30 Years of the Theology of Religions Typology: Retrospective and Future Prospects Conference

The University of Winchester, UK
9\textsuperscript{th} – 10\textsuperscript{th} September 2013

The Third Winchester Interfaith Conference
In collaboration with the World Congress of Faiths

Conference Booklet:
Timetable &
Keynote Abstracts, Biographies and Plenary Panel Guide
Timetable

Day 1: Monday 9th September

1.00-2.00pm  Registration (Stripe Foyer)
2.15-2.30pm  Welcome (Stripe Lecture Theatre SLT))
2.30-3.30pm  Plenary Panel 1: The ToR Typology: Assessment and Debate (SLT), chair: Liz Harris
3.30-4.30pm  Parallel Panels 1 (see Parallel Panels leaflet)
4.30-5.00pm  Tea and Coffee (Stripe Foyer)
5.00-6.00pm  Plenary Panel 2: Roundtable discussion: Christian Theologies of Religions and Other Faiths (SLT), chair: Oddbjørn Leirvik
7.00-8.00    Keynote 1 and Public Lecture (SLT), chairs: Paul Hedges and Alan Race
8.15pm       Dinner (Dining Hall, University Centre)

Day 2: Tuesday 10th September

7.30-9.00am  Breakfast (Dining Hall, University Centre)
9.00-10.30am Parallel Panels 2 (see Parallel Panels leaflet)
10.30-11.00am Tea and Coffee (Stripe Foyer)
11.00-12.00am Keynote 2 (SLT), chair: Alan Race
12.00-1.00pm  Keynote 3 (SLT), chair: Paul Hedges
1.00-2.00pm  Lunch (Dining Hall, University Centre)
2pm onwards  Departures
**Plenary Panel 1: The ToR Typology: Assessment and Debate**

**Paul Hedges & Gavin D’Costa**

This debate will look at arguments for and against the continued useful and employment of the Theology of Religions Typology in contemporary debates in the field. Hedges will speak in favour of the typology and its usefulness, and D’Costa against.

**Gavin D’Costa** was born in Kenya, East Africa. He came to England in 1968 and completed a first degree in English and Theology at Birmingham University. He studied at the University of Cambridge for his doctorate and then taught in London. His doctoral work on John Hick’s theology of religions led him into work with the Church of England and Roman Catholic Committees on Other Faiths, advising these communities on theological issues. He also advises the Pontifical Council for Other Faiths, Vatican City. In 1998 he was visiting Professor at the Gregorian University, Rome. He started teaching in Bristol in 1993.

**Paul Hedges** is currently Programme Leader for the Theology, Religion and Ethics and History, Civilization and Beliefs degrees at the University of Winchester. He has previously worked for other universities in the UK, Canada, and China. He studied at Lampeter, and his PhD was published as Preparation and Fulfilment: A History and Study of Fulfilment Theology in Modern British Thought. He has subsequently published three more books on Interreligious Studies (two co-edited with Alan Race), and has four books under contract, including the 3 volume Controversies in Contemporary Religion series due out in 2014. He has been co-editor of the Journal of the Academic Study of Religion, and is on the editorial board of the Journal of Religious History.

**Plenary Panel 2: Roundtable discussion: Christian Theologies of Religions and Other Faiths**

**Alan Race, Mark Owen & Haifaa Jawad**

This panel will feature responses from representatives of the Islamic and Buddhist traditions to Christian understandings of other religions within the Theology of Religions. It will seek to discuss the way Christians and non-Christians view and understand the nature of interreligious relations in theological terms. The question of the typology in this will be discussed.

**Dr Alan Race** is currently Rector at St.Margaret’s Church, Lee, south London. He was formerly Director of Postgraduate Studies at St.Philip’s Centre for Study and Engagement, Leicester, and priest-in-charge of St.Philip’s Church. He has combined theological education with pastoral ministry throughout his career, and received an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Leicester University in 2006. His book Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions (SCM Press and Orbis Press 1983, and revised and enlarged SCM 1993) has been called a ‘classic’ text in theology of religions debate. He is also author of Interfaith Encounter: the Twin Tracks of Theology and Dialogue (SCM Press 2001) and Making Sense of Religious Pluralism: Theology of Religions for Our Times (2013 SPCK, for the Modern Church Series on liberal theology). He is also Editor of numerous collections, including, Beyond the Dysfunctional Family: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue with Each Other and with Britain (with Tony Bayfield and Ataullah Siddiqui, pub. 2012 by the Manor House Abrahamic Dialogue Group), Christian Approaches to Other Faiths (with Paul M. Hedges,
2008 SCM Core Text, and accompanying Reader: Christian Approaches to Other Faiths, 2009), Religions in Dialogue: From Theocracy to Democracy (with Ingrid Shafer, Ashgate, 2002), as well as numerous contributions to journals and other edited books. He is Editor-in-Chief for the international journal Interreligious Insight, published through the World Congress of Faiths (UK) and Common Ground (USA).

