

*Relativism with respect to religion is generally called 'pluralism' and generally comes in two types.*

## *∞ Religious Pluralism ∞*

*➤ sociologically ◀*

*the recognition that, within a given context, there is a variety of religious beliefs*

## *∞ Religious Pluralism ∞*

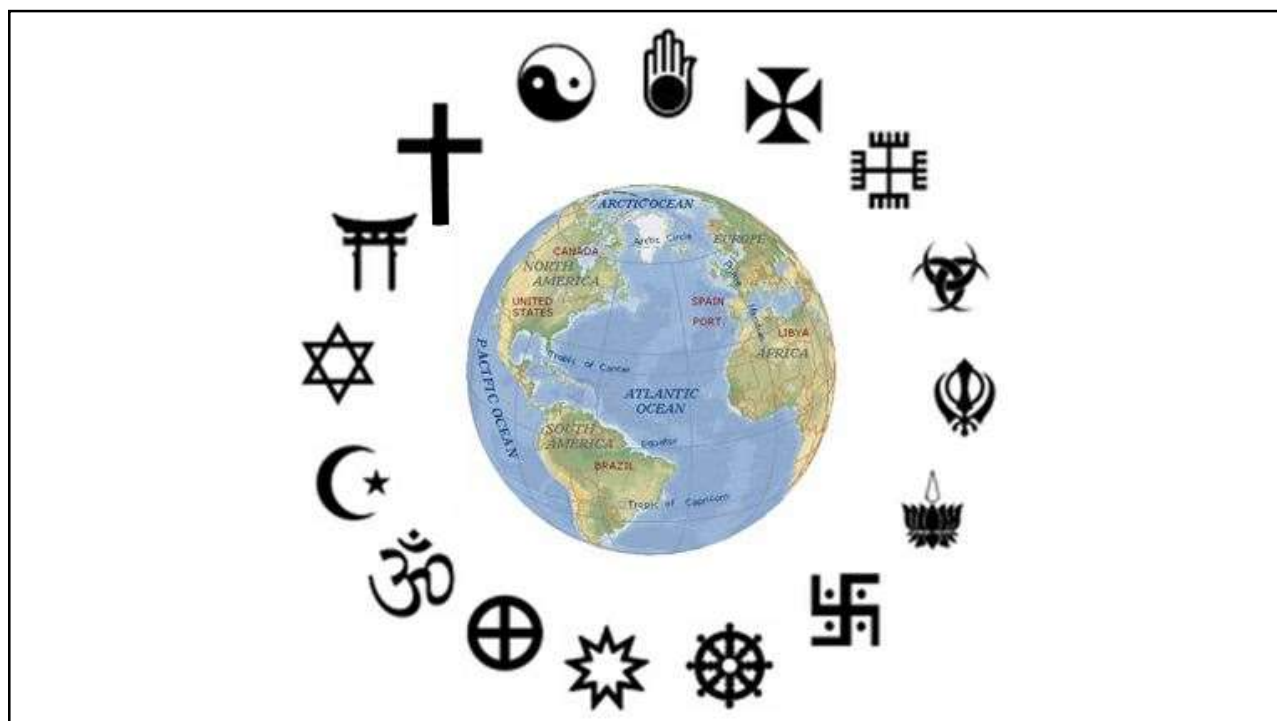
➤ sociologically ◀

*Sometimes one might hear the expression "religious diversity."*

## *∞ Religious Pluralism ∞*

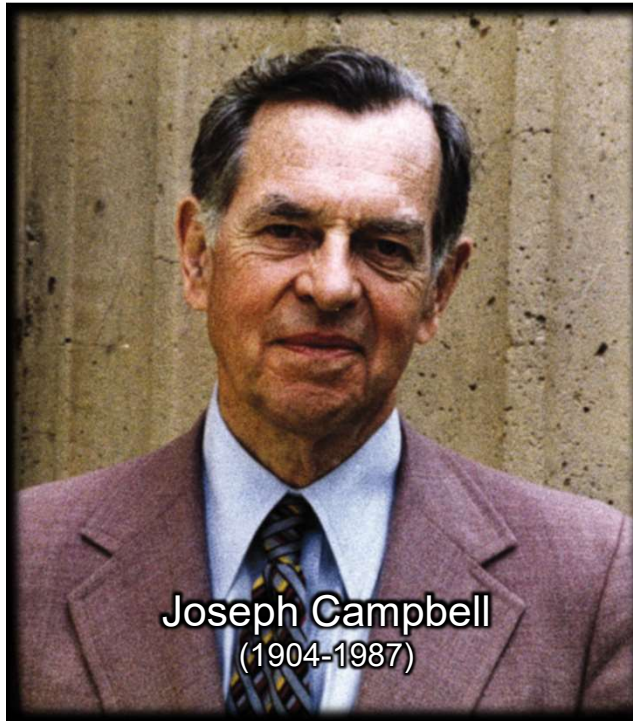
➤ philosophically / theologically ◀

*the view that all religious beliefs are equally valid or legitimate*

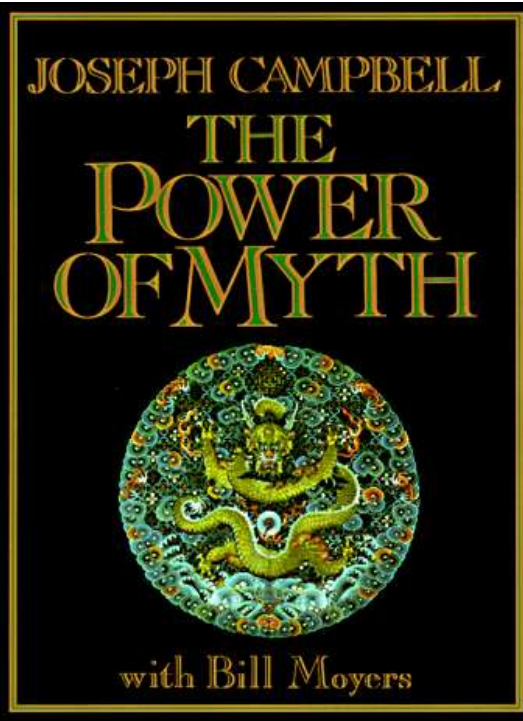


***Religious pluralism generally regards such differences to be either:***

- a. largely cultural and unconnected to specific truth claims about reality, or***
- b. representative of deeper truths unified as an expression of something residing deeply in the human psyche.***



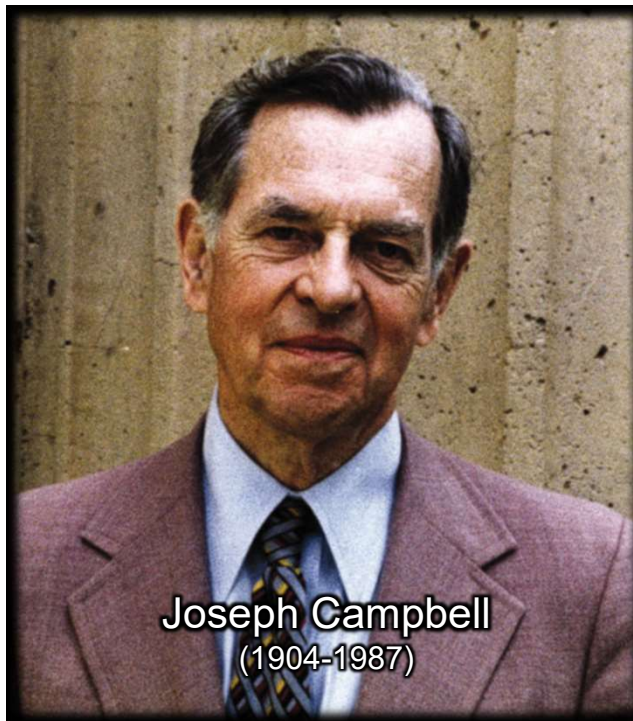
Joseph Campbell  
(1904-1987)



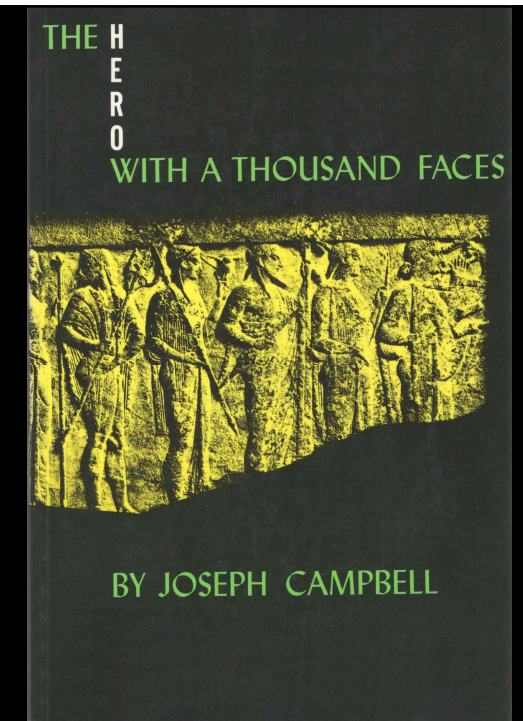
JOSEPH CAMPBELL  
THE  
POWER  
OF MYTH



with Bill Moyers



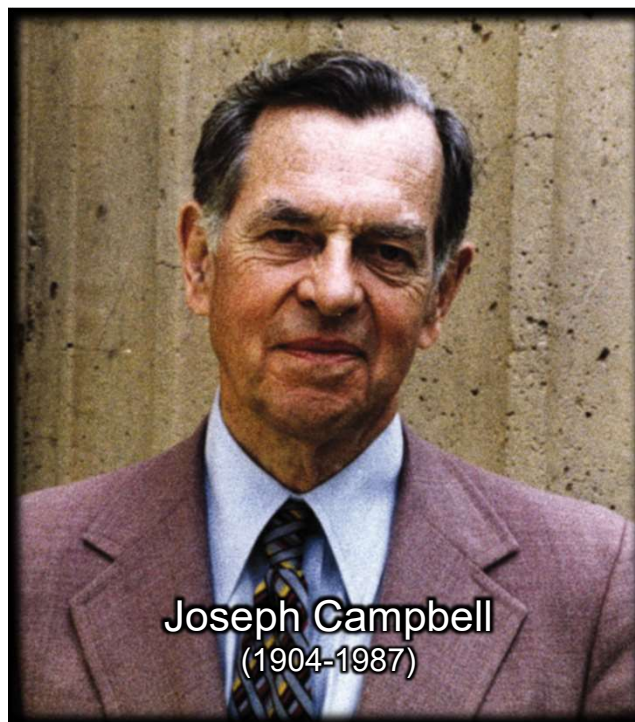
Joseph Campbell  
(1904-1987)



THE  
HERO  
WITH A THOUSAND FACES



BY JOSEPH CAMPBELL



Joseph Campbell  
(1904-1987)

