

## **EDITORIAL ESSAY**

### **KEY QUESTIONS FOR A THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS**

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Given the spate of studies seeking to elaborate a theology of religions that have appeared over the last five years, it is evident that the question of the "many religions," like that of the "many poor," is one of the issues that most disturb, and therefore can most invigorate, Christian consciousness. In what follows, I would like to review and analyze what I think are some of the pivotal issues in Christian efforts to come to a clearer, more adequate and coherent, understanding of other religions and of Christianity in the light of other faiths.

It seems to me that the central issue, around which most of the other questions within a Christian theology of religions gravitate, is whether the Christian community, having clearly made the move from what has been called the "exclusivity" to the "inclusivist" model, can now take the further step to what some have called the "pluralist" model for a theology of religions. (As is evident, I am speaking here mainly about the mainline Christian churches; most fundamentalist Christians prefer to pitch their tent in the "exclusivist" camp.)

For the sake of clarity, let me briefly define these terms. The inclusivist model represents both the official teaching of the Roman Catholic magisterium and, somewhat ambiguously, statements of the World Council of Churches, and reflects the *sensus communis* among Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant theologians. It affirms the value and dignity of all religious paths, and the urgent need to dialogue with them, but attributes to Christ and Christianity (either within the course of history or at its final outcome) an ultimacy and normativity meant to embrace and fulfill all other religions. Inclusivists approach other believers with a genuine respect and a sincere desire to learn, but feel that because of the historical fact of Jesus Christ, they have the final word. I should point out, however, that theologians who hold to this model, do so not just for internal reasons of fidelity to the Christian fact and to traditional teaching, but also for external, philosophical reasons arising out of the way we know truth and search for it with others. All profitable conversations, they point out, are based on certain decisive claims. Christians make their decisive claims on the basis of the incarnational reality of Jesus Christ.

Pluralist theologians, in an effort both to promote a more authentic dialogue among religions and a more faithful interpretation of the Gospel in our age of religious pluralism, recognize the equal rights and possible parity of all religions and therefore eschew any final or absolute expression of truth. In taking this stance, pluralists do not claim, as they are often misunderstood to do, that such a parity actually exists among religions, but only that it *can* exist. By parity, pluralists for the most part mean not that all religions are saying the same thing or that there is a common core within them all, but that many religions may have equally meaningful and valid messages for humankind and that it may be the case that no one religion has the final or normative word for all the others.

I would now like to summarize and comment on four issues which, if more clearly confronted and more thoroughly discussed, can make for either clearer divisions or greater resolution between inclusivists and pluralists. I should add that I do so as a pluralist who is still searching for a clearer path and who, therefore, stands in need of greater dialogue and challenge from the broader theological community.

### *I. Is Pluralism a Primary or Secondary Good?*

What think ye of pluralism? Is the manyness of things, especially of religions, a good in itself, a good to which other goods must be subordinated? Such questions point to a foundational, though often subconscious, issue that determines different ways of responding to the reality of many religions. Is the diversity of religions a provisional or an ultimate good? Is it something we have to accept and struggle with in order to move on to something else, something higher or better? Or is it something that, while we will be enriched in accepting and struggling with it, will never be removed? Such questions raise deep, ontological issues: are diversity and complexity part of the very stuff of reality, the way things work? At the same time, these are theological issues: what is the ultimate, God-intended state of affairs? Is it to be a oneness of religion in which, while there will be differences, such differences will be secondary and will be subsumed into a higher unity? Does God intend oneness to have the final word over manyness?

The inclusivists' response to these questions would tend to see oneness as the hoped-for eschatological state of affairs: the many religions will ultimately be brought into an all-inclusive, fulfilling unity. In this unity, of course, that which is true and good in other religions (as Vatican II has it) will be preserved and fulfilled; but this fulfillment, this attainment of true identity, can take place only within the revelation of Jesus Christ, as that revelation has been carried on within Christian tradition. The inclusivists, as I understand them, would argue that such an affirmation of ultimate oneness is part and parcel of the Christian

story; in light of the revelation given them in Jesus Christ, this is the way followers of the Nazarean understand the world and history.

