Jacques Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology and its Contributions Towards Interreligious Dialogue

Alexander Hendra Dwi Asmara, SJ

Introduction

The history of theology shows the shift of its focus and discussion as a response to new questions in each different time. As a reflection of the faith of the believers, theology finds a good starting point within the context of the signs of the times. In this recent time, the "new experience of pluralism," as Paul Knitter states in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness,* can be the "sign" of the present context. According to him, today's Christians experience religions in a new way—that is, they are feeling not only the *reality* of other religious paths but also their vitality, their influence in our modern world, their depth, beauty, and attractiveness.[1] This experience opens our eyes to a deeper reflection of other religions as part of God's plan of salvation and to the possibility of mutual enrichment. Because of this new experience of pluralism, Christians are feeling the need for a more productive dialogue with other religions, a new attitude toward them.

1 Paul F. Knitter and John Hick. eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions* (NY: Maryknoll, 1987), vii.

Avery Dulles believes that pluralism is really not an entirely new reality for the Church, although the response to this reality has varied with the passage of time.[2] From the apostolic times onwards, Christianity has had to situate its message, first, in relation to Judaism from which it emerged and subsequently to the other religions that it encountered along its way. Christian theology of religions is really a response of the Church to her encounter with people of other faiths.

The Church's Dialogue with Other Religions, Then and Now

In the early Church, Christianity had to define its identity in relation to Judaism. This identity was clarified at the Council of Jerusalem, which established that Christianity was different from Judaism, and those who wanted to be Christians were not duly obliged to keep some stipulations in the Jewish tradition (Acts 15). In the first 1,500 years, the encounter between Christianity and other religions was predominantly negative despite significant attempts at dialogue made by authors such as St. Justin, who wrote on the idea of Logos-Sower, Peter Abelard, who wrote "A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian," and Nicholas of Cusa with his "The Peace of Faith."[3] This, however, was a negative way of expressing an important aspect of the Christian faith, namely, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and human beings (cf. 1 Tim.

2 Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, "World Religions and the New Millennium," in *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis,* ed. Gerald O' Collins and Daniel Kendall (NY: Maryknoll, 2003), 3.

3 Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (NY: Maryknoll, 1997), 57-109.

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2:5).[4] In the sixteenth century, especially after the discovery of the new world in 1492, when Christianity entered into contact with the religions of Eastern Asia and the Americas, some missionaries sought to find positive elements in these religions and even to incorporate indigenous elements, like Chinese and Indian rites, into Christianity.

In this century, the development of the theology of religions has shown a more positive and welcoming attitude toward other religions. For the most part, Catholic theologians hold an inclusivist approach, holding that salvation is for all people through the grace of Jesus Christ.[5] In the same manner, the Second Vatican Council regards other religions in a positive way as having "seeds of the Word" (AG 11 and AG 15), "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men and women" (NA 2), and "elements of truth and grace" (AG 9). Post-conciliar documents such as *Redemptor Hominis* by John Paul II also reflect a positive posture toward other religions. This openness provides a significant foundation for interreligious dialogue.

The key point of doing theology in a pluralistic context is having a deep experience of and relationship with other religions in daily life, rather than propositions and theories. Its point of departure is a practice of interreligious dialogue itself, which helps the Christian interpretation of religious plurality. The Asian Bishops were thinking along this line when they saw the great religious traditions of their peoples as "significant and positive elements in the economy of

4 Josef Neuner, SJ and Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Bangalore, India: Theological Publication, 1995), 377.

5 The classic threefold approach in theology of religions can be seen further in Allan Race, *Christian and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

God's design of salvation." As described in the Theological Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) in 1987:

> Its experience of other religions has led the Church in Asia to a positive appreciation of their role in the divine economy of salvation. This appreciation is based on the fruits of the Spirit perceived in the lives of the other religions' believers: a sense of the sacred, a commitment to the pursuit of fullness, a thirst for self-realization, a taste for prayer and commitment, a desire for renunciation, a struggle for justice, an urge to basic human goodness, a total surrender of the self to God. The positive appreciation is further rooted in the conviction of faith that God's plan of salvation for humanity is one and reaches out to all peoples.[6]

A major feature of Jacques Dupuis' approach begins with the willingness to accord other religions a positive role in the divine economy of salvation, inspired by the actual experience of the fruits of the Spirit visible among them. It searches for the meaning of religious plurality in a deeper reality, in the light of Christian faith, for its significance lies in God's own plan of salvation for humankind.

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology

The Trinity as the Source and Goal of the Religious History of Humankind

In response to the interventions of the Congregation

6 "Evangelization in Modern Day in Asia," Statement of the First Plenary Assembly of the FABC, Taipei (1974), cited in Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (NY: Maryknoll, 1997), 220.

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for the Doctrine of the Faith pertaining to his work,[7] Dupuis argues that his Trinitarian Christology offers another possible, legitimate and helpful perspective in building an open Christian theology of religions while still remaining faithful to the Catholic heritage:

> The documents of the Congregation approach the faith in a dogmatic perspective, based on select quotations from Scripture, from conciliar documents, and from the pronouncement of the Church's magisterium. This approach, while legitimate, is not necessarily exclusive. Another perspective consists in developing what has been called in this book a "Trinitarian and Pneumatological Christology." The task of theology in this context will consist in asking whether the religious pluralism which characterizes our present world may or may not have a positive significance in God's one plan of salvation for humankind – whether, that is, the Christian faith in Jesus Christ, universal Savior of humankind, is compatible with the affirmation of a positive role of other religions in the mystery of salvation of their followers.[8]

According to Dupuis, only a radical Trinitarian approach

7 In the summer of 2000, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued a Declaration entitled *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*. This document takes up a number of themes that are present in Dupuis' book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, including the relationship between the work of the Word incarnate and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation (chapter two) and the unique mediation of Christ (Chapter Three). In 2001, the CDF released a Notification on *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, which sought to clarify certain possible ambiguities [and not heretic] within the text and correct possible false conclusions that readers may draw from it independent of Dupuis' own intentions. Finally, in the light of the reaction to *Dominus Iesus* and the Notification in March 2001, the CDF published an explanatory commentary on the *Notification*.

