



THINK
THEISM

Welcome!

Ratio Christi (“reason for Christ” in Latin) is a community of Aggies brought together with the common purpose that Jesus and his message are worth thinking about.

Weekly Meetings: Thursday @ 8:30pm

RC-TAMU.org



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Thomistic Institute

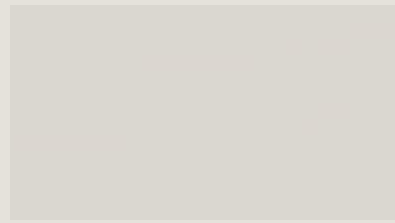
The Thomistic Institute exists to promote Catholic truth in our contemporary world by strengthening the intellectual formation of Christians at Texas A&M University, in the Church, and in the wider public square. The thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Universal Doctor of the Church, is our touchstone.

Reading Group Details in the Slack

thomisticinstitute.org/texas-am



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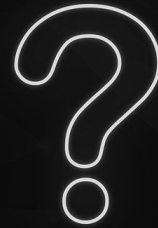
Think Theism lectures are supported by Ratio Christi @ Texas A&M, but the opinions represented herein do not necessarily reflect the beliefs or values of Ratio Christi. This content is presented to encourage discussion and critical thought about challenging questions.



RATIO
CHRISTI

Last Week

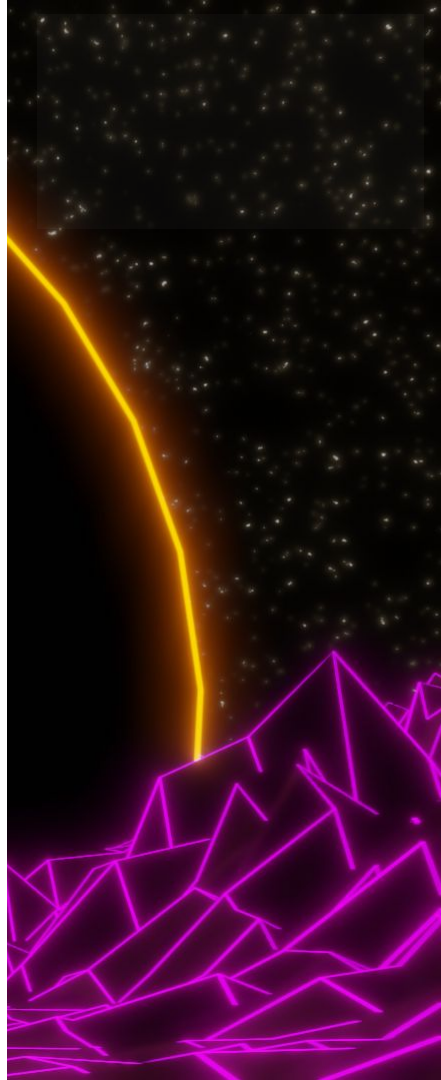
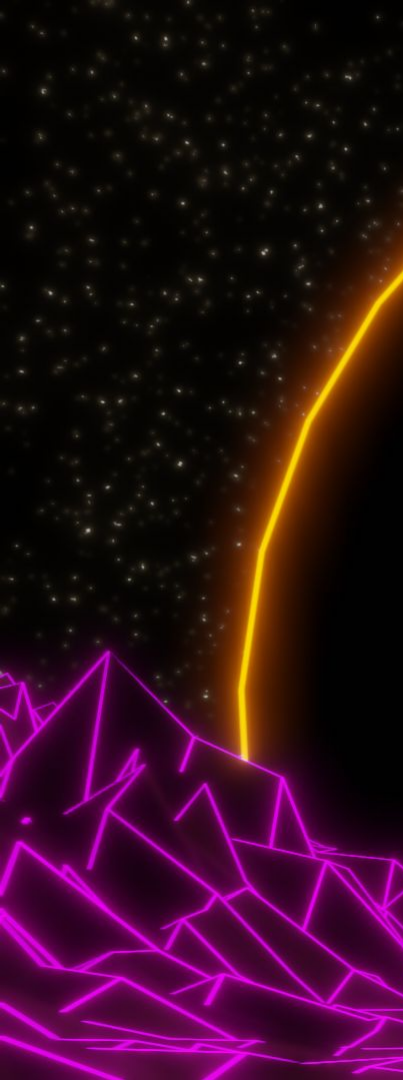
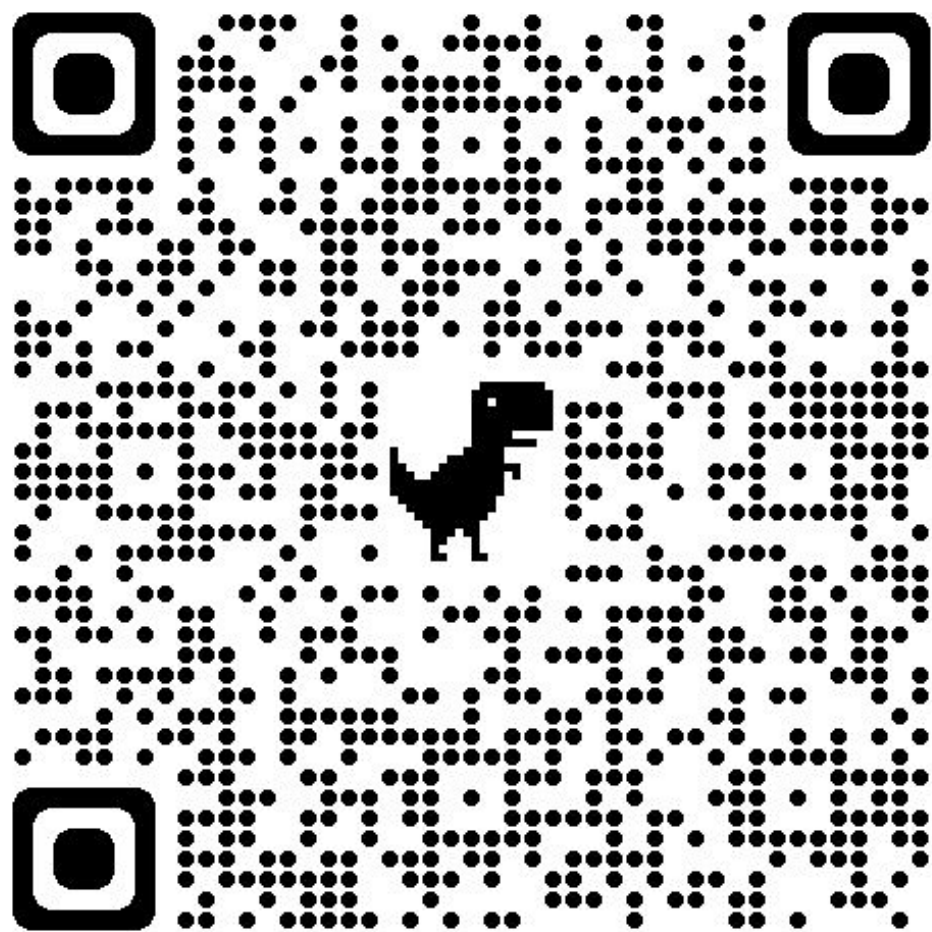
What is the Gospel?



