Part I: Inclusivism
(Our religion is best, but weaker forms of religion are possible in other religions)

1. Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (1075-1141)
Kuzari IV:23
Similarly, all religions that came after the Torah of Moses are part of the process of bringing humanity closer to the essence of Judaism, even though they appear its opposite. The nations serve to introduce and pave the way for the long-awaited messiah. He is the fruit and they, in turn, will all become his fruit when they acknowledge him. Then all nations will become one tree, recognizing the common root they had previously scorned.

2. Rambam (1135 - 1204)
Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 11:3
Even Jesus of Nazereth, who imagined that he was the Messiah, but was put to death by the court, Daniel had prophesized, as it is written, “And the children of the violent among your people shall lift themselves up to establish a vision; but they shall stumble” (Daniel 11:4). For has there ever been a greater stumbling block than this? All the prophets affirmed that the Messiah would redeem Israel, save them, gather their dispersed, and confirm the commandments. But he caused Israel to be destroyed by the sword, their remnant to be dispersed and humiliated. He was instrumental in changing the Torah and causing the world to err and serve another besides God.

The human mind has no power to reach the thoughts of the Creator, “for His thoughts and ways are unlike ours” (Isaiah 55:8). All these matters of Jesus of Nazareth and of the Ishmaelite who stood up after him are only intended to pave the way for the anointed king, and to mend the entire world to worship God together, thus: “For then I shall turn a clear tongue to the nations to call all in the Name of the Lord and to worship him with one shoulder” (Zephaniah 3:9). Thus the messianic hope, the Torah, and the commandments have become familiar topics of conversation among the inhabitants of the far isles and many peoples, uncircumcised of heart and flesh.

Teshuvot HaRambam 284
It is permitted to teach the commandments to Christians and draw them to our law. But it is not permitted to teach anything from it to Muslims because it is known to you about their belief that this Torah of ours is not from God..and if one can convince the Christians of the correct interpretation of Scripture, it is possible that they might return to what is good.

3. Abarbanel (1437-1508)
Commentary to Devarim 4
There is no doubt that this was the most powerful of providential acts that God brought about so that the Torah should not be lost completely. For when He foresaw the long duration of this great exile, He realized that if the Jews were to live among the idolatrous cultures of antiquity, who had neither heard of the Torah nor witnessed its greatness, then Torah would soon be forgotten...That is why He prepared the cure before

1 Thanks to Alan Brill for the title and framing of this class
the disease by exiling Jewry among the nations who supported the Torah, and in this way it was sustained by us during this long exile. For as we see with our eyes, these nations acknowledge the truth of the Torah and hold it in high regard, and there is no difference between them and us except in their understanding of it. Because of this the Torah remains strong and enduring among us. We should consider Christians and Muslims as instruments that will help bring about the recognition of God by all men on earth. While the nations worshipped their idols and denied the existence of God, and thus recognized neither the power of God nor the principle of reward and punishment, the existence of Christians and Muslims helped disseminate among the nations the awareness of God’s existence, and introduced into the most distant lands the realization that there is a God who rules the world, who rewards and punishes, and who has revealed Himself to men.

4. R. Yaakov Emden (1697-1776)
Commentary to Pirkei Avot 4:13

We should consider Christians and Muslims as instruments for the fulfillment of the prophecy that the knowledge of God will one day spread throughout the earth. Whereas the nations before them worshipped idols, denied God’s existence, and thus did not recognize God’s power or retribution, the rise of Christianity and Islam served to spread among the nations, to the furthest ends of the earth, the knowledge that there is One God who rules the world, who rewards and punishes and reveals Himself to men.

Seder Olam Rabah veZuta

Therefore you must realize - and accept the truth from him who speaks it - that we see clearly here that the Nazarne and his Apostles did not wish to destroy the Torah from Israel, God forbid; for it is written so in Matthew (5:17), the Nazarene having said, “Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the Torah. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. I tell you this: So long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the Torah until it is achieved. If any man therefore sets aside even the least of the Torah’s demands, and teaches others to do the same he will have the lowest place in the Kingdom of Heaven, whereas anyone who keeps the Torah and teaches others so, will stand high in the Kingdom of Heaven.” This is also recorded in Luke (16:17). It is therefore exceedingly clear that the Nazarene never dreamed of destroying the torah.

