

DOWNLOAD PDF A PROTESTANT THEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Chapter 1 : Religious Pluralism and the Contemporary World - Catholic Stand

In this book three main things have been accomplished. First, it locates the emergence of religious pluralism as a problem for Christian theology.

Why would we prefer this particular claim to remain fuzzy? In many cities there are arrays of religious beliefs: Mysticism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, to name a few. The presence of so many different religions in cities leads people Christians included to conclude that all religious paths lead to God. Why does this happen in cities? In urban areas, we are more likely to develop relationships with people from various religions. When we realize that they are kind and sincere because of their religious beliefs, it seems arrogant to insist their beliefs are wrong. After all, their religion appears to have made them very likable, respectable people. I have met secularists and Buddhists who are more generous and sacrificial than many Christians I know. How, then, should we respond to this array of religions with the claim that Jesus offers the one, true way to God? Answering the Question Socially When people of other faiths rival Christian character, we face a tendency to affirm all religions as valid ways to God. We make a theological decision based on social experience. Rather than investigate the answer to one of the most important questions, we prefer to glaze the question with inch-deep reflections upon the character of people we meet. Understandable but not wise. What if we became known for not only posing great questions but also grappling deeply and sincerely with great answers? Many Christians claim that belief in Jesus is the only way to God. Others insist there are many ways to God, a view popularly called religious pluralism academic religious pluralism advocates inter religious dialog not that all religions lead to the same God. Here we will deal with religious pluralism in its popular form. As I have reflected on these conversations, it seems that there are at least three reasons people embrace religious pluralism. They believe it to be more enlightened, humble, and tolerant. Is Religious Pluralism Enlightened? Is the belief that all religious paths lead to the same God more enlightened or educated? Comparatively, each religion teaches very different things about who God is and how humans reach the divine. In fact, there is a lot of disagreement between the religions regarding the nature of God. Islam teaches an impersonal monotheism, Allah. The Koran states that God reveals His will, but not His person. Christianity teaches a personal trinitarianism, where God is three persons in relationship, Father-Son-Spirit that can be known and enjoyed. Hinduism varies on this question, ranging from polytheism to atheism. Contrary to Islam, Hinduism has no presuppositions about the nature of God. In short, religious views of God differ. This claim of religious pluralism contradicts the tenants of the religions themselves. Therefore, to say that all religions lead to God is not only unenlightened it is inaccurate. And it is comforting to pretend that the great religions make up one big, happy family. But this sentiment, however well-intentioned, is neither accurate nor ethically responsible. God is not one. Prothero goes on to point out that just as God is not one, so also all religions are not one. They are distinct and make very different claims about God and how to reach him. In light of what we have observed regarding what religions teach about the nature of God and how to reach him, religious pluralism must be reconsidered. Is Religious Pluralism More Humble? Despite very clear differences on the nature of God and human access to the divine, religious pluralists continue to insist that there are many ways to God. Why would educated people persist in an inaccurate view of other religions? One major reason is because they believe it to be an act of humility and love. Very often I hear people say: Arrogant insistence on your beliefs actually runs counter to the life and teachings of Jesus. People are arrogantly right about all kinds of thingsâ€”Math, Science, Religion. You probably work with someone like this. The arrogantly right person always talk down to others with an air of arrogance because they have the right answer. They are willing to stand by what they discovered to be true. After all, it is Jesus who said it, and Jesus was quintessentially humble, especially if he is who he said he was. By contrast, religious pluralism exclusively insists that its viewâ€”all ways lead to Godâ€”is true while all other religions are false in their exclusive teachings. When religious pluralism claims that there are many ways to God, it is not humble. It actually carries an air of

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arrogance about it. Religious pluralism insists that its view—“all ways lead to God”—is true while all other religions are false in their exclusive teachings. Religious pluralism dogmatically insists on its exclusive claim, namely that all roads lead to God. The problem, as we have seen, is that this claim directly contradicts many religions like Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity. The claim of the religious pluralist is arrogant because it enforces its own belief on others. It says to other religions: You are wrong and I am right. Upon what basis can the religious pluralist make this exclusive claim? Where is the proof that this is true? To what ancient Scriptures, traditions, and careful reasoning can they point? The lack of historical and rational support for religious pluralism makes it a highly untenable view of the world and its religions. Is Religious Pluralism Truly Tolerant? Very often people hold to religious pluralism because they think it is more tolerant than Christianity. To be tolerant is to accommodate differences, which can be very noble. I believe that Christians should be some of the most accommodating kinds of people, giving everyone the dignity to believe whatever they want and not enforcing their beliefs on others. We should winsomely tolerate different beliefs. Instead of accommodating spiritual differences, religious pluralism blunts them. The claim that all paths lead to the same God actually minimizes other religions by asserting a new religious claim. When someone says all paths lead to the same God, they blunt the distinctions between religions, throwing them all in one pot, saying: When asserting all religions lead to God, the distinctive and very different views of God and how to reach the divine in Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam are brushed aside in one powerful swoop. When it does this, religious pluralism places itself on top of all other religions. The Religion of Religious Pluralism People spend years studying and practicing their religious distinctions. The very notion of religious tolerance assumes there are differences to tolerate, but pluralism is intolerant of those very differences! In this sense, religious pluralism is a religion of its own. It has its own religious absolute—“all paths lead to the same God”—and requires people of other faiths to embrace this absolute, without any religious backing at all. This is highly evangelistic. In the end, it is a step of faith to say there are many paths to God. The idea that all paths lead to the same God is not a self-evident fact; it is a leap of faith. Faith in the unity of religions is just that—“faith perhaps even a kind of fundamentalism. And the leap that gets us there is an act of the hyperactive imagination. As it turns out, each of the reasons for subscribing to religious pluralism—“enlightenment, humility, and tolerance”—all backfire. In the end, religious pluralism is a religion, a leap of faith, based on contradiction and is highly untenable. Christianity, on the other hand, respects and honors the various distinctions of other religions, comparing them, and honoring their differing principles—“Karma Hinduism , Enlightenment Buddhism , Submission Islam , and Grace Christianity. In particular, we will examine the unique principle of grace. What does this mean? Does it mean that Jesus is our trailblazer, clearing the other religious options aside so we can hike our way to heaven through spiritual or moral improvement. If I keep the Ten Commandments, if I serve the poor and love my neighbor, if I pray and read the Bible enough, then God will accept me. We can never make it—“do enough spiritual, moral, or social good to impress God. Much less love him with all our soul, mind, and strength. We all fail to love and serve the infinitely admirable and lovable God. The sentence for our crime must be carried out. When Jesus takes the arduous hike for us he goes down into the valley where the criminals die. He hikes down into our sin, our rebellion, our failures and he heaps them all on his back and climbs on a cross, where he is punished for our crime, a bloody gruesome death. The innocent punished for the guilty. If you reject Jesus, then you will pay the infinite consequences. However, if you embrace Jesus in his sin-absorbing death you get forgiveness, and Jesus hikes not only through the valley but up the mountain to carry your forgiveness to God, where he pleads our innocence Hebrews This is what it means for Jesus to be the way. He hikes into the valley of our just punishment and up the mountain for our forgiveness.

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Chapter 2 : A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism | Livingstone Thompson - blog.quintoapp.com

In this work three main things have been accomplished. First, it locates the emergence of religious pluralism as a problem for Christian theology. Secondly, it shows the critical weaknesses in the approaches to pluralism that we find in the works of.