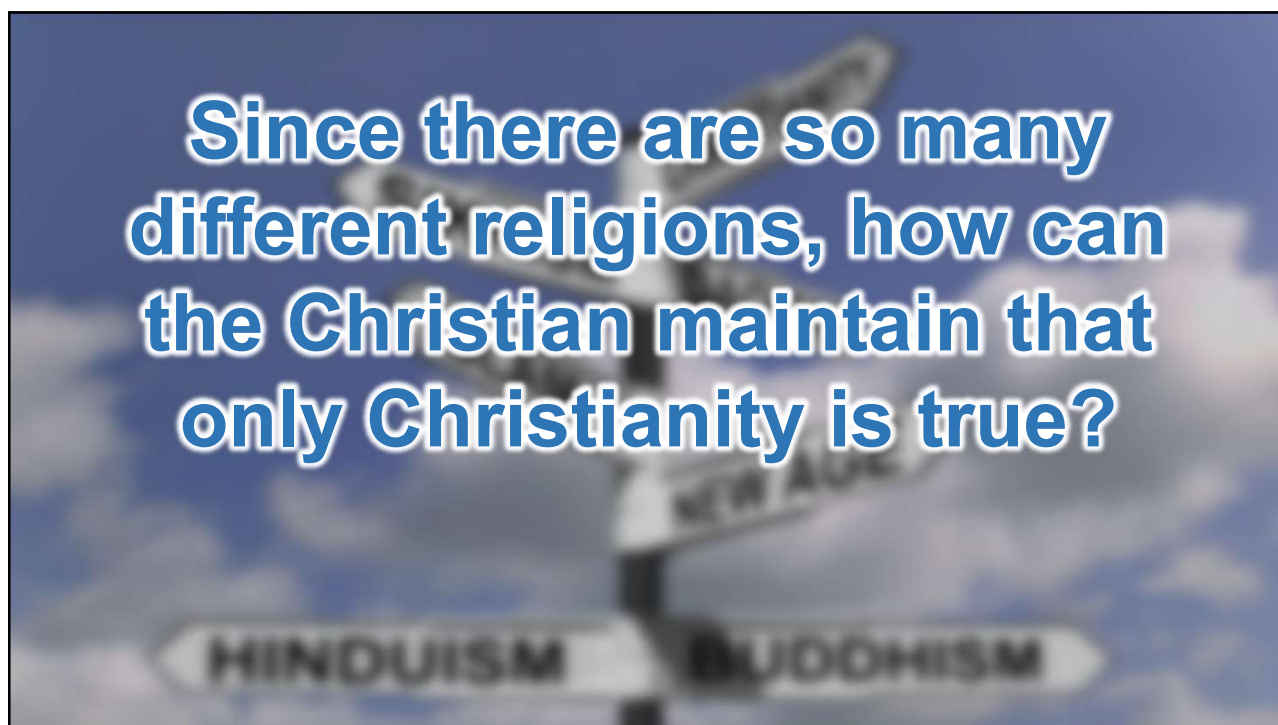
*"Whether we listen with aloof amusement to the dreamlike mumbo jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo, or read with cultivated rapture thin translations from the sonnets of the mystic Lao-tse; now and again crack the hard nutshell of and argument of Aquinas, or catch suddenly the shing meaning of a bizarre Eskimo fairy tale: it will be always the one, shape-shifting yet marvelously constant story that we find, together with a challengingly persistent suggestion of more remaining to be experienced than will ever be known or told."*

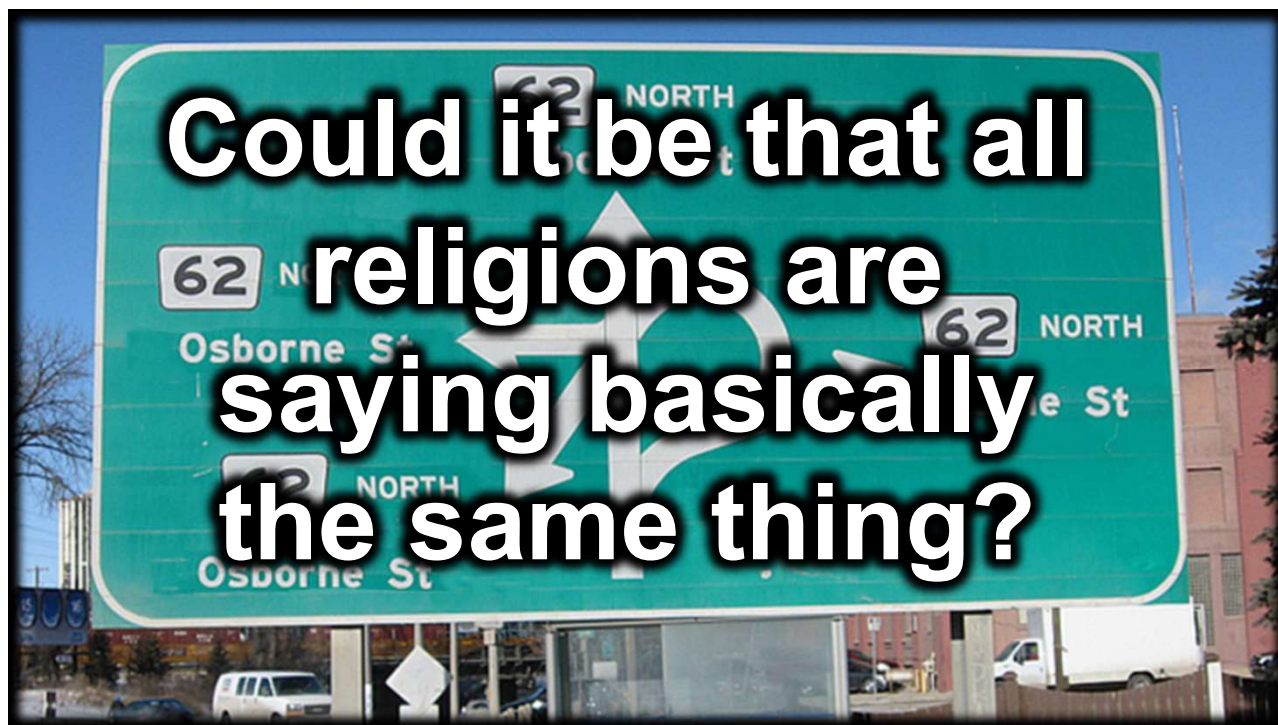
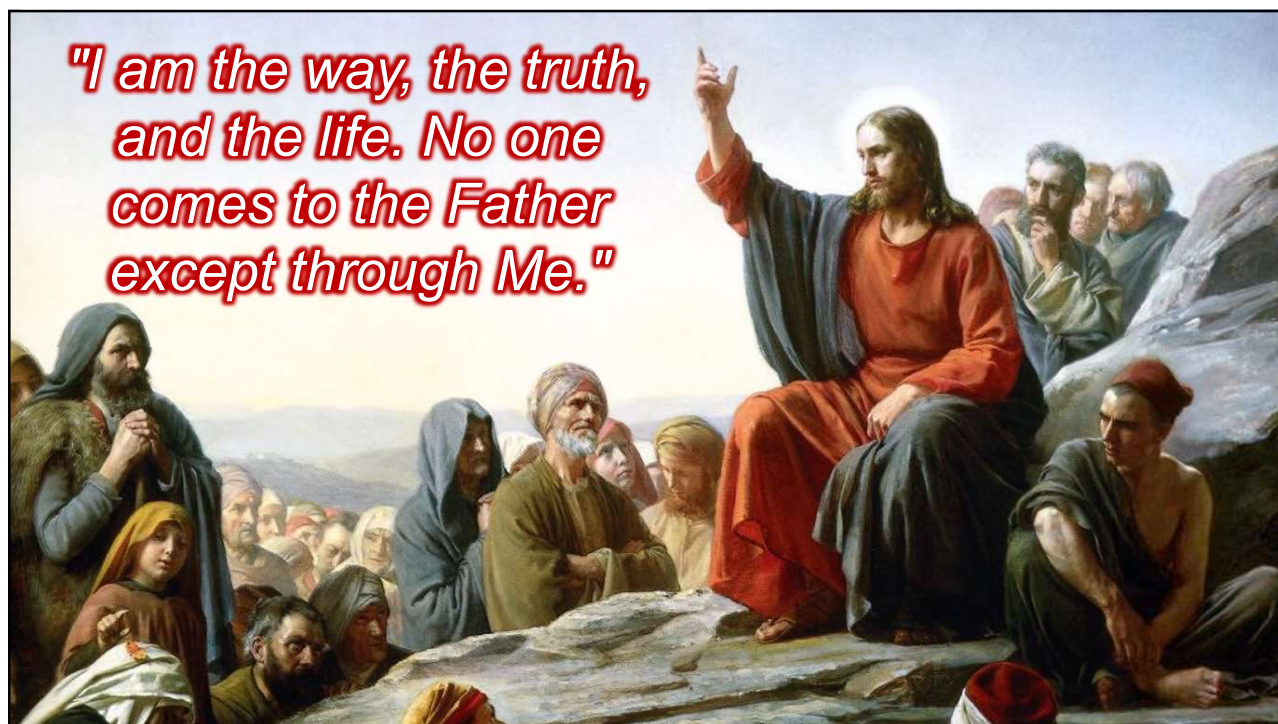
[Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 3]

