

The Fulfilment Theology of Jean Daniélou, Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis

Adam Sparks

Abstract

Prominent in much Theology of Religions is the concept of fulfilment (the extension of the fulfilment of the Old Covenant by Christ, to the fulfilment of other religions by Christ). The three Catholic theologians who are the subject of this article – Jean Daniélou, Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis – rely heavily on the fulfilment concept in their understanding of the relationship between other religions and Christianity. However, each uses the concept differently. This article outlines and then compares the use of the fulfilment concept in the theology of these three prominent theologians, and in doing so develops a fulfilment typology.

Keywords

Fulfilment; Theology of Religions; Daniélou; Rahner; Dupuis

Introduction

A fundamental requirement in an inclusivist understanding of the relationship between Christianity and other religions is the evidence of God's salvific activity outside of any knowledge of Christ. Evidence for such redemptive activity is commonly identified (rightly) in the people of Old Testament Israel. On this basis an analogy (hereafter referred to as the "Israel analogy") is drawn between these Old Testament believers and contemporary followers of other religions. The closely related subject of fulfilment theology argues that because Christ fulfils the Old Testament he can also be seen as the fulfilment of other scriptures and other faiths. Within fulfilment theology there is a continuum along which various sub-categories of this fulfilment concept exist. Towards one end of the continuum is a view that understands Christ to be the only answer to the longed-for but unrealised spiritual quest of all people. Within this definition a radical discontinuity between the prior worldview and Christianity

is maintained. The various religions themselves play no part in the salvific process. All non-Christian religions are natural rather than supernatural. Here a very qualified use of the Israel analogy is employed in an attempt to preserve the *sui generis* relationship between Israel and the Church. At the other pole of the continuum is an understanding of fulfilment that emphasises continuity between the prior religion and Christianity. Within this scheme non-Christian religions represent distinct interventions of God in salvation history. All religions play a positive, albeit preparatory role. In its most pronounced form this model tends to treat other religions/their sacred texts as alternative “Old Testaments.” Between the two poles are a variety of approaches, some giving more emphasis to one pole, and others giving more emphasis to the other. Fulfilment theology warrants a full analysis because of its continued prevalence in considerations of the relationship between Christianity and other religions, and particularly because of its key role in inclusivism. Indeed, in his *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (2002), Paul Knitter makes the bold claim that it is now the predominant view within the field of theology of religions “If the Replacement model...held sway over most of Christian history, the Fulfillment Model embodies the majority opinion of present-day Christianity.”¹ This article will focus on the use of the fulfilment concept in Jean Daniélou’s Karl Rahner’s and Jacques Dupuis’ Theology of Religions. These theologians have been selected because each represents a different variety of the fulfilment approach.

Jean Daniélou (1905–1974)

My exposition of the relevant aspects of Jean Daniélou’s theology of religions will be the most extensive of all the theologians here studied, as his position is complex and nuanced,² and it is here that we will first encounter many of the concepts and arguments that we will meet again in the subsequent expositions. Daniélou holds a three-stage history of salvation, through which God has been revealing his purposes progressively. Salvation history begins with creation: “In the Christian tradition, the history of salvation begins, not with the choosing of Abraham, but with

¹ Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), p. 63. Knitter suggests that this is especially true for present day Roman Catholicism. (p. 64)

² Dominic Veliath, declares that Daniélou’s theology of religions is “difficult to understand” and he “never elaborated his views in any systematic manner.” Dominic Veliathxfs, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions: Jean Daniélou and Raimundo Panikkar, A Study in Contrast*. (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti College, 1988), pp. 5, 9.

the creation of the world. St. Augustine constantly makes this point.”³

The first stage⁴ of salvation history is that of “cosmic religion”⁵ representing the period of history anterior to Abraham. The next stage is that of the Jewish⁶ religion, through which the holiness and faithfulness of God are manifested. In this second stage, God appeared as a living God who intervened directly in the life of people: “He did not merely make signs from a distance, as he does to the pagans.”⁷ The final phase is that of Christianity, in which the mystery of the Trinity is revealed.⁸

However, Jacques Dupuis contends that in Daniélou’s three-stage scheme:

Salvation history proper is... limited to the Judeo-Christian tradition: its starts with God’s personal revelation to Israel through Abraham and Moses, runs through the history of the chosen people, and culminates in Jesus Christ.... Whatever came before God’s personal manifestation in history, even though already inscribed in God’s unique plan for humankind, can at best be called “prehistory” of salvation. The same term would apply to whatever religious experience may be found today, outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, within the religions of the world.⁹

Daniélou refers to the religion of the first phase as “pagan religion”. He uses the term “pagan” to refer to all religious peoples that are “strangers to the covenants of Abraham and Jesus”¹⁰ – that is, all those religions which are beyond the context of historical revelation.¹¹ He does not include the non-religious world in the term “pagan”.¹² The cosmic covenant, between God and Noah extends, according to

³ Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History*. (London: Longmans, 1958), p. 28. Cf. Veliath, *Theological Approach*, p. 35. Veliath argues that Daniélou views salvation history as extending between two cosmic events – creation and the transfiguration.

⁴ Daniélou sometimes calls these successive stages “missions”. See for example, *The Salvation of the Nations*. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1949), p. 16.

⁵ See, for example, Jean Daniélou, *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 3.

⁶ Daniélou uses this term, by which he means the Old Testament Israelite religion.

⁷ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 24.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 27. Here, Daniélou calls this third phase or mission “the real one”. p. 26.

⁹ Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1997), p. 134. It should be noted that Daniélou does not use the term “prehistory” in any of the publications consulted by the current writer. It may therefore be a term Dupuis imports. This cannot be verified for Dupuis does not cite his source here. However, Veliath’s doctoral study on Daniélou (and Raimundo Panikkar) does not use the term, and in correspondence with the current writer Veliath suggests Daniélou would *not* use this term. (Email from Dominic Veliath, 13th January 2005).

¹⁰ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 2.

¹¹ Jean Daniélou, “Christianity and non-Christian Religions” in Patrick T. Burke, ed., *The Word in History*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), p. 86.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 87.

Daniélou, to all humanity.¹³ He suggests Hans Urs von Balthasar's concept of "cosmic liturgy" is the most appropriate term to "designate the period of sacred history anterior to the covenant with Abraham and to include at the same time whatever there is of truth in the non-biblical religions."¹⁴ This principle continues to apply today, to those people who are beyond the reach of the Gospel.¹⁵ Daniélou suggests these religions have a certain knowledge of God from the cosmic covenant while "ignoring the fact of his intervention in the historical process – as to which there is no witness before Abraham."¹⁶ Daniélou argues that the pagan saints were unacquainted with the positive revelation which begins with Abraham.¹⁷ Nevertheless, he affirms the holiness of many "pagans".

