



## "If you were born in India you would be a Hindu."

Paul Copan

There is an old parable about six blind Hindus touching an elephant. One blind man touched the side of the elephant and said it was a wall. Another blind man touched the ear and said it was a large leaf of a tree. Yet another blind man was holding a leg and thought it was a tree trunk. Still another blind man took hold of the elephant's trunk and said it was a snake. Someone else was touching the elephant's tusk and believed it was a spear. Another blind man had the elephant's tail in his hand and was calling it a rope. All of the blind men were touching the same reality but were understanding it differently. They all had the right to interpret what they were touching in their own personal way, yet it was the same elephant.

People have used this old parable to share *their* opinion or viewpoint that no *one* religion is the only route to God (pluralism). Pluralists believe that the road to God is wide. The opposite of this is that only one religion is really true (exclusivism).

What could a thoughtful person say in response?

§ Just because there are many different religious answers and systems doesn't automatically mean pluralism is correct.

§ Simply because there are many political alternatives in the world (monarchy, fascism, communism, democracy, etc.) doesn't mean that someone growing up in the midst of them is unable to see that some forms of government are better than others.

§ That kind of evaluation isn't arrogant or presumptuous. The same is true of grappling with religion.

§ The *same* line of reasoning applies to the pluralist himself. If the pluralist grew up in

Madagascar or medieval France, he would not have been a pluralist!

§ If we are culturally conditioned regarding our religious beliefs, then why should the religious pluralist think his view is *less* arbitrary or conditioned than the exclusivist's?

§ If Christian faith is *true*, then the Christian would be in a *better* position than the pluralist to assess the status of other religions

§ How does the pluralist know he is correct? Even though he claims others don't know Ultimate Reality as it really is, *he* implies that he does. (To say that the Ultimate Reality can't be known is a statement of knowledge.)

§ If the Christian needs to justify Christianity's claims, the pluralist's views need just as much substantiation.

If we can't know Reality as it really is, why think one exists at all? Why not simply try to explain religions as purely human or cultural manifestations without being anything more?