I will continue to explore this subject here as a continuation of my previous article. As time goes on and American culture further regresses into the darkness of paganism and the dominion of Satan, I begin to see just how critical the lack of Christian unity plays in that regression. This observation is primarily because I see the antagonism between liberalism and secularism with religion—Christianity in particular. Contemporary Culture Wars presents the case that the preaching of the Gospel in the contemporary world faces the challenge of evangelizing a world that has already been enlightened by the Gospel. Among the devastating effects was the scandal brought to the West by all the wars and in-fighting following the Protestant Revolution. I regard religious pluralism as one such idea. While generally debated among historians, philosophers and theologians, it is becoming the proverbial pink elephant in the room that religious pluralism has had a particularly negative contribution in Western civilization. Europe was quite weary of all the bloodshed and desired peace. The purpose of the treaty was to bring about peace after so many wars. In order to achieve this peace, the principle from the Peace of Augsburg was upheld—*cuius regio, eius religio* whose region, his religion. While it did not end the religious wars, this principle was arguably a precursor to the birth of religious pluralism in the 18th Century. To this Church, and it only, was entrusted the Deposit of Faith, and as such she possesses a living Tradition and succession that goes all the way back to the Apostles and Jesus Christ—the Light of the world—to which it is necessary to partake in order to obtain salvation. Innocent X knew that the salvation of souls was endangered so there was no other recourse than to condemn the Treaty of Westphalia. Sadly, *Zelo Domus Dei* was quickly ignored by the European powers and just as quickly forgotten. Nowadays it is arguably viewed with a negative eye by many historians and theologians. It was only after such efforts were proved futile that the principle of toleration and religious pluralism resulted. Perhaps at first this error was not so readily apparent to the world. It offered peace to a weary people. Religious pluralism and its precursor s were doomed to fail, and, in fact, opened the door to a whole-scale mess for Western civilization. While many aspects of the mess could be pointed out, I will restrict myself to one aspect in particular. Religious pluralism led to a gradual weakening of the power and influence of religion in society. Religious unity leads to social unity and where there is a problem within religion, society will be negatively affected. This had a devastating impact upon Truth as it was now largely made subjective. People could hold their own opinions on what is or was not Christian doctrine. While admittedly a very heated topic at this time, I see the ongoing saga with Kim Davis of Kentucky as a perfect example of just how subjective Truth has become. This observation is because of the glaring inconsistencies between the position Davis has taken on homosexuality with the religious doctrines and their practice thereof she believes as part of the Apostolic Christian ecclesial community. These inconsistencies are the joy and boon of liberals and secularists alike who rejoice at the opportunity to heap scorn upon the cause of religion. These two doctrines attack on a fundamental level the authority Christ gave to His Church. Christ established His Catholic Church, among many other reasons, in order to teach the truth. Moreover, truth and law go hand-in-hand. If truth was now largely subjective, what was going to be the effect upon law, public morality and society? The Popes saw this and other such monstrous errors and condemned them consistently in their Encyclicals and elsewhere. The above discussion brings us to the parallel examined in my article *Contemporary Culture Wars*: We are not simply dealing with a world that had long before given itself over to the dominion of Satan and suddenly the light of Christ appears and we begin evangelizing. Why has contemporary Western civilization rejected the light? A number of contributing factors can be specified but I herein specify the lack of Christian unity. This lack has been a scandal unto the world and has directly led to the prevailing secularism and atheism that we see pervading our culture and laws today. In a sense, the

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world saw cruelty and inhumanity among Christians, all based upon religious disunity for doctrinal or personal reasons, and decided it could do better. This reality is because God has established His Church in the world to guide and instruct its denizens unto the ways of salvation. Such would, however, lead man down the worse path that is secularism. In the context of the Roman Empire, the Church had the various sects and heretics that attempted to pervert the Faith. She triumphed over these by preaching and elucidating the Truth of Christ boldly and without compromise. Despite this, perhaps we are in a better position to assess the matter. Knowing that religious pluralism has led to secularism, maybe we can better see it as the cancer within society that it is. Truth, law, morality and society are intended to be inseparably united. Secularism intends to divide them by removing their unifying principle, namely God. Moreover, since God has established His Church on earth in order to teach the truth of the Gospel and guide man, rejecting the Church also became a principle objective of secularism. So it is that until there is Christian unity, and by this I mean a return to the bosom of the Catholic Church, society will continue to decay and increase hostilities with the Church. It is based upon this truth that I say whether people like it or not, there will be the aforementioned unity. What matters is to ask how it will materialize. It seems to me that there are two roads: The wide road is the path to hell as it seeks unity through some hand-shaking, hobnobbing, feel-good twaddle on love. The narrow road is the path less taken, for it requires people to let go of pride and submit to the Will of Almighty God and His Catholic Church. Their respective writings indicate that many of the ills plaguing contemporary Western society are rooted in the Renaissance and the Protestant Revolution. The world mocks the religious disunity among Christians and rejoices in the inconsistencies. It forgets, however, the cause for that disunity.

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Chapter 3 : A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism : Livingstone Thompson :

Author Livingstone Thompson provides a distinct form of contextual theology from a Protestant perspective in this analysis of religious pluralism. This book has three sections. In the first part, Thompson identifies how religious pluralism poses a theological problem for Christianity.

But what exactly does it mean? If Christianity is the true religion, why is it that so much of the world rejects it in favour of diametrically opposing religious traditions? Is it theologically and morally acceptable to maintain that one religion is uniquely true and that the others are at best incomplete or even false? What happens to those who have never heard the Gospel? How do I witness and evangelise to those of other faiths? It has become standard in this area of study to note three main approaches by which theologians have responded to religious pluralism: Netland provides a concise summary of these reference points: Christian exclusivists also characteristically hold that Jesus Christ is the unique incarnation of God, the only Lord and Saviour. Salvation is not to be found in the structures of other religious traditions. There are some evangelicals who argue for a modified or diluted version of inclusivism. On the contrary, God is said to be actively revealing himself in all religious traditions Christian faith is merely one of many equally legitimate human responses to the same divine reality. Rather than seeing these three positions as being tightly defined, if one is to persist with this typology then it is perhaps more helpful to see them as three points of reference on a wide spectrum. Such an approach takes into account many positions that appear to fall in between the three defined points. Issues and questions facing the evangelical student For evangelicals, maintaining any form of exclusivism in the world today smacks of narrowness, imperialism and is extremely counter-cultural especially for departments of theology and religious studies that laud pluralism. It is important for evangelicals to speak the truth in love and to be able to disentangle theological issues from non-theological ones. While we may recognise and even embrace factual pluralism we do not have to cherish philosophical pluralism and from the biblical revelation must expose its inherent weaknesses. Revelation While we might maintain the uniqueness, finality and particularity of Jesus Christ, has God revealed Himself in other ways. What is the difference between general and special revelation? Has God revealed himself in creation? How does this bear on how we view other religions? What is the relationship between revelation and salvation? What implications are there for evangelism and mission? Religion If other religions are not paths to salvation then what are they? Do they contain any truth? Are other religions demonically inspired? Are they human constructions? Are they all three? Do we affirm the good in other religions? Is this what Paul was doing in Acts 17 or not? Should we take off our shoes in a Sikh temple as a mark of respect? Can there be any such thing as inter-faith dialogue? How do we discern what is cultural and what is gospel? Towards an evangelical theology of religions Some of the answers to the above questions are easier to answer than others. For the evangelical, we must go to our ultimate authority, the Bible to attempt to answer these questions. I believe there are some biblical building blocks that can be used as foundations in order to answer these questions. These will not fill all the gaps and sometimes the gaps are quite big but can get one started with confidence: Christians worship a Triune God: I say this because the Trinity is what makes the Christian Faith unique and sui generis. Any worship to anything but this Living God is idolatry. Christians worship a Triune Creator God: Unlike religious forms of pantheism all is God or panentheism all is in God , Christians maintain a fundamental distinction between Creator and created. Christians worship a Triune Creator God who has chosen to reveal Himself to humankind universally: In terms of general revelation we would want to include concepts such as creation itself; the imago Dei image of God ; the Logos; human conscience Ps. Demarest notes that Paul states some important truths here: Not only do people reject the living Creator but they substitute him for created things v. Yet instead of bringing forth the appropriate responses of thanksgiving and worship, sinners perversely assert their own autonomy and become idolatrous. Christians worship a Triune Creator and Redeemer God who has chosen to reveal Himself to humankind particularly and uniquely in Jesus Christ: The writer of Hebrews summarises this well: What is

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the knowledge of this special revelation? One question that has led to some discussion within evangelicalism is the amount of knowledge needed for a saving response to God. Many including myself would hold that only those who hear the gospel from a human messenger in this life can be saved. This is commonly called restrictivism. This is commonly called inclusivism. See the reading list for more on this area. Christians worship a Triune Creator and Redeemer God who has chosen to reveal Himself savingly to humankind through particular revelation and who calls believers to share the good news of the gospel with all people: Netland sums this up well: The church should be actively involved in global missions so that all peoples will worship and give glory to the one God and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour Phi. Although probably superseded by Netland, still worth reading. Don Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* Leicester: A book to have and to refer to constantly. Clarke and Bruce W. Winter, *One Lord, One God: A collection of essays by evangelicals on the subject of religious pluralism*. Much of the collection focuses on the biblical material looking at pluralism in the OT and NT. For evangelicals, the first half of the book is very helpful as I think it offers a devastating critique of the pluralism of Hick, Knitter, Cohn Sherbock, Neo-Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhist Pluralism, arguing that far from being pluralism they are modernist exclusivists. Zondervan, Although this book is long out of print, it remains perhaps the best historical and evangelical survey of the doctrine of general revelation. Your library might have a copy..