***For the Christian,  
religious pluralism  
poses several  
challenges.***



**Since there are so many different religions, how can the Christian maintain that only Christianity is true?**

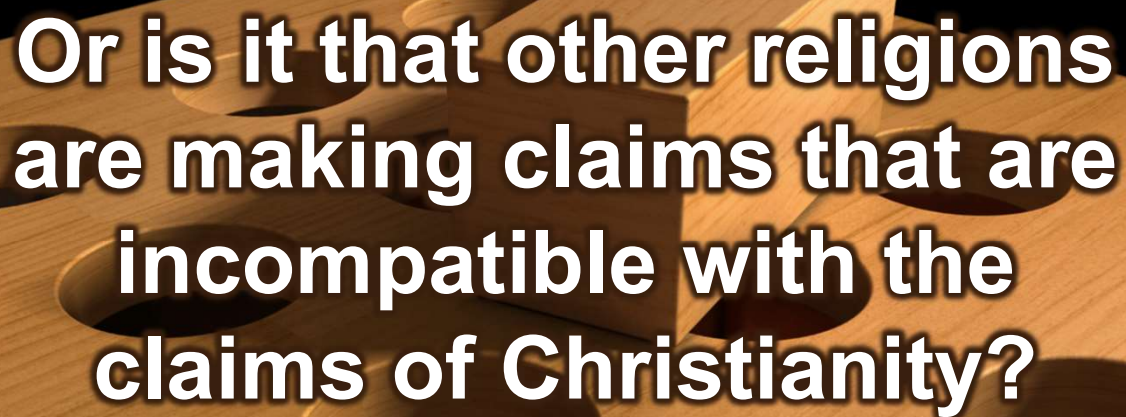








***Are Not All  
Religions the  
Same at the  
Core?***



**Or is it that other religions  
are making claims that are  
incompatible with the  
claims of Christianity?**

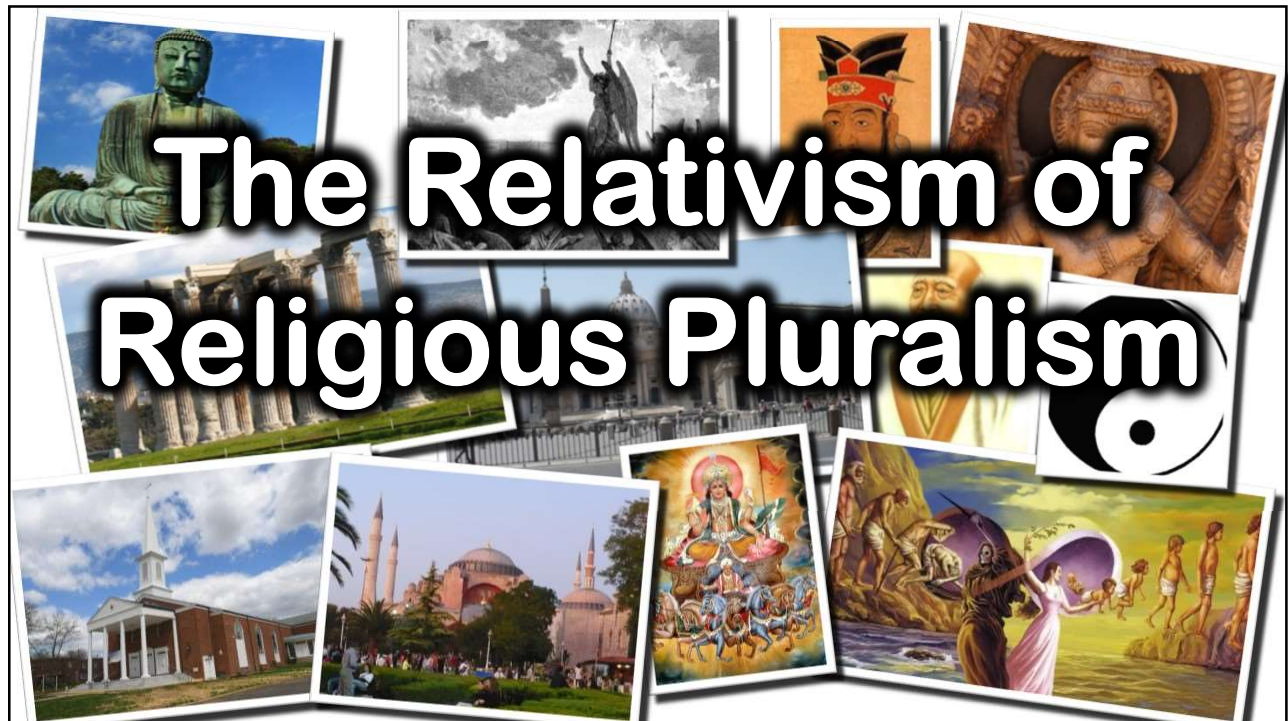


**If it is the case that only  
Christianity is true, are the  
followers of those  
religions eternally lost?**



**What about those who sincerely follow a "false" religion and never had a chance to hear the Gospel?**

***We will respond to the challenges at the end.***



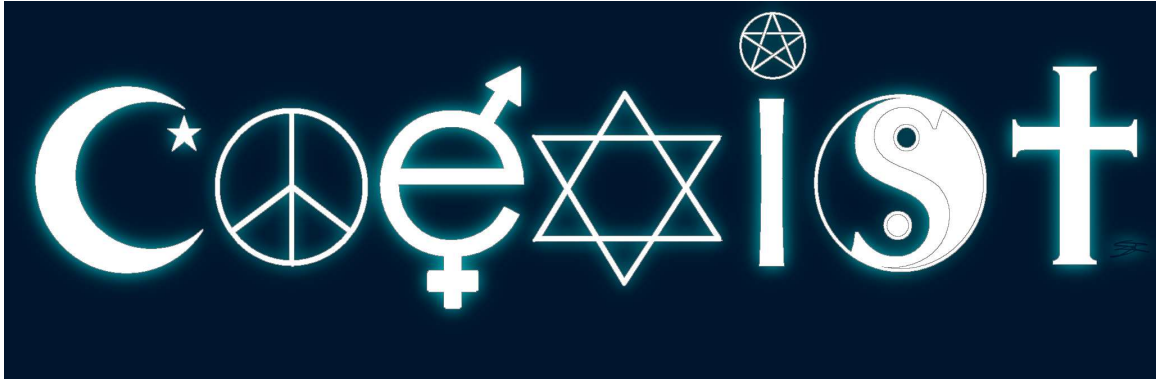


# Choosing My Religion

*Is it possible for a religion  
to be true for one person  
and not true for another or  
does religion deal with  
cream of facts? If so, in what way?*



*Many people have  
a functional  
understanding  
of religion.*







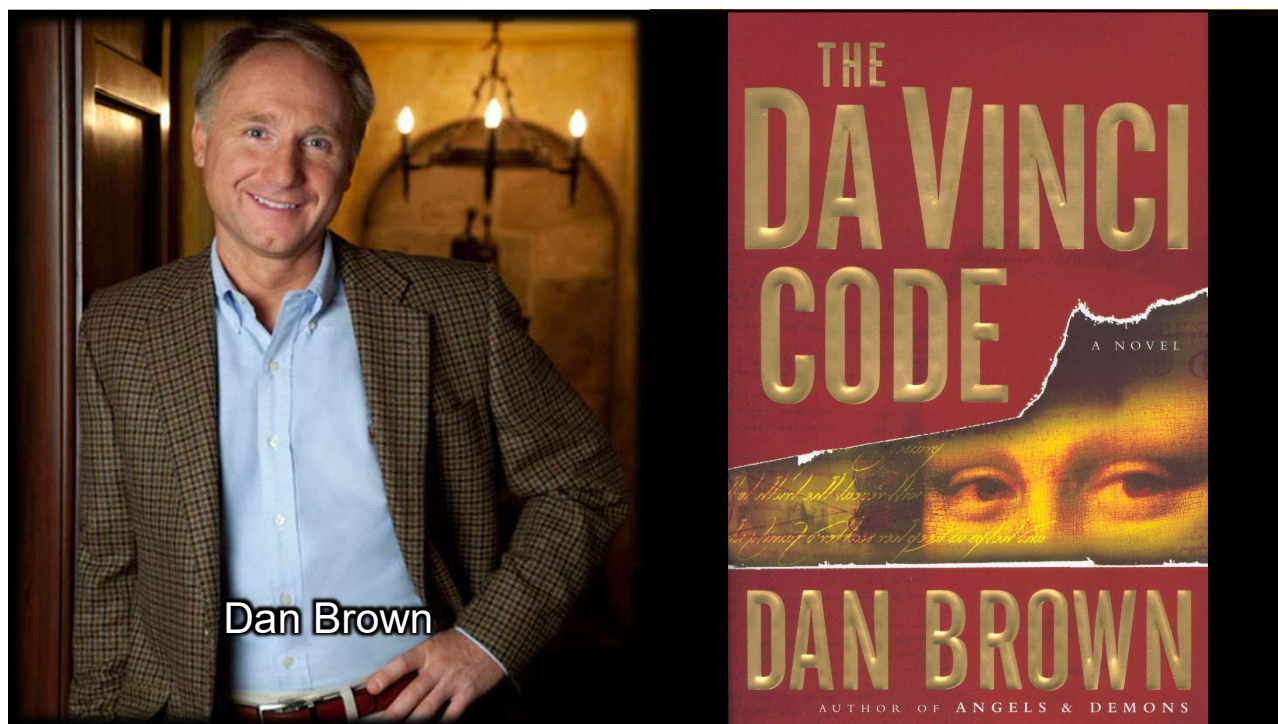


## What about Religion?

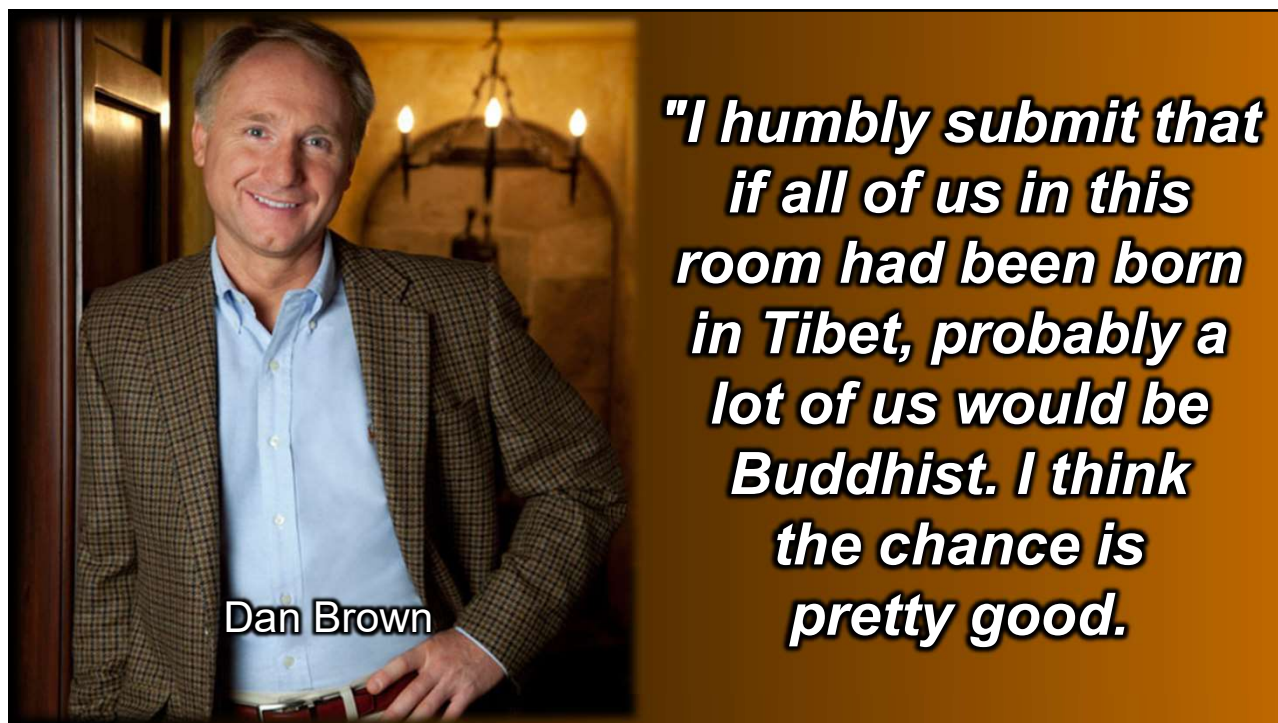
- ❖ It **proclaims** specific truths, and, thus, obligates certain **beliefs**.
- ❖ It **proscribes** a way of life, and, thus, obligates certain **behaviors**.



