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Twentieth-Century Christian Attitudes to Other Religions

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Twentieth Century Christian Attitudes to Other Religions: A Bibliographical Guide

GAVIN D' COSTA

Introduction

Since New Testament times the question of Christianity's relation to other religions has been important. And then, as now, a number of theological responses can be discerned. Today, living in a pluralistic society – with other religions as well as secular movements – Christians cannot ignore the question of their attitudes to these other faiths. Their attitudes will determine a host of major issues: should Buddhist meditation groups be allowed the use of Church halls; how should religious education be taught; what kind of social and political co-operation is permissible with people of other faiths? There are also fundamental theological issues at stake. If salvation is possible outside Christianity, what form should mission take? What is the significance of Christ and the meaning of the Church? What can Christians learn from these other faiths? Can Christianity be enriched rather than diluted or polluted from this encounter?

To set the scene of present day discussion we will first consider Roman Catholic and Protestant (including ecumenical) thought on our subject during the first half of the century. In a lightning tour such as this, I will only be able to deal with some major figures.¹ I have also given special attention to the debate in India and recent British contributions.

The Background: 1900-50

To set the scene I shall first consider Protestants (including ecumenical) and Roman Catholic (which I shall term Catholic) thought on this subject during the first half of the century.

Protestant and Ecumenical Theology

During this period much heated and creative discussion took place in missionary circles. Three distinctive paths through the landscape can be discerned. The Scot-

1 For some of the themes of this article see also my *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford/New York 1986 and *John Hick's Theology of Religions*, University Press of America, Washington DC. Forthcoming (1988).

tish Protestant missionary in India, John Farquhar, in his *The Crown of Hinduism*,¹ gave forceful and clear expression to the view that Christ (and not Christianity) was the fulfilment and crown of Hinduism, analogous to Christ's fulfilment of the law and the prophets of Judaism. Farquhar argued that this fulfilment applied to the theology, philosophy and practice of Hinduism. For him, missionary activity sought not to destroy but to fulfil the potential of Hinduism, which only Christ could bring to fruition. This inclusivist note was echoed in later theology, especially in Roman Catholic circles, fulfilling Farquhar's position, with an emphasis on the fulfilment taking place through the Christian Church and not in Christ alone. I shall call this approach 'inclusivist'.

Another emerging attitude during this period is exemplified in the writings of the German liberal Protestant Ernst Troeltsch, in his essay, 'The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions'² (1923), and in the American philosopher William Hocking's *Re-Thinking Missions*.³ Both were keenly aware of and emphasized historical and cultural relativism and argued that Christianity could not viably claim special status among the world religions, but should be seen as just one among many equally salvific paths to the divine reality. Their thought signalled a radical shift of emphasis away from both the missionary task of the Church in terms of preaching and evangelization, and the claim that the sole revelation of God was in Christ. Here the stress was upon a future of mutual enrichment and a transformation of Christianity and the other religions through their progressive interaction.

Troeltsch, for instance, acknowledged the manifestation and experiences of 'Divine Life' within Christianity through Christ, while significantly adding that this 'experience is undoubtedly the criterion of its validity, but, be it noted, only of its validity for us'.

Hocking went so far as to suggest the future emergence of a world faith. As the various religions reconceived themselves in the light of truths from other religions, they would slowly recognize a common essence and would one day eventually unite together in a world faith, rid of their irreconcilable differences. The views of Troeltsch and Hocking encouraged and validated religious pluralism. I shall call this kind of approach 'pluralist'.

However, Hendrick Kraemer, a Dutch missionary deeply influenced by the German Protestant theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, forcefully challenged both Farquhar and Hocking. In his very influential and controversial works, especially *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*⁴ and *Religion and the Christian Faith*,⁵ Kraemer propounded a dialectical theology which stressed Christ's relationship to the religions as one of discontinuity and judgment, rather than fulfilment (Farquhar) and mutual appreciation (Hocking). Although Kraemer was not uncritical of Christianity as a religion, he thought that its special relationship to Christ gave it unique status among the world religions. Kraemer sharply criticized the reduction of evangelism to social service and mutual enrichment. He also insisted that conversion to Christ and his cross could not be minimized in the Christian encounter with other faiths. The missionary's sole aim

1 OUP, Oxford 1913.

2 *In Christian Thought: Its History and Application*, University of London Press, London 1957.

