



A Reader's Guide to Interreligious Dialogue

JERRY K. ROBBINS

Lutheran Campus Center, Morgantown, West Virginia

There is perhaps no more significant reality for the development of Christianity today than the resurgence of the world religions. Many observers claim that any theology that wishes to be heard in this day will have to take into account this ascendancy of non-Western faiths. Yet, one must look long and hard to find any listing of resources on Christian dialogue with people of living faiths. While the literature on comparative religion and history of religions is readily accessible, little has been done to make available the burgeoning scholarship on interreligious dialogue.

The following listing is a modest effort to organize the vast new material on interreligious dialogue into a manageable form. It intends to put into the hands of the interested reader an outline that will provide ready entry into what has become a confusing array of books and periodicals. The listing is highly selective, including mainly works that introduce the general shape of the subject and its most recurrent themes. The arrangement is progressive, moving from introductory studies and broad overviews to special issues and particular dialogues. Bibliographic material for more extensive reading is reserved for the last section.

I. SURVEYS

Two excellent overviews of the discussions about mission and dialogue in the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church are available in Carl F. Hallencreutz's *Dialogue and Community: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious Relationships* (Swedish Institute of Missionary Research and The World Council of Churches, 1977), and Robert B. Sheard's *Inter-religious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II* (Edwin Mellen, 1987).

II. CHRISTIAN APPROACHES

Much of the literature on interreligious dialogue concerns Christian approaches to other religions. Owen Thomas, in *Attitudes to Other Religions* (Harper, 1969), lists seven different approaches and provides sample readings. A primary text, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Orbis, 1985), by Paul Knitter, outlines conserva-

tive, mainline, and Roman Catholic positions, and introduces Knitter's own theocentric approach. Paul Clasper, in *Eastern Paths and the Christian Way* (Orbis, 1980), talks about "The Dungeon," "The Round Table," "The Higher Synthesis," and other colorfully characterized models of encounter.

The most familiar characterization of interreligious postures describes three stances—

exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Introductory descriptions and critiques of these positions are provided by the exclusivists, Arthur F. Glasser and Donald A. McGavran, in *Contemporary Theologies of Mission* (Baker, 1983), the inclusivist, Gavin D'Costa, in *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (Basil Blackwell, 1986), and the pluralist, Alan Rice, in *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (Orbis, 1982).

A. Exclusivism

The belief that Christianity alone possesses saving truth has along modern history. For a first-hand exposition of exclusivism in its early formation, see Hendrick Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (Harper, 1938), and his more recent, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (Lutterworth, 1956). Neo-Kraemerian Stephen Neill updates the exclusivist position in *Crises of Belief: The Christian Dialogue with Faith and No Faith* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1984). A conservative Catholic version is available in Hans Urs von Balthasar's *The Moment of Christian Witness* (Newman, 1968). Though a revision of an earlier work, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism*, by Norman Anderson (InterVarsity, 1984), is a good recent statement of the exclusivist position.

B. Inclusivism

As a position open to other religions, yet basically christocentric, inclusivism is perhaps the most popular of interreligious postures. One of the earliest formulations of its "fulfillment" thesis was given by Protestant missionary J. N. Farquhar in *The Crown of Hinduism* (Oxford, 1913). One of its most recent expressions is Arnulf Camp's *Partners in Dialogue* (Orbis, 1983). Filling the long history in between is the "anonymous Christian" theme of Karl Rahner in *Theological Investigations* (Darton, Longman and Todd; Seabury; Herder & Herder, 1966-83). The subsequent "Catholic connection" includes *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (Burns and Oates, 1967), edited by Joseph Neuner; Eugene Hillman, *The Wider Ecumenism* (Burns and Oates, 1968); and Charles Davis, *Christ and the World Religions* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1970). Two more recent significant Catholic works are *True and False Universality* (Seabury, 1980), edited by Claude Geffre and Jean-Pierre Jossua, and *The Chosen Peoples* (St. Paul Publications, 1982), by Walbert Bühlmann. A philosophically perceptive study was E. L. Allen's *Christianity among the Religions* (Allen and Unwin, 1960). Without explicitly addressing the interreligious issue, Anglican Norman Pittenger develops an inclusivist position in *The Word Incarnate* (Harper, 1959). For further Protestant renderings, see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Harper, 1977), and John Cobb, Jr., "The Religions," in *Christian Theology*, edited by Peter Hodgson and Robert King (Fortress, 1982). An important advocate of openness was Kenneth Cragg, *Christianity in World Perspective* (Oxford, 1968), whose book, *The Call of the Minaret* (Oxford, 1956), inspired the SCM

"Christian Presence" series. Another spokesperson for tolerance was E. C. Dewick, *The Christian Attitude to Other Religions* (Cambridge, 1953).

