OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Religious Pluralism

Christian Thought

Critically assess whether Christian salvation should be understood exclusively through explicit faith in Christ.

1,580 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

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Argument plan

Critically assess whether Christian salvation should be understood exclusively through explicit faith in Christ.

Thesis: Christian exclusivism is strongest when it protects the particular claim that God's decisive self-revelation and saving action occur in Christ. It is weakest when it adds that only those with explicit Christian belief or institutional membership can receive salvation, since that confuses the source of grace with human access to it and makes destiny depend heavily on historical location. A critical inclusivism is therefore more convincing: salvation remains constituted by Christ, while grace and truth may be genuinely encountered beyond visible Christianity. Hick's pluralism exposes exclusivism's moral and epistemic problems but purchases equality by revising central incarnation claims too radically.

1. Biblical and doctrinal particularity supports the unique and final significance of Christ.

Counter-argument: Texts about Christ as the way do not necessarily state that explicit Christian knowledge is a universal condition of salvation.

Interim judgement: They establish an exclusive source more securely than an exclusive route of conscious access.

2. Barthian exclusivism preserves revelation as God's gracious act rather than human religious achievement.

Counter-argument: Its rejection of natural or non-Christian knowledge of God can appear to ignore evident holiness and insight outside the Church.

Interim judgement: Barth corrects Christian superiority but leaves the positive theological status of other traditions underdeveloped.

3. Strict soteriological exclusivism takes conversion, mission and doctrinal truth seriously.

Counter-argument: It creates severe problems of epistemic luck, justice and the fate of the unevangelised.

Interim judgement: Those problems defeat explicit-membership exclusivism unless access to grace is wider than access to Christian language.

4. Rahnerian inclusivism reconciles Christ's universal saving role with universal divine grace.

Counter-argument: Calling others anonymous Christians can appropriate their identities and judge them by Christian categories without consent.

Interim judgement: Its theological structure is stronger than its terminology, especially when paired with genuine learning from other faiths.