

“Edmund Chia has provided a marvelous service for the teaching of interreligious dialogue at practically every level of theological education. Only someone who, like Dr. Chia, has spent his life in actual interfaith dialogue could lay out the issues so clearly and simply, but with real profundity. This is a wonderfully conceived book, very learned and yet very accessible at the same time. It is truly what it sets out to be: a *summa* of interreligious dialogue. Teachers will find it teachable. Students will find it readable. Everyone will find it valuable.”

—Stephen Bevans, SVD  
Professor Emeritus of Mission and Culture  
Catholic Theological Union

“This is an original and comprehensive introduction to the encounter between world Christianity and world religions. The book covers the latest scholarly debates, yet it is written in comprehensible language. Rooted in his longtime Southeast Asian experience, the author succeeds in writing about polarities in thinking about interfaith dialogue in a holistic way.”

—Frans Wijzen  
Chair of Empirical & Practical Religious Studies  
Radboud University, The Netherlands

“Drawing on his broad scholarship and years of practical experience, Dr. Chia has indeed assembled a ‘summa’ of interfaith dialogue. He carefully and clearly introduces students/readers to the history, the methods, and the promise of religious traditions and peoples coming together to learn from each other and work together to fix the world. He both informs and inspires.”

—Paul Knitter  
Paul Tillich Professor Emeritus  
Union Theological Seminary, New York City

“*World Christianity Encounters World Religion* is a masterful summation of our multi-faceted religious reality that only the rare scholar and practitioner as experienced, insightful, and reflective as Edmund Kee-Fook Chia would dare to write. It is well-informed by the theology and lived experience of the church in Asia and attentive to the many ways in which Christians have encountered and do encounter people of other faith traditions in Asia’s diverse contexts. A text for teaching, it will work well in an introductory course on world Christianity or in a course on interreligious dialogue—and yet it can also serve as a handy reference work for leaders and practitioners in the field.”

—Francis X. Clooney, SJ  
Parkman Professor of Divinity  
Harvard University

“Dr. Chia discusses the changing shape of world Christianity and the history and theology of interfaith dialogue as an astute scholar and a leader of dialogue for decades. This book is a *summa* in the best sense: comprehensive, erudite, clearly organized, and yet accessible and not jargonish. It is a gift to students, teachers, and the church and deserves to be widely read.”

—Kwok Pui-Lan  
Visiting Professor at Candler School of Theology  
Emory University

WORLD CHRISTIANITY  
*encounters*  
WORLD RELIGIONS

*A Summa of Interfaith Dialogue*

Edmund Kee-Fook Chia

Foreword by Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald



LITURGICAL PRESS  
ACADEMIC

Collegeville, Minnesota  
[www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)

Cover design by Ann Blattner. Photo courtesy of Thinkstock by Getty Images.

Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Excerpts from documents of the Second Vatican Council are from *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; The Basic Sixteen Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, OP, © 1996. Used with permission of Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.

© 2018 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, except brief quotations in reviews, without written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9

---

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Chia, Edmund, author. | Fitzgerald, Michael, 1937– writer of foreword.

Title: World Christianity encounters world religions : a summa of interfaith dialogue / Edmund Kee-Fook Chia ; foreword by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald.

Description: Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press Academic, Liturgical Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018016785 (print) | LCCN 2018020420 (ebook) | ISBN 9780814684474 (ebook) | ISBN 9780814684221

Subjects: LCSH: Christianity and other religions.

Classification: LCC BR127 (ebook) | LCC BR127 .C414 2018 (print) | DDC 261.2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018016785>

*To  
Gemma*



# Contents

*Foreword* xiii

Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald

*Preface* xv

## **PART 1**

### **CHRISTIANITY, RELIGION, AND DIALOGUE**

#### ***1. From Christianity to World Christianity* 3**

Introduction 3

Jewish Roots of Christianity 4

Birth and Development of Christianity 6

Christian Diversity and Denominations 10

    Eastern Christianity 11

    Protestants and Reformed Churches 13

    Free Churches and New Christian Movements 15

The Advent of World Christianity 18

Christianity as World Religion 22

Conclusion 23

Suggestions for Further Reading 23

#### ***2. From Religion to World Religions* 25**

Introduction 25

A Case for Religion 26

Spiritual but Not Religious 28

The Idea of Religion 31

The Study of Religion	35
The Science of Religion	37
The Invention of World Religions	40
The World's Religions	42
Judaism	43
Islam	43
Hinduism	44
Buddhism	44
Jainism	44
Sikhism	45
Confucianism	45
Taoism	46
Conclusion	46
Suggestions for Further Reading	47

**3. *Principles and Methodology for Dialogue*** 48

Introduction	48
Definition of Interfaith Dialogue	49
Reasons for Interfaith Dialogue	51
Forms of Interfaith Dialogue	54
Attitudes for Enhancing Interfaith Dialogue	57
Strategies for Enhancing Interfaith Dialogue	59
Conclusion	62
Suggestions for Further Reading	63

**PART 2**

**SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION**

**4. *The Bible and Other Religions*** 67

Introduction	67
The Bible as Word of God	68
The Problem of Biblical Interpretation	69
Universality in Hebrew Scriptures	72
The Tower of Babel and Diversity	74
Particularity in Hebrew Scriptures	76

The New Testament as New Covenant	78
Particularity in the Gospel of Matthew	79
Universality in the Gospel of Luke	81
Jesus as the One and Only Savior	84
Conclusion	87
Suggestions for Further Reading	87
<b>5. <i>Christian History and Other Religions</i></b>	<b>88</b>
Introduction	88
The Age of the Apostles	89
The Age of the Church Fathers	91
Salvation of Those in the Pre-Christian Era	92
No Salvation outside the Church	94
The Age of Christendom	95
The Age of the Crusades	99
The Age of Mission	102
The Age of Dialogue	106
Conclusion	109
Suggestions for Further Reading	109
<b>6. <i>Vatican II Christianity and Interfaith Dialogue</i></b>	<b>111</b>
Introduction	111
Pope John XXIII: <i>Aggiornamento</i>	112
Pope Paul VI: <i>Ecclesiam Suam</i>	114
<i>Nostra Aetate</i> and Other Conciliar Documents	117
Pope John Paul II: Assisi World Day of Prayer	119
Pope Benedict XVI: <i>Dominus Iesus</i>	124
Pope Francis: <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i>	126
Conclusion	129
Suggestions for Further Reading	129
<b>7. <i>Asian Christianity and Interfaith Dialogue</i></b>	<b>130</b>
Introduction	130
Early Presence of Other Religions in Asia	131

x *World Christianity Encounters World Religions*

Christianity in Precolonial Asia	132
Colonial Christianity in Asia	134
Independence and the Quest for Indigenous Identities	136
Advent of Asian Christianity	139
The Asian Church and the Triple Dialogue	141
Dialogue with the Cultures of Asia	142
Dialogue with the Religions of Asia	143
Dialogue with the Poor of Asia	144
Asian Theses on Interreligious Dialogue	145
Conclusion	148
Suggestions for Further Reading	148

**PART 3**

**THEOLOGIES AND PRAXES**

**8. *Global Movement for Christian Unity*** 153

Introduction	153
The Scandal of Christian Division	154
Ecumenism and the Vision of Ecclesial Unity	156
The Modern Ecumenical Movement	158
Catholicism's Cautious Approach to Ecumenism	159
Vatican II's Embrace of Ecumenism	161
Catholic Documents and the Ecumenical Vision	163
Fruits and Challenges of Ecumenism	166
The New or Wider Ecumenism	169
Conclusion	170
Suggestions for Further Reading	171

**9. *Contemporary Theologies of Religious Pluralism*** 172

Introduction	172
Raimon Panikkar: Intrareligious Dialogue	173
Paul Knitter: No Other Name?	175
John Hick: The Pluralistic Hypothesis	177
Peter Phan: Being Religious Interreligiously	179

Kwok Pui-Lan: Discovering the Bible in the Nonbiblical World	181
Michael Amalados: The Asian Jesus	183
Edward Schillebeeckx: No Salvation outside the World	185
Aloysius Pieris: No Salvation outside God's Covenant with the Poor	187
Conclusion	189
Suggestions for Further Reading	190
<b>10. <i>Interfaith Reasoning, Hermeneutics, Theology, and Worship</i></b>	<b>191</b>
Introduction	191
Scriptural Reasoning	192
Cross-Textual Hermeneutics	195
Comparative Theology	199
Interfaith Worship	202
Conclusion	205
Suggestions for Further Reading	206
<b>11. <i>Christian-Muslim Dialogue of Theology</i></b>	<b>207</b>
Introduction	207
Muslim Questions on Christian Theology	208
Islamic Critique of Original Sin	209
Islamic Critique of Christ's Redemption	210
Muslim Views on the Crucifixion	212
Methodological Issues in Theological Dialogue	214
Foundations of Christian Faith	217
Underlying Concerns of Muslim Questions	219
Conclusion	222
Suggestions for Further Reading	223
<b>12. <i>Implications and Challenges of Religious Pluralism</i></b>	<b>224</b>
Introduction	224
Religious Syncretism	225
Multiple Religious Belonging	227

xii *World Christianity Encounters World Religions*

Theological Education and Interfaith Learning 230

Identity of Catholic Schools in Pluralistic Cultures 234

The Church's Evangelizing Mission and Interfaith Dialogue 237

Parable of the Chief Buddhist Monk 239

Conclusion 241

Suggestions for Further Reading 242

***Index*** 243

# Foreword

Religious pluralism is not a new phenomenon. If we look at the scriptures, we see that the Jewish people, chosen by God to bear witness to monotheism, had to accomplish their mission in a religiously pluralistic environment. Christianity also soon became aware of religious pluralism. Having developed as distinct from Judaism, it encountered polytheism and was confronted with emperor worship and Eastern cults such as Mithraism. As Christianity spread from the Mediterranean area to other parts of the world it met with other religious expressions. It found itself face-to-face with a new religion, Islam, but there were also Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions that developed in Asia. On the Asian continent Christianity has always been, and, apart from in the Philippines, still is, a minority religion.

If even regarding the past it would be incorrect to see the world divided into religious “blocs”—Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, with only the Jews, because of their dispersal, scattered to various regions—this would reflect present reality even less. With the increased mobility of the modern world, the religions are brought into contact with each other more than ever. So there is a need for Christians to understand what the encounter with world religions means for them and for others. The purpose of the present book is to help them to fulfill this need.

Edmund Chia is well suited to this task. As a Christian of Asian origin himself, he has lived and practiced his Christian faith in a pluralistic environment. He has excellent academic qualifications, but moreover he has had professional experience in promoting interfaith relations. He certainly knows what he is talking about.

As Chia points out, interfaith dialogue can be learned only through actual practice. This *summa* can serve as a useful guide and a tool for

verification. The suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter provide indications for deeper understanding.

Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald  
Past President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council  
for Interreligious Dialogue  
Former Apostolic Nuncio in Egypt and Delegate  
to the League of Arab States

# Preface

When we approach a person who professes his religion with conviction, his testimony and thoughts ask us and lead us to question our own spirituality. Dialogue, thus, begins with *encounter*. The first knowledge of the other is born from it. Indeed, if one begins from the premise of the common affiliation in *human nature*, one can go beyond prejudices and fallacies and begin to understand the other according to a new perspective.

—Pope Francis<sup>1</sup>

The notions of “world Christianity” and “world religions” are relatively new in the history of the study of religion. The former evolved in the academy when Western Christians became more conscious of non-Western Christianity, and the latter when Christian scholars became more conscious of religions other than Christianity. The encounter between them has become commonplace since the mid-twentieth century and is more widely known today as interfaith dialogue. The present book is about this encounter. It sums up practically everything that needs to be known about world Christianity’s encounter with world religions; it is a *summa* on interfaith dialogue. It presents in a single volume a systematic and relatively comprehensive survey of all the dimensions related to or impinging on interfaith dialogue. The term “interfaith” is used here broadly to represent all forms of faith engagements: between different

1. Pope Francis, “To Participants in the Meeting Sponsored by the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Its Establishment in Rome” (January 24, 2015), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150124\\_pisai.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150124_pisai.html).

religious faith traditions, between different Christian faith denominations, and with peoples who do not identify with any religion.

This book's starting point is the importance of encounter between persons of different faith convictions. The encounters facilitate new knowledge, which can help us not only to correct prejudices and fallacies but also to appreciate the religious other from new perspectives. This is one of the principal aims of interfaith dialogue, a ministry that has become integral to the mission of the church in the religiously plural world of the twenty-first century. This is what the book highlights. It first explores, in part 1, the basics of Christianity, religion, and dialogue, moving on, in part 2, to discuss the bases for interfaith dialogue as found in Christian Scripture and tradition, and culminating, in part 3, with an exposition of the theologies and praxes of interfaith dialogue.

