JACQUES DUPUIS' INDUCTIVE APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM:
A CRITICAL STUDY

MR. HILARIO PLUREH

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION
ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY OF THAILAND
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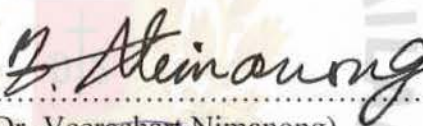**THESIS ADVISOR:** Dr. John T. Giordano
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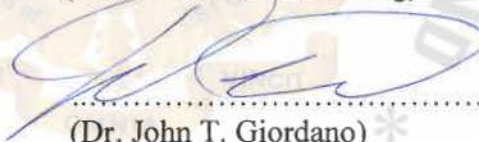
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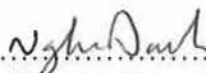Dean of the Graduate School of Philosophy & Religion

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ABSTRACT

In a rapidly integrating world, religion must play a big role in pursuing world peace, justice, and harmony. It should not be the cause of conflict and violence; rather it ought to be a channel of promoting well-being of humanity. Since we as global citizens can no longer ignore other races, nationalities, beliefs, we must learn to accept a more pluralistic world view. But how can we recognize pluralism with our own faith?

A Belgian Jesuit priest Jacques Dupuis (1923 – 2004) who spent almost half of his life in India as a missionary has developed a new way of approaching theology. As he personally encountered people from different faiths in his mission, he developed an *inductive approach* to the study of religious pluralism. This approach is considered highly relevant to this pluralistic world. His positive attitude towards other religious traditions while still retaining the necessity of the role of Jesus Christ makes him a unique theologian. His emphasis on the praxis of interreligious dialogue and of liberation theology suits the mentality of Asian people. As a result, Dupuis' approach has been gaining appreciation in our multi-religious society. This thesis is therefore to study the beginnings of Jacques Dupuis' odyssey to religious pluralism, to analyze his concept of religious pluralism, to

discuss the critiques to his religious pluralism together with its problems and challenges and to apply his approach with the situation in Myanmar.

This study is intended for any researcher with Christian background who may be interested in a research on religious pluralism. The researcher would recommend these interested people to survey Dupuis' theological works. In the eyes of those who do not believe or appreciate Jesus, Dupuis might appear to be still in the school of inclusivism, but his theological works went beyond the person of Jesus. Dupuis perceives Jesus as a protagonist in the fulfillment of God's plan but not in the way traditional Christians look at him. He is convinced that divine revelation is not limited to Christian tradition, but it extends to other religious traditions as well. His central approach to Jesus is that even though Jesus is chosen as a unique savior, God also works in other religions.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background and Significance of the Research

The reality of the world in which we live has many conflicts: social problems, political, economic, cultural, racial, and religious including natural catastrophes. All problems except natural disasters are likely to be caused by man. Even some say that these inevitable problems are due to human misuse of nature. The main concern in this thesis, however, is the religious conflicts. It is the researcher's belief that 'dialogue'[1] can create a better society or even can build a better world. In his apostolic letter, *Novo Mellennio Ineunte* (At the beginning of the new millennium), Pope John Paul II said "dialogue will be especially important in establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace" (no. 56). Similarly, Hans Küng, said, "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions" (Küng, 2007, p. xxiii). Küng concluded, "the world can achieve greater peace and justice only if the religious communities of the world can come together to recognize a minimal basis of shared values, norms, fundamental principles, and ideals" (Knitter, 1995, p. xi).[2]

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[1] Four kinds of dialogue is applied here: dialogue of life, of action (or common work), of theological exchange, and of spiritual communion

[2] Hans Küng wrote the foreword page in Paul Knitter's book, *One Earth Many Religions*.

Interreligious dialogue in this sense can play an important role to promote peace among the religions as well as the nations.

The emergence of pluralism[3] is another current issue today in the religious context. All religions are facing this new face of global phenomenon and needs to find ways of dealing with it. Pluralism has made quite an impact on the study of religions. The study of the 'theology of religions' has been replaced with the study of 'religious pluralism.' The term 'religious pluralism' has become a current debated issue and a worldwide subject. Many religious leaders from different traditions are aware of it. Some would consider it as a threat to their religion while others think that it is an inevitable movement that impels us to find ways to live with it. According to Roger Bose (2005), "The concept of religious pluralism, in particular the notion that no single religion can claim a monopoly of the truth, has gained wide currency during the last two decades as people have become increasingly aware of the need to break down barriers of mutual prejudice by engaging in interfaith and intercultural dialogue" (p. 1). In this situation, interreligious dialogue would be one of the best approaches to Religious pluralism.

Religious pluralism emerges as critical theologians[4] challenge the traditional theology. These venturers gradually come to realize the unsuitability of holding 'religious absolutism' in this civilized and globalized world. They have learned from their past experiences that 'absolutism' did lead to religious conflicts. The lessons of history have taught Christians that "hostility and violence are contrary to the gospel of Christ and do not

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[3] Pluralism means "a theory or system that recognizes more than one ultimate principle."

[4] John Hick, Paul F. Knitter, Peter Phan, Jacques Dupuis are among these theologians.

promote true religion" (Dupuis, 2003, p. 9). Religious pluralism, like other approaches, has strengths and weaknesses. The strength of holding religious pluralism is to respect, to integrate, to harmonize, and to exchange the values of the religious traditions. People with different faiths can recognize the beauty of sharing the multiple views on a 'point' or a 'reality' and appreciate the richness of having religious experiences.

The interest of interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism has brought the researcher here to study in this graduate school of religious studies. In taking this specialization, he is optimistic that his faith in Jesus Christ will help deepen his relationship with God and at the same time his attitude towards other believers would be positive. He is convinced that "there are many equally valid religions and no one religion can claim to be absolutely superior over all others" (Prabhu, 1996, p. 7). The various religions, Christianity included, "represent so many ways leading to God, each of which, differences notwithstanding, has equal validity and value" (Dupuis, 2002, pp. 76 - 77).

Accepting religious pluralism does not necessarily mean that "one denies one's own religious tradition that has distinctive truths and values of universal importance, but it means that if that tradition has such truths and values, it also assumes that other religions have as well" (Griffin, 2005, p. 3). Pope John XXIII, who not only opened the long-locked windows in the Roman Church but knocked through walls and indirectly called for reconstruction of old models and practices, has become a Christian idol of interreligious dialogue with other traditions and marked the beginning of the journey towards religious pluralism. His venture is a positive approach for the Church to follow the spirit of time. As

a result, the Second Vatican Council produced a marvelous document, *Nostra Aetate,*

reflecting the positive affirmation to other religious traditions. In this document, it is said:

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.
> She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those
> precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the
> ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth
> which enlightens all men (n. 2).

As interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism greatly attract the researcher, he

has tried to search for a particular theologian who covered both issues in his/her theology.

He finally found a Belgian theologian, Jacques Dupuis,[5] to match his quest. The main

reasons why the researcher has chosen this topic, JACQUES DUPUIS' INDUCTIVE

APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, are because of Dupuis' inductive method

and his Asian perspective. Dupuis' Asian perspective of doing theology is the first reason.

During his missionary work in India for 36 years, Dupuis admitted that he fell in love with

the culture and admired his Indian students from different religious traditions by which he

began his journey on the road to religious pluralism with an Asian perspective. The second

reason why the researcher has chosen Dupuis is due to his personal encounter with other

faiths in the Asian world in which he proposed the inductive method. The researcher

admires Dupuis' works because of relevance for this part of the world so he tries to base his

thesis on this model.

Before the inductive method has been used, most theological studies were applied to

the traditional methods: deductive, dogmatic, and genetic. Jacques Dupuis' new method of

doing theology mostly appeared after Vatican II. This method of doing theology to

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[5] The biography of Jacques Dupuis can be found in Part II.

religious pluralism opposes the preceding methods. While the former approaches usually

start 'from the general principles to reach the concrete applications' of the problems, the

latter method begins with 'concrete context of the problems' and then applies to the real

world. It means that Dupuis' theological approach is based on 'contextualization and

hermeneutics' (Dupuis, 1997, pp. 13–19). The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the

Modern World, *Gaudium Et Spes*, has reflected the inductive method in its very beginning

of the document as follows:

> The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age,
> especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and
> hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing
> genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a
> community composed of men….Therefore, the council focuses its attention
> on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those
> realities in the midst of which that family lives (GS no 1 &2).

According to Maureen Sullivan, "The Council Fathers understand that for the

church to be in dialogue with the people of God, it must take seriously the world in which

these people live and breathe. Only then can the message of the gospel have real meaning;

only then can this message take root (Sullivan, 2002, pp. 100 – 101).

Jacques Dupuis seems to comprehend the mission of the Church and fulfill the

Council's dream. His inductive approach normally starts "from the experience of lived

reality and the questions that the context raises, thereafter to search for answers in the light

of the revealed message and tradition" (Dupuis, 2003). Dupuis' inductive method is based

on 'the praxis of dialogue.' This is the reason why Dupuis perceives interreligious dialogue

as one of the best ways for doing religious pluralism. In his theology, he sometimes

combines both deductive and inductive methods in which Paul Knitter called 'global

theological method.' This thesis is going to survey his theological works. His understanding of religious pluralism as well as his methodology of approaching the matter will be explored throughout the study.

With this purpose and plan, the researcher divides the work into five chapters. The first chapter is just about the introduction which includes thesis statement, research methodology, research objectives, research limitations, research expectation, and definitions of the terms used. The second chapter deals with the beginnings of Jacques Dupuis' odyssey to religious pluralism. In this section, the researcher develops the turning point of his new way of theologizing, introduces Jacques Dupuis, examines his personal encounter with other faiths, proposes his new theological approach, and studies his difficult relationship with the Church.

The third chapter explores the main themes of the study, that is, Jacques Dupuis' concept of religious pluralism. This section begins with approaches to the theology of religions and different perspectives on religious pluralism. The biblical foundation of his theology of religions and his approaches to the theology of religious pluralism are in this chapter. Dupuis' personal encounter with other religions inspires him to reexamine the long prejudices of Christian traditions in which his understanding of pluralism eventually becomes a big clash with Vatican. This leads him to seek a new way of approaching theology of religions in the framework of the Asian context. His valuable experience with other faiths in the Indian regions encouraged him to embark on his pluralistic interpretation of Jesus Christ by trying to connect the universality of Christianity with religious pluralism.

This part ends with his two main types of theology: interreligious dialogue and liberation theology.

The fourth chapter discusses the critiques of Jacques Dupuis' religious pluralism. Not only Jacques Dupuis but also other theologians who attempt to embrace religious pluralism find it challenging. Religious pluralism is sometimes misunderstood as comparable with religious relativism or universalism. Then, some questions come out: What do the pluralists claim? Is it possible to believe in a particular religion and embrace pluralism at the same time? What is the best strategy to follow religious pluralism? What are the common claims of religious pluralists? These questions are to be answered in this section. The researcher has put forth his effort to clarify the importance of religious pluralism in the Asian societies. The chapter ends with religious pluralism in Myanmar.

The last chapter of the study is the conclusion. In this section, the researcher attempts to summarize Dupuis' theology of religious pluralism. Is Dupuis' inductive approach possible? Leo Elders said that the only valid theological method is the deductive one (which takes the data of revelation and tradition as first principles from which to draw theological conclusions).

1.2   Thesis statement and research questions

The adaptation of religious pluralism is very much needed in order to have peace, justice and harmony. Jacques Dupuis has perfectly addressed this issue in his theological approach to religious pluralism. His empirical encounter with other faiths changed his life and thoughts in which he understood the mission of Jesus Christ in a pluralistic way. In

short, the Inductive approach to religious pluralism in the works of Jacques Dupuis has made a strong impact on doing a Christian theology of religions, especially in the Asian context.

The following questions are to be answered in this study:

1. Can all religions coexist and still retain their independence and unique status?

2. Is Religious Pluralism possible in Christianity?

3. How do Christians respond to this challenge in the Asian context?

4. What stimulates Jacques Dupuis to walk on this controversial road?

5. Why Religious Pluralism should be embraced in this 21st century?

1.3   Research objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To study the beginnings of Jacques Dupuis' odyssey to religious pluralism.

- To analyze Jacques Dupuis' concept of religious pluralism.

- To discuss the critiques to Jacques Dupuis' pluralism together with its

problems and challenges.

- To apply Jacques Dupuis' Approach with the situation in Myanmar.

1.4   Definitions of the Terms Used

Salvation (also called redemption) – "a deliverance of humankind from fundamentally negative conditions, such as suffering, evil, finitude, and death; also in some religions, the restoration or raising up of the natural world to a higher realm, or state." In Christian tradition, "humanity is delivered from SIN and DEATH through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Safra, 2006, p. 961).

Exclusivism – "Salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by only one religion."

Inclusivism – "Salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by more than one religion but only one of these mediates it in a uniquely superior way."

Pluralism – "Salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by more than one religion and there is none among them whose mediation of that knowledge is superior to all the rest" (Schmidt-Leukel, 2005, p. 13).

Filioque clause or phrase – 'a theological term' that indicates whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father or both the Father and the Son. The word *filioque* literally means 'and son.' The Nicene Creed confirms that "the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son." This clause has become a controversy in the Church in which "it eventually led to split between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in 1054" (Houdmann, 2009, p. 87).

Novo Mellennio Ineunte (NMI) 'At the beginning of the new millennium' – An apostolic letter written by Pope John Paul II in the year 2000.

Gaudium Et Spes (GS) 'Praise and hope' – 'a pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world' promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965.

Nostra Aetate (NA) 'In our age' –'a declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions' promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965.

Dominus Iesus (DI) 'Lord Jesus' – 'a declaration on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church' published by Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

CDF – Pope Paul III founded the CDF in 1542 by with the name of the 'Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition' in order to defend the Church from heresy. In 1908, Pope Pius X changed the name to the 'Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office.' Pope Paul VI later named it to the 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith' with the purpose of promoting and safeguarding "the doctrine on the faith and morals throughout the Catholic world."

Notification (*Notificazione* in *Italian*) – refers to "an official document of the Catholic Church issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to alert members of the church about errors, problems, or deficiencies that the CDF finds in the work of theologians" ("Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition," n.d., p. 28).

Globalization – a term often used "to describe the recent and rapid process of intercontinental economic, social, cultural, and political integration" (Shuey, p. 37).

Excommunication – "To excommunicate means 'to cut off from communion' or 'to exclude from fellowship in a community.' In a Christian setting, the term excommunication also applies to exclusion from Holy Communion or the Eucharist" (Provost, 1987, p. 218).

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) – "a voluntary association of episcopal conferences in Asia established with the approval of the Holy See. Its purpose is to foster among its members solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of Church and society in Asia" (FABC).

Inculturation – a term often used "to denote a process of engagement between the Christian Gospel and a particular culture. It is intended conceptually both to safeguard the integrity of the Gospel and to encourage sensitivity to various cultural contexts" (Doyle, 2012).

Mediation – In Christian tradition, to mediate means 'to intervene between two parties in order to reconcile them.' This is the reason Jesus is called 'the mediator of the new covenant' (Hebrew 12:24).

Messiah – a Hebrew term which means 'anointing one.' Jesus is called the Messiah because he was *anointed*.

Nibbana or Nirvana – "the total absence of all craving and suffering" (Lee, 2007, p. 13).

1.5   Research Methodology

This study attempts at understanding the theory of Jacques Dupuis' approach to religious pluralism. The research, therefore, is analytical in nature making use of historical, descriptive, theological, interpretative, documentary and interreligious methodologies. The primary sources comprise Dupuis' own works such as books, journals, articles, and literary texts. The researcher has tried to collect all his works and made use of all possible materials available in the library of the Assumption University. Of course, relevant online materials on the internet are also utilized in the research.

1.6   Research Limitations

The scope of this study emphasizes the works of Jacques Dupuis on religious pluralism. It is thus more religious in its approach than theological one; more sharing faith than defending a religion. It is done in the perspective of a Christian (Catholic) in which Dupuis' understanding of Christianity is applied in terms of dealing with other religions.

1.7   Research Expectation

This research should be able to:

-project the understanding of Jacques Dupuis' concept of religious pluralism in which he was able to see the positive role of other traditions in the plan of God.

-inspire different believers to come to appreciate the existence of religious pluralism in this multi-cultural society.

-know the reason of the misunderstanding between the CDF (Congregation for the

Doctrine of the Faith) and Jacques Dupuis' theory of his theology of religions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BEGINNINGS OF JACQUES DUPUIS' ODYSSEY TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

2.1   A New Way of Looking at Faith

With the advance in technology, the world in which we live seems to have 'shrunk';
a country or a nation becomes just a 'village' among the 'global villages.' Whether we like
it or not we have to deal with people from different faiths, cultures, and traditions. It is
unlikely that any country/nation can live in isolation as it used to. We can no longer ignore
other races, nationalities, beliefs, and different viewpoints in this globalized world. In order
to avoid or at least minimize possible future conflicts, we need to become open-minded and
try to understand others and their differences.

The rise of globalization has made an impact on religious belief. No nation has only
one religion anymore: Christianity is not the only religion in Europe; Buddhism is not alone
in Asia; Islam is not just to be found in the Arab world; and Hinduism is also everywhere.
So, religion today is like a free bird flying from one place to another. It is not like a bird in
a cage any longer. While the bird in the birdcage knows only its owner, the outside bird is
more familiar with the surroundings. Religion in this third millennium is like the uncaged
bird.

For many centuries, doctrinal teaching has been the main emphasis of missionary
work. Due to this doctrinal highlighting, different religions attempt to separate from one
another. A number of religions have also become extremist because of the doctrinal
differences. Instead of trying to learn from each other, people from different religions try to

indoctrinate others and focus on their own creed. This biased practice has been common among religions throughout the centuries. Christianity is not one of the last religions to implement this practice. While the traditional axiom of the Roman Catholic Church taught, "no salvation outside the Church" (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*), the Protestants said, "there is no salvation outside Christianity." In short, both statements condemned non-Christians. It was only in the 20th century that a new way of seeing the world emerged in the Christian theology. Protestant churches, in 1910, started gathering together to discuss the possibility of overcoming the sectarian antagonism in the propagation of Christianity. The consequence of this meeting gave birth to the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, held the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 65) in order to modernize its teachings. The Catholic Church has undergone a fundamental change; the Catholic attitude towards other religions has taken a positive turn. The researcher therefore may say that, only around this period or in the 20th century, Christian theologians began to open up their theological perspectives. They tried to appreciate the values of other religious traditions and underwent their own Copernican shift. This is how the idea of religious pluralism was born within Christianity even though religious pluralism has been present for quite some time.

Martin Forward said, "religions are not static entities but are affected by culture and even by new and momentous revelatory acts of Transcendent grace, then the variegated expressions of faith in the contemporary world should be seen as natural and explicable in the context of the rapid change" (Forward, 2001, p. 117). As the world changes, religion also moves with it. A religion that does not follow the spirit of time will gradually ebb away. Religion does not possess any border either. Wherever people exist, there is religion,

that is, the experience of the presence of God. The rise of globalization and the borderless experience of religion in this period present a new way of looking at faith. People in Europe seem to get fed up with the institutionalized Christianity. They are now more interested in welcoming the new movements of religion. While Christianity is ebbing away in Europe, it is growing in Asia and Africa at the same time. Therefore, hitherto Christianity, considered to be a religion of the West now becomes a 'world Christianity.'

Christianity has learned many things from the past. Many Christian theologians have realized that exclusion of non-Christians from salvation is not Christ's way. Christ is a means, not an end. Having faith in Christ means that Christians are trying to reach God or Ultimate Reality through his path and his way is the best way for them. This perception was not accepted in the past centuries. It was very hard to find theologians who came up with the new idea on *faith* in those days. Some progressive Catholic theologians were afraid of openly criticizing the Church for fear of being excommunicated. The Church had been very powerful. Excommunication occurred frequently and dissatisfied theologians would rather keep quiet than making critical comment about the Church if they still want to be members of the Church. Apologetics and evangelization had been the core task of Christian missionaries. Even in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Church with its authority "had condemned historical-critical scholarship as undermining ecclesiastical authority" (Baum, 1999, p. 159). This is the real situation in former times.

The announcement of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII, less than three months after his election, in which he tried to emphasize the positive aspects of modernity gave a great surprise to both the Roman Curia and the larger church. This

Council has marked a turning point in the history of Catholicism. The Pontiff "did not

convene this council to face a specific threat or to discuss a matter of faith and morals, but

for the 'enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people'" (Bellitto, 2002,

p. 128). In his speech at the opening of the council in 1962, the Pope, emphasizing the

positive aspects of modernity, said:

> The Church should contribute to the unity of humankind and present its
> teaching in ways understandable to people who live in the modern world.
> There would be no condemnation of errors but rather a positive engagement
> of the modern world (Baum, 1999, p. 159).

Jacques Dupuis, however, has seen two important things in the council:

> First, the council's perspective was pastoral rather than doctrinal. With
> regard to the other religions, the council's aim was to foster new attitudes of
> mutual understanding, esteem, dialogue, and cooperation between them and
> Christianity.

> Second, the intention was to rally the highest possible majority on the
> council floor in favor of a change of attitude of Christians and the church
> toward the members of other religions (Dupuis, 2002, p. 59).

Vatican II has magnificently influenced the Catholic believers with many changes,

including the positive attitude towards other faiths. Conservative Catholics were shocked at

its new teaching. Even many priests left priesthood and so did the religious nuns. But it was

also a blessing at the same time because Vatican II had issued two important messages to

be carried out: to adapt to the circumstances of the local churches known as *mission-

countries* and to apply the gospel into the various cultures which is known as

'inculturation.'

Vatican II seems to have targeted the continent of Asia. The two dominant cultures

of Asia are Indian and Chinese. These two nations are also well-known as the birth place of

world religions, India gave birth to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism while

China is well-known to be the home of Chinese religions: Confucianism and Taoism.

Christianity, a foreign religion of this region, is now present in these rich soils as well.