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Chapter 4 : towards a protestant theology of religions | Download eBook pdf, epub, tuebl, mobi

Retrieving theological material from seventeenth-century Comenius and eighteenth-century Zinzendorf, the book shows that the Protestant tradition has suitable theological material that can better serve the development of a theology of religious pluralism.

References and Further Reading 1. Categories of Responses to Diversity There are a number of different ways that philosophers and theologians have grouped various accounts of religious diversity. One of the most commonly adopted strategies – and the one that will be used in the following discussion – is the threefold division first introduced by Alan Race. Exclusivist positions maintain that only one set of belief claims or practices can ultimately be true or correct in most cases, those of the one holding the position. A Christian exclusivist would therefore hold that the beliefs of non-Christians and perhaps even Christians of other denominations are in some way flawed, if not wholly false; or that non-Christian religious practices are not ultimately efficacious – at least, to the extent that non-Christian beliefs and practices depart from or conflict with those defended by the Christian exclusivist. Inclusivist positions occupy a middle ground between exclusivism and pluralism, insofar as they recognize the possibility that more than one religious tradition can contain elements that are true or efficacious, while at the same time hold that only one tradition expresses ultimate religious truth most completely. As McKim expresses it, inclusivists grant that many perhaps all religious traditions do well in regards to truth or salvation, but that one tradition does better than others by more accurately describing objects of belief or mechanisms of salvation. A Christian inclusivist might claim that those who live good lives but remain non-Christians may still achieve salvation, but that such salvation is nevertheless still achieved through Jesus Christ. Inclusivism thus may be understood as a more charitable variety of exclusivism, though exclusivists can also treat it as pluralism by another name. In addition, it is worth noting that exclusivist, inclusivist, or pluralist arguments about beliefs are sometimes presented separately from those about salvific practice and that consequently one approach to diversity of belief does not necessarily imply the same approach to diversity of practice, or vice versa. There remain a few other possible positions outside of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism that are worth mentioning briefly, though two of these are not commonly treated as sophisticated options in philosophical discussions of religious diversity. The first of these two is relativism: In contrast to the pluralist position, that of the relativist seems necessarily to imply an anti-realist theory of religious truth, which would deflate the significance of religious pluralism as a philosophical and theological issue since religious truth claims could only be upheld or defeated within the context of their own traditions. The second, which would have similar consequences, is the position that no positive religious beliefs are true in any sense, even the relativist ones, and no religious practices are efficacious at least not according to their own terms. In this case, which may be termed strong anti-realism, religious diversity remains at most a sociological, psychological, or historical topic. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that serious philosophical approaches to religious diversity tend not to adopt either of these positions but rather to treat diverse religious traditions as at least possibly having some positive relationship to an ultimate reality. Another position, that of skepticism, seems to entertain this possibility insofar as it concedes that some set of religious claims may be true. However, since this position contends that, given the extent of religious diversity and disagreement, no one is ever justified in making such claims, this position will not be considered in detail here for a contemporary defense of the skeptical position, see Feldman. However, most early accounts of religion either ignore religious diversity or do not treat it as an issue worthy of genuine consideration. Pre-modern sources that do treat religious diversity seriously tend to adopt exclusivist positions, though applying this label to such accounts is somewhat anachronistic. Once religions began to be considered as such alongside each other, though, positions approaching pluralism soon appeared. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, works by figures such as Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Voltaire presented rational and naturalistic interpretations of religion and argued for religious toleration. Though these accounts focused

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largely on Christianity and to a lesser extent Judaism, they laid the foundation for future pluralist approaches to religion. Though not the only important precursors of pluralism in the post-Enlightenment age, four influential approaches worth examining here are those of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, G. Hegel, and William James. Kant does not offer an argument for religious pluralism especially, but such a position emerges as a consequence of his account of rational religion and the distinction he makes between it and particular religious traditions. Thus, Kant makes the following claim: However, Kant also argues that in the progress of humanity toward greater enlightenment, these various traditions will be discarded as the purely rational religion Kant advocates becomes more fully realized. It is worth noting that he privileges Christianity specifically, Protestant Christianity as the paradigmatic historical faith, the tradition which, according to his argument, most fully manifests the moral core of religion. Schleiermacher is in agreement with Kant in the argument that the essential core of religion lies deeper than the diverse forms of belief and practice that make up the various religious traditions. Neither Kant nor Schleiermacher accept the idea that religion is fundamentally a matter of adherence to a particular set of dogmatic claims, or that religion, properly so-called, even puts forward any metaphysical claims at all. Schleiermacher goes further though, asserting that morality is no more a part of the essence of religion than metaphysics. In his *Speeches on Religion*, Schleiermacher explains that religion is primarily a matter of intuition or feeling, with the entire universe as its object. For Schleiermacher, then, religion is first and foremost a matter for the individual, and he does not discount the possibility that one could live a highly religious life without belonging to a particular religious tradition. However, he also concedes that consciousness of religious feeling is, in most cases, best developed within a community, and that within such communities the religious intuition is always accompanied by metaphysical claims, moral prescriptions, ritual practices, and so forth. These outward forms of religion, in turn, serve to shape the way that individuals understand and articulate their own religious feelings. Indeed, he goes so far as to argue that the diversity of traditions is necessary for the task of representing the infinite within the limitations of forms comprehensible to humans. Thus, while he also accords a privileged place to Christianity among other religions, Schleiermacher provides the framework for a type of pluralism grounded in the idea of a universal form of intuition that discounts the importance of metaphysical and moral claims in the foundation of religion. Hegel goes much further than Kant or Schleiermacher toward constructing a comprehensive and systematic philosophy of religion, particularly in offering both a general concept of religion and a detailed account of how diverse historical traditions manifest the basic religious essence. Hegel criticizes Kant for relegating God to the status of a regulative ideal, and he criticizes Schleiermacher for resting his concept of religion on subjective feeling. Indeed, he argues that the diverse concrete forms of religion are neither unavoidable deviations from an ideal form nor contingent responses to the infinite. The different forms religion has taken throughout history are determinate steps along the path of the self-manifestation of both the concept of religion and its object that is, God. On the one hand, this means that the details of diverse forms of religion are of not only historical but also conceptual significance, considering that each religion gives humans insight into absolute spirit in its own way. In the series of lectures that make up this book, James largely brackets out any considerations as to the truth content of religious claims regarding the ultimate nature of reality or as to the various rituals, practices, and institutions that constitute the diverse religious traditions. Instead, as the title suggests, he focuses on the religious experiences of individual humans. The few speculations James offers about the nature of ultimate reality toward which religious experiences point suggest a relatively pluralist attitude toward the diversity of religions, according to which none could claim a monopoly on genuine experience of the divine nor be excluded from it. Together with his later writings on pragmatism and pluralistic metaphysics, James serves as an important touchstone for later theories of religious pluralism—especially those emerging from process philosophy see below. Analytic Approaches Accounts of religious pluralism within the broadly construed analytic philosophy of religion tend to focus on the diversity of conflicting belief claims as the primary issue at stake. The present examination will address first the perspective in which the epistemology of religious belief claims is central, and second

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that which focuses on the semantics of belief claims. In both cases, the literature is extensive and contains sometimes highly nuanced discussions of specific issues. What follows are, therefore, only brief surveys of major trends, roughly sketched, of work in these two general areas.