The three chapters of part 1 offer a quick glimpse of what is meant by world Christianity, world religions, and the encounter between them. Appreciating the history of Christianity, especially from its origins and looking at its heterogeneous tradition, helps in the appreciation of the advent of the notion of world Christianity. Likewise, appreciating the phenomenon of religion, by examining the history of its study and the related concepts of faith and spirituality, also helps in the appreciation of the nineteenth-century invention of the idea of world religions. As the encounter between Christianity and the world's religions is the concern of the book, the what, why, how, and when of interfaith dialogue are clarified from the outset. Specifically, it will be pointed out that there are different kinds or levels of dialogue, known in academic circles as the (1) dialogue of life, (2) dialogue of action, (3) dialogue of theology, and (4) dialogue of religious experience.

Part 2 consists of four chapters that survey the biblical and theological resources within the Christian tradition that can be garnered to attend to peoples outside of its fold. It begins by looking at the problem of biblical interpretation and especially how and where the Bible portrays themes of exclusiveness and also of inclusiveness. Likewise, how Christian theology over the centuries has been dealing with those who are not Christians or those who abandon their faith will be discussed, with special reference to the question of salvation. An integral part of the church's teaching tradition is the contributions of the Second Vatican Council. This will be assessed, especially what it teaches about other religions and how these teachings have been interpreted and implemented by the post-Vatican

II papacies. Also important to explore is the experience of the Asian Church, which has had a long and rich history relating with its religious neighbors. In particular, the thesis of the triple dialogue advanced by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences will be spelled out.

The five chapters of part 3 offer an overview of the theologies and praxes that have developed in dealing with the reality of pluralism within as well as without the church. The actual praxis of dialogue between the different Christian denominations will be the first to be examined. The focus in this chapter is on the evolution of the modern ecumenical movement and the invitation to embrace the wider ecumenism. Next to be looked at are the numerous theologies of religious pluralism that have surfaced in recent decades, focusing on the contributions of eight pioneering figures and specific themes associated with each of them. The dialogue of theology and spirituality is then discussed by looking at the exercise of scriptural reasoning, the dynamics of cross-textual hermeneutics, the practice of comparative theology, and the cross-participation of believers in interfaith worship. An example of theological dialogue is then illustrated by examining the study of the Islamic critique of the Christian faith. This is no doubt the most urgent and sensitive dialogue for Christianity today since Islam is its most significant dialogue partner in the contemporary geopolitical world. Finally, the implications and challenges of religious pluralism will be deliberated by probing the phenomenon of religious syncretism and multiple religious belonging, as well as the response of theological education and Catholic educational institutions. The book concludes by examining one of the most problematic challenges of religious pluralism to the church, that is, the mission-dialogue dialectics, but it will do so by engaging with a parable that, in turn, raises more questions for further discussion.

As is obvious from the chapter overview above, this book briefly addresses quite a number of topics related to interfaith dialogue and the encounter of world Christianity and world religions. Volumes have already been written on each of the topics, and so this book is intentionally introductory in scope. It synthesizes the works of the most prominent scholars on each of the topics addressed. It can be used in undergraduate or graduate theology programs in seminaries or universities, especially where the curriculum has space for only one or two courses that address Christianity's relationship with other religions. Whether the course is titled "Comparative Theology," "Interreligious Dialogue," "Christianity

and Other Faiths,” “Theology of Religions,” or “Religious Pluralism,” the present book should be a valuable starting point. It is written for students and lecturers who come from Christian backgrounds—whether practicing or not—or who have greater familiarity with the Christian ethos as compared to their knowledge of other religions. It is also written for the intelligent and questioning layperson who may have little or no background in the study of theology but who wishes to explore the intricacies related to interfaith dialogue. The book is presented in as uncomplicated a fashion as possible, avoiding technical theological jargon, using minimal footnotes and references, and keeping to the textbook format so that it can be used in the course of a semester. The chapters can stand alone or be read sequentially. A list of suggested readings is provided at the end of each chapter and references are made in footnotes only to texts that are deemed important to the topic.

I have been teaching courses related to Christianity’s encounter with other religions for more than two decades, both at a seminary in the United States and now at a university in Australia and also through formation programs run in various parts of Asia. But my interest in this field probably has its roots in my childhood, raised as I was in Malaysia as a Christian with grandparents and most other relatives who adhere to the Chinese religions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. I was thus as used to participating in the rites and rituals of the Chinese religions as I was reciting the rosary or attending Sunday Mass. I also had more classmates who were Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs than Christians, and the first school I taught at was in a predominantly Muslim village where only 1 percent of its student population was Christian. As a young De La Salle brother I was often invited to run faith formation youth camps for students of multireligious backgrounds. All of these experiences predisposed me to interfaith dialogue even as I had not really engaged in any formal studies on the subject. Moreover, I never took seriously the compulsory Islamic education courses that were offered when I went to college in Malaysia.

It was not until I went to Washington, DC, where I had the opportunity to study the world’s religions with scholars such as William Cenkner, OP, and James Wiseman, OSB, at the Catholic University of America, as well as with Alf Hiltebeitel and Seyyed Hossein Nasr at George Washington University. My eight years as executive secretary for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Confer-

ences was yet another opportunity for further learning as I participated in numerous encounters with persons of other religions throughout the Asian continent. I was also mentored by my predecessor Thomas Michel, SJ, and greatly inspired by bishops I worked with, namely, Bishop Lawrence Thienchai, Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, Cardinal Chito Tagle, and Archbishop Ignatius Suharyo, as well as Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald and Archbishop Felix Machado who were at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at that time. Also inspirational were the Asian theologians I interacted with, especially Michael Amaladoss, SJ, Aloysius Pieris, SJ, Sebastian Painadath, SJ, Mary John Mananzan, OSB, Virginia Fabella, MM, Wesley Ariarajah, Felix Wilfred, and Wong Wai Ching. Working on my doctorate at the University of Nijmegen was of course a period of intense research and study, but it was my personal encounters with Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, and the support of Professors Wilhelm Dupre and Frans Wijzen, among others, that made it momentous. My seven years on the faculty of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago were also occasions for more learning, particularly with colleagues Robert Schreiter, CPPS, Stephen Bevans, SVD, Diane Bergant, CSA, John Pawlikowski, OSA, and the other great scholars serving as role models. My involvement with the Catholic Theological Society of America was yet another blessing as I received a lot of support from Peter Phan, Francis Clooney, SJ, Ruben Habito, Paul Knitter, Jeff Gros, FSC, Gerard Mannion and many of the other Catholic theologians. In Australia, my dialogue partners include my colleagues of the Interreligious Dialogue Network of the Australian Catholic University, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Melbourne Archdiocese, and the Living Faiths Commission and also the Faith and Order Commission of the Victoria Council of Churches. All of these encounters and moments of grace have prepared me well not only to engage in interfaith dialogue but to also write about it convincingly.

The publication of this book would not have been possible if not for the unyielding support of Hans Christoffersen and his staff at Liturgical Press. Hans told me to ensure that the book is not too intimidating and so I had a few of my best students read the drafts. I am grateful especially to Milani Arena and Victoria Caitlin Sophie-Louise Sharples, both of whom read through most of the chapters and provided me with valuable feedback. I began the research for this book when I had the good fortune of spending a few months in early 2017 as an international fellow at the

Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University. I am grateful to the dean and the faculty for their warm welcome and support. My thanks also go to Archbishop Fitzgerald for writing the foreword to this book and to all those wonderful colleagues who endorsed it. But most of all, I am eternally thankful to my parents, Albert and Monica, and siblings, Gabriel, Magdalene, and Richard, all of whom are in Malaysia, who have been a true source of unconditional support for my career all these years, and I am especially indebted to my lovely and loving wife, Gemma Cruz, who is my everlasting support and daily theological dialogue partner.

PART 2  
SCRIPTURE  
AND  
TRADITION





## The Bible and Other Religions

### Introduction

I was once at a seminar where questions of what the Bible teaches about interfaith dialogue and other religions came up. One of the speakers was very blunt, beginning his response by reference to 1 Timothy 4:1, which states that “in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.” He cautioned against falling into the trap and deception of the interfaith movement and then asserted that all the other religions are human attempts at reaching God while Christianity is about the one true God reaching out to humans. The various religions, he continued, are preoccupied with rituals and religious practices while Christianity’s focus is on developing a relationship with God. His conclusion was simple: the truth of biblical Christianity means that true Christians have to proclaim the falsity of all other religions and at the same time have the duty of announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ to those trapped by them!

This chapter explores the attitude of the Bible toward the other religions of the world. It begins by reflecting on what it means when Christians claim that the Bible is the “Word of God” and then goes on to examine some of the complexities involved in discerning God’s Word, especially in the contemporary context of multireligious societies. It then offers an overview of the Bible by looking first at key themes in what Christians call the “Old Testament,” which is really the Jewish Hebrew Bible, and then examining some major themes found in Christian Scriptures, more commonly known as the “New Testament.” Focus will be on showing that the themes of both exclusiveness or particularity and also inclusiveness or universality are clearly found throughout the Bible.

How to appreciate exclusive verses that proclaim Jesus as the one and only Savior will also be discussed from the perspective of a contextual reading of the biblical texts.

### **The Bible as Word of God**

Christianity is a biblical faith. Christians regard the Bible as the “Word of God.” Some read the Bible regularly and devotionally while others turn to it when looking for answers to life’s questions and challenges. Christians believe that the Bible is an important source of knowledge and information about life. Its teachings and truth carry a lot of weight. Its authority is premised on the belief that it is a record of God’s revelation to humanity. Some Christians take this to mean that the actual and literal words of God were dictated to and recorded by the biblical authors and evangelists. They cite as proof that, though the Bible is a collection of many books written by many authors in different languages and styles and spanning many centuries, its message is consistent. It is oriented toward the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world. Prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures are cited as being confirmed in the New Testament, especially in the person of Jesus Christ, who is “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). And since God is the source of all truth, which Jesus claims when he says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) and, “your [God’s] word is truth” (John 17:17), it is beyond doubt that the Bible is from God and that it is true in all its senses. So, when asked what the Bible has to say about other religions Christians who read the Bible literally usually refer to it for guidance. Verses such as Deuteronomy 4:35 (“To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him”) and Mark 13:22 (“False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect”) are sufficient proof for them that there is no place for other religions and interfaith dialogue in Christian living.

There are major problems with the above lines of thought. While we might get some insights on the leanings of the Bible with regard to how Christians ought to think about other religions, what it has to say is actually very little. This is because the Bible contains elements that were first addressed to the Judaic faith and later additions that tell the

story of Jesus Christ and his followers. Its compilation addresses the Christian faith. One can then expect mainly to find issues pertaining to Christianity's development and its interaction with the Jewish religion to be contained within. But since the first part of the Christian Bible is the Jewish Bible or Hebrew Scriptures, the people of Israel's theology shapes to a great extent Christianity's attitude toward people of other religions. For example, in view of Israel's profound consciousness of its own religious identity as God's chosen people, its negative judgments on other religious systems was taken over in the New Testament by the early Christians in their evaluation of the other religions as idolatrous. This does not, however, suggest that the entire Bible teaches negatively about other religions, as there are indeed biblical stories and teachings advocating positively for out-group members. But, on the whole, discussions about other religions are at best ancillary to the primary concern of the Bible, which is to witness to the Christian faith. There is certainly no theology of other religions explicitly articulated in the Bible. It is an in-house document with lots to say about and to those within the group but almost nothing substantive about or to those without. At best we can only discern some basic principles that can then be applied to today's reality of religious pluralism.

### **The Problem of Biblical Interpretation**

Another reason why it is disingenuous to assert that the Bible preaches against other religions is because there are many ways in which the Bible is being interpreted today. Biblical hermeneutics or interpretation is a science unto itself, positing a variety of tools and methods, such as the allegorical, moral, and anagogical approaches, some of which yield radically different interpretations from one another. The literalist approach, which considers the Bible to be inerrant and infallible, for example, differs significantly from the contextualist approach, where texts are interpreted in the light of the context of the author as well as that of the reader. It is important to note that interpretations are also a function of the interpreter's education, theological orientation, social location, existential concerns, and a variety of other nontheological factors. Contemporary biblical studies also insist that it is necessary to take into account the "world behind the text," "the world of the text," and "the world in front of the text." All

three worlds are significant because they influence how scriptural texts are read and interpreted. There is also the problem of exegesis as opposed to eisegesis. While the former listens carefully to what the text is saying, the latter brings into the text one's own agenda and viewpoints and reads meaning into it. The diversity of these methods and their differing conclusions highlight the difficulties involved in the unquestioning acceptance of some of the basic assumptions of biblical teachings that have been historically passed down from generation to generation.

Moreover, there is also the problem of the text itself. It is somewhat inaccurate to suggest that there is absolute consistency in the Bible. Biblical scholars have unraveled lots of errors in the copying and translation of key texts from their original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Some of these errors are really mistakes but some may have been intentional as the "wrong" translation fits more squarely with the scribe's or translator's worldview or theology or beliefs. Internal inconsistencies are also found in the Bible. The apostle Paul, for example, teaches that "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works" (Eph 2:8-9) while the Letter of James, on the other hand, is explicit that "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:24). An even more obvious example is the Ten Commandments, which teaches "You shall not murder" (Exod 20:13) while just a few chapters down we have the story of the Golden Calf, where Moses was so furious that he ordered, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side, each of you! Go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbor'" (Exod 32:27).