Daniélou maintains that the Noachic Covenant marks a turn in salvation history from the period of preservation to that of redemption – "from a heart-burning for primeval innocence to the first steps towards final restoration of it."¹⁸ This covenant is the first manifestation of redemptive love, whilst the former divine economy showed only creative love:¹⁹

The covenant [Noachic] thus marks a turning point in the history of salvation, the passage from a vision directed to a past that is to be maintained despite the destructive action of time, to a vision turned upon a future that is to be prepared for by the constructive action of time. With the covenant nature becomes history.²⁰

Daniélou distinguishes between natural religion and supernatural religion. Dupuis asserts that in Daniélou's approach "Non-Christian religions belong to the order of natural reason, the Judeo-Christian revelation to the order of supernatural faith. Both constitute different orders."²¹ The current writer agrees with Dupuis that this distinction is made by Daniélou. However, it should be noted there are isolated references in Daniélou's work that seem to be at odds with this distinction. For example, in *Holy Pagans*, Daniélou writes "the cosmic covenant is itself a supernatural covenant. It is not of a different order

¹³ Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*. (New York: Image, 1985), p. 179.

¹⁴ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 3. Daniélou does not cite the source of the term "cosmic liturgy".

¹⁵ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 134. I have been unable to find explicit affirmation of this in the primary Daniélou texts and Dupuis does not cite his source. However, this assertion does seem to be implied by the available Daniélou's sources.

¹⁶ Daniélou, Jean., *The Lord of History*, p. 137. The meaning of Daniélou's reference to "intervention in the historical process" is not clear, for surely the flood was "intervention" – and this precedes Abraham.

¹⁷ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 3.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 82.

²¹ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 134.

from that of the Mosaic or the Christian covenant.”²² In the same publication he states:

The cosmic religion is not natural religion, in the sense that the latter means something outside the effective and concrete supernatural order. That is the reason we avoid the expression. It is not natural except in the sense that it is through His action in the cosmos and His call to the conscience that the one God is known. The cosmic covenant is also a covenant of Grace, but it is still imperfect, in the sense that God reveals himself therein only through the cosmos, and it is very difficult to grasp by reason of the fact that it is addressed to an already weakened humanity.²³

There is therefore an apparent ambiguity regarding this matter. However, Daniélou’s overall framework certainly seems to rely on a natural – supernatural dichotomy, and this assessment is confirmed by other evaluations of Daniélou. Veliath writes “[For Daniélou] religions belong to the realm of nature, whereas Christian revelation belongs to the supernatural realm. There is a radical distinction between the order of nature and the order of grace.”²⁴ Chrys Saldanha’s assessment of Daniélou reaches the same conclusion. Saldanha argues that Daniélou “attempted to draw a distinction between Christianity and the religions on the lines of supernatural versus natural, or grace versus nature.”²⁵

The cosmic covenant is a covenant of grace, however it has been superseded by a “new and better covenant”.²⁶ The Judaeo-Christian faith is quite different to religious faith in general. It is testimony to an event—an event that constitutes sacred history:²⁷ “The object of revelation is a unique event, designated as *hapax* in the Epistle to the Hebrews. If this event is unique, revelation must necessarily be unique.”²⁸ Thus, Daniélou distinguishes sharply between religion and revelation:

The religions are a gesture of man towards God; revelation is the witness of a gesture of God towards man... The religions are creations of human genius; they witness to the values of exalted religious

²² Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 23.

²³ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 20. Daniélou prefers to use the term “cosmic religion” rather than “natural religion” because of the latter term’s incorrect implication of meaning “apart from grace”. *Holy Pagans*, p. 3. Veliath notes that “in his earlier books and articles, Daniélou used the qualification ‘natural’ to designate these religions [i.e. pagan religions]. Subsequently, however, he preferred the terms ‘pagan’ or ‘cosmic’.” Veliath, *Theological Approach*, p. 44.

²⁴ Email from Veliath, 17th January, 2005.

²⁵ Chrys Saldanha, *Divine Pedagogy: A Patristic View of Non-Christian Religions*. (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1984), p. 154.

²⁶ Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 119.

²⁷ Daniélou, “Christianity and non-Christian religions,” p. 91.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 92.

personalities, such as Buddha, Zoroaster, Orpheus. But they also have the defects of what is human. Revelation is the work of God alone. . . . Religion expresses man's desire for God. Revelation witnesses that God has responded to that desire. Religion does not save. Jesus Christ grants salvation.²⁹

For Daniélou, Biblical revelation is "radically different" from the content of the other religions.³⁰ However, this distinction is not absolute, for Daniélou does not deny fallen humanity all possibility of knowledge of God.³¹ Daniélou affirms the "genuine spiritual worth" of other religions, but the "unique transcendence" of Christianity.³² The "nature-religions" represent an authentic manifestation of true religion – the representation of God through the regular procession of cosmic events.³³ There is thus a "portion of truth" in every religion. "Paganism does not enjoy the immense benefits of Revelation in its search for truth" but it does contain a certain natural knowledge of God.³⁴ Nevertheless, the religion of nature is invariably found, in the forms known to us, in a more or less corrupt condition.³⁵ Daniélou also makes a sharp distinction between knowledge of God and saving faith. Other religions are human expressions of a real knowledge of God available through the proper use of natural reason. This natural knowledge of God, however should not be confused with supernatural faith which comes only from God's active intervention in the unfolding history of salvation (beginning with Abraham and culminating in Christ).³⁶ Between the cosmic and historical covenants there is some continuity as the first serves as the necessary substratum for God's personal revelation in history. But God's personal intervention initiates a new order which commands a greater discontinuity.³⁷

Veliath states that influential in Daniélou's scheme are Patristic sources, particularly Irenaeus.³⁸ Drawing on the thought of Irenaeus, Daniélou proposes that the Old and New Testaments belong to the same scheme of things, but mark two successive stages in the development of history. For Daniélou these are the second and third stages of his scheme. This succession is a system of pedagogy:

²⁹ Daniélou, Jean., "Christianisme et Religions Non-Chrétiennes" *Etudes* 321 (1964) p. 327, quoted in Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* p. 187.

³⁰ Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 119.

³¹ Michael Barnes, *Christian Identity & Religious Pluralism*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), p. 47.

³² Daniélou, *Lord of History*, pp. 107–8.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁴ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, pp. 6, 23.

³⁵ Daniélou, *Lord of History* p. 119.

³⁶ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 8.

³⁷ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 135.

³⁸ Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*, p. 59.