## The Insidiousness of Religious Relativism

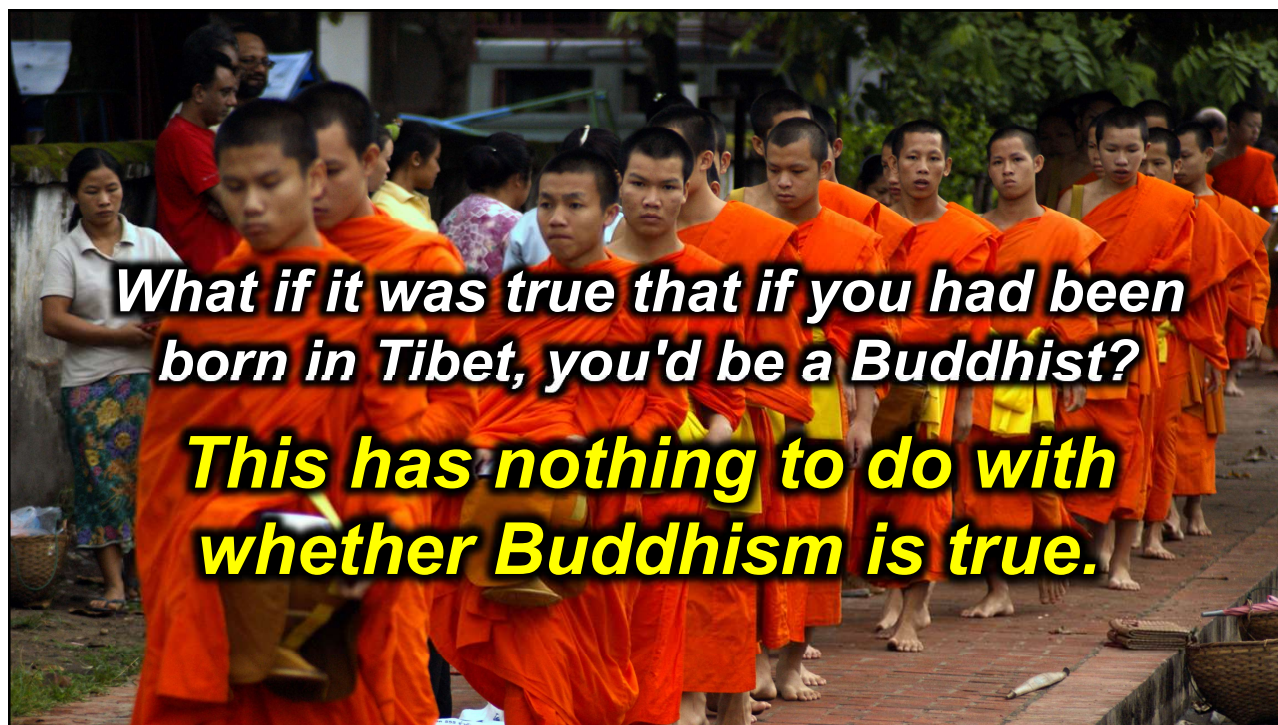
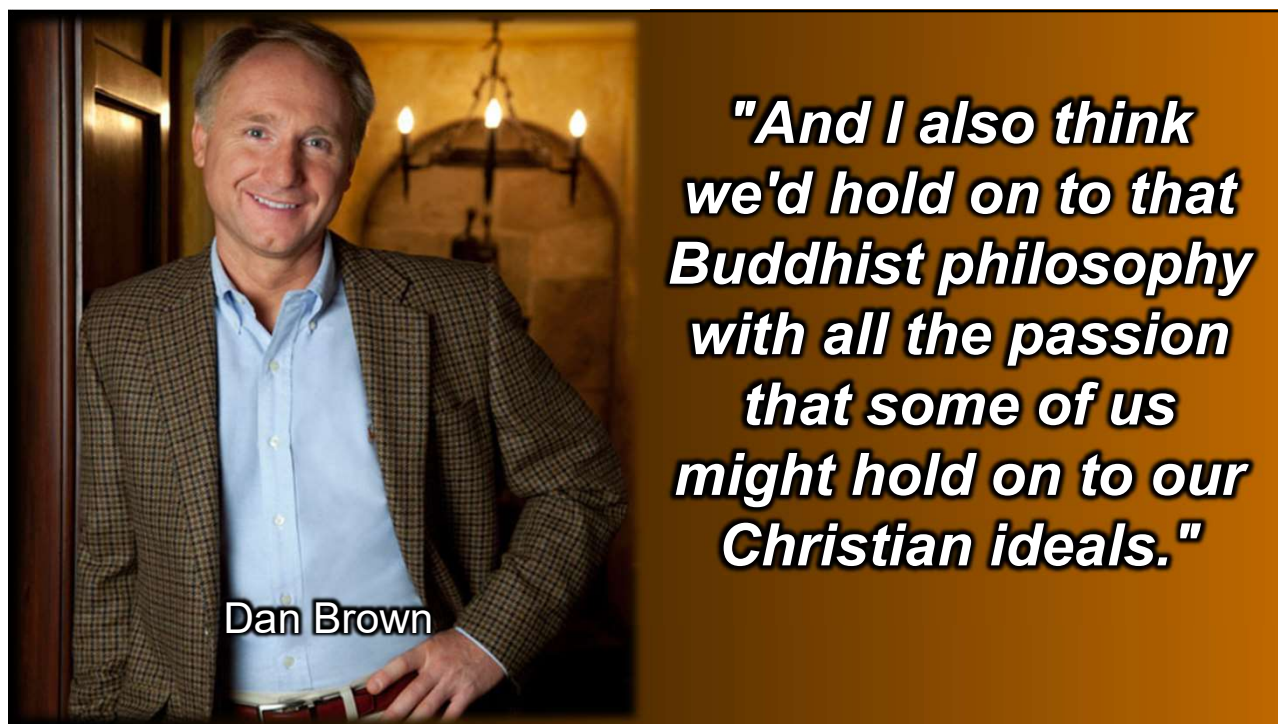


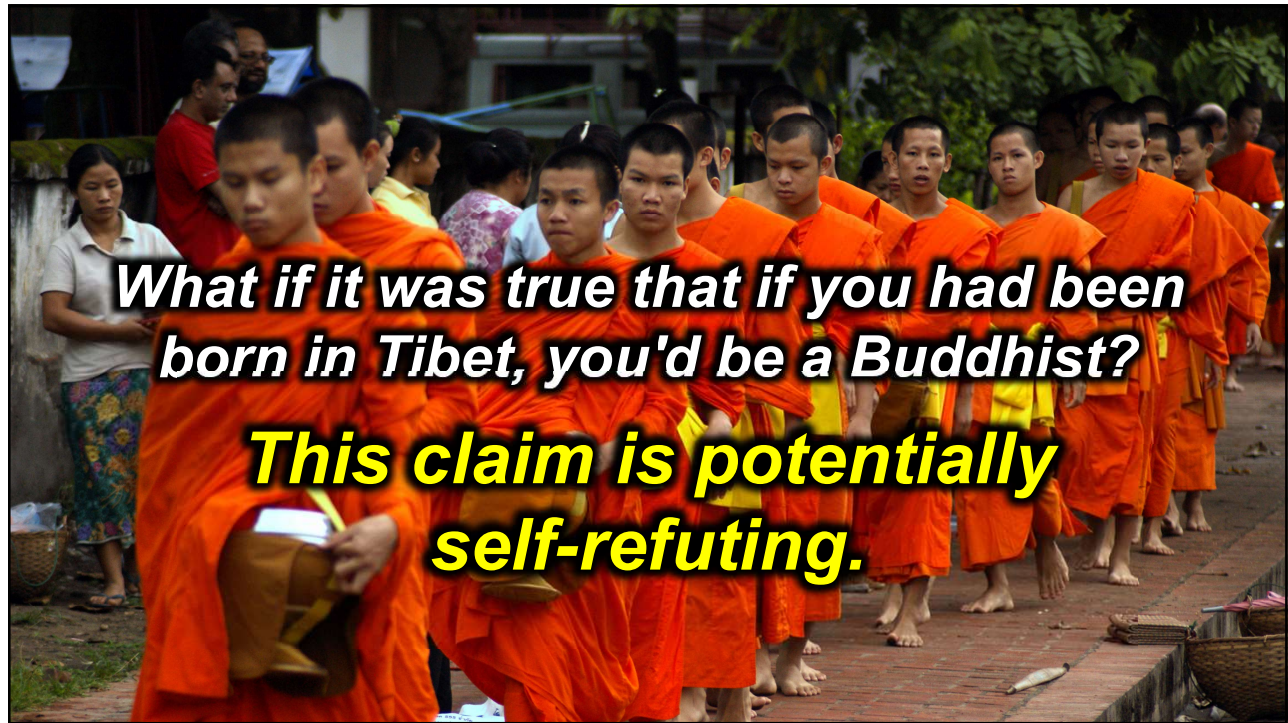
Dan Brown



Dan Brown

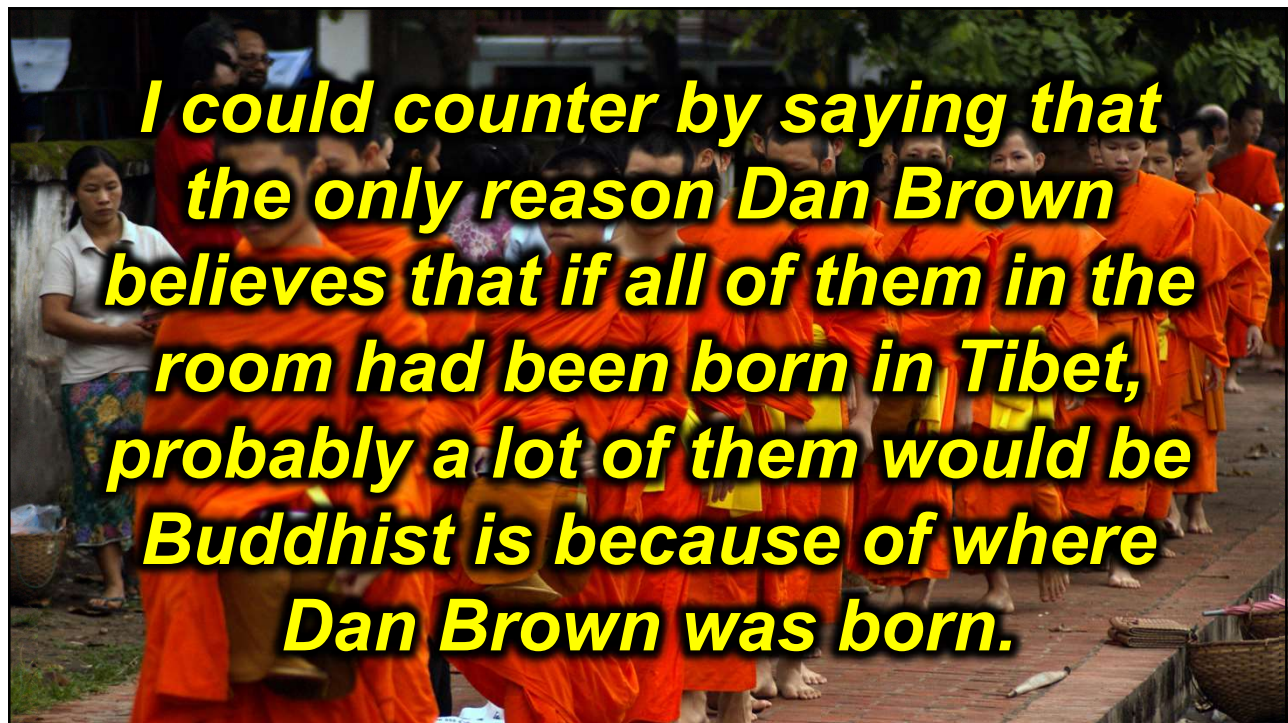
***"I humbly submit that if all of us in this room had been born in Tibet, probably a lot of us would be Buddhist. I think the chance is pretty good."***





