

# Religious Passion and the Pluralist Theology of Religions<sup>1</sup>

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It would appear that there are few things in human life that have the power to override all other concerns. There are few things, that is, that seem to command our unconditional attention. Amongst such things we might include 'matters of life and death'. Perhaps the most admirable aspects of the human spirit are often found in the setting of life and death situations. Self-sacrifice, life-threatening risks on behalf of others' lives, self-denying and courage etc. What is it that motivates people to behave in these ways? A common response comes to mind in their defence: 'it was a matter of life and death'. We all understand the priority of that appeal. At the scene of an accident, an observer runs to an occupied telephone kiosk - 'please let me use the phone, it's a matter of life and death...' A businessman arrives an hour late for a meeting, 'Excuse me for being late, I was caught up in an accident, I had to stop - it was a matter of life and death...' Despite the potential rudeness of interrupting another's telephone call, or the tardiness of the businessman's entry, we are willing to excuse such behaviour on the grounds that 'it was a matter of life and death'. Like a verbal skeleton key, it is a plea that demands (and usually obtains) the unconditional unlocking of doors or removal of obstacles.

The purpose of this brief preamble concerning the effect life and death situations' seem to have upon our attitudes and actions, or more particularly, our perceptions of appropriate attitudes and action, is to focus our attention upon an assumption that will be forming part of this paper - that religion itself is a 'matter of life and death'. This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it is a rather bald statement 'defining' the areas which religion has especially made its province: life and death. Secondly, it can indicate a special quality about religion, namely its ability to inspire a certain unconditionality of commitment, a passionate 'inwardness' (Kierkegaard), or an 'ultimate concern' (Tillich). In fact, it is this latter interpretation that I wish to concentrate on. Nevertheless, my purpose is not to investigate the phenomenology of religion in any exhaustive way but to direct such reflections towards the current debate concerning the plurality of faiths, or more precisely, the pluralist theology of religions.

To begin, let me place the following discussion into a context by

briefly developing this 'passionate' or 'unconditional' view of the religious concern. Talking about religious experience, David Hay writes:

'Religious experience is a matter of total involvement. It is not just a case of intellectual or aesthetic "bits" of a person becoming aware; the whole person is involved in something "other than" themselves...the experience is intensely real, more so than everyday experience. It is as if the mental clutter of ordinary life was cleared away to leave behind merely what is "here and now"'

Expanding this further, we might suggest that there is a 'clarity' about religious experience - not in the sense that the experiencer can perfectly communicate the experience, but that the experience itself leaves the strong impression of something simple and unconditional or, something which 'matters the most' - that is, there is a clarity of *feeling*. Moreover, we might combine this feeling of clarity with a sense of urgency or longing for some sort of grounding in life. Schleiermacher famously summed up religious experience as 'the consciousness of absolute dependence, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation to God.'<sup>3</sup> Such dependence is an anchor in an ambiguous world; perhaps it is in this spirit that Wittgenstein commented that religion is, as it were, 'the calm bottom of the sea at its deepest point, which remains calm however high the waves on the surface may be'.<sup>4</sup> The various religions of humankind almost always seek to address (and to a great extent, answer) the most fundamental questions of human existence; we might say, with Wittgenstein, that they seek to get to a 'stillness' which is untouched by the shifting currents of human affairs.

It was Kierkegaard who, (rather excruciatingly), saw humanity's most authentic existence as involving *passion*. Without passion or involvement, it was impossible, thought Kierkegaard, to fully exist. Truth in Kierkegaard's system is associated with the grittiness of human existence rather than with the 'objectivity' of rationality. So that, 'Modern thought in attempting to avoid decisiveness thereby defines itself...as an escape from existence'.<sup>5</sup> Thus, finding truth in existence or 'true existence' involves almost a martyrdom of the intellect: 'The greater the risk the greater the faith, the more objective security the less inwardness, and the less security the more profound the possible inwardness'.<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that Kierkegaard was arguing for a total irrationalism but that he believed that the truth about existence could only be effectively discovered by including such existence in the quest for the truth about reality. Moreover, (and most significantly), being 'truth' which has been found in existence means, for Kierkegaard, that it is worth dying for. 'The thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die...what good would it do me to be able to explain the meaning of Christianity if it had no deeper significance for me and my life?'<sup>7</sup>