“Everything that belongs to the temporal order must be imperfect at first. . . . Before granting the plenitude of revelation to his people, he began by familiarizing them gradually with his ways, that is, by educating them.”³⁹ Veliath summarises Daniélou’s understanding of the progressive nature of salvation history:

This includes in the first place, the unity of the plan of God which also presents a great diversity. It implies progress in different stages, within each of which there is growth. This is seen as a pedagogy on the part of God who adapts his blessings to man’s conditions as a temporal being. The plan of God is to recapitulate all things in Christ. The pagan religions form the first stage of this education; to be followed by Judaism; and then by Christianity. Hence, on the one hand there is continuity between the religions, Judaism and Christianity; and on the other hand, discontinuity, since Christianity is a *nouveauté totale*.⁴⁰

Daniélou makes an important distinction between non-Christian religions themselves and adherents of these other religions. In *The Salvation of the Nations*, Daniélou writes “true religion” (which he defines as the Catholic religion) is “the religion in which God’s grace has made answer to man’s cry. In other religions grace is not present, nor is Christ, nor is the gift of God.”⁴¹ However, in the same publication he contends that “No man is a stranger to the grace coming from Christ,”⁴² and elsewhere he states that “pagan saints” were not strangers to grace.⁴³ The terms “pagan saints” or “holy pagans” are used by Daniélou to describe all those people, who were not part of the Old Testament covenant community but nevertheless attained a right relationship with God. Daniélou is here asserting that grace is available to all, but is not mediated by non-Christian religions. There is no salvation but through Christ. Those who are saved without knowledge of Christ (whether B.C. or A.D.) are not saved by their religions – only Christ saves. And if they were saved it was because they, in a sense, already belonged to the Church, for there is no salvation outside the church:

This obliges us therefore to accept the conclusion that the domain of Christ and of the Church extends beyond the limits of the explicit revelation of Christ and of the visible expansion of the Church. In every age and in every land there have been men who believed in

³⁹ Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 5 referring to Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* IV:11,2 and IV:9,1.

⁴⁰ Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*, pp. 59–60. Note, “nouveauté totale” is Daniélou’s term. Veliath is quoting it from *Le Mystère de l’Avent* (Paris, 1948), p. 13.

⁴¹ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 8.

⁴² Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 20.

⁴³ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 4

Christ without knowing Him and who have belonged invisibly to the visible Church.⁴⁴

He finds support for this assertion in the Thomistic principle of Baptism of Desire.⁴⁵ Thus, the Church includes all who like Abel, express in their lives the supernatural quality of faith in the provident God:

They [Holy Pagans] are the intercessors for that immense body of pagan humanity, existing both before and after Christ, which has known Him, not in the fullness of His actual presence nor in the certitude of prophecy, but in that rectitude of desire which theology recognises as a form of Baptism.⁴⁶

All religions apart from the three monotheistic faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam⁴⁷) are classed, by Daniélou, as cosmic religions. According to Veliath, Daniélou maintains that these three are “not on the level of religious sentiment but positive revelation.”⁴⁸ In contrast, the cosmic religions are just human elaborations of a knowledge of God through nature: “As such they [cosmic religions] were unable in the past, and remain unable today, to lead to the saving faith which can only come from God’s gracious intervention in the lives of people.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, people living under this regime of the cosmic covenant can exhibit a proper faith—as shown by the “Holy Pagans.”

[They are] saints of the first covenant. They represent the initial stages of that divine educating of mankind which the history of salvation portrays. But by this very fact they exemplify the initial stages of that divine educating which the history of every man portrays.⁵⁰

However, it is important to note that although Daniélou considers it possible for an individual outside the visible Church to be saved, he

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ St. Thomas writes: “The sacrament of baptism may be wanting to someone in two ways. First, both in reality and in desire (*et re et voto*), as is the case with those who neither are baptized, nor wish to be baptised: which clearly indicates contempt of the sacrament, in regard to those who have the use of free will. Consequently those to whom baptism is wanting thus, cannot obtain salvation. . . . Secondly, the sacrament of baptism may be wanting to someone in reality but not in desire: for instance, when someone is overtaken by death before receiving baptism. Such a person can obtain salvation without being actually baptized, on account of the person’s desire for baptism, which is the outcome of faith that works through charity, whereby God, whose power is not tied to visible sacraments, sanctifies a person inwardly.” *Summa theologiae* III, q.68, a.1. in Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* p. 59.

⁴⁶ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁷ Islam constitutes a singular exception and will be considered below.

⁴⁸ Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 135.

⁵⁰ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, pp. 6–7.

considers this a “limit-situation which cannot constitute the basis for a theological approach regarding the salvific validity of non-Christian religions.”⁵¹

Daniélou argues that the Old Testament envisages cosmic revelation only in the generations before Abraham.⁵² After Abraham the Gentiles are considered as “knowing not God.”⁵³ However, with the Advent of Christ this changes. The message of Christ is addressed to all. “The universal call to salvation makes its appearance.”⁵⁴ Daniélou points out that this raises questions regarding the position of pagans who preceded Christ (but lived after the call of Abraham). He suggests the answer is to be found in St. Paul’s affirmation of a continuous revelation of God “made by way of the cosmos and directed to all mankind. . . . To this exterior revelation there is conjoined the interior revelation of the conscience.”⁵⁵ Daniélou finds further support for his argument in his assertion that St. Paul likens the case of pagans in his own day to those of primitive humanity prior to Abraham.⁵⁶

Salvation history reaches its apex in Christ. Christ’s resurrection is the decisive event for all history which nothing can surpass. Christ’s saving presence within time is now continued by the Church. Christ “inaugurates the stage that will not pass away. So there is nothing beyond Christianity.”⁵⁷ Pre-Christian religions (he mentions Judaism and Buddhism as examples) are not so much false as *old*—survivals of ancient civilizations.⁵⁸ Daniélou judges therefore that:

⁵¹ Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*, p. 77. Veliath cites Daniélou, “La Participation Active des Séminaristes à la Recherche Théologique” in *Seminarium* NS 8 (April–June 1968) p. 254, as his basis for this observation.

⁵² Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 14.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 15. While there may be an apparent inconsistency in Daniélou’s argument here, the continuation of cosmic revelation does seem to be consistent with Daniélou’s overall framework. Dupuis interprets Daniélou as affirming this. Dupuis writes: “Whatever came before God’s personal manifestation in history, even though already inscribed in God’s unique plan for humankind, can at best be called “prehistory” of salvation. *The same term would apply to whatever religious experience may be found today*, outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, within the religions of the world.” Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 134. This is also Eugene Hillman’s understanding of Daniélou. Hillmann writes: “If St. Paul could ‘liken the case of the pagans of his own day to those of primitive humanity previous to Abraham’, as Daniélou has pointed out, then we may say also that the unevangelized peoples of our time are still under the irrevocable and salutary cosmic covenant. The rainbow still appears in the sky.” *The Wider Ecumenism, Anonymous Christianity and The Church*. (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), p. 75, quoting Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 14f.