**What if it was true that if you had been born in Tibet, you'd be a Buddhist?**

**This claim is potentially self-refuting.**



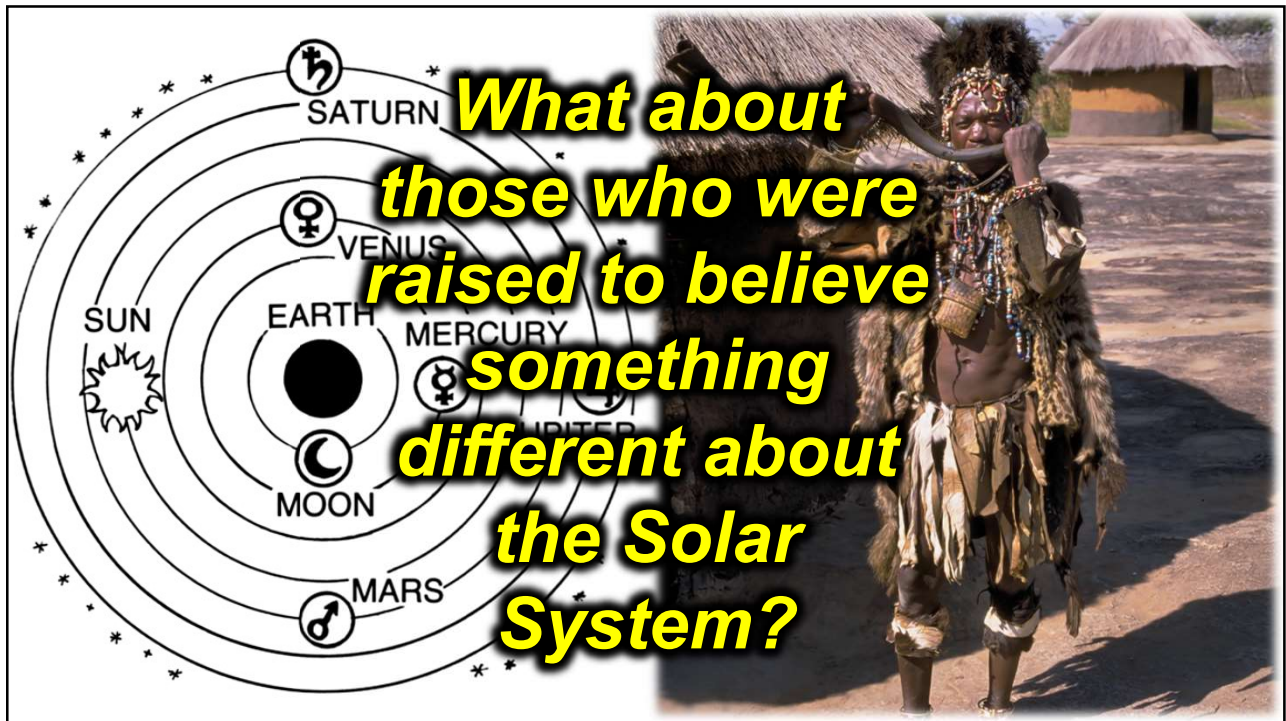
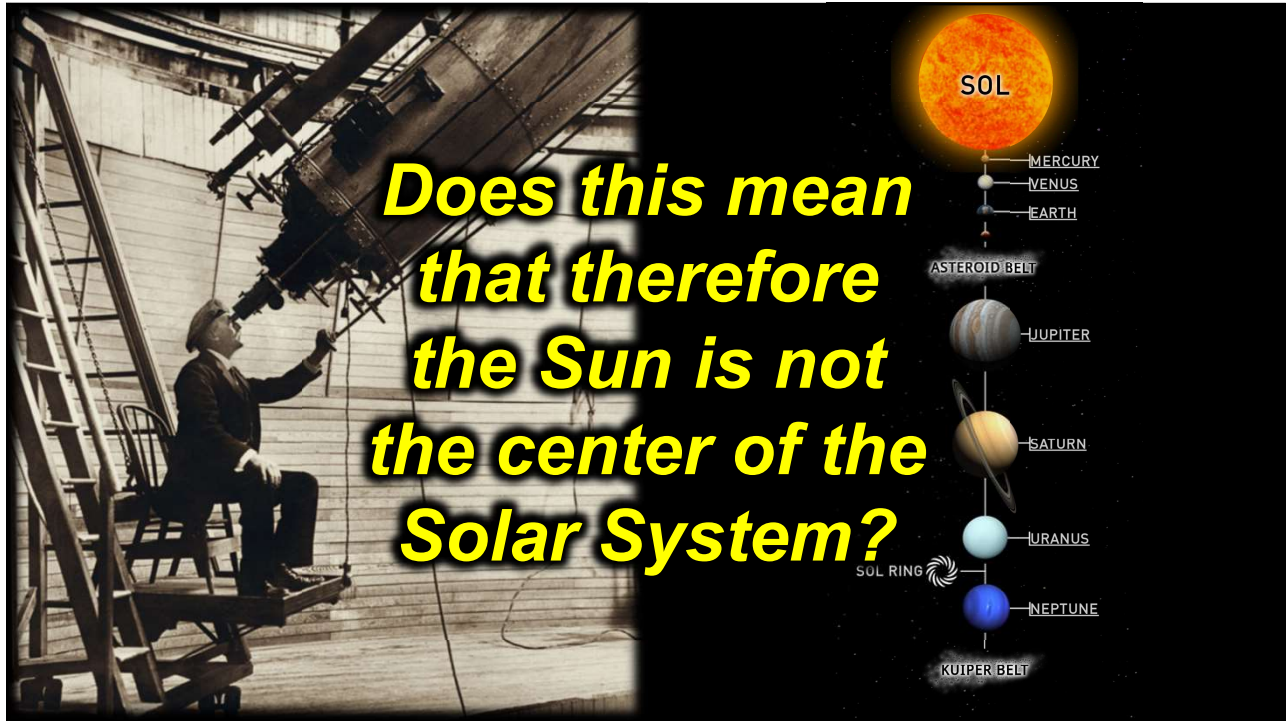
**I could counter by saying that the only reason Dan Brown believes that if all of them in the room had been born in Tibet, probably a lot of them would be Buddhist is because of where Dan Brown was born.**

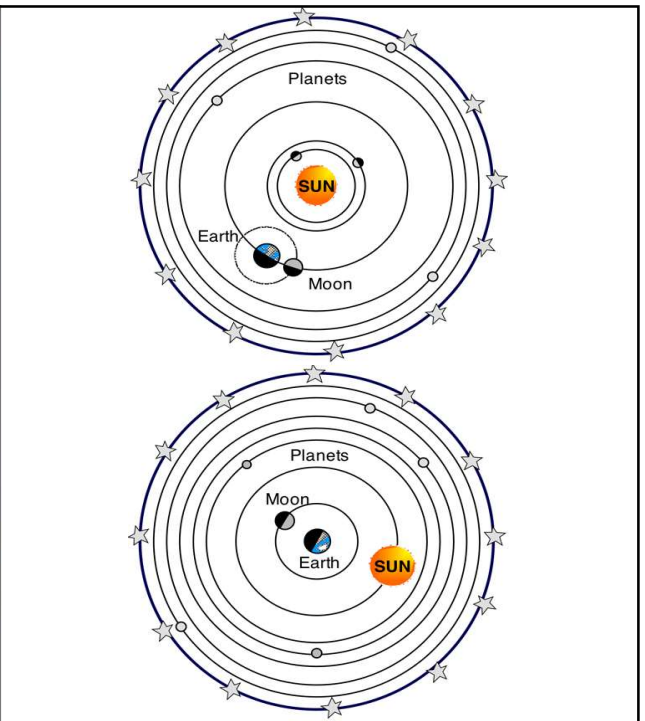
# ∞ Genetic Fallacy ∞

*the fallacy of suggesting that the origin of a belief is relevant to the issue of whether the belief is true or false*

**You were probably raised to believe that the Sun is the center of the Solar System.**

SOL  
MERCURY  
VENUS  
EARTH  
ASTEROID BELT  
JUPITER  
SATURN  
URANUS  
NEPTUNE  
SATURN RING  
KUIPER BELT







# Revisiting the Challenges of Religious Pluralism

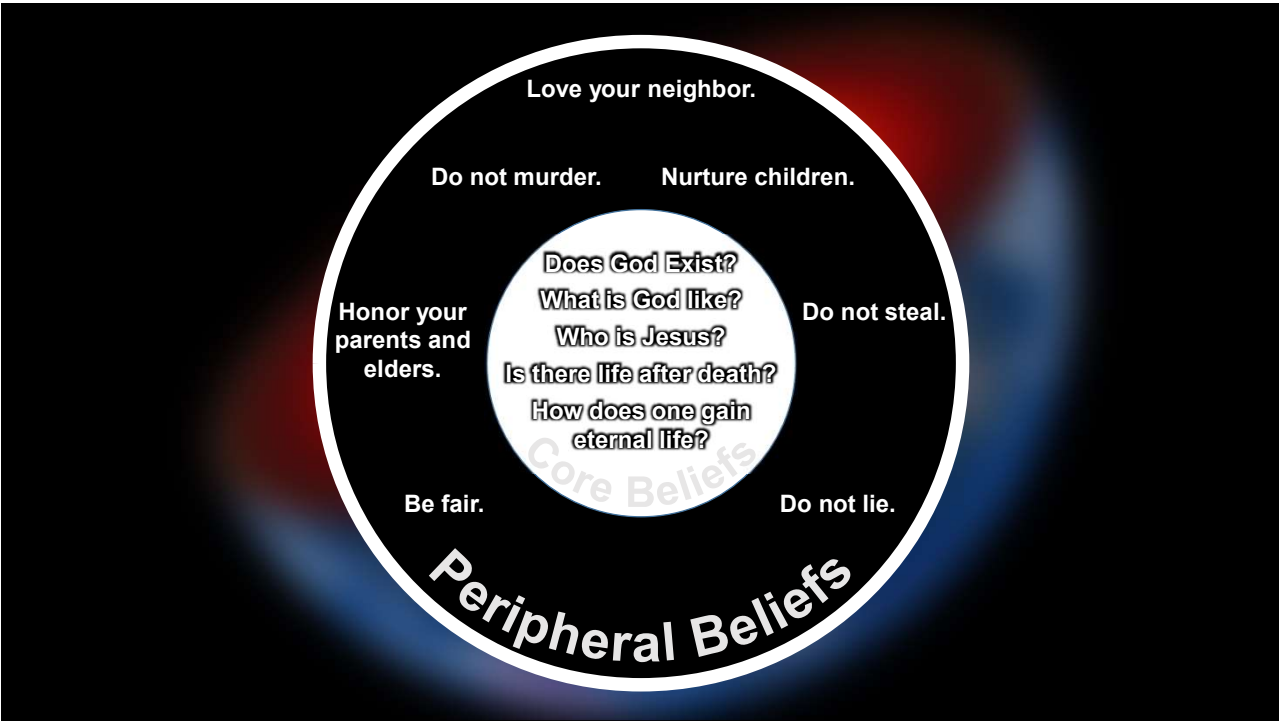
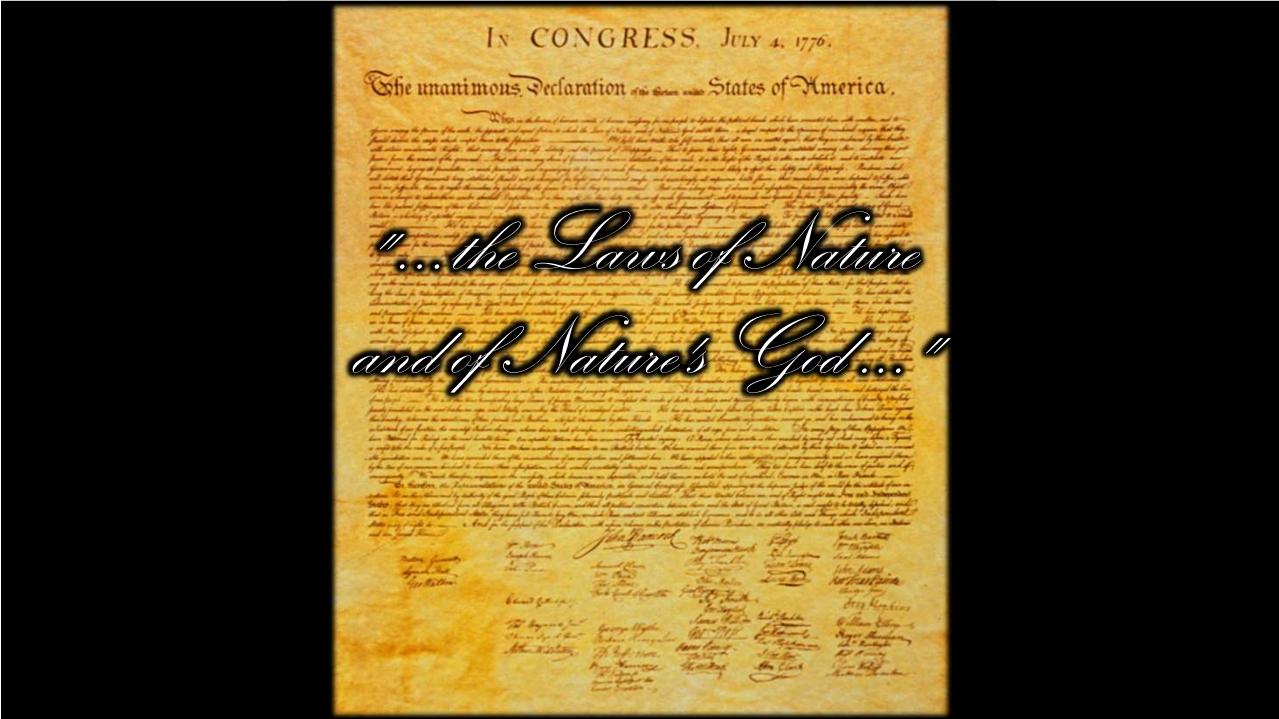