8 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 262.

can preserve the essential unity of the salvific economy while at the same time allowing for the legitimate diversity which is manifest in the plurality of religions. In other words, the "Christian vision of the Triune God opens the door for a positive evaluation of other religious traditions."[9] In the divine Trinity, "salvation history is in its entirety the history of the origin of all things from God through his Word in the Spirit and of their return to God through the Word in the Spirit."[10] The Trinitarian rhythm of God's activity throughout salvation history is the action of the Word and the Spirit since the time of creation. The universality of the salvific action of Christ, which is the climax of God's self-communication to humankind, cannot be understood without the universal presence of the Word before the incarnation (Jn 1:1-4) and without the universal presence of the Spirit who blows where it wills (Jn 3:8).[11] The Trinity also constitutes the final goal of humankind's religious history:

> The expansiveness of God's inner life overflowing outside the Godhead is, in the last analysis, the root cause for the existence in human history of convergent paths, leading to a unique common goal: the absolute mystery of the Godhead which draws all paths to itself, even as in the first place it launches them into existence.[12]

The Triune God is the Ultimate Reality that has revealed Godself to human beings through history. Vatican II expresses this as follows:

> It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal Godself and to make known the mystery of

9 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 313.
10 Ibid., 209.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.

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> his will [Eph 1:9]. His will was that human beings should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit and thus become sharers in the divine nature. By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses human beings as his friends (DV 2).

The Divine Trinity also serves as the hermeneutical key to an interpretation of the Divine Reality to which other religions testify. Dupuis argues that "in every authentic religious experience, the Triune God of Christian revelation is present and operative, though anonymously."[13] Dupuis points out some attempts of theologians in tracing Trinitarian activity in other religious traditions, even though he asserts that these attempts should be critically evaluated.[14]

For Christian faith, Dupuis maintains that the essential unity of the salvific economy of the Trinity is realized and expressed in the incarnation of Christ.

The becoming human of the Word of God in Jesus Christ, his human life, death, and resurrection, is the culminating point of the process of divine self-communication, the hinge upon which the process holds together, its key interpretation. The reason is that the Word's 'humanization' marks the unsurpassed and unsurpassable—depth of God's self-communication to human beings, the supreme mode of immanence of his being-with-them.[15]

It is from this incarnational perspective that Dupuis

13 Ibid., 277.

14 For example, Raimon Panikkar in his book the Unknown Christ of Hinduism establishes a parallel between Father-Son, on the one hand, and Brahman-Ishvara, on the other. He pursues the parallel between the Spirit and the Atman in the Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man.

15 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 209.

proposes a term called "Trinitarian Christology." Trinitarian Christology denotes an open Christian theology of religions which focuses on and affirms the centrality of the Christ-event in the whole of Trinitarian reality. In this Christological perspective of the Trinity, Dupuis points out that "the one human face of God who is Jesus Christ may be said to relate to other saving figures from which God has not withheld his saving presence and grace."[16]

Trinitarian Christology: A New Perspective in a Christian Theology of Religions

Recent debate on the theology of religions has been dominated by three mutual perspectives of Race's model, namely, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Each parallels three fundamental perspectives: ecclesiocentrism, Christocentrism, and theocentrism. Dupuis notices the "shift of the perspective in Christian theology of religions" from narrow ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism, and then to theocentrism. However, he points out that many theologians find Race's categories significantly inadequate in terms of being a model of Christian theology of religions, since they imply an "either/or" mode of contradiction among the three important elements of the Christian faith.[17] A more crucial implication of Race's paradigm is that a Christian theology of religions seems to be founded not so much on harmony, convergence, and unity, but rather on "confrontation and contradiction,"[18] to the extent that other religions are considered as a hindrance that must be overcome or a fact of life that we must be resigned to tolerate.

16 Ibid., 283.
17 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 84.
18 Ibid.

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Dupuis himself particularly criticizes the exclusive opposition between inclusivism in a Christocentric perspective and pluralism in a theocentric perspective that Race's paradigm proposes. The debate between these two positions focuses on the central figure of Jesus Christ, a centrality opposed by the pluralistic view: "Is it still possible to make the salvation of all human beings depend on the particular historical individual Jesus of Nazareth, about whom they [other religious traditions] often have not heard or whom otherwise they have not been in a position to recognize?"[19] For Dupuis, this debate is misplaced and unnecessary because Christocentrism is never opposed to theocentrism, since it is theocentric by being Christocentric and vice versa.