3 Harper & Row, New York 1932.

4 Edinburgh House Press, London 1938.

5 Lutterworth Press, London 1956.

was 'to persuade the non-Christian world to surrender to Christ as the sole Lord of Life'.¹

This approach then, which I shall call 'exclusivist', characterized the three great International Missionary Conferences held at Edinburgh (1910), Jerusalem (1928) and Tambaram (1938). This approach also dominated the World Council of Churches under the direction of Willem Visser't Hooft until his retirement in 1966.

Variations of these three approaches (inclusivist, pluralist and exclusivist) characterize the discussion that has continued during the latter half of the century.

Roman Catholic Theology

The majority of Catholic theologians concerned with these questions in this period were European scholastics. Consequently, much of the discussion on the salvation of non-Christians (technically designated 'infidels') followed Thomist lines. Philippe Glorieux developed Thomas Aquinas's early remarks that God would 'reveal by internal inspiration what (the good infidel following the dictates of their conscience) has to believe'. Glorieux argued that a special death-bed illumination would be granted to the good infidel, thereby allowing an assent of faith necessary for salvation. Ricardo Lombardi followed the later thought of Aquinas, which stressed the assent to God by means of natural reason: 'When a man arrives (morally) at the age of reason, the first thing to which his mind must turn is to deliberate about himself towards the true end, grace is given to him and original sin is remitted.'

R. Lombardi, in *The Salvation of the Unbeliever*,² also developed Aquinas's argument that this rational assent contained an implicit desire for baptism into the Church. His book contains a useful analysis of earlier theories; one such worth mentioning was Cardinal Billot's theory. Disturbed by his French contemporaries' inability to arrive at theism through the use of reason, Billot argued that infidels possessed the moral level of infants, thereby declaring them morally inculpable and destined to limbo, as were infants.

These scholars laboured under the often rigidly interpreted Catholic axiom, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (no salvation outside the church), solemnly promulgated at the Council of Florence (1438-45). The difference between the Catholic axiom and Kraemer's position was the Catholic stress on the Church rather than Kraemer's Protestant stress on Christ alone. M. Emynan, *The Theology of Salvation*,³ contains a scholarly survey and comprehensive bibliography of European Catholic theology in this period.

However, a group of mainly French and Belgian Catholics in India propounded a form of inclusivist theory in the light of their studies of, and encounters with, the Hindu tradition of Advaita Vedanta. In 1950 the French orientalist Jules Monchanin, and his Benedictine monk friend Henri le Saux (later called Swami Abhishiktananda) founded an Indian-Christian ashram on the banks of the Kavery River at Kulitalai in Tamil Nadu, South India. The ashram was pertinently named *Saccidananda*, after the Hindu characterization of divine reality interpreted as Sat (Being), Cit (Logos - the Word), Ananda (Bliss of Love and Beauty). There they meshed together Hindu spirituality and a Benedictine monasticism to forge what

1 *The Christian Message*, p 444.