Dr Mark Owen is the Director of the Winchester Centre of Religions for Reconciliation and Peace, University of Winchester. He has carried out extensive fieldwork throughout Asia including India, Tibet, China and Mongolia. Mark’s research interests include Tibetan Buddhism; Buddhism and conflict transformation; Buddhist death beliefs and rituals; Religion conflict and development; Asian religion and politics; and research methodologies.

Haifa Jawad is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham. He is also the director of Birmingham Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, University of Birmingham. His most recent research work is “Towards Building a British Islam, New Muslims’ Perspective”, Continuum, London, 2011.

Keynote 1: The Pluralist path: where we’ve been and where we’re going?
Paul Knitter
This paper will look back at the origins and evolution of what is called a pluralistic theology of religions, in order to offer suggestions as to how it might further evolve in its efforts to enable Christians to both affirm and engage followers of other religious paths. To clear away broad misunderstandings of the pluralist project, the author first defines and defends what pluralist theologians of religions are trying to achieve, that is enabling pluralists to carry on their efforts to fashion a theology of religions that will foster both a faithful commitment to Christian values and an authentic openness to the values of other religions.

Paul Knitter is one of the world’s most prominent and controversial theologians. He is just retiring from the distinguished Paul Tillich Professorship of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and taught theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati for 30 years. He has degrees from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and the University of Marburg, Germany. Most of his research and publications have dealt with religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. Since his ground-breaking 1985 book, No Other Name?, he has been exploring how the religious communities of the world can cooperate in promoting human and ecological well-being. This is the topic of: One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility(1995) In 2002, he published a critical survey of Christian approaches to other religions: Introducing Theologies of Religions (2002). Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian, came out in Oct. 2009.
From 1986-2004, Knitter was on the Board of Directors for CRISPAZ (Christians for Peace in El Salvador). He is also on the Board of Trustees for the International, Interreligious Peace Council, formed after the 1993 World Parliament of Religions, to promote interreligious peace-making projects.

Keynote 2: Christian Theology of Religions: A Jewish Response
Reuven Firestone
Living within and among believers in other religions for millennia, Jews have been required to negotiate theological as well as social relations with them. This paper provides a historical/theological arc to Jewish relations with other religions and a perspective on today’s need to find a way to remain authentic to one’s own truth claims while fully respecting the truth claims of other faiths.

Reuven Firestone was born in Santa Rosa, California in 1952 and educated at Antioch College, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Hebrew Union College where he received his M.A. in Hebrew literature in 1980 and Rabbinic Ordination in 1982, and New York University where he received his Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic studies in 1988. From 1987 to 1992, he taught Hebrew literature and directed the Hebrew and Arabic language programs at Boston University. In 1992 he was awarded the Yad Hanadiv Research Fellowship at the Hebrew University, where he spent the year conducting research on holy war in Islamic tradition. In 2000, Professor Firestone was awarded a fellowship for independent research from the National Endowment for the Humanities for his research on holy war in Judaism, was chosen to be a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 2002, received the Fulbright CASA III Fellowship for study and research at the American University in Cairo, spring, 2006 and the D.A.A.D. (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst) grant to teach at the University in Potsdam, Berlin in 2012-2013. Since 1993 he has served as associate and then full professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. Professor Firestone is co-director of the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement (CMJE), a joint program of Hebrew Union College, the Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Foundation and the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California.