Epistemic Conflict It is an undeniable fact of religious diversity that many traditions offer various accounts of the nature of both mundane and supramundane reality, of the ultimate ends of human beings, and of the ways to achieve those ends. The claims offered by different traditions, as well as the sometimes unarticulated assumptions about matters of ultimate concern, can and do seem to conflict with each other, and one possible approach to religious diversity is to treat this conflict as real, genuine, and significant. Treating epistemic conflict as real means not assuming that it only seems to arise because of lack of clarity or universality in the terminology of various traditions; treating it as genuine means admitting that equally sincere and knowledgeable adherents of different traditions may uphold conflicting claims, while treating it as significant means that such conflict constitutes a problem “perhaps the central problem” that any philosophical response to religious diversity must address in order not to ignore or misrepresent the challenge of religious diversity itself. Possible responses to the epistemological issues raised by religious diversity include exclusivist and inclusivist as well as pluralist perspectives. Exclusivist arguments maintain that, in the case of conflicting claims about, for instance, the intrinsic nature of divine reality, no more than one non-contradictory set of claims can be correct. Thus, the exclusivist may hold that all the claims made by her own tradition are true and consequently that all conflicting claims made by other traditions are false. Inclusivist approaches argue that while only one set of claims is wholly true or one set of claims is more true than others, claims made by other traditions may be true partially, selectively, or to a lesser extent. The exclusivist, in order to maintain her belief claims, may simply choose not to recognize or respond to the fact of religious diversity at all. However, many philosophers of religion agree that anyone who is sincerely interested in maximizing the truth and minimizing the error of her belief claims is *prima facie* obligated to address significant epistemic conflict, at least in part by assessing the strength or justification of her own beliefs. It remains a debated point whether or not the existence of multiple conflicting belief claims necessarily decreases such justification; positions on this question range from outright denial of the possibility of justified religious belief in cases of epistemic conflict cf. Schellenberg to the argument that justification in such instances is at most only slightly diminished cf. In most cases of diverse religious beliefs, it seems that there is no objective evidence or set of criteria that would allow for straightforward adjudication between conflicting belief claims. It is also unclear that every belief one holds may reasonably be assessed in light of the conflicting claims of others. Some beliefs may serve a foundational role in the total belief system of an individual or community, in which case its epistemic status is somewhat different than other beliefs. Especially if it is granted that religious beliefs are often not subject to evidential justification, it may be the case that beliefs cannot be assessed except on the basis of other, more foundational beliefs. There would thus be a set of beliefs in any belief system that cannot meaningfully be subject to doubt or assessment in light of conflicting claims belonging to other systems. He goes on to argue that even if rock bottom beliefs are subject to assessment, a believer is obligated to assess them only when she loses confidence in them in the face of other, competing beliefs Gellman William Alston, similarly to Plantinga, also accepts that certain religious beliefs can be foundational, yet he does not agree that this renders them immune from assessment or revision. Naturally, pluralists advocate a significantly different approach to the issue of epistemic assessment of beliefs. If there exists real conflict between beliefs held by different religious traditions, conflict which cannot be resolved by appeal to evidence or to a universal set of justificatory criteria, then the pluralist may conclude that no one set of beliefs can reasonably be held as preferable to others. A strong form of this position is simply the skeptical argument, which maintains that judgment must be suspended on belief claims that remain unresolved in this way such that an exclusivist would be required to give up her commitment to them cf. Feldman ; Kitcher A less extreme version of the position, however, may admit that the lack of criteria by which to resolve conflicting belief claims does put the beliefs of different traditions on equal epistemological footing, but that this does not necessarily require that believers suspend or

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give up their beliefs. It acknowledges that most religious believers are likely to hold on to the set of beliefs and to engage in the practices with which they are most familiar given their historical and cultural backgrounds, and it posits that, given the absence of strong arguments to the contrary, they are justified in doing so. This is the direction in which Quinn gestures when he argues that there is more than one rational option for the believer in the face of a variety of conflicting claims. However, another position advanced by some philosophers of religion is that belief claims from different religious traditions cannot be assessed for their relative strength because particular claims cannot retain their meaning outside the context of the whole system of beliefs in which they belong. In this case, they would have no shared frame of reference according to which the conflict could be resolved. It may not even be accurate to say that an epistemic conflict actually exists, rather than simply a difference in linguistic practice. If one accepts this approach to religious language, there are significant consequences. One is that it would be meaningless to speak of the truth or falsity of an entire belief system, because the truth of belief claims could only be assessed according to the internal grammar of this or that system. It also seems that adopting this approach may commit one to adopting one of the positions that were set aside at the beginning of this article: The relativist would conclude that, if belief claims are justified only based on the semantic criteria provided by their particular religious cultural-linguistic frameworks, then claims from different frameworks simply cannot be meaningfully compared. The strong anti-realist would go a step further, arguing that religious belief claims thus cannot refer to content beyond their cultural discursive context, while the skeptic would hold that the cultural-linguistic delimitation of the meaning of belief claims prevents us from knowing whether or not such claims accurately refer to extra-linguistic reality. Each of these positions exhibits the tendency of the cultural-linguistic approach to religious language, which is to minimize the importance of whatever cognitive content there may be in such language. Critics of this approach argue that it does not accurately represent the attitudes of religious individuals toward the meaning and status of the particular claims they make or the ways in which they use religious language generally. Even if one were to take such statements merely as expressive of certain subjective attitudes or existential commitments on the part of the person who utters them, one could argue that the adoption of such attitudes or commitments on the part of the speaker presupposes that she also believes the statements to be cognitively true. Otherwise, the attitude that she expresses in them would be arbitrary or unwarranted. If one maintains, contrary or in addition to the cultural-linguistic model, that at least some religious statements do express actual truth claims and that some of these claims conflict with each other, then the question returns as to whether such conflicts need to be resolved and, if so, how. One of the most significant responses to this issue made in terms of the logic of religious language is that of Paul J. Griffiths, who argues that the incompatibility of certain doctrinal statements belonging to diverse religious traditions creates the obligation that representatives of these traditions engage in inter-religious apologetics, p. Griffiths calls this the principle of the necessity of inter-religious apologetics NOIA. Griffiths divided the enterprise of inter-religious apologetics into two categories: He maintains that the NOIA principle enjoins representatives of religious communities to engage in both forms of apologetics, insofar as the interest in maximizing truth that is evident in making statements of doctrine entails both internal self-evaluation and external correction. Griffiths argues that the imperative of the NOIA principle is both epistemic, insofar as religious communities have a responsibility to justify and defend the content of their claims against challenges posed by conflicting claims, and ethical, insofar as assent to certain belief claims is often understood by religious communities to be a necessary condition of salvation, p. Adherence to the NOIA principle implies not only that there is a real referent to which some belief claims point but also that, when claims conflict, one claim is likely to be more accurate in its description of reality than others. If this were not the case, it would be difficult to defend the necessity of positive apologetics, and perhaps negative apologetics as well. However, a commitment to the importance of apologetic dialogue as Griffiths proposes it is not necessarily equivalent to strict exclusivism, especially the variety that would allow the exclusivist to retain confidence in the superiority of her own position without assessing them in a religiously diverse context. It has garnered both considerable praise and

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considerable criticism from a variety of fronts.

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Chapter 5 : How to Respond to Religious Pluralism | Gospel-Centered Discipleship

First, it locates the emergence of religious pluralism as a problem for Christian theology. Secondly, it shows the critical weaknesses in the approaches to pluralism that we find in the works of Gavin D'Costa, George Lindbeck and John Hick, all major players in the field of religious pluralism.