> The first is that the assumption made by a growing number of theologians that a Christocentric perspective is no longer tenable, calls for some clarifications. Are Christocentrism and theocentrism really at odds, as is being claimed, as two contradictory paradigms? The Christocentrism of Christian tradition is not, in fact, opposed to theocentrism. Christian theology is not faced with the dilemma of being either Christocentric or theocentric; it is theocentric by being Christocentric and vice versa.[20]

Dupuis also criticizes Race's inclusivist perspective. Inclusivism is the dominant position among Catholic theologians in the Christian theology of religions since it is able to combine the centrality of the Christ-event and the possibility of divine manifestation in other religions. However, Dupuis' main objection to inclusivism is its insistence on the saving presence of the Christ-event when this presence

19 Ibid., 88.
20 Ibid.

is not unequivocally acknowledged and when non-Christians explicitly attribute their religious lives to sources other than Christ.[21] Inclusivism is an *a priori* Christian solution to the problem of salvation of other religions: Dupuis considers his Christian theology of religions inclusivist, but significantly qualifies it by stating that even without affirming Christ, "non-Christians have a real mediatory role of salvation for their members."[22]

Dupuis, therefore, proposes the more integral model, the Trinitarian Christology, which incorporates all aspects that are otherwise set in opposition to each other by Race's model. "Whereas inclusive Christocentrism is non-negotiable for Christian theology, it can be combined with a true theocentric pluralism, both aspects being complementary in a single reality."[23] This model overcomes not only the exclusivist but also the inclusivist paradigm, without resorting to the "pluralist" paradigm based on the negation of constitutive salvation in Jesus Christ.[24] In Trinitarian Christology, one arrives at a position which sincerely attempts to harmonize Christocentrism with a certain pluralism of religions in God's design.

> Therefore, Trinitarian Christology allows for the recognition of the ongoing presence and activity of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Such a perspective makes it possible to affirm a plurality of ways or paths to human liberation/salvation in accordance with God's design for humankind in Jesus Christ; it also opens the way for recognizing other saving figures in human history.[25]

21 Terrence Merrigan, "Exploring the Frontiers: Jacques Dupuis and the Movement 'Towards a Christian Theology of Religions,'" *East Asian Pastoral Review* 37/1 (2000): 34.

22 Dupuis, "'Christianity and the Religions' Revisited," *Louvain Studies* 28 (2003): 369.

23 Ibid., 90.

24 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue,* 256.

25 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 282.

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A Trinitarian Christology, in other words, is a model for a theology of religions which could well be called "inclusivist pluralism." In inclusivist pluralism, one may affirm at the same time a plurality of religious paths having some salvific value for their adherents while keeping to the inclusivist position by holding fast to Jesus Christ as universal Savior with whom these paths are essentially and organically related in accordance with the one divine plan of salvation for humankind.[26]

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is also "an approach which combines an inductive a posteriori method with the a priori deductive one, thus professing explicit reference to the concrete reality of de facto religious pluralism."[27] In his Trinitarian Christology, Dupuis dialogues between the a priori element or the "text" which is the revealed data contained in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, and the a posteriori element or the "context," which is the complex reality, including the sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and religious reality.[28] In interpreting the Scripture, Dupuis avoids the "proof-text method" which selects texts and takes them out of context, and makes them affirm what they do not say. At the same time, he also insists that "Scripture and the New Testament, in particular, is not a monolithic piece of writing and that many affirmations are found in it which may seem to contradict each other, but are in reality complementary and must be combined and integrated."[29] Dupuis' Trinitarian

26 Dupuis, "The Truth Will Make You Free," *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999): 226.

27 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 262.

28 Dupuis adds the third element, namely, the "interpreter." The "interpreter" is the ecclesial community, a believing people in the community.

29 Dupuis criticizes the unilateral interpretation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ based on a few isolated texts: Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5 and

Christology combines both the deductive and inductive approaches which are the firm beliefs of the universality of Christ the Savior and the fact of "the element of truth and grace" (AG 9) and "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men and women" (NA 2) in other religions as the work of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in them.

Positive Effects of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology

Applying a Trinitarian Christology to a Christian theology of religions has several positive effects.

First of all, a Trinitarian Christology reveals the relational aspect of the centrality of the Christ-event with God's universal plan of salvation through the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Dupuis finds it reasonable to say that God's saving action is not exclusively bound by the Christ-event, since the non-incarnate Word (*Logos asarkos*) that "enlightens every human being by coming into the world" (Jn 1:9) pre-exists the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ, and endures eternally after the Incarnation, after the historical event of Jesus Christ. In the same way, the Spirit is also universally present in history, even before the time of creation. Therefore, while a Trinitarian Christology affirms the centrality of the Christ-event, it also leaves room for other paths of salvation which are invariably enlightened and inspired by the universal and eternal presence of the selfsame Word and Spirit. This

Jn 14:6. He proposes a more integral hermeneutic of the biblical data. For example, the Word "pitched its tent among human beings" (Jn 1:14) in Jesus Christ, but Wisdom had previously taken possession of every people and nation (Sir 24:6-7) and "pitched her tent" in Israel (Sir 24:8-12). Likewise, Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 114:6); but the Word who is before him was "the true light that enlightens every human being by coming into the world" (Jn 1:9).

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is the first positive effect of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology: it provides grounding for interreligious dialogue since it is more theologically open and attitudinally positive towards non-Christian religions.

Secondly, a Trinitarian Christology encourages Christians to recognize the mediating and saving roles of other religious traditions now seen as various ways through which God saves humankind. Dupuis says that "the other religious traditions are oriented toward the mystery of Jesus Christ in whom they can find their fullness; however, that orientation does not prevent the germs of 'truth and grace' contained in them."[30] A Trinitarian Christology constructs a solid basis for "a true understanding of the meaning of interreligious dialogue, since the fact that we share the same Spirit—the Spirit of God and—that the 'seeds of the Word' are sown among others constitutes the concrete foundation for a dialogue."[31]

A third positive effect of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is the fostering of a mutual complementarity, an exchange and a sharing of values, a dynamic interaction between Christianity and other religions. The element of "truth and grace" in other religions can enrich the Christian's religious values.

Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religions

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is a model for a Christian theology of religions that is able to combine and hold together the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation and a truly positive and salvific value of other

30 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 257.
31 Ibid., 223.

religious traditions for their followers. Dupuis moves beyond the dilemma of choosing between Christocentrism and theocentrism, or between inclusivism and pluralism, which is understood as paradigms mutually opposed and excluding each other. Thus, a Trinitarian Christology overcomes not only the exclusivist but also the inclusivist paradigm, without resorting to the "pluralist" paradigm based on the negation of constitutive salvation in Jesus Christ.

The key element in Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology, which makes a "breakthrough" in Christian theology of religions, is his affirmation that the universal presence of the non-incarnate Word and the Spirit enlightens and inspires other religious traditions. The Christ-event, the deepest and unsurpassable self-commitment of God to humankind, does not exhaust the mystery of God. Thus, there is room to believe that God communicates Godself to other religions through the divine Word and Spirit. In other words, the Christ-event as the climax of God's self-communication to humankind should not be interpreted exclusively, which eventually leads in condemning and rejecting the element of "truth and grace" (AG 9) in other religions. The Christ-event, the culmination of saving history, does not repudiate but, in fact, confirms all that God has done for humankind before that event and in view of it. Dupuis steadfastly affirms the centrality of the Christ-event, but this sincere affirmation need not entail exclusivist statements by which any positive significance in God's eternal design for humankind in other religions is denied.

In his Trinitarian Christology, Dupuis opens to a more positive dialogue between Christianity and other religions and avoids the excesses of the traditional threefold model of "exclusivism," "inclusivism," and "pluralism." He suggests

that Christians can learn new aspects of truth and grace from other religions (which he suggests "exclusivists" and "inclusivists" do not allow), but denies the "pluralist" claim that there are other saviors unrelated to Jesus Christ. Therefore, other religions have "positive but hidden meaning" and can be "ways or routes of salvation" intended by God.[32] Hence "the goal of interreligious dialogue is the common conversion of Christians and members of other religious traditions to the same God—the God of Jesus Christ, who challenges them through each other."[33]

Interreligious Dialogue as Mutual Enrichment

In his Trinitarian Christology, Dupuis affirms the elements of "truth and grace" (AG 9) in other religious traditions which Christians can learn in interreligious dialogue. Thus, interreligious dialogue must be reciprocal and complimentary, engaged in dynamic interaction between Christianity and other religions, resulting in mutual enrichment. Dupuis intends a "mutual complementarity" which "without suppressing the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the consequent irreducible singularity of Christianity, maintains, nevertheless, that true aspects of the divine mystery can so stand out and be expressed in other traditions that even Christians can profit from contact with them."[10]

"Complementarity" is understood here not in the sense of the fulfillment theory according to which Christian truth 'brings to completion' in a one-sided process the fragmentary truths it finds sown outside. Rather, "complementarity" refers to "an exchange and a sharing of saving values or

32 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 253.
33 Ibid., 234.

a dynamic interaction between Christianity and other religions.[34]

Dupuis is open to the possibility that some aspects of the divine mystery may be found stressed more vividly in other religions than in the Christian revelation. This, therefore, calls for interreligious dialogue in which participants may find their own faith stimulated and deepened by another's. For Dupuis, the process of dialogue is two-way. It is, therefore, possible that Christianity will find its own fulfillment through engagement with other traditions. Dupuis understands that the mystery of salvation is mediated overtly, explicitly, and with full visibility through Christianity.[35] Other religions contain the element of truth and grace; however, these still only "anticipate God's fuller disclosure and decisive self-gift in Jesus Christ."[36]

Accordingly, Dupuis critiques the "fulfillment" theory as the framework for interreligious dialogue because it reduces truth and grace in other religions to merely "seeds" or "stepping stones" to be nurtured and superseded in and by Christian revelation. In the "fulfillment" theory, non-Christian religions simply represent the human aspiration for union with the divine mystery, while Christianity represents the one God-given answer to such aspiration. The "fulfillment" language is basically an a priori language emphasizing the Christian self-understanding about means of salvation and judges other religions and their role in the history of salvation. Interreligious dialogue demands respect and affirmation of the "otherness" of other religions and not rejection and

34 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 257.
35 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 319.
36 Ibid., 325.

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disrespect. Rather, it is a form of sharing, of giving, and receiving. Dupuis advocates a mutual complementarity between Christianity and other religions, which leads to a mutual fulfillment between Christianity and other religions where each participant can be enriched.[37]

Interreligious Dialogue Demands Commitment and Openness

Dupuis objects to the fulfillment-theory understanding of interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, he also disagrees with another extreme called the "pluralist" position. Pluralism rejects a "constitutive" and "inclusivist" Christology, which avows that humankind is saved by God in Jesus Christ, since it does not give room for genuine dialogue.[38] As understood by the pluralist frame of mind, dialogue can be sincere only if it takes place on an equal footing between partners. This means that Christians should give up their faith on the constitutive character of Jesus Christ. The pluralist argues that interreligious dialogue demands openness from each participant, which must, first of all, renounce any claim to uniqueness for the person and work of Jesus Christ as a universal constitutive element of salvation.

