

Thesis Title : A Critical Exposition of John Hick's Religious Pluralism and
the Thai Church Today

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ABSTRACT

According to John Hick's work, *God has many names*, he tried to investigate the topic of religious pluralism and conflicting truth claims of the different religions. He believed that the notion God has many names could be explained by the understanding that God's general revelation is revealed to everyone and that the world's religions sprang up as different ways of responding to the divine reality, and this is guided by cultural and historical worldviews of the different believers.

For Hick, our knowledge of God, or the "Transcendent Reality," can only be understood from our personal subjective standpoint. We cannot know God outside of our personal experience and so, any truth claims about God are only truth claims based on our perceptions of God and not of God as He really is in Himself. For sure, God can only be known as He is perceived, He cannot be known as He is in Himself. This idea reflects in Hick's theory that we can only know the "phenomenon" and not the "noumenon", that is, to know a thing as it appears to us and not as it is in itself.

Hick was very much against any kind of religious exclusivism, especially, Christian exclusivism, which holds that although other religions might contain partial goodness and truth, salvation is provided ONLY in Jesus Christ, and the complete truth of God subsists and is contained only in Christianity.

It is evidently clear that the models of Exclusivism and Inclusivism adopted by most of the world religions in their relations to one another have been a big failure and have only contributed to the alienation of different religious traditions, one from the other. The posture of superiority and exclusive truth claims presented by each of the world religions have led to much insecurity and unhealthy rivalry amongst them, even to the point of waging wars in the name of God and religion. Religious conflicts, killings, wars, and even genocides have become common place in our world because of the truth claims of each competing religion.

This work is an attempt at redirecting the reader's gaze away from the two failed models of Religious Exclusivism and Inclusivism, and to offer a better approach to the different world religions. The approach suggested in this work is religious pluralism. I strongly support religious pluralism and have come to see it as the very important way forward in the relationship between the different religious traditions. A strong advocate for religious pluralism was John H. Hick, a philosopher of religion and theologian. His book, *God has Many Names*, shall be my primary source for arguing for a pluralistic approach to religion. I shall critically expose Hick's religious pluralism and then also compare his position with the Thai religious tradition in the attempt to show that his views agree with the Thai religious viewpoint and my own religious world view as well.

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