C. Pluralism

The position that there are a plurality of saving faiths has been gaining in popularity in

recent years. Precursors of this viewpoint include: Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religion*, 1901 (John Knox, 1971); W. E. Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions* (Harper, 1932); and Arnold Toynbee, *Christianity among the Religions of the World* (Scribners, 1957).

Leading a wave of more recent pluralist publications is W. C. Smith, *Faith of Other Men* (Harper, 1962), and *Faith and Belief* (Princeton, 1979). Perhaps the most developed pluralism is that of John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Macmillan, 1973), *God Has Many Names* (Macmillan, 1980), and *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (St. Martin, 1985).

For many recent theologians, pluralism is the position of choice; see *Religious Pluralism* (Notre Dame, 1984), edited by Leroy Rouner, and *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* (Orbis, 1985), by Harold Coward. Basic tenets and applications of the pluralist position are described in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions* (Orbis, 1987), edited by John Hick and Paul Knitter.

III. SELECTED TOPICS

A. Dialogue

One response to the emergence of world religions has been an interest in conversation among the various faiths. This interest has produced both theoretical studies of dialogue and reports of actual dialogue. Among the former are Raimundo Panikkar's *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Paulist, 1978), and Donald Swearer's *Dialogue: The Key to Understanding Other Religions* (Westminster, 1977). A very readable statement on dialogue as well as other topics is Willard Oxtoby's *The Meaning of Other Faiths* (Westminster, 1983). A review of biblical material about dialogue is included in *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (WCC, 1985), by S. Wesley Ariarajah. Authors who carry on dialogue with the religions in their writings include Ninian Smart, *World Religions: A Dialogue* (Penguin, 1960), and Arnulf Camp, *Partners in Dialogue*.

Faith Meets Faith (Paulist, 1981), edited by Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky, brings together many previously published essays that address the topic of dialogue. Richard W. Rousseau has edited two excellent collections of published essays on dialogue, *Interreligious Dialogue: Facing the Next Frontier* (Ridge Row, 1981), and *Christianity and the Religions of the East: Models for a Dynamic Relationship* (Ridge Row, 1982). *Christianity among World Religions* (T & T Clark, 1986), edited by Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, and *Christianity and the World Religions* (Doubleday, 1986), edited by Hans Küng, Joseph Van Ess, Heinrich von Stietencrom, and Heinz Heinegg, are collections of essays that look at Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese religions from a Christian perspective. David McKain's *Christianity: Some Non-Christian Appraisals* (McGraw-Hill, 1964), gathers views of Jews,

Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists toward Christianity. Several of the conferences sponsored by the World Council of Churches have published papers. Lists of WCC publications are available in *Faith in the Midst of Faith* (1977), and *Courage for Dialogue* (1981), both edited by Stanley Samartha. A multi-faith symposium at Washington and Lee University in 1976 is documented in *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World* (Orbis, 1978), edited by Donald Dawe and John Carman. A consultation of Christians at Union Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, produced

Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism (Orbis, 1981), edited by Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky. A conference of Christian and non-Christian speakers held at Temple University in 1984 is preserved in Leonard Swidler's collection, *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Orbis, 1987).

B. Christology

For Christians the major issue with interreligious dialogue is whether or not encounter and exchange with other faiths violates allegiance to Jesus Christ. In *The Finality of Christ* (John Knox, 1969), Lesslie Newbigin argues that, inasmuch as Jesus is God and the sole criterion of revelation, any contact with other religions must be for the purpose of conversion. More recently, Mark Heim argues for an exclusivist christology in *Is Christ the Only Way? Christian Faith in a Pluralistic World* (Judson, 1985). Kenneth Surin, in an article, "Revelation, Salvation, the Uniqueness of Christ and Other Religions," *Religious Studies* 19 (1983), defends an incarnational christology in a world of many religions.