As expected, the pluralists propose an opposite response and suggest that there will always be many, that there will never be a final solution or a final oneness. Yes, they hold that ever-greater unity among peoples and religions is possible and necessary, but in their view, such unity will not constitute a final state of integration. There will indeed be ever new relationships, but they will increase, not decrease, real differences. Whitehead's axiom seems to neatly reflect the ontological preferences of pluralists: the many become one and are increased by one.

For the pluralists, this is not merely a philosophical assertion. They hold to the ontological priority of manyness, not only because of what they see in the world, but also because of their Christian faith. Countering the inclusivists' theological arguments, the pluralists would hold that when John's Jesus announces that "I will that they might be one," he does not mean any other kind of "oneness" than that which exists between himself and his Parent—a oneness that does not destroy genuine and irreducible differences. Some pluralists, therefore, root their preference for manyness in the way Christians experience and speak about the ultimate—that is, in the trinitarian mystery. As Raimon Panikkar states: "The mystery of the Trinity is the ultimate foundation for pluralism." Just as the experience of and belief in the Trinity affirms a radical, irreducible pluralism within the Godhead so too does it ground a similar pluralism as the very stuff and dynamic of finite reality. In other words, divine pluralism *ad intra* makes for finite pluralism *ad extra*. This means, in Panikkar's words, that "reality itself is pluralistic. . . ."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, just as God cannot be reduced to a unity that would remove irradicable differences, so too the world of religions forbids any notion of unity that would do away with the real differences among the various traditions.

## II. *Is Dialogue a Primary or Secondary Good?*

Questions dealing with the ultimate value of dialogue itself also touch on the hidden presuppositions or criteria that determine how one sees or judges issues in the theology of religions. I suspect that one's attitude towards the value of dialogue determines one's proclivity toward inclusivism or pluralism. For myself, it was only through the staunch criticism that I received about my book *No Other Name?*<sup>2</sup> that I realized how much this question determines my own way of perceiving.

<sup>1</sup>Raimundo Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" in John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 110.

<sup>2</sup>Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985).

Just how important is dialogue for us? Within the world of finite goods, is it a primary or secondary good—that is, is it a good which, for the most part, cannot be sacrificed for other goods? Or, should one be ready to lay dialogue on the altar for the sake of higher goods? Notice that in posing this question, I am not calling dialogue an “ultimate” good. I have realized the dangers invoked by those liberals who insist on “keeping the conversation going at any cost.” With Dorothee Soelle, I recognize that there are limits to tolerance and there comes a time when the conversation becomes not just futile but dangerous. This is especially the case when dialogue or an extolling of pluralism becomes an ideological tool for the maintenance of oppressive, socio-economic structures.<sup>3</sup> Justice remains a higher ethical value than dialogue.

Perhaps I can more clearly state what I am getting at in terms of a rather heated discussion going on among missionaries and mis-siologists, as exemplified in questions which Cardinal Tomko recently raised in regard to some of the newer theologies of religion. He suggested that dialogue must never get in the way of evangelization—that it must take a second place to the task of seeking conversions. If certain understandings of other religions and of what it takes to dialogue with them in any way jeopardize the “higher good” of evangelizing, then these theologies must be abandoned.<sup>4</sup>

In a certain sense, I agree with the Cardinal: evangelization is essential to living out the Christian message. If Christians gives up the task of announcing the good news, with the intent to persuade others that it *is* genuinely good, then Christianity has lost not only its fiber but its very soul. Yet I would want to suggest to the Cardinal that if he thinks there is a contradiction between evangelization and genuine dialogue with other religions, the problem cannot simply be resolved in favor of evangelization, as if dialogue were a subordinate good. Rather, I would argue that because Jesus’ “new commandment” to love our neighbor takes precedence over the “missionary commandment” to evangelize our neighbour, so too dialogue holds a primacy in our dealings with other people. We cannot follow Christ and his commandment to love our neighbor unless we are genuinely open to authentic dialogue with others. Respecting and authentically listening to others is part of loving them. There cannot, therefore, be a contradiction between authentic dialogue and authentic evangelization. If there are tensions between the two, the solution must come not through facile subordination but through careful integration.