Dupuis argues that a "constitutive" Christology is not necessarily "exclusive" because the universal saving impact of Jesus Christ leaves space for other "saving figures" and other religious traditions, where God is present and at work through God's Word and God's Spirit.[39] Moreover, without commitment to and integrity in one's own faith, a dialogue

37 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 257.
38 Ibid., 228.
39 Ibid., 227.

will end in a form of "syncretism"—a reduction of faith in the quest for a common ground—or "eclecticism"—a combination of the various traditions by choosing scattered elements and forming a shapeless, inconsistent amalgam.[40] The pluralists do not take seriously the real differences among religions. They even play down the contradictions among the religions while the search for an underlying unity ends up with the lowest common denominator, like liberation or human salvation. In other words, the pluralist's proposal that "one should give up one's faith in interreligious dialogue" will not result in a fruitful dialogue. Dialogue presupposes the integrity of personal faith. Interreligious dialogue must admit the differences and possible contradictions among the religions and seek understanding in those differences.

If dialogue supposes the integrity of personal faith, it also requires openness to the faith of the other. Openness is the willingness to enter into the experience of the other, striving to grasp that experience from within one's own faith-perspective:

> To know the religion of another is more than being cognizant of the facts of the other's religious traditions. It involves getting inside the skin of the other, it involves walking in the other's shoes, it involves seeing the world in some sense as the other sees it, it involves getting inside the other's sense of 'being a Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist or whatever.[41]

Trinitarian Christology as the Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is primarily an

40 Ibid., 229.
41 Ibid., 230.

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intra-Christian dialogue that provides a theoretical theology of religions for a more fruitful dialogue between Christians and other religions. His theology leans more toward the dialogue of theological exchange and spiritual experience because of the intellectual manner of his theology and the shared spiritual movements of the Spirit in other religions.

A Trinitarian Christology gives a theological foundation for interreligious dialogue in three aspects. First, a Trinitarian Christology highlights the "mystery of unity and salvation" of humankind in God's plan of salvation. Therefore, in the Trinitarian Christology perspective, interreligious dialogue takes place between persons who are already bound to each other in the unity of God's plan of salvation through the universal presence of God's Word and God's Spirit in human history. Secondly, a Trinitarian Christology affirms the positive role of religions in the salvation of their adherents. Therefore, dialogue with other religions is not meant to convert them to Christianity but to share in their values and work together to build God's Kingdom. Third, a Trinitarian Christology affirms the importance of the proclamation of the Good News as an integral part of interreligious dialogue.

A Trinitarian Christology and the "Mystery of Unity and Salvation"

Dupuis argues that his particular model of Trinitarian Christology expresses "the mystery of unity and salvation" of humankind, which Vatican II considers a foundation for interreligious dialogue. *Nostra Aetate* states that "Humanity forms but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth and also because all share a common destiny, namely, God"

(2). Dialogue is thus established on a double foundation: the community which has its origin in God through creation and its destiny in God through salvation in Jesus Christ.[42] In this "mystery of unity," differences have to be acknowledged, although they are less important than unity which is the more radical, basic, and decisive of the two. Invariably, "Dialogue and Proclamation" also affirms that "from this mystery of unity, it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit."[43]

> Christians know this [the salvific action of Christ] through their faith, while others remain unaware that Jesus Christ is the source of their salvation. The mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit (DP 29).

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology recognizes the ongoing presence and activity of the Word of God and of the Spirit of God in the history of humanity, including the world religions.[44] He argues that the Spirit is present in the economy of salvation everywhere and mediates all genuine religious experiences of God. Such mediation reaches other believers through channels available to the Spirit: sacred scriptures, religious practices, and rites which the Second Vatican Council expressed as "seeds of the Word" (AG 11). The Spirit is active in a distinct manner on a cosmic scale outside visible Christianity (RM 28) without, as Dupuis says, opposing the Christ-event as if they [the Christ-event and the Holy Spirit] functioned in two distinct economies. In such a situation, for

42 Ibid., 222.
43 Ibid., 224.
44 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 385.

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Dupuis, interreligious dialogue takes place between people who are already saved by the work of Jesus Christ and who share in the communion of the Spirit. God's Word and God's Spirit have already been present in those religions.

A Trinitarian Christology and Communion with Others

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology proposes a theology of dialogue which is grounded on the Being/Self of God who is dialogical, not only in reaching out to humanity in history, but also in God's very nature as Father, Son, and Spirit.[45] The entire history of human salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which he prolongs with humankind in so many different ways (ES 70). Dialogue is found in the very plan of God. Mission is mostly the mission of God who intended to share with people the fullness of life in God's eternal Son and the Holy Spirit (AG 2). Thus, mission means entering into the mystery of a missionary God whose love embraces the world in ways we have neither known nor imagined (GS 22). Therefore, Dupuis argues that the commitment of Christians to dialogue is not merely anthropological but also and primarily, theological. Christians should enter into a dialogue with all human beings in the very same way that God entered into a constant dialogue of salvation with humankind.[46] Thus dialogue is Trinitarian inasmuch as "God the Father initiated and established it with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit" (ES 70).

Moreover, Christians are also called to build a "mutual and reciprocal" dialogue with others based on a communion model of the Trinity. Interreligious dialogue is meant not to convert others into Christianity. It is for Christians to discover and

45 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 255.
46 Ibid., 225.

encounter the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the members of other religions. In such an atmosphere, Christians should not only hope for the conversion of the "other." Christians themselves should remain open to experience personal transformation and remain attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit which might come from other believers and their religious traditions.

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology also highlights another aspect in the theology of dialogue: that God has initiated a dialogue between God and humanity through the world religions. Religious traditions are a "path to salvation." This refers not merely to humanity's search for God, but also God's search for humankind. In fact, God takes the gracious initiative in inviting non-Christians to share in his divine life.[47] Therefore, the world religions do not simply represent the universal human aspiration for union with the divine mystery; they represent God's self-communication to humankind. Dupuis here quotes John Paul II's *Redemptor Hominis*, which states that "other religions have authentic religious experience which is the work of the Holy Spirit who is present and active in the world" (RH 6).