There are even incorrect citations of texts from the Old Testament in the New Testament. One small example suffices. The Gospel of Luke states in Luke 4:18-19 that it was quoting a text from the book of Isaiah. But when we compare the quoted text with where it was quoting from, namely, Isaiah 61:1-2, it is clear that "and recovery of sight to the blind" in Luke was an addition and that "to bind up the brokenhearted" in Isaiah is missing from Luke. With regard to prophecies from Hebrew Scriptures being fulfilled in Jesus, scholars have hypothesized that the reverse could also have been the case. The gospel authors, they argue, could have consciously framed the life of Jesus based on these prophecies that they were all too familiar with so that Micah 5:2—"But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come

forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days”—shaped Matthew’s and Luke’s decisions to locate Jesus as being born in Bethlehem when composing the infancy narratives. These concerns, along with numerous other opinions and theories about the Bible, enable one to conclude that there are many complexities associated with biblical interpretation. Merely insisting that the Bible is the literal words of God and that it has to be taken at face value is problematic, to say the least. To be sure, there is no one way of biblical interpretation that is perfectly accurate or acceptable to all. Just as those who argue negatively about other religions quote scriptural texts selectively, it is also possible for those who have a more positive attitude about other religions to do the same. Proof-texting, or the misuse of isolated verses from scriptures, is not a convincing method or argument to use.

The Bible has to be read holistically, taking the entirety of its message, discerning what it says about other religions through specific texts, and intelligently looking for clues between the lines. Because its primary purpose is to proclaim the Christian faith, we would expect to read texts in the Bible that endorse that proclamation. But where we come across biblical texts that speak positively about the religious outsider, we ought to pay special attention to them. These are texts that could be regarded as groundbreaking. An illustration might help: If I were writing a book to glorify my red football team it would be surprising if in the book I say something nice about the competing blue team. But if you do find me complimenting the blue team in the book, it is probably because the comments are true, what I said actually did happen, and not writing about it would simply make the book less credible. Meantime, it would also be safe to say that many of the nice things I say about my own red team—for example, that it includes all the best footballers on the face of the earth—can be taken with a grain of salt since my professed aim is to excite my supporters, in which case exaggeration helps. In biblical scholarship this is known as the “criterion of embarrassment,” as the nice things I say about my competitor is embarrassing and serves only to weaken the overall thesis of my book. But I had no choice but to mention them because it is truthful information that cannot be hidden.

So, if the Bible—which is a Christian document written to nurture the Christian’s faith—has something positive to say about other religions, one must regard those views as not only insightful and authentic but also truly revolutionary. These revolutionary insights and teachings cannot

be dismissed as aberration. They are God's teachings for us and have special relevance in today's increasingly pluralistic world. So, given the nature of the biblical texts and the problems inherent in interpretation, it is important that we are more conscious when referring to the Bible in our assessment of other religions. A sincere reading of scriptures ought to open minds, soften hearts, and encourage Christians to look to the Bible as God's Word inspiring everyone to build bridges rather than walls across the different religious traditions. We can begin the cultivation of more positive attitudes by offering alternative ways of looking at biblical texts, as well as by pointing out that some traditionally held views, such as the Bible opposing interfaith dialogue, need not always be accurate, much less absolute. The Bible is the Word of God and has thus to be treated as a dynamic and not static text. It has much to say to every culture and in every era and about practically everything that matters in life, including the contemporary phenomenon of religious pluralism in society.

### **Universality in Hebrew Scriptures**

The Bible begins with the story of creation. Creation therefore serves as the starting point and foundation for how all the other biblical texts are interpreted. The biblical story of creation differs from the other ancient Near Eastern thinking on how the earth came into being. It speaks of God as creator of everything on earth and everyone who has ever lived. Creation comes out of nothing, with God simply uttering the "Let there be . . ." command in words and the light, dome, sky, land, etc. comes to be. The first chapter of Genesis offers a theology to the "How did it all begin?" and "What is the human's place in relation to the world?" questions. Nothing or no one on earth or in the heavens is outside of God. Thus, all peoples, not only Jews and Christians, are God's people. This cosmic perspective on creation is the basis for the doctrine of the universal lordship of God.

The Bible is also emphatic that there is only one creator and that there is no other. All human beings are children of this one and only God. This is the strict monotheism of biblical theology. Those who claim that the Israelite God is different from the Babylonian God or that the Christian God is not the same as the Muslim or Hindu Gods are not monotheists. That is not what the Bible teaches. There is no such thing as a Christian

God or a Muslim God, since there is but only one God. This monotheistic insight evolved sometime during or shortly after the Babylonian exile when the Israelites realized their folly of having conceived of God in tribal terms. The exile taught them that God was even able to use their Babylonian enemies to subjugate them in order to bring them back to the right path of faithfulness to the one and only God. This means that the God whom they called by the name Yahweh was the same God of the Babylonians. The first chapter of Genesis is the fruit of this reflection. It depicts the myth of creation culminating in the creation of the first human beings, as representing the one human family: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). The biblical text also records that they participate in the life and image of God. This was how humanity was designed to be, and God saw that it was good. The Bible clearly emphasizes that as, at the end of creation, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

But the biblical authors then had to account for the existential reality of brokenness and sin in the world. Thus, the next two chapters of the Bible depict the accounts leading to humanity's alienation from God, beginning with the Fall (Gen 3). Ironically, it was the sin of Adam and Eve that facilitated their growth and development as human beings with the appropriate conscience, including "knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:22). In other words, growing up means being endowed with the freedom and responsibility of choice, which in turn means being susceptible to sinfulness. The Bible's narrative is that God then sends the humans off from the Garden of Eden so that they are able to lead their lives on their own and be responsible for the earth's affairs (Gen 3:23). The finite realities of the world, with all its depravity, are then amplified in the subsequent chapters of the Bible. Genesis 4 speaks about the effects of the Fall, including its giving rise to the sins of jealousy, anger, and murder. Ironically, again, these acts of violence take place in the context of worship of God and sacrificial offering. Worship of God does not necessarily guarantee a blissful life. Humans have to take charge of their lives even if in the presence of God. This is the Bible's way of portraying God as unconditional love and acceptance, on the one hand, and human beings as truly free individuals but having responsibilities, on the other. This theme of God's saving activity is interspersed with the theme of the sinfulness of the human condition throughout the rest of the Bible.

The reality of human irresponsibility becomes so bad at one stage that God contemplates wiping it all away: “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them” (Gen 6:7). With Noah and the Flood, however, humanity is allowed to begin anew as God establishes a universal covenant with the whole of creation: “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you. . . . I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:9-11). The rainbow is the sign of that covenant. Noah, like Adam before him, is seen as humanity’s representative in that this was God’s covenant with the entire human race. The rainbow is seen even until today; the covenant remains valid. God’s love for the human race continues to be available to everyone, Jews or Christians, Muslims or Buddhists, secularists or atheists. The Bible teaches that every person on earth has the potential of being reconciled and brought into the heavenly embrace of the kingdom of God that is made possible through the universal love and salvation for all.

### **The Tower of Babel and Diversity**

The first nine verses of Genesis 11 narrate the story of the Tower of Babel. It is often used etiologically to explain the origins and causes of linguistic diversity in the human family. The story begins by stating that “the whole earth had one language and the same words” (Gen 11:1). It then describes how the people came together in a plot to build a tower to reach the heavens, saying, “let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:4). But God was not pleased, saying, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them” (Gen 11:6). Thinking that their plans could be stopped if they do not understand one another, God decides to confuse their language and then “scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen 11:9).

This text risks being interpreted as suggesting linguistic homogeneity was the original divine intent and that linguistic heterogeneity is a result of God’s punishment. This literalist reading of the myth can be

countered by another that reads Genesis 11:1-9 in the context of the wider Genesis story. A close reading of the text would point out that the primary motivation for building the tower is the fear of being “scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:5). Ironically, at the end of the day, it is because of their attempt at building the tower that caused them to scatter all over. Anyway, acting on the fear of being scattered, the people in Babel thought that if they were to build an edifice high enough to storm the heavens they would not be subjected to God’s dictates anymore. They would then be masters of their own lives and destinies, a desire evidenced by their saying, “let us make a name for ourselves” (Gen 11:4). So, the biblical author’s intent is to point out that the ultimate sin in this story is really the people’s desire to do away with God so that they can then take charge of their own lives, without any recourse to God. This is comparable to Adam and Eve’s sin of wanting to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:5) so that they can become all-knowing, like God. Thus, sinfulness in the Bible is usually in reference to the human being’s rejection of the finite conditions of worldly and human existence and wishing that they can be like the infinite God. But just as Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden for yielding to their sinful desires, the people at Babel were also scattered “abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen 11:9) for wanting to defy their true human nature.

The Bible’s thesis seems to be that the people at Babel would have liked to remain where they were and not move away. In that sense they would view being banished and being scattered as punishment from God. The fact of life, however, is that change and being scattered around the earth is simply a reality of the human condition according to God’s divine plan for the world. If we revisit the story of creation, we will be reminded that humanity was commanded to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), a command repeated after the flood when “God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’ ” (Gen 9:1). Filling the earth means human beings have to spread out far and wide. That is just what life is all about and the way the world was created. Human desires, however, are not always in consonance with the divine blueprint. The fear of the unknown and the comfort of the status quo can lead one to prefer stagnation and be afraid of living out the mandate of the creator God. Moreover, being scattered can be challenging even as it is the process by which new thinking, beliefs, and

languages evolve. These were the very realities that the biblical authors had been experiencing in their lives in the millennium before the Common Era when the texts of Genesis were being composed. They were merely reflecting on these challenges and projecting it onto the Bible in their description of the beginning of time. Heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity, therefore, is the state of the world and of created reality. It is how the world was created, and God saw that it was very good.

So, far from advocating that a single language or culture or religion was the original will of God, the Babel story is asserting, instead, that human reality entails dealing with diversity. There is no running away from it and no human tower can change the course of nature. This is in fact verified in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles where the Pentecost event is seen as a recapitulation of Babel, except that the story is reversed. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples, all of whom were Galileans, spoke in tongues so that the crowd, who had come from all over the face of the earth, could say “in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power” (Acts 2:11). There was no indication that the crowd had learned the language of the Galileans, and there was no indication that the disciples had learned the many different languages of the crowd. Yet they all heard the message of God in their own native languages. The Word of God cannot be localized to any specific people or nation. It is meant for all peoples and all nations, and they will hear it in the diversity of their language, culture, race, and nation. This is the message of universality that the Bible relates over and over again. Its universality is not so much in its uniformity but precisely in its pluriformity or diversity.

### **Particularity in Hebrew Scriptures**

Beginning with the call of Abraham as recorded in chapter 12 of Genesis, the Bible shifts its focus from a story about the wider universal human community to the story of a specific people, namely, the people of Israel. The rest of the Hebrew Scriptures have to be appreciated in light of this; its concerns are with Israel as people and nation. The stories of other nations are mentioned from the perspective of Israel, especially in the context of its special relationship with God. The accounts of Abraham, such as his calling, his faithfulness, and his descendants, are best read

with the covenant that God establishes with him in mind (Gen 15:18). The Abrahamic covenant, in turn, has to be read in concert with the Mosaic covenant (Exod 24:7-8) that establishes Israel as God's chosen people. This covenant reminds the people that there is but one true God and that they are to be faithful and obedient to God's commandments and the divine will for human living: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:4-5). But, over time, the people of Israel swayed in their faith and began to lapse, at times not fulfilling their part of the covenant. They rebelled and sinned and even adopted as their own what were called "pagan" gods that the surrounding nations were worshiping. This was a major transgression against the commandment: "You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God" (Exod 20:5). Israel's forgetfulness and tendency toward sin, especially after possession of the Promised Land, is met with rebuke by the prophets, and these are at times accompanied by divine rebuke as well. The prophetic message is consistent: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you" (Jer 7:23). Thus, if the foundation of Hebrew Scriptures is the universality of God's revelation and salvation as depicted in the doctrine of creation, the theme of Israel's election and uniqueness is most dominant throughout the rest of the scriptures.

Given this very particular concern for Israel's faithfulness to God, oftentimes at the expense of its relationship with those outside its fold, accounts in the Bible that speak positively about people of other nations ought to be highlighted. That these stories, which have the potential for being an embarrassment to the doctrine of election of the people of Israel, were included in the Bible signals that they are important. The anointing of the pagan Cyrus the Great of Persia by God as the king who would liberate the Israelites from the Babylonian Captivity is an example of how the Hebrew Scriptures seem to go out of their way to portray the religious outsider positively in the history of the people of Israel (Isa 45). Another example is the famous story of the Israelite prophet Jonah, not so much with the whale, but with the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, Israel's dreaded and sworn enemy. The Bible records the conversion of what was initially a pagan and wicked city after which God decided to spare it from destruction, much to the protest of Jonah

(Jonah 3–4). These texts confirm the thesis of the universality of God’s love, that Yahweh is the God of all and not only of the people of Israel.