⁵⁷ Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 7. In the same book Daniélou describes the “Absolute finality” of Christ’s work. p. 191.

⁵⁸ Daniélou, Jean. *Advent of Salvation* (Glen Rock: Paulist, 1962), p. 18 quoted in Barnes, *Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*, p. 62, fn.3.

The error of the Jews is strictly an anachronism, because they would arrest the development of God's plan, and perpetuate an obsolete pattern of reality. Origen, following Melito of Sardis, described the Old Testament as a preliminary sketch – something indispensable at one stage, but of no further use once the work is finished.⁵⁹

Daniélou considers all religions⁶⁰ other than Judaism and Christianity to be “doubly anachronistic” – superseded by Judaism and then by Christianity. Christianity, in contrast, is the “eternal youth of the world.”⁶¹

The covenant with Noah was the true religion of mankind until the covenant with Abraham was made; but from that moment it was superseded. From the time of the Gospel it has been doubly obsolete; it is anachronistic twice over. What is wrong with the heathen religions is that they have not made room for revelation.⁶²

Anomalies such as Islam are “regressions”.⁶³ Islam is a special case due to its Jewish and Christian borrowings.⁶⁴

[Islam] is a very particular case, for Islam appeared after the beginning of the Christian era and, on the whole, it was grafted on the Jewish trunk. It is an extension of Jewish monotheism and at the same time it contains certain elements derived from Christian heretics.⁶⁵

Daniélou's paradigm considers the primary relationship between other religions and Christianity, to be one of fulfilment. In *The Lord of History*, Daniélou suggests the Christian mission is ultimately about engaging in the fulfilment of history.⁶⁶ Paul Knitter suggests Daniélou's fulfilment model views other religions as “imperfect” or “negative” preparations for Christ.⁶⁷ For Daniélou, fulfilment encompasses both a perfecting and a replacing of the former religion. Pagan religions are “divine pedagogy.”⁶⁸ Revelation “purifies paganism”.⁶⁹ The Church “does not despise pagan teaching, but sets it free,

⁵⁹ Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 5

⁶⁰ Islam excepted – see next paragraph

⁶¹ Daniélou, *Advent of Salvation*, p. 18 quoted in Barnes, *Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*, p. 62, fn.3.

⁶² Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 19.

⁶³ Daniélou, *Advent of Salvation*, p. 18 quoted in Barnes, *Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*, p. 62, fn.3.

⁶⁴ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 37. Cf. Daniélou, “Christianity and non-Christian Religions”, p. 86.

⁶⁵ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 37.

⁶⁶ Daniélou, *Lord of History*. This is a theme throughout the book.

⁶⁷ Paul Knitter, *Towards A Protestant Theology of Religions*, (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1974), p. 212, fn.2.

⁶⁸ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 28.

⁶⁹ Daniélou, “Christianity and non-Christian Religions”, p. 94.

fulfils and crowns it.”⁷⁰ To become a Christian is not to change one’s religion but to move from the plane of religion to that of truth.⁷¹

Religions are one of creation’s most remarkable aspects and contribute to its splendour. How, then, could Christianity destroy these religions? Christianity with its mission not to destroy but to fulfill, to save what has been created?⁷²

However, Veliath maintains that in Daniélou’s fulfilment theology there is also an element of destruction:

Christianity presents a double relationship to religion, historical and dramatic. By historical, Daniélou means that between Christianity and religions, there is a chronological relationship inasmuch as Christianity represents that to which all the others lead; but at the same time ‘dramatic’: While it is true that Christianity fulfils the religions, it is also true that Christianity destroys them. Consequently, once they have found their fulfilment in Christianity, the religions have to die to make room for Christianity.⁷³

Daniélou’s understanding of the relationship of other religions to Christianity employs (and is arguably dependent on) the analogy made between the Old Covenant and other religions. More precisely, he utilizes a dual analogy here. The first is the analogy made between those he considers to be outside the Old Covenant⁷⁴ and people beyond the reach of the Gospel today. The second is the analogy drawn between the religion of the Old Covenant (that is the Old Testament Jewish faith) and non-Christian religions today.

Regarding the first analogy, Daniélou considers the Noahic Covenant to be valid for all people in all places today outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition:

They [Holy Pagans] are the intercessors for that immense body of pagan humanity, *existing both before and after Christ*, which has known Him, not in the fullness of His actual presence nor in the certitude of prophecy, but in that rectitude of desire which theology recognises as a form of Baptism.⁷⁵

[They are] saints of the first covenant. They represent the initial stages of that divine educating of mankind which the history of salvation

⁷⁰ Daniélou, *Lord of History*, p. 121. Daniélou is here paraphrasing a quote from Pope Pius XII in *Divini praecones*. (Full reference not given).

⁷¹ Daniélou, “Christianity and non-Christian Religions”, pp. 89–90.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷³ Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*, pp. 67–68.

⁷⁴ That is, in Daniélou’s scheme, all those living prior to Abraham, and all those living after Abraham (but prior to Christ) who are not part of the covenant community, but nevertheless have saving faith.

⁷⁵ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, pp. 4–5. (Emphasis added).

portrays. But by this very fact *they exemplify the initial stages of that divine educating which the history of every man portrays.*⁷⁶

Daniélou's scheme permits this analogy because of the way he divides the pre-Christian history of salvation into the cosmic covenant (pre-Abraham) and historical covenant (after Abraham). I will later argue that the entire Old Testament era is part of one and the same overall covenant, and that this analogy is therefore problematic.⁷⁷ Of more direct relevance for the current thesis is the analogy Daniélou draws between the Old testament Jewish religion and other religions: The following quotes show how Daniélou uses this analogy:

It was for Him, for Christ, the centre of the world, the centre of history, not only that the Jewish people had been prepared, but that all these pagan civilizations – the conquests of Alexander, the thinking of Socrates and Aristotle – had also been prepared.⁷⁸

Just as the convert Jews rightly saw in Christianity not the destruction but the fulfilment of their faith, so likewise would these pagans be conscious that in their adherence to Christ, far from denying what was best in themselves, they were on the contrary finding its completion.⁷⁹

With regard to the “authentic religious values in the pagan tradition” they represented a revelation parallel to that in the Old Testament, a preparation for Christ in the pagan soul.”⁸⁰ Daniélou quotes from Augustine to support his position here: “It is necessary to include within the Church all the holy people who lived before the coming of Christ and believed that he would come just as we believe He has come.”⁸¹ He then immediately extends this principle beyond Israel:

It is important to note that this preparing for Christ is not confined to Israel. The authors concerned always make it clear that it is a question of the preparation for Christ as related in the Old Testament; but in the Old Testament Israel does not come into the picture until the eleventh chapter of Genesis. All the preceding chapters are devoted to recounting the religious history of mankind before Israel. . . To be exact, therefore, it should be said that the Old Testament describes the

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 6–7. (Emphasis added).