The writers of the Gospels never meant to say that the Nazarene came to abolish Judaism, but only that he came to establish a religion for the Gentiles from that time onward. Nor was it new, but actually ancient; they being the Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah, which were forgotten. The Apostles of the Nazarene then established them anew. However, those born as Jews, or circumcised as converts to Judaism are obligated to observe all commandments of the Torah without exception. But for gentiles he reserved the seven commandments which they have always been obliged to fulfill. It is for that reason that they were forbidden pollutions of idols, fornication, blood, and things strangled. (Acts 15).

It is therefore a habitual saying of mine...that the Nazarene brought about a double kindness in the world. On the one hand, he strengthened the Torah of Moses majestically, as mentioned earlier, and on one of our Sages spoke out more emphatically concerning the immutability of the Torah. And on the other hand, he did much good for the Gentiles...by doing away with idolatry and removing the images from their midst. He obligated them with the Seven Commandments so that they should not be as the beasts of the field. He also bestowed upon them ethical ways, and in this respect he was much more stringent with them than the Torah of Moses. The Christians keep distant even from certain practices that are permitted to Jews...They have many admirable and saintly traits, such as the piousness of not only avoiding vengeance but also refraining from causing evil to an enemy.
5. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch  
Commentary to Numbers 29:13  
The distinction between Israel and the nations continuously lessens through the influence of the mission of Israel and quiet exemplar activities amidst the nations.

Part II: UNIVERSALIST  
(The truth is one)

6. Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058)  
Thou art God:  
Every creature is Thy servant and Thy devotee.  
Thy glory never can diminished be.  
Because to others some men bend their knee,  
For none intends but to come near to Thee.

7. Moses Mendelssohn  
Letter to Prince Karl Wilhelm of Brunswick  
Since all men must have been destined by the Creator to attain eternal bliss, no particular religion can have an exclusive claim to truth. This thesis, I dare to submit, might serve as a criterion of truth in all religious matters. A revelation claiming to show man the only way to salvation cannot be true, for it is not in harmony with the intent of the all-merciful Creator.

8. Rabbi Israel Lipschutz (1782-1860)  
_Tiferet Yisrael_, (commentary on _Pirkei Avot_) 3:17  
R. Elazar ben Azariah said, “If there is no Torah there is no civilization (_derekh eretz_).” The word “Torah” here cannot be meant literally since there are many ignorant people who have not learned Torah, and many pious among the Gentiles who do not keep the Torah and yet are ethical and follow _derekh eretz_. Rather, the correct interpretation seems to me to be that every people has its own Divine religion, which comprised three foundational principles, 1) belief in a revealed Torah, 2) belief in reward and punishment, and 3) belief in an afterlife. They only disagree on the interpretation of these principles. These three principles are what are called Torah

Even without these holy words of our rabbis, we would know this from simple logic. “God is right in all His actions and pious in His deeds.” We have come across many good non Jews who in addition to believing in the Creator and accepting the Divine sanctity of the Bible have done great kindnesses not only to Israel but have benefited the whole of mankind. The pious Jenner invented inoculation against smallpox, and thus saved the lives of tens of thousands of people and helped them avoid disease and becoming crippled. Drake brought potatoes to Europe and thus prevented much famine. Guttenberg invented the printing press. Some who were not at all rewarded in this world, like the saintly Reuchlin, who put his own life in danger by preventing the Talmud from being burnt on the orders of Emperor Maximilian in 1509, as a result of the pressure from the apostate Pfefferkorn who plotted together with the evil monks. This Reuchlin risked his life, and with his arguments got the Emperor to change his decree. As a result he was pursued and harassed and his life made bitter by the monks who opposed him, and he died a broken man. Do you think it conceivable that these amazing deeds would not be recognized and rewarded in Heaven? God does not betray any of his creatures.

9. Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook  
_Iggerot_ 1:112  
Since the manner that human thought and feeling connects with the infinite supernal Divine light needs to be in a multiplicity of colors, heretofore every nation and society must have a different spiritual way of life. The
brotherly love of Esau and Jacob, of Isaac and Ishmael will transcend all confusions...The old method of choosing one path to patiently follow can no longer exist or continue. In the beginning of our path, we need to develop and evolve to grasp an integration of the paths to synthesize them into a secure tranquility.

**Speech to city notables, Montreal, Canada May 5, 1924**
When all is said and done, the difference of religious belief is only on the surface, the fundamentals being: to do good to all mankind, live up to the teachings of the Bible, and carry out the precepts of the Golden Rule.

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**Part III: PLURALISM** *(All major religions have some truth)*

**10. Rabbi David Hartman (b. 1931)**
**A Heart of Many Rooms**
When revelation is understood as the concretization of the universal, then “whose truth is the truth?” becomes the paramount religious question and pluralism becomes a vacuous religious ideal. If, however, revelation can be separated from the claim of universality, and if a community of faith can regain an appreciation of the particularity of the divine-human encounter, the pluralism can become a meaningful part of Biblical faith experiences...

**11. Rabbi Yitz Greenberg (b. 1933)**
**In the Name of Heaven and Earth**
We can say firmly and respectfully, that the logic behind incarnation and God becoming flesh is the shared value system: Both religions believe that life will win out over death - resurrection is the climax of that process - because it’s God’s will that the world will be made perfect, and that this will be accomplished by a partnership, a covenant between God and humanity, which expresses itself in many religions and many covenants, including Judaism and Christianity.

**12. Rabbi Dr. Lord Jonathan Sacks (b. 1948)**
**The Dignity of Difference** *(and related essays/interviews)*
In the course of history, God has spoken to mankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims...As Jews we believe that God has made a covenant with a singular people, but that does not exclude the possibility of other peoples, cultures and faiths finding their own relationship with God within the shared frame of Noahite law.

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**Part IV: EXCLUSIVISM** *(There is only one true religion)*

**13. Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook (1891-1982)**
**Judaism and Christianity**
The State of Israel was established by Divine decree; this negates the fundamental principle of Catholic theology, founded on the eternal punishment of Israel. Wandering in exile provides the truth of Christianity. The State of Israel proves that the Jewish people are the true Israel. Christianity is the number one enemy of the State of Israel. With the Arabs we have a non-essential “neighbors quarrel”...But with Christianity it is cosmological in essence, whether we are the Jewish people or not.
In the World to Come, however, there will be no nation other than Israel. The souls of righteous Gentiles will be allowed to exist in the Future World, but only as an addition and attachment to Israel. They will therefore be secondary to the Jews, just as a garment is secondary to the one who wears it.

To elucidate still further, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the verse, “The candle of God is the soul of man” What it means is that the souls of Jews, who are called “man,” are by way of illustration, like the flame of the candle, whose nature it is always to scintillate upwards. Now this is a general principle in the whole realm of holiness...This stands in direct contrast to the so called “kelipah” (evil forces” and “sitra abra” (the other, evil, side), where from are derived the souls of Gentiles...Therefore they (the Gentiles) are called “dead.”

The “spreading of the wellsprings” of Chassidic teachings should not be limited to Jews alone, but should be extended outward to non-Jews as well. As Rambam states, the purpose of giving the Torah was to bring peace to the world (Hilkhot Hanukah 4:14). Similarly, he writes that every Jew is obliged to try and influence those who are not Jewish to fulfill the Seven Laws of Noah. Maimonides also states that one of the achievements of the Messiah will be to spiritually refine and elevate the nations of the world until they too become aware of God to the point where Godliness will be revealed to every flesh, non-Jews.