2 Burns and Oates, London 1956.

3 St. Paul's Publications, Boston 1960.

they perceived as a totally Indian, totally Christian lifestyle. This included using the Vedas for meditative readings and chanting Sanskrit prayers in the liturgy. In 1951 they wrote of this experiment in *An Indian Benedictine Ashram*. Monchanin thought that: 'Advaita (non-dualism) and the praise of the Trinity are our only aim. This means that we must grasp the authentic Hindu search for God in order to Christianize it, starting with ourselves first of all, from within.'¹

In 1922, seventeen years before Monchanin arrived in India, two Belgian Jesuits, Pierre Johanns and George Dandoy founded a journal, *The Light of the East*, in which they stated that they wished to 'help India . . . to know and understand Jesus . . . We have no intention to put out the existing lights. Rather we shall try to show that the best thought of the east is a bud that fully expanded blossoms into Christian thought.'²

Catholic thought had itself to await full blossoming until after the mid-1960s, with the advent of the Second Vatican Council's proclamation on the non-Christian religions. The teachings set forth by such Councils have authoritative status for Roman Catholics. The inclusivists mentioned above represent exceptions to the otherwise prevailing exclusivist attitudes within Catholicism. A lucid survey of Catholic attitudes, to Hinduism in particular, during this era can be found in J. Mattam, *Land of the Trinity: A Study of Modern Christian Approaches to Hinduism*.³

The Foreground: 1950 to the Present Date

After two world wars, the disintegration of empires and the upsurge of new theological currents, the three main paths I have outlined traversed varying contours in the changing historical and theological terrain. It was increasingly felt that mission must be separated from religious imperialism, while social service and proclamation came to be seen as inseparably connected. The understanding of the Church took on a sacramental and social, rather than institutional, character especially in Roman Catholic circles. Furthermore, many Christians had become deeply impressed by various religions and less confident about their own previous claims.

Protestant and Ecumenical Theology

In the late 1960s, under the direction of the Indian Christian Stanley Samartha, the World Council of Churches' Department of Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies forged a path between a weakened form of inclusivist theology and a strong version of pluralist practice. Two consultations edited by Samartha reflect this new mood: *Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals*⁴ and *Towards World Community*.⁵ The first title indicates the strong respect, without compromise on beliefs in ultimate goals towards the lives and beliefs of people from other faiths. Marxism, also considered a living faith, was represented in the first consultation. The second title stresses the urgency of the social tasks which now preoccupied mission thinking.

Samartha's views reflect this variation of inclusivism. He affirms the decisive, but not exclusively unique, revelation of God in Christ. He also reports that the

1 Cited in J. Weber, ed., *In Quest of the Absolute: The Life and Works of Jules Monchanin*, Mowbrays, Oxford 1977.

2 1, 1922, pp.1-2. The Journal ran for twelve volumes between 1922 and 1934.

3 Theological Publications of India, Bangalore 1975.

4 WCC, Geneva 1974.

5 Sub-title, *Resources and Responsibilities for Living Together*, WCC, Geneva 1975.

fulfilment approach is often 'regarded as patronizing by our neighbours' whose religions he sees as 'alternative ways of salvation'. Samartha characteristically adds that demanding acceptance of Christ prior to 'sharing with our neighbours the love of God . . . is unhelpful.'¹

The British Council of Churches has tended to follow a similar inclusivist path, producing its useful *Relations with People of Other Faiths: Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain*² and a number of other helpful theological and pastoral booklets. It has also just begun the publication of a splendid quarterly journal, *Discernment*, dealing specifically with the British inter-religious scene. The Executive Secretary of the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths is Kenneth Cracknell, a Methodist minister. Cracknell's *Towards a New Relationship*³ explores the biblical perspective on this question and is a more solid and careful study than his current WCC counterpart Wesley Ariarajah's, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths*.⁴ The contribution of biblical scholars is welcome to a debate that often lacks rigorous exegetical work. This issue was highlighted within the pages of this journal when Chris Wright offered some penetrating evangelical criticisms of the Church of England's Report *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*.⁵

British theologians have also made a thoughtful contribution to pastoral inter-faith issues. Beside the many booklets on inter-faith prayer, marriage, the use of church buildings, two books are worthy of special mention. Christopher Lamb's, *Belief in a Mixed Society*⁶ investigates a wide range of social issues from an intelligent and informed evangelical position. Lamb and Roger Hooker (both former CMS missionaries) have also written *Love the Stranger: Christian Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas*,⁷ rightly challenging many Christians' attitudes of non-interference as a form of escapism from the demands of the Gospel. A nuanced evangelical understanding of mission and dialogue emerges. The book contains a helpful bibliographical guide appropriate to the British scene.