⁷⁷ There are also other grounds for questioning whether the pagan saints were really ‘pagan’. Strange argues that the epithet ‘holy pagan’ is a contradiction either because, they (the so-called ‘holy pagans’) were pagans who *became* saints by virtue of being ingrafted into Israel, or, secondly they were never ‘pagans,’ but were recipients of a special revelation and so cannot be counted as pagans. Daniel Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelized*. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 167.

⁷⁸ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 18

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 10, quoting Augustine *De catech. rud.*, 3.

preparation for Christ first of all in the cosmic covenant, illustrated by the early chapters in regard to pagan humanity, and after that in the Mosaic covenant.⁸²

Daniélou considers the concept of covenant to be key in understanding salvation history.⁸³ The current writer also affirms this. However, there appears to be a certain lack of clarity in Daniélou's scheme regarding the nature and progression of the covenants. In some of his writing he suggests that the first covenant is that made with Noah.⁸⁴ Indeed, he calls the pagan saints "saints of the first covenant",⁸⁵ but elsewhere he suggests the first covenant is that made with Abraham:

God intervenes in history to accomplish a certain plan. We first glimpse this plan when He makes the first covenant with Abraham and thereby founds what is to become the Judaeo-Christian religion.⁸⁶

To conclude this exposition, I will summarise the key characteristics of Daniélou's scheme and offer a classification for it. On the continuum outlined in the Introduction, Daniélou's fulfilment approach is located toward the "discontinuity" pole. He emphasises the distinction between religion and revelation, natural and supernatural, nature and grace, knowledge of God and saving faith.⁸⁷ Within Daniélou's three-stage understanding of salvation history, non-biblical religions⁸⁸ are natural, and are relegated to the prehistory of salvation, they have no abiding value. Judaism has been superseded, and is therefore now an anachronism. Grace and salvation are not mediated by non-Christian religions. However, no-one is a stranger to grace, and salvation is available to adherents of non-Christian religions, reaching them as the divine response to the universal religious aspiration. Although he uses the terms "preparation" and "pedagogy", Daniélou, does not see non-Christian religions *themselves* as playing any part in salvation, and they are not providential instruments raised up by God. Rather, they represent natural responses to the revelation of God made known in the cosmos and the conscience. They contain some truth, but are inevitably vitiated and corrupt. Henceforth, I shall refer to this approach as "Fulfilment 1" or "F1."

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 10–11. However, it is important to recognise that Augustine was not referring to Pagan religions here, but was referring to the covenantal people of the Old Testament.

⁸³ Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*, p. 57.

⁸⁴ See for example, Daniélou, *Holy Pagans*, p. 12: "The notion of the *berith* [covenant] characteristic of the biblical God, does not appear for the first time with the Mosaic covenant but in the covenant made with Noe [Noah]."

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6

⁸⁶ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations.*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ I recognise Daniélou qualifies these distinctions (see above). However, for the purposes of this summary I am merely stating the prevailing strands to his theology.

⁸⁸ See above for discussion of Islam.

Karl Rahner (1904–1984)

Karl Rahner's theology of religions is based on the dual axioms of God's universal salvific will and the necessity of *Christian* faith, which Rahner holds in tension. He insists salvation is *solus Christus*, but at the same time maintains there are those who are saved who have *not* responded to the Christian message because they have not had the opportunity to respond, through no fault of their own.⁸⁹ His theological anthropology maintains that humankind is created by God and is destined to union with God. Humans carry more than just a passive potency for self-transcendence in God. What Rahner calls the "supernatural existential" is built into us by God's free initiative of grace. This spurs our intentional activity toward him – an activity that is destined to become historically concrete in the categorical or thematic order, that is through religions.⁹⁰

His theology of religions is given extensive treatment in various essays in his *Theological Investigations*.⁹¹ In one such essay he outlines this in a four-stage thesis—the first three of which are of particular import to our study. In his first thesis, Rahner proposes that the fact Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion and demands adherence, must be balanced by the difficulties in discerning "when the existentially real demand is made by the absolute religion in its historically tangible form."⁹² Rahner wants to leave open the question of when in time "the absolute obligation of the Christian religion has in fact come into effect for every man and culture."⁹³ Thus those who lived before Christ, and those who live after Christ but have never encountered the gospel through no fault of their own, are not excluded from salvation. The universal demand of the Gospel cannot be seen in isolation from the historical and existential situation. D'Costa suggests this avoids the difficult exclusivist

⁸⁹ Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christian", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 14 (London: DLT, 1976), pp. 282–3.

⁹⁰ Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 5, (London: DLT, 1966), pp. 127–9

⁹¹ See particularly: "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 5, (London: DLT, 1966), pp. 115–134; "Anonymous Christians", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 6, (London: DLT, 1969), pp. 390–398; "Church, Churches and Religions", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 10 (London: DLT, 1973), pp. 30–49; "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church". *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 12, (London: DLT, 1974), pp. 161–178; "Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christian", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 14, (London: DLT, 1976), pp. 280–294; "Anonymous and Explicit Faith", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 16 (London: DLT, 1979), pp. 52–59; "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 17, (London: DLT, 1981), pp. 39–50; "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 18, (London: DLT, 1984), pp. 288–95.