<sup>3</sup>Dorothee Soelle, *Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 66. See also the soon to be published study of Mark Kline Taylor that seeks to balance theological concern for pluralism with that for domination and oppression: *Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-Political Theology for North American Praxis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), ch. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Cardinal Josef Tomko, “Missionary Challenges to the Theology of Salvation,” *Omnis Terra* (Pontifical Missionary Union), December, 1988, 541-53.

“Authentic dialogue” is a high-sounding term that can be thrown around to hide fuzzy thinking. What is this “dialogue” which is so valuable? Certainly, to really converse or dialogue with someone does not mean that we have to agree with, or even tolerate, everything we hear from them. As already stated, especially in matters dealing with justice and oppression, authentic dialogue will often require us to disagree, to take strong contrary positions, maybe even to take steps to prevent our partners from acting on what they hold to be true.

But before we can come to such options of opposition, we have to have conversed with our partners. Without laying out rules for dialogue, I suspect that most people would agree that there are indeed certain “conditions for the possibility” of genuine conversation: we must really listen to each other, honestly speak our mind to each other, and be ready to change our views and our practices in the light of our conversation. Whatever prevents such conditions, prevents dialogue.

Most pluralists regard dialogue as a “primary good”—not absolute, but certainly primary to, for instance, clear doctrinal claims or traditional methods of evangelization. The orthopraxis of dialogue takes precedence, for the most part, over the orthodoxy of clear or “unchanging” beliefs. Pluralists take this position not only as philosophers who hold that communicative praxis is essential to the pursuit of truth, but also as followers of Jesus Christ who believe that they cannot really love their neighbors unless they listen to and respect—that is, dialogue with—them. So pluralist theologians would argue that whatever does not promote the spirit of dialogue is not according to the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And in the spirit of dialogue they would suggest to their inclusivist colleagues that the inclusivist model, which requires one to enter the dialogue with the conviction and claim that one possesses a God-given final and normative word, is an obstacle to dialogue. This criticism is not saying that one should not enter the conversation with clear ideas and bold claims, convinced that one’s own view of things is closer to the truth than one’s partner’s; on the contrary, such is the stuff of dialogue. But this criticism is saying that when one believes that one’s truth is *given by God* as final and normative over all others, the dialogue will never get off the ground, for one will never be able to really listen to and be challenged by what one’s partner is saying. To do so would mean being unfaithful to God’s final word.

Whether pluralists are correct in these criticisms, and what is the nature and value of authentic dialogue, is one of the pivotal issues the discussion of which will clarify the content of the Christian theology of religions.

### III. How is Jesus Unique?

As William Thompson has said in a recent essay in *Horizons*, the question of the uniqueness of Christ “is one of the more burning issues, if not the burning issue, in christology today.”<sup>5</sup> Notice, we are asking not whether but how Jesus is unique. I recognize that it is of the essence of Christianity to affirm and proclaim the uniqueness of Jesus; and by uniqueness, I and other pluralists certainly mean more than just the uniqueness that characterizes every human being in her or his distinct individuality and gifts. But just how is Jesus unique—and how are Christians to proclaim His uniqueness? This is another question that divides inclusivists and pluralists and that calls for more intense discussion.

The inclusivists’ understanding of how Jesus is unique is well known and need not be summarized here; it has been neatly articulated and defended in the already mentioned essay by William Thompson. As the title of Thompson’s essay makes clear, to proclaim that Jesus is unique is to affirm before all peoples and religions that He is unsurpassable and final. As Karl Rahner has amply argued, the uniqueness of Jesus is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from that of all other religious figures. He is God’s ultimate and normative word for all other truth. There can be no other religious truth that is not already contained, at least implicitly, in the revelation given in Jesus Christ. Other religions, while they are to be fulfilled and included in Christ, are incomplete and unfulfilled without Him.