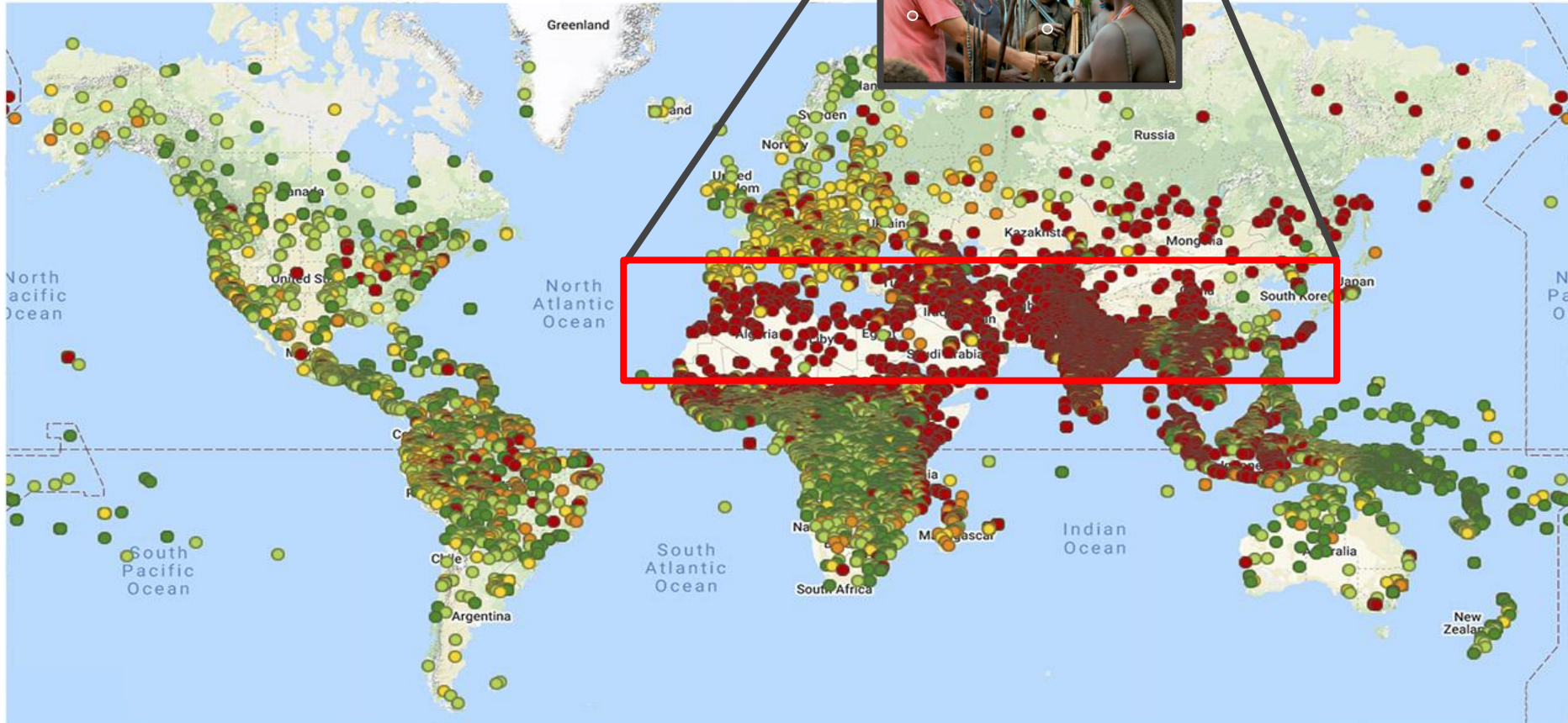
The background features a dark space filled with small white stars. A bright, glowing yellow arc, resembling a rising sun or moon, spans across the upper half of the image. Below the arc, a landscape is depicted using a purple wireframe style, with jagged, mountain-like peaks and a valley floor. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and ethereal.