Since not only religion but everything in this third millennium seems to move to the East, it

appears that the future of the world, the future of religion, and the future of Christianity will

be in the hands of the Asia-Pacific. This is the reality of our world today. The only thing

people in this age need to do is to be ready for this new challenge and to openly view the

world in a different standpoint. As Dupuis said,

> "if we wish to have in the future open and positive mutual relations between
> the peoples, cultures, and religions of the world, relations, in other words, of
> dialogue and collaboration, multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious
> world requires from all parts a qualitative leap proportional to our
> situations"(Dupuis, 2002, p. 7).

Christianity has to find out means to modernize its teaching in order to survive. The

Church cannot be too strict in following the dogmatic method in this multi-religious and

multi-cultural world. A new way of looking at faith needs to be found. The Church must

learn local cultures in order to effectively apply with *Scripture* and *Traditions*. Day-to-day

meeting is the best way to understand other cultures, other traditions, and other religions.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the most influential body in the

Asian Church, declares that "the pathway for the Church in Asia to truly discover its own

identity is to continually engage in a three-fold dialogue: with Asian people (especially the

poor), Asian cultures (inculturation), and Asian religions (interfaith dialogue)." (Kroeger,

FABC, p. 5). These three characters are very typical of Asia. Jacques Dupuis, likewise,

proposed three important factors of doing theology of religions in Asia: interreligious

dialogue, inculturation, and liberation from poverty. Realistic or practical experience has to be the first step to the three approaches.

The role of dialogue, for Dupuis, is "the necessary foundation of a theology of religions." There are four forms of dialogue: "dialogue of life, of common work, of theological exchange, and of spiritual communion"[1] (Kendall & O'Collins, 2003, p. 81). Out of these four, Dupuis seemed to focus on the first two in his inductive approach to religious pluralism since he and Aloysius Pieris found out two important things in Asia: the poverty of humanity and the plurality of religious traditions. For Dupuis, "the praxis of interreligious dialogue is a point of departure for doing theology of pluralism. The goal is not to develop some new universal theology which levels out all differences, but to promote a dialogical openness and mutual enrichment through conversion" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 18; Javier, 2006, p. 144).

The second important thing in doing theology of religions in Asia is to integrate with indigenous cultures. In Asia, culture impacts the life of the people. "Culture and religion are integrally related. Asia calls for - *en-religionization* – religion and culture must be joined in an intimate union, analogous to that of body and soul. There is no way of formally removing one religion from a culture"(Knitter, 2005, p. 172). Inculturation therefore is a very important factor for successful religious pluralism in Asia. Any religion coming to Asia has to adapt itself to the local culture. Christianity, especially Catholicism, has to integrate Western cultures with the local cultures. FABC, hence, on *Dialogue: Interpretive Key for the Life of the Church in Asia* stated,

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[1] Peter C. Phan has written on "Jacques Dupuis and Asian theologies of Religious Pluralism," *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, pp. 72 – 84.

> The Asian local Churches are aware, enthusiastic, and committed to the
> pivotal challenge and obligation of inculturating the Christian faith in the
> Asia milieu. 'Asia' Church workers, both indigenous Asian as well as
> expatriate missionaries, view the inculturation of the Christian faith as a
> specific missionary and pastoral commitment (Kroeger, *FABC*, p. 5).[2]

For Pieris, "Christianity will achieve real inculturation in Asia and become of Asia only by

receiving, like Jesus, a double baptism, that is, at the 'Jordan of Asian Religiosity' and on

the 'Calvary of Asian Poverty'" (Pieris, 1994, p. 4).[3]

The third element, for Dupuis, of understanding a Christian theology of religious

pluralism in Asia is the liberation from poverty. The poverty in Asia is huge; many live

from hand to mouth. They want to escape from this miserable life. In this situation, how is a

religious pluralist going to approach these people? Dupuis has beautifully connected the

theology of religious pluralism to the liberation theology. Gerard Hall (2002), on *Jacques*

Dupuis' Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism stated: "Just as liberation theology

begins with reflection on the concrete context of injustice and oppression; the theology of

religious pluralism begins with reflection *on* and *within* interfaith dialogue."[4] Hence, only

practical experience with the suffering people in the light of the divine mystery can lead a

theologian to work on the inductive method to religious pluralism. And only realistic

encounter with the miserable lives of the people can motivate a person to talk about day-to-

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[2] James Kroeger has given ten kinds of inculturation. Read more about this on "Dialogue: Interpretive Key for the Life of the Church in Asia," in *FABC papers, no. 130,* pp. 7 – 26.

[3] Double baptism, for Pieris, means that Christianity has to adapt its teaching to Asian cultures and liberate their people from poverty. For details, see Aloysius Pieris (1996). 'Two Encounters in My Theological Journey," in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah. Maryknowll: Orbis Boods. pp.* 45 - 50.

[4] Gerard Hall (2002). "Jacques Dupuis' Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism" in *Pacifica 15.* p. 38.

day matters. The faith of the people especially Asians in this age is more realistic than theoretical one.

2.2   An Experiential Pilgrimage

2.2.1 A Glance at Jacques Dupuis' Life

Jacques Dupuis was born in Belgium from a well-to-do family. He was one of the four children from the exemplary parents. His father was a chief manager from a big factory while his mother was like a living saint with her well-known meekness and generosity. At the age of five, he went to a Jesuit school where he spent twelve years of his education. The meeting with the Jesuit Fathers at school impressed him to follow vocation. He eventually joined the Society of Jesus (S.J). After being in the congregation around eight years, finished studying philosophy, he requested his superior to be sent to India. He was the first one who asked for this. This outstanding country had long attracted him due to its pluralistic cultures and religions. When the time came, he bid farewell to his family members and departed for India. His departure brought pain not only to himself but also to his parents and his relatives. He knew very well that once he was in the missionary field, he would not have a chance to return home. It was the usual way of doing mission in those days. He was totally shocked at seeing the entirely new culture when he arrived at Calcutta. A multitude of people was walking on the streets where the sick and the dying were also lying. Looking at this painful scene, he was moved with compassion. He realized that unless he studied human's attitudes and cultures, he would never understand their action. His first assignment at the city of Calcutta was to teach at Saint Francis Xavier's College.

From classroom, he had opportunities to meet many students from different faiths. This is how he confessed in his writing, *my Pilgrimage in Mission*, "I had the opportunity to discover the richness of human gifts as well as the depth of cultural and religious endowments that they carried in themselves and that they had learned from their family education and the religious tradition to which they belonged" (Dupuis, 2003, p. 169). From the very start of his life in India, Dupuis focused his intention on the diversity of the culture and religion.

> In India, he became fascinated by the great religious traditions of Asia, and played a leading role as an advisor to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in carving out a new theological approach to religious diversity, one that strove to uphold traditional Catholic doctrine about the uniqueness of the salvation won by Christ, while at the same time acknowledging that other religions play a positive role in God's plan for humanity (Allen, 2005).

Dupuis finished his licentiate degree in theology in India before going to Rome for doctorate degree. His first years of teaching, after coming back from Rome, happened to coincide with the meeting of the Second Vatican Council (1959 - 62). Dupuis admitted that

> the council constituted an enormous challenge in all spheres connected with theological training and teaching, starting with the liturgical reform that was being initiated, passing on to a new notion of the church, from a perfect society to the people of God, and a reversal of perspectives on the mystery of the church, from pyramidal and hierarchical to communal and sacramental; more important still, perhaps, in the Indian context, there was a new attitude toward the other religious traditions, recommending dialogue and collaboration (Dupuis, 2003, p. 169).

After working in India around 36 years, Dupuis was called back to Rome to teach at the Gregorian University. Even though he did not wish to leave India, he left this country out of obedience. The Indian experience, he acknowledged, was the greatest grace he had

ever received from God. His theological perspective gradually changed into a wider aspect: from a Christian Theology to a theology of religions (then religious pluralism) and from a prejudiced view to an appreciation of other traditions. The primary reason for his shifted idea was his exposure to the religious reality that he had experienced during his apostolic mission in this beautiful land. This concrete encounter could never be found in the European countries at that time. His experience of Indian life inspired him to examine "the interaction between text and context" (Kendall & O'Collins, 2003, p. 223).

As Dupuis comes to appreciate the other traditions, his narrow-minded attitude such as *Christianity is the only true religion* slowly dies out. He even had to struggle against the Vatican to support his pluralistic approach to religion. He was forced to be silent after the publication of his controversial book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, even though he had no intention of going against the Church. He was 'a serious theologian' who wanted to dedicate his life to reading and writing. Many of his Jesuit peers attacked his progressive theological thought. But Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach (the General Superior of Society of Jesus at that time) and Fr. Gerald O'Collins (his chief defender and theological counselor), however, defended him. During his mission in India, he was considered to be "too conservative and insistent on retaining the tradition of the early ecumenical councils and later magisterium" by local theologians and his students. But it turned out that "the man who was too cautious for Indian Jesuit seminarians and theologians was too radical for the Roman stage."("Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition," n.d., p. 7). His earthly life ended on 28 December 2004 in Rome and he was loyal to the Church until the last moment of his life.

2.2.2 An Encounter with Other Faiths

Experience is the best teacher: this expression can also apply to the study of religious pluralism. Experience has to come first in order to see the beauty of other cultures, traditions, and religions. People who have encountered other faiths are inclined to view other religions in a positive way. This is what many religious pluralists have been doing. They begin to journey on the road to religious pluralism only after meeting with other faiths, having interreligious dialogue, and reaching mutual understanding. In the beginning, they might look at other religions with biased eyes like many people, do but when they come to experience the beauty of other religious traditions, they try to throw away the mentality of superiority. Christianity, especially Jacques Dupuis' approach, has tried to learn from this method. Many Christians have acknowledged that "it is no longer possible to understand their faith without reference to the faith of the Jews and to the covenant of Sinai which has never been revoked" (Kendall & O'Collins, 2003, p. 33).

As people become more and more creative, more and more open, and more and more close to each other through the media, their view on religion also changes dramatically. On December 15, 1979, Pope John Paul II encouraged the professors at the Gregorian University "to be creative and have courage to explore new ways with prudence but not to be too easily satisfied with what has proved useful in the past" (Kendall & O'Collins, 2003, p. 225). This is what Jacques Dupuis has been doing recently. His departure to India was his first step to the journey towards religious pluralism. At first he just wanted to do mission work in the pluralistic culture; he never thought of changing his

theological idea. But his experiences with other religious traditions gradually change his theological viewpoint.

Dupuis, in fact, went there with the hope of evangelizing Indian people. He was amazed at seeing his non-Christian students who might have got kindness, compassion, and meekness from their parents (of course they are not Christians either). His practical experience with these godly people who had never heard of Jesus Christ stimulated him to reexamine his own faith. He understood completely that "one must have an interior experience of the encounter of the religious experience of traditions and allow them to react upon each other in one's own person" (Dupuis, 1996, p. 67). So, he could not waste his time but studied hard to know about the people, their cultures and their religions.

The daily encounter with other faiths inspired him to study theology of religion with an Asian perspective. The main task of his theology is to respond to the current situation and make it adaptable to the life of the people. Dupuis along with Aloysius Pieris found out two important elements in Asia: Most Asians are living in poverty in the context of diverse religious traditions. How can the Scripture be applied to these two massive realities? This is the first question Dupuis needs to ask and find answer. In order to do so, it is very necessary to have an adaptation of the Church's attitude to Asian culture and to link the miserable lives of the people with the life of Jesus.

For many founders of religions, the first journey towards religion is the personal encounter with some kinds of sacredness. Through their practical experience, they had encountered the presence of transcendence, which becomes their motivation to share their

experience through their teachings. Hence, all the believers who want to follow their footsteps also need to know their life, experiences, teachings, and sayings. Without entering into these elements, no one can claim to have known a religion. In fact, 'faith' (the commitment of a person) requires both knowledge and experience. And so, unless a Christian experiences with other faiths and testifies to their values, he/she may not be able "to discover at a greater depth of certain aspects, of certain dimensions, and of the divine mystery" (Dupuis, 2003, p. 171).

Judging other religions without understanding of their religious practices has a tendency to go wrong. Only observation from outside is not enough to judge others; experience needs to follow. Dupuis has expressed that his close relationship with Indian students who asked him radical questions concerning their personal experience with other faiths has strengthened his Christian faith. Without this experience, he, like other Western theologians would have continued his Asian mission with traditional deductive approach. Dupuis, however, was able to see the world in a different way. His Indian experience had brought him a deeper understanding of the divine mystery. He could perfectly understand that "Religious experience today is increasingly concerned with the *space of mutuality* in which Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and other are able to validate a broader religious experience than that of any single tradition."[5]

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[5] Gerard Hall (2002) has written commentaries on "Jacques Dupuis' Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism" in *Pacifica 15*, p. 46.

Many Western theologians who have come to work in Asia fail to adjust themselves to the local situation. Many of them have focused on 'deductive method.' They did not realize that Asian nations are very much different from their countries; Asian countries do not face the same problems as European countries. To impose Western theory into the deep-rooted culture of Asian people has been a big mistake. The religious identity of Asia normally identifies with nationalities or ethnicities or cultures. Asian people used to think: an Indian is Hindu; a Malay is Muslim; a Filipino is Catholic; and a Thai or a Burmese is Buddhist. Many would regard this as contradiction to the usual attitude if an Indian is Christian; a Malay is Catholic; a Filipino is Buddhist; and a Thai or a Burmese is Muslim. Unlike Western nations, Asian countries are rich in cultures and religions.

Religious pluralism is a Western concept? It is not a problematic phenomenon in Asia. Asian people of different faiths have been living together for centuries. When this problem emerged in the West, it gradually affected Asian thoughts. Since most theologians in Asia have literally or economically been influenced by the West, they are inclined to adopt Western theories. Asian theologians forget their own history, culture, and context. Those who have studied in the West attempt to apply Western theories. The theories are good but most of the Westernized Asians do not know how to adapt these foreign theories into their own cultures or societies. The theory of religious pluralism is one of the examples. It is not an Asian concept but it has come with Westerners who approach other religions with a deductive method. Edmund Chia (2007) stated: "the experience of religious pluralism is an existential reality for Asians, most of whom live in societies characterized

by multiculturality and multireligiousity. Religious pluralism, therefore, is by no means a Western concept" (p. 57).

2.2.3   A New Approach

The traditional methods of doing theology had been dogmatic, genetic, and deductive. The dogmatic method "begins from a point fully removed from history and its relativity, and from that point it derives unconditionally valid statements which at best can be brought only later into touch with the knowledge and understanding of other aspects of human life"(Chan, 2001, p. 22). The dogmatic method has been seen as 'an abstract character' and blamed for its lack of reality. This approach has been replaced by the genetic method in which it "starts from the revealed data and goes on to show the understanding and interpretation which it has received through history, in the tradition of the Fathers and of the councils, through the theological schools and authors" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 14). Both methods share the same theme and more or less similar with the deductive approach of doing theology since all "start from basic assertions to conclusions; from the better known to the less known; and from general principles to reach their concrete applications to the problems of today" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 14). Theologians who follow deductive method normally "begin with certain statement in the New Testament that they judge to be clear and indisputable in their meaning, then they ask what Christian faith can grant the other religious traditions" (Dupuis, 1996, p. 5).

Dupuis, however, did not follow these preceding methods. He tried to go the other way around. After personally encountering the challenge of poverty and religiosity, he

proposed an *inductive approach* to the study of religious pluralism. This approach normally

starts "from the experience of lived reality and the questions that the context raises,

thereafter to search for answers in the light of the revealed message and tradition" (Dupuis,

2003, p. 170). It means that the concrete experience of the encounter with other religions

motivated Dupuis to reexamine the long prejudices of Christian traditions. Dupuis

understood that his method was rather 'problematic' compared with the deductive method.

After he realized that the traditional method was not appropriate for doing theology of

religions in Asia, especially in India, he had no choice but to go on with his risky approach

as a pioneer. In following this method, he emphasized the praxis of interreligious dialogue.

In Asian nations where most people live hand to mouth and where many different

religions co-exist, Dupuis' new approach seems to be the best to embrace religious

pluralism. Asian theologians should live with the people and know their cultures in order to

successfully have interreligious dialogue. This approach can be risky to anyone who does

not have a profound knowledge of their own religion because they might lose their own

faith. And also those who object to this method because they are the ones

> who have never been in serious contact with the reality of other religions or
> even met persons who practice them sincerely and profoundly. Those who,
> on the contrary, have made the effort at a true and sincere encounter with
> others have had their faith strengthened in the process and deepened by the
> experience (Dupuis, 2003, p. 170).

Peter C. Phan's on *Jacques Dupuis and Asian Theologies of Religious Pluralism*

stated that Dupuis followed both deductive and inductive methods. Leo Elder, however, did

not accept Dupuis' approach. He said that only deductive approach is 'a valid theological method.'[6]

To follow an inductive method means to accept the challenges of the daily encounter with unfamiliar lifestyle. By using this practical approach to religious pluralism, Dupuis also used the 'contextual and hermeneutical theology.' Stephen B. Bevans (2002) defines contextual theology:

> as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the church; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change within that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation (p.1).

This theology shows that all messages, including the Holy Scripture, come in the form of humanity and human lives with history, culture, and ethnicity. Therefore, any message needs to go back to its original history, cultural background, and ethnic society. The contextual theology enables a believer to understand the specific context of the message.

According to Claude Geffré (1987), "Hermeneutical theology is a new act of interpretation of the event of Jesus Christ on the basis of critical correlation between the fundamental Christian experience to which tradition bears witness and contemporary human experience" (p. 50). From the hermeneutical theology, a Christian theology of religious pluralism ought to be "rooted in an actual praxis of dialogue with non-Christian religions but must not start from the teachings of the Bible or Tradition (Kendall &

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[6] Peter C. Phan, "Jacques Dupuis and Asian Theologies of Religious Pluralism," *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*. P. 73; and also see *Who do you say I am?* by Jacques Dupuis, p. 5 – 8.

O'Collins, 2003, p. 73). Hermeneutical theology, for Dupuis, is an integral element towards a Christian theology of religious pluralism. His hermeneutical theology is not only based on *hermeneutical circle,* that is, 'context' and 'text; between present and past, but he also talks about the person who interprets the 'text' and the 'context' that it comes to be known as *hermeneutical triangle* (Dupuis, 1997, pp. 14 - 15).

The "hermeneutical triangle consists of the mutual interaction among text, context, and interpreter, that is, the interaction among the Christian memory, the surrounding cultural and religious reality, and the local church" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 16). "*Text* includes everything contained in 'Christian memory'; *context* is both a concrete place and time in human history and its theoretical complexities; *interpreter* is less the individual theologian than the community of faith to which the theologian belongs" (Hall, 2002, p. 38). Dupuis concludes that "the interaction between text and context, or between memory and culture, takes place in the interpreter, that is, in the local church" (Dupuis, 1994, p. 9).

2. 3   Jacques Dupuis and the Church

2.3.1   His Controversial Book

Jacques Dupuis is the author of many books and several articles in the field of religions. One of his books, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism,* has attracted great attention from the readers. In this scholarly book, Dupuis is shown as a faithful Catholic theologian who tried, as much as he could, to follow the teaching of the Church but not in the traditional ways; he rather used the inductive approach. His theological strategy is to go along with the spirit of the time. He did not want the Church to

be left behind while the world is changing so rapidly. However, his good intention seems to create a big problem in the eyes of the Vatican, the body of the Catholic Church. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) strongly criticized his book and finally put it under close scrutiny.

Dupuis' book of 447- page is the fruit of his personal theological reflections and concrete lived experiences while living both in Europe and Asia. This book mainly focuses on how Christianity in the past showed 'the negative attitudes toward other religious traditions'; how Christianity in this dramatic change of the world responds to the context of religious pluralism; and of course, out of his experience, how religious pluralism needs to embrace this pluralistic world. Dupuis has divided the book into two parts: a). *historical* or *positive* and b). *synthetic & thematic.* He has three reasons to support:

> a). the current significance of religious pluralism cannot separate from the Christian roots, b). the attitude towards other religions has rapidly changed in this period that the Church needs to be aware of this new phenomenon and c). the historical problems has to be addressed in order to deal with the issue of religious pluralism (Dupuis, 1997, p. 20).

Dupuis, the pioneer of the inductive method, has written this book in order to bring up three issues: "the sense of religious pluralism; the meaning of the relational uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ; and the way of understanding the mutual complementarity and convergence between Christianity and the other religious traditions of the world" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 386). The outcome of his book and his new pioneering theology to religious pluralism has been both 'a blessing and a curse' to him.

> On the one hand, it made Dupuis a worldwide celebrity, as a never-ending stream of speaking and writing invitations attest. Dupuis gained an audience for his ideas that might otherwise have eluded him. On the other hand, the lingering whiff of scandal meant that Dupuis remained under a cloud. His

works were subjected to intense scrutiny, and in recent months he felt his Jesuit superiors had been under pressure to silence him (Allen, 2005).

2.3.2   *Dominus Iesus* and *Notification*

The CDF has published two documents (*Dominus Iesus*[7] & *Notification*[8]) concerning Jacques Dupuis' book, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism,* and his inductive theological approach to religious pluralism. Even though *Dominus Iesus* was not directly addressed to Dupuis, it is broadly believed that he was 'the primary target of the document.' The intention of the document is also "to reaffirm Catholic-Christian identity in the face of erroneous interpretations that are threatening the faith" (Dupuis, 2012, p. 72). The Church is afraid of relativism. *Dominus Iesus* "openly criticized Catholic theology of increasing 'relativism' 'subjectivism' 'Eastern mysticism; and other orientations seen as compromising the uniqueness of Jesus Christ " (Kärkkäinen, 2003, p. 205). *Dominus Iesus* (no 4) attempts to justifiably equalize 'relativistic theories' with religious pluralism. In the case of Dupuis, however, his controversial book emphasizes 'the uniqueness of Jesus Christ' and makes a clear distinction between religious pluralism and religious relativism.[9]

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[7] This document (Lord Jesus in English) was released in August 6, 2000 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Both Pope John Paul II (the head of the Catholic Church at that time) and Pope Benedict XVI or rather Cardinal Ratzinger (the head of the CDF) signed the document. Its subtitle is "On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church." This document is famously known as the restoration of the Catholic dogma on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

[8] The word 'Notification' (*Notificazione* in *Italian)* refers to "an official document of the Catholic Church issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to alert members of the church about errors, problems, or deficiencies that the CDF finds in the work of theologians" ("Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition," n.d., p. 28). Many past Notifications from CDF can be found in the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va.