### Keynote 3: Beyond the ‘Christianization of religion?

**Materializing Comparative theology**

Marianne Moyaert

The field of the theology of religions is marked by a deliberate ethical concern for the religious other and a desire to reach out to those of other faiths. The undergirding assumption is that Christians may only alter their troubled inter-religious relations and rectify at least some of the wrongs of the past if they learn to make space for the other in their theological frameworks. Many theologians recognize the ethical dimension of their theological

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1 Hegemony has Greek roots: Greek hēgemonia, from hēgēmōn leader, from hēgeisthai to lead
reasonings and accept that is part of their responsibility to develop a theology of religions that at least endeavors to overcome Christian dominance while remaining committed to Christian faith. Nevertheless, despite good intentions – sometimes, or should I say often – theologies of religions have simply reproduced prejudiced patterns of Christian thought. It seems that any systematic-theological approach may end in a Christianization of other religions, i.e. the explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious interpretation and evaluation of the intricate phenomenon of religion(s) from a normative Christian perspective. As a form of *Hineininterpretierung* such a Christianization is problematic, not only because it misconstrues religious otherness, but also because, by doing so, it inhibits nuanced theological responses and constructive interreligious relations.

In this contribution, I will paint a picture of the recent history of the theology of religions and I will show how theology has struggled with the problem of religious hegemony. Though this contribution will focus on the subtle ways in which Christianity continues to misconstrue religious otherness, I will also establish how the growing awareness of the potential (and real) hegemonic nature of Christian discourse has affected Christian theological self-understanding, such that it institutes at least a feel for the sensitive issues related to religious diversity, and increases theological humility.

*Marianne Moyaert* holds the Fenna-Diemer Lindboom Chair in Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics of Interreligious dialogue at the Faculty of Theology, Free University of Amsterdam. She teaches contextual and cross-cultural hermeneutics, philosophy of religion and philosophical and theological anthropology. She is also a Postdoctoral Fellow of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) in the Faculty of Theology of the K.U.Leuven (Belgium).


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2 I do not think it will be possible to completely overcome symbolic violence.

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Parallel Sessions Papers
Abstracts and Biographical Details

Parallel Panel Session 1: Monday 9th September 3.30-4.30 pm
A: Thinking about Religious Pluralism (Lecture Theatre), chair: Anna King

B: The Typology in Practice (Studio 1), chair: Ulrich Winkler

C: Theological Thinking and the Theology of Religions (Studio 2), chair: Marianne Moyaert

Parallel Panel Session 2: Tuesday 10th September 9.00-10.30 am
A: Comparative Theologies (Studio 1), chair: Gavin D’Costa

B: New Directions and Perspectives (Studio 2), chair: Paul Knitter
Monday Session A: Thinking about Religious Pluralism

Sybille C. Fritsch-Opfermann

Christians and Religious Pluralism – 10 To dos for Good Global Governance

Coming from a more comparative point of view as far as theology of religions is concerned I want to ask how interreligious and intercultural hermeneutics are a necessary tool when we want to set up minimal standards for a global ethics. I introduce as an ethical correspondent to comparative theology what I call “responsible interim”.

Starting from rather concrete questions in the realm of governance/leadership and new biotechnologies/medical care I ask to what extent and in what ways interreligious, intercultural, interdisciplinary and international discourse is a necessary prerequisite for good conduct grounded in the reality of nowadays multicultural societies.

That means to proceed from more general questions of philosophy of religion toward questions of cultural contexts shaping ethical view. Can smallest common denominators be found? How does legal rule help to establish and keep them? How does society, how do individuals change by starting from a spiritual, creative and holistic point of view – a view of co-creation and incarnation continua so to speak – a transpersonal view? Will this help shaping future politics, governance, leadership – not the least economics? And in what direction (peace, justice, integrity of creation) will we have to move together?

Finally I develop 10 To Dos for individuals as well as institutions, organisations and companies to start with for implementing new forms and strategies of governance, transformation, awareness and hope. Asking then, how these vice versa will add to comparative theology and its hermeneutics.

Sybille’s PhD was on Christian Existence in a Buddhist Context/Katsumi Takizawa and Seiichi Yagi. She is a minister of the Church of Southern Hesse, and has taught Ecumenical Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Hamburg University, and had guest lectureships in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Russia, Turkey, Malaysia, Japan and the US. She conducted postgraduate Studies at International Christian University, Tokyo, and had a Special Internship at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey. She is Director of Studies and Director of Protestant Academies in Germany (Loccum, Rheinlande). Research Topics: Philosophy of Religion, Hermeneutics, Science and Theology, Buddhist-Christain Studies, Peace Ethics, Security Politics and Good Governance, Common Approach and Intercultural Sensitivity.