God cares for all, including Israel’s enemies. While Israel is the favored child, the Bible insists that its election is not for its own sake but to serve as “a light to the nations” so that God’s “salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa 49:6). The people of Israel, therefore, become humanity’s representative of God’s love and providence. God’s blessing on the nations is through the nation of Israel. Israel announces God’s salvation to all peoples, including the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Hittites, and so on. The God of creation who wills the redemption of all is the only God and will care for all of God’s people. This theme of the universal God is interspersed with the theme of Israel as God’s chosen people throughout the Bible. The dialectic of universality and particularity continues even through to the New Testament.

### **The New Testament as New Covenant**

The New Testament begins with accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus and his disciples, all of whom were Jews, were naturally steeped in their understanding of the people and nation of Israel as God’s chosen people. In fact, even after the early Christian community’s separation and expulsion from the mainstream Jewish community, they continued to embrace the theology of election and eventually made it central to their own self-understanding of what it means to be church. They not only considered themselves to be God’s special and elect community but even insisted that the church had displaced Israel and that the Christian community was now the “new” and “true” Israel. They believed that they had entered into a new covenant with God. The church’s new status and role are clearly articulated in Peter’s epistle: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet 2:9).

Where did this idea of the new covenant come from? Familiar with the teachings of Hebrew Scriptures, the early Christians took as their basis a text from the prophet Jeremiah: “The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Jer 31:31). This new covenant, they assumed, was initiated and fulfilled by the coming of God’s Son Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who by his death on the cross and subsequent resur-

rection redeemed all of humanity. Paul's Letter to the Galatians spells this out: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal 3:13-14). The evangelist John distinguishes between the old and the new covenants: "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Matthew adds that Jesus had, in fact, fulfilled the law but gave humanity much more on top of that (Matt 5:17). The Letter to the Hebrews testifies to Jesus' role in establishing a new covenant with God: "But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises" (Heb 8:6). God's church was now known as the "spiritual" or "heavenly" Israel.

Jesus' role as the promised Messiah and God's revelation is most adequately depicted in the four canonical gospels found in the New Testament. Taken together they tell the story of God as revealed in the human person of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no singular account of the story of Jesus; there are multiple. The gospels offer different perspectives of who Jesus is and are by nature meant to be not historical or biographical but theological. Each gospel is written in a different context, by different authors, and for different audiences. No single gospel can capture the complete picture of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They have to be read in concert with one another to obtain a more holistic picture of who Jesus is and what he means for the world. The themes of particularity and universality are again evident in the gospels. This is most clearly seen through a comparison between Matthew's and Luke's gospels.

### **Particularity in the Gospel of Matthew**

Matthew's gospel was written for Jewish Christians. It portrays Jesus as the new Moses and the newly proclaimed kingdom of heaven as a reality for the Jews. It emphasizes the continuity between the Hebrew Scriptures and the life of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus fulfills many of the biblical prophecies the Jewish Christians were familiar with. His genealogy is traced back to David and Abraham (Matt 1:1), and many of the expectations about the Messiah's birth are recounted in Matthew's gospel. Like

## 9

# Contemporary Theologies of Religious Pluralism

### Introduction

I still remember that during my first years of theological studies the authors I came across had names that sounded foreign to me, and their theologies didn't resonate much with my Asian psyche either. It didn't make any difference whether I was reading a text from Athanasius or Aquinas, Schleiermacher or Barth. I found it difficult to identify with any of them as they were all, as I later came across the phrase, no more than "dead white men." I would never have imagined then that a theological treatise or book of theology could actually be written by someone I might one day get to physically see or talk to. It was therefore quite a treat when, as a young scholar, I was able to not only meet with but also wine and dine with some of the big-name theologians of our times. Since encountering them in the flesh, when I read something written by them the text tends to come alive and I actually "hear" it as if the author is speaking to me in real life, complete with intonation, accent, smile, and humor!

This chapter discusses contemporary theologies of religious pluralism. As religious diversity has only recently come into global consciousness, the theologies that have arisen to deal with it are also relatively young. The pioneering figures in this field are twentieth-century scholars, many of whom are still very much alive: they are by no means dead, only white, or only men! The chapter will explore very briefly the thinking of eight scholars whom I have had the privilege not only to meet but also to become friends with, all of whom I deeply admire and respect. They are

well-known as Christian theologians advocating a pluralistic approach to other religions. They no longer ask if other religions are true, as they have been presuming that in all of their writings. While every single one of them has written many volumes of books on practically every area of Christian theology, this chapter will explore only one or two aspects of each scholar's works for the purpose of delineating the various dimensions that could be attended to when discussing Christian theologies of religious pluralism.

### **Raimon Panikkar: Intrareligious Dialogue**

Often regarded as a pioneer of interfaith dialogue, Raimon Panikkar's life itself is an illustration of this dialogue. Born in Barcelona of a Hindu Indian father and a Roman Catholic Spanish mother, Panikkar subsequently became a Catholic priest, theologian, and scholar of the Indian religions. One of his earliest works on interfaith dialogue is his book *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, where he proposes that "Christ" is the universal symbol of the divine-human unity. Moreover, Christ is also not the monopoly of Christianity as, according to St. Paul, it is "the name that is above every name" (Phil 2:9).<sup>1</sup> But his most famous quote, found in the book *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, is "I 'left' as a Christian, I 'found' myself a Hindu, and I 'return' a Buddhist, without having ceased to be Christian."<sup>2</sup> This describes his leaving Europe for India, immersing himself in Hinduism and Buddhism, and then returning to Europe and still remaining Christian. He speaks of these encounters with other religions as touching two levels: one external and in the main doctrinal (called interreligious dialogue) and the other internal and stirring one's whole self to ask deep questions (called intrareligious dialogue). It is this internal intrareligious dialogue that Panikkar suggests takes place at the core of our being in a quest for the truth of salvation. This dialogue entails, on the one hand, a willingness to question our own belief systems and, on the other, openness to learning from the religious other. It also

1. Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

2. Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 40.

entails accepting that what we learn can challenge us to a conversion that risks upsetting our own tradition. This is undoubtedly a bold and religious act because it is inviting us to look toward the transcendent, our tradition, and also the world of the religious other for the truth of the mysteries of life. Intrareligious dialogue, in helping us discover our own and the other's tradition, contributes directly and indirectly to bringing the different religious traditions together in a mutual dialogue on the mystery of God's salvific intent for all of humankind.

Panikkar proposes five attitudes that our personal intrareligious dialogue can embrace:

(1) *Exclusivism*: We believe that only our religion is true and all others are false. This attitude inspires dedication, as we are convinced that we are on God's side and adhering to a universal and absolute truth. Nevertheless, it breeds intolerance, assumes that truth is purely logical and conceptual, and does not recognize that truth can be multifaceted. Moreover, we fail to appreciate that even if our own tradition does contain the fullness of truth we may not be interpreting this truth appropriately.

(2) *Inclusivism*: We believe our own religion is true while acknowledging truth in the other religions as well. But we see ours as including all the truths that are found in the others. In other words, ours is the truest while others are true only to the extent that their truths are found in ours, the supra-religion. This attitude enables all other religions to exist and does not condemn them as wrong since they will eventually be assimilated into our own or will serve as preparation for their believers' encounter with Christ.

(3) *Parallelism*: We believe ours to be the right path while fully cognizant that other people also believe the same about their own religion. This is the conviction that the various religions run parallel to one another without any one being superior to the others, trusting that all will meet at the end of the human pilgrimage. Our task is therefore to deepen everyone's adherence to their own religion, avoiding muddy syncretism and eclecticism by keeping the boundaries between the religious traditions clear.

(4) *Interpenetration*: We realize that the different religions share a lot in common, are complementary, and also challenge one another. This attitude inspires mutual confidence and encourages us to engage with

the religious other in dialogue. This can contribute to mutual enrichment within a synthesis where the values of the other can be integrated into our own beliefs and tradition and vice versa.

(5) *Pluralism*: This is an attitude that stands between unrelated plurality and a monolithic unity. This implies that, on the one hand, we are displeased with the contemporary reality where the religions are separate from one another without any relationship between them whatsoever and, on the other, that we do not support the thesis of one universal religion or that any single religion should triumph over the rest. Such an attitude facilitates dialogue between peoples of different religions in order to bridge the gaps of mutual ignorance that each has about the other's tradition.

### **Paul Knitter: No Other Name?**

The five intrareligious attitudes above have been expounded on differently, especially by means of other models. One cogent model is that presented by the Catholic theologian Paul Knitter, professor emeritus of world religions and culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City after a long teaching career at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He came to fame with his landmark book *No Other Name?*, which reviewed the different models Christians employ in attending to the fact of religious pluralism. He later set out revising the book but, in view of the changes to the religious landscape, ended with a totally new book titled *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.<sup>3</sup> The question mark after the *No Other Name* title distinguishes it from many other books by the same title. Unlike other authors, Knitter raises the question as to whether Christians can still hold on to the doctrine that there is indeed no other name under heaven by which peoples of religions other than Christianity can be saved without embracing Jesus or without being baptized into the church (Acts 4:12). He reviews four models for dealing with this question, at times even identifying them with particular Christian denominations.

3. Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985); Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

First, the *exclusivism* model is generally identified with the conservative Evangelical Churches, with Karl Barth as its main representative. Its starting point is that there is one God, that this God was revealed to the world in Jesus Christ, and that it is only God, through Christ, who can save humankind. Thus, there can be only one true religion, and the Christian's mission is to replace all the others with Christianity. This model is ecclesiocentric (church-centered), as baptism into the church is believed to be necessary for salvation.

Second, the *inclusivism* model is identified with both the mainline Protestant Churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church. It acknowledges that God's revelation can also be found within other religions but does not admit that salvation is possible independent of Christ. Beginning with the conviction that God wills the salvation of all, it allows that other religions do mediate the salvation of their followers but that it is actually through Christ (whether those who are saved know it or not) that this salvation is made possible. Christianity does not replace the other religions but fulfills them. Karl Rahner's theory of the anonymous Christian is the best representative of this. This model is Christocentric (Christ-centered), as it believes that ultimately Christ, and not so much the church, is necessary for salvation. Obviously, Christ's salvific act stretches beyond the boundaries of the church.

Knitter then conflates the parallelism, interpenetration, and pluralism attitudes of Panikkar into two main models. His third, the *theocentric* model, considers not so much Christ but God as the means of salvation. The various religions, including Christianity, are pathways to God, the one and only absolute. While there are similarities between the religions, they are also very different ways of reaching God. Pluralism it is! Moreover, no one religion can claim superiority over the others, and so every person actually experiences both revelation and salvation in and through their own religion. Acknowledging that there are many true religions, this model promotes mutual respect and invites the religious adherents to engage with one another in dialogue. It is theocentric (centered on God), based on the conviction that we are ultimately saved by the one God of the universe who is the same God of the many true religions.

Finally, the *soteriocentric* model is a variation of the theocentric model and attempts to respond to the criticism that not all the religions have a belief in God. Plunging beneath the surface similarities of the different

religions we find that, even if there is a belief in God, who God is and what God is like differ significantly from one religion to another. The soteriocentric (from the Greek word *soter*, which means “savior”) model proposes that at the core of every religion is the vision of liberation or salvation for the suffering masses. Salvation (from the Latin word *salus*, which means “wholeness”) is the universal aim of the various religions. This model’s focus therefore is on how the different religions can and must work together to alleviate the people’s suffering and facilitate the liberation of humankind and that of the earth. These are steps the various religions have to take in view of ushering in the reign or kingdom of God. This model, centered on action and praxis, focuses on the ethical dimension of the faith.

### **John Hick: The Pluralistic Hypothesis**

The British Presbyterian philosopher John Hick is perhaps the foremost scholar who has radically embraced the theocentric and pluralist approach to other religions. Coming initially from a conservative and even fundamentalist Christian background, he underwent a personal conversion when he moved to Birmingham in the 1960s and found himself working and even living with many neighbors who adhered to religions other than Christianity. His firsthand experiences of interacting with them and worshiping in their houses of worship led him to develop what he calls the “pluralistic hypothesis” as the ideal approach in apprehending the religiously ambiguous world. He expounds on this in numerous publications, more directly in *God and the Universe of Faith*, which explores the issue of religious language and God-talk as representing how the world’s religions interpret the same divine reality, and *An Interpretation of Religion*, which offers the most comprehensive presentation of his theory of religion in the context of pluralism.<sup>4</sup>

Epistemologically, Hick questions the traditional Christian definition of faith as intellectual assent to propositional truths. Instead, he considers faith as our response to religious experience as mediated through our own human experience of the world and interpreted through our *a*

4. John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faith: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973); John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

*priori* knowledge and structures of consciousness. Hick's starting point is Immanuel Kant's distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal, which he uses as the premise to postulate his pluralistic hypothesis. While the former refers to, in German, the *Ding an sich* (thing in itself), which is not completely knowable through the human mind and sensation, the latter is how the thing or reality is experienced by human beings through their culturally and historically conditioned lenses and worldviews. When speaking about God (whom Hick calls the Real) or the absolute, ultimate, and transcendent reality, Hick makes a distinction between the noumenal ineffable Real *an sich* and the phenomenal subjective Real that is experienced by human beings. The world's religious traditions are expressing the latter, that is, at the phenomenal level, when describing God as Yahweh, the Trinity, *Allah*, *Shangdi*, *Ik Onkar*, *Krishna*, and *Vishnu*, as that is the only way the Real *an sich* can be defined and perceived by finite human beings. The parable of the three blind persons touching the elephant is often used to illustrate this. The first touches the leg and describes the elephant as a tree trunk; the second touches the trunk and describes the elephant as a large snake; the third touches the elephant's side and describes it as a great wall. While all of them are correct from where they are standing and how they are "seeing," no one person has the complete picture of what the elephant is or is even capable of realizing it at all. As long as they are contingent beings, the phenomenal level is the only way they can perceive as well as express reality, including the Ultimate Reality.