***Are Not All Religions the Same at the Core?***



# ***Core Beliefs*** ***VS.*** ***Peripheral Beliefs***

Love your neighbor.  
Do not murder. Nurture children.  
Honor your parents and elders. Do not steal.  
Be fair. Do not lie.  
***Peripheral Beliefs***



**"What are the things that men consider right? Kindness on the part of the father, and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of elders, and deference on that of juniors; with benevolence on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister; —these ten are the things which men consider to be right."**

Book of Ritual 7.2.19



**Confucius**  
551-479 BC

## **Hinduism**

***"Utter not a word by which anyone could be wounded."***

***"A sacrifice is obliterated by a lie and the merits of alms by an act of fraud."***

***"One should never strike a woman, not even with a flower."***

# Buddhism

**"Supporting one's father and mother, cherishing wife and children and a peaceful occupation; this is the greatest blessings."**

*Sutta Nipata 262*



## Does God exist?



**Buddhism:** Theravada Buddhism has no God. various schools of Mahayana Buddhism (e.g., Tibetan Buddhism) have many gods.



**Hinduism:** Early Vedic Hinduism was very nearly monotheistic. Upanishadic Hinduism is pantheistic. Bhakti Hinduism is polytheistic.



**Confucianism:** Confucius's teachings contain no gods, no religious worship, and no revelations.



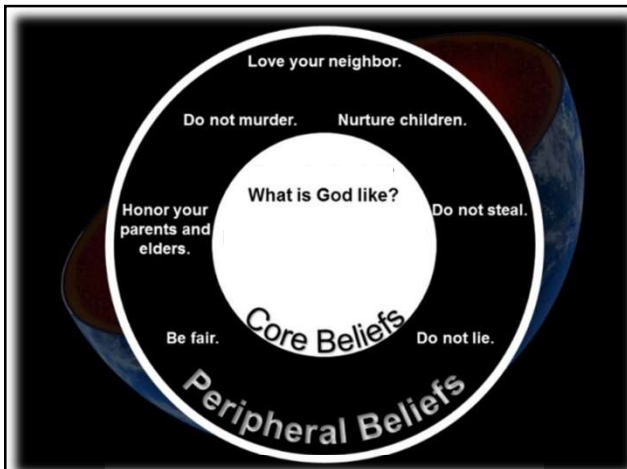
**Judaism:** There is only one God.



**Islam:** There is only one God.



**Christianity:** There only one God.



## What is God like?



**Buddhism:** The gods of Tibetan Buddhism are angelic and demonic beings.



**Hinduism:** Early Vedic Hinduism God = the "father of heaven;" Upanishadic Hinduism God = all; Gods of Bhakti Hinduism are finite



**Confucianism:** Being atheistic, there is nothing for God to be like.



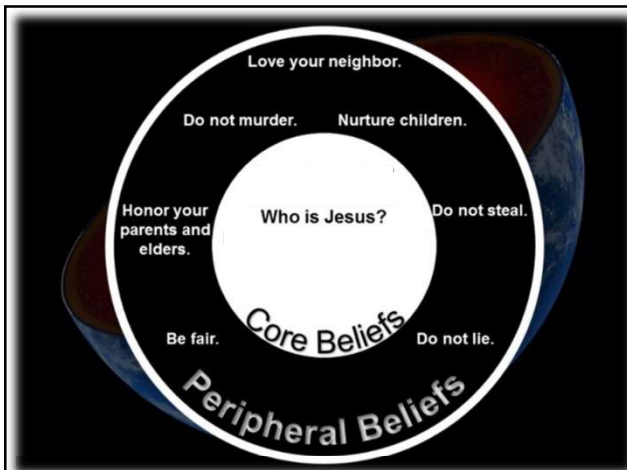
**Judaism:** The one, true God created the heavens and the Earth and revealed Himself to Abraham and Moses.



**Islam:** The one true God created the heavens and the Earth and revealed Himself to many prophets, the last of whom was Mohammed.



**Christianity:** There only one God. This God is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



## Who is Jesus?



**Buddhism:** Some Buddhist see Jesus as one among many "enlightened ones" or Buddhas.



**Hinduism:** In Bhakti Hinduism, Jesus is one of virtually countless "gods" to whom one can attach himself in devotion for "salvation."



**Confucianism:** Given that there is no God, Jesus is nothing more than a man.



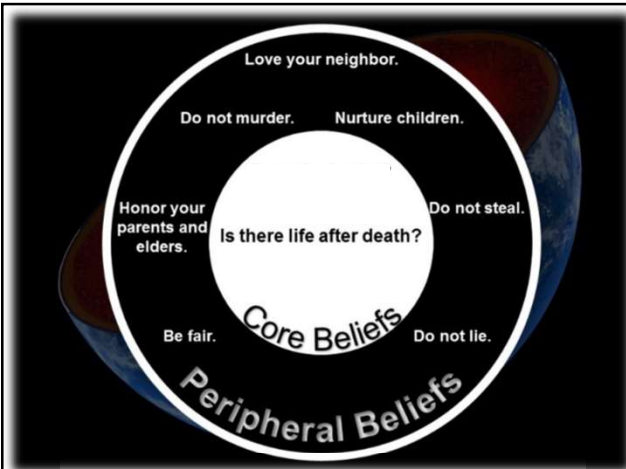
**Judaism:** Jesus was a well intentioned (if misguided or misunderstood) Jewish rabbi but was not the promised Messiah of Israel.



**Islam:** Jesus was one of the greatest prophets (born of a virgin and a miracle worker) but he did not die on the cross or resurrect from the dead.



**Christianity:** Jesus is the unique Son of God (God in the flesh) who died for the sins of the world.



## Is there life after death?



**Buddhism:** Theravada Buddhism seeks to lead one to Nirvana which is extinction of desire. Pure Land Buddhism seeks to lead one to a heaven.



**Hinduism:** The Hindu afterlife (deliverance from reincarnation) varies from absorption into the pantheistic God to a paradise of delights.



**Confucianism:** Confucius's emphasis was on the ordering of society in this life. He avoided speculating about any afterlife.



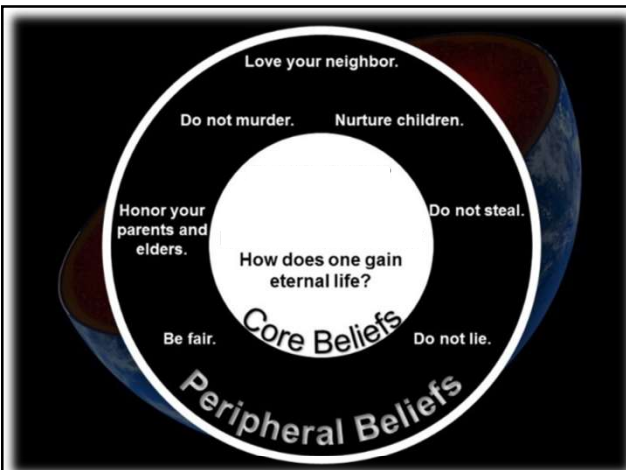
**Judaism:** Modern Judaism focuses on the life that one lives in the here and now.



**Islam:** Heaven awaits those who are counted worthy by Allah. Hell awaits all infidels and those on whom Allah's favor does not fall.



**Christianity:** Heaven awaits all who believe the Gospel of Jesus. Hell awaits all unbelievers.



## How does one gain eternal life?



**Buddhism:** In Theravada Buddhism, Nirvana is by the Eight-fold path. In Pure Land Buddhism one finds heaven by the favor of Amida Buddha.