⁹² Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions", p. 119.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 120.

claim that all religions are rendered invalid at the moment of the incarnation.⁹⁴

His second thesis states that until the moment when the gospel really enters the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion, even one outside the Mosaic covenant may be lawful. Salvation history is coextensive with world history—it is not limited to the period of the Old and the New Testaments. In history each person experiences God's free offer of grace. This is not necessarily thematically apprehended in Christianity, but is always concretely and existentially in Jesus Christ.⁹⁵ It is therefore *a priori* quite possible to suppose that there are supernatural grace-filled elements in non-Christian religions. The religions of pre-Christian humanity must not be regarded as simply illegitimate from the very start but be seen as quite capable of having a positive significance. They can, in short be "lawful religions".⁹⁶ Lawful religions can contain errors, as did the Old Covenant.⁹⁷ However, the Old Covenant remained lawful until the time of the Gospel, and according to many Christians, was then grafted onto and fulfilled by the New Covenant. Thus non-Christian religions can be lawful up until the time when Christianity becomes a historically real factor for their adherents. They can be "a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore *positively included in God's plan of salvation*."⁹⁸ Rahner defends this assertion by appeal to the Old Testament Israelites, who were saved without possessing any explicit knowledge of Christ. Rahner accepts that: "This thesis is not meant to imply that the lawfulness of the Old Testament religion was of exactly the same kind as that which we are prepared to grant in a certain measure to the extra-Christian religions."⁹⁹ He acknowledges that:

The main difference between such a salvation-history and that of the Old Testament will presumably lie in the fact that the historical, factual nature of the New Testament has *its* immediate pre-history in the *Old Testament*. Hence, the New Testament unveils *this* short span of salvation-history distinguishing its divinely willed elements and those which are contrary to God's will. It does this by a distinction which we cannot make in the same way in the history of any other religion.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986), p. 84.

⁹⁵ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*. (London: DLT, 1978), p. 144ff.

⁹⁶ Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions", p. 121.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 125 (Emphasis added).

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 130

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 130–1. Rahner contends that the Old Testament salvation-history is "insignificantly brief in comparison with the general salvation-history which counts perhaps a million years – for the former can be known with any certainty only from the time of Abraham or Moses." (p. 131).

However, the thrust of his argument is clear, as D'Costa explains: "The important point to note is that the Old Covenant facilitated and provided the concrete means by which many attained salvation. Rahner then suggests that these theological considerations may be applied, at least in principle, to other non-Christian religions."¹⁰¹

Rahner's third thesis follows the second. Because grace is mediated through religions, not despite them, adherents of other religions should not be viewed as totally devoid of truth and salvific grace. They may already have accepted God's grace as it is made known to them. However, God's grace and salvation cannot be divorced from Jesus Christ—thus these believers can be considered as "anonymous Christians".¹⁰² This anonymity can only be lifted by communicating the explicit message of the gospel. On this basis, Rahner proposes degrees of membership of the church from full membership descending into a "non-official and anonymous Christianity, which can and should yet be called Christianity in a meaningful sense, even though it would not describe itself as such."¹⁰³

From this brief overview of Rahner's theology of religions it is evident that his assessment of other religions is far more positive than Daniélou's. While both maintain it is possible for non-Christians to be saved, Rahner (contrary to Daniélou) proposes that the religions are instruments of salvation (but always related to Christ and the Church). There are supernatural elements in other religions arising out of grace.¹⁰⁴ Rahner maintains other religions are "lawful", but this lawfulness is only provisional – it is valid only up until the occasion of historical and existential encounter with Christianity. Rahner employs the Israel analogy, and although he acknowledges the unique relationship between Old and New Covenants, this acknowledgement seems to be undermined by his overall position. Rahner makes less distinction between natural and supernatural, religion and revelation, than Daniélou does. He perceives a greater (but not full) continuity between other religions and Christianity. Salvation history is coextensive with world history and other religions are positively included in God's plan of salvation. On the fulfilment continuum already referred to, Rahner's approach is located between the discontinuity and continuity poles—being perhaps slightly closer to the latter. I shall refer to this Rahnerian form of fulfilment as "F2."

¹⁰¹ Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) p. 86

¹⁰² Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions", pp. 131ff.

¹⁰³ Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 6, (London: DLT, 1969), pp. 390–398. *Theological Investigations* Vol. 6 (London: DLT, 1969), p. 392.

¹⁰⁴ Rahner "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions", pp. 121, 130.

Jacques Dupuis (1923–2004)

The aim of Jacques Dupuis in his magnum opus *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*,¹⁰⁵ is to work towards a genuinely Christian theology of religious pluralism.¹⁰⁶ He builds on his earlier approach of “theocentric Christocentrism” which sought to:

open up a theological perspective which, while holding fast to faith in Jesus Christ as traditionally understood by mainstream Christianity and church tradition, would at the same time, integrate in their differences, the religious experiences of the living religious traditions and assign to those traditions a positive role and significance in the overall plan of God for humankind, as it unfolds through salvation history.¹⁰⁷

Dupuis argues that salvation history operates as an “important hermeneutical key for Christianity’s self-understanding as well as the way in which it situates itself in relation to world history in general and to the history of religion in particular.”¹⁰⁸ However, it is not “exempt of theological problems” and Dupuis believes “the Christian view of salvation history allows for a more positive appraisal of other religious traditions than has often been held.”¹⁰⁹ He questions whether it is right to see other religions as transient. Instead, Dupuis suggests they could have “a lasting role and a specific meaning in the overall mystery” of the relationship between God and humanity.¹¹⁰ His Trinitarian model allows for the abiding validity of other religions by stressing “the universal presence and activity of the Word of God and of the Spirit of God throughout human history as the mediums of God’s personal dealings with human beings independently of their concrete situation in history.”¹¹¹ Therefore, for Dupuis, the idea that salvation history began with Abraham must be dismissed:

Every attempt to situate the beginning of salvation history in the vocation of Abraham, and thereby to reduce its extension to “sacred history”, must be firmly resisted. Such an attempt, wherever it is made, always betrays an a priori tendency to discount any personal engagement of God with humankind prior to and outside the tradition that issues from the call of the biblical patriarch.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Dupuis. *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 211

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 212.

¹¹² *ibid.*, pp. 215–6.

Instead, Dupuis suggests salvation history coincides and is coextensive with the history of the world.¹¹³ He maintains that the Noachic covenant is cosmic, or universal and this is a fundamental assumption in his thesis. “The covenant with Noah constitutes the lasting foundation for the salvation of every human person.”¹¹⁴ He distinguishes between general salvation history (which is universal) and special salvation history (which is particular). In the latter “God’s revelation-salvation becomes ‘thematized’ and categorical.”¹¹⁵ Dupuis recognises the concept of special salvation history is, of course, clearly realised in the Jewish and Christian traditions but states that it need not be reduced to these traditions:

For other religious traditions too may contain prophetic words interpreting historical happenings as divine interventions in the history of peoples. In fact, the Judeo-Christian revelation itself testifies to saving acts performed by God on behalf of other peoples. Such historically tangible saving deeds of God are analogous to those performed by God in favor of Israel according to the Old Testament record – notwithstanding the fact that the Christian tradition ascribes to the history of Israel the singular distinctive character of being the immediate historical prologue to God’s decisive saving intervention in the Christ-event.¹¹⁶