Among Protestant theologians inclusivism is becoming popular. However, this tendency is increasingly marked by a reticence towards any evangelical form of mission demanded by exclusivists such as Kraemer, and by a tacit theological encouragement of religious pluralism. One reason for this is reflected in the title of the late English Anglican bishop John Robinson's book *Truth is Two-Eyed*.⁸ Rather than stress the fulfilment of Hinduism in its encounter with Christ, Robinson argued that Christianity itself is fulfilled in its encounter with Hinduism. Robinson showed that Christian myopic vision is enriched and fulfilled in the light of Hindu reflections on the personal and material world. Two eyes on the truth are better than one, although the focus for both lenses, so to speak, is Christ. Like Samartha, he holds to the definitiveness of the revelation of God in Christ, without denying that God has revealed Himself elsewhere: 'To believe that God is best defined by Christ is not to believe that God is confined to Christ.'⁹

1 Cited in G. Anderson and T. Stransky, eds., *Christ's Worship and Religious Pluralism*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York 1981, pp 35-6.

2 BCC, London 1983.

3 Sub-title *Christians and People of Other Faiths*, Epworth, London 1986.

4 WCC, Geneva 1985.

5 *Anvil* 1, 1984, pp 231-58. The Board for Mission and Unity published the report for the General Synod, (GS 625, CIO, London 1984).

6 Lion, London 1985.

7 SPCK, London 1986.

8 SCM, London 1979, p 129.

9 *Ibid.*, p 129.

Earlier, across the Atlantic, this same thrust was apparent in Paul Tillich's stimulating attempt to mediate between the pluralism of Troeltsch and the exclusivism of Barth and Kraemer. Starting from a somewhat different approach from Robinson, Tillich acknowledges the experience of the Holy in all religions and affirms, like Robinson, that the crucified Jesus is the most valuable criterion for discerning God's activity within the history of religions. Robinson said that in the criterion of Jesus 'as embodying, fleshing out, the saving disclosure and act of God', one holds 'the conviction, always to be clarified, completed and corrected in dialogue, that it is this [criterion] which offers the profoundest clue to all the rest.'¹ Tillich writes that in the image of the crucified Christ: 'the criteria are given under which Christianity must judge itself and, by judging itself, judge also the other religions and the quasi-religions'.²

Tillich and Robinson pay little attention to the implications for mission and ecclesiology, but their Christological criterion for evaluating other religions places them firmly in the inclusivist-fulfilment category. Tillich's words characterize this weaker form of inclusivism: 'Not conversion, but dialogue. It would be a tremendous step forward if Christianity were to accept this.'³

Another American implicitly within this tradition is the process theologian-philosopher John Cobb. His book, *Beyond Dialogue*,⁴ offers a vision of transformation that is similar to Hocking's, without the assumption of a common future essence. It is clear that the pluralism of approaches within Christian theology itself (process, dialectical, liberal etc.) is a source for a pluralism of responses to other religions.

In Europe, Tillich's work has been a source of stimulation for the German Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg. Stressing the importance of the history of religions, combined with his own eschatological perspective, Pannenberg remains within the inclusivist tradition: 'The history of religions even beyond the time of the public ministry of Jesus, presents itself as the history of the appearances of the God who revealed himself through Jesus.'⁵

Another German Lutheran, Jürgen Moltmann, like Hendrik Kraemer, strongly relativizes the Church and Christianity. This reflects his Barthian heritage. However, fulfilment for him is not in terms of the Church or Christ explicitly, but in the creation of hope. He writes that the main aim of mission should be to infect people, whatever their religion, with the spirit of hope, love and responsibility for the world. But, for Moltmann, Christ is the original source of all hope, love and responsibility: '*Outside Christ no salvation. Christ has come and was sacrificed for the reconciliation of the whole world. No one is excluded.*'⁶

This multi-faceted inclusivist development has come under fire from opposite theological wings, often repeating, but also furthering, the discussion that took place in the first half of the century.

