

Summary, Final Thoughts, and Practical Applications

Session 6

Outline

- I. Summary
- II. Other Minor Views
- III. Narrow Accessibilism
- IV. Final Thoughts and Questions
- V. Practical Applications
- VI. Conclusion

Outline

I. Summary

Summary

- **Pluralism**: all religions lead to salvation
- **Universalism**: all the unevangelized are saved
- **Inclusivism**: most of the unevangelized are saved
- **Restrictivism**: none of the unevangelized are saved
- **Narrow Accessibilism**: the unevangelized have access to salvation, but few or perhaps none receive it.

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- I. Summary
- II. Other Minor Views

Other Minor Views

- Agnosticism

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- God Saves Based on What People Would Have Done

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Other Minor Views

- Agnosticism
- God Saves Based on What People Would Have Done
 - No faith needed
 - Cuts both ways
 - Why would God bother waiting (2 Peter 3:9)
 - Salvation but also damnation of infants

Other Minor Views

- Agnosticism
- God Saves Based on What People Would Have Done
- Post-Mortem Evangelism

Other Minor Views

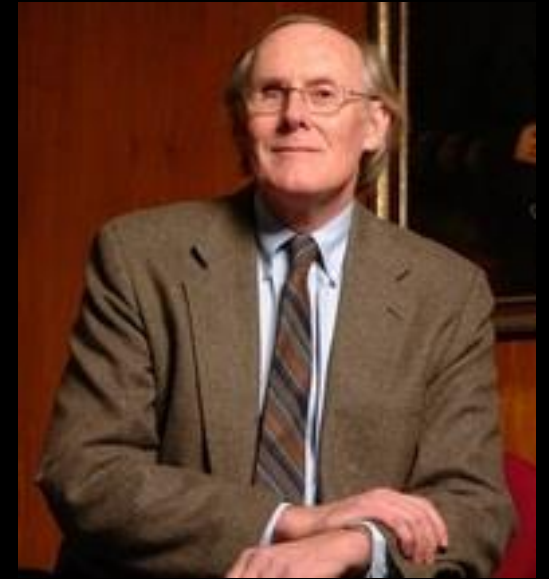
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 - No room in Hebrews 9:27

Other Minor Views

- Agnosticism
- God Saves Based on What People Would Have Done
- Post-Mortem Evangelism
 - No room in Hebrews 9:27
 - They'd still reject God

Other Minor Views

“In essence, to desire heaven, which is life in the presence of absolute goodness, implies a love of goodness. Otherwise heaven would be hell... The person who has made firm decisions against God throughout life is not going to be inclined to choose him afterwards. If one has resisted him for a lifetime, one would want to receive him even less when God’s nature is revealed more clearly and decisively.”



Clark Pinnock

Other Minor Views

- Agnosticism
- God Saves Based on What People Would Have Done
- Post-Mortem Evangelism
 - No room in Hebrews 9:27
 - They'd still reject God
 - Makes earthly life meaningless

Other Minor Views

“Such a doctrine empties the present life of its religious significance... Indeed it even suggests that those who die in the womb are more fortunate than those who survive to face the trials and temptations of life... We cannot be content with a theory which gives meaning to death by depriving this life of its meaning.”



John Hick

Outline

- I. Summary
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- III. Narrow Accessibilism

Narrow Accessibilism

- **Pluralism:** there is some truth available to all people.
- **Universalism:** God loves all people and desires everyone to be saved.
- **Inclusivism:** in the past some people have been saved without any knowledge of Christ and perhaps may still be able to do so.
- **Restrictivism:** the pessimistic prospects of salvation without knowledge of Christ.

Narrow Accessibilism

“God, in his grace, may choose to save certain individuals who have never heard the gospel. As the master, who represents God, in Jesus’ Parable of the Laborers, says, “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?” (Matthew 20:15) Or, as God says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion” (Romans 9:15).”



Doug Becker

Narrow Accessibilism

It is possible for the unevangelized to receive salvation. But few, or perhaps none, actually do receive it.

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- IV. Final Thoughts and Questions

Final Thoughts and Questions

- The Basic Truths

Final Thoughts and Questions

1. The Bible should not be twisted to synthesize its revealed teachings with those of non-Christian religions. This is the failed program of perennialism.
2. The church has been commissioned by its Lord to take the gospel to all the nations. This is nonnegotiable and essential.
3. Although Christianity cannot be reduced to a common core that it shares with other religions, it can still find *some* common ground with respect to the *individual beliefs* held by other religions. We should expect that other religions contain some truth about morality, humanity, and the sacred.
4. Because of the fall, human beings will tend to twist the truth knowable through General Revelation into false religions and philosophies.



Douglas
Groothuis

Final Thoughts and Questions

5. The Bible nowhere claims that people will be judged according to what they do not know or could not have known. Rather, God holds people accountable for the knowledge that is made available to them and how they have responded to it.
6. No one is worthy of redemption, nor can anyone claim it as a right or entitlement.
7. Whatever position we hold on the fate of the unevangelized, given the truth and rationality of the Christian worldview, it is impossible that anyone can be redeemed except through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ.
8. Christians cannot sidestep the biblical insistence that some will incorrigibly resist and rebel against the knowledge of God provided to them, whether they are privy to Special Revelation or not.