**Hinduism:** One must break the cycle of reincarnation by working off one's Karma.



**Confucianism:** There is no afterlife to attain.



**Judaism:** There is little to no emphasis on any kind of afterlife in modern Judaism.

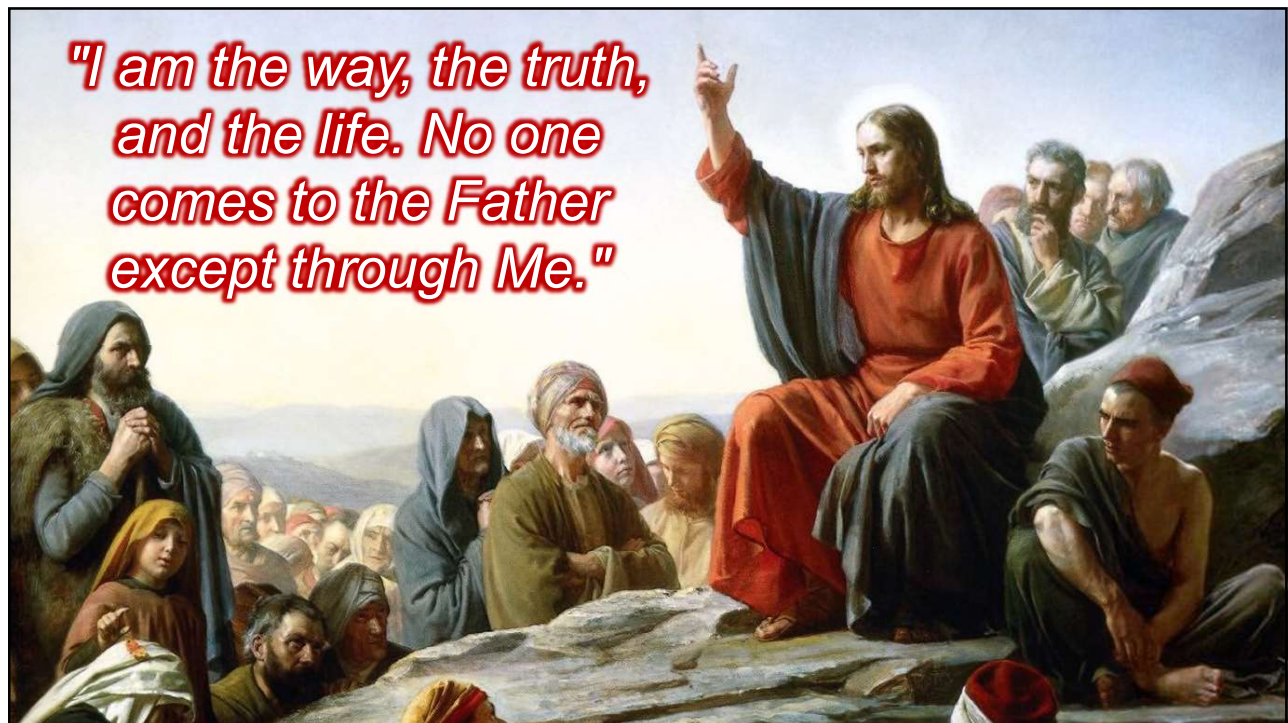


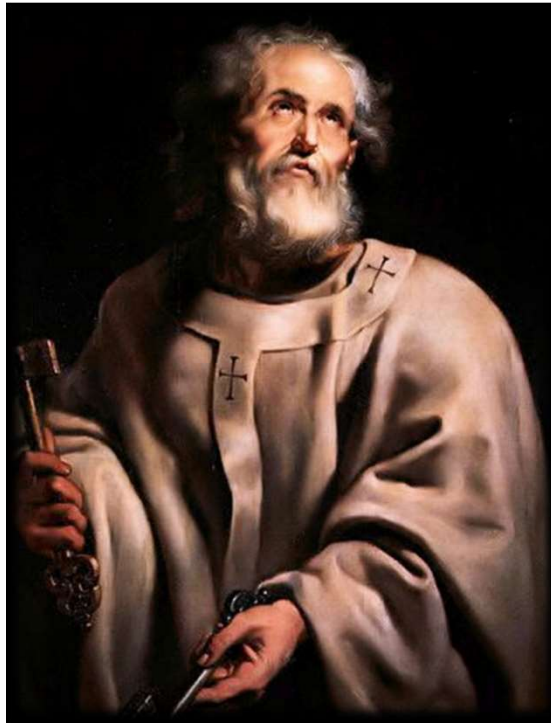
**Islam:** Heaven is gained by service to Allah. Only a few can have any assurance of avoiding hell.



**Christianity:** Eternal life is a gift that cannot be earned. It comes to those who trust God's provision in Jesus.

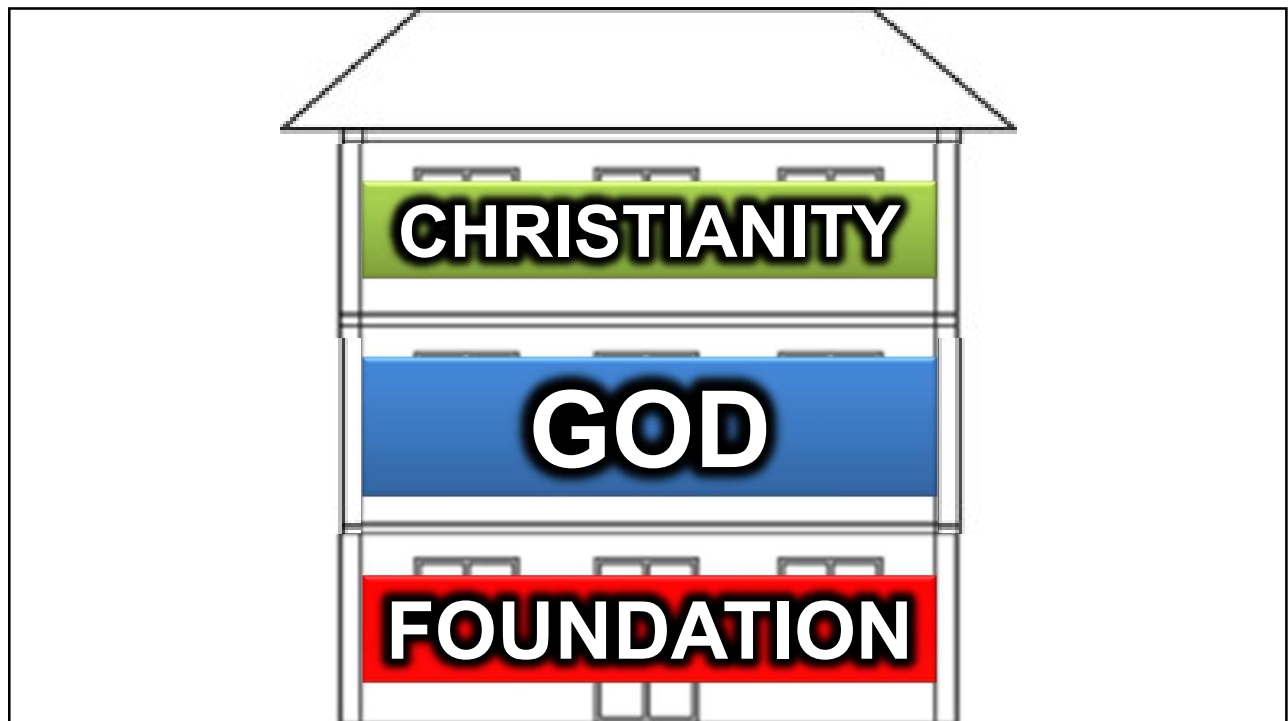
Since there are so many different religions, how can the Christian maintain that only Christianity is true?



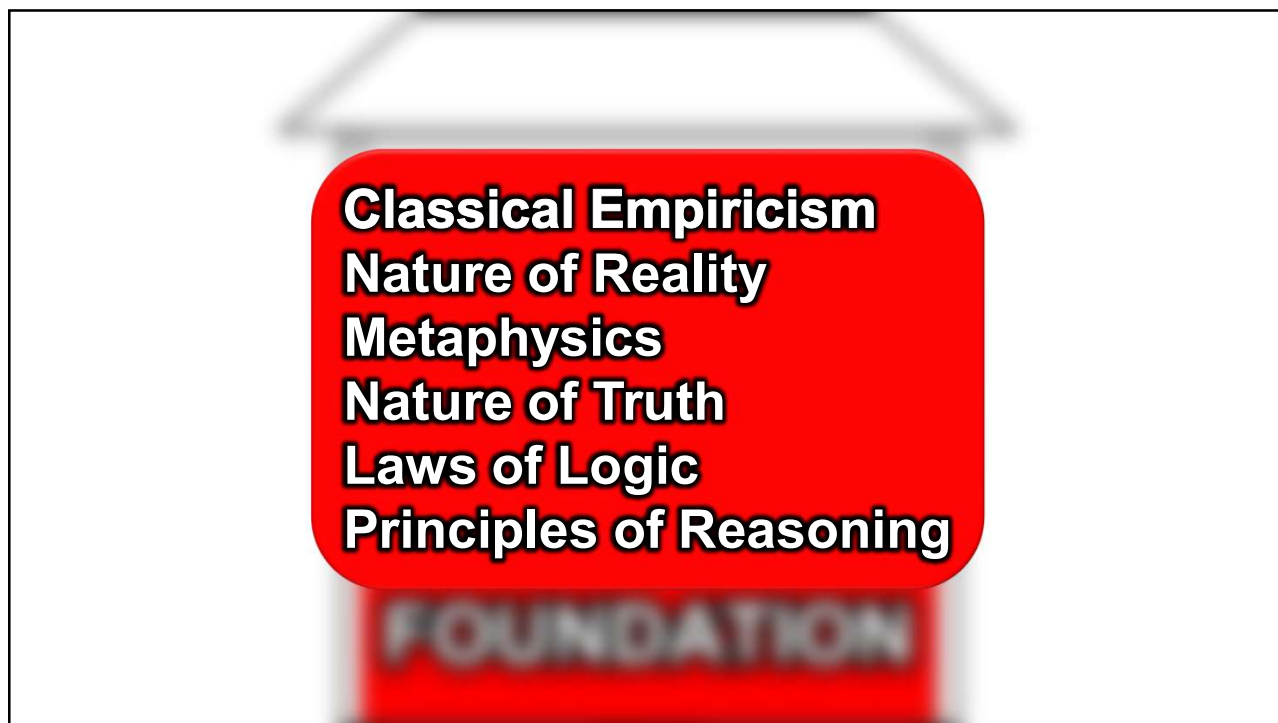
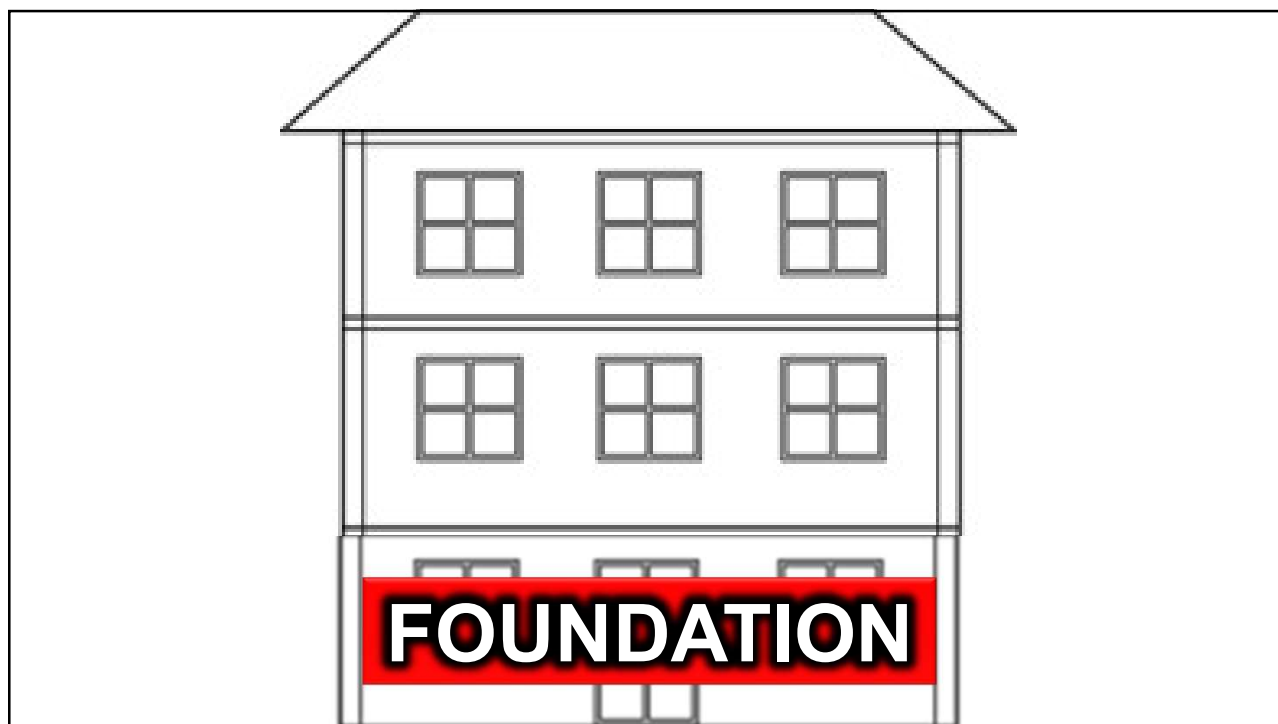