1 Ibid., pp 119 and 129.

2 *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Columbia UP, New York 1963, p 82.

3 Ibid., p 95.

4 Sub-title *Towards a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1982.

5 *Basic Questions in Theology*, Vol. 2, SCM, London 1971, p 115.

6 *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, SCM, Harper and Row, London and New York 1977, p 153.

Pluralists, developing the impetus of Troeltsch and Hocking, argue that Christ's decisiveness should be understood as a personal confession without objective or universally binding status. This follows Troeltsch's 'only . . . for us' emphasis. Consequently, many pluralists argue that Christians should not evaluate other religions through Christological spectacles but must re-think issues in the light of the data from all the religions, developing a sort of world theology. A major proponent of this view is the English Presbyterian philosopher of religion and theologian, John Hick. His theology of religions and criticisms of Christology, ecclesiology and missiology can be found initially in *God and the Universe of Faiths*,¹ and more recently in *God Has Many Names*.² Hick places much emphasis upon the universal salvific will of God: 'Can we then accept the conclusion that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation?' Hick's answer is 'No!' He has also developed a global theology of the after-life with references to Christian, Hindu, Humanist and Buddhist sources.³

The historically, but less theologically, minded Canadian scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith tackles the problem from a different angle. In *The Meaning and End of Religion*,⁴ Smith attacks the very notion of 'religion' as an abstract and unhelpful reification, encouraging 'us-them' thinking. He also argues for a common religious unity in 'faith' as distinguished from the various 'cumulative traditions' – the historical accumulation of creeds, liturgies and institutions. He further reflects on the task of developing a global theology in the light of this common core of faith in *Towards a World Theology*.⁵

The British scene has its share of pluralists. Hick is the major proponent, but now resides in California. Two recent books articulate and signify the attraction of this position. Alan Race, an Anglican minister, has written a lucid and extensive guide, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*.⁶ Race, like other pluralists with their Troeltschian pedigree, wishes to retain the normativity of Christ – for Christians, but not for others. A 'norm among norms' rather than *the* norm. The Church of Scotland minister, Alastair Hunter has also advocated a pluralist approach in *Christianity and Other Faiths in Britain*.⁷ It is a stimulating and personal account, but theologically it raises more questions than it answers.

In part, these works represent the liberal reaction against harsh versions of exclusivist theology, such as propounded at the Congress of World Mission at Chicago in 1960. The Congress announced: 'In the years since the war, more than one billion souls have passed into eternity and more than half of these went to the torment of hell fire without even hearing of Jesus Christ, who He was, or why He died on the cross of Calvary.'⁸

The 'Frankfurt Declaration' (1970), composed by mainly German Lutherans who felt dissatisfied with the approach of the World Council and other Christian bodies, clearly refuted any idea of fulfilment or compromise on mission: 'We refute any idea that "Christian presence" among the adherents to the world

1 Collins/Fount, London 1973.

2 Macmillan and Westminster Press, London and Philadelphia 1980 and 1982.

3 *Death and Eternal Life*, Collins/Fount, London 1976.

4 Sub-title, *A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind*, SPCK, London 1978 (1963).

5 Macmillan, London 1980.

6 SCM, London 1983.

7 SCM, London 1985.

8 J. Percy, ed., *Facing the Unfinished Task: Messages Delivered at the Congress on World Mission*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1961.

religions and a give-and-take dialogue with them are substitutes for a proclamation of the Gospel which aims at conversion. Such dialogues simply establish good points of contact for missionary communication.¹

For Hick and Smith, like the previous group of inclusivists, there is an acceptance of religious plurality. But Hick, Smith and others add a positive and explicit encouragement of, and theological justification for, religious pluralism. They stress like Hocking and Troeltsch their predecessors, the learning and growth that takes place through encounter. While they tend to neglect ecclesiological questions, Hick has dwelt upon the related Christological issues. These modern day pluralists have sometimes been criticized for their allegedly vague and obscure understanding of God and their relativizing of religious truth.