[9] See details on Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 191 – 197.

Dominus Iesus is heavily criticized because of its 'exclusive and absolute

statements.' It seems to go back to Pre-Vatican II council. Dupuis expresses his

understanding that a purely *dogmatic* and a *priori* methodology is used in *Dominus Iesus*.

This document represents a serious step backwards in the ecumenical field as well as that of

interreligious dialogue. The exclusive interpretation has caused much damage in the field of

ecumenism" (Dupuis, 2012, p. 72). *Dominus Iesus* (no. 22) says: "If it is true that the

followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively*

speaking they are in a gravely *deficient* situation in comparison with those who, in the Church,

have the fullness of the means of salvation."

The CDF members were not yet satisfied with *Dominus Iesus* in their dealing with

Dupuis' inductive approach to religious pluralism. On september 4, 2000, Dupuis came to

know that a special Notification would explicitly be released and directed at his book. The first

draft of the Notification came out with the phrase 'grave errors and ambiguities.' On

December 6, 2000, Dupuis got the second draft of text from his superior with the phrase

'grave ambiguities,' lack of errors this time, to be signed and to send it back to CDF as soon as

possible. Dupuis, at first, hesitated to sign his name on the text but he did it after discussing

with his superiors. He, however, sent the text back with an attached letter, saying,

> "I understand that the meaning of my signature is that, in the future, both in
> talks and in my writings, I will have to take into account the text of the
> Declaration Dominus Iesus and of the Notification" (Dupuis, 2012, p. 72).

There are eight propositions in the Notification and each proposition begins with the

claim 'firmly believed' or 'the doctrine.' Out of the eight statements, six $(2-6, 8)$ are

found to be in errors. The declaration of Notification is that "the book contains notable

ambiguities and difficulties on important points which could lead a reader to erroneous or harmful opinions" (Preface).[10]

2.3.3   Dupuis' Defense

After hearing the news that the CDF would scrutinize his controversial book, Jacques Dupuis spent two weeks in hospital. Fr Kolvenbach S. J., his superior, advised him to cancel his academic semester so that he could prepare for his defense. He was given three months to prepare and answer questions from the CDF. Dupuis could not do anything for a year. He defended his theological stand with a response of approximately 200 pages in which it was submitted to the CDF. He had to wait for more than six months when Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) sent him a reply of 11 pages. Dupuis took another three months with another 60 pages reply. Dupuis was called by Ratzinger to meet him on September 4, 2000 and on the next day, the document *Dominus Iesus* was released. This document is believed to indirectly attack Dupuis. Six months later, a special Notification on his book also came out.

Dupuis felt that he had been treated unfairly by the CDF. Instead of discussing with him about the matter first, they sent a number of questions to him through his superior. He also realized that they (CDF) did not read his work carefully and did not understand what he meant. The premature response of CDF has damaged Dupuis' life and has blocked the

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[10] See the preface of the Congregation for the doctrine of faith on Notification on the book: *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York 1997) by Fr. Jacques Dupuis, *S.J.*

journey towards religious pluralism. Dupuis knows very well the need of the Church in Asia. He, out of his experience, comes to realize that only those who have practical experience with the Church in Asia will come to appreciate his works and his realistic approach to other religious traditions. The CDF members, however, have never encountered this real situation so they are not able to appreciate the context. William R. Burrows said, "like the wise householder of Matthew 13:52, Dupuis knew that the church needed to face the Asian reality with new ways of interpreting old doctrines" (Burrows, 2012, p. 17). Cardinal Franz König, *In Defence of Fr. Dupuis*, protected Dupuis' theological process by stating, "With its long-standing, extensive experience over centuries, one should surely be able to rely on the doctrinal congregation to find better ways of doing its job to serve the Church effectively, especially when it is a matter of breaking new theological ground" (*The Tablet* 16 January, 1999).

According to William R. Burrows, Dupuis has at least given three reasons to support his theology that goes beyond *Dominus Iesus:*

> 1). Dupuis sees Christianity as an intrinsically eschatological faith; 2). Dupuis is intensely Trinitarian, and in his Trinity, the Holy Spirit hovers over the entire process of cosmic history; 3). Dupuis increasingly draws attention to the fact that if the similarities and complementarities between the religions at the level of experience are such that words like 'revelation,' 'teacher,' 'prophet,' and 'savior' are used to denote seemingly common aspects of the several traditions, then one must take care to understand them *analogically*, not *univocally* (Burrows, 2012, pp. 115 - 116).

CHAPTER THREE

JACQUES DUPUIS' CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

3.1   An Overview of the Different Approaches in the Theology of Religions

Alan Race (1983) and Gavin D'Costa (1986) are the two Christians theologians who

introduced the tripolar typology, *Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism,* of a Christian

theology of religions.[1] These triple terms have been widespread among the scholars of

religions in the past years. Some criticisms on these positions also came out recently.[2]

Gavin D'Costa and Wesley Ariarajah are among the well-known objectors. D' Costa rejects

what he himself has proposed by saying that there is only one typology, that is,

exclusivism; "both inclusivism and pluralism are the subtypes of exclusivism" (D'Costa,

1996, p. 225). According to Ariarajah, the three positions have "increasingly become one of

the stumbling blocks to progress in the discussions on how Christians should understand

and relate to religious plurality" (Ariarajah, 1997, p. 30).

3.1.1   An Ecclesiocentric Approach: *Exclusivism*

No one would argue that Christianity was the leading religion for many centuries.

Christianity was considered as the main religion in the world in those days. Theologians

such as Saint Cyprian and Fulgentius of Ruspe viewed Christianity as the only religion to

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[1] Alan Race (1983), *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions,* London: SCM; Gavin D' Gosta (1986), *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions,* London: Blackwell.

[2] Eight major objections were written by Perry Schmidt-leukel, "Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism: The Tripolar Typology – Clarified and Reaffirmed," in *The Myth of Religious Superiority* edited by Paul Knitter, pp. 14 - 18.

salvation. These theologians narrowed down their theological viewpoints to equalize with the Church's axiom "outside the Church no salvation" (*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*) (Dupuis, 1997, p. 86). Since the Church is centered on this view, it later on comes to be known as *ecclesiocentrism*. It is also called *exclusivism* because it excludes other religions from salvation. Another famous theologian Karl Barth, after the reformation period, similarly viewed the necessity of becoming a Christian in order to be saved (Dupuis, 2002, p. 76). The Barthian approach goes a little bit further but the pessimistic emphasis on other religions is still there.

The New Testament itself did not specifically address the theological question in relation to other religions. It, however, explicitly stresses 'the need of faith for salvation' (Acts 4: 12; Jn 3: 5; Mk 16: 15 – 16). Christian writers in those days endeavored to link 'the ark of Noah' with the entrance of baptism. They therefore regarded the Church as the "ark of salvation" and eventually concluded with a statement that "outside the ark of the Church there is no salvation" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 85). The Church Fathers such as Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, and Origen also defended this standpoint. The adage "outside the Church no salvation" had run very long "from the writings of some third-century writers down to the authoritative statement made by Council of Florence (1442)" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 85). It went on and on until the discovery of the New World (1492) and the emergence of the Enlightenment[3] in the 17th and 18th centuries. Since the Church realized that it would no

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[3] The Enlightenment or the Age of Enlightenment was a cultural movement of intellectuals in the 17th and 18th centuries, which began first in Europe and later in the American colonies. Its purpose was to reform society away from irrationality; specifically, away from superstition, dogmatism of all kinds, unfounded intolerance of all kinds; and, gross abuses of power by both the Catholic Church and by despotic kings (From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment

longer be possible to hold on to this axiom, the Church called on theologians "to rediscover the entire case of the requisites for salvation" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 111). The Church, as a result, would find a new solution at the Council of Trent (1547). This Council "clearly affirmed the possibility of justification through 'baptism of desire'" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 111).

The ecclesiocentric approach, that is one has to pass through the Church in order to get salvation, has been in the mindset of many Christian missionaries for a long period of time. When Jacques Dupuis came to India as a missionary, he might probably have brought the mentality that the Church is the only place where one can get salvation. In fact, Indian Jesuit seminarians and theologians, according to William R. Burrows (2012), viewed him to be "too conservative and insistent on retaining the tradition of the early ecumenical councils and later magisterium" (p. 7). No question that Dupuis has started his religious odyssey from the traditional position. He was brought up by Catholic parents, studied at Catholic schools, and was trained in a Catholic country. Even after working in India for many years and trying to adopt an inductive method in doing theology of religions, he is still seen as a 'conservative' in his theology. In the preface of the book, *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition*, Burrows (2012) wrote:

> As a 'conservative,' Dupuis believed that the Church's teaching office is guided by the Spirit and that its doctrinal tradition is a faithful explication of the self-revelation of the Trinitarian God: Father, Son, and Spirit (p. xii).

3.1.2   A Christocentric Approach: *Inclusivism*

Anyone who claims to be a Christian follows the footstep of the person Jesus.[4]
From the very beginning of Christianity when Christians acknowledged Jesus as the second
person of the Trinity and as the man with both natures (humanity and divinity), Jesus has
been the central message of Christian missionaries. Even though there have been so many
years that Christians concentrate on the necessity of the Church, Jesus Christ is the vital
person in the Church. It was through him that the Church was founded and it is in his name
that the Church has been proclaiming. Hence, no one can deny that Christ had already been
the means and the end of Christian messages before the *Christocentric* approach came out.
In fact, Dupuis stated, "the Church, as a derived mystery and utterly relative to the mystery
of Christ, cannot be the yardstick by which the salvation of others is measured" (Dupuis,
2002, p. 77).

The *Christocentric* approach replaces the *ecclesiocentric* approach when
theologians attempt to prioritize the centrality of the mystery of Jesus Christ. This model is
also called *inclusivism*. The inclusivists' view includes other faiths in the history of
salvation; however, it still focuses on the necessity of a particular religion. Karl Rahner is
the most well-known Christian theologian in this position. He introduced the term
'anonymous Christians' in order to include non-Christians to be part of the salvation

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[4] Jesus was also called Christ, the anointing one. The person Jesus Christ who most Christians address him
never killed any person but many people have been martyred due to his name. He did not write any book but
many books have been written about Him and the most famous book is *the Bible*. This book, the bible,
contains mainly about Him and it is the best-selling book throughout history. Moreover, it is the book that
cannot be forgotten throughout centuries.

history. His concept greatly influenced the Second Vatican Council in terms of dealing with other religions.

The Vatican II's document, *Nostra Aetate* (in our age), is the first ever document of the Catholic Church that addresses other religions positively. [NA 2] declares:

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.
> She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those
> precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the
> ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth
> which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim
> Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find
> the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to
> Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5: 18f).

Though the council in its document *Nostra Aetate* is trying to open the doors to the other faiths, it still views the need of the Church in the framework of inclusivism. The *Christocentric* approach became well-known in the Reformation period among Protestant traditions but their theological standpoint, however, was still exclusivistic. For Catholic tradition, it was around the beginning of the 20th century that this view became dominant. Pope John Paul II emphasized the centrality of the mystery of Jesus Christ during his pontifical reign of the Catholic Church.[5] The Christocentric approach, for Dupuis,"implies a radical 'decentering' of the Church, which now finds itself 'recentered' on the mystery of Jesus Christ. Jesus, indeed, not the church, stands at the center of the Christian mystery; the

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[5] From 7th January 1987 to 19th April 1989 the Holy Father John Paul II gave extensive catechesis on the second article of the Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ". It consists of 85 chapters of a Christological itinerary divided into eight stages. Retrieved from:
http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01101998_p-08_en.html. on 22. 08. 2013

church, by contrast, is a derived, related mystery, which finds in him its raison d'être"
(Dupuis, 2002, p. 77).

3.1.3   A Theocentric Approach: *Pluralism*

Another aspect of religious approach is *Theocentrism*. This new paradigm which
centers on God alone is also called *pluralism*. This perspective considered Jesus as – one
way to God out of many. According to Jacques Dupuis:

> Pluralism refers to the replacement of the single universal and constitutive
> mediation of Jesus with many 'ways' or saving figures leading to God-the-
> Center. The various religions, Christianity included, represent so many ways
> leading to God, each of which, differences notwithstanding, has equal
> validity and value" (Dupuis, 2002, pp. 76 - 77).

In fact, the God-centered approach was the main message of Jesus Christ. Jesus
preached about God and his kingdom (Matthew 12:28, 32; Luke 10: 9; 17:21). He placed
emphasis on 'the kingdom of God' as evident in the gospel of Matthew which contains
several parables of his teaching (Matthew 13). However, his followers (Christians) later on
shifted his theocentric approach to the Christocentric one. Many Christian pluralists[6]
therefore urge their fellow Christians not to stick to the person of Jesus Christ but to go
beyond him.

The theocentric approach has taken over the preceding approaches (*Ecclesiocentric*
and Christocentric) as Jesus' humanistic nature is challenged through the discovering of the
historical Jesus. Jesus is no longer at the centre in this paradigm; he is not only the 'object'
(the other two approaches) but he himself is the 'subject' of the approach. Generally, this

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[6] Hans Küng, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, John Harwood Hick, and Paul Knitter

method "looks to a divine authority as the source of normative standards for all human behavior or, as Plato observed, 'God is the measure of all things' and the central aspect of all human existence (Hensel, 2004, p. 1).

Theologians attempt to equalize the theocentric approach with religious pluralism. The reality, however, is not the same. The theocentric approach insists that 'there is one God within many religions.' Thus, it does not comprise all religions since there are some religions that do not acknowledge the existence of God. It can be an obstacle to these non-theistic religions if God is at the centre of the religious discussions. The theology of religious pluralism, in fact, needs to go beyond the triple approaches: Ecclesiocentric, Christocentric, and Theocentric. All religious believers have to know that "as long as there is a variety of human types there will be a variety of kinds of worship and a variety of theological emphases and approaches"(Hick, 1982, p. 77). Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2005) summarizes these three approaches as follows:

> -Christian exclusivism would mean that saving revelation is found only within Christianity and not within any other religion.
>
> -Christian inclusivism would hold that non-Christian religions sometimes entail elements of revelation and grace that are capable of supporting a salvific life. But since – according to Christian inclusivism – all salvation is finally through Christ, the revelation to which Christianity testifies is in a unique sense superior to any other form of knowledge of God.
>
> -Christian pluralism would entail that some other religions – usually the major world religions are in a theological sense on a par with Christianity (p. 21).

3.2   Different Approaches to Religious Pluralism: A Brief Review of Selected

        Theologians

Jacques Dupuis has not been the only voice inviting the Church to appreciate

religious pluralism in the past centuries. There are also other theologians (such as Wilfred

Cantwell Smith, John Harwood Hick, Hans Küng, and Paul F. Knitter) who critically

challenged Christianity with their positive attitude towards other religions. These selected

theologians, though all have been trying to walk on the road to religious pluralism,

approached the issue differently. Most of these theologians including Jacques Dupuis,

however, stress the necessity of having interreligious dialogue in order to embrace religious

pluralism. The researcher therefore is going to briefly mention about their theological

positions.

3.2.1   Wilfred Cantwell Smith

Wilfred Cantwell Smith was a Canadian pastor from the Protestant traditions of

Christianity. Smith is well-known as 'a historian in the field of the comparative study of

religion' who emphasized *faith* as 'the common theme of all religions' and 'the quality of

the human person.' Faith, for him, is "an individual' engagement with, and participation in,

a form of life" (Livingston, 2003, p. 59)[7] in which a person is inclined to have "a total

response…..to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension" (Smith, 1979, p.

12). Faith, according to Smith, is therefore an individual response and a personal

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[7] J. C. Livingston wrote an article on "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Religious Truth in Wilfred C. Smith" in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory 4.3* (August, 2003).

relationship with God. He understood religion as "the living, vital faith of individual

persons rather than as an abstract set of ideas and doctrines" (Sonn, 2010).[8]

Smith was ordained as a minister in India where he had been serving "the

representative among Muslims of the Canadian Overseas Mission Council." He eventually

became a specialist in Islamic studies and a well-known scholar in comparative religious

studies. Smith, according to Charles Davis (1979), is "an outstanding scholar, creative

administrator and acknowledged leader in promoting mutual understanding between people

of different religious and cultural traditions." Davis further goes on:

> Smith has combined impeccable scholarship of a most rigorous kind with a
> humane vision of comparative religious studies as our religiously plural
> world of persons coming through dialogue to a disciplined self-
> consciousness of its own variegated and developing religious life (Davis,
> 1979).

3.2.2   John Harwood Hick

John Harwood Hick was a Presbyterian who was not very happy about the attitude of

fellow evangelicals towards other religions. He began his theological development as a

conservative evangelical. His religious experience changed when he moved to Birmingham.

He met different people from different faiths at work. As a result, he began to fall in love

with the subjects of theology and philosophy in which he eventually moved his major

subject from law to theology and philosophy. His philosophical approach gradually

changed during his studying and working with people from different faiths, different

cultures and different colors (Hick, 1982, p. 17). Here was where he built up his 'pluralistic

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[8] Tamara Sonn mentioned about Smith's view on faith in his article, *The Future of Islam, the Future of Humanity* (2010).

hypothesis' based on Kantian philosophy of phenomenal/noumenal distinction and started his journey towards religious pluralism.

No one can deny that he is one of the most influential comparative scholars in contemporary time. His theological standpoint is theocentric and his simple hypothesis is that all religions are different in terms of traditions, cultures, beliefs, doctrines, etc., but equal in the sense of the divine Reality. It means that the destination of every religion goes to the same place with different means, methods, and approaches. To express in other words, each religion views the revelations of the same Ultimate Reality in its own particular tradition. There should not be such an 'absolute' claim that my religion is superior or better than yours.

Hick defines religious pluralism as "the view that the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness is taking place in different ways within the contexts of all the great religious traditions. There is not merely one way but a plurality of ways of salvation or liberation" (Hick, 1994, p. 34). Ultimate Reality is Hick's main approach to religious pluralism. His assumption of religious pluralism is a way of concrete living experience. It took him years to embrace this hypothesis and required him to have a practical experience of living with other faiths in order to come to know the reality of the Divine Being. He admitted that the Ultimate Reality is beyond human's understanding. What man knows about in this world is just a partial comprehension through the limited knowledge of humanity (Hick, 1982, p. 21). Hick does not accept the 'traditional doctrines of incarnation and Trinity.' According to him, these doctrines are the

main obstacle to discuss with other faiths. He sees Christianity as "one true religion among others"(Hick, 2010, p. 17).

3.3.3 Hans Küng

Hans Küng is a Swiss Catholic theologian who challenges Karl Rahner's inclusivist approach of 'anonymous Christians.' The reason why Küng does not support Rahner's inclusivism is due to his ecclesiocentric theology. Küng questions his fellow Christians in his book, *On Being a Christian*: "If all religions contain truth, why should Christianity in particular be 'the truth?' If there is salvation outside the Church and Christianity, what is the point of the Church and Christianity at all?" (Küng, 1978, p. 99). As a result of his progressive theological view, the Catholic Church has forbidden him to teach Catholic theology.

Küng has urged the Church and Christianity to embrace religious pluralism. According to him, "all religions address man's need for redemption and perceive the Divinity" (Küng, 1978, p. 92). Küng does not deny that each religion is unique and so does Christianity. He, however, does not want Christianity to be *exclusive* but remain *unique* with a "fruitful encounter in which other religions would be encouraged to bring out what is best and deepest in them" (Küng, 1978, p. 112). Salvation, for him, occurs in two ways: 'ordinary' for 'non-Christians' and 'extraordinary' for 'all Christians.' He says, "As against the 'extraordinary' way of salvation which is the Church, the world religions can be called – if this is rightly understood – the 'ordinary' way of salvation for non-Christian humanity" (Küng, 1967, p. 51).

3.3.4   Paul F. Knitter

Paul F. Knitter, a former Catholic priest, was a well-known American Catholic theologian who has developed another concept of religious pluralism called 'unitive pluralism.' Knitter, in his approach, appreciates the uniqueness of each religion and he defines *unitive pluralism* as:

> a unity in which each religion, although losing some of its individualism (its separate ego), will intensify its personality (its self-awareness through relationship). Each religion will retain its own uniqueness, but this uniqueness will develop and take on new depths by relating to other religions in mutual dependence (Knitter, 1985, p. 9).

From this unitive pluralistic perspective, Knitter proposes the correlational theology of religions. This theology attempts to avoid using the 'absolutist' terms within the dialogue of all religious believers. It, however, recognizes 'the real differences between religious traditions' but affirms "the value and validity of this world differences" (Knitter, 1995, pp. 31 - 32). Knitter also sees the importance of having interreligious dialogue among different religions in order to come up with the 'mutuality.' According to him, "a correlational dialogue cannot begin with one religion claiming to hold all the cards, or to be superior in all respects to the others, or to have the final norm that will exclude all other norms" (Knitter, 1995, p. 16). With the affirmation that 'there are many true and saving religions,' Christianity, for him, is 'one among many ways.' He states:

> Though we Christians claim Jesus the Christ as our necessary and happy starting point and focus for understanding ourselves and other peoples, we must also remind ourselves that the Divine Mystery we know in Jesus and call *Theos* or god, is ever greater than the reality and the message of Jesus. Thus we are open to the possibility that other religions may have their own valid views of and responses to this Mystery. (Knitter, 1995, p. 9).