Laurens de Rooij

Identity and Media Portrayals: Religious pluralism in the public sphere and the influence of media

As a result of migration and conversion, the public sphere contains an increasing number of religious communities. These communities construct their identities as they locate themselves and interact with their environment. These communities are exposed to a number of issues and the media is a important factor in the public sphere. This paper will discuss how media usage in the public sphere influences religious identity construction and the conceptualisation of the religious identity of others in light of British cosmopolitanism and global civil society.

The effect of media narratives from a number of sources consist of among others blame, trust, curiosity, prejudice and persecution and is used by the various communities to construct their identity and define their place and role in society. The existing protocols of media and public space of a given context characterize the kinds of experiences communities are exposed to. As well as dictating their participation. Increasingly electronic and digital media allow for new methods of identity construction, especially as it allows for easier access to other religions than one’s own as well as allowing the user more control over the elements he or she wishes to focus on.

As media usage is becoming increasingly democratic through forms such as blogging and YouTube a person increasingly has the ability to channel and monitor his media usage to some extent. At the same time through migration and globalisation pluralistic societies such as Britain are growing. The media’s ability to reach a global audience and to be accessed from anywhere on the globe, means that a global public sphere, that is necessarily ethnically and religiously diverse, influences the identities of the people contained in global civil society. As a result religious identities are constructed after engaging with global media practices and place themselves within global civil society as well as a local context. In turn this adds to the cosmopolitan nature of global society.

Laurens de Rooij is a doctoral candidate at Durham University in England. He is working on how the British news media on Islam and Muslims is interacted with and utilised by non-Muslims in Britain, and is in his second year of dissertation research. He holds a Masters of Arts degree in Theology and Religious Studies (Cum Laude) from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven), a Bachelors of Arts degree in Theology and Religious Studies from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven). His promoters-supervisors are Joanildo Burity and Chris Insole of Durham University.
Monday Session B: The Typology in Practice

Elizabeth Harris
Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism: A Spatial Perspective
In recent years, interest in 'space' as a category in the study of religion and inter-religious encounter has increased. In response to this development, this chapter will examine the spatial implications of Alan Race's typology. The following questions will be examined: Do exclusivist perspectives lead to exclusivist or conflict-fuelling uses of space?, Do inclusivist perspectives lead to a more inclusive attitude towards religious space? Does a pluralist perspective necessarily lead to a conflict-free use of space? Or do we need other categories to understand the factors that condition the spatial aspect of conflicts and convergences between religions. To illustrate the argument, examples will be taken from the history of inter faith relations in Britain, Sri Lanka and Israel/Palestine.

Elizabeth Harris is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies at Liverpool Hope University, specialising in Buddhist Studies and Inter Faith Studies. She is President of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies and Moderator of the Inter Faith Theology Advisory Group of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Her current research focuses on religion, space and conflict in colonial and postcolonial Sri Lanka.

Ray Gaston
The Theology of Religions Typology and Theological Education
The aim of this paper will be to examine the typology as a pedagogical tool for encouraging Christian self-reflection and intra Christian dialogue on engagement with other faiths. Drawing on over five years work with ordinands at an ecumenical theological college and work with local church groups the author seeks to demonstrate the positive ability of the typology for enabling theological dialogue and encouraging theological confidence amongst groups of mixed theological persuasions and of limited theological education.

The paper will begin with an examination of Race's original categorisation as outlined in 'Christians and Religious Pluralism' and explore criticisms that it has an inherent bias towards a Pluralist Theology of Religions. The paper will then explore how the typology has been more widely used and a critical examination of three case studies of its use in written material aimed at the general Christian reader will explore how its presentation can be geared towards any of the particular positions - therefore questioning the inherent pluralist bias critique.

The paper will then argue for a presentation of the typology that encourages a positive attitude towards theological pluralism and intra Christian dialogue. It will argue that the typology can be a tool for encouraging intra-Christian theological plurality in relation to other faiths and an intra-Christian dialogue that can enable confidence in engaging positively with other faith communities and help develop an appreciation of Christian theological pluralism.