Criticizing both exclusive and pluralist christologies, Lucien Richard, in *What Are They Saying about Christ and World Religions?* (Paulist, 1981), opts for a non-exclusive christology that nevertheless accords decisive influence to Jesus and the Bible. See also his earlier, "Some Recent Developments on the Question of Christology and World Religions," *Église et Théologie* 8 (1977; reprinted in *Interreligious Dialogue*, edited by Rousseau). Robert Schreiter, in "The Anonymous Christian and Christology," *Missiology* 6 (1978), tries to escape criticisms of Rahner's christology by an appeal to Wisdom christology. In "The Absoluteness of Jesus Christ and Christ-Centered Syncretism," *Ecumenical Review* 37 (1985), M. M. Thomas suggests a creative Christian participation with other religions under the control of the gospel.

Alan Race favors an "action" christology in which Jesus embodies the broader salvific work of God (*Christians and Religious Pluralism*). There are degrees of incarnation, Hick argues, and Jesus is one outstanding instance on a continuum of revelation (*Problems of Religious Pluralism*). Paul Knitter argues that Christians can hold a non-normative christology (*No Other Name?*). Other non-incarnational christologies are developed by Don Cupitt, "The Finality of Christ," *Theology* 78 (1975), and Howard Burkle, "Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16 (1979). A position sympathetic to Hick and Knitter is developed by Lee Snook in *The Anonymous Christ: Jesus as Savior in Modern Theology* (Augsburg, 1986).

A criticism of non-incarnational christologies is available in Brian Hebblethwaite's "Incarnation—the Essence of Christianity?" *Theology* 80 (1977). See also the perceptive criticisms of Knitter's theocentric christology

by Mark Heim and others in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Winter 1987. Related to the previous two positions but deserving special mention is a group of christologies framed around the concept of the Logos. Contending with Kraemer's narrow interpretation of the Logos, A. C. Bouquot argues that it was through the notion of the Logos that Christianity approached other religions (*The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* [Harper, 1958]). Robert D. Young, in his *Encounter with World Religions* (Westminster, 1970), also criticizes Kraemer and suggests a modified logos theology as a route to dialogue with other religions. Process theologian John

Cobb, Jr. explores logos christology in *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Westminster, 1975). Among the many criticisms of logos theology, one of the most passionate is Robert Jenson's "Religious Pluralism, Christology, and Barth," in *dialog* 20 (1981).

C. Truth

The plurality of religious world views raises anew the issue of the truth of religious propositions. In a philosophical essay, *Oppositions of Religious Doctrines* (Herder, 1972), William Christian describes how contradictory doctrines can arise among the religious traditions. In *Religious Truth and the Relation between Religions* (Madras, 1950), D. G. Moses shows how the issue of truth is overlooked in pluralist and liberal approaches, but leads to dogmatism in an exclusivistic position.

Truth and Dialogue in World Religions: Conflicting Truth Claims (Westminster, 1974), edited by John Hick, includes an essay by W. C. Smith defending a definition of truth as personal and an essay by Hick attacking that position. In addition to Smith, Knitter (*No Other Name?*), and Swearer (*Dialogue*) defend a non-cognitivist or relational definition of truth. For additional commentaries, see the essays by Swidler, Smith, Panikkar, and Küng in *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, edited by Swidler, and the essays by Glass and Rossano in *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, edited by Anderson and Stransky. Discussions of Hindu and Christian views of truth are available in John A. T. Robinson's *Truth Is Two-Eyed* (Westminster, 1979); K. Klostermaier's "A Hindu-Christian Dialogue on Truth," in *Man's Religious Quest* (Open University, 1978), edited by W. Foy; and "Ganga and Galilee: Two Responses to Truth," by S. Samartha (*Courage for Dialogue*).

Supporting a confessionalist position that maintains the truth of Christianity are essays by Brian Hebblethwaite, "Religious Truth and Dialogue," *The Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 5/1 (1984), and Harold Netland, "Religious Pluralism and Truth," *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985). "Towards a New Dialectic of Religions," *Religious Studies* 18 (1982), by Hugo Meynell, argues for objective criteria in measuring the truth or falsity of religions, while "Is Buddhist Karmic Theory False?" *Religious Studies* 19 (1983), by J. E. White, criticizes Griffith's verificationist attack on Buddhist beliefs. The trouble pluralism can cause is outlined by Roger Trigg in "Religion and the Threat of Relativism," *Religious Studies* 19 (1983). An effort to counter that charge is offered by J. Kellenberger in "The Slippery Slope of Religious Relativism," *Religious Studies* 21 (1985).