3.3   Jacques Dupuis' Theology of Religions

Christianity, considered to be the only religion in the ancient early time, is just one of the many religions in the world. The person Jesus, its founder, is simply one savior - out of many. He is unique and Christians portray him as the second person in the Trinity. The theological meaning of his coming into the world is to restore or save the sinful world. He preached about the kingdom of God in which it eventually became his central message. His new way of looking at society has caught attention of many people in his times. In this reliable context, we may ask: doesn't Jesus intend to save all humanity? Is it possible to hold the idea that he is the only one to redeem the world in this pluralistic society?

Jacques Dupuis, a professor at Gregorian University in Rome who spent almost half of his life in India, tries to give an answer to the currently debated issue in his theology of religions. The theology of religion or religions, for him,

> asks what religion is and seeks, in the light of Christian faith, to interpret the universal religious experience of humankind; it further studies the relationship between revelation and faith, faith and religion, and faith and salvation. Christian theology of religions thus studies the various traditions in the context of the history of salvation and in their relationship to the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Christian Church (Dupuis, 1997, pp. 7 – 8).

Dupuis' theology of religions, in general observation, is that he has a tendency to go beyond the inclusivistic view of Karl Rahner (anonymous Christians) and the Vatican II's positive attitudes towards other religions. On the one hand, he has defended inclusivism in terms of seeing Jesus Christ as a unique mediator by developing "a comprehensive theology of religions which is avowedly Christian and indeed inclusivist" but on the other hand, he has also explored "several avenues of thought that may lead beyond the traditional

frontiers of inclusivist theology as he is willing "to venture beyond the well-trod paths marked out by some of his inclusivist predecessors" (Merrigan, 2000).

Dupuis, whose theological reflection is based on his practical experience in Asia (especially in India), is the forerunner of the inductive approach to the study of religions. He perceives Jesus as a protagonist in the fulfillment of God's plan but not in the way the traditional Christians look at him. He is able to see the issue of revelation and salvation in a more complex and broader perspective than he finds in the church's teaching. He is convinced that divine revelation is not limited to the Christian tradition, but it extends to other religious traditions as well. His central approach to the person Jesus is that even though Jesus is chosen as a unique savior, God also works in other religions. Jesus, for him, is just one way of going to God or gods. In his perspective, Jesus Christ must not be a substitute for the Father, and thus faith-interpretation must be "God-centered." Christian faith ought to go beyond the human person Jesus but centers on God instead.

But while Jesus is seen not in place of God, Jesus remains a universal savior. The universality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ is one of the central issues of Dupuis' Christological theology vis-à-vis other religions. To understand Jesus Christ as 'the universal savior' in a unique way is a difficult task especially in the current context of pluralistic religion (Dupuis, 1996, p. 192). From a Christian viewpoint, it cannot be denied that as "revealer and redeemer, Jesus is one and universal but in practice the visible paths to salvation have remained many" (O'Collins, 2013, pp. 182 – 183). In connection with this matter, Dupuis interprets:

"The uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the universal meaning of the Christ event represent more than a central belief for Christian tradition. To be sure, uniqueness and universality are understood here in the strict sense. We traditionally affirm that Jesus is unique not only as any person whom God would choose as the vehicle of a divine self-revelation and self-manifestation would necessarily be unique – so that consequently any divine revelation resulting from this would also be unique – but in the sense that, by and in Jesus, God effected a self-manifestation in a manner that is decisive and can be neither surpassed nor repeated" (Dupuis, 1996, p. 92).

Dupuis never regards Jesus as an 'absolute' savior. In fact, he does not like to use the terms 'absolute' and 'definitive' in his theological discussions The term 'absolute' is attributed to the Ultimate Reality or God. He therefore said that the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is neither *absolute* nor *relative*; it is rather *constitutive* and *relational*. While he refers 'constitutive' as the universal significance of "the paschal mystery of the death-resurrection of Jesus' which constitutes 'a bond' between God and humankind, he relates 'relational' as "the universal significance of the Christ-event into the overall plan of God for humankind" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 305).

The universality of Jesus is also clearly shown in the letters of St. Paul. The apostle Paul preached beyond the Jewish territory. He understood that the message of Jesus is universal. Many passages in his letters illustrate the universality of Jesus Christ. Alain Badiou mentioned Pauline universalistic view in his book, *St. Paul among philosophers,* which in a way may help us understand Dupuis:

> Pauline universality is the universality of the inclusion of the Greek in the Jew, and this—here was Paul's revolutionary gesture—without having to pass through the narrow gate of the Jew, of circumcision or the law. God's promise to the Jews was fulfilled in Christ, a Jew, whom Paul announces is available to all, Greek or Jew, so that in the end we will all be Jews, spiritually, Jews not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, having all come to acknowledge and to be acknowledged by the God of Israel.

Everyone would be brought under the wing of the One God of Israel. Paul's universalism is the universalism of a monotheist who calls on all people to acknowledge the One God and who claims that the One God makes all people one. This is the universalism of conversion to something quite concrete (Badiou, 1997, p. 3).

Dupuis' understanding of the universality and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is a very unusual approach. He neither intends to shy away from the orthodox teaching of the Magisterium nor opposes it. His pluralistic approach of still holding on the necessity of Jesus Christ does not condemn other religions. It is his wishes, however, that the Church needs to open its door to other religions.

3.4   Dupuis on the Biblical Foundation of Religions

The Bible does not provide a clear-cut answer in dealing with the current issue of religious pluralism. *The Bible Foundations for Mission* (1983) written by Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller comes up with five points in which the authors point out that the biblical reference to other religions is quite negative.[9] Both positive and negative attitudes can be found in the letters of the Apostle Paul. He is very pessimistic about the people who do not recognize God (Romans 1: 18 – 32) and at the same time he is optimistic about the Gentiles and pagans (Acts 17: 22 – 34). The biblical negative attitude towards other religions needs to be reinterpreted in this age. It is a time to search the message of God "who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

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[9] These five points can be found in Donald Senior & Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983, pp. 345 – 347; See also Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 29.

As regards the biblical reference, the first thing that strikes Dupuis is the different covenants that God has established with his people. The 'covenant' that God made with Abraham and Moses in the Old Testament was attributed to the chosen people. Israel was known as 'the people of God.' In fact, the establishment of the covenant with Israel was to identify them as 'the people of God.' Dupuis said Israel who started from the experience as "the covenanted people of God discovered the transcendence of God the Creator who made all things" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 31). When the new covenant in Jesus (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25) is made in the New Testament, the phrase 'the people of God' is not only referred to Israel but it attributes to all humankind. Even this, it has to be noticed that the primary mission of Jesus is towards the people of Israel. He claimed to have been sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 14: 24). He ordered his apostles not to go 'among the gentiles' and not to enter the 'town of the Samaritans' but to 'go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matthew 10: 5 – 6). The limited mission of Jesus might be due to the circumstances in Israel in his times.

On the other hand, the mission of Jesus also went beyond the border of the general Jewish attitude towards other faiths. There are a number of quotations that Jesus refers to non-Israelites. Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for water (John 4: 1 – 6); he admires the 'faith' of a centurion who is a pagan (Matthew 8: 10); and he takes the Good Samaritan as a model for the Jews to follow (Luke 10: 29 – 37). With all these statements, it can be concluded that Jesus was a revolutionary Jew who tried, as much as he could, to keep the Jewish laws and applied them according to the situations of his times. His progressive movement eventually caused his life.

Another essential person for all Christians in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul. Paul was also a revisionist who preached about Jesus' crucifixion – a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (I Corinthians 1: 23). His encounter with the crucified and risen Christ on the way to Damascus, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles, marked a turning point of his life. Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan (2009), in their recent book, *The First Paul*, have adequately expressed it: *Paul's Damascus experience not only transformed Paul, but also transformed, necessarily, his way of seeing Jesus' death. It was no longer simply an execution, but a revelation* (p. 130). Paul in the first century already experienced the diverse religions. While his fellow pious Jews abstained from all food, refused to enter into idol sanctuaries, and did not allow any Jew to sell their animals to Gentiles, Paul accepted 'social engagement from idolatrous compromise differently' (1 Corinthians 8:4; 10:19 – 20). Don N. Howell (1995) concludes that there are four areas of Paul' encounter with the religious pluralism in his day: *A Theocentric Christology, The Employment of Pagan Religious Terminology, Idolatry and the Church in Corinth, and Syncretism and the Church in Colossae* (p. 93).

Both the two religious leaders (Jesus & Paul) who had religious experience in the first century and Jacques Dupuis who experienced religious pluralism in this 21st century have to face the official body of the religion in their times respectively. The Jews believed that they are the only chosen people of God, but the teaching of Jesus and Paul included non-Jews which is not acceptable to the Jewish society at that time. Similarly, Dupuis had to confront the investigation of the CDF because of his unconventional notion that the 'path to salvation' is not meant for only Christian. Dupuis concludes:

It must be remembered that the Bible was not directly concerned with the questions which today's theology of religions is seeking to answer in the present context of religious pluralism. The revealed word was primarily concerned to stress in the Old Testament privileged situation of Israel, and in the New Testament that of Christians; the other religions faded away in comparison. Nevertheless, the ambiguity between negative and positive data notwithstanding, a lead is found in the sacred books for a positive approach to religions, firstly and principally in the biblical faith in God's universal involvement with humankind in a dialogue of salvation (Dupuis, 1997, p. 51).

3.5   Jacques Dupuis' Approaches to the Theology of Religious Pluralism

Each religion has to be seen with its own cultural and historical context. The way of

Jesus is surely different from the way of Buddha. But it is not necessary to assume that their

goal is not the same. They might have an equal point with different ways. Every religion,

therefore, ought to be seen in a positive viewpoint rather than a negative one. Just as

different kinds of flower beautify a garden, different religions should strengthen the faith of

the believers. This is what Dupuis understands the existence of different religions.

According to him,

The religions of the world are expressions of the human openness to God. They are signs of God's presence in the world. Every religion is unique and through this uniqueness, religions enrich one another. In their specificity, they manifest different faces of the supreme Mystery which is never exhausted. In their diversity, they enable us to experience the richness of the One more profoundly (Dupuis, 1997, pp. 199– 200).

God (who Christians address their Supreme Being) has communicated with his

people 'in many and various ways' before communicating through Jesus Christ, the one

who became flesh through the Word (John 1:1). He has made 'various covenants' with

humankind before making with Jesus as 'the new covenant.' In every time, "God has taken

the initiative at the encounter between God and human beings" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 254). It would therefore be the case that just as God has taken the initiative in communicating with Abraham and Moses in Judaism, and Jesus in Christianity, He might also be the One who took the initiative in inspiring Buddha in Buddhism and Muhammad in Islam.

According to Dupuis, religious pluralism is not just 'a matter of fact; it is also 'a principle of God's relationship' with humankind. He therefore embraces religious pluralism both as *de facto* "a fact of history" and *de jure* "a raison d'être in its own right" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 11). He understands that religious pluralism:

> Has its roots in the depth of the Divine Mystery itself and in the manifold
> way in which human cultures have responded to the mystery. Religious
> pluralism needs to be welcomed, with thankfulness, as a sign of the
> superabundant riches of the Divine Mystery which overflows to humankind
> and as an outstanding opportunity for mutual enrichment, 'cross-
> fertilization' and 'transformation' between the traditions themselves
> (Dupuis, 1997, p. 198).

With this theological perspective, Dupuis adopted the inductive approach as an exemplar to follow in his study of religious pluralism. In order to reach this realistic approach, he has developed different models within the framework of Christology.

3.5.1 A Trinitarian-Christological Model

In doing theology of religions, not many Christian theologians have based their theory on the doctrine of the Trinity even though the doctrine itself has been the main issue in Christian theology. Raimundo Panikkar is credited to be the pioneer of the Trinitarian approach in dealing with other religions when he wrote the book, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man (1973).* Many proponents (Michael Barnes (1989) and Rowan

Williams (1990) who later on follow this method and were influence by his idea. The *Inter-Faith Consultative Group of the Board for Mission and Unity of the Church of England* (1984) also emphasized the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity in their report in which they found out that the *filioque* phrase[10] is the main problem. A Trinitarian approach to the theology of religions, according to Pan-Chiu Lai (1994), can be described as "an endeavour which seeks to integrate the centrality of Christ and the freedom of the Holy Spirit within the framework of the doctrine of the Trinity" (p. 43). This approach goes beyond Christocentric and Theocentric approaches since it also welcomes the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Hence, neither God nor Jesus is at the centre of the Trinitarian approach; its centrality would be the unity of the Triune God.

This method of doing theology of religions, in which Catholic theologians pay more attention, compared with Protestant theologians, is "deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, particularly the doctrine of the Trinity together with the doctrine of the incarnation" (Lai, 1994, p. 43). Many tend to see this approach as too much inclined into Christianity and irrelevant in discussing with other faiths. But there are also a number of theologians who place emphasis on this approach. Jacques Dupuis is not the last to be among those who see the positive aspect of the Trinity. In contrast to John Hick who insisted that 'the traditional doctrine of Trinity' is the main obstacle to have interreligious dialogue with other faiths, Jacques Dupuis maintains this traditional dogma by highlighting that

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[10] Filioque clause or phrase is 'a theological term' that indicates whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father or both the Father and the Son. The word filioque literally means 'and son.' The Nicene Creed confirms that "the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son." This clause has become a controversy in the Church in which "it eventually led to split between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in 1054" (Houdmann, 2009, p. 87).

"the divine Trinity is experienced, though hiddenly and 'anonymously' wherever human beings allow the Divine Reality that impinges upon them to enter into their life. In every authentic religious experience the Triune God of Christ revelation is present and operative" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 277).

Dupuis proposed a new model in relating to the Trinity. He realized that it is unavoidable for Christian theology not to deal with the person Jesus Christ; a Trinitarian Christological model would be one of the best approaches in doing theology of religions. According to him,

A Trinitarian Christological perspective, in particular, allows us to recognize the ongoing presence and activity of the Word of God and of the Spirit of God. Such a perspective makes it possible to affirm a multiplicity of "ways" and "routes" toward human liberation or salvation, in keeping with God's plan for humankind in Jesus Christ; it likewise opens the way for recognizing other "saving figures" in human history (Dupuis, 2002, p. 164).

This model draws attention to the 'interpersonal relationships between Jesus and God whom he calls Father and the Spirit whom he sends.' Among these three persons, Jesus is the only one who personally experienced the living humanity concretely. This might be the reason why Dupuis imposes an inductive method for his approach to religious pluralism. The connection between the Trinitarian Christological model and the inductive approach is that the Ultimate Reality whom Christians call God incarnates in the person of Jesus by the word of the Holy Spirit. The historical Jesus, who has been the central faith of Christians, might not have been a real human person if there has been no communal work of God the Father and Holy Spirit. Dupuis continues to claim:

"Where the dimensions of salvation history are concerned, the Trinitarian model will make it possible to lay stress on the universal presence and action of the Word of God and of the Spirit of God throughout human history as mediums of God's personal dealings with human beings independently of their concrete situation in history. The relatedness of the action of the Word

and of the Spirit to the punctual historical event of Jesus Christ will not thereby be overlooked or forgotten (Dupuis, 1997, p. 212).

In the context of Christian theology, God has communicated with his people in different ways. The most perfect communication was the sending of his Only Son. The Logos became flesh through the Spirit. The incarnation of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit can never be separated. Jesus Christ, 'the high point of God's personal involvement with humankind,' is the main *exemplar* of Dupuis' inductive approach to religious pluralism. Jesus who fully possesses a divine nature has taken a human nature to be part of humanity. He becomes a human being in order that man can see *abstract* God through him. His human image, the fruits of the work of God and the Holy Spirit has given humanity to experience the mystery of God. This divine mystery is present in every religion.

The Trinitarian-Christological model recognizes 'the saving economy of the triune God in other religious traditions.' The Trinitarian approach to salvation is one of the various ways of God's multifaceted relationship with his people. Christian theology, however, should never separate God's self-disclosure in the particularity of Christ's event from the Trinitarian God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For Dupuis,

> The Trinitarian Christology model, the universal enlightenment of the Word of God, and the enlivening by his Spirit make it possible to discover, in other saving figures and traditions, truth and grace not brought out with the same vigour and clarity in God's revelation and manifestation in Jesus Christ. Truth and grace found elsewhere must not be reduced to 'seeds' or 'stepping-stones' simply to be nurtured or used and then superseded in Christian revelation (Dupuis, 1997, p. 388).

The Trinitarian approach opens the door to other traditions. Just as the incarnate Word in the person Jesus Christ fulfills Christian revelation, the non-incarnate Word that

enlightened Buddha brings revelation to Buddhist tradition. Buddha or Muhammad is the second person of the Trinity in its own tradition. In this situation, just as there is a Trinitarian Christology, there might also be a Trinitarian Buddhalogy. Through the cooperative working of the Trinity either with Jesus or Buddha or Muhammad, etc., the divine plan of salvation comes.

3.5.2 A Theocentric-Christological Model

It seems that neither Theocentric nor Christocentric approach, for Dupuis, is the right way to study religious pluralism. In general, Christocentrism means "an approach towards the doctrine of revelation in which the person and work of Christ plays a determining or central role." When applied to the study of religions, Christocentrism narrowly means "salvation or revelation comes through Christ alone" Theocentrism, in general, means that God is at the centre of theology. But when this term is discussed in the theology of religions, it means "one-sidedly Unitarian" (Lai, 1994, p. 37). Dupuis who has treasured the salvific work of Christ in which, he believes, this saving deed is done by the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), combines these two approaches to become one. He neither accepts that Christ is the only way to salvation nor does he reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, therefore, he comes up with *A Theocentric-Christological Model*. For him, this model is:

> to open up a theological perspective which, while holding fast to faith in
> Jesus Christ as traditionally understood by Christianity and church tradition,
> would at the same time integrate, in their difference, the religious
> experiences of the living religious traditions and to assign to those traditions
> a positive role and significance in the overall plan of God for humankind, as
> it unfolds through salvation history (Dupuis, 1997, p. 1).

Jacques Dupuis' Theocentric-Christological Model is clearly reflected in his book, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (1991). This model not only keeps Christian identity but at the same time it also openly welcomes theological discussion with other traditions. It is through this approach that Dupuis is normally addressed as an inclusive pluralist or pluralistic inclusivist rather than a 'real' pluralist. Neither the Church nor Christianity plays any role in his inclusive pluralism; but the person Jesus whom he perceives as a 'unique' mediator does act as a protagonist without taking the place of God's position. It is advisable quoting his understanding of God and Jesus, as he wrote:

> Jesus is the center – not as God's replacement, but because God has set him there as mediator and the path to God. To be sure, the humanity of Jesus is of the order of 'signs' and 'symbols' since it is in him that God works the divine self-communication (Dupuis, 1991, p. 190).

In another place, he elaborates on this:

> To say that Christ is at the center of the divine plan for humanity is not to consider him as the goal and end toward which the religious life of human beings and the religious traditions of humanity tend. God (the Father) remains the goal and end. Jesus never replaces God. Jesus Christ is at the center of the mystery as obligatory Mediator, constituted by God and no one else, as the way leading to God. Jesus Christ is at the center because God, not human beings or Christianity, has placed him there (Dupuis, 1991, p. 110).

The divine relationship between God and Jesus starts from the very beginning of the mystery of incarnation. The incarnation of Jesus is one of the biggest events that God has shown his people. As the instrument of God, Jesus sacrificed his life for mankind. So he becomes the *centre* of Christian faith and perceived as the second person of the Trinity. Dupuis said, "the unique closeness that exists between God and Jesus by virtue of the

mystery of the incarnation may never be forgotten, but neither can be unbridgeable distance

that remains between the Father and Jesus in his human existence" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 92).

All in all, Dupuis would end up his Theocentric-Christological Model as follows:

> In a Christian theology of religions, christocentrism and theocentrism go
> hand in hand; indeed, they are inseparable. There can be no Christian
> theocentrism without christocentrism; but neither can there be a genuine
> christocentrism that will not at the same time be theocentric (Dupuis, 1991,
> pp. 10 –11).

3.5.3 A Christocentric-Christological Model

Jacques Dupuis mentions in his article, *Religious Plurality and the Christological*

Debate (1990), that "the Christological problem has always been at the heart of the

Christian theology of religions." As the rapid increase of religious plurality in which it

greatly requires the practice of inter-religious dialogue, the Christological questions are

being raised in the context of religious pluralism. As stated by Dupuis, "it is generally

agreed that the New Testament bears an unequivocal witness to the finality of Jesus Christ

as universal Saviour of humankind." (Dupuis, 1990). In the gospel of John 14:6 Jesus

declares himself to be 'the way, the truth, and the life.' According to Dupuis, Jesus does not

say that he is the goal or the end; only God can be the end. He therefore says:

> Christocentrism never places Jesus Christ in the place of God; it merely
> affirms that God has placed him at the centre of his saving plan for
> humankind, not as the end but as the way, not as the goal of every human
> quest for God but as the universal mediator of God's saving action towards
> people (Dupuis; 1990).

Paul the apostle mentions in his first letter to Timothy (1 Tim 2:5) that Jesus is the

'one mediator between God and men.' No one has taken his position as a bridge to God. He

is a special person whom Peter expresses, "there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Yet, Dupuis interpretes this passage by focusing on Jesus' uniqueness:

> The mediation of Jesus Christ as 'the way' to the Father does not mean that other religious traditions cannot offer their adherents 'paths' of salvation through which the constitutive way of Jesus Christ might be operative, albeit in secret and imperfectly; nor that the founders and saving figures of other religious traditions cannot serve in an unconscious and incomplete way as 'pointer' toward the salvation realized in him who is personally constituted by God as the only way to him (Dupuis, 2002, p. 42).

After taking the form of humanity, he belonged to a particular tradition and a specific culture. Indeed, "he is a singular and unique man rooted in a culture and a tradition" (Hall, 2009, p. 200). He "represents humanity by having fulfilled the form of the human, a form in which the form or image of God in which human beings have been created shines clearly forth and the humanity is transfigured" (MacQuarrie, 1990, p. 60). After all "the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is a window through which we may see the beauty of the multi- faceted grace of God hidden in the postmodern world here and now" (Literature, 2008, p. 114).