Ray Gaston is Tutor in Inter Faith Engagement at Queen’s Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham, UK. An Anglican Priest he has wide experience of ministry in Inter Faith contexts and is the author of A Heart Broken Open – Radical Faith in an Age of Fear (Iona 2010) exploring grassroots Christian Inter Faith Engagement. He is a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Inter Faith Theological Advisory Group.
**Monday Session C: Theological Thinking and the Theology of Religions**

**Philip Whitehead**

**Paul, Adam, and the Theology of Religions**

Few would dispute that, although complex and nuanced, Paul’s theology is sharply dichotomous when it comes to human beings and their relation to God. Paul’s language and imagery implies a sharp distinction between Christian and non-Christian when it comes to knowledge of God and one’s status before him. Furthermore, given the cohesive nature of his theology, this dichotomy can also be found in Paul’s thought on justification, salvation and eschatology. Through an examination of Romans, I argue that Paul’s theological anthropology is rooted in his Adam-Christ typology. Increasingly among modern Pauline scholarship, the significance of Adam for Paul’s theology is being recognised. Human beings are considered to belong either to the realm of Adam or of Christ. These are more than labels of convenience, since Paul uses the language of union with one of these figures. Humanity stands in solidarity with either Adam or Christ. Paul employs ‘mythic’ language to explain what, for him, is an ontological statement about the incorporation of human beings into the realm of Adam or Christ. Paul’s claim that “we have been crucified with Christ” makes a stronger ontological statement than simply describing religious affiliation, indicating that he sees the transfer of the human being from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ as effecting a change in the human person at the very deepest level. This explains Paul’s dichotomous language concerning Christians and non-Christians, and would seem to place Paul (with some qualification) in the “exclusivist” category in the threefold Theology of Religions paradigm. A Christian Theology of Religions wanting to take proper account of the shape of Pauline thought will thus have to deal with the Adam-Christ dichotomy, and the implication that union with Christ is not a surface-level religious affiliation, but an ontological aspect of the human being.

**Graham Adams**

**Shaking the Typology: Being Honest and Hospitable – Graham Adams**

The typology continues to introduce people to the diverse ways Christians account for and assess the status of other religious traditions. However, some of its inherent features work against its own goal of encouraging pluralism. As Andrew Shanks demonstrates, we are often conditioned by half-truths and dishonesties, but we can be ‘shaken’ out of them toward higher possibilities.

Firstly, the typology presupposes a particular Christian self-understanding, which inevitably colours its picture of Christian attitudes to other traditions. Namely, it implies that Christians are focused on the question of personal salvation: do Christians believe non-Christians are saved? This focus can be shaken by alternative Christian self-understandings, to help paint a picture in which hospitality towards others is more intrinsic to Christian identity. Furthermore, by focusing too clearly on the relation and tension between the particular tradition and the universal saving will of God, the typology denies the dynamic relations between traditions. This denial can be shaken by renewed discovery of the way in which a particular tradition’s grasp of the Universal may in itself urge hospitable relationships with other particular traditions, as a mark of its pursuit of the Universal.

Finally, the typology also accepts Christianity’s common portrayal of Jesus as either a barrier or a bridge to pluralism. In other words, he either excludes those outside the particular, Narrow Way, or encourages any who walk the more universal, Wider Way. This polarity denies the politics of Jesus’ ministry, of Christology and of our engagement with others. By contrast, if we recover the problematic Jesus who criticises religio-political judgment and shakes systems of inhospitality, we can affirm again that it is faithfully Christian to be hospitable to others.

**Graham Adams** graduated first in Law, before training for ministry at Northern College (URC), studying Contextual Theology with the ecumenical Partnership for Theological Education (Luther King House, Manchester). Whilst ministering in Manchester, he undertook his PhD. Subsequently Christ and the Other: In dialogue with Hick and Newbigin (Ashgate, 2010) was published. Several experiences with the World Church, including most recently the World Council of Churches’ Global Ecumenical Conference arguing for ‘a new financial and economic architecture’, continue to shape his concern to connect theology, difference, and justice. He has taught on the Congregational Federation’s distance-learning Foundation Degree in Practical Theology since 2003, worked in training development for the Federation on two projects, and since last September has been Tutor in World Christianity (including Mission Studies) and World Faiths, with Northern College.
Elizabeth Chloe Erdmann