The pluralists are searching for a new understanding of the uniqueness of Christ that will be both appropriate to Christian tradition and adequate to respond to the new experience of religious pluralism. If the inclusivists interpret the uniqueness of Jesus in terms of finality and unsurpassability, the pluralists view Jesus’ uniqueness as a statement of the universality and indispensability of His message and mission. I trust that this would be a proper statement of the christological position that a number of theologians, Catholic and Protestant, are presently seeking to elaborate; among them are Rosemary Radford Ruether, Raimon Panikkar (since the early ’70s), John Hick, Leonard Swidler, Aloysius Pieris, Felix Wilfred, Michael Amaladoss, Stanley Samartha, Tom Driver, Seiichi Yagi, and Edward Schillebeeckx (only recently).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>William M. Thompson, “Jesus’ Unsurpassable Uniqueness: A Theological Note,” *Horizons* 16 (1989): 101.

<sup>6</sup>See the essays of Ruether, Panikkar, Hick, Samartha, Driver, Yagi, Pieris in Hick and Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*; Michael Amaladoss, “Faith Meets Faith,” *Vidyajyoti* 49 (1985): 109-17, and “Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?” *Vidyajyoti* 50 (1986): 62-86; Felix Wilfred, “Dialogue Grasping for Breath? Towards New Frontiers in Interreligious Dialogue,” *Federation of Asian Bishops Papers*, No. 49 (1987), 35-52; Leonard Swidler, “Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue: The Matrix for all Systematic Reflection Today” in Leonard Swidler, ed., *Toward a Universal Theology of*

While a pluralist christology does not insist that Jesus Christ is absolute and final, it does continue to hold—contrary to widespread misunderstanding—that Jesus is *universal* and *decisive*. Or, as recently suggested by Richard Viladesau, though pluralist Christians may be hesitant to claim that Jesus is *unsurpassable*, they can and must continue to affirm Him as *indispensable*.<sup>7</sup> In other words, pluralists are not saying that Jesus is Savior “just for us,” or “just for Christians or Westerners.” Nor are they suggesting that the Buddha is just as good as, or the same as, Jesus. Such relativistic pap is the deathknoll of both personal and religious commitment and of interreligious dialogue, and is recognized as such by most pluralists. For them, even though they do not feel able, on either biblical or philosophical grounds, to proclaim to the world that the message of Jesus contains the full and final word on divine truth, they do continue to claim, with integrity, that what has been revealed in Jesus Christ is of universal relevance for all peoples and all times and that to know Him is to be called to decisions that radically affect, and even redirect, one’s way of being in the world.

Edward Schillebeeckx, who in a recent essay seems to have given his christology a much more pluralist slant, states clearly the difference between universality and finality. On the one hand, he staunchly affirms that universality is essential to the Christian witness to Jesus; if this is lost, so is the gospel and Christian identity. For “the essential bond between the coming of the Reign of God for all people and Jesus the Christ is confessed in all levels and traditions of the New Testament, even by the first Hebrew-Jewish interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth.” Yet Schillebeeckx also insists that universality does not mean absoluteness or superiority over all other expressions of truth. In other words, the Christian conviction that Jesus offers “the definitive and decisive revelation of God” does not necessarily mean that “that revelation then is normative for other religions.” Schillebeeckx evidently understands “definitive and decisive” in such a way as not to rule out equally definitive and decisive revelations elsewhere. So he bemoans the historical and present-day fact that “a proper claim to universality was twisted imperialistically into an ecclesiastical claim of absoluteness.” Signaling his own pluralistic turn, he then rejoices that “at the moment, Christianity is not dropping its claim to universality, but is letting go both its *exclusivist* and *inclusivist* claim to universality.”<sup>8</sup>

In such a pluralist christology, Jesus remains unique insofar as he offers a revelation that is universally relevant, indispensable, and deci-

*Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 32-45; Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Religious and the Human Ecumene” in Marc E. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds., *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 177-86.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Viladesau, *Answering for Faith: Christ and the Human Search for Salvation* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 242-45.