In line with this hypothesis, all the teachings, doctrines, and even truth claims about God and religious faith are really perceptions and pronouncements at the phenomenal level. They point to the noumenal, the God *an sich*, but they are not the really Real. This is another way of saying that our knowledge of God and our religious truth claims are limited, in view of the finiteness of our human condition, and that they are also shaped by cultural and historical forces and so should by no means be considered absolute. That accounts for why there is so much diversity between the religions, and conflicting truth claims should be understood as incompatible only at the phenomenal level. It is in this context that Hick rejects the claims to the absoluteness of Christ and the Christian faith. He calls for a paradigm shift, or Copernican revolution, in how Christians appreciate the world of many religions. Positing that, just as Copernicus maintained that the sun and planets do not revolve around the earth, Christianity must also assume that other religions and

their adherents are not centered on Christ or Christian salvation. True to the theocentric model, he argues that all the religions, including Christianity, revolve around God, the Real *an sich*. This hypothesis has led him to review all areas of theology, including the doctrines of the incarnation, salvation, the Trinity, and so on. A controversial book that he edited is *The Myth of God Incarnate*, which challenges the way Christians interpret the doctrine of the incarnation.<sup>5</sup> Hick submits that many of Christianity's absolute claims, because they are on the phenomenal level, have to be understood not so much as metaphysical claims but as metaphorical or mythological in tenor.

### **Peter Phan: Being Religious Interreligiously**

One theologian for whom religious pluralism is not only a theological hypothesis but very much a lived reality from the time of his birth is the Vietnamese American Catholic priest Peter Phan. Phan fled his home country as a young adult and arrived in the United States as a refugee when the communists invaded Saigon in the 1970s. Regarded as the foremost Asian American Catholic theologian, he completed a three-volume work on Asian theology, titled *Christianity with an Asian Face*, *In Our Own Tongues*, and *Being Religious Interreligiously*.<sup>6</sup> It is in the third volume that he addresses head-on some of the challenges that religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue pose to the Christian faith in the context of post-modernity. Within a year of its publication, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) informed Phan that the book was being investigated because it contained serious ambiguities and doctrinal problems. He was presented with a document outlining areas that needed correction and a set of questions that he was to respond to. Correspondence between Phan and the CDF, as well as with the Committee on

5. John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

6. Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003); Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003); Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

Doctrine of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, went on for two years but concluded with no resolution.

Finally, in 2017, Phan produced *The Joy of Religious Pluralism*, a book-length response to the set of questions given him by the CDF more than a dozen years earlier.<sup>7</sup> One might note that Phan's investigation began under the papacy of Pope Benedict XVI but his book-length response was published following Pope Francis's 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) and his 2016 postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). Phan's *The Joy of Religious Pluralism* offers a response to the four basic concerns and questions raised by the CDF: (1) How is Jesus Christ unique and what does the universality of his salvific mission mean? (2) What is the salvific significance of religions other than Christianity? (3) How is the church unique and what is its role as instrument of salvation? (4) What is the mission of the church in the context of religious pluralism?

Instead of responding directly to the questions, Phan sets out to address the question of theological method. He argues that a lot of the issues raised about his *Being Religious Interreligiously* relate to the question of how he does theology rather than the book's content. Taking the declaration *Dominus Iesus* as an example, Phan notes that the CDF espouses neoscholastic methodology, which takes God's revelation as starting point. The document proceeds deductively (top-down) and insists that any act of theology has to begin with the faith of the church as taught by the church's magisterium. These teachings are then substantiated by verses from the Bible and the tradition of the church in a method called proof-texting. This gives primacy to magisterial teachings over the teachings of Jesus as found in the biblical texts, which are practically used to confirm church teachings. For Phan, theology, as inspired by the Second Vatican Council, is done inductively, taking the "signs of the times" and the experience of the people as starting points for reflection. These are then reflected against the teachings of the church and scripture, taking into account that the church's magisterium refers to the multiple magisteria that are in the service of the global church. These are (1) the episcopal magisterium of the bishops in union with the pope; (2) the magisterium of the theologians, who promote the understanding of the faith; (3) the

7. Peter C. Phan, *The Joy of Religious Pluralism: A Personal Journey* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).

magisterium of the laity or the *sensus fidelium* (instinct of the faithful); (4) the magisterium of the poor, the inheritors of the kingdom of God (Matt 5:3); and (5) the magisterium of the believers of other religions, along with the wisdom of their tradition and sacred scripture. Phan's conviction is that theological differences are rooted in theological methodologies: "Disputes about particular doctrines will ultimately turn into disputes about *how* those doctrines should be derived from the sources of the faith of the community (which method?) and by *whom* (which magisterium?)."8

Aside from exploring the issue of theological method, Phan also discusses the foundations supporting the Christian beliefs about Jesus Christ, those who are not Christians, the church, and its mission. The foundation stone, he avers, is none other than the theology of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Like Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit fulfills the one divine plan of salvation of God the Father. The one economy of salvation entails that the two agents or "hands" of God act in their own time, space, and way. Thus, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as the two "hands" of the one Divinity, act independently but complementarily and in mutual dependence of each other. As such, it is the Holy Spirit, as agent of God, who was at work before and after the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth, especially in the lives of those who did not accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is this same spirit, acting as the Divine agent, who is mainly at work in religions other than Christianity. This pneumatological understanding is used by Phan to serve as basis for his response to the questions about Christ, church, mission, and other religions. He does this not so much by disputing the theologies arrived at by the neoscholastic tradition but by providing alternative ways for appreciating the teachings and doctrines. In particular, he showcases other methods and theologies that have been circulating in Asia since Vatican II, especially those advanced by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

### **Kwok Pui-Lan: Discovering the Bible in the Nonbiblical World**

Another thinker who theologizes from the Asian perspective and who also focuses on methodological issues in theology is Kwok Pui-Lan.

8. Ibid., 46.

Having grown up as a Chinese in the British colony of Hong Kong and converting from the Chinese folk religions to the Anglican tradition in her teens, Kwok furthered her studies in North America in the 1980s. She has since taught in various institutions, primarily at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A past president of the American Academy of Religion, Kwok is regarded as the foremost Asian American woman theologian and has published significant work on feminist theology, postcolonial theology, and biblical hermeneutics. Her *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* offers a new approach to the task of biblical hermeneutics.<sup>9</sup> She begins with the reminder that Asia is unique in that, unlike Africa and the Americas, the European missionaries to Asia encountered not only a population that was already very religious but one that also had its own corpus of scriptural texts and a long tradition of hermeneutics, commentaries, and exegesis on the *Analects*, *Tao Te Ching*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and many other sacred books. Kwok therefore argues for a more dialogical and multidimensional reading of Christian Scriptures, including the use of multi- and interreligious hermeneutics. In multiscriptural contexts there is a need to rethink how sacred authority associated with the Bible is understood. Biblical claims to truth, Kwok contends, are less determined by appeal to theories of inspiration than by its liberative effects. The extent to which a scriptural text inspires action on behalf of justice and peace and the liberation especially of the most vulnerable in society is the extent to which it is seen as true and truly the Word of God. This obviously means that questions are raised if indeed the Bible is the only revelation of God's Word. Scholars rooted in Asian pluralism, and the experience of multiple religions, find it difficult to deny the authenticity and authority of the other wisdom traditions. Elsewhere, Kwok refers to this through the concept of polydoxy, which "debunks the myth of the superiority of one God, one creed, and one church, and holds multiple traditions and perspectives together when looking at God and reality."<sup>10</sup>

Kwok also suggests that scripture is not necessarily looked on by Asians the way it might be in the West since there is an overall suspicion

9. Kwok Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

10. Kwok Pui-Lan, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012), 77.

about text in general. Zen Buddhism warns against relying on words and letters at the expense of direct religious experience. There is also a general caution about the limits of human language, and truth is seen as being embodied not so much in a scriptural text but in the everyday lives of people. Moreover, given that most Asians are not educated in the scriptural languages, they depend on translations provided mainly by the early Christian missionaries and bibles produced by their printing presses. As these missionaries are not without their own biases and prejudices, especially with regard to Asian culture, one finds these seeping in to Bible translations as well. For example, when translating the Antichrist term for the dragon-beast found in the book of Revelations, the missionaries used the Chinese character *long*, which refers to the ominous, beneficent mythic animal of historical China and serves as a royal symbol of the emperor. It is obvious that the Western missionaries were preaching, through their translation ministry, that the God of Jesus Christ has come to replace the *long* (dragon) of the Chinese people (Rev 12).

It is in these contexts that Kwok calls for a dialogical approach to biblical hermeneutics. The task of interpreting the Bible in Asia must be connected with Asian spirituality, its traditions, and the life and struggle of the peoples in Asia. It has to also challenge some of the interpretations that have arisen from perspectives that are born out of colonialism, sexism, racism, or ethnocentrism. Dialogical models are not necessarily focused only on the text of scripture but also on the discussion about the written text. The Bible serves more as a “talking book” that invites discussion and helps people reflect on their own situation. It is the community of faith that brings the words of scripture to life. This implies that truth is less dependent on what is within a text than on the multiplicity of voices reflecting on what the text means to their lives as children of God.

### **Michael Amaladoss: The Asian Jesus**

Another Asian pluralist perspective, but this time addressing the topic of Jesus Christ, comes from the Indian theologian Michael Amaladoss. He has been world-renowned since the 1980s, when he served as assistant to the superior general of the Society of Jesus with special responsibilities for evangelization, inculturation, and interfaith dialogue. Amaladoss’s *The Asian Jesus* engages these theological themes from the

Asian perspective.<sup>11</sup> It offers another picture of how Christ comes across in Asia, which, not surprisingly, differs significantly from the more dogmatic profile that is presented by the institutional and missionary church. But Amaladoss indicates from the outset that the book does not aim to replace the christological dogmas that were developed by the early church in the context of heresies in the Greco-Roman world. Instead, the book aims to examine the significance of the person and life of Jesus by means of symbols and images. Symbols and images, he argues, are as valuable as dogmas and concepts in understanding Jesus. To privilege abstract conceptual dogmas over evocative symbols and images is to privilege Greek culture and its philosophical tradition. Ultimately, Amaladoss believes, neither dogmas nor symbols can claim to be able to unravel the mystery of divinity.

*The Asian Jesus* begins with a survey of Jesus in the Bible and in Christian history. Jesus is presented as prophet, messiah, Logos incarnate, Lord, high priest, Word of God, King of kings, crucified one, liberator, and so on. The book then examines the same from the perspective of Asians who adhere to other religions. Jesus is looked on as moral teacher, *avatar* (incarnation of a deity), *satyagrahi* (seeker of truth), *advaitin* (someone in a nondual relationship with God), and *bodhisattva* (a compassionate, altruistic individual who delays entry into nirvana in order to assist humankind further). The book then investigates images of Jesus that arise in the context of the cultural and religious pluralism of contemporary Asia. Specifically, it discusses images such as Jesus, the sage; Jesus, the way; Jesus, the *guru* (teacher); Jesus, the *satyagrahi*; Jesus, the *avatar*; Jesus, the servant; Jesus, the compassionate; Jesus, the dancer; and Jesus, the pilgrim. It is important to note that all of these symbols and images are rooted in both the Christian faith and the Asian cultural and religious traditions. They are images that are not particular to any one religion although more widely used in some than in Christianity. The primary motivation of Amaladoss is to point to their relevance for Asian Christians by highlighting how the same images can actually be found in the biblical and Christian tradition. His aim is not so much to engage in a comparison of how the different religions employ the images or symbols, except to note that similarities and differences do exist. For sure, he does not compare them on the philosophical or theological levels and does not in any way attempt to prove that Jesus is the one and only or the most superior sage or way or *guru* or *satyagrahi* or pilgrim.

11. Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

Symbols and images, Amaladoss is convinced, are able to provoke thought and reflection better than doctrines and concepts. They invite us to draw connections with similar images used with reference to other religious figures so as to better understand the meaning, life, and message of Jesus. This serves a twofold purpose. First, it enables Asian Christians to appreciate the other religions and see in them common elements shared with the Christian faith. Second, it enables peoples of other religions to appreciate that Jesus Christ is not exclusive to Christians and has meaning and relevance to their own life of faith as well, without the need for them to become Christian. It is in this way that the Asian Church preaches that Jesus Christ has universal relevance for the peoples of Asia and that his message of salvation cannot be confined within the Christian community but ought to have an impact on the adherents of the other religions as well.

### **Edward Schillebeeckx: No Salvation outside the World**

The soteriocentric approach to religious pluralism focuses on ethics and salvific action. The ethical dimension and the place of other religions in relation to the Christian faith are taken up more specifically by the Dominican priest Edward Schillebeeckx. Born in Belgium, Schillebeeckx came to prominence in the Netherlands through his work as theological consultant to the Dutch bishops, especially during the Second Vatican Council. His most famous contribution to the world of theology is his christological trilogy, the first on the topic of *Jesus*, the second on *Christ*, and the third on *Church*.<sup>12</sup> It is in the third book that the issue of religious pluralism was elaborated on. In *Church: The Human Story of God*, Schillebeeckx looks at what it means to be church in an increasingly secular and pluralistic world. He does this by expanding the church's horizons so that Christians see their mission as *in* the world rather than *for* the church. He begins his reflection by turning the age-old adage *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church, no salvation) to *extra mundum nulla salus* (outside the world, no salvation). He assumes that salvation is achieved in

12. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Collins and Crossroad, 1979); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, 1980); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad Publications, 1990).

and through the world, wherein the various religions are the ordinary sites for most people to become aware of God's saving action in history. Schillebeeckx asserts that the religions, including Christianity, are sacraments of God's salvation in the world. He is therefore explicit that religions other than Christianity are as much vehicles of God's salvific acts and ways of salvation. He points to the Second Vatican Council's document *Nostra Aetate*, which reminds us that men and women look to different religions for the message of salvation. It follows that those who belong to religions other than Christianity find salvation not so much despite their religion but precisely in and through it. Schillebeeckx believes that the different religions, including Christianity, must allow themselves to be challenged by each other and that no single religion can claim monopoly to or exhaust the whole meaning of truth. As historical particularities, religions are relative in relation to God and to one another. They have to be brought into a critical correlation and confrontation with each other, so as to better discern truth from that which is untrue.

Hence, the question is how Christianity can maintain its own uniqueness and at the same time be respectful of other religions. It is in view of this that Schillebeeckx deems it important that we explore anew Christianity's self-definition, including its claims to uniqueness and universality. This is for the purpose of putting Christianity in its place while at the same time giving it its rightful place. To begin, Schillebeeckx affirms that all religions are unique in and of themselves. Each manifests a different face of God, the God who is totally other, even as Christians believe that God has appeared in Jesus of Nazareth. Christianity's distinctiveness is revealed in the human person of Jesus, the historical expression of God's universal love and saving message as presented to Christians in the gospels. On the basis of his own historical and hermeneutical investigations, Schillebeeckx proposes that the distinctiveness, uniqueness, and foundation of Christianity lie in the message of Jesus and especially in his praxis of the kingdom of God. If this message and praxis of Jesus is to see its fruition in God's kingdom, then the career and ministry of Jesus must be continued in his disciples. Without this continuity by the Christian community, the proclamation and praxis of Jesus will remain purely speculative and confessional: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt 7:21). It is incumbent, then, on Christians to do the will of the Father in order to "enable" the king-

dom to come. They are reminded of this in the Lord's Prayer: the clause "your kingdom come" is immediately followed by "your will be done on earth." Therefore, "doing" the will of God the Father is imperative if God's offer of salvation in Jesus is to be truly universal. This means that Christians have to be active in continuing the mission of Jesus by following his way of life. Specifically, being in solidarity with the poor and oppressed is a specific task of the Christian disciple's mission. Moreover, as justice and peace are the entitlements of all persons, and not only Christians, this solidarity has to be extended to persons of all religions. This is how the salvation in Jesus can be universalized through Christian praxis. Schillebeeckx is emphatic that the transformation of the world to a higher humanity, to justice and peace, is therefore an essential part of the catholicity or universality of Christian faith.

### **Aloysius Pieris: No Salvation outside God's Covenant with the Poor**

Sri Lankan theologian and Jesuit priest Aloysius Pieris shares a lot with Schillebeeckx, particularly the way he reflects on the essentials of discipleship. Pieris focuses especially on the liberative and praxis dimensions of Christian living in two of his books, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* and *God's Reign for God's Poor*.<sup>13</sup> He shifts the focus of salvation from one based on faith in Christ to the praxis of Christian faith. Like Schillebeeckx, Pieris regards Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist as the first prophetic gesture of Jesus of Nazareth. He discerns four missiological principles from this prophetic act. First, Jesus opted for the ascetic and liberative religiousness of John the Baptist. Second, at the Jordan, Jesus chose to be baptized rather than to baptize, thus joining the ranks of the poor. Third, by submitting himself to baptism, Jesus receives his missionary credentials and authority to preach. Fourth, while losing his identity in baptism, he discovers his authentic selfhood as God's beloved Son, the Messiah. With his identity clarified and authority bestowed, Jesus then set off on his prophetic mission, a journey that saw him, according to Pieris, in defence of the poor and in confrontation with

13. Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretians, 1988); Aloysius Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula* (Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: Tulana Research Centre, 1999).

mammon. It was this, especially his challenge of the ruling religious elites and colonial powers, that led to Jesus' death on the cross. The journey that began at the Jordan in humility was to end on Calvary, not only in humility, but also in shame; the two events are described in the New Testament by the same word, "baptism" (Matt 3:13-15; Mark 10:35-40; Luke 12:50). This leads Pieris to propose that "the baptism of the cross, therefore, is not only the price he paid for preaching the good news, but the basis of *all Christian discipleship* (Mark 8:34)."<sup>14</sup>

Pieris then advocates that the church, as disciples of Jesus, must walk in the footsteps of him who humbled himself in order to serve the poor of his time. The events that took place at Jordan and Calvary are significant markers for Christians of our time, especially in discerning their prophetic role on behalf of the poor. Pieris distinguished between two groups of poor: the first are the poor by circumstance, where poverty is forced on them, and the second are poor by choice, those who choose to embrace poverty voluntarily. Pieris calls those who embrace evangelical voluntary poverty the followers of Jesus; they are the disciples of Christ. The group who are forced into an anti-evangelical poverty and are poor not by choice are the vicars of Christ; they represent Christ who said, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40). The two groups are necessarily related in that the forced poor (the vicars of Christ) have a right to demand that the followers of Christ (the disciples of Jesus) share in their fate and assist in their helplessness: "As Yahweh's proxy, the poor are authorized by Yahweh, their Covenant Partner, to dictate terms to the non-poor. They are the primordial magisterium. To listen to God (evangelical obedience) is to listen to the poor."<sup>15</sup> It is clear, then, that the poor by circumstance need the intervention of the poor by choice. By the same token, those aspiring to authentic discipleship need the poor they serve. The disciples of Jesus are the proclaimers of God's reign while the vicars are its inheritors. In other words, Pieris asserts, there is "no salvation outside God's covenant with the poor."<sup>16</sup>

This brings us to the question of how the other religions are related to this covenant with the poor. This is a crucial question, especially in Asia

14. Pieris, *An Asian Theology*, 49.

15. Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 38.

16. *Ibid.*, 60.

where the church ministers as a tiny minority among adherents of the other great religions of the world, many of whom are also in the service of the poor. They are thus to be regarded as the Christian's partners in the mission of service to the poor. So, following in the footsteps of Jesus, Pieris avers, the church has to submit itself to a baptism by the Jordan of Asia's religiousness. In effect, this means that the church must be extensively immersed in and involved with Asia's other religions and initiated into the pre-Christian traditions under the tutelage of Asia's ancient gurus. In this baptism, the church, like her Master Jesus, has to "sit at the feet of Asian gurus not as an *ecclesia docens* (a teaching Church) but as an *ecclesia discens* (a learning Church), lost among the 'religious poor' of Asia, among the *anawim* who go to their gurus in search of the kingdom of holiness, justice, and peace."<sup>17</sup> Actually, this was what Fr. Aloysius Pieris personally did. Being one of the first Catholics to earn a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy from Sri Lanka, he was still not quite welcome by the Buddhists until he himself was "baptized" in the Jordan of Asia's religion. In his words: "Then one day, garbed in my cassock as a Catholic priest, I took a basket of fruit and flowers and, in the presence of a Buddhist leader, fell prostrate. I worshipped him and asked to be accepted as his pupil. From that day, after this act of humility, I have no problem with Buddhist monks. And now (thank God) they have accepted me as a scholar among them."<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

Religious pluralism or the reality that contemporary societies are becoming more religiously diverse is a fact that needs no further discussion. How Christianity attends to this fact theologically continues to engender a lot of discussions. Some of these theologies of religions assess the truth or falsity of the other religions against criteria or themes particular to Christianity, such as salvation and uniqueness of Christ or of the church. Others, especially those developed from within the Asian context where

17. Pieris, *An Asian Theology*, 47.

18. Aloysius Pieris, "Two Encounters in My Theological Journey," in *Frontiers in Asian Theology: Emerging Trends*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 143.

Christianity is a minority religion, have moved beyond theological issues to look at common human concerns. In particular, the soteriocentric approaches to religious pluralism focus on the praxis of the faith and, if they have to make a judgment on other religions, assess its efficacy by its effects: “Thus you will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:20). How each religion facilitates the salvation and liberation of the people, especially the poor and marginalized, are the prime concerns of these contemporary theologies of religious pluralism.

### **Suggestions for Further Reading**

- Hick, John, and Paul Knitter, eds. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987.
- Panikkar, Raimon. *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*. Translated and edited by Scott Eastham. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983.
- Samartha, S. J. *One Christ, Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *Toward a World Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981.
- Swidler, Leonard, ed. *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987.

# Index

- Abhishiktananda, Swami, 230  
*ad extra*, 117, 169, 222, 234  
*ad gentes: missio* 108, 237; Vatican document, 117, 122  
*ad intra*, 169, 222, 234  
Adam and Eve, 4, 43, 73, 74, 75, 81, 208–10, 217–20  
*Advaitin*, 184  
*Adversus Judaeos* (Chrysostom), 200  
African: Christianity, 19, 130;  
    American, 17, 21; culture, 34, 94  
*Against Heresies* (Ireneus), 92  
*aggiornamento*, 112  
agnostics, 27, 29  
*ahimsa*, 45  
*al-Dajjal*, 214  
Alexandrian School, 11, 155  
Ali, Yusuf, 209  
al-Kamil, Sultan Malik, 102  
Allah, 43, 52, 178, 210–11, 213, 214, 220–21  
Alopen, 133  
al-Shahrestani, Muhammad, 35  
Amaladoss, Michael, 63, 183–85, 202  
Ambrose of Milan, 96  
American Academy of Religion, 182  
*Amoris Laetitia*, 180  
*An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Pieris), 149, 187  
*An Interpretation of Religion* (Hick), 177  
*an sich*, 178–79  
Anabaptists, 14–15  
*Analects*, 45, 182, 215  
anathema, 11, 129  
Angkor Wat, 131  
Anglican (Tudor) Church, 14, 16, 159, 162, 167, 182  
Anselm of Canterbury, 199, 216  
anthropomorphism, 38  
Antiochean School, 155  
apologetics, 102, 200  
apostasy, 8, 109, 220  
Aquinas, Thomas, 172  
Areopagus, 90  
Arévalo, Catalino G., 143  
Arianism, 11  
Ariarajah, Wesley, 87, 148  
Aristotle, 101  
Ashoka, Emperor, 93, 132  
Asian: Christianity, 19, 130–49, 179, 181, 184–85, 187–89; Americans, 19, 179, 182; people, 27, 42, 172, 183; religions, 36, 196–98; countries, 44  
Assisi: World Day of Prayer, 119–20, 125, 205; St. Francis of, 86, 102, 126  
Assyrian: empire, 6, 77–78; Church, 11, 167  
Athanasius, 172  
atheist, 9, 27, 29, 74, 92, 128