Nomadic Theology: Comparative theology with no return
To compare theologies and seek understanding it is essential to continually identify the points of departure from your home tradition and internalize your responses. When comparing religions, most theologians journey back and forth between faiths and belief systems, assimilating truths and being shaped by them. Such definitive points of departure and ‘return’ or even conversion differ when one does not have a conventional or customary tradition to compare and contrast with other religions to begin with—or desire to. This "tradition-less" or “tradition-full” exploration for God/dess/es is not “faith-less” and is more commonplace today in our world of rapid international communication and overlapping cultural identities. The world is not necessarily more diverse, but individuals (arguably) are more aware of all the diversities simultaneously. Repeated exposure to many traditions-coupled with the alleviation of necessarily choosing or returning to one's roots-sets the stage for a style of theology best described as "nomadic". A nomadic style of theology is difficult to define because it doesn't claim and isn't claimed by a set of religious symbols, doctrines or community but instead thrives on many. Since nomadic theology is already comprised of a constantly dynamic comparative theology, it is difficult to use many methods and models that are used for comparing more "fixed" faiths. Exploration of this style of theology will explore the current debates in comparative theology and the theological model options described by Paul Knitter. Radical theoalogy of Carol P. Christ, Rose Braidotti, the religion of Vodou and interviews will help trace some lines of this nomadic style.

Elizabeth Chloe Erdmann is completing her Ph.D. thesis on “Nomadic Theologies” at the University of Stirling in Scotland and holds an MTS in theology from Boston University. She is co-director at the Ariadne Institute for Myth and Ritual in Crete, a practicing priestess and a member of Edinburgh’s Beltane Fire Society. Her article "Nomadic Theology: Crossing the Lines of Traditions in Theology" is published in Testing the Boundaries: Self, Faith, Interpretation and Changing Trends in Religious Studies (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011) and her interview “From Scotland to the Aegean Sea: Diving Deep in Conversation with Carol P. Christ” is published in Goddess Thealogy, An International Journal for the Study of the Divine Feminine (Vol 1, No 1, December 2011).

Ulrich Winkler

Passion and Fog. Theology of Religions Typology Discussion’s Impacts on Comparative Theology’s Epistemology
No other discussion in systematic theology in the last decades has evoked more passion, polemics, suggestions for clarification and further development, but also attempts at veiling and fog projection than the debate on the theology of religions typology. This paper will focus on the intersection between theology of religions and the new project of comparative theology. Most of the latter’s proponents are extremely skeptical of the benefit and advantage of reflections on theology of religions. Some of them consider these reflections as unsolvable, some as aporetic, some as too theoretic and removed from the particularities of religious traditions, some others finally try to avoid decisions. Against these positions, I argue that the typology of the theology of religions reflects on the theological value and relevance of other religions' data and, therefore, is an epistemic precondition for doing comparative theology.


Dr. J. Abraham Vélez de Cea

Comparative Theology of Religions and the Virtue of Interreligious Openness
This paper makes two claims: (1) theologies of religions can be interpreted as different expressions of the virtue of interreligious openness. (2) Comparative theology of religions is an indispensable way to cultivate the virtue of interreligious openness. The first part explains the diverse cognitive and dispositional aspects that constitute the virtue
of interreligious openness. Like other virtues, interreligious openness can be cultivated in excessive or deficient ways, thus leading respectively to the extremes of relativism and fundamentalism. However, the middle point in which ideal interreligious openness lies is not simply a vague mean between the extremes of relativism and fundamentalism but rather a more specific position labeled pluralistic-inclusivism. Pluralistic-inclusivism corresponds to a theology of religions that goes beyond exclusivist and inclusivist theologies but does not go as far as pluralist theologies. The second part suggests that comparative theology of religions is the form of comparative theology most helpful to cultivate interreligious openness. Although any kind of comparative theology has the potential to expand the theological horizons of one tradition with the contribution of other traditions, not all forms of comparative theology lead to interreligious openness. In fact, some exercises in comparative theology are instances of apologetics, that is, they are intended to defend the truth or the superiority of one tradition, which usually fosters the vice of interreligious narrow-mindedness or solipsism rather than the virtue of interreligious openness. However, comparative theology of religions exposes members of one tradition to the claims of superiority made by other traditions, thus challenging in a unique way deeply held assumptions about the nature of one’s own tradition. This encounter with claims of superiority made by others is likely to transform theological arrogance into intellectual humility, thus making us more open to other religions.