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Kierkegaard was talking about the discovery of truth (in existence) that was non-negotiable - a passionate sense of the ultimate. This radical nature of commitment is something which we again see reflected in Kierkegaard's rebellion against the Hegelian method of 'both/and'. Such a spirit of compromise is, Kierkegaard feels, foreign to the religious enterprise. For something to be religiously significant it is 'either/or' - that is, something *is* or it *isn't*. This commitment (a positive choice for one reality *in opposition/contrary* to another) we might call religious passion - a sort of joyous abandonment that accompanies throwing all one's eggs into the same basket, so to speak. If we swallow Kierkegaard's religious ideas then, we get a form of religious expression which relishes the leap of faith as the very thing that makes for 'true existence'. A sense of real engagement with things that are, as William Christian put it, 'more important than anything else in the universe.'<sup>8</sup>

Combining these various factors, it seems wholly appropriate to characterize the religious concern as 'a matter of life and death'; and if that is the case then it quite naturally fosters a certain *decisiveness* in thinking and attitude. Perhaps such experience might also be described as a feeling of 'relief from a world of transient commitments and relative concepts - analogous to drinking an ice-cold beverage at the end of a long walk on a hot summer's day.

Having sketched a rather passionate picture of the religious concern let me ask the following key question: Does the notion of religion as a matter of life and death (in the 'passionate' sense) sit comfortably with the motivations behind a pluralist theology of religions?

First of all, it is necessary to add some qualification: There is probably no single overriding motivation for adopting a pluralist stance. Nevertheless, rather than dissipate the thrust of my points through over-qualification I am going to assume that there are roughly two types of motivation behind the pluralist view, and this will have the effect of dividing the argument into two prongs. Again, what follows may seem to be a somewhat crude division, there are broader reasons for adopting a pluralist stance.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging that there may be shades in between, I think that the caricatures I shall offer faithfully epitomize two 'polarities' in the pluralist view.

(1) The pluralist view can reflect a socio-ethical pressure to construct a suitable theology of religions that somehow secures a less discriminatory and more stable multi-cultural community.

(2) There can be a feeling for religion as a whole, or rather - an overriding religious sense of a global spirituality.

These two perspectives are, of course, by no means incompatible with each other, but I contend that although (2) would seem to entail a religious

motivation, (1) if seen as being wholly separate from (2) - does not, rather it is of an ethical (or even, political) kind.

Let us begin with motivation (1). Wilfred Cantwell Smith, like many others, thinks pragmatically: 'Co-existence, if not the final truth of man's diversity, would seem at least an immediate necessity, and indeed an immediate virtue.'<sup>10</sup> Paul Knitter, with his liberation perspective, elucidates this approach further: 'We go out to meet others, liberation theologians would urge, we encounter other religions, not primarily to enjoy diversity and dialogue but to eliminate suffering and oppression - not only to practice charity but, first of all, to work for justice.'<sup>11</sup> Initially we might observe that here the motivation for a pluralist theology could well fit into category (1). That is, the imperatives that Smith and Knitter speak of are, it would seem, not religious but ethical.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, there is a certain purity of motive, the goals are ennobling; that is, the desire to promote justice, peace, understanding and unity are paramount concerns to those whose motivations are in line with (1). Nevertheless, (having thrown my hat firmly into a Kierkegaardian ring), my main contention is that religion does not just rest on a 'socio-ethical' bedrock, something much more *urgent* is going on. Paul Tillich said that 'purity without glory is the character of all humanistic ideas of God...Humanism has forgotten that God's majesty, as experienced by the prophet, implies the shaking of the foundations wherever He appears? and the veil of smoke whenever He shows Himself.'<sup>13</sup> Does the pluralist view have 'purity without glory'? That is, the pluralist view, certainly according to motivation (1), seems to make an appeal to our moral fibre and sense of social responsibility, but does it appeal to us religiously? The pluralistic vision - if it is to be effective, must have this unique element - a sense of *glory* as Tillich put it. Or else, an inexpressible numinous quality that is ultimately real to the persons experiencing it. I would contend that it is this inexpressible quenching of the thirst for ultimate meaning that characterises the 'glory' of religion. Thus, with regard to (1), we might sharpen the focus of our original question as follows: 'do matters of life and death [or indeed, religious matters] override such motivations?' Such a question is especially pertinent if we maintain that religion is a passionate affair involving an unconditional response to an ultimate reality.