> The world religions 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. When religions encounter one another in dialogue, they build up a community in which differences become complementaries and divergences are changed into pointers to communion.[48]

47 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 305.
48 Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association (December 28-31, 1989), "Toward an Indian Christian Theology of

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By affirming the positive role of other religions, dialogue of Christians with other religions is grounded on respect for others and on enrichment from the difference. A Trinitarian Christology highlights the surplus of God's mystery in other religions that Christians can learn and by which they can be enriched. While the historical Jesus represents the fullness of God's salvific will, he does not exhaust the mystery of God which is made present in the world religions through the non-incarnate Word.

Trinitarian Christology and the Proclamation of the Good News

Dupuis is definitely aware that there can be no authentic evangelization without proclaiming Jesus Christ the "constitutive" Savior, but he is equally aware that in such contexts as the church in Asia, Africa, or Latin America, there can be no profound evangelization and inculturation of Christ's message without dialogue with other religions and cultures. By affirming the "constitutive" role of Jesus Christ as the universal Savior, Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology also recognizes that dialogue with other believers ultimately constitutes the deepest motivation of Christians: to announce Jesus Christ and to share with others the joy of knowing and following him as Lord and Savior.[49] The document "Dialogue and Proclamation" shares the same notion:

Insofar as the Church and Christians have a deep love for Lord Jesus, the desire to share him with others is motivated not merely by obedience to the Lord's command, but by this

Religious Pluralism," in *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective*, ed. K. Pathil (Delhi: ISPCK, 1991), 338-49.

49 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 228.

love itself. It should not be surprising, but quite normal, that the followers of other religions should also desire sincerely to share their faith (DP 83).

A Trinitarian Christology underlines the necessity of both dialogue and the proclamation of the Christian gospel. Proclamation is part of Christians' commitment to faith in Christ, and of their mission to share God's love to the world. Thus, Dupuis acknowledges that in the Church, interreligious dialogue is always "in tension" with the proclamation.[50] It is a tension between the "not yet" of the Church who, together with the others is in history a pilgrim toward the fullness of the Kingdom, and the "already" of the Church that is in time and in the world the sacrament of the Kingdom: the former [the already] makes proclamation possible and the latter [the not yet] makes interreligious dialogue necessary.[51] Dupuis argues that the aims of dialogue and proclamation differ: the former seeks a deeper conversion of both partners toward God (DP 40 to 41), while the latter aims at inviting others to become disciples of Jesus Christ in the Christian community (DP 83). Taken together, dialogue and proclamation are closely linked. Dialogue contains an element of witness to one's own faith, and proclamation is to be carried out in a dialogical manner.[52]

50 This "tension" highlights that dialogue and proclamation must be distinguished as two different aspects in the Church mission; yet both are closely interrelated. In the traditional theology of religions represented, for instance, by *Dominus Iesus*, dialogue with other religions happens outside the mission and plays a preparatory role. Thus dialogue becomes subordinated to proclamation (DI 22). In this situation, the main purpose of the evangelizing mission is to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior with the intention of converting others. The real problem with this approach is that conversion becomes one-sided.

51 Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation," in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. W. R. Burrows (NY: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1993), 155.

52 Michael Louis Fitzgerald, "Dialogue and Proclamation," in *In Many and Diverse Ways: in Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, ed. Daniel Kendall

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Proclamation itself is dialogical, for "the communion brought about by dialogue is the deepest dimension of God's own mission in our midst luring us into self-giving love."[53]

In maintaining the importance of Gospel's proclamation, it must be noticed that Dupuis does not incline his theology toward ecclesiocentrism—an approach that has been objected to by Catholic theologians, including Dupuis. In his Trinitarian Christology, he moves beyond eccleciocentrism and offers a fruitful insight into the universality of the Kingdom of God as the center of every religion.[54] Dupuis agrees that the fullness of the means of salvation is in the Church (LG 9, 14, 17, and 48; RM 11; and DI 16). At the same time, he affirms that in relation to other believers who do not belong explicitly to the Church, the role of the Church is different. The other believers do not have to belong explicitly or implicitly to the Church in order to be saved. The Council appears to have affirmed this by another term in saying that the unbaptized are "oriented" to the church (LG 36). Hence, Dupuis argues that the proclamation of the Good News is not primarily to convert members of other religions to be an explicit member of the Catholic Church. Rather, its aims is to do the mission of Jesus Christ in the world to build the Kingdom of God. People are called to build the Kingdom of God by opening themselves to the action of the Spirit:

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and Gerald O'Collins (NY: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2003), 191.

53 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 227.

54 Concerning the function of the Church in the process of salvation, Church documents distinguish three elements which are non-negotiable. Firstly, the church is the sign and instrument of God's salvation directed to all people (LG 9, 14, 17, 48; RM 11; DI 16). Secondly, all other believers are oriented to the Church and are called to become its part (LG 13, 16; AG 7; DH 1; RM 10; DI 20-22). Finally, the various religions cannot be considered as ways of salvation which complement the Church (RM 36; DI 21-22).

> It is true that the inchoate reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live "Gospel values" and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills (Jn 3:8). But it must immediately be added that this temporal dimension of the Kingdom remains incomplete unless it is related to the kingdom of Christ present in the Church and straining towards eschatological fullness (RM 20).

