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January 10, 2015: Islam is Violence, Judaism is Exclusion, Capitalism is Inequality, Christianity is Colonialism

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Title: Islam is Violence, Judaism is Exclusion, Capitalism is Inequality, Christianity is Colonialism

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1/10/2015—In the wake of the horrific shootings in France, Muslims all over the world have protested that Islam is a religion of peace—which of course in a sense is true. There are around 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. Obviously, Islam allows for peaceful existence. But the major reigning ways of existence all have flaws at their heart that must be confronted if these ways of life are going to lead to human flourishing. They are inherent, not accidental. Specifically, Islam has not yet confronted its violent past. Islam originally spread largely through violence. Its current calls for violence still resonate. Death for denigrating the Prophet is not heretical. The Saudi punishment of 1000 lashes for free expression is not so different from the shootings in France. These flaws are tendencies, not the whole truth of these traditions. But if you pretend they don't exist, they just remain. Judaism in its turn has never solved the problem of the stranger, the non-Jew. God's plan for the world always centered on the Jews, not on anyone else. That is why the movement to deny democracy in Israel to non-Jews resonates. That is why peace with the Palestinians is a theological necessity, not just a political one. Similarly, inequality in capitalism is not easily eradicated. It is part of the inherent logic of capitalism. Can it be cured or even tamed? I doubt it. Of the four traditions I mentioned in the title, the colonialism of Christianity, which arises from the call to make disciples of all nations, is the closest to being confronted. Christianity has denounced nationalist colonialism. But Christianity still defends its efforts to spread itself. It now claims the right to do so nonviolently. Maybe that is the answer. None of the traditions can be cured, but each can be reformed so that its flaws do less harm. But there is no pretending the flaws do not exist. They are historic tendencies that must be confronted. Secularism and liberalism are not immune from this analysis, either. They tend to materialism and individualism respectively.