So, the motivations expressed in (1) could possibly be brushed aside because the search (and passion) for truth, or the 'ultimate', matters more. This is something I think we all *understand*: In the same way that the brushing aside of another caller in a telephone kiosk because of a life-and-death situation causes no offence - even if the previous caller were involved in an important call. The point is - can I distract with socio-ethical pleadings someone who feels that they have touched, or have

been touched by, an untainted reality? Put simply, I am arguing that a pluralist theology of religions cannot, *on the basis of purely socio-ethical criteria*, carry real, (or 'final'), weight in the religious arena.

Before proceeding to examine motivation (2), I want to lead into that discussion by briefly drawing attention to religious and ethical attitudes. Thus far I have somewhat urged a distinction between religious and ethical imperatives; but religious language and ethical language are, it is argued, comparable discourses. (At least, such a comparison was made by R.B. Braithwaite in response to the positivistic challenge in the 1950's)<sup>4</sup>. What should our attitude be towards the pluralistic landscape? Or else, is there an authentically religious attitude that we might identify? This seeking for an appropriate attitude is comparatively paralleled in Bernard Williams' discussion of relativism in morality in his little book, *Morality*. When speaking critically about relativistic morality, Williams calls attention to the concessionary-type arguments that are often presented for adopting a relativist, or neutral, point of view in ethics and claims that they have little affinity with the nature of moral impulses. He argues that moral arguments are unlike, say, scientific or historical arguments. For example, two distinguished scientists may disagree about the explanation of a particular phenomenon and as they respect each other's achievements and abilities they may conclude that the matter is uncertain and therefore a final judgement should be suspended until further evidence is uncovered. Similarly, an ethical relativist might argue that where two people (or cultures) disagree on an ethical point one should suspend judgement as to the 'truth'. But this attitude, claims Williams, does not lend itself to morality:

for the vital difference is that the disagreement in morality [as opposed to factual knowledge] involves what should be done, and involves, on each side, caring about what happens; and once you see this difference, you see equally that it could not possibly be a requirement of rationality that you should stop caring about those things because someone disagrees with you.<sup>15</sup>

Williams is suggesting a degree of feeling (care) in ethics that removes it from a purely rational (or 'scientific') arena. It is probable that religious 'cares' are made of similar stuff, that is - I care what I believe. Moreover, because I care about such things they cannot be classified as merely 'notional' assents; I cannot cease to care about what I believe in because there are other people who believe (and care about) quite contrary things. However, what those others could do - and perhaps this is the only really effective measure - is to somehow get me to care about what they believe. Perhaps this is a more appropriately *religious* attitude towards disagreements about 'truth'. And there is something further: the necessity to passionately engage others in your religious perspective surely applies

to the pluralist also? That is, the pluralist must somehow get me to care about his/her vision; and, moreover, in a religious context I would argue that the pluralist vision must appeal at the deepest level of religious experience. However, if we conclude that such a passionately religious approach to the pluralistic landscape is desirable, then there arises the additional question of whether it engenders an attitude which is (or should be) contrary to the pluralist's disposition.

So, what of motivation (2)? As I have suggested, we might arrive at a pluralist theology of religions not just because of a demand for peaceful co-existence, but as a result of a global spirituality or religious consciousness. A pluralist can therefore claim that theirs is a religious response to the religious landscape - perhaps a sense of the 'numinous' in all faiths. Some of the following statements, I would argue, contain elements which illustrate this 'sense' or concern. With regard to an emerging new religious consciousness, Ewert Cousins writes: 'Many, especially the younger generations, are beginning to feel their primary relatedness not to their nation or culture, but to the human community as a whole.'<sup>16</sup> In somewhat more complex language, William Nicholls suggests that the effect of living in a multicultural society is giving rise to an 'awareness' of global unity when he writes: 'the modern recognition of cultural relativity may serve to open the door for a transcendental awareness of one's own relativity.'<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Cousins encourages us not to underestimate the importance of this new global 'feel' in present society for: 'There is reason to think that the creative development of global spirituality, through interreligious dialogue, is the distinctive spiritual journey of our time.'<sup>18</sup>

What is noticeable about some of the quotes above is that it is as if the possible ingredients of a distinctive 'global faith' are being hinted at: A '*transcendental awareness*'; a '*distinctive spiritual journey*'. There is a certain spiritual excitement going on here, we can speak with a feeling for pluralism and we are, perhaps, beginning to enter into a 'religious sense'. Such a pluralistic vision of a global spirituality might thus be presented religiously as a truth worth caring, or being passionate, about.