What About Those That Never Hear the Gospel?

The Soteriological Problem of the Unevangelized



Who Are the Unevangelized?



- ● ● ● ● Summary
- Unreached
- Minimally reached
- Superficially reached
- Partially reached
- Significantly reached

The argument is an objection to the exclusivism of the Gospel:

1. If the gospel is necessary for salvation, the unevangelized are damned.
2. Punishing people for what they could not have known is inconsistent with a loving and just God.
3. Therefore, Christianity is not true.

Alvin objects to Christianity based on this issue.
How should Carol respond?

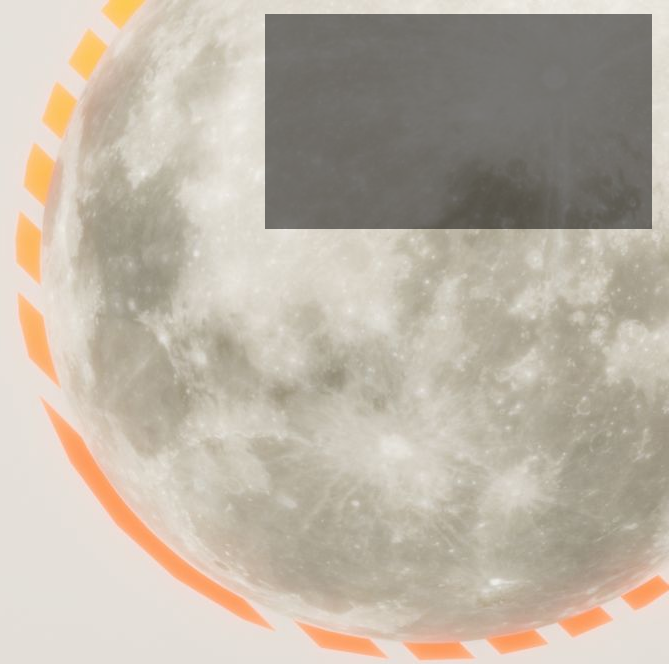


Alvin the Atheist

Carol the Christian

Brief Overview of Seven Responses

1. Agnosticism
- 2. Inclusivism**
- 3. Postmortem Evangelism**
- 4. Universal evangelization**
5. Universalism
6. Final Option View
7. Middle Knowledge Views



