“Spiritual But Not Religious”

The Challenge of
Ala Carte Spirituality
ELIZABETH GILBERT
author of The Last American Man

eat pray love

One Woman’s Search for Everything Across Italy, India, and Indonesia
Religious Debate

Does God Belong in a Religion Class?
phar·i·see

Etymology:

- Middle English *pharise*, from Old English *farise*, from Late Latin *pharisaeus*, from Greek *pharisaios*, from Aramaic *pērīshayyā*, plural of *pērīshā*, literally, “separated”
When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."
John 14:6

6Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
Christian View of Non-Christian Religions?

1. Exclusivism:
   - Jesus is the unique incarnation of God, fully human and fully divine.
   - Salvation is found only in Him.
   - Bible is true, unique, authoritative revelation.
   - Claims incompatible with the Bible must be rejected as false.
Christian View of Non-Christian Religions?

2. Inclusivism:

- The basic claims of Christian faith are true, and Jesus is unique, but God reveals Himself and, *through Christ*, saves people through other religions as well.
Christian View of Non-Christian Religions?

3. Pluralism:

- Jesus is *not* unique; God (whatever “that” is) reveals “himself/herself/itself” in all religions and “saves” (whatever that means) all pious people (however they define “piety”).
Christian View of Non-Christian Religions?

4. Universalism:
   - All people will be “saved” regardless of what they know or how they live.
American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)

- Self-identified "Christians" has dropped from 86% to 76% since 1990
American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)

- Number of “unaffiliated” rose from 8% to 16% in recent years
American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)

- Self-identified atheists or agnostics rose from 1 million in 1990 to 3.6 million in 2009
Newsweek Poll

- Self-identified “spiritual but not religious” rose from 24% in 2005 to 30% in 2009.
“Spiritual But Not Religious”

- There is an experiential core common in all religions.
That core is spiritual energy, described in personal terms by some and impersonal terms by others.
Human beings have unlimited spiritual potential which must be actualized to achieve success in life.
“Spiritual But Not Religious”

- Experience, not truthfulness, is the proper test of any worldview.
Spirituality has more to do with a general "openness" to multiple spiritual realities than a commitment to a particular set of creeds.
Those who are “spiritual but not religious” are very suspicious about institutional religion.
Jesus, if he is included at all, is seen as a highly evolved spiritual being who can aid us in our own spiritual evolution.
“Spiritual But Not Religious”
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“Zen Christianity”
“The trouble when people stop believing in God is not that they thereafter believe in nothing; it is that they thereafter believe in everything.”

G. K. Chesterton
“Christless Christianity”?

“Moralistic Therapeutic Deism”
“Speaking the Truth in Love”

1. We must begin with the question of truth, not pragmatic experience.
2. We must be more informed about the alternatives.
3. We must stress the uniqueness of Christ and his “exclusive” kingdom without ridiculing other religious figures or beliefs.
4. We must replace the traditional “monologue” approach to evangelism with genuine dialogue.

5. We must live lives that are consistent with the truth.
“Speaking the Truth in Love”

6. We must not overstep our authority as messengers; we are not judges.

7. We must bathe all of our efforts in prayer.
Calling all “exclusivists” to:

Humility . . . because
- “We know in part”
- We are messengers
- We follow Jesus

Confidence . . . because
- “We know in part”
- We are messengers
- We follow Jesus