Nevertheless, before we have even begun pursuing such notions we must call a halt and ask: Would it be wise for someone anxious to deny the exclusive claims of religions in order to facilitate the equal validity of all to talk of a pluralistic *spirituality*? It could be argued that such talk actually hinders the objective of a pluralist theology of religions. Why? Because it is creating a new dogma to rival the older ones, and it would seem that the aim of an authentically pluralist view of religions is to downplay the dogmatic and adopt an approach that underlines the equal validity of all. If the pluralistic view becomes a mission to awaken some

kind of global spirituality then it has pulled the carpet from beneath its feet, so to speak. That is, it cannot speak *for itself*. It does appear, therefore, that the pluralist faces a peculiar dilemma: s/he may feel a sense of inspiration in 'apprehending' a unity of world faiths (and here I mean something more than an academic enthusiasm for comparative studies) but, in order to accord with the spirit of pluralism as a 'neutral' idea, this must stop short of passion because it is this passion that has been responsible, it would appear, for the disagreements between different faiths.<sup>19</sup> So, (2) is potentially damaging for the pluralist case. For, the moment we become passionate about our particular vision we inevitably begin to talk of the 'truth' of our stance. That is, the passionate pluralist is really an exclusivist.<sup>20</sup> Marcus Braybrooke describes the pluralist inspiration as that thing which '[being] awakened to a unity that transcends religious divisions has been called a "second conversion"'.<sup>21</sup> But such language really has to be ruled out of court by a pluralist theology of religions which is committed to creating an air of neutrality. Enthusiasm for pluralism can only risk the possibility of underlining it as a closeted exclusivist hypothesis, especially if there is an awakening that almost amounts to a 'conversion'.

So far, it could be maintained that I have tended to concentrate chiefly on the pluralist perspective as a *theology* of religions rather than a *philosophical theory about religion*. Whereas the former somewhat implies the construction of satisfactory spiritual (and/or practical) responses to the reality of religious diversity, the latter seems to indicate a measure of disengagement or detachment. Such a distinction ought to be made and my criticisms immediately above are, perhaps, more directed at the former rather than the latter. Additionally, drawing such distinctions can open up other options. That is, it may be that adopting pluralism as no more than a philosophical theory about religion represents the only way that pluralism can avoid becoming a 'first-order' exclusivistic view in its own right. Or else, we might similarly suggest that the pluralist should speak only of a 'notional assent' to a pluralistic reality. (By 'notional assent' I mean the mere acknowledgement of a fact or state of affairs that has no corresponding life-changing effect.) S/he would be ill-advised to attempt to *excite* us about it.

It is probable that this idea of a notional assent to pluralism is implicitly present in the thinking of a leading pluralist thinker, John Hick. Hick proposes that the contrasting faiths 'constitute different ways of experiencing, conceiving and living in relation to an ultimate divine Reality which transcends all our varied visions of it.'<sup>22</sup> He proceeds from a Kantian epistemology by distinguishing between the 'phenomenal' world and its 'noumenal' ground, concluding that 'ultimate reality' ('the Real'



being Hick's preferred term) 'cannot be said to be one or many, person or thing, substance or process, good or evil purposive or non-purposive...For whereas the phenomenal world is structured by our own conceptual frameworks, its noumenal ground is not.'<sup>23</sup> This basic standpoint has opened up a range of criticisms, not least the claim that Hick's hypothesis is non-cognitive. (As Hick is a realist thinker, this accusation is viewed to have a special sting in its tail.) Both Mark Heim and Gavin D'Costa have pursued this line of criticism. Heim has claimed that the 'Real' is incapable of independent verification or falsification; that is, there is no set of experiential circumstances (by definition) that could be specified to verify or falsify the hypothesis.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, D'Costa has said that Hick's 'Real' is so nebulous that it encourages a certain 'transcendental agnosticism'.<sup>25</sup>