<sup>8</sup>Schillebeeckx, 179-80, 182.

sive. But such a christology is ready to recognize other revelations as analogously unique. There could be, as William Thompson suggested, a “complementary uniqueness” between Jesus and the Buddha.<sup>9</sup>

Are such pluralistic christologies valid? What are the criteria by which they should be evaluated? Here, I suggest, we have another focal issue for future discussions among Christian theologians of religions: how to develop a christological criteriology. More precisely, is it possible to reconcile the new pluralistic views with the clearly exclusivist or inclusivist New Testament language about Jesus? Is there any validity to the pluralists’ proposals that such language belongs more to the medium than to the central content of New Testament christology? Should the New Testament language about Jesus, together with conciliar and doctrinal language, be understood more as performative language calling people to a particular way of acting, rather than metaphysical language making absolute claims about the nature and ontological status of Jesus Christ? Such questions are as complex as they are necessary for clarifying a theology of religions.

#### IV. *How to Maintain a Fruitful and Faithful Balance Between Particularity and Universality?*

The christological question contains and exemplifies the broader question within any Christian theology of religions concerning how to maintain the necessary dipolarity between particularity and universality—that is, between commitments and fidelity to the gospel on the one hand and genuine openness to other religions on the other. This broader issue manifests two sides: *ad intra*, pertaining to Christian life and praxis, and *ad extra*, pertaining to the requirements for dialogue.

##### *Ad Intra*

A pivotal point of difference between Roman Catholic inclusivists such as Avery Dulles, Hans Küng, Franz Josef van Beeck, and Gregory Baum and pluralists such as Raimon Panikkar, Leonard Swidler, and myself is located in the inclusivists’ concern that the new views of other religions, and especially the new pluralist christologies, offend against the *lex orandi* (the rule of prayer) and, if I may coin a term, the *lex prophetizandi* (the rule of prophecy).<sup>10</sup> The inclusivists warn that the

<sup>9</sup>William M. Thompson, *The Jesus Debate* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 388-93. He “corrects” (I would also say, “retracts”) this position in his *Horizons* essay cited in note 5.

<sup>10</sup>Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 78; Hans Küng, “Toward an Ecumenical Theology of Religions: Some Theses for Clarification,” *Concilium* 183 (1986): 119-25; Franz Josef van Beeck, *Christ Proclaimed: Christology as Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 389; Gregory Baum, “The Grand Vision: It Needs Social Action” in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third, 1987), 4.



pluralists so stress the universality of God's truth and revelation and they so dilute the centrality and finality of Jesus that Christians will no longer be able to worship Christ and sustain their commitment to Him (the *lex orandi*), nor will they have the resoluteness and certainty to carry out their prophetic role of standing up to the sinful structures of the world and criticizing the powers and dominations in the name of Christ (the *lex prophetizandi*). Going right to the heart of the Christian message and mission, this is a serious criticism. If it is true, any Christian pluralists would have to, in conscience and in fidelity to the theological task, abandon her or his position.

The pluralists offer a pastoral response that is as deep-reaching as is the inclusivists' criticism. They suggest that a pluralistic understanding of Christ and Christianity that affirms the revelation given in Christ to be decisive and universal but not absolute and final—which in other words sees Jesus as God's authentic though not only Word—can ground an even deeper and more mature Christian faith and commitment. Genuine human growth and commitment is fostered not by supplying people with a one-and-only, absolute truth which they know surpasses all other truth, but, rather, by offering them a vision and confidence by which they can carry on the pursuit of truth. As John Dunne tells us, we are truly freed and are truly held in the hands of God when we perceive our life not as a pursuit of certainty but as a pursuit of ever-greater understanding.<sup>11</sup> In the past, ministers and teachers have improperly led the Christian faithful to believe that they can be committed to Jesus Christ only if he is the "one and only," or only if he provides "the highest or unsurpassable truth." It seems to me that to demand "absolute truth" or an "absolute Savior" before one can offer one's "absolute commitment" is to demand what is humanly impossible, psychologically damaging, and theologically suspect. Reflecting on a biblical scene, perhaps we can surmise that before the future disciples could "come and follow, and eventually die for Jesus," they indeed had to see and be convinced that He was truly "the Christ, the Son of the Living God," but not that he was the *only* Son of God (Mt 16:15-16).