The Relevance of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology to the Asian Church

Asia is a continent characterized by widespread poverty. Except for a few developed countries such as South Korea, Japan and Singapore, most Asian countries are among the poorest in the world. "The Church in Asia then, with its multitude of poor and oppressed people, is called upon to live a communion of life which shows itself particularly in loving service to the poor and the defenseless" (EA 32). The FABC highlights this poverty in Asia as a *locus theologicus* for theology. Another document from the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) says that the experience of the struggle of the poor and the oppressed against all forms of injustice in the Third World as a source of theology must be taken seriously as a new locus for theological reflection.[55] Thus, an important feature of Asian theology is human liberation and thus the coming together of different religions in the continent is not primarily to talk about problems among religions, but to solve the problems of poverty, injustice and violence in society.

55 See Final Statement of the Fifth EATWOT Conference, New Delhi, August 17 – 29, 1981, in *The Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 199.

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Dupuis' theology of religions is very much influenced by the Asian context and Asian theologians. For him, because of the intertwined phenomena of widespread poverty and deep religiosity in Asia, interreligious dialogue must go hand in hand with actions towards the liberation of the poor in Asia.[56] Thus, Dupuis situates the praxis of interreligious dialogue in the context of human liberation. Following "Dialogue and Proclamation," Dupuis underlines the importance of uniting dialogue with the praxis of liberation such that

> Dialogue is for integral developments, social justice and human liberation. . . . There is need to stand up for human rights, proclaim the demands of justice and denounce injustice . . . . independently of the religious allegiance of the victims. There is need also to join together in trying to solve the great problems facing society and the world, as well as in education for justice and peace (DP 44).

Dupuis argues that one of the significant *loci theologici* for interreligious dialogue is to bring liberation especially to those who are poor and marginalized in society. Dialogue with other religious members is united with the praxis of human liberation that the members of the different religious traditions must engage together in the struggle for human liberation out of the differences between their respective religious faiths.[57] Dupuis particularly refers to the Asian context with poverty as its main characteristic together with religious diversity. As the FABC's document states, God is present and most clearly active in the poor of Asia; therefore, the Asian bishops have made the preferential option for the poor the fundamental direction of the church of Asia.[58] In this context,

56 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 119.
57 Ibid., 375.
58 Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arevalo, eds., *For All the People of*

Dupuis argues that interreligious dialogue in Asia should mainly fight for human liberation.

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is genuinely open to a Kingdom-centered theology of mission.[59] The goal of dialogue, therefore, is not ultimately to sweep other religions into the Church but to work with them in building the Reign of God.[60] By emphasizing the reality of the Kingdom of God instead of the centrality of the Church, Dupuis echoes the same intention with the FABC's document which points out that the mission of the Church in Asia is "to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: to promote justice, peace, love, compassion, equality, and brotherhood in these Asian realities. In short, it is to work to make the Kingdom of God a reality."[61]

Further Reflections

After doing research on Dupuis' theology of religions, particularly on his Trinitarian Christology, I believed that what Dupuis is simply trying to do is to take a God's eyeview of the history of salvation, allowing him to observe how God in many and diverse ways has been giving Godself to humankind for their salvation. For him, religious pluralism shows that God is love and God's love is "greater than our heart" (1 Jn 3:20). The plurality of language, then, finds its ultimate source in a God who is Love and communication.

Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, vol. 1, Documents from 1970 to 1991 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Quezon City, Claretian Publication, 1992).

59 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 342.

60 Dupuis, "The Theology of Religious Pluralism Revisited," 211-263.

61 FABC: "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium," in *For All the People of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences,* vol. 1, *Documents from 1970 to 1991*, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arevalo (NY: Orbis Books; Quezon City, Manila: Claretian Publications, 1992), 275.

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As a Jesuit, I also believe that Dupuis was inspired and deeply moved by the contemplation of the Trinity in the second week of the Spiritual Exercises: "Here it is how the Three Divine Persons were looking upon the whole extent and space of the earth, filled with human beings. They see that all were going down into hell, and They decreed, in their eternity, that the Second Person should become man to save the human race." Here, for Ignatius, the Christ-event is always in relationship to God's universal plan of salvation, willed by the three divine persons, as it has been expressed as well by Dupuis in his Trinitarian Christology. In the same way, Dupuis was also inspired by the "Contemplatio ad Amorem" or *Contemplation to gain love* in the Fourth Week of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. This contemplation is meant to find God's love in everything and love everything in God.

To Be Religious Is to Be Interreligious

As I reflect on Dupuis' writings, I found out that his main concern can be expressed in this statement: genuine religion necessarily entails a relationship with the other religions; thus, to be religious is to be interreligious.[62] What does this mean? It is in dialogue with other religions that Christianity can come to a fuller realization of its own identity and mission and a better understanding of the unique revelation that it has received from Christ. In the same way, other religions can achieve their full potential only in dialogue with each other and Christianity. There is then a reciprocal relationship between Christianity and other religions. In short, it is in and

62 This title is taken from the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association, entitled "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism" on December 1989 from Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (New York: Maryknoll, 1997), 2-3.

through a conversation with others that we come to know who Jesus is for us today, and how to be a Christian in this pluralistic society. Our faith is not threatened but rather enlarged by the different ways of other faiths that have become a source of blessing for us.

As I reflect on my faith journey, Dupuis' concern resonates with my personal experience as well wherein my faith as a Christian was strengthened and deepened through my relationship with other believers, particularly with my Muslim brothers and sisters. Through this relationship, I have encountered in their religious traditions a sense of the sacred, a commitment to a deep personal experience of God and a total surrender of the self to God which eventually gave me a chance to learn and to deepen my faith as a Christian.