Boundary Beliefs of the Three Views

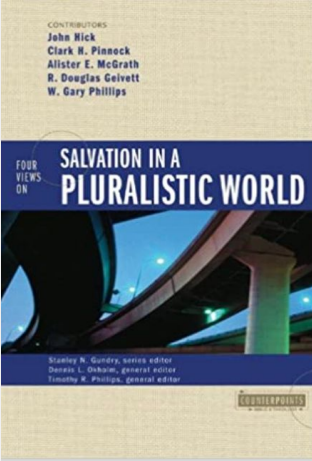
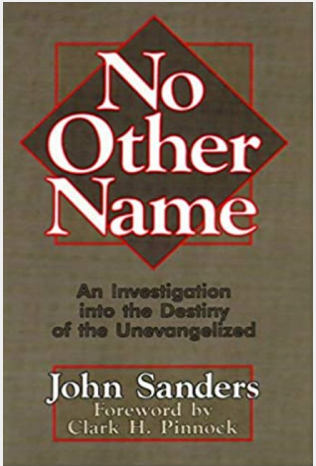
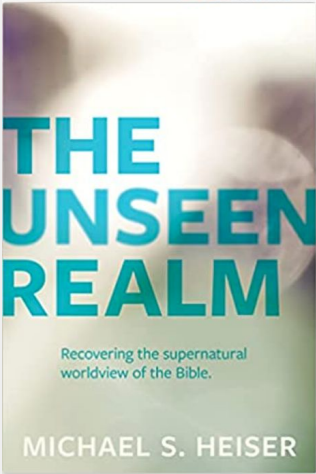
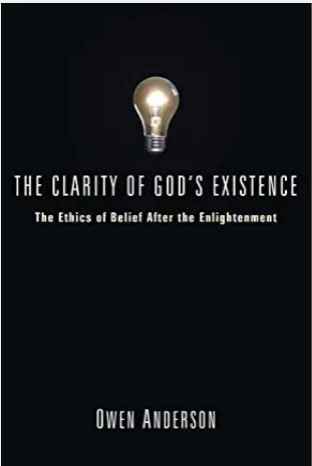
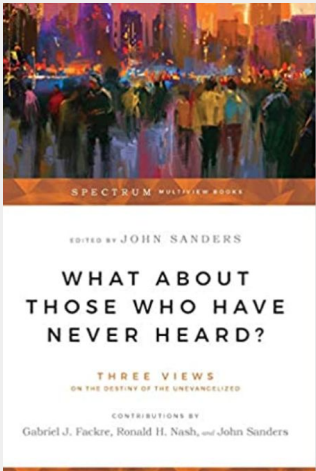
Control Beliefs held in Common



Inclusivism,
Postmortem Evangelism, and
Universal Evangelism
all agree that...

1. Jesus is the only Savior (John 14:6)
2. God desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4)

Resources



Middle Knowledge and Christian Exclusivism

William Lane Craig

SUMMARY

David Hunt has criticized a middle knowledge perspective on Christian exclusivism on evangelistic and metaphysical grounds. He argues that from a middle knowledge perspective attempts to evangelize another person are either futile or superfluous and that an omnibenevolent God would have created a post-mortem state of the blessed without ever creating any of the damned. Hunt's evangelistic objection is unfounded because our evangelistic efforts may bring it about that people are saved who otherwise would not have been saved. Hunt's metaphysical objection errs in thinking that God judges people on the basis of what they would do rather than what they in fact do.

MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE AND CHRISTIAN EXCLUSIVISM

In another place, [1] I have attempted to formulate and defend a middle knowledge perspective on the exclusivity of salvation through Christ. The difficulty posed by the doctrine of Christian exclusivism, it seems to me, is counterfactual in nature: granted that God has accorded sufficient grace to all persons for their salvation, still some persons who in fact freely reject God's grace might complain that they would have responded affirmatively to His initiatives if only they had been accorded greater or more congruent grace. If God is omnibenevolent, He must surely, it seems, supply all persons with grace efficacious for their salvation. But then Christian exclusivism is incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.