Three important schools within this field are pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism. Each of them will be briefly examined here. Pluralism Pluralism is basically the belief that the world religions are true and equally valid in their communication of the truth about God, the world, and salvation. By whatsoever way men worship Me, even so do I accept them; for, in all ways, O Partha, men walk in My path. According to Hick, Christianity is not the one and only way of salvation, but one among several. To a pluralist such as Hick, Christianity is not the absolute, unique, and final way to God. While pluralists assert the validity of all religions, they also deny the finality of all religions. According to Hick, in the evolutionary scheme of things in which at isolated ages and places the early religions are succeeded by higher religions, it is the same message of God that comes distinctly to a particular group but as different from the others. Hick challenges the older view that Christ or Christianity must be seen at the center of religions. Rather, he says, God must be seen at the center of religions. The pluralistic contention is that all religions are fundamentally the same though superficially different. However, the reasons for rejecting pluralism go beyond the cause of evangelization. Any sincere study of world religions expressly reveals that contrary to the pluralistic contention all religions look superficially the same but are fundamentally different. Each of them differs from the rest in its view of God, sin, salvation, death, and eternity. Obviously, the pantheistic notion of the world as God and the monotheistic notion of the world as creation of God are not the same. The only way to call them same is by jettisoning the notion of absolute truth itself; however, that would mean that no absolute statements about anything can be made, including the statement that all religions are the same. Another point against pluralism is the counterfeit posture it assumes. Pluralism contends that it is different from exclusivism in that it accepts the validity of all religions. Thus, truth is both relativized and pluralized. However, one basic feature of truth is exclusivity. Truth by nature excludes everything else contrary to it. Thus, every statement in order to be meaningful must exclude all its opposite. Thus, pluralism by contending the validity of all religions against the segregated contention of each to validity excludes all other views contrary to it. Inclusivism Inclusivism is the belief that God is present in non-Christian religions to save the adherents through Christ. The inclusivist view has given rise to the concept of the anonymous Christian by which is understood an adherent of a particular religion whom God saves through Christ, but who personally neither knows the Christ of the Bible nor has converted to Biblical Christianity. This position was popularized by the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner b. One important issue that Rahner raises is about the salvation of those who have never had the opportunity to listen to the gospel Jesus Christ. To Rahner, then, people can be saved apart from allegiance to the Christian church. It is God in Christ who reaches out to the individual in his own personal religious history to save him. Inclusivism is based on two axioms: Consequently, God saves people through Christ alone; however, he makes this possible through ways that extend to all humanity. To Rahner, a non-Christian religion is a lawful religion for until its followers have a Christian witness it is a means by which non-Christians gain a right relationship with God. Inclusivism has a great appeal to people because of its sympathetic approach to religion. However, it ignores the fact of ungodly elements within religions. It would only be a contradiction in terms to conceive of a God who reveals that he is against idolatry and at the same time assert that he saves a person in his worship of idols. Jesus said it is by knowing the truth that one is liberated. When the apostles spoke of salvation by the name of Jesus, they never meant that people could be saved within allegiance to the lordship of Jesus; on the contrary, they expressly meant that only by a voluntary submission to the Lord could one be saved. The will of God for salvation of all men in 1 Timothy 2: Thus, the Bible is clear on the point that knowledge of Christ precedes the reception of saving grace in faith. Inclusivism is seen as arrogantly

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exclusivist, if seen from the perspective of other religions. It tells that Hindus are not saved by their dharma, and Muslims are not saved by their works, but all are saved unaware by Christ. This not only proves that the salvation doctrine of all other religions are false but also that people are not saved because of following the religious way of their religion. This is something like saying that the neighbor is living by my money though it is he who earns his livelihood and lives by it. The claim is unwarranted. Finally, Christ assumes a nebulous and abstract character and personal commitment to the historical Christ almost loses soteriological value as can be seen in the case of M. Therefore, inclusivism cannot be accepted as Biblically warranted. Exclusivism

Exclusivism is the theological position that holds to the finality of the Christian faith in Christ. The finality of Christ means that there is no salvation in non-Christian religions. Based on the Aristotelian concept of truth as one and not many, exclusivists regard all other religious claims as false and invalid since the Christian revelation is accepted as true. Exclusivists hold that salvation is through Christ alone. It is through a personal experience of commitment to Christ that one receives assurance of salvation. The non-believers cannot receive such assurance since they are neither aware of the uniqueness of Christ neither do they acknowledge His lordship. The exclusivist begins with the Bible as the source of all knowledge about spirituality and salvation. The Bible is the criterion of all religious truth. The Bible relates the history of redemption, gives a foundation to personal faith, is a guidebook of the Christian community, and tells us of the future of the world that links up all history, life, and service with meaning and purpose. Exclusivism, thus, establishes the uniqueness and identity of Christianity among world religions. Such exclusivism can take either an extremist or a moderate viewpoint. The extremist view regards all non-Christian religions as demonic and enemies of Christian truth. On the other hand, the moderate view sees some non-Christian religions as containing elements whereby a dialogue with them can be initiated. However, all exclusivists in general agree that salvation is exclusively only through Christ and received by a personal commitment to the Lord. An exclusivist view is inevitable in any dialogue of truth. As has been seen, neither the pluralist nor the inclusivist could avoid being exclusivist at some point. Truth by nature is exclusive and any claim to truth is exclusive. The only way to deny exclusiveness of Christ is to deny the veracity of the Bible. The exclusivist view rightly sees the exclusiveness of the Bible in its proclamation of Christ as the only way of salvation. However, at the same time, it must be affirmed that the Bible also speaks of God involved in the history of the nations. Therefore, it must not be thought non-Christian religions are totally devoid of virtue.

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Chapter 6 : Religious Diversity, Theories of | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Coming to terms with religious pluralism --Developing the Protestant approach to pluralism --The Protestant theology of pluralism applied. Series Title: Studies in the history of religious and political pluralism, 3.

The people of this nation probably support more different religious societies than do citizens of any other country. Pluralism is also a characteristic of the patterns of belief of members of many denominations for within many congregations a wide variety of beliefs exists. In an attempt to present "to Catholics" a description of the theological diversity dividing Protestants, Robert Campbell has compiled a most revealing work, *Spectrum of Protestant Beliefs*. He says, "Significant divisions in Protestantism no longer are along denominational lines, but rather depend on the orientation of the individual in the liberal conservative spectrum" p. As one Lutheran Protestant minister confessed, "Frankly, I feel closer to a liberal of any denomination than I do to a conservative of my own denomination" p. For organizational purposes, Campbell divided "the left-to-right spectrum" into "five bands" which he calls radical, liberal, confessional, new evangelical, and fundamentalist. Then he selected five prominent religious leaders to represent these schools of thought and to express their beliefs concerning a variety of subjects including God, the virgin birth, the Bible, original sin, Satan, heaven and hell, what a man must do to be saved, marriage and divorce, premarital sex relations, racial integration, the ecumenical movement, and Vietnam. Henry, editor of *Christianity Today*, spoke effectively for the new evangelicals; Dr. John Warwick, chairman of the division of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, accepted the assignment to represent the "confessional segment of the spectrum"; Bishop James A. Pike, theologian-in-residence at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, responded to the request of articulating the view of a liberal; and William Hamilton, professor of religion at New College, Sarasota, Florida, elucidated views of radical theologians. All of these scholars prepared excellent, lucid, and succinct descriptions of their beliefs. One of the apparent problems involved in preparing a work of this nature for publication was that of locating a theologian who might be recognized as a spokesman for a particular band of Protestant theology. This problem was especially difficult when the editor considered the liberal, confessional, and the new evangelical schools of thought. Campbell recognized that not every Protestant would fit neatly into one of the groups in the five-fold division of the Protestant liberal-conservative spectrum and noted that an individual might be conservative regarding one subject and liberal on another. Consequently, not all who might classify themselves as a particular type of Protestant would agree with the statements of the selected representatives for the various bands in the spectrum. This is especially true of the liberal school of thought. In fact, the controversial theologian, Bishop Pike, who was selected to represent the liberal band in the spectrum, is regarded by many liberal ministers with whom I am acquainted as a radical. Therefore, in the opinion of many liberal Protestants, two radicals express their views in this work; and many popular beliefs of the liberals are not reflected in this publication. Another organizational feature of this work that should be seriously questioned is the establishment of a band in the spectrum labeled confessional. While many Protestants might classify themselves in this school of emphasis, this work was designed to reveal the different theological positions of Protestants, and confessional Protestants are not united by belief. Instead, they emphasize the liturgy and the creeds, but disagree concerning the interpretation of the creeds. John Warwick, the representative of the confessional spectrum specified, "Doctrinally, confessional Protestants cover the spectrum from center to right [and might have said from left to right]: Rejection of this would locate a person in the liberal camp. No one man could have been selected to represent the doctrinal position of this group of Protestants on the issues considered in this publication. Although one might adopt another system of classification of Protestants by employing four labels radicals, liberals, orthodox or conservatives, and fundamentalists, many liberals would divide liberalism into a variety of schools such as the followers of Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, Richard Niebuhr, and Rudolf Bultmann. Another weakness of the publication is the failure