- Augustine: of Hippo, 82, 97–98, 219;  
 Augustinian, 13, 83, 105, 160  
*avatar*, 184, 231  
 Ayoub, Mahmoud, 223  
 Azusa Street Revival, 17
- Babel, Tower of, 74–76  
 Babylonian: people, 6, 72–73, 78;  
 creation myth, 4; exile, 8, 73, 77  
 baptism: 17, 82, 97–98, 123, 157,  
 164, 176, 241; infant, 14–15; of  
 desire (*voto*), 106; of the cross,  
 187–89  
 Baptist: congregation, 15–16, 153;  
 John the, 8, 187; World Alliance,  
 167  
 Barrows, John Henry, 41, 42  
 Barth, Karl, 172, 176  
 Bea, Cardinal Augustin, 113, 117  
 Becker, Karl Josef, 109  
*Being Religious Interreligiously*  
 (Phan), 179–80  
 Bellarmine, Robert, 106  
 Benedict XIV, Pope, 105  
 Bergoglio, Cardinal Jorge Mario, 22,  
 126, 128  
 Bevans, Stephen, 41  
*Bhagavad gita*, 44, 182  
 Bible: 4–5, 7, 10, 13, 17, 35–36,  
 67–78, 85, 87, 107–8, 153, 156,  
 158, 164, 167, 180–84, 194–99,  
 206, 208, 215, 218, 221–22  
*bodhisattva*, 184  
 Bonaventure, 216  
 Boniface VIII, Pope, 100  
*Book of Mormon*, 17  
 Borelli, John, 129  
 Borobudur, 131  
 Borrmans, Maurice, 223  
 Brahman, 44, 52  
 Brent, Bishop Charles, 159–60  
 Brethren Church, 16  
 Browne, Robert, 15  
 Buber, Martin, 106  
 Buddhism: religion, 28–29, 36, 42,  
 44, 46, 117–18, 131–32, 135, 138,  
 173, 183; Buddha, 26, 29, 44, 44,  
 220, 242; Buddhist, 189, 193,  
 198, 204, 206, 226–28, 230, 233,  
 239–41  
 Bühlmann, Walbert, 20–21  
 Bull of Union with the Copts, 101  
 Calvin, John, 14; college, 18  
 catechism: *of the Catholic Church*  
 (CCC), 163, 217, 221; instruction,  
 234  
 Chia, Edmund, 63, 129, 149, 242  
 Chinese: religions, 35, 44, 46, 105,  
 132, 182–83, 226; state, 45, 133–  
 34; people, 46, 182, 196–98; Rites  
 Controversy, 105; New Year, 235  
*Christ: The Christian Experience*  
*in the Modern World*  
 (Schillebeeckx), 185  
 Christendom, 15, 23, 41, 95, 103,  
 242  
 Christian: disunity, 94, 156, 158–59;  
 division, 3, 10–12, 15, 18, 99,  
 153–56, 158–59, 164  
 “Christian Witness in a Multi-  
 religious World,” 126, 170, 240  
*Christianity with an Asian Face*  
 (Phan), 179  
 christocentric, 176  
 christological: dogma, 11, 184; faith,  
 155, 185  
 Chrysostom, John, 96, 218  
*Church: The Human Story of God*  
 (Schillebeeckx), 185  
 Clement XI, Pope, 105  
 Clifford, Catherine E., 129  
 Clooney, Francis, 199, 200–201, 206  
*Code of Canon Law*, 160, 163

- colonial: colonialism, 15, 20, 22, 35, 41, 103–4, 130, 134–41, 182–83, 188, 196, 233; Christianity, 104, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138–42, 145; precolonial, 130, 132, 137; postcolonial, 138–39, 141–42, 145, 182
- communion, 10, 12, 113, 142, 146–47, 155, 162, 164–67, 192, 200
- comparative: theology, 17, 55, 192, 199–202, 206, 232–33; religions, 36–37, 47
- Confucian: religion/culture, 28, 35–36, 42, 45–46, 105, 132, 135, 196, 198, 226–27, 233; Confucius, 45–46, 215
- Congar, Yves, 161
- Congregation: for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), 124, 179–80; for the Evangelization of Peoples (*Propaganda Fide*), 121
- Congregational Church, 15–16
- Constantine, Emperor, 9, 95
- contextual (contextualization), 19, 22–23, 68–69, 87–88, 109, 139–43, 146, 148, 231
- conversion/converts, 9–10, 19, 51, 77, 81, 89, 92, 94, 96, 100, 102, 106, 123–24, 132, 135, 145, 160–62, 174, 177, 182, 194, 197, 227, 229, 241
- Copernican revolution, 178
- Cornille, Catherine, 63, 201, 225–26, 228
- Council of Churches: National, 167–68; World, 87, 126, 148, 159–60, 167–68, 170–71, 240
- Council: of Chalcedon, 11; of Clermont, 99; of Florence, 101; of Jerusalem, 9, 154; of Nicaea, 10–11, 157; of Trent, 15–15, 105, 112, 114; Second Vatican, 111–25, 127–29, 131, 141, 146, 153, 161–68, 180–81, 185–86, 237–38
- Couturier, Paul, 161
- covenant, 5–7, 43, 74, 77–79, 89, 118, 187–88, 230
- cross-textual hermeneutics, 192, 195–98
- Crusades, 99–103, 233
- cuius regio, eius religio*, 96
- cultural, 8, 12–13, 22–23, 40, 54, 88, 104, 139, 142, 162, 165, 178, 184, 196, 199, 219, 225, 234–37; transcultural, 42; cross-cultural, 93; multicultural, 107, 224, 234, 236; intercultural, 236
- Cyprian of Carthage, 95, 218
- D’Costa, Gavin, 109
- Darby, John Nelson, 16
- Dayananda, Swami, 230
- De Las Casas, Bartolomé, 103
- De Nobili, Roberto, 35, 139
- De Rhodes, Alexander, 139
- De Roo, Bishop Remi J., 114
- De Vitoria, Francisco, 103–4
- Dei Verbum*, 162
- deicide, 96
- denominations, 3, 10–11, 15–16, 18, 21, 116, 120, 125, 135, 153–54, 157–58, 160, 164–67, 169, 175
- Deus*, 198
- dharma*, 34, 44–45
- diakonia*, 234
- dialogical, 48, 50–51, 57–59, 63, 106, 182–83, 214
- Dialogue and Mission*, 121
- Dialogue and Proclamation*, 122–23, 238
- dialogue, 23, 47–63, 67–68, 72, 93, 106–9, 111–12, 115–17, 120–31, 141–48, 153–54, 160, 165, 167–68, 170–71, 173–76, 179, 182–83,

- 193–94, 198, 201–3, 205–7,  
214–15, 217, 223, 225, 228, 230,  
232, 235–38, 240–42
- Dignitatis Humanae*, 117–18, 162
- Directory Concerning Ecumenical  
Matters*, 163
- Directory for the Application  
of Principles and Norms on  
Ecumenism*, 163
- Disciples of Christ Church, 14, 167
- discipleship, 3, 83, 85, 145, 187–88
- Discovering the Bible in the Non-  
Biblical World* (Kwok), 181–82,  
195
- Divali, 235
- dogmatic, 29–30, 36, 117–18, 184,  
194
- Dominicans, 103, 105, 134, 185
- Dominus Iesus*, 124–25, 180
- Dupuis, Jacques, 96, 101, 109
- Durkheim, Émile, 32–33
- Easter (resurrection) faith, 218
- Eastern: Christianity, 11–13, 20, 99,  
101, 113, 155, 163; religions/  
cultures, 31, 36, 42, 72
- Ebionites, 11, 155
- Ecclesia Sancta*, 160
- Ecclesiam Suam*, 114–16, 121
- ecclesiocentric, 176
- Eck, Diana L., 47
- ecumenical: council, 10, 101, 112,  
154–55, 157; movement, 18,  
153–54, 158–63, 167, 169–71;  
dialogue, 16, 116, 153, 157,  
165–66, 173
- Ecumenism in Higher Education*,  
163
- ecumenism: decree/teachings,  
117, 153, 156–57, 159–64, 166,  
168–69, 171; wider, 154, 169–70;  
receptive, 167; spiritual, 167
- Edict: of Milan, 10, 95; of  
Thessalonica, 95
- Educating to Intercultural Dialogue  
in Catholic Schools*, 236–37
- Eid-al-Fitr, 235
- eisegesis, 70
- Elohim*, 198
- Enlightenment, 33, 112
- Enuma Elish*, 4
- epochē*, 37
- Esposito, John L., 47
- European: country/people, 20, 33,  
35–37, 40, 102–3, 107, 132, 134–  
37; Christians/religion, 101, 130,  
140, 142, 159, 182, 230
- Eusebius of Caesarea, 94, 116
- evangelical: movement, 16, 126,  
168–70, 176; World Evangelical  
Alliance (WEA), 167;  
evangelization, 18, 22, 84, 88,  
100, 102, 104, 106, 112, 116,  
121–23, 126–27, 135, 145, 147,  
158, 180, 183, 188, 225, 232, 235,  
237–38, 240–42; evangelists, 68,  
79–8; *praeparatio evangelica*, 94
- Evangelii Gaudium*, 126–28, 180
- Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 116
- Ex Illa Die*, 105
- Ex Quo Singulari*, 105
- exclusive/exclusivism, 30, 61, 67–68,  
80–81, 84, 89, 100–101, 106, 125,  
136, 174, 176, 185, 194, 204, 225,  
228–29, 235, 241
- excommunicate, 12, 155
- exegesis, 70, 94, 182, 239
- extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, 95, 185
- Faith and Order Movement, 159–62,  
167
- Federation of Asian Bishops’  
Conferences (FABC), 130, 141–  
46, 149, 181

- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 38–39  
*fides quaerens intellectum*, 216  
*filioque*, 12  
*fitrah*, 210  
 Fitzgerald, Michael L., 129, 223  
 Flannery, Austin, 118, 164  
 Ford, David, 193, 206  
 Fox, George, 16  
 Francis: Pope, 126–28, 180, 241; of Assisi, 86, 102, 204; Franciscans, 105  
 Fredericks, James L., 206  
 Free Churches, 15  
 Freire, Paulo, 106  
 Freud, Sigmund, 39
- Gaillardetz, Richard R., 129  
*Gaudium et Spes*, 117  
 Gentiles, 9, 79–82, 90, 229  
 Gioia, Francesco, 205  
 global/globalization, 3, 18, 19–23, 26, 43, 46, 53, 87, 120, 126, 129, 137, 153, 172, 180, 191, 231, 234  
*Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* (Kwok), 182  
 Gnostics, 11, 94, 155, 215  
*God and the Universe of Faith* (Hick), 177  
*God's Reign for God's Poor* (Pieris), 187–88  
 Goosen, Gideon, 242  
 Gort, Jerald, 242  
 gospel: books, 8, 10, 70, 79–84, 86, 92, 102, 157, 169, 186, 208, 211, 213; Good News, 9, 13, 18, 36, 81, 86–87, 94, 96–98, 103–4, 114, 116, 118, 121–22, 127–28, 139, 142, 145, 164, 166, 180, 196–97, 238  
 Great Schism, 12, 155, 163  
 Great Spirit, 52
- Greco-Roman, 9, 35, 91, 136, 184, 196  
 Gregory of Nyssa, 94, 96  
 Griffiths, Bede, 230  
 Gros, Jeffrey, 171  
*gurdwaras*, 61  
*Guru Granth Sahib*, 45  
 Guru Nanak, 45  
*gurus*, 45, 189
- hadith*, 43, 214  
 Hebrew (Jewish) Scriptures, 4, 6–8, 17, 68–70, 72, 76–79, 81–81, 93–94, 119, 207, 209–10, 217, 219  
 Helwys, Thomas, 15  
 Henry VIII, King, 14  
 heresy (heretics), 11, 15, 94–95, 97, 99, 101, 109, 125, 129, 155, 162  
 hermeneutics, 69, 106, 182–83, 186, 191–92, 195–98, 200, 215  
 heterogeneity, 74, 76  
 Hick, John, 177–79, 190  
*hijab*, 57, 235  
 Hinduism/Hindus, 26, 34–36, 42, 44–45, 72, 117–18, 120, 131, 133, 135, 138, 173, 193, 198, 204, 227–33  
 Hiroshima, 137  
 Holocaust, 113, 137  
 Holy Spirit, 7, 16, 18, 76, 85, 89–90, 95, 125, 163–64, 181, 222, 240  
 homogeneity, 74, 76  
 Husserl, Edmund, 37  
 Hutterites, 14  
 hyphenated, 228–29, 242
- idolatry, 9, 45, 69, 91, 105, 196  
 Ignatius of Antioch, 94, 218  
 Ik Onkar, 178  
 imam, 125, 230  
 imperial/imperialism, 10, 46, 91, 96, 99, 105, 134–37, 140