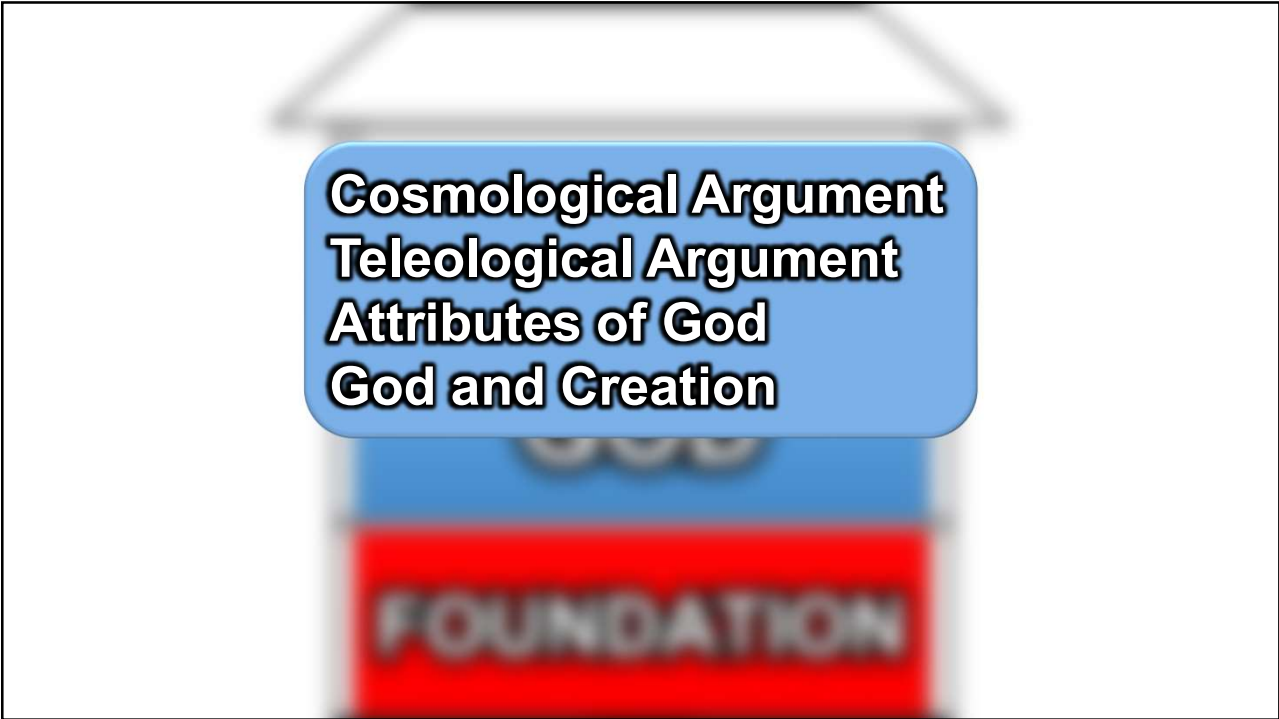
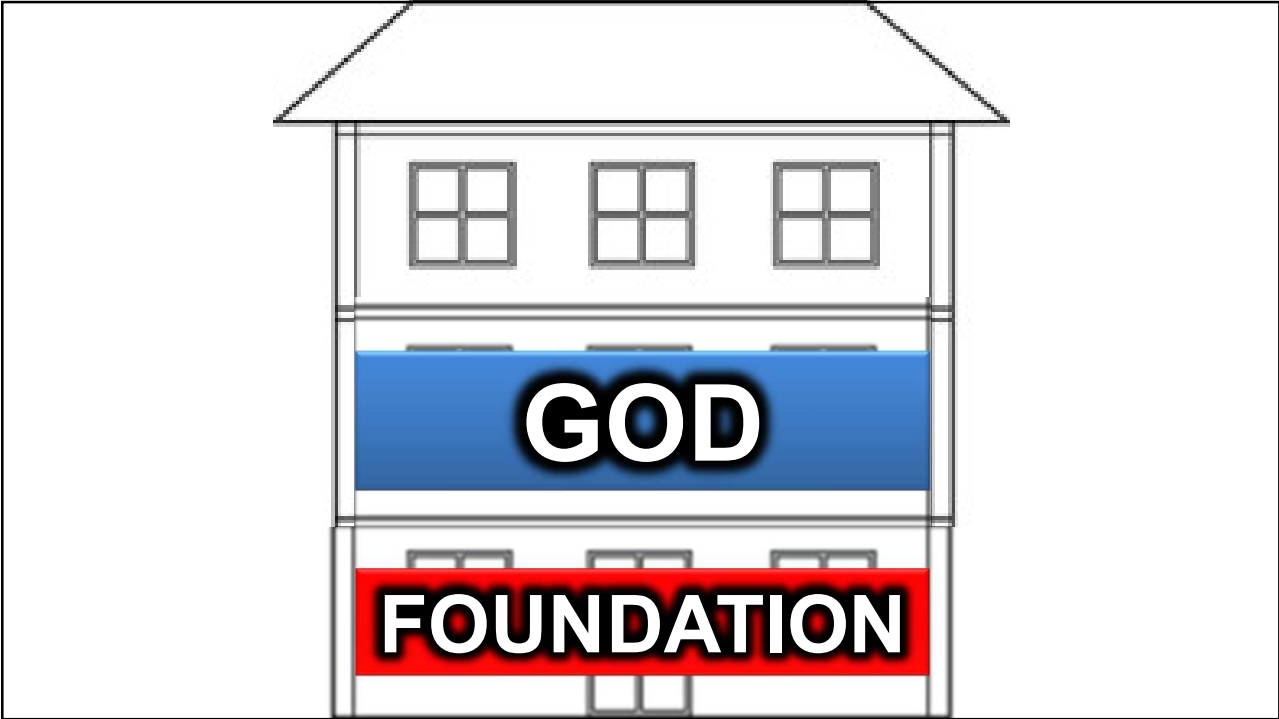
*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, always be ready to give a **defense** to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;"*

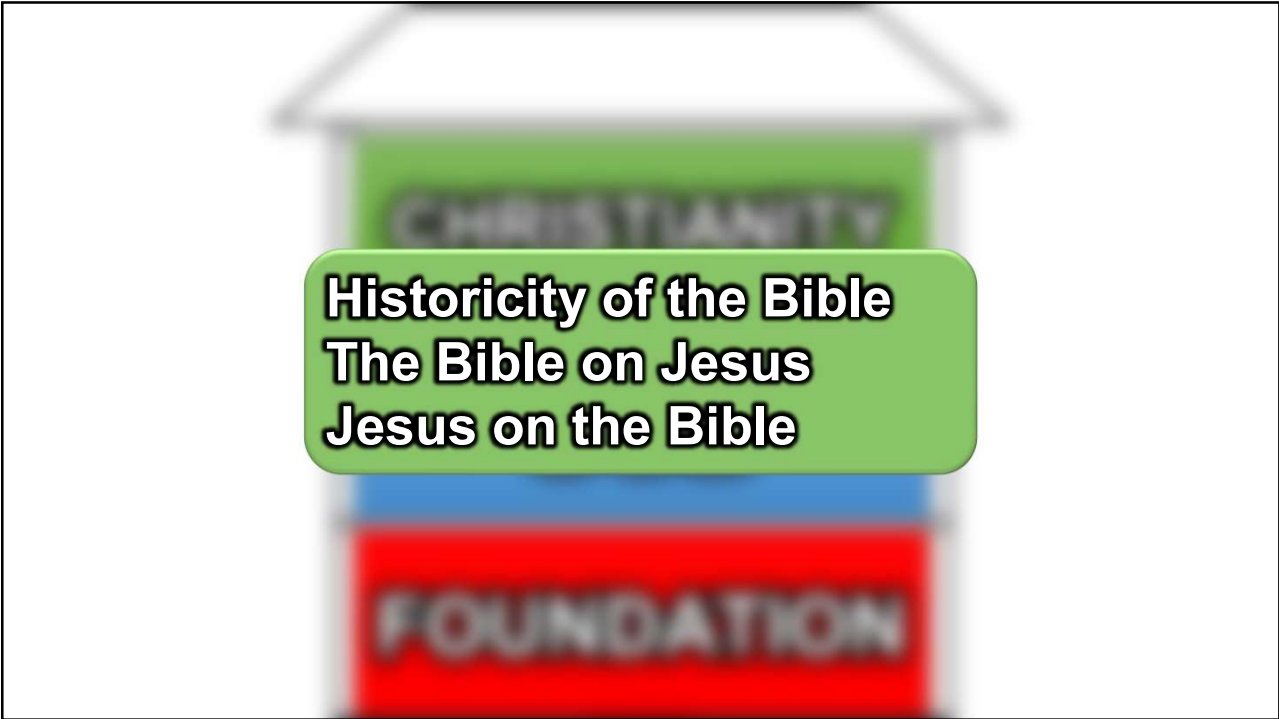
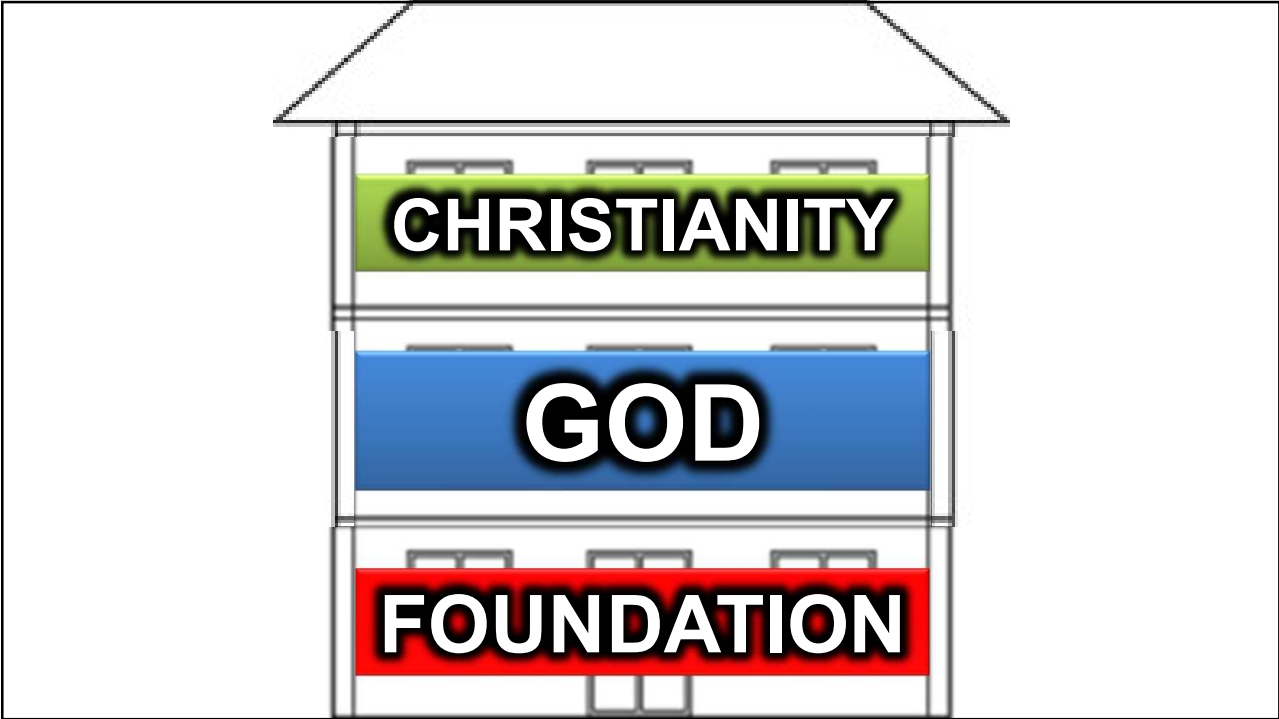
1 Peter 3:15











**If it is the case that only  
Christianity is true, are the  
followers of those  
religions eternally lost?**

**What about those who  
sincerely follow a "false"  
religion and never had a  
chance to hear  
the Gospel?**



# What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

**Richard G. Howe, PhD**

*Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Apologetics,  
Southern Evangelical Seminary*

*Past President, International Society of Christian Apologetics*