Roadmap

- The View in a Nutshell



- Key Scriptural Support



- Theological Assumptions



- Ancient and Modern proponents



- Evaluate Strengths/Weaknesses



- Interpretation of Acts 10



Exclusivism (The Targeted View)



To be saved, it is necessary to know about the work of Jesus and exercise faith in Him before you die. The means of salvation is exclusively through human messengers.



- + It stresses that Jesus is the only Savior.
- + It emphasizes evangelism and missions.
- Salvation is not universally accessible.



Central points - Cornelius was saved after responding to the gospel. Had he died before Peter arrived, he would have been damned.

Inclusivism (Wider Hope View)



God saves people because of the work of Christ, but it is not necessary to know the gospel message. One must respond in faith to God as revealed through General Revelation before you die.



- + Emphasizes Jesus as ontologically necessary.
- + Offers universally accessible salvation.
- Does not require explicit faith in Christ.
- De-emphasizes missions.



Central points - Cornelius was a *believer*, with faith in God, before receiving the gospel. He became a *Christian* after receiving the gospel. Had he died before Peter arrived, he would've been saved.

Postmortem Evangelism (Afterlife Message)



Those who die unevangelized receive an opportunity for salvation after death. No one is saved without explicit knowledge of Christ. It is not a second chance view, but a first chance view. Only those who explicitly disbelieve in Christ will be condemned. It is not an indefinite offer.



- + Emphasizes ontological *and* epistemological necessity of Jesus.
- + Salvation is universally accessible.
- De-emphasizes missions.
- Likely misinterprets key scriptures.



Central points - Cornelius was saved after responding to the gospel. Had he died before Peter arrived, he would have an opportunity to hear the gospel in the afterlife.

Universal Evangelism (God sends the message)



If people respond to general revelation, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, God will send the gospel message to them, whether by human messenger, dreams, visions, or angels.



- + Emphasizes ontological and epistemological necessity of Jesus.
- + Offers universally accessible salvation.
- De-emphasizes the need for human agents.



Central points - God made sure Cornelius received the gospel message because Cornelius had responded in faith to the light given to him.

Conclusion

Which of the three responses best harmonizes the claims of Christianity?

- *We have a model for sorting out this debatable issue and other issues.*

Your answer depends not only on Scriptural support, but also on **theological assumptions**.

Carol the Christian has a reasonable response to Alvin that upholds the claims of Christianity concerning the exclusive nature of the gospel and the destiny of the unevangelized.

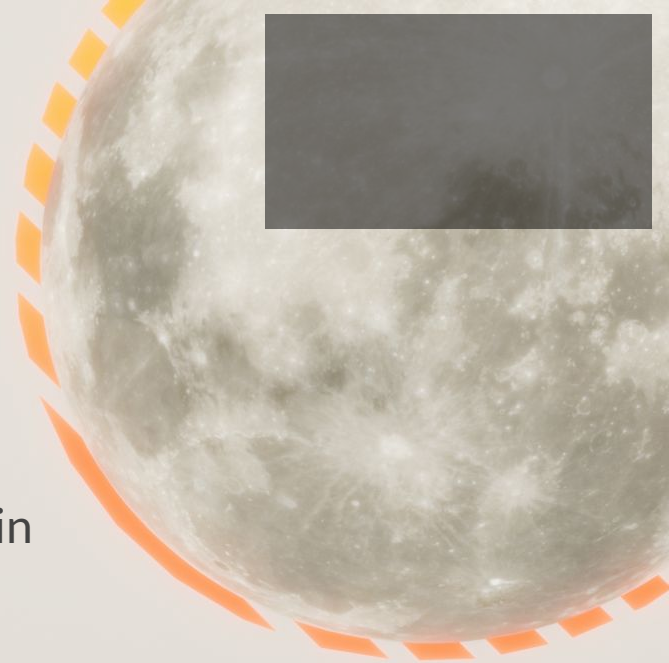


Takeaways

- Although evangelical responses to this topic are not dogmatic conclusions, we *can* use critical reason to harmonize the two premises that:
 - (i) **Jesus is the only way of salvation** and
 - (ii) **God desires all people to be saved.**
- When evaluating competing views of debatable issues in Christianity, it is important to:

Consider and evaluate the theological assumptions that guide the interpretation of the key scriptures that are used as support.

Ratio Christi's aim is to **give our skeptical and atheist friends intellectual permission to consider the gospel** by thoughtfully answering objections like this one.



Other Small Topics to Discuss

- The role and importance of General Revelation?
- The destiny of infants and the mentally disabled?
- Universalism?
- Middle Knowledge view?