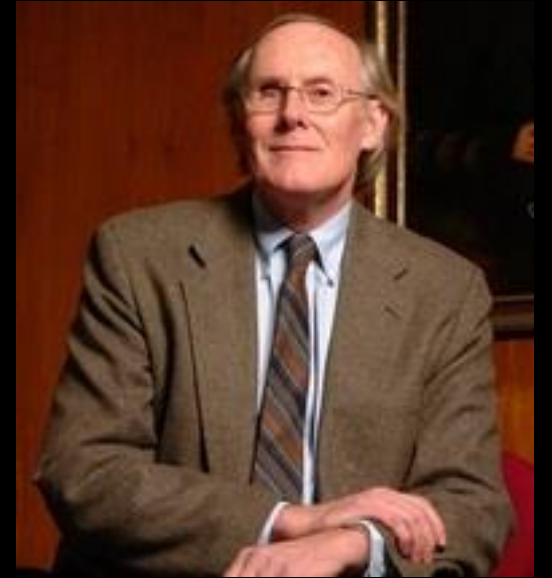
Douglas
Groothuis

Final Thoughts and Questions

- The Basic Truths
- What If Someone Has Accepted God Through General Revelation and Then Hears the Gospel?

Final Thoughts and Questions

“This question would have greater force if we knew who... [these people] were, whereas in actual fact they are mixed in with populations that need to hear the Gospel. Even if we did know their identity, we would be obliged to tell them of the greater light and salvation that they long for.”



Clark Pinnock

Final Thoughts and Questions

“Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

John 8:47

“Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

John 18:37b

Final Thoughts and Questions

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- Why Does God Allow Other Religions?

Final Thoughts and Questions

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- Why Does God Allow Other Religions?
- Can we Learn Something About God from Other Religions?

Final Thoughts and Questions

- The Basic Truths
- What If Someone Has Accepted God Through General Revelation and Then Hears the Gospel?
- Why Does God Allow Other Religions?
- Can we Learn Something About God from Other Religions?
 1. Theological refinement by encounters with challenges
 2. Inspiring us with individuals of other faiths that exemplify a particular moral virtue

Final Thoughts and Questions

- The Basic Truths
- What If Someone Has Accepted God Through General Revelation and Then Hears the Gospel?
- Why Does God Allow Other Religions?
- Can we Learn Something About God from Other Religions?
- Why do people reject the truth of General Revelation?

Final Thoughts and Questions

“²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”

Romans 1:21-25

Final Thoughts and Questions

“God’s revelation of himself may produce a theological *trauma*—*what results from* an injury, wound, or shock. God is Creator and I am not. I am beholden to God... [People then] *repress* or suppress this truth and turn from the Creator to worship and serve the creation. Having their desires warped in false worship... their desires are warped in their relationships... The upshot is that they “exchanged the truth for a lie.” ... the unbeliever fails to render God his due and fails to fulfill his truest nature. But the desire to worship remains and is shifted to other things; that is, substitutes are given, which, while they cannot please God or even truly fulfill people, divert the unbelievers from his true plight before God.



Douglas
Groothuis

Final Thoughts and Questions

The witness of God in one's consciousness can be willfully eclipsed through selecting an alternative object of worship, biblically known as an idol... Idols may be made of wood, stone, or diamond; they may also be made of career, status, or sexuality...



Douglas
Groothuis

Final Thoughts and Questions

The atheist or skeptic, having been exposed to general revelation sufficient to know there is a God, develops a false belief that God does not exist, since if God existed, one would need to humble oneself, be thankful, and worship God. Pride forbids this, and pride (or autonomy) is the essence of all sin. As Pascal wrote, "Men despise religion and hope it is not true." In one sense, Christianity is the easiest of all religions. You believe the gospel and are redeemed. It is all of grace. In another sense, it is the hardest of all religions, because you must repent of any self-righteousness and humble yourself before the cross."



Douglas
Groothuis

Final Thoughts and Questions

- The Basic Truths
- What If Someone Has Accepted God Through General Revelation and Then Hears the Gospel?
- Why Does God Allow Other Religions?
- Can we Learn Something About God from Other Religions?
- Why do people reject the truth of General Revelation?
- The Fate of Children

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Practical Applications

- General Revelation aids in evangelism

Practical Applications

“Having established the antithesis between “the Lord of heaven and earth” ... and the false gods of the Athenians, Paul again makes a point of contact with their worldview by citing Greek poets: “**For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring’**” (Acts 17:28).

Although their fundamental worldview was off base, the Greeks had some sense of the divine as well as their dependence on it. They were partially right, although largely wrong. Given God’s general revelation in creation and conscience, Christian witnesses should always try to find the scattered elements of truth embedded within darkened worldviews.

Paul continues by arguing that since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like any humanly crafted image... he makes his case on the basis of the Athenians’ own beliefs about God and humanity.”



Douglas
Groothuis

Practical Applications

- General Revelation aids in evangelism
- Learning from other religions can be profitable

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 2. Profitable in apologetics

Practical Applications

- General Revelation aids in evangelism
- Learning from other religions can be profitable
 1. Profitable for teaching
 2. Profitable in apologetics
 3. Opposition can help perfect Christian doctrines

Practical Applications

“... exploration of other religions is deep water that the spiritually young should not enter until they have first gone deeper into their own pools. Even mature Christians should know that there are riptides and other currents that could carry them out to sea. Some have never returned to land.”



Gerald
McDermott

Practical Applications

- General Revelation aids in evangelism
- Learning from other religions can be profitable
- We can be optimistic about the reach and effect of the Gospel

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Questions