He is associate professor at the department of philosophy and religion, Eastern Kentucky University. His research interests include comparative theology of religions, interfaith dialogue and Buddhist-Christian studies (contemplative practices and virtue ethics). His expertise is the historical Buddha and contemporary presentations of his thought. He has published The Buddha and Religious Diversity (Routledge, 2013), which is an exercise in comparative theology of religions. At present he is working on a book about contemplative practices in Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism with special emphasis on the Buddha of the Pāli Nikāyas and St. John of the Cross.
Tuesday Session B: New Directions and Perspectives

Sigrid Rettenbacher
Theology of Religions in a Postcolonial Perspective: Epistemological and Ecclesiological Reflections
In recent times the concept of “religion” as well as the discursive construction of religious identities have been critically examined within the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies. There are different studies that tackle the questions of power and representation in the encounter of religious traditions. At first glance these insights from cultural and religious studies put any theological engagement with other religious traditions under a hermeneutics of suspicion thus seriously questioning any approach to theology of religions. However, more closely examined postcolonial theories turn out to be a fruitful inspiration for a systematic approach to theology of religions. This paper explores the possibilities of adopting a critical postcolonial awareness in theology of religions. Ecclesiology as the epistemological framework of theology is the central point of reference for bringing postcolonial and theological reflections together. Due to the problematic history of the axiom *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus est* ecclesiology is blinded out in most approaches to theology of religions. As ecclesiology, however, is the locus where the Christian identity is negotiated, a lacking awareness for ecclesiological questions gives raise to several problems within theology of religions among which are, for example, the inability to deal with the church’s history of guilt in the encounter with other religious traditions as well as a missing framework for dealing with the church’s bounded perspectivity. In a postcolonial perspective the paper conceives of ecclesiology as the locus where the Christian identity is negotiated and discursively constructed – in relation as well as in demarcation to the various religious others –, thus allowing for new insights that may prove fruitful for current debates within theology of religions.

MMag.a Sigrid Rettenbacher has been since 2009 Postgraduate teaching and research assistant at the Centre for Intercultural Theology and Study of Religions, Department of Systematic Theology/University of Salzburg. In the winter semester 2012 she stayed as researcher in residence at the Free University Amsterdam/Netherlands. Vice chairwoman of the Salzburger Hochschulwochen, an interdisciplinary international Summer School at the University of Salzburg. Part of a research project on Jacques Dupuis’ approach to theology of religions – translator of Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism into German – the first German translation of Jacques Dupuis SJ. PhD-topic: Theology of Religions in a Postcolonial Perspective. Epistemological and Ecclesiological Reflections.

Janet Williams
The four Chalcedonian adverbs: a reflection on Buddhist-Christian dual belonging.
In this paper, as a reflection on personal experience of practice in the Zen and Christian traditions, I offer the Chalcedonian adverbs, which set the boundaries within which Christian thought and worship could address the salvific mystery of two natures in one person, as a framework to address dual belonging. *Without fusion, without alteration, without partition, without assigning territories*: these adverbs address dynamic behaviours rather than reified traditions, they are apophatic in tone (with an intriguing resonance with the Buddhist tetralemma), and they are oriented towards the goal of understanding what it might be to be most fully a person, most completely alive.

After a BA in Classics and an MST in Patristic Theology at Oxford, Janet spent 6 years in the money markets in London and Tokyo. In 1991 she began to teach Philosophy, History of Ideas and World Religions at Temple University Tokyo, while studying Zen with Gudo Nishijima Roshi. Returning to England, she gained her PhD at the University of Winchester with a study of apophaticism in Patristic Christian and Soto Zen texts, published by OUP as Denying Divinity; she has taught Buddhism, Philosophy, Religious Studies and Theology in a number of UK and US colleges. Ordained in the Church of England in 2009, she currently works for Ripon College Cuddesdon as Gloucester Tutor for the West of England Ministry Training Course.

Oddbjørn Leirvik
An Ethical and Relational Turn in the Theology of Religions: Some Reflections In The Space Between Christianity And Islam
In philosophies of dialogue inspired by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, interreligious relations are discussed in an ethical rather than a theological perspective. This corresponds in fact with a more general, *ethical* turn in modern Christian theology. It also reflects, I will argue, a *relational* turn in Western academia from “comparative religion” to “interreligious studies” – which typically seeks to understand the living encounter between adherents of different faiths. Referring to modern interpretations of a well-known hadith about “The merit of visit the sick”, Tariq Ramadan’s 2005 moratorium on hudud punishments, and Hasan Askari’s reflections of the dialogical relationship between Christianity
and Islam, I will discuss whether a similar ethical and relational turn can also be identified in the writings of modern Islamic theologians.

From a slightly different angle, I will also discuss whether the ethical and relational turn can in fact be seen as a (Christian-Muslim?) endeavor to “humanize” theology. In this part, I will also consider Khaled Abou El Fadl’s notion of “moral enrichment” of sacred scriptures.

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