3.5.4 A Regnocentric-Christological Model

The Christocentric approach of Christianity does not stop with the person Jesus Christ. Christian faith goes beyond the humanistic nature of Jesus. He is assumed to establish the earthly visibility of the kingdom or the Reign of God. In Jesus, the Reign of God is present on earth. Since it is believed that Jesus is also the one who founded the Church, the Church is therefore identified with the Reign of God present in the world. Here

the Reign of God needs to be distinguished into two parts: the Reign of God as the

'already' through the coming of Jesus Christ and the Reign of God as the 'not-yet' while

waiting for the eschatological fullness. Dupuis puts it in this way:

> God has instituted his Kingdom in the world and in history through Jesus
> Christ. It could be said that he instituted it in two stages. For, in fact, the
> Reign of God is already instituted through the earthly life of Jesus, through
> his words and deeds; it has, however, been fully instituted through the
> paschal mystery of his death and resurrection. But the Reign of God
> instituted in history in Jesus Christ must develop to eschatological fullness at
> the end of time (Dupuis, 1997, p. 334).

The union and the difference between the Church and the Reign of God is clearly

demonstrated by Dupuis in the following words:

> The unity and the difference of the Church and the Kingdom seem to be
> understood as the relation between the seed and the plant, between the
> beginning and the end, between the pilgrim Church which is the Kingdom in
> becoming and the Church in heaven which represents the kingdom in its
> fulfillment (Dupuis, 1997, p. 337).

It is true that one of Jesus' main messages is 'the kingdom of God.' The whole life

of Jesus, including his preaching, his mission, his thought, his words and actions, focuses

on the Reign of God. The theme of his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7) is the Reign

of God; many of his parables refer to it. His most important message, after all, is the life

that he paid to establish the Reign of God.

> The reign of God which God had begun to institute in the world through the
> earthly life of Jesus became really present through the mystery of his death
> and resurrection. There is no break in continuity between the Kingdom-
> centered character of Jesus' proclamation and the Christocentrism of the
> kerygma of the apostolic times (Dupuis, 1997, p. 342).

The meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at Hong Kong in 1992 discussed about the universality of the Reign of God. The Reign of God can be present anywhere: at work, at school or at the market. The Reign of God is there 'where God is accepted, where the Gospel values are lived, where the human being is respected.' The FABC concludes that 'Regnocentrism' needs to have Christocentrism because "it is in Jesus Christ and through the Christ-event that God has established his Kingdom upon the earth and in human history" (FABC, no. 64).[11]

3.5.5 A Soteriocentric-Christological Model

A Christian theology of religious pluralism, according to Dupuis, must hold that Jesus Christ is 'at the centre of God's plan of salvation for humankind.' This salvific act of God is an historical event that has taken place 'in the concrete history of humanity.' The person Jesus is the main character of God's self-communication to mankind. Jesus is "the medium of God's encounter with human beings. The man Jesus belongs, no doubt, to the order of signs and symbols; but in him who has been constituted the Christ by God, who raised him from the dead (Acts 2: 36), God's saving action reaches out to people in various ways, knowingly to some and to others unknowingly" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 191).

Dupuis interpreted Paul Knitter's theology of religions by claiming that "all religions propose a message of salvation or human liberation and share the same potential of becoming ways of salvation for their followers" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 42). Salvation or redemption is the core message of many religious founders. It is at the heart of Christian

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[11] Text in *FABC papers*, no. 64 (Hong Kong, 1992), 31.

message and Jesus is at the centre of the divine plan for salvation. Salvation is not just for

the future to attain but it is also meant for the present time. Dupuis succinctly reflects

Knitter's theology in these words, "the *soteria* he advocates calls for the global

responsibility and shared commitment of the different religious traditions for 'eco-human

well-being'" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 80).

3.5.6 A Logocentric-Christological Model

It can be said that any Christology begins with the word *Logos*. Jesus was from the

logos and it is the *logos* that the salvation of humankind starts through the incarnation in

Jesus. Here is the beginning of the existence of a Logos Christology. Logos Christology is a

very biblical ground in the Prologue of the Johannine Gospel. It emphasizes that Jesus

Christ becomes the self-manifestation of God and it is 'the Word of God who saves.' In

John 1:1, it is said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

Word was God." In logos Christology, "the *subject*, i.e. the one who becomes incarnate, is

the divine Logos" (O'Byrne, 2010, p. 34).

Through the *logos* Christology, Dupuis goes further to develop the importance of

the Word of God. He later on comes up with a logocentric-Christological model. This

approach for Dupuis would be that "Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, remains at the center

of God's plan of salvation and of its unfolding in history. Logocentrism and

Christocentrism are not contradictory to each other, on the contrary they are

complementary (Dupuis, 1997, p. 191). Jesus Christ, the incarnated Word of God, is

overlooked in this logocentric model. Aloysius Pieris expresses beautifully in the following

words:

> He who reveals, who saves and transforms is the Word himself. 'The Christ'
> is a title; a title does not save. As for Jesus, he is 'he in whom Christians
> recognize the Word, as seen, heard and touched by human senses (Pieris,
> 1994, p. 60; Dupuis, 2002, p. 81).

It should be kept in mind that the Logos incarnated in Jesus (John 1:1 –4) has

already been present before the coming of Jesus. In this case, the Logos exists earlier than

the concrete presence of the humanistic person Jesus. For this, Dupuis said:

> A logocentric Model is being built in which the Word and the man Jesus
> seem to be separate. And the door is opened to two economies of salvation,
> one through the Word of God encountered in Jesus Christ for Christians, and
> the other through the Word as such for the 'others' (Dupuis, 2002, p. 81).

3.5.7 A Pneumatocentric-Christological Model

Another aspect of seeing Christology is the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit

of God has been the forerunner of the human-incarnated Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit that God

has actively been working in other traditions. Dupuis stated, the Holy Spirit is the one

> who 'inspires' in people belonging to other religious traditions the obedience
> of saving faith, and in the traditions themselves a word spoken by God to
> their adherents. In short, the Holy Spirit is God's necessary 'point of entry'
> into the life of human beings and of peoples (Dupuis, 1997, pp. 196 –197;
> Dupuis, 1990).

Following this expression, Dupuis has proposed a *Pneumatocentric-Christological*

Model. This model emphasizes that the Holy Spirit also plays an important role in the

history of salvation. The Holy Spirit must not be ignored in the theology of religions. The

model that centered on the Holy Spirit cannot separate from the model that centered on

Jesus Christ.

> The action of the Spirit and that of Jesus Christ, though distinct, are
> nevertheless complementary and inseparable. Pneumatocentrism and
> Christocentrism cannot, therefore, be construed as two distinct economies of
> salvation, one parallel to the other. They constitute two inseparable aspects,
> or complementary elements, within a unique economy of salvation (Dupuis,
> 1997, p. 197).

The impact of the Spirit that reveals in the working presence of God's saving action

in Jesus Christ is amazing. It is the abstract entity of the Spirit of God that has been with the

human Jesus since the divine plan for salvation. It is also the Spirit with the *Logos* that

incarnated the person Jesus into the form of humanity. Dave Dean Capucao (2010) states:

> Jesus, who is empowered by God's Spirit, offers universal salvation.
> Moreover, Spirit Christology affirms that the salvific activity of God's Spirit
> has been at work in the world already from the beginning because the Spirit
> is not only the Spirit of Jesus but above all the Spirit of God. The Spirit-
> motivated Jesus model acknowledges that the Spirit is operative outside the
> Christian sphere and is open to other mediations of God (p. 73).

The Holy Spirit becomes God's 'point of entry.' God seems to use the Holy Spirit

whenever He wants to manifest Himself to his people. It is the Holy Spirit that has been the

channel of opening up a new way of Christian theology of religions. The third person of the

Trinity (the Holy Spirit) is as important as the second person (Jesus Christ). Without the

Holy Spirit, there would have been no incarnation and if there has been no form of

humanity, there would have been no paschal mystery as Dupuis expressed:

> The specific function of the Spirit consists of allowing persons to become
> sharers, before or after the event, in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ's
> death and resurrection (GS 22). Thus, through the power of the Spirit, the

Jesus Christ event is being actuated through all times; it is present and active in every generation (Dupuis, 2002, p. 83).

A Spirit Christology would bring a more positive impact in dealing with other religions compared to a *Logos* Christology. But Dupuis said that "the Spirit Christology cannot stand without the *Logos* Christology." The Spirit and the Logos are 'the two hands of God" (St. Irenaeus). Dupuis concludes:

> A pneumatic Christology must stress, on the one hand, the active presence of the Spirit throughout the human story of the man Jesus and, on the other, the sending of the Spirit to the world by the risen Christ. It must, likewise, show that Christocentrism and pneumatology belong together in the same economy of salvation (Dupuis, 1997, p. 197).

Since Dupuis consistently kept on saying the necessity of the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, the most appropriate way to address his theology is the 'inclusive pluralism' or 'pluralistic inclusivism.'

To sum up: all these models are interrelated, Trinity, Theos, Logos, Pneuma, Soteriology, etc. It allows Dupuis to show the universal presence of Christ as mediator in religions who do not recognize Christ by name.

3.6   One God – One Mediator – Various Ways

Dupuis acknowledges that there is only One God whom people from various cultures attempt to address him in different terms. The God of Christians is equal with the Ultimate Reality. According to him, only God or Infinite Being is 'absolute.' No finite and contingent beings including 'the humanity of the incarnate Word' can save humanity (Dupuis, 2002, p. 165). In his encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio* (80) Pope John Paul II wrote

that "God alone is the absolute." Jesus, therefore, is not an 'absolute' savior but he is indeed a 'universal' savior whom God has granted the special gift of 'universal saving significance.' 'Absolute' is still 'the primary and ultimate agent of human salvation' and God is still "the primary cause of salvation" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 167). The apostle Paul said, "In Christ God was reconciling the world" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus whom Dupuis prefers to address as 'constitutive' rather than 'absolute' savior becomes a secondary savior. "God remains beyond the man Jesus as the ultimate source of both revelation and salvation. The revelation of God by Jesus is human transposition of God's mystery; his saving action is the channel, the efficacious sign or sacrament of God's saving will and action" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 176).

The personal identity of Jesus Christ who is 'the only begotten Son of God' is still unique; his position as a unique mediator does not necessarily condemn other traditions. However, Christians in this pluralistic world have "to see in the other religious traditions valid 'paths,' 'ways,' or 'channels' through which the goal of union with the God of Jesus Christ may be reached or through which the God of Jesus Christ communicates personally and shares his own life with the followers of those traditions" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 183). They, on the one hand, must keep on announcing Jesus Christ as "one in whom the reality and saving power of God is incarnate and available" but, on the other hand, they need to "open to the possibility/probability that there are others whom Christians can recognize as sons or daughters of God." Moreover, they can commit fully to Christ but "at the same time genuinely open to others who may be carrying out similar and equally important roles" (Knitter, 1995, p. 35).

Apart from the human-incarnated Jesus, there are various ways to salvation or to God. The God of Jesus has revealed himself in various ways to different people in their respective situations. And wherever God wants to communicate with his people, He always takes the initiative. God will always keep contact with humankind in space and time. The mystical person of Jesus is not the first and will not be the last event that God has showed his marvelous deeds to all humanity. The manifestation of God will ever take place, either in the form of personal or impersonal, as long as humankind exists. Jesus' personally taking the human form, according to the Bible, is to get back what has been lost. The relationship between God and man was lost after Adam's disobedience to God (Genesis 3: 1-24). Here is where humankind needs *salvation*.

Since Dupuis perceives the salvation in Jesus as 'relational,' he acknowledges the existence of different paths to salvation. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen wrote that Christian salvation, for Dupuis, has "to do with the search for and attainment of fullness of life, wholeness, self-realization and integration that is the triune God" (Kärkkäinen, 2003, p. 213). God is the final goal for all Christians. "God's personal presence to human beings in Jesus Christ reaches its highest and most complete sacramental visibility through the word revealed in him and the sacraments based on him" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 318; 2002, p. 188). It does not mean that there is no other ways but, for Christians (the followers of Jesus), Jesus' way is the best. It is true that "Jesus was a divine manifestation; but he was only one among others" (Dupuis, 1996, p. 19). In contradiction with S. Mark Heim's notion but similar to John Hick's view, Dupuis states, "the various religious traditions represent various paths leading, though differently, to the common goal" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 313).

3.7   Jacques Dupuis' Portrait of Jesus

Dupuis in an Asian context persistently keeps on saying that the implication of the day-to-day experience with the personal life of Jesus, in the Asian mentality, has taken over his doctrinal teachings. Asian people stir up interest about Jesus' personality, his life, and his mission rather than his dogmas. It is 'the person Jesus who needs to be presented not the doctrines about him' to the Asian people. After all, Jesus, for Dupuis, is 'at the centre of the divine plan for humanity' and 'the mediator in whom God and human beings are irrevocably bound together because he is personally one and the other' (Dupuis, 2004, p. 3).

3.7.1   Jesus as a Mediator

The usage of the term 'mediation' in the Old Testament is not the same that has been used in the New Testament. Moses is regarded as 'intermediary' to be 'a mediator between God and the chosen people' in the old covenant. But Jesus is the 'mediator of a new covenant' between God and humankind in so far as "he unites divinity and humanity in his person in such a way that in him the Divinity and humankind have become united in a permanent bond" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 168). The 'mediation between God and human beings through incarnate Word – Jesus Christ – is 'unique' in the Christian tradition. It is clearly shown in the first letter of St. Paul to Timothy: "there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human" (1 Tim 2: 5). Dupuis does not condemn other religious traditions by claiming that Jesus is the *only* mediator; he also talks about the 'participated mediations.'[12] When he refers Jesus as a mediator, he is inclined to

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[12] The details of Jacques Dupuis on the 'participated mediations' can be found in his book, *Christianity and the Religions*, pp. 185 – 190.

be in the inclusive pluralism or pluralistic inclusivism. He attempts to draw all other

traditions to participate or include in the mystery of Jesus Christ. Christopher McMahon

said:

> The notion of 'participated mediations of salvation' is the central for Dupuis
> as he constructs an inclusive pluralist approach to the theology of religions.
> Participated mediations maintains the integrity of other religious traditions
> as vehicles for the salvation of their adherents, while also remaining
> Christocentric by emphasizing that Christ is the definitive source of
> salvation and is present within those traditions (McMahon, 2007, p. 225).

The 'various religious traditions' may function as mediations and the 'mediation of

the mystery of Christ' can take place in a variety of ways:

> While God's grace is certainly one, it is visibly mediated in different ways –
> differing from one another not only in degree but in nature. This means that
> the religious practices and sacramental rites of other religions are not on the
> same level as the Christian sacraments deriving from Jesus Christ; but it
> does also mean that we must attribute to them a certain mediation of grace
> (Dupuis, 2002, p. 188).

3.7.2   Jesus as the 'Christ'

In his whole life, Jesus never identified himself with God the Father. Nor did he

claim to be 'a political Messiah.'[13] He rather associated himself with the mysterious

suffering, the 'servant of God' (Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 53). Jesus who was given the title 'Christ'

has become the model for all his followers. Different people from different cultures

perceived him in different ways. In the Asian perspectives, he is known as "the teacher of

true wisdom, the way of the spirit, the teacher of truth, the spiritual guide, the enlightened

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[13] Jews wanted to make Jesus as their long-waited Messiah but he refused. Jews were the ones who were oppressed in those days. They were therefore praying to God to send them a 'Messiah' who can liberate them from the miserable life.

one, and the one who shares the *kenosis* of the Asian peoples" (Dupuis, 1999). Jesus' title

as the 'Christ' has greatly influenced his followers who were later called 'Christians.' [14]

(Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)

The term 'Christian,' however, seems to have been misused. Only Jesus had been

given the title 'Christ' who became the model for all his followers. In this case, Jesus is 'the

only true Christian' who is the 'Christ.' To quote the expression of Friedrich Wilhelm

Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) who wrote *Der Antichrist* in1888, "In truth, there was only *one*

Christian, and he died on the cross." What he said seems to be somewhat 'true'[15] even

though his main intention was to attack Christianity. He might totally be anti-Christianity

but his idea has challenged all the followers of Jesus Christ to reexamine their identity as

believers.

Any follower of Jesus who claims to be a Christian can never be like Jesus Christ.

Christians can imitate Jesus' mission, his attitudes, and his ways of living but they can

never function like him. The researcher likes to quote Mahatma Gandhi who said, "I like

your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." This

statement illustrates that Christians do not do or act what Jesus Christ has done. Gandhi

therefore addressed Christians as follows:

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[14] The term "Christian' normally is used to refer to 'the follower of Jesus Christ. There are three times quoting in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16) with this meaning. Actually, the word 'Christian' derives from the term 'Christ' and the title 'Christ' means literally 'anointed one.' The word is used to apply to the person Jesus because he was *anointed*. The original term for 'Christ' comes from the Greek word *Christos* which is itself a translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*. The only person who has been anointed as the *Messiah* is Jesus and no one else can be like him. He is a true Christian in the sense that on one can become like him. The term 'Christian' here means more than 'the follower of Jesus.'

[15] The researcher uses the word 'true' here to signify that 'Christians,' the followers of Jesus Christ will never understand exactly what Jesus wanted to mean 2000 years ago and they will not be able to grasp his idea completely.

God did not bear the cross only nineteen hundred years ago, but He bears it
today, and He dies and is resurrected from day to day. It would be poor
comfort to the world, if it had to depend upon a historical /god who died two
thousand years ago. Do not then preach the God of history but show Him as
He lives today through you (Gandhi, 1963, p. 198; Dupuis, 1991, p. 21).

3.7.3   Jesus as an Asian

According to Peter C. Phan (1996), 'Asian theology' began to emerge in the 19th

century as "Asian theologians attempted to articulate their Christian faith in the context and

in terms of their own cultures and sociopolitical conditions" (p. 399). The 'Asian theology'

for Aloysius Pieris needs to focus on two elements: liberation from poverty and mutual

understanding of deep religiousness. Doing theology in Asia indeed requires a portrait of

Jesus as an Asian. This is what Dupuis did when he was in India. He wrote an article with

the title, *Jesus with an Asian Face (1999).* In this article, he emphasized that 'the mystery

of Jesus Christ ought to be presented in the Asian context.' To express in other words, 'the

need of developing a contextual Asian theology'[16] is enormously important in doing

theology of Asia. A new way of presenting Jesus to the people of Asia is needed (Dupuis,

1999). Many Asian theologians, including the Synod Fathers and FABC, are aware of this

significant project. They would put forward the role of Jesus as the priority of their

discussion in the meeting.

Peter C. Phan who similarly wrote an article with the title, *Jesus the Christ with an*

Asian Face (1996) also stresses the important role of Jesus in his work. He begins his

theological reflection with a biblical question "who do you say that I am" (Matthew 16:15).

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[16] Jacques Dupuis (1999), "Jesus with an Asian Face" http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/dupuis_1.htm

In his article, he identifies the problem of Asia. Like Aloysius Pieris, Asian theology, for

Phan, has to mainly address the two common challenges of Asia: poverty and deep

religiousness as well as communism and socialism. Phan also mentions how Asian

theologians with Asian eyes, thought, and mind depict the person Jesus differently. Jesus,

for him, should not be seen as a 'colonial Christ' who is a white and all-powerful man

(Phan, 1996, p. 57).

The social and practical works of Jesus are very much highlighted rather than his

mysterious relationship with God the Father in the Asian theology. It means that Asian

theologians are more interested in the humanity of Jesus as a perfect model than his divinity

as the second person of the Trinity. In this way, Christianity in Asia is trying to open the

floor to the other traditions. According to Dupuis, Jesus Christ ought to be depicted to the

people of Asia with an Asian face or Asian identity. His portrayed Jesus is very similar to

Jacob Kavunkal's (Jesus) who said:

> Jesus of Asia, where the vast majority of people are suffering in one form or
> the other, though deeply religious, is the one who participates in their
> suffering. In Asia, Jesus' identity cannot be separated from the suffering
> poor. He is the one who empowers them in their suffering to rise up in their
> dignity as human persons. And this is the image of Jesus that the gospels
> present, constantly moving to restore the dignity of human persons who are
> suffering marginalization in one form or other (Kavunkal, 2008, p. 81).

3.8   Jacques Dupuis' Religious Pluralism in Asian Perspective

The continent of Asia is 'the cradle of all world religions.' (Phan, 2011, p. 2). Even

though Christianity is said to have been born in Palestine, part of West Asia or the Middle

East, many Asians considered it as 'a foreign religion' or 'a Western religion.'

Furthermore, the historical presence of Christianity in Asia especially in India (where

Jacques Dupuis worked 36 years) went far back to the apostolic times. Christianity is also

believed to have reached China as early as the 7th century. While Christianity is found

dominant in the two countries: the Philippines and East Timor, all other Asian countries are

in the hands of other religions: Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, etc. It can be seen

clearly that religious pluralism as a fact of history (pluralism *de facto*) is rich in Asian; it is

still a question, however, whether religious pluralism has already been a raison d'être in its

own right (pluralism *de jure*).

Jacques Dupuis' inductive approach to religious pluralism has taken both as *de facto*

and *de jure*. Dupuis might have understood that Asian people do not have any problem with

religious pluralism at all. Religious pluralism has been in existence since time immemorial;

it is a phenomenon that many Asians have 'grown up with and have been very much used

to.' Edmund Chia[17] even said that the experience of religious pluralism is already "a

constituent element of the Asian psyche" and "an existential reality for Asians, most of

whom live in societies characterized by multiculturality and multireligiousity" (Chia, 2007,

p. 57). Chia therefore does not agree with anyone who says that religious pluralism is 'a

Western concept.'

