism (*see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF).

Speaking of the mystery religions, British scholar Norman Anderson explains:

The basic difference between Christianity and the mysteries is the historic basis of the one and the mythological character of the others. The deities of the mysteries were no more than “nebulous figures of an imaginary past,” while the Christ whom the apostolic *kerygma* proclaimed had lived and died only a few years before the first New Testament documents were written. Even when the apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians the majority of some five hundred witnesses to the resurrection were still alive. (Anderson, 52–53)

A Unique View of the Written Word of God. Most religions have holy or wisdom books, including all the major world religions. Judaism has the Torah, *Islam the Qur’an, and Hinduism the *Bhagavad-gita*. Confucianism has the *Analects*. In comparison with these and other writings, the Christian Bible is unique. Only the Bible claims to come by the unique process of divine inspiration. The Qur’an claims to have come by verbal dictation from the angel Gabriel to Muhammad. Further, only the Bible has supernatural predictive prophecy (*see* PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE).

Other religions claim predictive prophecy but fail to provide examples of clear predictions hundreds of years in advance that have been literally fulfilled, such as the Bible has. Muslims, for example, claim that Muhammad made predictions in the Qur’an. But upon closer examination, they fail to measure up to their billing (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF; QUR’AN, ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF).

Only the Bible has been supernaturally confirmed (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR; CHRIST, DEITY OF). For only the Bible was written by men of God who were confirmed by special acts of God (cf. Exod. 4:1ff.; Heb. 2:3–4) to be telling the truth about God (*see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF; MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE).

Uniqueness of the Way of Salvation. While some other religions employ grace, for example, “Cat” School of Bhakti Hinduism (*see* Otto), Christianity is unique in its plan of salvation. It declares humankind sinful and alienated from a holy God (Gen. 6:5; Ps. 14; Eccles. 7:28; Luke 13:3; Rom. 3:23). It insists that no amount of good works can get a human being into heaven (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5–7). It declares that there is only one way to God—through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins

(John 10:1, 9; 14:6; 1 Cor. 15:1–6). One must believe from his heart and confess with his mouth to be saved (Rom. 10:9). There is no other way. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6; cf. John 10:1; Acts 4:12).

Salvation and Other Religions. Christianity, therefore, admits salvation through no other way than Christ. Christ is not considered to be the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again in any non-Christian religion (see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR).

It is important not to draw false implications from this exclusivity.

It does not follow that God does not love the unbelievers in the world. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Paul said that God wants all to know the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

It does not follow that God did not provide salvation for all. John informs us that Christ is the atoning sacrifice for both our sins and “the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Christ died not only for the elect but also for all the “ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). He even died for those who “deny” him (2 Peter 2:1).

It does not follow that only a few select nations will be evangelized. John declared, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (Rev. 7:9).

It does not follow that no salvation is available to those who have never heard of Christ (Acts 10:35; Heb. 11:6; see “HEATHEN,” SALVATION OF). Anyone anywhere who seeks God will find him. Peter insisted that God “accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:35). The writer of Hebrews says, “He rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

All have the light of creation (Rom. 1:19) and conscience (Rom. 2:12–15), which is sufficient for condemnation but not salvation. There are many ways by which God could get the gospel to those who will to be saved. The normal way is through a missionary (Rom. 10:14–15). But God can save through his Word (Heb. 4:12), which he can convey through a vision, a dream, a voice from heaven, or an angel (Rev. 14:6). God is not limited in the ways in which he can get the saving message to those who seek him (cf. Heb. 1:1). But if

men turn from the light they have, God is not responsible to give more light (John 3:19).

Truth and Other Religions. Many Christians are willing to accept that there is truth or value in other religions (*see* TRUTH, NATURE OF). All humanity receives general revelation (Ps. 19; Acts 17; Rom. 1:19–29; 2:12–15). God has revealed truth to them, so it is no surprise that their beliefs express both good and truth.

There is, however, an important difference between truth as Christians hold it and truth as embraced by non-Christians. The Christian system is a system of truth with some error in it as we understand it. All non-Christian religions are systems of error with some truths in them (*see* PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS). The only system of truth is the Christian system. Since Christians are finite, our understanding of this system of truth will have some error in it. This is why we must continue to grow in the truth (2 Peter 3:18), knowing that now we understand imperfectly (1 Cor. 13:9, 12). By contrast, no non-Christian system is true as a system, although there are truths within the system. However, the system itself obscures and taints these truths so that even they are distorted. And no non-Christian system provides the light of salvation.