- In our Own Tongues* (Phan), 179  
 inclusive/inclusivism, 51, 67, 81, 87, 174, 176, 229, 235  
 inculturate/inculturation, 139, 142–44, 148, 179, 183  
*Index* (forbidden books), 15  
 indigenous, 35, 43, 118, 130, 132, 135–40, 142, 196, 198, 227  
*Inquisition*, 15  
 International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Union of Utrecht, 167  
*Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Knitter), 175  
*Introduction to the Science of Religion* (Mueller), 36  
 Irenaeus of Lyons, 92–94  
 Isaac, Jules, 113  
 Islam/Muslims, 26–27, 34–36, 42–43, 45, 61–62, 74, 96, 99–103, 113, 116–19, 128, 132, 135, 138, 162, 191–92, 194, 204–5, 207–17, 219–23, 228, 232–33  
 Jainism, 29, 36, 42, 44–45, 233  
 James, William, 31  
 Japanese: occupation, 137; people, 226  
 Jefferson, Thomas, 33  
 Jehovah's Witnesses, 17  
 Jenkins, Philip, 23  
 Jesuits, 35, 103–6, 126, 161, 187  
*Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (Schillebeeckx), 185  
 John Paul II, Pope, 111, 119–21, 123–25, 163, 205  
 John XXIII, Pope, 20–21, 111–14, 161–62  
 Johnson, Todd M., 23  
 Judaism/Jewish religion, 3–4, 8–9, 42–43, 69, 90, 117, 119, 192, 217, 228–29  
 justice, 46, 98, 119, 121, 127, 144–45, 148, 159, 170, 182, 187, 189, 211–12, 216, 231, 235  
 kabbalah, 233  
 Kalu, Ogbu U., 41, 242  
 Kant, Immanuel, 178  
 Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti, 110  
*karma*, 44–45  
*kerygma*, 234  
 Kim, Kirsteen, 24  
 Kim, Sebastian, 24  
 Knitter, Paul, 87, 175–76, 190, 242  
 knowing, three modes, 216  
*koinonia*, 10, 234  
 König, Cardinal Franz, 163  
 Koshy, Ninan, 171  
*Krishna*, 178, 227  
 Kublai Khan, 134  
 Kwok Pui-Lan, 181–83  
 Lao Tzu, 46  
 Last Supper, 128, 229  
 Latin American: country, 22; Christianity, 130  
 Le Saux, Henri, 230  
*lectio divina*, 192  
 Lee, Archie, 196–97  
 Lefebvre, Archbishop Marcel, 129  
*leitourgia*, 234  
 Levine, Amy-Jill, 83  
*lex orandi, lex credenda*, 205  
 liberation, 55, 146, 148–49, 177, 182, 187, 190, 200, 225, 238, 240  
 Life and Work movement, 159–60  
*limbus infantium*, 98  
 little flock (minority religion), 140, 143, 147, 189–90, 231  
*logos*: divine principle, 35, 92–93, 184; *spermatikos*, 92  
 Lossky, Nicholas, 171  
 Lubbock, John, 37–38

- Lumen Gentium*, 117–18, 122–23  
 Luther, Martin (Lutheran), 13–14, 135, 153, 159; Lutheran World Federation, 167
- Maghrib*, 57  
 magisterium, 10, 123, 180–81, 188  
 Mahavira, 45  
 Marx, Karl, 38–39  
 Masuzawa, Tomoko, 40  
 Mennonites, 14  
 messiah, 6–8, 68, 78–79, 89–91, 155, 184, 187, 218, 229  
*metanoia*, 51  
 Methodists, 16, 135, 153; World Methodist Council, 167  
 Michel, Thomas F., 223  
 Miller, William, 16  
 mission/missionary, 15–16, 18, 20–23, 41–42, 55, 80–81, 87, 93, 100, 102–8, 112–13, 115, 117, 121–23, 125, 127, 131, 133–35, 137–42, 144–48, 158–59, 170, 176, 179–85, 187, 189, 195–98, 211, 221, 225, 230–32, 234–42  
*moksha*, 225  
 Monophysite, 155  
 monotheism, 6, 8, 38, 45, 72–73, 198, 208, 221–22, 228  
 Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), 17  
 Mosaic Law, 5, 9, 79–80, 82–83, 93, 154, 240  
 mosque, 55, 61, 111, 120, 125, 230  
 Moyaert, Marianne, 203  
 Mueller, Max, 36  
 multi: religious, 54, 61, 67, 107, 126–27, 144, 170, 182, 203–5, 225–31, 234, 236–37, 240–41; cultural, 107, 224, 234, 236; scriptural, 182, 192, 196–97  
 multiple religious belonging, 225–30
- Murray, John Courtney, 161  
 mystical, 12, 21, 38, 45, 120, 132, 233
- Nabi Isa, 207, 211, 214  
 Nagasaki, 137  
 native, 20–21, 76, 103–4, 137–38, 140, 142, 196–97, 227  
 Nestorian: Christians, 11, 133; Monument, 133  
 New Age religions, 43, 226  
 New Christian Movements, 15  
 Newbigin, Leslie, 87  
 Nicene Creed, 10, 12, 95, 222  
*Ninety-five Theses* (Luther), 13  
 Nirvana, 52, 184, 225  
*No Other Name?* (Knitter), 175  
 Nongbri, Brent, 47  
*Nostra Aetate*, 117–19, 121–22, 131, 146, 162, 186, 237
- O'Collins, Gerald, 129  
 O'Malley, John, 129  
 Ochs, Peter, 193  
*oikoumene*, 157  
 Omar, Irfan A., 223  
*On Heaven and Earth* (Bergoglia & Skorpa), 128  
 original sin, 33, 98, 103, 207–10, 212, 214–15, 217–22  
 Orthodox Christians, 11–12, 99, 113, 155–56, 162, 167  
 orthodoxy, 129, 155  
 Otto, Rudolf, 32
- padroado*, 102  
 pagan, 9, 77, 91–92, 94–97, 99, 101, 104, 140, 196, 229  
 Palestine, 5, 86, 133, 154  
 Panikkar, Raimon, 173–74, 176, 190  
 papal bull, 100, 105, 163  
 Parham, Charles Fox, 17

- Parrinder, Geoffrey, 223
- Passover, 5, 85,
- Pathil, Kuncheria, 171
- Patriarch of Constantinople, 11, 163
- Paul VI, Pope, 114–16, 119–20, 141, 163
- peccatum originale*, 219
- Pelagianism, 97
- Pentecost, 63, 76, 89, 114, 160
- Pentecostal, 17–18, 23, 153, 167, 169
- Phan, Peter, 149, 179–81
- Pieris, Aloysius, 149, 187–89
- Pius XII, Pope, 21, 105, 112
- Plantinga, Richard J., 110
- pluralism, 8, 10, 22–23, 37, 40, 47, 52–53, 61, 69, 72, 86–87, 96, 101, 107–11, 118, 124–25, 127, 140, 148, 154–55, 170, 172–73, 175–80, 182–85, 189–90, 200–201, 224–25, 230, 234–35, 237, 239, 241
- pneumatological, 181
- Polo, Marco, 134
- polydoxy, 182
- polytheism, 38, 91, 198, 222, 233
- Pontifical Council: for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), 121–22, 126, 170, 238, 240; for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), 162, 164, 166, 168
- Portal, Ferdinand, 161
- postmodern, 22, 30–31, 47, 107, 161, 179, 192, 224, 226
- praxis, 12, 62, 86, 122–23, 147, 177, 186–87, 190, 235
- Prayer for Christian Unity, 160, 162, 166
- predestination, 14, 97
- Presbyterian Churches, 14, 135, 177
- Primitive Culture* (Tylor), 38
- primordial: status, 33; faith/religion, 43, 220; magisterium, 188; sin, 219
- Princeps Pastorum*, 20
- proclamation, 41, 68, 71, 84–85, 97, 108, 121–23, 125, 147–48, 186, 234, 238
- Prophet Muhammad, 43, 101, 220
- prophetic, 6, 8, 77, 102, 146, 155, 187–88
- proselytization, 42, 135, 231, 240
- Puritans, 15
- Quakers, 14, 16
- Qur'an, 43, 101, 191–92, 194, 207–10, 212–16, 221–23
- Radano, John A., 171
- Rahner, Karl, 176
- Ramadhan, 56, 224
- Ramakrishna, 42
- Ratzinger, Cardinal Josef, 124
- redemption, 78, 207–8, 210, 212, 214–15, 217–19, 221–22
- Redemptoris Hominis*, 120
- Redemptoris Missio*, 121–23
- Reformation: Protestant, 11, 13–15, 105, 115; Counter, 112
- Reformed Churches, 13–14, 162, 167; Alliance of, 167
- reiki, 21
- Restoration movements, 16–17
- Ricci, Mateo, 35, 105–6, 139
- Riggs, Ann, 171
- Rosales, Gaudencio, 143
- Ross, Kenneth R., 23
- Russel, Charles Taze, 17
- Ryan, Thomas, 206
- Sacred Books of the East* (Mueller), 36
- Sadducees, 84
- salah*, 205
- Salvation Army, 16
- salvation, 9, 12, 30, 36, 49, 74, 77–78, 81–84, 88, 91–82, 94–98,

- 100–101, 103–7, 109, 118–19,  
122–23, 143, 146, 148, 156,  
165, 169, 173, 176–77, 179–81,  
185–88, 190, 198, 200, 212, 219,  
225, 228, 239
- Samaritan, 80, 82–83
- Samartha, Stanley J., 190
- samsara*, 45
- San Jiao*, 132, 226
- Sanneh, Lamin, 24
- sannyasi*, 230
- satyagrahi*, 184
- Schillebeeckx, Edward, 149, 185–87
- Schleiermacher, 172
- Scriptural Reasoning, 192–95, 206
- Seager, Richard Hughes, 42
- Second Coming of Christ, 16, 82
- Seventh Day Adventists, 14, 16
- Seymour, William, 17
- shamanism, 38
- Shangdi*, 105, 178, 198; *Shangzhu*,  
198
- shari'a*, 34
- Sharpe, Eric J., 47
- Shen*, 198
- Shintoism, 28, 204, 226
- shirk*, 220
- signs of the times, 109, 114, 166, 180
- Sikhism, 42, 45, 61, 111, 193, 230,  
233, 235
- Skorka, Rabbi Abraham, 128
- Smith, Huston, 47
- Smith, John, 15
- Smith, Joseph, 17
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, 190
- sola: fidei*, 14; *scriptura*, 14
- soteriocentric, 176–77, 185, 190
- Southern Christianity, 19, 22–23,  
160, 164; global South, 3, 18–20,  
22, 107, 126, 231
- spiritual but not religious (SBNR),  
28, 30–31
- spirituality, 12, 25, 28, 30–31, 56, 59,  
120, 144, 148, 183, 225–26, 228
- Stransky, Tom F., 160
- Sufi, 132, 204, 233
- Sugirtharajah, R. S., 189, 206
- Sullivan, Francis A., 92, 98, 104
- Swidler, Leonard, 63, 190
- synagogue, 33, 86, 120, 192
- syncretism, 174, 205, 224–27, 230,  
242
- Synod on Evangelization, 116
- Syriac Orthodox (St. Thomas), 12,  
133
- tai chi, 31
- Taizé, 167
- Tan, Jonathan Y., 24, 63
- Tanakh, 192, 194
- Tao/Taoism, 28, 36, 42, 46, 52, 132–  
33, 135, 182, 192, 196, 198, 226–  
27, 231; *Tao Te Ching*, 46, 182
- Tavard, George, 160
- tawhid*, 221
- temple: of Jerusalem, 5–6, 8, 43, 89;  
place of worship, 33, 111, 120,  
131, 227, 229
- textual reasoning, 192
- The Asian Jesus* (Amaladoss),  
183–84
- The Christian Experience in the  
Modern World* (Schillebeeckx),  
185
- The Coming of the Third Church*  
(Bühlmann), 20
- The Ecumenical Dimension in the  
Formation of those Engaged in  
Pastoral Work*, 163
- The Essence of Christianity*  
(Feuerbach), 38
- The Future of an Illusion* (Freud), 39
- The Human Story of God*  
(Schillebeeckx), 185

- The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Panikkar), 173
- The Invention of World Religions* (Masuzawa), 40
- The Joy of Religious Pluralism* (Phan), 180
- The Myth of God Incarnate* (Hick), 179
- The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man* (Lubbock), 37
- The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (Panikkar), 173
- theocentric, 176–77, 179
- theological education, 167, 225, 230
- Theos*, 198
- Tian, Tianzhu, Tianzhuan*, 105, 198
- tikkun olam*, 195
- tilaka*, 120
- totemism, 38
- Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Dupuis), 96, 101
- Tran, Anh Q., 24
- transcendental: meditation, 31; entity, 81, 241
- Treatise on the Religious and Philosophical Sects* (al-Shahrastani), 35
- Trinity, 17, 147, 178–79, 181
- triple dialogue, 130, 141, 145
- Tylor, Edward Burnett, 38
- Ultimate Reality, 52, 178
- Unam Sanctam*, 100
- uniqueness, Christian, 36, 41, 86, 124, 156, 180, 186, 189, 190, 200, 221; Israel, 77
- Unitarian Church, 16
- Unitatis Redintegratio*, 117, 162–67
- Upanishadic, 93
- Urban II, Pope, 99
- Ut Unum Sint*, 163
- Vedanta, 31
- vera religio*, 100
- Vesak, 235
- Vipassana*, 228
- Vishnu*, 131, 178
- Weigel, Gustave, 161
- Wesley, John, 16
- Western Wall of Jerusalem, 120
- Wilfred, Felix, 197
- Winkler, Ulrich, 200
- Word of God, 67–68, 71–72, 87, 98, 107, 144, 182, 184, 192, 194, 196, 199, 208, 222–23
- World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh), 41, 158–60
- World War: First, 158–59; Second, 130, 136–37
- Yahweh, 73, 78, 178, 188, 198
- yoga, 31, 204, 231
- Yong, Amos, 63
- Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), 158
- Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), 158
- Zen, 183, 204, 228
- Zoroastrianism, 36
- Zwingli, Ulrich, 14