Equally opposed to the various exclusivist approaches and the developed pluralism of Hick and Smith are British neo-Kraemerians such as the late Bishop of the Church of South India, Stephen Neill,² Bishop Lesslie Newbigin,³ and the English lawyer, Islamicist and evangelical, Norman Anderson.⁴ While Neill, Newbigin and Anderson acknowledge that God operates outside ecclesiological Christianity, Anderson characteristically denies that 'other religions' may be viewed as 'saving structures'.⁵ These exclusivists, although not uncritical of Kraemer, emphasize the proclamation of the Word. However, they also stress a social involvement with, and a deep appreciation of, other faiths and cultures. They maintain that the Gospel is compromised in the inclusivist and pluralist approaches, and that ecclesiology, missiology and Christology are thereby neglected. A recent book in this vein, from another British theologian, is Kenneth Cragg's *The Christ and the Faiths*.⁶

One other British contribution to be noted here is *Christianity and Other Faiths*,⁷ a short and simple presentation arguing for an exclusivist view without arrogance or intolerance. A most stimulating and fresh defence of exclusivism has recently come from the pen of George Lindbeck. In *The Nature of Doctrine*,⁸ Lindbeck develops a socio-linguistic model of 'religion' which highlights the virtual incommensurability of religions and warns against facile reconciliations and commends a post-mortem 'solution' to the question of the salvation of non-Christians.

Nuances within the exclusivist approach are evident, as is a growing respect and appreciation for certain elements of non-Christian religions. It is noticeable that figures like Neill, Newbigin and Anderson, (and Lamb and Hooker) are deeply knowledgeable and conversant with other faiths. Nevertheless, many modern exclusivists have been criticized as to the authority of their biblical foundations, their minimizing of revelation outside Christianity and even, in some cases, their triumphalism and racism.

1 *Christianity Today*, 14, 1970, p 844.

2 *Christian Faith and Other Faiths: The Christian Dialogue with Other Religions*, OUP, Oxford 1970, revised as *Crises of Belief*, H & S, London 1984.

3 *The Open Secret*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1978.

4 *Christianity and World Religions*, IVP, Leicester 1984 (1970).

5 Ed., *The World Religions*, IVF, London 1950.

6 Sub-title *Theology in Cross Reference*, SPCK, London 1986.

7 Sub-title *An Evangelical Contribution to Our Multi-Faith Society*, Paternoster, Exeter 1983.

8 Sub-title *Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age*, SPCK, London 1984.

Roman Catholic Theology

After the relatively quiet period before Vatican II's important 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions'¹ Roman Catholic theology blossomed, or even erupted, into fruitful discussion. The debate mainly moved along the fulfilment and exclusivist paths, with a tendency to view pluralism as a species of indifference.

A major figure, whose influence dominates Catholic debate, is the late German Jesuit Karl Rahner. His main writings on this topic are found in his *Theological Investigations*.² In these works Rahner coined the term 'anonymous Christian'. This term refers to a non-Christian who gains salvation through faith, hope and love by the grace of Christ, mediated however imperfectly through his or her own religion, which thereby points towards its historical fulfilment in Christ and the Church. For Rahner, grace, Christology and ecclesiology are inseparable. He tries to hold two axioms together: 'God desires the salvation of everyone. And this salvation willed by God is the salvation won by Christ.'³ In this way many Catholic theologians are able to interpret the 'no salvation outside the Church' axiom, aided by a more sacramental understanding of the Church initiated by Vatican II.

If Robinson and Tillich represent the liberal wing of inclusivism, Rahner, while firmly planted within the same tradition, occupies a more conservative position. While Robinson and Tillich emphasize Christ alone, Rahner emphasizes both Christ and his Church.