In fact, religious pluralism which has just emerged in the West has long been in

Asia. Many Westerners who never have any personal encounter and a lived experience with

other religious traditions are inclined to oppose it. This is one of the reasons why the CDF

do not accept Dupuis' theology of religious pluralism. Their lack of the concrete experience

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[17] Edmund Chia is Assistant Professor of Doctrinal Theology at the Chicago Theological Union, Chicago, IL, USA and was the Executive Secretary of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

disabled them to comprehend the very far-sighted work done by the rich experience of

Dupuis. They would have a different view if they have experienced like Dupuis.

It is true that Christianity in many of Asian countries were planted along with the

Western colonization. With Western mindset and European mentality, Christian

missionaries in those days came to Asia with the aim of converting Asian people into

Christianity. This is a general purpose of doing mission work 500 years ago. After so many

years, many Asian countries began to search for their identities and challenged European

power. Here is the birth of 'Asian theology.' Asian Christians, however, have been

accustomed to and gradually adopted the European mentality. The concept of religious

pluralism can be used as an example. In general, Asian Christians are very familiar with

other religious traditions. They have been living hand in hand with different faiths for

centuries. But when Christianity in Europe faces the plurality of religious traditions, the

churches in Asia are not at peace either. The comparison between these two continents

could be that while Christianity in the West attempts to view religious pluralism as a

challenge, Christianity in the East considers it as a day-to-day reality.

In general, "Asian context consists of two massive realities: dehumanizing poverty

of immense masses of people and the plurality of religious traditions" (Dupuis, 1997, p.

19). From these two realistic experiences among Asian people, a new way of theologizing

needs to be developed. In response to the huge poverty of Asian population, Dupuis

proposed that Asian churches should imitate the Latin American churches to solve these

problems. The praxis of a 'liberation theology' would best suit the Asian context. Similarly,

in their reactions to the plurality of religious traditions, Asian churches ought to emulate the

African approach to theologizing.[18] Aloysius Pieris has identified that it is important to combine and unify the praxis of both liberation and interreligious dialogue in the Asian context.

3.8.1   Interreligious Dialogue – One Way of Doing Religious Pluralism

According to Dupuis, the role of dialogue is "the necessary foundation of a theology of religions." For him, "the praxis of interreligious dialogue is a point of departure for doing theology of religious pluralism. The aim here is not to develop some new universal theology which levels out all differences, but to promote a dialogical openness and mutual enrichment through conversation" (Dupuis, 1997, pp. 18 – 19; Javier, 2008, p. 144). The process of interfaith dialogue, for Doris Donnelly (2003), "does not begin with propositions and theories but with experience and relationships" (p. 136). On April 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II also highlighted "the importance of interreligious dialogue in today's world where believers of different religions and cultures live side by side" in his speech on the 450th anniversary of Gregorian University (Collins, 2003, p. 28 – 29). The same Pontiff wrote in his Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990):

> Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. It is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills. Through dialogue the Church seeks to uncover the 'seeds of the Word', a 'ray of that Truth which enlightens everyone'; these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of humankind" (n. 56).

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[18] The Church in Africa has to adapt to the African cultures. Like Asia, the nations there have variety of cultures.

In fact, dialogue is a very important factor in every field: in politics, in societies and in religions. Religiously, through the dialogue believers can appreciate other faiths and grow deeper in their own faith. In the case of Christianity, Christians will be more critical of their religion if they discuss their faith with other believers. World Council of Churches (WCC) (n. 20) states, "Dialogue is a means of building bridges of respect and understanding." In dialogue there is a mutual respect for other religions and a common understanding of misconception about other religions. It is also important "to respect the integrity of religious traditions in the variety of their structures and organizations" (WCC n. 24). In dealing with the dialogue, Pope Paul VI said "Christ himself exemplifies the dialogue of salvation in which God himself comes to us in meekness, trust, and patient witness, respecting our freedom and our limitations" (Kendall & O'Collins, 2003, p. 9).

In his article on *Jacques Dupuis and Asian Theologies in Religious Pluralism,* Peter C. Phan has articulately expressed that "there are four forms of dialogue for Dupuis: dialogue of life, of common work, of theological exchange, and of spiritual communion" (Phan, 2003, p. 81). As Dupuis ventures to take the inductive approach, he gives the impression of stressing the first two. Almost half of his life was in the missionary field where there was the plurality of religious traditions. As a result, his perspective on interreligious dialogue, according Marianne Moyaert, is "a process of give-and-take in which an experience of mutual enrichment for the dialogue partners is made possible" (Moyaert, 2011, p. 61). Pope Paul VI seemed to agree with Dupuis as he suggested that in dialogue with non-Christians, 'the common ideals such as religious liberty, human brotherhood, sound culture, and civil order' should take priority. The themes of dialogue

should be "concerned with suffering and happiness, life and death, speech and silence, and more explicitly religious topics such as prayer, worship, and mystical experiences" rather than doctrines or dogmas (Kendall & O'Collins, 2003, p. 10).

The theology of religious pluralism in an interfaith context, for Dupuis, "does not look at the praxis of interreligious dialogue merely as a necessary condition, premise, or even a first step; it further maintains a dialogical attitude at every stage of the reflection; it is theological reflection *on* and *within* dialogue" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 19).

3.8.2   Liberation Theology – A Model for Doing Religious Pluralism in Asia

The reason of Dupuis' strong emphasis on the praxis of interreligious dialogue is that it paves the way for the theology of liberation. In the Asian context, it is urgently needed to liberate people from oppression, poverty, and injustice. Liberation theology that "seeks to implement the principles of the 'kingdom of God' on earth by liberating, or setting free, social, economic, ethnic, and religious structures that are perceived to be oppressive" (Turner, 1994, p. 1) would be the best model to follow in the midst of the massive poverty. Such a theology normally 'starts with a liberating praxis', that is, the reflection on the concrete context of injustice and oppression "in order to lead thereafter to a theological reflection in the light of revelation" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 18). The combination of the two models (liberation theology and theology of religions) is required here. Dupuis, who prioritizes 'the model of theologizing' from praxis to theory, from orthopraxy to

orthodoxy, and from lived experience to divine revelation, is among one of the pioneers who attempt to link the two theologies.[19]

The living experience of human oppression as the 'first act' has urged Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino, O.P., the founder of liberation theology, to reflect on the mission of Jesus in dealing with the poor. For him, theology must follow the spirit of time with the application of the cultural context. The theology therefore must create 'a new understanding of the world' for a specific society in the hope of solving the problem of the place in question. In his book, *A Theology of Liberation (1988)*, Gutiérrez wrote:

> Theology is an understanding which both grows and, in a certain sense, changes. If the commitment of the Christian community in fact takes different forms throughout history, the understanding which accompanies the vicissitudes of this commitment will be constantly renewed and will take untrodden paths (p. 9).

Similarly, the concrete encounter with other religious traditions as well as the day-to-day meeting with the suffering people in Asia as the 'first act' have brought Jacques Dupuis to rethink over his prejudiced view on the other religions and challenge the authentic teaching of the Church on 'the preferential option for the poor.' Aloysius Pieris, an expert on Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Asia, has collected all his articles into a book entitled, *An Asian Theology of Liberation (1988)*. The central theme of this book is that 'Asian liberation theology must focus on both Asian poverty and Asian religions.' Poverty alone has brought Latin American theologians to work on liberation theology in South America. But both massive poverty (a radical empathy with the central realities of Asian

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[19] Paul Knitter is also one of the leading theologians who try to combine the two models of theology.

life) and plurality of religions (a living involvement with Asian culture) need to be addressed in Asian context for doing liberation theology (Pieris, 1988, p. 52).

The head of the Catholic Church, the Vatican, has never supported the liberation theology from the very beginning of its emergence. Only after the first ever Pope from Latin America (Pope Francis) was elected on 13 March, 2013, the Vatican is trying to view liberation theology in a positive way. In his article, *Vatican Readmits Leftist Thinking*, James Bone wrote:

> Under its first Latin American pope, the Vatican is recognizing the strengths of the movement that gave priority to the poor. Francis has eschewed the pomp of the papacy -- refusing to wear red papal slippers and insisting on living in the Vatican guesthouse rather than the luxurious papal apartment overlooking St Peter's Square (Bone, 2013).

The present Pontiff seems to endeavor to put into practice Jesus' teaching of the first Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5: 3). In fact, the words of God in the perspective of liberation theology are very much alive in the lives of the people. The words of Jesus in the Bible do not remain in the past but they are really present in the suffering, in the marginalized, and in the poor. Dupuis puts it in this way:

> In the context of liberation theology, biblical hermeneutics does not consider the sacred book to be a mere memory of a past word. The word is being 'reactualized' in the present history, thus making present history part of the ongoing history of salvation. Some theologians speak, in this connection, not only of a 'fuller sense' of scripture, but of a 'surplus of meaning,' insofar as God's original word is becoming actualized anew in the present (Dupuis, 2002, p. 172).

While the 'praxis of liberation' is the 'first act' in the context of liberation theology, the 'praxis of interreligious dialogue' is the 'first act' in the context of religious pluralism (Dupuis, 2002, p. 171). In this way, the theology of religious pluralism is imitating the process of liberation theology. Both begin with the praxis, the actions, and the experiences. From there, the divine revelation of the biblical messages is applied to the day-to-day encounter with the culturally plural context.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITIQUES TO JACQUES DUPUIS' RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: PROBLEMS AND
CHALLENGES

4.1   The Common Claims of Religious Pluralists

In this section, the researcher critically discusses some of the most common topics

that religious pluralists have claimed in their journey towards religious pluralism. As

Jacques Dupuis is considered to be one of the members, his pluralistic approach cannot

escape from this pluralist claims.

4.1.1   Ultimate Reality

Jacques Dupuis is in the position with John Hick and all theologians who hold that

the end of all religions is the 'Ultimate Reality.' According to this standpoint, every

religious believer from different traditions will have the same goal at the end. The

'Ultimate Reality' will be their final goal. Each religion, however, views this

incomprehensible term differently and expresses it in various ways: God, Absolute,

Brahman, Allah, Buddha, Spirit and so on. For the theistic traditions, the 'Ultimate Reality'

is conceived as "personal and manifested alternatively by different figures" (Dupuis, 1997,

p. 258). Christians attempt to personalize 'Ultimate Reality' to identify with the Trinity in

which the second person, Jesus, becomes a real person through the incarnation. Krishna

takes the form of humanity in Hindu tradition and Jews experience Yahweh of Israel as

personal in Judaism. On the contrary, 'Ultimate Reality' is also seen as 'non-personal' in

some religious traditions; Buddhism and Chinese religions are such examples. After all,

'Ultimate Reality' "lies beyond 'personae' of the theistic traditions as well as beyond the

'impersonae' of the nontheistic, providing a model for upholding the equality of the various

traditions in their differences" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 257). God, Yahweh, Allah, Brahman,

Nirvana, and so on are "the different terms with which the various traditions articulate a

human experience of Ultimate Reality; the reality is the same and the experiences of equal

value, notwithstanding the divergences which characterize them. All religious ways are

equally salvific because they all tend to the same Ultimate Reality" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 254).

Dupuis concludes:

> The religious traditions of the world convey different insights into the
> mystery of Ultimate. Incomplete as these may be, they nevertheless witness
> to a manifold self-manifestation of God to human beings in diverse faith-
> communities. They are incomplete 'faces' of the Divine Mystery
> experienced in various ways, to be fulfilled in him who is 'the human face of
> God.' (Dupuis, 1997, p. 279).

The problem of this pluralist' approach, including that of Jacques Dupuis is that it

wants to explain the 'Ultimate Reality' within each context. In the case of Dupuis, he tends

to identify the 'Ultimate Reality' with the Triune God and at the same time, he stated that

"the Real *in itself* remains in all events beyond all manifestations of it in human

consciousness through the personae or the impersonae" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 258). If 'Ultimate

Reality' is beyond human comprehension and the 'personae' entity of theistic traditions,

why many religious traditions view IT in the personae form? If there is only one 'Ultimate

Reality,' how is it possible that the doctrines from different religions are contrary to one

another?

4.1.2   Salvation

'Salvation' is another mainstream theme that religious pluralists have insistently

focused on. The trend of the theology of salvation has to be reviewed in recent years as

believers from different faiths gradually come to meet. There have been various stages of

salvation in the history of humankind. Dupuis claimed that "all the divine manifestations

that preceded the Christ-event are essentially orientated towards it and find in it their

meaning and fulfillment" (Dupuis, 1977, p. 155). 'Salvation' is regarded as "the

fundamental transformation of our human existence. This transformation is available

through all the great religious traditions" (Capucao, 2010, p. 117). Dave Dean Capucao

hightlighted John Hick's theology by stating that "salvation is transformation from

centeredness in the *self* to centeredness in *Ultimate Reality* or noumenal 'Real.' John Hick

believes that all religions are in essence teaching the same thing and have the same goal at

the end. Christianity therefore does not have exclusive claims to salvation" (Capucao, 2010,

p. 117). Capucao goes on saying that "salvation is something that is beyond human reach

but only comes to man through divine intervention and initiative. Deliverance is the

gracious working out of God's own salvific purpose for his people and does not depend

upon the merits of the people" (p. 108).

Salvation, according to Dupuis, is the primary issue in Christian tradition. The way

he perceives salvation is that the incarnate Jesus has been God's perfect act of the salvific

figure but there are also other 'paths' of salvation. His perspective on salvation matches up

with this pluralist claim: "God saves people through their own tradition even as he saves

Christians through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the way for Christians while the respective

traditions constitute the way for the others" (Capucao, 2010, p. 117). Salvation, however, is not Dupuis' first issue in his theological approach to religious pluralism. He would prefer expanding salvation in a broader sense when he comes to discuss it with other faiths. His theological perspective "searches more deeply, in the light of Christian faith, for the meaning in God's design for humankind of the plurality of living faiths and religious traditions" (Merrigan, 2000). He would rather follow the modern view of salvation as follows:

> Many contemporary models of salvation agree that salvation is rooted in experience, in the context of people's lives, within social and cultural patterns. Salvation can be spoken of in ordinary language, the language of dialogue with people, and of experiences of specific liberating events of well-being, happiness, peace, relief, justice, freedom, and etcetera. These are concrete human experiences interpreted in faith as gifts of God because ultimately, they are brought about by God" (Capucao, 2010, p. 108).

The critique of this pluralistic claim is that it sounds too theistic or even too Christian. Even if Dupuis recognizes the salvation through Jesus as 'a total liberation,'[1] it is still not the best way to begin with when coming to the table of interreligious dialogue. There are some religions that do not focus on humanity or the world as Paul Knitter described:

> There are religious traditions which are not that concerned about the state of humanity or of the world, for they understand their ultimate and meaningful goal to be beyond this world in some other realm, or away from this world within the confines of the human heart (Knitter, 1995, p. 48).

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[1] The total salvation means that Jesus not only comes to liberate humankind from sin but he also "brings Good News to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4: 18).

4.1.3   Love

Love is another topic that religious pluralists are inclined to talk about. It appears to be one of the most suitable approaches in the context of religious pluralism since many religions emphasize the teaching of love and love is a very practical issue as well. In Christian traditions, it is believed that "God has entered into the life of a person in self-disclosure and manifestation through the acts of love or agape in action" (Dupuis, 2002, p. 193). Peggy Starkey,[2] in her article *Agape: A Christian Criterion for Truth in the Other World Religions*, makes an effort to discover the existence of the 'brotherly love' (known as agape in Christian tradition) in other religious traditions through the study of their scriptures. She finally concludes that each religion supports *agape* but in different ways. Love for her is an action or something that a person does rather than an emotion (Starkey, 1985, p. 448).

Not much different from Starkey, Dupuis expressed the subject of love in the following way:

> The practice of love is the sure criterion by which to recognize that a person has listened to the word of God and opened his or her heart to it. The practice of agape is the reality of salvation, present and operative in human beings in response to God's self-disclosure and revelation (Dupuis, 1997, p. 323).

Dupuis has further quoted Jesus' expression of love: the love of God and the love of neighbor go together (Luke 10: 25 – 28) and the brotherly love (agape) even extends to the love of enemies (Matthew 5: 43 – 48). Jesus' first and greatest commandment is about love

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[2] Peggy Starkey is assistant professor of religion at Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.

(Matthew 22: 37 – 39). Dupuis stated that 'love is universal.' It can be found in various traditions. The commandment of love is clearly seen in Jewish scriptures (Leviticus 19: 17 – 18). Love is used several times in the Qur'an. According to Starkey, "The Hindu Scriptures call for the action for *agape* described as acts of compassion, justice, respect, generosity, uprightness, and selflessness towards *all*" (Starkey, 1985, p. 451; Dupuis, 1997, p. 324). She added that "The Buddhist must not only treat friends and neighbors with *metta* (love), but also one's enemies should be treated with loving kindness" (Starkey, 1985, p. 454; Dupuis, 1997, p. 323).

The criticism on this pluralistic claim is that it is too humanistic an approach. Any religion from the transcendent background needs to personify God. In principle, love has to be personal, reciprocal, and practical with actions. To show the divine love, the God of the Christians has to take the form of humanity in the person Jesus Christ. This practical experience of love supports Dupuis' way of perceiving other religious traditions. His love for the people and the fascination of their multi-cultural background has inspired him to spend 36 years of his missionary life in India. According to Robert Blair Kaiser (2003), "he even took his vacations in India, exploring the country alone on a motorcycle" and never dreamed of leaving India (p. 222). Without having a deep love for the people, the culture, and different religions in reality, Dupuis might have not been emboldened to develop his inductive theological methodology.

4.1.4   Compassion

The fourth common subject that religious pluralists claim goes to 'compassion.' A British author Karen Armstrong[3] wrote a book entitled, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (2011). Many of her works are related with compassion and the Golden Rule. As a result, she won the 'TED prize'[4] in 2008 in which she created 'the Charter for Compassion'[5] in the following year. In her particular book mentioned above, she espouses the importance of having compassion in all religions and how religious believers should put it into action. She said, "all faiths insist that compassion is the test of true spirituality and that it brings us into relation with the transcendence we call God, Brahman, Nirvana or Dao. Each has formulated its own version of what is sometimes called the Golden Rule: *Do not treat others as you would not like them to treat you"* (Armstrong, 2011, p. 1). For her, being in other's shoes is the first thing a person should do and every religious person should practice. That is the reason compassion is extremely important. To be compassionate means "to endure with another person, to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes, to feel her pain as though it were our own, and to enter generously into her point of view"(Armstrong, 2010, p. 6).

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[3] Karen Armstrong is a British author and commentator whose books are mostly on comparative religion. She used to be a Catholic religious sister who held a conservative theological view but her theology changed to liberal after leaving the sisterhood.

[4] TED (known as Technology, Entertainment, and Design) is 'a global set of conferences owned by the private non-profit Sapling Foundation' under the slogan 'ideas worth spreading.'

[5] The Charter for Compassion is a document that "transcends religious, ideological, and national differences" and urges the people of different religious traditions in the world to embrace the core value of compassion: http://charterforcompassion.org/the-charter/#charter-for-compassion

It is suitable to link her centrality of compassion with Dupuis' inductive approach to religious pluralism. Even though compassion was not Dupuis' core means to the interreligious dialogue, his strong emphasis on the concrete living experience is seen as possessing a compassionate heart in his day-to-day experience with the poor. In his controversial book, Dupuis acknowledges that when he searched for the biblical texts to support his Christian theology of religious pluralism, he would attempt to find a "generous theological evaluation of the other religious traditions of the world" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 30). In fact, in the Asian context Dupuis' perspective on Jesus agrees with Jacob Kavunkal'a notion of Jesus. Kavunkal said:

> In Asia Jesus identifies himself with the outcastes, condemned to all sorts of menial jobs, including carrying human excreta, with the aborted baby girls because of the preference for boys, with the women subjected to violence in every imaginable way, with the indigenous people, dispossessed of their land and victims of exploitation. The Asian mind can identify itself with a self-emptying Christ who came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45; Philippians 2: 7), who is shepherd of the lost (John 10: 1 – 18) (Kavunkal, 2008, p. 82).

4.2   Religious Pluralism vs Religious Relativism

Nowadays, the school of pluralism and the school of relativism have drawn attention of many religious believers. Many have approached these two schools synonymously. In fact, they are not the same. Paul F. Knitter who is the editor of the book, *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration,* has enumerated six points of the general agreement on religious pluralism after the conference at Birmingham. The number *four* of the 'six principal ingredients' states that "pluralism does not imply relativism." Religious pluralists do not claim that "all religions are essentially the same" or "all religious beliefs or practices are equally

valid" but they do assert "the broad validity of the many religions" (Knitter, 2005, p. xi). Furthermore, the number *two* & *three* of the pluralist consensus indicate that religious pluralists do not deny Ultimate Reality or Truth as 'the object of religious quest' but they do recognize that IT is beyond human comprehension and all religious traditions with its own context attempt to view IT in different ways (Knitter, 2005, pp. x - xi). Hence, religious pluralism "focuses on the viability of different religious perspectives on Ultimate Reality" (Pojman & Rea, 2011, p. 673)

Relativism, on the other hand, views that "what is right or wrong and good or bad is not absolute but is instead variable and relative, depending on the person, circumstances, or social situation" (Safra & Aguilar-Cauz,, p. 913). According to this relativistic theory, "there is nothing absolute" and therefore "everything is relative." And since "everything is relative, all is equally valid" (Griffin, 2005, p. 228). From this hypothesis, religious pluralism emerges as "a thesis about differences of religious *truth-claims.*" For religious relativists, "*truth* itself is relative and plural" (Pojman & Rea, 2011, p. 673).

The concept of religious pluralism and religious relativism is quite different. Religious pluralism does not necessarily lead to religious relativism; in return religious relativism cannot become religious pluralism as long as it claims that 'there is no absolute truth and everything is relative." Joseph Runzo has differentiated these two schools in his article, "Pluralism and Relativism" as follows:

> While the pluralist attempts to solve the problem of religious pluralism by
> setting aside conflicting truth claims and emphasizing a universality and
> unity of all religions, the religious relativist attempts to resolve the problem
> of religious pluralism by accepting these conflicting truth claims as an

appropriate manifestation of transcendent/human interaction (Runzo, 2010, p. 71).