In his effort to account positively for the value of other religions in the economy of salvation, Dupuis draws on the relationship between the Old and New Covenants as an analogical basis for the relationship between other religions and Christianity. Dupuis acknowledges the unique bond between Israel and the Church, and that between the Old and New Testaments, and notes that:

Such a scheme readily lends to the idea that in the advent of special revelation history and, specifically, of the Christ event, pre-Christian religions belonging to the ‘general’ history of salvation are run past and ousted, having become obsolete or even ‘illegitimate’.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, he believes the question must be asked:

whether the history of other peoples cannot play for them, in the order of salvation, a role “analogous” to that played for the Hebrew people by the history of Israel, as comprising historical events whose divine salvific significance is guaranteed by a prophetic word. . . . Israel and Christianity obviously represent a singular case, owing to the unique relationship existing between the two religions; however. . . it may

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 217.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 226.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 218.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 219.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

furnish, *mutatis mutandis*, an emblematic model for the relationship between Christianity and other religions.¹¹⁸

For Dupuis the relationship between Judaism and Christianity serves “as a catalyst for the reorientation of the relationship between Christianity and the other religions.”¹¹⁹ His position here is similar to Rahner—an attempt is made to acknowledge the *sui generis* nature of the relationship between Old and New Covenants, but as I will argue later, his theology of religions fails to do so adequately.

The direction of Dupuis’ latest theology of religions is described by him as “inclusive pluralism.”¹²⁰ This, as the name suggests, tries to combine inclusivism and pluralism:

It represents a qualified pluralism allied with a broad inclusivism. It thus offers the key for a theology capable of accounting at once for the Christian faith in Jesus Christ universal Saviour and a positive role of the religions of the world in God’s plan for humankind.¹²¹

This is a “qualified pluralism” because he insists that the ultimate reality towards which all religion tends is the Triune God.¹²² The “Christian Trinitarian God represents the Ultimate Reality *an sich*”.¹²³ Within this developing paradigm Dupuis is proposing a dynamic, complementary fulfilment:

The complementarity intended here is not a mere simple complementarity, understood as a “one way traffic”. Such a one-way complementarity would mean that, while it is true that the other religions must find their “complement” in Christianity, the reverse is in no way true, as these have nothing to contribute to Christianity. To hold such unilateral complementarity would amount to going back to the “fulfilment theory” in the theology of religions, according to which all other religions represent but different expressions, in the various cultures of the world, of the universal aspiration of human beings for union with the Divine Mystery. All would then be merely “natural” religions, destined to find the fulfilment of their aspirations in the only “supernatural” religion, which is Christianity. It is easy to see that this theory, largely abandoned today by theologians, makes true interreligious dialogue inconceivable. Christianity has nothing to receive but only to give, nothing to learn but only to teach. There can be no

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 219–220, 229.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 233.

¹²⁰ Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001). See especially pp. 87–95.

¹²¹ Jacques Dupuis, “Inclusivist Pluralism as a Paradigm for the Theology of Religions” (Paper prepared for Leuven Conference, 2003. <http://www.theo.kuleuven.ac.be/ogtpc/lest4/ppseniors/dupuis.pdf>), p. 4.

¹²² Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 237.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 259.

dialogue between religions, but only a Christian monologue directed to the others.¹²⁴

Dupuis suggests here that the type of fulfilment theology which sees Christianity and Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of other religions is “largely abandoned today.” However, as will be seen below, fulfilment theology still represents a major theme in Catholic theology or religions, and is far from abandoned in official Church teaching.

On the fulfilment continuum already established, Dupuis’ approach is located at the continuity pole, for his approach maintains greater continuity between other religions and Christianity than Rahner’s (and far more so than Daniélou’s). Dupuis avoids the distinctions between natural and supernatural, religion and revelation. Grace is mediated through other religions, which are salvific. They have abiding value and are not invalidated by encounter with Christianity. Salvation history is coextensive with world history. Other religions are providential, having been raised up as preparations for Christianity. The fulfilment of these in Christianity however, is not to be seen as unidirectional, for Christianity is also complemented by its encounter with the Other. Henceforth, I will refer to this position as “F3”.

Conclusion: Daniélou, Rahner and Dupuis compared

There are many similarities between Rahner’s, Daniélou’s and Dupuis’ approaches. All three suggest that the relationship between the Old and New Covenants has some analogical application to this relationship between other religions and Christianity, and all believe that Christ or Christianity is in some sense a fulfilment of prior revelation found in other religions (not just Judaism). However, there are also important differences between the three, and highlighting them will emphasise the various nuances of the fulfilment theory.¹²⁵

According to Hedges, there are two main areas of variation in fulfilment theology, and each may be seen as bipolar, having two extremes (a “weak” and a “strong” form), between which a range of options exists. The first variable is the assessment made of the teachings and experiences of non-Christian religions:

There is a graduation of differences from those who regard the teachings of the non-Christian religions as essentially negative, but redeemed either through some recognition of the need for God, or due to some

¹²⁴ Jacques Dupuis, “Renewal of Christianity through Interreligious Dialogue.” (<http://www.luce.nl/publicatiies/sd704-dupuis>, 2003).

¹²⁵ To avoid extensive repetition, I refer the reader back to the relevant sections above, for elaboration of points raised in this comparison, and for associated sources.

primal revelation [the “weak” form], through to those who are ready to speak of the religious experience of Hinduism and Buddhism as being on a par with Judaism, and who see the non-Christian saints as being comparable to the Christian saints [the “strong” form].

The second variable involves the assessment made of the origins of other religions:

[A] bipolarity appears between those who believe that the non-Christian religions have been created through the Providence of God, and represent part of His divine plan, and believe that they actively point, therefore, towards Jesus [the “strong” form]. The other extreme consists of those who would suggest that, while the non-Christian religions may have similarities to Christianity, and provide points of contact, these similarities are due only to the fact that there is a common religious instinct in man, and that God has not actually prepared the non-Christian religions as teachers for other nations. However, this does not mean that they cannot be seen, or used, as ‘preparations’ for Christianity, in that their teachings may be used as pointers to Christianity, but merely makes a statement about their ontological status. [this is the weak form]

I suggest that in terms of these variables, Daniélou, Rahner and Dupuis, represent progressively “stronger” versions of fulfilment. This should be clear from the brief expositions given above, but I will now draw attention to some particularly pertinent points.