Some Objections Answered. The unique claims of Christianity are offensive to the unbelieving mind. “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). Nonetheless, the offended critic deserves an answer (Col. 4:5–6; 1 Peter 3:15).

The Charge of Narrowness and Exclusivity. It is objected that Christianity is narrow and exclusivistic. Nothing sounds worse to the contemporary mind than narrow-mindedness. But this argument is more emotional than rational.

Only one worldview can be true. If the various worldviews have mutually exclusive truth claims, only one can be true (*see* PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS). A true system of thought must be comprehensive of thought and life. It must possess consistency and coherence in its overall claims. But most important, the system must correspond to reality, past, present, and future, natural and supernatural. And all major systems of thought contain key truth claims that are contrary to those of all other systems. Either Christianity teaches true precepts about the *Trinity, the deity of Christ (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF), and the one way of salvation, or else another system is true, and Christianity is false.

Truth by nature is narrow. It is narrow to claim that $3 + 3 = 6$ is the only answer, but every other answer is wrong. The unbeliever's viewpoint is just as narrow. The claim "Christianity is true and all non-Christian systems are false" is no more narrow than the claim "Hinduism is true and all non-Hindu systems are false." No truth claim is all-inclusive.

This does not mean that minor truths within opposing systems of thought cannot both be true. Non-Christians hold that murder is wrong and that the earth is spherical. But only Christians (and Judaism, from which it emerged) believe that the world was created *ex nihilo* by a Triune God. Christians and non-Christians can believe that Jesus was a good man. But only Christians believe that he was the God-man. So while there can be agreement between truths, there is no agreement on the major truths unique to the Christian system.

All religions claim to have the truth. As noted, the claim to unique truth is shared by every religious system that makes truth claims. This is true even of "broad," "eclectic" religions. Hindus claim "there are many ways to God." This appears open-minded, but it is just as narrow as the Christian claim. It excludes all opposing views. For if pluralism is true, then all forms of non-pluralism are false. Thus, the claim to pluralism is an exclusivistic claim.

The Charge of Injustice. Is it unfair and unjust to claim that there is salvation in no other religion? This objection is without merit for reasons detailed in the article "HEATHEN," SALVATION OF. It suffices to mention that God has provided salvation for everyone (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). Everyone who really wants it will get it (Acts 10:35; Heb. 11:6).

Conclusion. Any truth claim is exclusive. A system that is all-inclusive makes no truth claim. And every proposition that affirms something denies something else by logical implication. Statements such as "God is all" are opposed by statements such as "God is not all." They cannot both be true. All truth claims exclude those that are contradictory. Indeed, all religions claim to have *the truth*—even if that truth is that they believe other noncontradictory religious systems are true also. But if two or more religions embrace the same truths, then they are really one. And that one basic religious system behind them claims to be the true religion to the exclusion of all opposed religious systems. So Christianity's claim to be the true religion is no more narrow than the claim of any other religion (*see* PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS).

Sources

Adler, *Truth in Religion*
 N. Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions*.
 E. C. Beisner, *God in Three Persons*.
 F. F. Bruce, *Paul and Jesus*.
 Y. S. Chishti, *What Is Christianity?*
 W. Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*.
 G. Habermas, *The Verdict of History*.
 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*.
 J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*.
 R. Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenistic World*.
 R. Otto, *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted*.
 Plato, *The Republic of Plato*.
 Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*.
 G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*.
 H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*.
 H. Smith, *The Religions of Man*.

Worldview. A worldview is how one views or interprets reality. The German word is *Weltanschauung*, meaning a "world and life view," or "a paradigm." It is the framework through which or by which one makes sense of the data of life. A worldview makes a world of difference in one's view of God, origins, evil, human nature, values, and destiny.

There are seven major worldviews. Each is unique. With one exception, *pantheism/*polytheism, no one can consistently believe in more than one worldview, because the central premises are mutually exclusive (see PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS; TRUTH, NATURE OF; WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY). Logically, only one worldview can be true. The seven major worldviews are *theism, *deism, *atheism, *pantheism, *panentheism, *finite godism, and *polytheism.

Looking through the Views. Theism. An infinite, personal God exists beyond and in the universe. Theism says that the physical universe is not all there is. There is an infinite, personal God beyond the universe who created it, sustains it, and acts within it in a supernatural way. He is transcendently "out there" and immanently "in here." This is the view represented by traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Deism. God is beyond the universe but not in it. Deism is theism minus miracles. It says God is transcendent over the universe but not immanent in it, certainly not supernaturally. It holds a naturalistic view of the operation of