The Catholic discussion may be profitably charted in relation to Rahner's version of inclusivism. On the one hand, exclusivist theologians attacked Rahner for minimizing mission, dissolving the character of the Church and Christian discipleship, and compromising the cross and proclamation of Christ. Such were the criticisms of the Dutch Jesuit missionary Henricus van Straelen,⁴ the Austrian theologian Hans von Balthasar,⁵ and the German orientalist convert to Catholicism Paul Hacker.⁶ On the other hand, liberal Catholics like the Swiss Hans Küng joined pluralists like Hick in criticizing Rahner's ecclesiocentrism. However, Küng is himself criticized by Hick for his Christocentrism. Küng allows other religions a provisional but genuine salvific value, but then suggests an 'existential confrontation' with Christ after death, echoing Glorieux's theory. Küng's searching and interesting dialogues with the Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist traditions can be found in *Christianity and the World Religions*.⁷ The missionary Eugene Hillman criticizes Rahner's suggestion that Christians have a better chance of salvation, but agrees with the notion of the 'anonymous Christian'. In *The Wider Ecumenism*,⁸ Hillman discusses further important contributions by Catholic theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx, Heinz Schlette, Yves Congar and Henri

1 See W. M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1964.

2 Vols. 1-20, DLT and Seabury Press, London and New York, 1961-84.

3 *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 1966, p. 122.

4 *The Catholic Encounter with World Religions*, Burns and Oates and Newman Press, London and New York 1966.

5 *The Moment of Christian Witness*, Newman Press, New York 1969.

6 *Theological Foundations of Evangelicalization*, Styler Verlag, St. Augustin 1980.

7 Collins, London 1987.

8 Sub-title *Anonymous Christianity and the Church*, Burns and Oates and Herder and Herder, London and New York 1968.

de Lubac. Küng, Hillman and the authors cited above may all be classed as inclusivists. Variations within this tradition are clearly evident.

However, a small number of influential American Catholics have adopted a Hickian form of pluralism, criticizing even liberal inclusivists like Küng. Paul Knitter's *No Other Name*¹ (which also contains a magisterial survey of different responses to religious pluralism) exemplifies this position. Knitter's book tries to face the difficulty of utilizing an implicit (or explicit) Christological criterion for evaluating other religions. He suggests a contentious Jungian criterion, although in his most recent writings he is moving towards a resolution employing insights from liberation theology. Whether this approach, which emphasizes human liberation from suffering, evil and persecution, can actually be sustained without a Christological basis is questionable.

Catholics in India, as before, have been especially creative. Klaus Klostermaier's stimulating and vivid book *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban*² is critical of pronouncements from European armchair theologians, and in *Kristvidya*³ he gives expression to an Indian Christology in terms of the Hindu thought world. Klostermaier follows in the tradition of Monchanin. Also in this tradition, Raymundo Panikkar had fused together fulfilment theology and the urgency for an enriching indigenous theology in his classic book, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.⁴ In *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*,⁵ he further argues that the three aspects of the Trinity provide a useful framework for understanding religious plurality – truth can even be three-eyed! His massive *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*⁶ is an illuminating exegesis of Hindu mythology in a similar vein to Robinson and Cobb, but far surpassing their work in erudition and orientalist skills.

Following Panikkar, although less conceptual and more concerned with spirituality, is Abhishiktananda's successor at Saccindananda Ashram, the Englishman Bede Griffiths. His most important works are *Return to the Centre*⁷ and *The Marriage of East and West*.⁸ Sister Vandana's *Social Justice and the Ashrams*⁹ seeks to relate the spirituality of the ashram movement to social service – a theme often expressed in Indian Catholic Circles.