Hick has argued against the charge of non-cognitivity;<sup>26</sup> but, from the perspective of religious experience, it would appear that with his pluralistic proposals it is almost impossible to do much more than offer a cursory acknowledgement to a bigger picture than the one perceived in our own traditions. This is because it is difficult to visualise, in any real sense, what this bigger picture looks like! Hick's (somewhat magnified) Kantian structure facilitates no more than a vague notional assent to a nebulous Real which transcends its multifarious cultural representations. We might contrast such vacuity with the real commitments offered to the fleshed-out particularities (of ultimate reality) evident in the various faiths. That Hick intends this to be the case is brought out by the fact that he does not appear to be seeking to inaugurate a 'global faith' as such; he is content to remain within his own tradition whilst appreciating the spiritual beauties contained in others.<sup>27</sup> He is not advocating 'a world-wide uniformity';<sup>28</sup> we might crudely characterise Hick's position as: 'stay put in whatever (salvific) faith you belong to, but keep one eye on the other faiths because they are your (equally legitimate) fellow travellers towards the Ultimate'. In fact, he has recently described his pluralistic hypothesis as 'a meta-theory about the relation between the historical religions'<sup>29</sup>; moreover, it is 'a second-order philosophical theory'.<sup>30</sup> Ostensibly then, it appears that Hick comes close to proposing that religious people (of whatever persuasion) should offer what is little more than a notional assent to the equal validity of other faiths, or the 'bigger picture'. Following from this, we can somewhat identify Hick's hypothesis as a philosophical theory about religion rather than a theology of religions.

However, a question emerges from what has gone before: is a purely notional assent possible as an effective response to religious diversity? Or more importantly, if a pluralist view seeks to change things, can it adequately speak to the religious mind at a purely notional level?<sup>31</sup> Hick,



and others, do not just want us to remain unaffected by a pluralist perspective on religion. What would be the point of that? What is required is an inner spiritual change of perception in each of the conflicting faiths - a religious sense that there is something real and true to be grasped in a plural vision; (indeed, Braybrooke was right to speak of a 'second conversion'). Hick would probably acknowledge the futility of seeking only to whet the philosophical/notional appetite with his pluralistic proposals. Religious enquiry is concerned with inner-application: 'what does it mean for me?'; 'who or what am I?'; 'shall I survive death?'; how will my mind be transformed?' When addressing the rationality of religious belief, Hick maintains that a mere notional assent (to a proof of the existence of God) is not sufficient to provoke what could be characterised as a truly 'religious' reaction. It is a religious reaction that 'turns what would be a purely abstract conclusion into an immensely significant and moving fact.'<sup>32</sup> This seems to imply, (in the context of making the pluralistic vision meaningful), that some sort of spiritual shift is required within each religion, that is, something that takes us beyond the pure philosophical acknowledgement of the 'bigger picture' and into an affirmation of pluralism as an 'immensely significant and moving fact'.

Moreover, Hick has also said that in order to render a distinctive style of life both attractive and rational religious beliefs must be regarded as assertions of fact, not merely as imaginative fictions.'<sup>33</sup> If this is true then it is clear that the pluralist perspective cannot be content to state nothing factual or substantial about the religious landscape; it cannot occupy what might be called a 'thin air position'. Hick of all people understands that if it doesn't make a difference whether the pluralist view is true then it is cognitively vacuous.<sup>34</sup> But in the quote immediately above, Hick is not just making an academic point about religious language, he is really suggesting that in terms of religious significance a non-cognitive position would be 'unattractive'. His own religious and 'theological' inclinations tell him that there must be a reality behind religious experiences and propositions to bestow a truly religious significance. And so this is the crux: if religious pluralism is to make religious sense - and to effect some sort of inner change - then it must somehow be *immensely significant, moving, rational and attractive*. The whole idea of pluralism occupying a kind of vacuous neutrality is religiously impotent. Those 'second-order' philosophical shoes will have to be removed if we are to step into the pluralist vision with religious feeling.

Hick clearly wants the pluralist vision to have a significant impact, he does not think that the religions with their various dogmas can go unchallenged or unaltered in light of a positive acknowledgement of other faiths: he speaks of 'a positive mutual enrichment'.<sup>35</sup> This is, of course,

something that represents a welcome and beneficial development and need not necessarily lead us in a pluralist direction. However, Hick builds creatively on such developments and seeks to draw religions together more intimately. If the pluralist vision is embraced wholeheartedly then it is probable that each religion will 'de-emphasise that aspect of its teaching which entails its own unique superiority.'<sup>36</sup> In some of his most recent publications Hick also envisions, to a certain extent, a kind of spiritual move towards what could be labelled a 'global' liturgy. In the book, *The Rainbow of Faiths*, he sets forth his 'vision' for 2056 thus:

In those sections of the universal church in which the pluralistic vision has become established, worship is explicitly directed to God, rather than to Jesus, or to the Virgin Mary or the saints. This has been the result of a continual process of liturgical revision.<sup>37</sup>

Is it possible that Hick's speculative picture represents a state of affairs which will eventually progress towards the emergence of a global faith? Perhaps, beyond the year 2056, Jalaludin Rumi's famous adage: 'The lamps are different, but the Light is the same'<sup>38</sup> will assume a *positive* significance - maybe even a 'creedal' tone? Alternatively, it could be maintained that a global trend towards spiritual unity does not actually constitute a distinctive global faith, but merely represents the intention to draw religions together in a meaningful interactive dialogue. Nevertheless, (as I have somewhat already argued), I would contend that a 'vision' of religious significance has to be provided to motivate this. Moreover, such a vision, if it is to be effective, cannot operate incognito: Rumi's 'Light' has to be held aloft in order for the various lamps' to recognise it as their own origin and source. Perhaps, even, 2056 will usher in a new phenomena - a new evangelism and mission equipped with a pluralist vision?

I do not seek to take issue with someone who endeavours to convert me to a perspective where all religions are somehow taken up into a global spirituality and vision. I have no complaint about someone who feels this *deeply*, or finds such a possibility 'immensely significant and moving' and seeks to develop a full-blown pluralist theology of religions. Furthermore, it is this that I have argued makes the most religious sense: If the pluralistic vision is said to be free of dogma or a passionate commitment to 'truth', that is, if its tenets don't matter - then I don't know if we ought to become excited about it. But then, when characterising the religious passion as 'a matter of life and death' I have argued that, in a sense, religious beliefs should be very exciting, or else there is little use for them. However, if the advocates of pluralism are to excite us or give us a passion for their vision then they must relinquish the notion that

theirs is a uniquely tolerant, open and dogma-free vision, or that it somehow occupies an abstract philosophical vacuum of neutrality.

Thus, paradoxically, I am arguing that if the pluralist vision is to become religiously feasible then it is compelled to deny what must be the keystone feature of its perspective - that there is no exclusive truth; or else, that there is no exclusively 'right way' of seeing things. Is such a move possible? Perhaps the pluralist could urge us to see things in a global perspective without the pretence of neutrality and argue that theirs is a fairer, or more likely, vision. But then, if this were the case then it would have to take its place alongside (rather than 'above') other competing faiths. And if it is to be religiously significant, religious pluralism must become a religious passion.

- 1 My thanks go to Gavin D'Costa for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
- 2 D. Hay, *Religious Experience Today*, (London: Mowbray, 1990), pp. 98,99.
- 3 F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, (eds), (Edinburgh, 1948), p.12.
- 4 L. Wittgenstein, extract from *Culture and Value*, G.H. von Wright, (ed), P. Winch, trans., (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), reprinted in E. T. Oakes, (ed), *German Essays on Religion*, (New York: Continuum, 1994), p.226.
- 5 E.J. Hughes, 'How Subjectivity is Truth in *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, June, 1995, p. 203.
- 6 R.H Johnson, *The Concept of Existence in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), p.188; cited in E.J Hughes, *op. cit.*, p.206.
- 7 S. Kierkegaard, *Journals*, 22 (LA,75)
- 8 W.A. Christian, Sr., *Meaning and Truth in Religion*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, p.60f).
- 9 For an excellent discussion of the varieties within the pluralist stance see P. Byrne, *Prologomena to Religious Pluralism: Reference and Realism in Religion*, (London: Macmillan, 1995.)
- 10 W. C. Smith, 'The Christian in a Religiously Plural World', *Religious Diversity: Essays by Wilfred Cantwell Smith*, W. G. Oxtoby, (ed), (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); reprinted in B. Hebblethwaite & J. Hick, (eds), *Christianity and Other Religions*, (Fount, 1980), p.96.
- 11 P.F. Knitter, 'Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions' in P.F. Knitter & J. Hick, (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, (London: SCM Press, 1988), p.181.
- 12 For example, it seems that the priority of the 'ethical/praxis' imperative is revealed when Knitter claims that 'the right practice of following Jesus and working for his kingdom is more important for Christian identity than is the right knowledge concerning the nature of God or of Jesus himself.' *Ibid*, p.195. Knitter is surely right to identify 'right practice' as an important concern, but I have argued that religion as 'a matter of life and death' is also about the *unconditional*, the *ultimate concern*, and (perhaps we might add) the *truth about oneself*. If this is so then obtaining 'right knowledge' about the nature of God, or 'ultimate reality', must come high on a *religious* priority list.
- 13 P. Tillich, [1949] *The Shaking of the Foundations*, (Penguin, 1963), p.95.
- 14 See for example R.B. Braithwaite's Eddington Memorial Lecture, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); reprinted in J. Hick, (ed), *The Existence of God*, (London & New York: Collier Macmillan, 1964).