Some theologians including Pope Benedict XVI do not recognize the difference between these two schools. One of the reasons he powerfully attacked Dupuis' pluralistic approach was his interpreting of religious pluralism as religious relativism. Religious relativism, he said, is "the greatest problem of our time." Before his pontifical election, Benedict strongly addressed his fellow cardinals in the following words:

> Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be "tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine", seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires (Benedict XVI, 2005; Rausch, 2009, p. 32).

But I wish to suggest that it is not religious relativism that Dupuis has developed in his pioneering theology. What he has endeavored to attain is to embrace religious pluralism, not religious relativism. His pluralistic approach remains in the doctrine of the Trinity and focuses on the necessity of the person Jesus Christ. As a consequence, Dupuis is well-known as an inclusive pluralist or pluralistic inclusivist. He cannot be a religious relativist since he believes that there is Ultimate Reality and Jesus Christ is One way to this Reality.

4.3   Religious Pluralism vs Universalism

One of the major challenging schools of thought to religious pluralism is universalism. The view of this school has changed in the religious context of Christianity.

The older view of universalism, emerging in the second century, claimed that "salvation would come after a temporary period of punishment" (Rhodes, 2007, p. 178). The later view of universalism, however, affirms "the ultimate salvation of all humans" and rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment (Eliade, 1987, p. 145). According to this theory, everyone will be saved in the end and no matter how bad a person is; all will go to the same place. The main concern of universalism is the subject of salvation. The duty of Universalists therefore is 'to tell people that they are already saved.' In general, "universalists stress the use of reason in religion and modification of belief in the light of the discoveries of science" (Safra & Aguilar-Cauz,, p. 1117).

Religious pluralism, on the other hand, refers to "the belief in two or more religious worldviews as being equally valid that accepts multiple paths to God or gods as a possibility" (Houdmann, 2002). For Dupuis, the theology of religious pluralism "searches more deeply, in the light of Christian faith, for the meaning in God's design for humankind of the plurality of living faiths and religious traditions with which we are surrounded" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 10). He concluded, "Religious pluralism in principle rests on the immensity of a God who is love" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 387).

The difference between the school of religious pluralism and universalism is clearly explained by Sam Welbaum, a researcher who holds the idea that 'the God of the Bible is true.' He differentiated the two schools as follows:

> Pluralism sees the Divine as ineffable and each religion as an equally valid attempt to interpret it. Universalism sees only Christianity as correct, yet God, in his love and by the work of his Son chooses to redeem everyone, regardless of religion. For the pluralist, all religions are equally valid paths

to salvation or are about equal in terms of effectiveness in guiding their followers to their respective goals; for the Universalist, however, Christ makes all beliefs equally valid paths for salvation (Welbaum, 2011).

Welbaum further quoted some passages in the Bible as an example. Jesus, in the gospel of John (John 14:6) says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The pluralists, on the one hand, perceives this verse as "a truth relative to the Christian interpretation of the Divine" but the Universalists, on the other hand, take it as 'absolutely true' (Welbaum, 2011).

The French philosopher, Alain Badiou, who wrote about Paul the apostle in a book entitled, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism.* Badiou who sees Paul as 'one of the first theoreticians of the universal' and a political philosopher rather than as a saint, states that "Universalism is always the result of a great process that opens with an event. To create something universal is to go beyond evident differences and separations" (Miller & Badiou, 2006).[6] The great event of the mystical encounter with the resurrected Jesus created a change in the life of St. Paul. What Badiou expressed in this book is that the resurrection of Jesus could be just a 'myth' but Paul's transformation is not; it is a reality. In the book, Badiou said:

> Its [Paul's concept of the universal] bearing, in a mythological context [religion] implacably reduced to a single point, a single statement (Christ is resurrected), pertains rather to the laws of universality in general. This is why it can be called a *theoretical* break, it being understood that in this instance 'theoretical' is not being opposed to 'practical', but to real (Badiou, 1997, p. 108).

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[6] Alain Badiou answered the interview of Adam S. Miller & Alain Badiou, "An Interview with Alain Badiou: Universal Truths & the Question of Religion" in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture.*

One cannot consider Dupuis as a Christian Universalist or a religious relativist. Dupuis is neither a theologian who holds that 'all humanity will eventually be saved through Christ' nor a person who believes that 'there is no absolute truth.' He is rather an inclusive pluralist or a pluralist who attempts to embrace religious pluralism with the conception of holding Jesus Christ as a universal savior; at the same time he is an optimist who opens the door to the possibility of other religious traditions in God's salvific plan for humankind. In his understanding of the universality of Jesus Christ, Dupuis declares that "salvation is at work everywhere; but in the concrete figure of the crucified Christ the work of salvation is seen to be accomplished." It does not mean that "God's revelation in him be complete and exhaustive – which it is not and cannot be; but in relation to the universal process of divine revelation which occurs through concrete limited manifestations" (Dupuis, 1997, p. 328 – 329).

4.4   Religious Pluralism in Myanmar

4.4.1 General Background

Myanmar is famously known as "a perfect ethnological museum or a melting pot" (Ling, 2005, p. 11). The government officially acknowledges that there are eight major groups among the 135 ethnicities with more than two hundred dialects in the country.[7] It is, in terms of ethnicity, one of the richest countries in the world. Due to its diverse tribes and cultures, it is a big challenge to unite this diversity under an umbrella of one nation. This is the main reason why the central government has encountered intermittent uprisings of

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[7] Eight major ethnicities are Burman, Kayin, Kachin, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan.

discontented ethnic groups. Each ethnic group wants to be independent because they want to keep their ethnic identity. After gaining independence from the British rule, the Burmans (the largest tribe in the country, approximately two-thirds of the total population) have been in control of the country and have occupied the majority of seats in the ruling military government. On account of this position, the minority groups (Kayin, Kachin, Mon, Kayah, Shan, Rakhine, and Chin) have not been satisfied with the military government. These ethnic groups accused the government of trying to 'implement a Burmanization policy' in the country. (Topich & Leitich, 2013, p. 3). That is why, for many decades they have been fighting for the independence in their own territories. In fact, some of these ethnic groups (for example Kayah) were even "granted autonomy via the 1947 constitution with the right of succession following a 10-year period" after the agreement (Topich & Leitich, 2013, pp. 2 – 6).

With regard to the aspect of religion, Theravada Buddhism is the main belief of the people in Myanmar. Eighty-nine percent of the population embraces this religion in which most of them belong to the Burman tribe. This major ethnic group cannot easily convert to other religions because they see Buddhism as linked with their social and cultural background. They think that Buddhism is the only religion of their tribe and if one of them happens to convert to Christianity, that person is considered not only to have committed "an act of disloyalty to Buddhist society and to the nation" but the person is also seen to have abandoned his or her 'socio-cultural identity' (Ling, 2005, p. 13). With this deep-rooted mentality of the people, a well-known statement from the Burman Buddhists

emerged "to be a Burmese (Burman) is to be a Buddhist."[8] Indeed, this major ethnic group

never separates religion from nationality. For them, "religion cannot be forsaken without

giving up nationality; in other words, the fact of embracing the religion of another people is

equivalent to becoming a member of the same social or political body" (Bigandet, 1996, p.

4). And for many, "being Buddhist is an important part of being Burmese, and monks, the

most venerable members of society, are beyond reproach."[9]

According to Samuel Ngun Ling, even though, in 2005, the military government

declared that "there is freedom of worship and no discrimination on religious grounds,"

Buddhism is still the 'favored religion' in the eyes of the government from the very

beginning of its arrival. (Ling, 2005, pp. 12 - 13). Apart from the British colonial period,

the Burmese government has long seen Buddhism as their national religion. Their policy is

"one dominant ethnic group (Burman), one united country (Myanmar), and one religion

(Buddhism)" (Berlie, 2008, p. 1). As the researcher belongs to an 'un-favored religion'

(Christianity) and a minor ethnic group (Kayah), he has been one of the victims under the

military government. He has personally witnessed the confiscation of lands and schools that

belonged to Christianity. The Burmese military has constantly fought against ethnic

minorities and destroyed schools, hospitals, places of worship, houses, and "the primary

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[8] The statement is quoted by K. T. Tun Gottingen, "Authority and Freedom of Action in the (Burmese) Buddhist Tradition," on p. 223 of the book, *Tradition and modernity in Myanmar: Culture, social life and languages* and by Samuel Ngun Ling, *Communicating Christ in Myanmar*, p 57. This statement is supposed to apply to the tribe of Burman, not all people in Myanmar. A Burmese in this sense is attributed to the tribe, not to the citizen.

[9] "Punk rockers break Myanmar's silence on religious attacks," in *Bangkok Post*: Retrieved from http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/363116/punk-rockers-break-myanmar-silence-on-religious-attacks

targets of these abuses" have been the Christian populations (Chin, Kachin, Shan, Karen, and Karenni or Kayah) and the Islamic community (Rakhine). Only in 2009, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) ordered "100 churches and religious meeting places in Rangoon to stop holding services and forcing Protestant leaders to sign pledges to that effect"(Leo, 2010, p. 35). The researcher has also heard so many times from his fellow Christians that being a Christian in Myanmar means being an unlucky person. Christians are discriminated against in several ways: they seldom hold any high position; they cannot freely build churches as Buddhists build temples; and they do not have the same privilege as Buddhists. Some Christians have to abandon their faith in order to get a job. "Thousands of young Christians are unemployed because of their faith and are pressured to convert to Buddhism. Several Christians churches and homes were burned down during 2003" (Claydon, 2005, p. 177). Many Muslims (Rohingyns) are not given citizenship. In this circumstance, is it possible to embrace religious pluralism? To answer this question, one needs to look at it in a very unique way. Each religion will have to find its own way.

Jacques Dupuis inductive approach can be applied here. The researcher as a Catholic Christian attempts to use his practical experience. His personal background is that even though he was born and raised up in a Catholic family and surroundings, he has encountered many people of different faiths. While the majority of his relatives on his mother's side embraces Buddhism, his father used to practice local rituals connected to animism. As far as the researcher notices, his parents, on the one hand, are committed to Christianity; yet, on the other hand, they never entirely abandon their animistic beliefs.

According to Western theologians, these practices are against the faith of Christianity.[10] To confront the local practices (animism) and Eastern cultures (Buddhism) has been one of the difficulties that Christianity (Western cultures) has encountered from the very beginning of its arrival. Buddhism, however, has been more lenient in dealing with the local practices (such as *Nat* worship, *Naga* worship and fortunetelling).[11] In fact, animism is the religion of the land. The other religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc) are foreign religions.

In general, people from Myanmar are believers. Most follow a religious belief: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Animism, etc. Religious belief is familiar to them. But religions in Myanmar are not 'pure,' they are somewhat intermixed. Even the main religion (Buddhism) still contains elements of folk belief and indigenous spirit cult (Animism). According to James Roger Black who wrote the review of Maung Htin Aung's book, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*:

> Burmese Buddhism is not purely the outgrowth of the Dharma taught by Buddha, but contains many indigenous or pre-Buddhist concepts that still have powerful attraction for the people of Burma, and have dramatically changed the religious practices of the original Theravada Buddhists of Burma (Black, 1973, p. 10).

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[10] Just a few years ago, after so many years of prohibiting Christians to practice their former cult practices, the local priests realize that by imposing them to do so, the culture of the people gradually disappear and so they are now trying to acculturate with the Christian faith. It is still noticeable that animistic practices always accompany cultural events.

[11] The word *Nat* in Burmese seems to derive from the Pali-Sanskrit term *natha* (Lord or guardian). *Nat* (also spirit) is "very much alive in the lives of the people in Myanmar. The power nat of Myanmar has evolved into spirit that may hold dominion over a place, person, or field of experience" (Reid & Grosberg, 2005, p. 59). When King Anawrahta came to power in 11th century, he tried to make Theravada Buddhism a national religion. At first he tried to ban '*nat* worship' and destroyed '*nat* shrines' but he later on realized that his people could not abandon the aged old practices, and worse still, forcing them to do so would take them away from Buddhism. From then onwards, Burmese Buddhists can still practice '*nat* worship' while embracing Buddhism.

In this sense, it is hard to find a 'pure' religion in Myanmar. The plurality of religions has been present in this land back to the arrival of the four major religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Religious diversity therefore is not new to the people but to embrace the religious pluralism is another story. The researcher tries to address all existing religions here; how they are facing religious pluralism and how they approach or respond to this issue.

4.4.2   Religious Pluralism and Buddhism

Buddhism is known as "the most tolerant religion on earth" (Humphreys, 2012, p. 50) and a human-based religion. It usually adapts to different cultures easily and emphasizes the liberation of man from worldly sufferings. Indeed, it was peace and happiness that Gautama Buddha searched in his lifetime. In doing so, he tried to avoid all kinds of violence and sought to enter Nirvana without depending on others; he rather put his own selfless and strenuous effort into practicing meditation until he attained enlightenment. He identified the contemporary world with sufferings and his mission would be fulfilled only when sufferings ceased. His practical and down-to-earth teachings motivate men and women to enable them to see the *self* as humanity and to have compassion for others. This is the authentic teaching of Buddha widely known as Buddhism.

Like many Southeast Asian nations, Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion in Myanmar. Many legends described how Buddhism reached this beautiful land. A story even said that Gautama Buddha had been there and left his eight hairs (Bischoff, 1995, pp.

18 – 19). The most famous two accounts, however, are: King Asoka sending missionaries to the Burmese kingdom to establish orthodox Buddhism (Buddhism, in this period, was influenced by Aris monks, 'Mahayanists' who adopted the local practices of astrology, alchemy, and spirit-mediumship); another account is of King Anawrahta who tried to unify Myanmar into one nation and imposed Theravada Buddhism as an official religion of the country. King Anawrahta, however, could not convince Burmese (Burman) people to stop their traditional practices (*Nat* worship, *Naga* worship, etc). Not much has been changed even in these modern times; "the Burman Buddhists embrace primal religions like *Nat* (spirit) worship as part of popular Buddhism" (Ling, 2005, p. 13). According to Maung Htin Aung, "*Nat* worship is part of the Buddhist faith and the Burmese (Burmans) want to worship *Nat* without ceasing to be good Buddhists" (Aung, 1959, p. 73 – 75). Melford E. Spiro, the author of *Burmese Supernaturalism,* tries to interpret the relationship between animism and Buddhism in his beautiful work on *Nat* worship as follows:

> For most Burmese, animism is a concession to human frailty; Buddhism is a striving for human nobility. Animism represents man's natural fears and desires; Buddhism symbolizes his highest ideals and aspirations. Animism presents man as he is; Buddhism indicates what he *ought* to be (and can become). One worships the Buddha because He is holy; one propitiates the nats because it is expedient ("out of fear we must") (Spiro, 2011, p. 273).

Animism has been subsumed into Buddhism; even comparable aspect of Hinduism could also be identified such as worshiping different gods. However, Burmese Buddhists do not seem to involve themselves with Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, not to mention Judaism). They are not so willing, most probably because the general majority sentiment of the people is not interested in these "foreign" religions. It is thus difficult to

have mutual understanding, which is the second step to religious pluralism after dialogue. Without interreligious dialogue, it is almost impossible to reach any mutual understanding, dimming the hope for religious pluralism. Even though "to most Buddhists the experience of 'religious pluralism' has not been the serious shock as it has been to most Christians," Buddhists in Myanmar are not interested in promoting religious pluralism (Abe, 1995, p. 18). Instead, they are proud of committing to Buddhism. They have more privilege in the eyes of the military government. They consider themselves as belonging to the religion of the nation and so regard other faiths as foreign. However, they are, in principle, tolerant towards the other religions if they themselves do not become manipulated by politics. The real cause of conflict between Buddhists and Muslims is of political nature rather than religious one. Of course, the rise of nationalism and ethnicity is the main cause of the conflict. Buddhism has taken many times "a leading role in the nationalist movements" and it eventually led into 'violence.' Many non-Buddhists feel that Buddhism is integral to 'their national identity' and so the minorities have no comfortable position. The role of the Buddhist monks in Myanmar is very honorable.

> Monks wielded their moral authority to challenge the military junta and argue for democracy in the Saffron Revolution of 2007. Peaceful protest was the main weapon of choice this time, and monks paid with their lives. Now some monks are using their moral authority to serve a quite different end. They may be a minority, but the 500,000-strong monkhood, which includes many deposited in monasteries as children to escape poverty or as orphans, certainly has its fair share of angry young men (Strathern, 2013).[12]

Buddhism in Myanmar must strive still towards an appreciation of religious pluralism. It cannot just follow its old way since "Buddhism has moved from the old

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[12] Alan Strathern, "Why are Buddhist Monks Attacking Muslims?" Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22356306. on 11. 08. 2013.

pluralistic situation to a new pluralist one" (Abe, 1995, p. 19). In Myanmar, Buddhism can play a big role in order to reach mutual understanding among the different religions which helps promote religious pluralism.

4.4.3 Religious Pluralism and Christianity

Christianity reached Myanmar quite late compared with Buddhism. Some Christians might have passed by this land in the early periods through the commerce and trade. Some legends stated that a number of merchants came to this region in the early 17th century but no evidence has been documented. If it is true, the first Christians in Myanmar would not be natives but foreigners who came from different parts of the world (Netherlands, England, Portugal, India, etc.). This is the reason why local people in those days used to view Christianity as foreign religion. According to the official record, the Holy See, in 1720, sent Barnabite Missionaries to China with the purpose of spreading Christianity and some of them eventually ended up in Myanmar in 1721 (Bigandet, 1996, pp. 1 - 28). Christianity in Myanmar was under the care of the Catholic Church until the arrival of Adoniram Judson, the first American Baptist missionary and his wife, Ann Judson in 1813.

According to Samuel Ngun Ling, Christianity in Myanmar can be divided into three periods: Christianity till the British colonial rule (1947), Christianity after independence in 1948, and Christianity post-independence under the military rule (1962 till at present). Christians in the first period enjoyed freedom under the protection of the British rulers but Burmese Buddhists feared of losing their 'centuries-old ways of life' to the alien rule. In the second period, Christians were under suspicion of being 'pro-Westerners" by nationalist movements who strongly opposed British colonial rule. When the third period

began, Christians were indirectly persecuted; "Christian missionary schools, hospitals and properties were nationalized under General Ne Win" (Hre & Ling, 2012, pp. 78 – 81).

Christians in Myanmar (mainly ethnic groups) do not perceive religious pluralism in the way Western Christians do. Since they (Christians in Myanmar) are very small in number (4 % to 5 %) in comparison with the total population of the country, they do not enjoy the same freedom as Buddhists. They are still, at the present, in some way in the 'third period.' They are still followers of un-favored religion in the eyes of the military government.

With regard to economic aspect, the majority of the people are still very poor. Because of closed-country policy of the military government, there are no foreign investments. Hence, there are no jobs for the younger generations. Hundreds of thousands of them have to sneak out the country to find work in neighboring countries. Most of them could find only menial jobs. Back home a large number of people have to struggle hard and most of them live hand to mouth. With this situation, how can Christians in Myanmar talk about the Ultimate Truth or God when most of the time they have to worry about their stomach and to feed their children. Burmese people (I think also many Asian people as well) are not interested in ideology. They would prefer practical or realistic approach rather than idealistic or theoretical one. They want to try first and then make it as a theory if it succeeds. They prefer practicing first and then write down what they have done. Westerners, on the other hand, do the opposite. They would, at first, formulate a theory, and then follow it; and they would write down first in order to have a guideline for practice. If the researcher applies this different approach to religious pluralism, Christians in Myanmar

would rather have interreligious dialogue concerning day-to-day matters (poverty, culture, social life, education, etc.) than discussing about God or Ultimate Truth.

Jacques Dupuis' inductive method to religious pluralism can be applied in this situation. On the academic level, there is more intra-religious dialogue than interreligious one. It seems that Christians in Myanmar have more problems among themselves (Catholics with Protestants of different denominations) than with other faiths. Catholic Bishops, priests, and sisters get along well with Buddhist monks and nuns. If the government does not intervene, any interaction among the religious leaders is smooth and friendly. On the grassroots level, Christians in Myanmar usually meet people of other faiths at work, at school, and at the market without having any problem. They sometimes even invite neighbors of other faiths to help them if there is an emergency, or they participate in animistic festivals. The researcher used to go to his uncle's village when the villagers celebrated *Nat* worship (the people of this village are Christians but still conduct the practice of animism). This festival is celebrated once a year. He also used to go to his mother's relatives on this special event (It is very interesting that this village, on the other hand, embraces Buddhism but still keep on practicing *Nat* worship). All in all, Christians in Myanmar are quite familiar with religious pluralism even though "Christianity itself has moved from a relatively non-pluralistic situation to one radically pluralistic" (Abe, 1995, p. 19).

4.4.4   Religious Pluralism and Islam

Islam, the fastest-growing religion in North America and in the world (Emerick, 2002, p 3), follows the teachings of a single Prophet, Muhammad, who claimed to have got

a revelation from God. His simple message is: *there is only One God*. Islam was introduced

to Myanmar as early as the 8th century. The first Muslims who settled in this land were

believed to have been Arab mariners and traders who landed on the Rakhine coast.

According to J. A. Berlie in 2008, even though Muslims make up 7 to 10 % of the total

population, like other minority religions, Islam is still seen as an un-favored religion. There

are various groups of Muslims in Myanmar. The most famous four are: Arakan Muslims

(Rohingyas), Muslims of Indian 'origin', Panthays and Zerbadees. Most of the Muslims in

Myanmar are Sunni with a small numbers of Shi'ite sects. Rohingyas are believed to have

been the Muslims with the longest history in Myanmar. These Muslims used to serve in the

palaces of both Buddhist and Muslim Kings. "Many Rohingyas consider themselves to be

the natives of the region" and claimed that they are the same like other ethnic groups

(Berlie, 2008, p. 10). For Buddhists, who make up the majority of the country, state that

they came with the British in the 19th and 20th centuries. Rohingyas are the most

marginalized ethnic group in Myanmar; they are the stateless citizens.