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of the editor to summarize more fully some of the most significant doctrinal differences separating the different groups of Protestants. Brief explanations of the positions of the five representatives concerning their schools of thought were included, but a more comprehensive description of the conflicting patterns of belief concerning the Bible, life beyond the grave, the fall, the atonement, and other subjects considered in this publication would have been most helpful to the class of readers for whom this work was prepared. Although there are organizational problems in *Spectrum of Protestant Beliefs* problems which plague all men who prepare a summary of patterns of belief, Campbell has compiled a most interesting work that accomplishes the primary goal of the editor, that of emphasizing the tremendous variety of belief in modern America and of presenting to lay members a brief description of some of the more popular views held by American Protestants.

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Chapter 7 : christian theology and religious pluralism | Download eBook PDF/EPUB

Religious pluralism led to a gradual weakening of the power and influence of religion in society. Religious unity leads to social unity and where there is a problem within religion, society will be negatively affected.

References and Further Reading 1. Facts and Theories of Religious Diversity Scholars distinguish seven aspects of religious traditions: Smart Religious traditions differ along all these dimensions. These are the undisputed facts of religious diversity. It is arguably the doctrinal and philosophical aspects of a religion which are foundational, in that the other aspects can only be understood in light of them. Prothero , ; Yandell , a. History Scholarly study of a wide range of religions, and comparison and evaluation of them, was to a large extent pioneered by Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century seeking to understand those whom they sought to convert. Netland , Theories of religious diversity have largely been driven by attacks on and defenses of such claims, and discussions continue within the realm of Christian theology. Such would be the work of a religiously embedded and committed theology of religious diversity, not of a general philosophy of religious diversity. Theories and Associations Many people associate any sort of pluralist theory of religious diversity with a number of arguably good qualities. These qualities include but are not limited to: In contrast, any non-pluralist theory of religious diversity is associated with many arguably bad qualities. These negative qualities include but are not limited to: These, however, are mere associations; there seems to be no obvious entailments between the theories of religious diversity and the above qualities. In principle, it would seem that an exclusivist or inclusivist may have all or most of the good qualities, and one who accepts a theory of religious pluralism may have all or most of the bad qualities. These connections between theory and character - which are believed by some to provide practical arguments for or objections to various theories - need to be argued for. But it is very rare for a scholar to go beyond merely assuming or asserting some sort of causal connection between the various theories about religious diversity and the above virtues and vices. Religious Pluralism A theory of religious pluralism says that all religions of some kind are the same in some valuable respect s. While this is compatible with some religion being the best in some other respect s , the theorists using this label have in mind that many religions are equal regarding the central value s of religion. This would be the view of many naturalists, who hold that all religions are the product of human imagination, and fail to have most or all of the values claimed for them. Byrne ; Feuerbach a. Naive Pluralisms Though naive pluralisms are not common amongst scholars in relevant fields, they are important to mention because they are entertained by many people as they begin to reflect on religious diversity. An uninformed person, noting certain commonalities of religious belief and practice, may suppose that all religions are the same, namely, that there are no significant differences between religious traditions. This naive pluralism is refuted by accurate information on religious differences. This is because they cannot be empirically verified, that is, their truth or falsity is not known by way of observational evidence. There are three serious problems with verificationist pluralism. First, some religious claims can be empirically confirmed or disconfirmed. Second, the claim that meaningfulness requires the possibility of empirical verification has little to recommend it, and is self-refuting that is, the claim itself is not empirically verifiable. While there are other sorts of negative naive pluralism, we shall concentrate on positive kinds here, as most of the scholarly literature focuses on those. Some forms of naive pluralism suppose that all religions will turn out to be complementary. One idea is that all religions would turn out to be parts of one whole either one religion or at least one conglomeration of religions. This unified consistency may be hoped for in terms of truth, or in terms of practice. With truth, the problem is that it is hard to see how the core claims of the religions could all be true. For instance, some religions teach that the ultimate reality the most real, only real, or primary thing is ineffable such that no human concept can apply to it. But others teach that the ultimate reality is a perfect self, a being capable of knowledge, will, and intentional action. Some practices seem compatible, such as church attendance and mindfulness meditation. On the other hand, others seem to make little or no sense outside the context of the

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home religion, and others are simply incompatible. What sense, for instance, would it make for a Zen Buddhist to undergo the Catholic rites of confession and penance? Nor can he be fruitful and multiply while living as a celibate Buddhist monk. Dabblers and hobbyists freely stitch together unique quilts of religious beliefs and practices, but such constructions seem to make little sense once a believer has accepted any particular religion. Many religious claims will be logically incompatible with the accepted diagnosis, and many religious practices will be useless or counter-productive when it comes to getting what one believes to be the cure. However, such a person is probably only thinking of large, respectable, and historically important religions. For example, a religious group may function only to satisfy the desires of its founder, discourage the worship of God, encourage the sexual abuse of children, or lead to the damnation of its members. Carefully worked out theories of religious pluralism often sound all-inclusive. However, they nearly always have at least one criterion for excluding religions as inferior in the aspects they focus on. A difficulty for any pluralist theory is how to restrict the group of equally good religions without losing the appearance of being all-accepting or wholly non-judgmental. A common strategy here is to simply ignore disreputable religious traditions, only discussing the prestigious ones.

Core Pluralisms An improvement upon naive pluralism acknowledges differences in all the aspects of religions, but separates peripheral from core differences. A core pluralist claims that all religions of some kind share a common core, and that this is really what matters about the religions; their equal value is found in this common core. If the core is veridical experiences, all religions will enable ways to perceive whatever the objects of religious experience are. If the core is salvifically effective practice, then all will be equal in that each is equally well a means to obtaining the cure. This encompasses the idea that physical reality, the terrestrial plane, is contained within and controlled by a more real intermediate plane that is, the subtle, animic, or psychic plane which is in turn contained and controlled by the celestial plane. This celestial plane is a personal God. Given that it is ineffable, this Being is neither a god, nor the God of monotheism. It is more real than all that comes from it. Some experience this Being as if it were a god, but the most able gain a non-conceptual awareness of it in its ineffable glory. Smith holds that in former ages, and among primitive peoples now, such a worldview is near universal. It is only modern people who are blinded by the misunderstanding that science reveals all, who have forgotten it. Smith, ch. Sedgwick