As Langdon Gilkey has prophetically pointed out, Christians living in a world of historical consciousness and religious pluralism are summoned to live out a paradox in their following of Christ: they are called to be *absolutely* committed to truth even though they recognize that such truth is *relative*. They are to be fully committed to the truth of Christ—also to the point of laying down their lives for that truth—even when they realize that this truth may not be the whole truth about ultimate reality. Though limited, though perhaps eventually to be completed by other truths, the gospel still can call forth our total response. The follow-

<sup>11</sup>John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 38-49.

ing of Christ is precisely that—an adventurous following, not a secure possession.<sup>12</sup>

### *Ad Extra*

In reaching *ad extra* and approaching followers of other paths, Christian theologians of religions are called upon to achieve a balance between universality and particularity that will protect them from both relativism and imperialism. As the antifoundationalist philosophers would put it, any good theology of religions should be haunted by the Cartesian anxiety—the fear of either forcing one’s views on others or of not having anything worthwhile to say to them.

Both inclusivists and pluralists are accused of not properly maintaining this balance. The inclusivists, with their claims of possessing a universal norm in Christian revelation, are exposed to accusations of foundationalism and imperialism—of passing judgment on other religions with standards of truth that these religions do not recognize and that have been fashioned solely within the Christian world of discourse. The pluralists, for their part, are exposed to a double criticism. From the inclusivists, they are accused of relativism—of losing hold of the particularity of Jesus Christ and the gospel, of making Jesus just “one among many.” And from antifoundationalist philosophers and often from other religious believers, they are accused of an “anonymous imperialism.” In all their fine talk about universal openness, and about not giving any viewpoint a privileged position, in their efforts to place the universal divine mystery, and not the particular Jesus, in the center of the religious universe, pluralists are naive; they are not sufficiently aware that no one can be a pure universalist, that we always judge the whole from our particular perspective. There is no common, neutral ground between or above the religions. We are always judging others, whether we like it or not, according to our own standards of truth. So critics of the so-called theocentric (pluralist) approach to other religions ask: when the pluralists place God, and not Jesus, in the center of the universe of religions, whose God are they talking about?

So the problem or question that needs to be discussed is this: on the one hand, how can we maintain commitment to our Christian convictions and world view and so have something distinctive to contribute to the dialogue, but also, on the other hand, how can we at the same time really listen to others and not see or judge them according to our pre-established convictions? How can we, in other words, be fully committed to Christ but at the same time fully open to the *mirabilia Dei* that may be offered to us in other religions?

<sup>12</sup>Langdon Gilkey, “Plurality and Its Theological Implications” in Hick and Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 46-48.

There are no easy answers to these questions because, I believe, there is no one absolute truth given to any particular religion, nor is there any preestablished common ground among them that can be known before the conversation. Rather, if there is any common hermeneutical ground on which religious believers can understand and criticize each other, it can be and must be discovered and created *within the dialogue itself*. But such a claim raises a further question: where and how to find or form such common ground?

As I have recently suggested, one promising and effective starting point for the shared search for common ground and for the shaky foundations on which the religions might understand and pass judgment on each other can be found—I would want to say *must* be found—in the common problems that face all religions and all cultures: the realities of human and ecological suffering, injustice and oppression, the threat of nuclear war.<sup>13</sup> These are issues that all religious believers not only can but must recognize as part of a truly “common human experience” and common human responsibility—a responsibility which they feel not only as human beings but on the basis of what seems to make up the experience and vision of all the religious traditions of the world. A shared concern for and conversion to the victims of this world—and to the victimized world itself—can (must?) provide the context and starting point for a fruitful and salvific dialogue among the religions of the world.

These, then, might be some of the fruitful, though complex, questions that Christian theologians can pursue in future conversations and efforts to fashion a theology of religions faithful both to the gospel and to the faith and experience of other believers: What kind of value do we really place on pluralism and dialogue? Does the uniqueness of Jesus reside in finality or in universality? How can we maintain both commitment to the particularity of Jesus Christ and to the universality of what we believe to be God’s saving and revealing presence?

<sup>13</sup>Paul F. Knitter, “Dialogue and Liberation: Foundations for a Pluralist Theology of Religions,” *The Drew Gateway* 58 (1988): 1-53.