Under the British rule, Myanmar shared the same province with India. Many traders

from India came and brought their cultures and religions. Many Indian Muslims were

recognized as "the most important minority community under the 1935 Government of

Burma Act" (Berlie, 2008, p. 8). Hindus and Muslims of Indian origin were involved in

many kinds of business. Myanmar separated from India in 1937 and many Indians went

back to India in 1964. Muslims from Yunnan is known as Panthays. These Chinese

Muslims, however, prefer to be called Burmese Muslims in public. Some of these Muslims

are believed to be the descendants of soldiers who invaded Pagan in 1211-79. Zerbadees,

the mixed-blood Muslims, are the nearest culture-wise to Burmans. Some do not want to be

called 'Zerbadee' but 'Burmese Muslims.' Zerbadees believe that there is no difference between them and the Burman Buddhists. They accept some Buddhist practices such as fortune-telling and astrology. In general, Burmans usually call Muslims in Burmese Language *kala,* a very derogatory term, but they would, however, prefer to be called 'Burmese Muslims' (Berlie, 2008, pp. 6 - 16).

Like Christians or even worse, Muslims are not only the victims of the military government, they are also seen as a threat to the Buddhist Nationalists. Many Buddhists are afraid of the future possibility of Islamic dominance in the country. They are therefore trying to impose the national law, that is, the law of nationalism. According to this law, "Burmese Buddhist girls should not marry non-Buddhists, if they do, the men must convert to Buddhism. If a Burmese Buddhist woman does not obey this law, she will be sent to prison at least five years." This is the general law that the leaders of the nationalistic movement such as U Warathu and U Pinyawara are trying to collect enough votes from the citizens in order to submit it to the parliament.[13] If the parliament passes this law, every Burmese Buddhist girl has to follow it or else she would be put to jail.

The reason why recently Muslims in Myanmar have been continuously in conflict with the Burmese Buddhists is because of the oppression from the military government. Not recognizing them (mainly Rohingyas) as one of the ethnic groups and not giving them citizenship is one of the reasons. It becomes a religious clash between Buddhists and Muslims because Buddhists support the government's position and there are "radical

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[13] The deadline for the collection of the votes from the citizens was on July 17, 2013 and according to the information that the researcher referred which was on July 18, 2013, Two millions people have singed this potential law. Retrieved from thithtoolwin.com July 18, 2013.

monks who are at the forefront of a bloody campaign against Muslims."[14] The researcher, however, believes that not all Buddhists hate Muslims and also not all Muslims dislike Buddhists. The fight began only with a very small group of people. It means that there are some anti-Muslims who are 'nationalists or fascist' and there are some Muslim extremists who do not like Buddhists. The problem of ethnicity is also one the reasons why these two groups are fighting. To make the matter worse, the government leaders do not know how to handle this problematic issue. They are facing the dilemma of making a definite decision. This controversial case is one of the most challenging the government leaders have to face as they are also trying to open the country and to journey towards a democratic road.

Islam, like other un-favored religions in the country, is also struggling to encounter the favored religion, Buddhism. Like many Christian theologians, in the researcher's viewpoint, Islamic scholars would prefer to discuss about the day-to-day problems (basic needs, education, poverty, refugees, etc.) rather than talking about the supernatural things when coming to the dialogue table. The way Muslims in Myanmar approach religious pluralism might not be the same as the Indonesian Muslims who make up the majority of the population. Just like Christians, they have to watch out their daily life in order not to disturb the military government. According to the country's constitution, "the Muslims' right to worship in Myanmar is guaranteed; however, the lack of citizenship of the majority of Arakan Muslims attests to their strong, albeit unspoken, resistance to state policies in the Rakhine State" (Berlie, 2008, p .108).

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[14] "Punk rockers break Myanmar's silence on religious attacks," in *Bangkok Post*: Retrieved from http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/363116/punk-rockers-break-myanmar-silence-on-religious-attacks

4.4.5 Religious Pluralism and Hinduism

Hinduism, the world's oldest religious tradition and the world's largest pluralistic tradition, is considered as "a non-institutionalized religion." It therefore does not face "the problem of defining itself *vis-à-vis* 'the other'" (Chatterjee, 1994, p. 1). Since Hinduism is not based on dogma (system of religious laws) but emphasizes One Supreme God with different forms or various small gods, its followers believe in the multiplicity of spiritual paths and ways. Hinduism, unlike the other world religions, is not based on the teachings of a single master or a single book; rather it follows the teachings of the different sages. Hindus therefore can encounter the existence of God anywhere, in everything, and in every being (Goel, 2002, pp. 1 - 3). Due to their internal pluralism, Hinduism is "tolerant of other religions and is capable of subsuming them within its own mythic structures"(Knitter, 2005, p. 148)

It is said that Hinduism is the only major religion that does not seek to actively expand and convert others. Since it recognizes that "there are many paths to the Divine and that each must find the way which suits them best," Hindus are more interested in searching for the truth rather than trying to get more people in their religion (Chatterjee, 1994, p. 3). They do not seem to mind the number. The positive viewpoint of their having no creed is that they do not have the border to exclude non-Hindus. That is the reason Jeffery Long said "everybody is a Hindu."[15] Furthermore, Mahatma Gandhi who was known as the model of "the adjustment to pluralism under the general umbrella of nationalism" in India

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[15] This statement is mentioned in his article "Anekanta Vedanta: Towards a Deep Hindu Religious Pluralism." In *Deep Religious Pluralism*, ed. David Ray Griffin. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005 (130-157).

had believed "in the light of his common-sense realization that people belonging to different communities do not encounter each other in theologically charged contexts but in day-to-day living" (Chatterjee, 1994, pp. 1 & 8). Here is what Gandhi had proposed for all religious people how to pray, "our inmost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian" (Gandhi, 1959, p. 461).

Hinduism is supposed to reach Myanmar as early as Buddhism. Some traders immigrated to this land from India and brought their own culture and religion. According to a Mon legend, these Hindu merchants fought with the Mon settlers and they (Hindu traders) were finally conquered by Mon who also brought their own civilization. There is no doubt to say that Hinduism has greatly influenced Buddhism in Myanmar. Even Theravada Buddhism was introduced in the 11th century, Hinduism still plays a big role in the daily life of the Burmese Buddhists. Hindu god or goddesses have been adopted into the form of *Nat* worship in which Burmese Buddhists highly venerate. The king of the *Nats* called Thagyamin (သိကြားမင်း) is identified with *Indra*, the king of Hindu gods. All three religions are intermingled. As the religion (Hinduism) appreciates other religious traditions, Hinduism in Myanmar, as the researcher observes, seems to get along well with other faiths.

4.4.6   Religious Pluralism and Animism

Animism, the first stage in the development of religion according to Edward Burnett Tylor, believes that the spirit exists in the natural entities both living and non-living; plants,

mountains, animals, etc. Animists believe that "the spirits that exist in nature have the power to help or harm; therefore Animists offer some form of worship to these spirits" (Hopfe & (Jr.), 1993, p. 36). These people see the spirit or the soul in every being. The practice of Animism is everywhere: in Africa, in Australia, in America, and in Asia. Myanmar has also been one of the Southeast Asian countries that greatly embraced this religion in its history. In fact, animism is the religion of the land before the arrival of other world religions. Therefore, people in Myanmar are very familiar with Animistic practices.

Animism has influenced all other religions in Myanmar. It is the religion rooted in the heart of the people there. People might officially convert to the newly-arrived religions but their daily life would not change. They would still believe in the supernatural of the spirit. To give an example of this, the parents of the researcher are officially Catholics. They put their effort, at least his mother, to go to Church on every Sunday. But when there is a problem in the family or when one of the family members gets sick, they will offer something to the spirit so that the person will recover and get well again. It is a kind of superstition. The researcher finds it hard to believe but it is sometimes difficult to deny as well. This practice is very common to the Burmese believers either Buddhists or Christians.

Buddhism is more flexible to adopt the Animistic practices into its rituals than Christianity. This is the reason why many Christian missionaries in the past failed. They brought Western cultures with them and tried to force the local people to practice exactly as they did. Many times they could not succeed. They did not realize that indigenous culture has strong influence on Burmese people. Buddhism and Hinduism, on the other hand, could easily adapt their teaching to the native cultures. Animism, however, to a certain extent makes a strong impact on all religions coming to Southeast Asia. Buddhism, the religion

that officially acknowledges the 37 *Nats* under the reign of King Anawrahta, has the strongest influence of Animistic practices in Myanmar anyway.

4.4.7   Religious Pluralism and Other Religions

Since Chinese immigrants used to come in the past, there might still be some Chinese traditional religions in the country but no official record has been given. It is said that before the Second World War, there was a Jewish community which made up around 2,500 members in Rangoon. The document even mentioned that Myanmar was "the first Asian country to recognize Israel in 1949" (Planet, Allen, Smith, & Smith, 2012). Less than one hundred Jews may still be found in the country today.

To conclude: like many Southeast Asian Nations, religious character of Myanmar operates along ethnic lines. Just like many Asians think: Malays are Muslims, Thais are Buddhists, Filipinos are Catholics, and Chinese are Taoists/Confucians; Burmese people (Burmans 'the majority' ethnicity') cannot believe that Burmans are Christians, Karens or Karrenis are Buddhists, Rakhines are Muslims, and Kachins are Animists. All these seem to contradict them. Most people classify religion with ethnicity. They see the religious identity in line with culture and ethnicity. In this situation, the first need is to solve the problem of cultural pluralism or ethnic pluralism in order to embrace religious pluralism.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In a rapidly integrating world, human perception toward religion has changed. Since no religion lives alone in a country or a nation anymore, believers as global citizens can no longer ignore other races, nationalities, beliefs and different viewpoints. It is therefore a time to cross over one's own religion or one's own culture in this globalized world. The world or the global village today needs to have broad-minded believers to solve religious conflicts. It is hoped that adopting a pluralistic view would be the best approach to a peaceful co-existence and the inductive approach of Jacques Dupuis is considered highly relevant in this part of the world (Asia).

It is not an easy task, however, to embrace religious pluralism and at the same time submitting oneself to a particular religion. A religious pluralist needs to have courage: the courage of being challenged by one's own people, the courage of criticizing one's own religion, and the courage of accepting mistakes done by one's own religion. Jacques Dupuis who tried to open up his theological thoughts after his personal encounter with other faiths in India had to face the inquisition of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF). The CDF members even scrutinized his book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism,* and published two documents: *Dominus Iesus* and *Notification* to reprimand him.

As an Asian Catholic Christian from Myanmar, the researcher believes that Dupuis' inductive approach to religious pluralism can play an important role in the study of

religions. His method which emphasizes 'experience of lived reality' and the problem of 'context' suits the mentality of Asian people. Dupuis mainly focuses on the humanity of Jesus as he personally encounters the reality of the problem. In order that humanity can comprehend God, the second person of the Trinity needs to take humanity in Christian tradition. This second person Jesus Christ who cooperates with the other two persons is as important as the first and the third. The divine revelation in Christianity would not have been complete if Jesus Christ had not taken the form of humanity. He is therefore the one who brings the fulfillment of Christian hope. For Christians, nobody else but Jesus alone leads to human salvation. Having said that the divine revelation does not only take place in the person Jesus Christ, but there are varieties of divine manifestations. While, for Buddhists, the enlightened Buddha takes the place of Jesus in Buddhist tradition, Muhammad (the last prophet of Islam for Muslims) is more important than Jesus in Islamic tradition. God of the Trinity in Christianity shares a certain similarity with other traditions. God the Father that Christians know is equal to Ultimate Reality or Allah or Yahweh and God the Spirit that Christians claim is present in every religion. It is the Spirit that enlightens Buddha to attain *Nibbana* or *nirvana*. It is the Spirit that guides Muhammad to be 'the messenger of God.' Whereas Jesus can be substituted by another person in other traditions, God the Father and God the Spirit that Christians profess are active in all traditions.

The usual projection of God in the deductive approach is an ever-loving, an ever-merciful and an ever-compassionate Father. It means that the theological view of this model normally begins with God, and then applies Jesus' teachings to the lives of the people. God in the inductive approach, on the other hand, is perceived in the living people. It means that

the theological perspective in this approach starts from humanity; this theology enables us to see God in every individual person in spite of the different cultures, different traditions, and different contexts. This is what Jacques Dupuis has been developing in his theological studies. He tries to go first to the people and experience the reality of their lives and then applies religious teachings or dogmas. In a specific word, it is his inductive method of doing theology of religions: from concrete experience of humanity to theoretical invisibility of God; from realistic encounter with human lives to theological experience of God. The humanity of Jesus or low Christology therefore is more emphasized in Dupuis' inductive approach.

The researcher shares the same view as Jacques Dupuis. Christians need to know the people in order to apply the Holy Scriptures. The Catholic Church needs to listen to the cry of the people, pay attention to the specific areas, and prioritize the voices of the local churches or the missionaries who are working in those areas. The CDF members should travel to different places to know the need of their people. When they scrutinize the works of their own people like they did to Dupuis, they should investigate carefully in order to avoid unfair or wrong judgment. The Catholic Church hence requires more frankness in dealing with other religions. She has to discard the former theoretical approach as well as the Western mindset in order to follow Dupuis' theology of religious pluralism.

The emphasis of dialogue in Dupuis' inductive approach is very appropriate in the study of religious pluralism in Asian context. Interreligious dialogue is a very important factor in this part of the world since there are a variety of religious traditions. Like Dupuis who sees dialogue as an essential factor to religious pluralism and Paul Knitter who described a dialogical odyssey in his book, *One Earth Many Religions*, all Asian believers

should take these two theologians as a model to imitate or learn.[1] It is impossible in this pluralistic and globalized world to adhere to one religion and ignore the other traditions. It is out of date to hold an exclusivist idea in this diverse and multicultural world. Each religious believer needs to open their eyes to see the beauty and share the values of other religions. Narrow-mindedness and deep-seated conservatism are not relevant today.

In Asia, only academic dialogue is not enough; the dialogue also needs to go to the grassroots level. These people are the ones who need most; they want to be liberated from poverty, oppression, and injustice. Dupuis' theology does not refer only to the 'not-yet' affair; it also applies to our present situation. This is the reason he stresses the importance of adopting liberation theology. For him, liberation theology is what the majority of Asian people want to hear. They want to follow the life of Jesus Christ by living their life like Jesus Christ. It is the person Jesus Christ whom they want to know. It is their belief that God has come to liberate them through the person Jesus Christ. Here Jesus is seen as a suffering servant, a poor man, and a person in solidarity with the poor. In his theology, Dupuis has tried to combine liberation theology and theology of religions. He is a critical theologian who gives priority to the model of theologizing: from praxis to theory, from orthopraxy to orthodoxy, and from lived experience to divine revelation.

Dupuis' positive attitude towards other religious traditions while at the same time while upholding the necessity of Jesus Christ as traditionally understood by 'mainstream Christianity and Church tradition' still keeps himself in the limelight as an inclusive

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[1] The details of Paul Knitter's dialogical odyssey can be found in his book, One Earth Many Religions, pp. 1 – 20.

pluralist which makes him different from other pluralists. According to William R.

Burrows, Jacques Dupuis is a 'conservative revisionist.'

> As a 'conservative,' Burrows said, Dupuis maintains that "the Church's
> teaching office is guided by the Spirit and that its doctrinal tradition is a
> faithful explication of the self-revelation of Trinitarian God: Father, Son,
> and Spirit". As a 'revisionist,' Dupuis sought to retain the doctrinal core of
> tradition while carrying forward and developing that Trinitarian and
> soteriological ensemble in the light of the contemporary experience of the
> wisdom and richness of these traditions….. He sought to carry doctrinal
> development forward, not to rewrite tradition to conform to contemporary
> historicist canons of evidence concerning what is 'revealed' in the Christ
> (Burrows, 2012, p. xii).

Again, the researcher agrees with Jacques Dupuis in terms of his theological

viewpoints towards religious pluralism. To solve the existing problems of the world, we

should consider first coming to the table for an interreligious discussion. It would be foolish

to discuss about God or Ultimate Reality or Truth while many people are dying of hunger.

The common problem in our world today is what Paul Knitter called 'global suffering.' It

does not matter who a person is or which religion he/she belongs to, he or she will

encounter suffering in his/her lifetime. Suffering becomes a common problem and a global

responsibility. Different religious traditions may, however, have the same problem but it

does not necessarily mean that their answer will be the same. Likewise, suffering would be

a common issue for all religions but each religion may view it differently or answer it in

different ways. Despite the different perspectives, the basic needs of humanity should take

priority in any interreligious encounter.

Paul Knitter said, "All religions show the capability of genuine concern for human

well-being in this world" (Knitter, 1995, p. 124). No matter whether one belongs to any

religion or not, there is a time when people always come together. There is an occasion that

the real identity of human nature is revealed. No one cares about religious identity in the midst of tragedy. It would be very silly to put a question: Are you a Muslim or a Buddhist or a Christian? when people are dying.

In general viewpoint, the existence of many religions is the acknowledgement of religious pluralism. Religion may not be able to answer all human problems but it can consolidate believers to face life challenges. Religion may not be able to solve all problematic cases but it could be one way to encounter these hardships. The mission of religion, therefore, is not only to search for Ultimate Reality but to provide the well-being of humanity. This is the main goal of every religion.

According to Dupuis, all religions are different in terms of traditions, cultures, beliefs, doctrines, etc. but equal in the sense of the divine reality. It means that the destination of every religion goes to the same place through the different means, methods, and approaches. To say in other words, each religion views the revelations of the same Ultimate Reality in its own particular tradition. The researcher agrees with anyone who views that human practice of religion today is like a person who tries to convince a dog that there is a moon. The dog is not able to see the moon but just look at the finger of the person. Nowadays, many believers are like a dog seeing the index of the finger instead of the moon. We, as believers, should not stop in the existing symbols but rather see them as pointers to the reality of something.

Dupuis' inductive approach to religious pluralism is a way of life-experience and personal reflection. It took him years to embrace this hypothesis and required him to have a

practical experience living with other faiths in order to come to know the reality of the divine being. The reason why Dupuis' inductive approach should apply to a country like Myanmar is that since many believers from various traditions are still narrow-minded and with deep-seated conservatism, the researcher believes that his approach would probably be the best in doing theology of religions in this region. Unless believers come to encounter and have dialogue with other faiths, they cannot broaden their minds. To give an example of this: once when the researcher was travelling on a bus, a Buddhist asked him to which religion he belonged. After knowing that the researcher was a Catholic Christian, he started criticizing how Catholics devote to the Blessed Virgin Mary. If the person in question had experienced the reality of how Catholics venerate Mary, he would probably have not rebuked other beliefs.

Another example would be about the personal life of the researcher. He was brought up by Catholic parents and Catholics have been quite strong in his area. As a result, he knew nothing about other religions. He was so narrow-minded that he even thought of Christianity as the only main religion in the world. As he grew up to be a teenager, he was impressed by some apostolic works of a priest who came to his village. This eventually led him to choose his future career as a special way of following Jesus Christ. When he was in the seminary in his own country, he admitted that he was too innocent or rather too ignorant in dealing with religious matters. He would believe whatever the priest preached from the pulpit without critical thinking. As a seminarian, he hardly had any chance to study or contact with other faiths.

As he kept going and trying to fulfill his dream of becoming a priest, he had opportunity to join the Dominican Order. Here it was, he would say, the beginning of his personal encounter with other cultures and different faiths. When he arrived in Hong Kong, he noticed that what the Chinese people are doing or practicing are different from what are customary in Myanmar. He gradually came to realize that Christianity is just one of the religions in the world. From then onwards he began to open wide his eyes and started raising questions. His understanding of religion, however, is still in the framework of Christianity but with a different perspective. The study abroad broadened his view. He had a chance to learn and deal with other religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, etc. It was in Macau where he received his Bachelor's Degree on Christian Studies that inspired him to take religious studies.

The reason for his coming to study at Assumption University, Graduate school of Philosophy and religious studies, is just to know more about other faiths. Thailand is a multi-cultural country with many religious beliefs. Besides, the country is also well-known for its religious tolerance. In taking this specialization, he is optimistic that his faith in Jesus Christ grows deeper and at the same time his attitude towards other religious believers would be positive. This is the purpose of his study in this school where the faculty has professors from different faiths and cultures. The questions that always come to his mind during the process of this research are that: what would Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad do if they were born in this 21st century? Will they dialogue or fight with each other? Will they do as Buddhists, Christians and Muslims do today?

After his graduation from this school, he intends to work in his own country. He will try to apply Dupuis' theology of religions in his daily encounter with people of

different religions. He believes that Dupuis' method of approaching religious pluralism is suitable to a country like Myanmar because people are more interested in day-to-day matters. Since a majority of people lives hand-to-mouth, believers would prefer to discuss about liberation from poverty than to talk about religious truth. But is Religious Pluralism possible in Christianity? Is Dupuis' inductive approach possible? Leo Elders said that the only valid theological method is the deductive one. According to S. Mark Heim, in defense of their pluralistic theory, pluralists end up with what they want to reject, that is, inclusivism or exclusivism. Pluralism for D'Costa, on the other hand, is just an illusion as he stated, "Pluralism must always logically be a form of exclusivism and that nothing called pluralism really exists" (D'Costa, 1996, p. 225).

As an Asian Catholic from Myanmar, the researcher appreciates Dupuis' *inductive* method which emphasizes 'experience of lived reality' and the problem of 'context.' His approach can be valuable for a country like (Myanmar) in order to counter the narrow-minded and deep-seated conservatism of believers from various traditions. Hence, this humble thesis possibly paves the way for a solution to the problem of religion in the region. Any religious researcher from this area should follow Dupuis' inductive method. There should be further research on him in related with religious pluralism. The researcher would recommend that anyone who is interested in the topic of religious pluralism should survey his theological works.

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