- 15 B. Williams, *Morality*, (Penguin, 1972), p.48.
- 16 E. Cousins, in F. Whaling, (ed), *Religion in Today's World*, p.330.
- 17 W. Nicholls, in W. Nicholls (ed), *Religion and Modernity* (Waterloo/Ontario, 1987) p.177.
- 18 E. Cousins, *op. cit.*, p.334.
- 19 That is, it is when incompatible truth-claims are held with passion - or as 'matters of life and death' - that disagreements become *real* rather than purely notional.
- 20 This somewhat endorses a similar point made recently by Gavin D'Costa who claims that the logical structure of pluralism is in fact exclusivistic. He argues that 'all pluralists are committed to holding some form of truth criteria and by virtue of this, anything that falls foul of such criteria is excluded from counting as truth (in doctrine and in practice). Thus, pluralism operates within the same logical structure of exclusivism and in this respect pluralism can never really affirm the genuine autonomous value of religious pluralism for, like exclusivist it can only do so by tradition specific criteria of truth.' 'The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions', *Religious Studies*, Vol.32, No.2, June 1996, pp.225, 226. (Hick has responded to D'Costa with 'The Possibility of Religious Pluralism: A Reply to Gavin D'Costa', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 33, No.2, June, 1997.)
- 21 M. Braybrooke, 'Religious Studies and Interfaith Developments', in U. King, (ed), *Turning Points in Religious Studies*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), p.140.
- 22 J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, (London: Macmillan, 1989) pp.235-236.
- 23 *Ibid.* p.246.
- 24 See S. Mark Heim, 'The Pluralistic Hypothesis, Realism and Post-Eschatology', *Religious Studies*, Vol.28, No.2, June,1992.
- 25 See Gavin D'Costa, 'John Hick and Religious Pluralism: Yet Another Revolution' in H. Hewitt, (ed.), *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, (London: Macmillan, 1991).
- 26 See J. Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths*, (London: SCM Press, 1995) esp. ch.3
- 27 See in particular the closing remarks of Hick in 'A Personal Note'. *Disputed Questions in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion*, (London: Macmillan, 1993), esp. pp.144-145.
- 28 J. Hick, *The Second Christianity*, (London: SCM Press, 1983), p.89.
- 29 J. Hick, 'The Possibility of Religious Pluralism: A Reply to Gavin D'Costa', *Religious Studies*, Vol.33, No.2, June, 1997, p.163.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 For example, Braybrooke expresses the need for the pluralistic vision to have a significant influence: 'The hardest task of the interfaith movement is not to establish co-operation between some members of each religion, but to effect inner change within each religion'. M. Braybrooke, *op.cit.*, p 140
- 32 J. Hick, 'Rational Theistic Beliefs Without Proofs' in P. Badham, (ed) *A John Hick Reader*, (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.54. [First appeared in J. Hick, *Arguments for the Existence of God*, (London: Macmillan, 1971)]
- 33 J. Hick, [1963] *Philosophy of Religion*, (Prentice Hall International 1990, 4th Ed.), p. 96.
- 34 Hick argues for the cognitivity of religious language. For example, see 'Theology and Verification', *Theology Today*, Vol.27, No.1, April, 1960; reprinted in Hick, *The Existence of God*.
- 35 J. Hick, *The Second Christianity*, p.90. Those familiar with J. Hick, (ed), *The Myth of God Incarnate*, (London: SCM Press, 1977) will appreciate how the pluralist view effects 'change' with regard to a central feature of the Christian faith.
- 36 J. Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths*, p.30-37. *Ibid.*, p.136. 38. R.A. Nicholson, [1950] *Rumi: Poet and Mystic*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978), p.166. Cited in Hick, *Interpretation of Religion*, p.233.