In his treatment of “preparation” and “fulfilment” Dupuis suggests these two concepts are “opposite”¹²⁶ positions. He suggests the fulfilment theory views all other religions as natural—“varied expressions of *homo naturaliter religiosus*.”¹²⁷ Only Christianity is the divine response to God, that is, supernatural. Salvation reaches the members of other religions as the divine response to the human religious aspiration but the prior worldview plays no part in their salvation. He suggests Daniélou’s approach is an example of this fulfilment category.¹²⁸ In direct contrast with fulfilment is preparation, which Dupuis calls the “theory of the presence of Christ in the religions” or the theory of “Christ’s inclusive presence.”¹²⁹ The various religions are ordained by God in salvation history—but to the decisive event in Jesus Christ. The preparation theory refuses to separate nature from grace, it attempts to transcend the dichotomies between the human search for self-transcendence and “God’s stooping down to meet us”.¹³⁰ Members of other religions are saved by Christ not

¹²⁶ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 132.

¹²⁷ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 132.

¹²⁸ He also includes John Farquhar, Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar here. See Dupuis, *Towards*, pp. 137–142.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 132. See also, his exposition of this approach, pp. 143ff.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 143.

in spite of their religion but through that religion.¹³¹ No religion is purely natural. They play a positive role before the Christ event as *praeparatio evangelica*, and they keep “even today a positive value in the order of salvation.”¹³² Dupuis offers an exposition of Rahner’s theology of religions as an example of this category.¹³³

Dupuis is correct to recognise the differences between fulfilment and preparation, but I see little reason why such a strong dichotomy is needed. As I have argued above, I consider it more accurate to see here, a continuum characterised by various bipolarities, between which there is a range of intervening positions. For example, Dupuis describes Daniélou as being representative of the “fulfilment” approach, but as I have shown, Daniélou also incorporates elements of “preparation” in his scheme. I concur with Hedges, who asserts that although “it would be possible to use the term “fulfilment” without reference to “preparation”. . . it is, to say the least, normative within fulfilment theology for the two to go together.”¹³⁴ With this qualification in mind, I maintain that Daniélou, Rahner and Dupuis place increasing emphasis on the “preparation” pole. All three hold a progressive theology of revelation within history in which Christ forms the apex. In this respect they share a common fulfilment perspective. In contrast to Daniélou though, Rahner and Dupuis make a less strict distinction between the natural and supernatural orders, than Daniélou. All agree that humans are never complete strangers to divine grace, but for Rahner and Dupuis this grace is always at work in humans *in concrete ways* – that is through religions. On the contrary, Daniélou maintains this grace is operative apart from these non-Christian religions.¹³⁵ Because of this conviction Rahner and Dupuis come to a very different assessment than Daniélou, of the role and meaning of non-Christian religions. Rahner states: “In view of the social nature of man. . . it is quite unthinkable that man, being what he is, could actually achieve this relationship to God . . . in an absolutely private interior reality and this outside of the actual religious bodies which offer themselves to him in the environment

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 132. It is important to note that within this approach there are divergent views concerning the precise nature of the continuing validity of non-Christian religions, after historical and existential encounter with Christianity. This matter will be taken up below.

¹³³ *ibid.* pp. 143ff. He also groups Raimondo Panikkar, Hans Küng and Gustave Thils here.

¹³⁴ Paul Hedges, *Preparation and Fulfilment: A History and Study of Fulfilment Theology in Modern British Thought in the Indian Context*. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 29, 33.

¹³⁵ Veliath notes that Daniélou expressed his satisfaction that the final draft of *Nostra Aetate* eliminated a phrase included in earlier versions, that Daniélou had found “ambiguous”. The eliminated phrase described non-Christian religions as “economies of salvation.” *Theological Approach and Understanding*, p. 70.

in which he lives.”¹³⁶ James Fredericks argues that for Rahner “the notions of a natural and supernatural order are merely ‘remainder concepts’: although they may be helpful as conceptual clarifications, they refer to a ‘Holy Mystery’ in which the human and the divine are already incomprehensibly and profoundly interrelated.”¹³⁷ Michael Barnes suggests: “Rahner presents us with an important alternative to the fulfilment theory of Daniélou by allowing for the sacramental presence of the Holy Spirit within the religions.”¹³⁸

In a similar vein, Dupuis contends that Daniélou is “unduly restrictive” in his appraisal of the extent of salvation history. For although Daniélou affirms that the “cosmic religion” that preceded the Abrahamic covenant already belongs to the “concrete historical supernatural order” this is not in the sense that God would have manifested himself personally through it. According to Daniélou, under the cosmic covenant, God’s self-revelation is only through the cosmos – and is thus only the “prehistory” of salvation based on a natural knowledge which God gives through the creation.¹³⁹ Thus, for Rahner and Dupuis, non-Christian religions cannot be seen as merely natural expressions of human wisdom and aspiration as with Daniélou. It follows also that Christianity cannot claim to be the only supernaturally revealed religion.¹⁴⁰ Other religions mediate supernatural grace to those who follow them. They are not merely preparation, they are supernatural acts of God that make saving grace available. Neither can they be relegated to the “prehistory” of salvation as Daniélou does.

Dupuis argues for a continuing role for other religions, even after the Christ event: “They [other religions] keep, even today, a positive value in the order of salvation by virtue of the operative presence within them, and in some way through them, of the saving mystery of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴¹ In contrast, Rahner suggests that other religions have only provisional value. Non-Christian religions before Christ “in principle were positively willed by God as legitimate ways of salvation,”¹⁴² though they were overtaken and rendered obsolete by

¹³⁶ Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions”, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 5, p. 128.

¹³⁷ James Fredericks, “The Catholic Church and the Other Religious Paths: Rejecting Nothing that is True and Holy.” *Theological Studies*, Volume 64. Issue 2, 2003, p. 230, referring to Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace” in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), pp. 297–317, esp. 302.

¹³⁸ Barnes, *Christian Identity*, p. 60.

¹³⁹ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 216.

¹⁴⁰ Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions”, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 5, p. 122.

¹⁴¹ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 132.

¹⁴² Rahner, Karl “Church, Churches and Religions,” *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 10, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), p. 46

the coming of Christ and his death and resurrection.¹⁴³ However, we cannot define the precise moment at which that obsolescence takes place in the experience of any individual.¹⁴⁴ It happens only when “Christianity in its explicit and ecclesiastical form becomes an effective reality.”¹⁴⁵ Dupuis considers Rahner’s view that religions remain “lawful” only up to a point in time as a “weak expression which continues to suppose their provisional and transitory character.”¹⁴⁶ Daniélou also maintains that other religions have only provisional value, as was seen above, but for Daniélou their provisional nature is emphasised even more strongly—they are superseded by both Judaism and Christianity. They are “doubly anachronistic.”

Adam Sparks

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁶ Dupuis, *Toward*, p. 314.