My observations have concentrated upon individual theologians. An excellent study of more institutional developments reflecting Christian attitudes to other religions can be found in Marcus Braybrooke's *Inter-Faith Organizations, 1893-1979*¹⁰ and Walter Buhlmann's journalistic *All Have the Same God*.¹¹

Besides the bibliographies and overviews mentioned there are some further useful works. If you are teaching a course or require a selection/anthology for a study group J. Hick and B. Hebblethwaite *Christianity and Other Religions*¹² includes seminal essays on our subject from Troeltsch, Barth, Rahner, Vatican II, Smith,

1 Sub-title *A Critical Study of Christian Attitudes Towards the World Religions*, SCM, London 1985.

2 SCM, London 1969.

3 CLS, Bangalore 1967.

4 DLT, London 1981 (1964).

5 DLT, London 1973.

6 Fowler Wright, Leominster 1979.

7 Collins, London 1977.

8 Collins, London 1982.

9 Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore 1982.

10 Sub-title *A Historical Directory*, Edwin Mellen Press, New York 1980.

11 St. Paul's Publications, Slough 1979.

12 Collins/Fount, Glasgow 1980.

Tillich, Pannikar, Samartha, Hick, Moltmann and Taylor. Combined with an extensive bibliography it is an outstanding introductory book.

There are numerous other collections of varying quality. G. Anderson and T. Stransky, *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*¹ is one of the best. It contains essays from numerous standpoints in the debate and is especially valuable as it includes responses from opposing standpoints and a reply from the initial writer. Waldron Scott represents an evangelical contribution, while Orlando Costas presents a 'radical evangelical' perspective from Latin America. For an even more internationalist perspective (I've focused on primarily American and European writers) the *Mission Trends* series,² also edited by Anderson and Stransky are excellent anthologies. No's 1, 2, and 5 focus on mission, evangelization and the theological encounter respectively. Finally, for Church study groups, the World Council of Churches has produced an excellent booklet, *My Neighbour's Faith and Mine*.³

For some good overviews by single authors, Eric Sharpe's *Faith meets Faith*⁴ helpfully typifies various approaches to this issue. Frank Whaling's more recent typological guide, *Christian Theology and World Religions*,⁵ is even more extensive in its categories and contains some good examples of the way in which Christian theology would gain in richness through its dialogue with other religions. H. Coward, *Pluralism*⁶ surveys various Christian responses to religious pluralism – and within one cover, the responses within Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. J. Hick and H. Askari (eds.), *The Experience of Religious Diversity*⁷ contains essays by Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists reflecting upon religious pluralism from the standpoint of their various traditions. Arnulf Camps, a Dutch Roman Catholic missiologist, has three books translated under one cover, *Partners in Dialogue*.⁸ This contains a massive survey of Christianity's interaction with and the lessons to be learnt from dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, new Japanese religions, Bantu religion, folk religions in Latin America, Mao's communism; and a survey of the development of indigenous churches around the world. Inevitably weak in some areas, nevertheless it is a stunning and stimulating book. Some useful journals in this area are *The International Review of Mission*, *The Ecumenical Review*, *World Faiths Insight*, the WCC's *Current Dialogue*, and the BCC's *Discernment*, and the journal from the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Non-Christians *Bulletin* (although not all the articles are in English).

My survey has been brief and far from exhaustive. It has also neglected many groups, traditions and writers. Valuable gems have been left unnoticed. What I hope will be noticed is the plethora of theological issues that require attention in reflecting upon our Christian attitude to other religions. Church life in all its aspects are brought into a new focus, and whatever the various responses, Christianity will surely be enriched in proportion to the seriousness to which it attends to these issues.

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1 Orbis, Maryknoll, New York 1981.

2 Paulist Press/Eerdmans.

3 WCC, Geneva 1986.

4 Sub-title *Some Christian Attitudes to Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, SCM, London 1977.

5 Marshall Pickering, London 1986.

6 Sub-title *Challenge to World Religions*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York 1985.

7 Gower, Aldershot 1985.

8 Sub-title *Christianity and Other World Religions*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York 1983.