Like traditional religions, it too offers a diagnosis of the human condition and a cure. It offers a fall from primordial spirituality into modern spiritual poverty, cured by adopting the outlook sketched above. Most importantly, it offers a chance to discover the deep self as Being. A muted ally in this was the influential religious scholar Mircea Eliade, whose work focused on comparing mythologies, and on what he viewed as an important, primitive religious outlook, which separates things into the sacred and the profane. Such an outlook is commonly perceived as meaningless, hopeless, and devoid of value. Others dissent because they accept the incompatible diagnosis and cure taught by some other religion, such as the ones found in Islam or Christianity. Roy, however, always retained his Hindu and Brahmin identities. Stenmark He does not advocate this view, but explores it as an alternative to exclusivism, inclusivism, and Hickian identist pluralism. Stenmark views it as most similar to identist pluralism see 2e below. In modern times, it tries to equalize other religions in the same ways it equalizes the apparently contrary claims and practices internal to it. While elements within it have been sectarian and exclusivistic, modern Hindu thought is usually pluralistic. Furthermore, Hindu thought has shifted in modern times from a scriptural to an experiential emphasis. Long Still, some Hindus object to various kinds of pluralism. Long The slogan may also imply that all religions feature veridical experience of that one object, by way of a non-cognitive, immediate awareness. Sharma This modern Hindu outlook has proven difficult to formulate in any clear way. Sharma But if there is no one clear modern Hindu pluralism, it remains that various modern Indian thinkers have held to versions of core or identist pluralism. Paradoxically, such pluralism is often expressed along with claims that Hinduism is greatly superior in various ways to other religions. This, it is hoped, rules out anyone having grounds for believing any particular religion to be the uniquely best religion. Griffin a They do, however, take seriously at least many of the unusual religious experiences people report. These three - Creativity, God, Cosmos - are such that

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none could exist without the others. Sometimes God and Cosmos are described as aspects of Creativity. The underlying metaphysics here is that of process philosophy, in which events are the basic or fundamental units of reality. On such a metaphysics, any apparent substance being, entity turns out to be one or more events or processes. It is also allowed that each major religion really does deliver the cure it claims to for example, salvation and heaven, Nirvana, Moksha, and is entitled to operate by its own moral and epistemic values. Further, it respects and does not try to eliminate all these differences, and so makes genuine dialogue between members of the religions possible. Finally, Cobb and Griffin emphasize that this approach does not endorse any unreasonable form of relativism and, as such, allows one to remain distinctively Christian or Buddhist and so forth. In all these ways, they argue that their ultimist pluralism is superior to other pluralisms. This view has not been widely accepted because the Process theology and philosophy on which it is based has not been widely accepted. One may object that this above proposal is counter to the equalizing spirit of pluralism. Griffin and Cobb seem to attribute the deepest insight to those who think the ultimate reality is an impersonal, indescribable non-thing. In their view, those who confess experience of Emptiness, Nirguna Brahman, or the One of Neoplatonism behold the ultimate reality Creativity as it really is, in contrast to monotheists or cosmos-focused religionists, who latch on to what are limited aspects of Creativity. But these monotheists and cosmos-worshippers each take their object to be ultimate, and would deny the existence of any further back entity or non-entity, that is, of Creativity. It would seem that that, for example, a Christian to accept this ultimist pluralism, she will have to reinterpret what many Christians will regard as a core commitment, namely, that the ultimate reality is personal. Even a Mahayana Buddhist may have a lot of adjusting to do, if she is to admit that believers in a personal God really do experience the greatest entity, and something which is not separate from Emptiness. And how can the ultimist pluralist demand such changes? A similar pluralism is advanced by Japanese Zen scholar Masao Abe. In Mahayana Buddhism, the ultimate reality, a formless but active non-thing, is Emptiness, or the Truth Body Dharmakaya. This in some sense manifests as, acts as, and is not different from a host of Enjoyment Bodies Sambhogakaya, each of which is a Buddha outside of space and time, a historical Buddha now escaped from samsara and dwelling in a Buddha-realm. The historical Buddha, the man Gautama is, in this doctrine, a Transformation Body or Apparitional Body, Nirmanakaya of one of these, as are other Buddhas in time and space. In some sense these three are one, however, the Truth Body manifests or acts as various Enjoyment Bodies, which in turn manifest or act as various Transformation Bodies.

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Chapter 8 : Livingstone Thompson | All Hallows College (Dublin City University) - blog.quintoapp.com

Religious pluralism is an attitude or policy regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society. It can indicate one or more of the following.

Ecumenism Some Christians [10] have argued that religious pluralism is an invalid or self-contradictory concept based upon passages of the Bible such as: Maximal forms of religious pluralism claim that all religions are equally true, or that one religion can be true for some and another for others. Some Christians hold this idea to be logically impossible from the Principle of contradiction. I do not deny for a moment that the truth of God has reached others through other channels - indeed, I hope and pray that it has. So while I have a special attachment to one mediator, I have respect for them all. Roman Catholics , Orthodox Christians, Episcopalians and most Protestant Christian denominations still maintain this belief. Furthermore, the Catholic Church makes the claim that is the one and only true Church founded by Jesus Christ , but the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches also make this claim in respect to themselves. Church unity for these groups, as in the past, is something very visible and tangible, and schism was just as serious an offense as heresy. Following the Great Schism, Roman Catholicism sees and recognizes the Orthodox Sacraments as valid but illicit and without canonical jurisdiction. Eastern Orthodoxy does not have the concept of "validity" when applied to Sacraments, but it considers the form of Roman Catholic Sacraments to be acceptable, and there is some recognition of Catholic sacraments among some, but not all, Orthodox. Both generally mutually regard each other as " heterodox " and " schismatic ", while continuing to recognize each other as Christian, at least *secundum quid*. Modern Christian views[edit] Some other Protestants hold that only believers who believe in certain fundamental doctrines know the true pathway to salvation. The core of this doctrine is that Jesus Christ was a perfect man, is the Son of God and that he died and rose again for the wrongdoing of those who will accept the gift of salvation. They continue to believe in "one" church, believing in fundamental issues there is unity and non-fundamental issues there is liberty. Hinduism and other religions Hinduism is naturally pluralistic. A well-known Rig Vedic hymn says: Hinduism emphasizes that everyone actually worships the same God, whether one knows it or not. Many foreign deities become assimilated into Hinduism, and some Hindus may sometimes offer prayers to Jesus along with their traditional forms of God. The neutrality of this section is disputed. Relevant discussion may be found on the talk page. Please do not remove this message until conditions to do so are met. March Main article: Islam and other religions Religious pluralism is a controversial subject in Islam. The primary sources that guide Islam, namely Quran and hadiths , offer contradictory positions on religious pluralism. The acceptability of religious pluralism within Islam remains a topic of active debate. In several Surah , Quran asks Muslims to remain steadfast with Islam, and not yield to the vain desires of other religions and unbelievers. These verses have been interpreted to imply pluralism in religions. Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by the light of what Allah hath revealed, they are no better than those who rebel. To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but His plan is to test you in what He hath given you: The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute; And this He commands: Judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that teaching which Allah hath sent down to thee. And truly most men are rebellious. Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer: And Allah knows the deeds that ye do. And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better than mere disputation, unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong and injury: So the People of the Book believe therein, as also do some of these pagan Arabs: This is the true account: But if they turn back, Allah hath full knowledge of those who do mischief. That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among