I am convinced that interreligious dialogue does not begin with propositions and theories but with experience and relationship. Through a real encounter with other religions, I have found the superabundant riches of the Divine Mystery expressed in the uniqueness and the depth of their faith. Their diversity enables us, Christians, to experience the richness of God more profoundly and thus deepen in our faith as Christians. Elizabeth Johnson quotes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' analogy beautifully to show the enrichment that interreligious dialogue can bring:

> What would faith be like if we acknowledged the image of God in another, whose truth is not our truth? It is like feeling secure in one's own home, yet moved by the beauty of foreign places, knowing they are someone else's home, not mine, but still part of the glory of the world that is ours. It is like being fluent in English, yet thrilled by the rhythms of an Italian sonnet. It is like realizing that your life is a sentence written in the story of your own faith, yet

> pleased to know that there are other stories of faith written in other lives, all part of the great narrative of God's call and humanity's response.[63]

The Possibility of Multiple Religious Belonging?

Another element that I found deeply significant in Dupuis' theology of religions is his concern for "mutual enrichment" between Christianity and other religions, "an exchange and a sharing of saving values take place between Christianity and the other traditions and from which a mutual enrichment and transformation may ensue between the traditions themselves."[64] In fact, I realized that this mutual complementarity is the unique character of Dupuis' theology of religions which differentiates it from Race's approach. Does Dupuis also affirm the possibility of multiple religious belonging? By focusing on the mutual complementarity among religions, Dupuis opens up the possibility of adopting and living out other beliefs. Is multiple religious belonging in accordance with Catholic teachings with regard to the centrality of Jesus Christ? This question is very relevant particularly in the Asian context where religions are part of their people's culture. Not infrequently, Asian people go to pray and worship in pagodas, temples and shrines without caring about what religions these pagodas, temples, and shrines belong.

Given the model of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology, which affirms the "elements of truth and grace" (AG 9) in other religious traditions as the work of God's Word and God's Spirit, multiple religious belonging is not only possible but also

63 Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum Publication), 178.
64 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 326.

desirable.[65] If non-Christian religions contain an "element of truth and grace" and if they may be considered ways of salvation from which Christianity can and should benefit through dialogue, then there should be no theological objection against someone wishing to be a Christian and at the same time following some doctrinal teachings and religious practices of other religions, for as long as these are not patently contradictory to Christian faith and morals. It is through the effort to "go over" to other religions that Christians can deepen their Christian identity. Raimundo Panikkar shares his experience: "I 'left' as a Christian, 'found myself' a Hindu and I 'return' as a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian."[66] Dupuis gives an example of Christian-Buddhist encounter where the Buddhist learns more about what is uniquely valuable in Buddhist "gnosis," while Christians learn about what is uniquely valuable in Christian "agape." Thus, Dupuis affirms that the dynamics of multiple religious belonging is not to start from an abstract consideration of other religions' doctrines but on the willingness to deepen and enrich one's faith by combining one's Christian commitment and another faith experience.[67]

Multiple religious belonging is one form of interreligious dialogue where one tries to step into the shoes of a devotee of another religion and tries to acquire the same religious experience. It would allow Christians to learn from other traditions. Therefore, in the first place, the commitment to Jesus Christ

65 Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 504.

66 Raimundo Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 2.

67 Dupuis, "Christianity and Religions," in *Many Mansion*? *Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity,* ed. Catherine Cornille (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 69.

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is assumed to be strong and without doubt so that the quest for the spiritual riches of other religions is meant to deepen and enrich Church teachings. This would clearly distinguish this manner of openness to other faiths from religious eclecticism, syncretism and relativism.

The dynamics of multiple religious belonging is a phenomenon which poses challenges and offers opportunities for the Church. Dupuis clearly makes this phenomenon more acceptable and desirable as the way for "mutual complementarity." However, its practice by people, especially the young, who do not possess the necessary qualifications, can easily lead to the danger of eclecticism, syncretism, and relativism. Among those qualifications, especially important are a deep commitment to Jesus Christ as the "unique" Savior, a firm rootedness in the Christian community, a competent knowledge of the doctrinal and religious traditions of both Christianity and the non-Christian religions, docility to the guidance of a trustworthy teacher or director, a genuine and sincere quest for communion with God, and an effective commitment to the work of justice.[68] The document *Dominus Iesus* warns against the following dangers of interreligious encounter:

> The difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history, the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history, the ecclecticism of those who, in theological resarch, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the tradition and magisterium of the Chruch (4).

68 Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging," 515-16.

Dupuis shares with us his effort to provide an inclusive theology of religions for a more positive and open concrete stance toward other religious traditions. His theology, as Dupuis says, is a "qualitative leap" in the theology of religions as he has been able to break new ground by offering fruitful insights through the model of Trinitarian Christology. With great courage and at painful cost, he opens a new path so that others can travel further in the quest for understanding the marvelous fact of religious pluralism as an expression of God's love. Pope Francis appears to be one of the theologians who dare to "follow" Dupuis' path in affirming the universality of God's love to all people. In an interview, Pope Francis emphasized God's limitless love, asserting that "God's mercy has no limits, even for those who have no faith." In his encyclical *Lumen Fidei,* he also expressed the importance of love in Christian faith:

> It is clear that the faith is not intransigent, but grows in coexistence that respects the other. The believer isn't arrogant; on the contrary, truth makes him humble, knowing that, more than our possessing it, it is truth that embraces and possesses us. Far from stiffening us, the certainty of the faith puts us on the way, and makes possible witness and dialogue with everyone.[69]

69 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Lumen Fidei,* June 29, 2013, Encyclicals *http*://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei_en.html.

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