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ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah. Ye People of the Book! Have ye no understanding? Ye are those who fell to disputing even in matters of which ye had some knowledge! It is Allah Who knows, and ye who know not! O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine. For example, Surah Al-Tawba verse 1 through 5 seems to command the Muslim to slay the pagans with verse 9. And an announcement from Allah and His Messenger, to the people assembled on the day of the Great Pilgrimage,- that Allah and His Messenger dissolve treaty obligations with the Pagans. If then, ye repent, it were best for you; but if ye turn away, know ye that ye cannot frustrate Allah. And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject Faith. But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war; but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: Hostilities were frozen for a three-month period during which the Arabs pledged not to wage war. Prophet Muhammad was inspired to use this period to encourage the combatants to join the Muslim ranks or, if they chose, to leave the area that was under Muslims rule; however, if they were to resume hostilities, then the Muslims would fight back until victorious. One is inspired to note that even in this context of war, the verse concludes by emphasizing the divine attributes of mercy and forgiveness. Thereafter, he or she would be escorted to safety regardless of his or her religion. Cite Hathout, Jihad vs. The Religion and the People. Muslim fighters are commanded not to kill women, children, or the aged unless they attack first; not to torture or otherwise ill-treat prisoners; to give fair warning of the opening of hostilities or their resumption after a truce; and to honor agreements. At no time did the classical jurists offer any approval or legitimacy to what we nowadays call terrorism. Nor indeed is there any evidence of the use of terrorism as it is practiced nowadays. Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, even if they are of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. These Ayat Quranic verses stress the necessity of fighting against the People of the Scripture, but under what conditions? We previously established the fact that the Islamic State is not permitted to attack non-Muslims who are not hostile to Islam, who do not oppress Muslims, or try to convert Muslims by force from their religion, or expel them from their lands, or wage war against them, or prepare for attacks against them. If any of these offenses occurs, however, Muslims are permitted to defend themselves and protect their religion. Muslims are not permitted to attack non-Muslims who signed peace pacts with them, or non-Muslims who live under the protection of the Islamic State. In actuality, it only commands Muslims to fight those who practice oppression or persecution, or attack the Muslims. Allah hath upset them for their evil deeds. Would ye guide those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way? For those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way, never shalt thou find the Way. They but wish that ye should reject Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing as they: But if they revert to [open] enmity, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and in any case take no friends or helpers from their ranks. Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty Of peace , or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people. If God had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you: Others you will find that wish to gain your confidence as well as that of their people: Those who reject Truth [Islam], among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, will be in Hell-Fire, to dwell therein for aye. They are the worst of creatures. Those who have faith and do righteous deeds - they are the best of creatures. Sufism is defined by the Sufi master or Pir Sufism or fakeer or Wali in the language of the people by dancing and singing and incorporating various philosophies, theologies, ideologies and religions together e. See many more famous Sufis at the List of Sufis. The Sufis were considered by many to have divine revelations with messages of peace, tolerance, equality, pluralism, love for all and hate for no one, humanitarians, philosophers, psychologists and much more. Many had the teaching if you want to change the world, change yourself and you will change the whole world. The views of the Sufi poets, philosophers and

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theologians have inspired multiple forms of modern-day academia as well as philosophers of other religions. See also Blind men and an elephant. But undoubtedly, the most influential Sufi scholar to have embraced the world is Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi. He was born in AD in a northern province of Afghanistan, however, he later had to seek refuge in Turkey following the invasion of Afghanistan by Mongols. He served as a uniting figure for people of different faiths and his followers included Muslims, Christians and Jews. I looked for God. And then finally I looked in my heart, and there he was. How many paths are there to God? There are as many paths to God as there are souls on the Earth. Since in the religion of Love, there is no irreverence or faith. Become this, fall in Love, and you will not be separated again. Prophethood Ahmadiyya Ahmadis recognize many founders of world religions to be from God, who all brought teaching and guidance from God to all peoples. According to the Ahmadiyya understanding of the Quran , every nation in the history of mankind has been sent a prophet, as the Quran states: And there is a guide for every people.

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Chapter 9 : What is religious pluralism?

"Keith Johnson's clearly written and theologically incisive Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism makes a critical contribution to Christian dogmatics on at least three fronts: It provides an invaluable resource for thinking about the relationship between two of contemporary theology's most important topics, the doctrine of the Trinity and the reality of religious pluralism.

Purpose[edit] The American theologian Langdon Brown Gilkey argued that the political situation of the West following World War II set up a need for Christian thinkers to reconsider the place of other religions specifically because of the changing political world: Colonies vanished, Europe disappeared as a major power, other non-western power centers appeared representing other ways of life and other religions. The West no longer ruled the world Western religion became one among the other world religions. This is the popular view that all religions lead to the same God and all ways lead to heaven. According to Hick, Christianity is not the one and only way of salvation, but one among several. To a pluralist such as Hick, Christianity is not the absolute, unique, and final way to God. While pluralists assert the validity of all religions, they also deny the finality of all religions. According to Hick, in the evolutionary scheme of things in which at isolated ages and places the early religions are succeeded by higher religions, it is the same message of God that comes distinctly to a particular group but in a different form from the others. Hick challenges the older view that Christ or Christianity must be seen at the center of religions. Rather, he says, God must be seen at the center of religions. This view is also called theo-centrism. The pluralistic contention is that although religions have different outward forms, all have the same source. To an evangelical Christian, such pluralism only means the abolition of kerygmatic mission i. Pluralism has been criticized for masquerading as Christianity when in fact it is an invasive force that comes from outside of Christianity and imperialistically demands the surrender of Christian distinctiveness. To value them equally requires a devaluation of propositional truth claims. It is for this reason that pluralism is often treated as a form of self-defeating relativism, though pluralists generally do not accept this label. According to John Hick, "Religious pluralism is emphatically not a form of relativism. The inclusivist view has given rise to the concept of the anonymous Christian by which is understood an adherent of a particular religion whom God saves through Christ, but who personally neither knows the Christ of the Bible nor has converted to Biblical Christianity. This position was popularized by the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner b. To Rahner, then, people can be saved apart from allegiance to the Christian church. It is God in Christ who reaches out to the individual in his own personal religious history to save him. Inclusivism is based on two axioms: To Rahner, a non-Christian religion is a lawful religion for until its followers have a Christian witness it is a means by which non-Christians gain a right relationship with God. Inclusivism has a great appeal to people because of its sympathetic approach to religion. Exclusivism[edit] Exclusivism is the theological position that holds to the finality of the Christian faith in Christ. The finality of Christ means that there is no salvation in non-Christian religions. Based on the Aristotelian concept of truth as one and not many, exclusivists regard all other religious claims as false and invalid since the Christian revelation is accepted as true. It is through a personal experience of commitment to Christ that one receives assurance of salvation. The non-believers cannot receive such assurance since they are neither aware of the uniqueness of Christ neither do they acknowledge His lordship. The exclusivist begins with the Bible as the source of all knowledge about spirituality and salvation. The Bible is the criterion of all religious truth. The Bible relates the history of redemption, gives a foundation to personal faith, is a guidebook of the Christian community, and speaks about the future of the world that links up all history, life, and service with meaning and purpose. Exclusivism, thus, establishes the uniqueness and identity of Christianity among world religions. Such exclusivism can take either an extremist or a moderate viewpoint. The extremist view regards all non-Christian religions as demonic and enemies of Christian truth. However, all exclusivists in general agree that salvation is exclusively only through Christ and received by a personal commitment to the Lord. An

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exclusivist view is inevitable in any dialogue of truth. In fact, neither the pluralist nor the inclusivist could avoid being exclusivist at some point. Truth by nature is exclusive and any claim to truth is exclusive. The only way to deny exclusiveness of Christ is to deny the veracity of the Bible. The exclusivist view sees the exclusiveness of the Bible in its proclamation of Christ as the only way of salvation, though the Bible also speaks of God involved in the history of the nations. Religion "is not a series of tenets, institutions, practices that can be taken one by one as independent items of religious life". Knitter in his book *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. He outlined four possible views or models that one could adopt. Exclusivism, but is split into two subsections: Total Replacement and Partial Replacement. It suggests that the reason the Christian religion is considered true is that it realizes that all religion is false including itself, and recognizes that the only true belief can be found in Jesus. It does not necessarily say that there is nothing of value in other religions, but simply that there is no use in studying other religions, as everything of value can be found in Christ. The Partial Replacement model has similar things to say about other religions, but does not go so far as to say that there is nothing of value in other religions. This is an important distinction, as it implies that some truth can be found in other religions, but not whole of the truth, and not enough to receive salvation. This view is largely based on the views expressed by the World Council of Churches in their discussion on religious dialogue and theology. This view is also held by some forms of Islam with respect to Christianity and Judaism before them, as well as by Mormonism and all other faiths who feel they have a later clarification from God. While this is a type of pluralism, it does not go so far as to admit that everyone is right, or that there is no objective truth - it only admits that we must learn from one another to find it. It may be that one or another faith is wrong on even major doctrines - but it is also right and has some value in contributing to the whole. All paths may lead to God, and no one can affirm surely that their way is correct. We must all learn from one another, and pull back from making any absolute claims about spiritual matters. As a type of utilitarianism, it takes a subjective approach that admits that various viewpoints may work or not work for the individual, and that is the measure of truth, and any claims beyond that are speculation. Podstawy nauk o religii. Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions. Okholm, and Timothy R. Phillips Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, , National Council of Churches in India, , p. TBT, , p. The Centenary Press, , pp. Boyd in *Indian Christian Theology* Delhi: ISPCK, , p.