IV. PARTICULAR RELIGIONS

Among the major world religions, this bibliography will briefly document Christian dialogue with three: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Claiming several hundred million adherents each, these faiths are perhaps the least known in the West of the truly large religions. At the same time, a considerable literature about them is now available.

A. Buddhism

Noteworthy from the early literature are B. H. Streeter's *The Buddha and the Christ* (Macmillan, 1932), and F. H. Hilliard's *The Buddha, the Prophet and the Christ* (Macmillan, 1956). A pair of books by George Appleton, *The Christian Approach to the Buddhist*

(Edinburgh, 1958) and *On the Eightfold Path* (SCM, 1961), are among the first in the new wave of literature in this field. Winston King's *Buddhism: Some Bridges of Understanding* (Westminster, 1962), traces parallels between the two faiths on key concepts.

Roman Catholics confront Buddhism in *Towards the Meeting with Buddhists* (Secretariat for Non-Christians, Rome, 1970). Aelred Graham in *Conversations: Christian and Buddhist Encounters in Japan* (Harcourt Brace, 1971) records meetings between Graham and six Buddhists. In *Christianity Meets Buddhism* (Open Court, 1974), Hemrich Dumoulin suggests the two faiths meet in the arena of religious experience.

Donald Swearer's *Dialogue: The Key to Understanding Other Religions*, shows how Buddhism can deepen and enlarge Christianity. *Buddhism and Christianity* (Seabury, 1979), by Claude Geffré and Mariasusai Dhavamony, brings together essays on the theme of suffering and liberation. John B. Cobb, Jr. develops his famous proposal for mutual transformation ("Buddhized Christianity"/"Christianized Buddhism") in *Beyond Dialogue* (Fortress, 1982). Two recent collections of essays that underscore the problems and possibilities are G. W. Houston's *The Cross and the Lotus: Christianity and Buddhism in Dialogue* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), and *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Mutual Renewal and Transformation* (University of Hawaii, 1986), edited by Paul Ingram and Frederick Streng.

B. Hinduism

Early missionary activity in India is reviewed in Eric J. Sharpe's *Not to Destroy But to Fulfil* (Gleerup, 1965), which notes, among others, the fulfillment theologies of missionaries T. E. Slater and J. N. Farquhar. The Christian Literature Society for India (hereafter CLS), located at Madras, published two works by V. Chakkarai: *Jesus the Avatar* (1926) and *The Cross and Indian Thought* (1932). Principal of the Christian College at that place, A. G. Hogg, wrote *The Christian Message to the Hindu* (SCM, 1947). His *Karma and Redemption* (1909) was reissued in 1970 by CLS. Rounding out this period is Jack Winslow's *The Christian Approach to the Hindu* (Edinburgh, 1958).

The sixties saw the beginning of a burgeoning literature on Christian-Hindu relations. Following his earlier, *The Gospel and Renascent Hinduism* (SCM, 1959), P. D. Devanandan, a prime figure in the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, located at Bangalore, was honored by that institute with a posthumous printing of some of his papers in *Preparation*

for Dialogue (1964). Another valuable publication of the institute is *Inter-Religious Dialogue* (1967), edited by Herbert Jai Singh. Especially noteworthy are the many writings of R. C. Zaehner, whose *Concordant Discord* (Oxford, 1970) comprised the Gifford Lectures for 1967-1969.

Roman Catholic writers of that time include Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (Orbis, 1981); Klaus Klostermaier, *The Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (SCM, 1969); M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (SCM, 1969); Swami Abhishiktananda (H. le Saux), *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point* (Bangalore, 1969); and Bede Griffiths, *Christ in India* (Scribners, 1966). Other writings from this period are N. K. Devaraja's *Hinduism and Christianity* (Asia, 1969); Marcus Braybrooke's *Together to the Truth* (Diocesan, 1971); Swami Satprakashananda's *Hinduism and Christianity* (Vedanta Society of St.

Louis, 1975); and Eric Sharpe's *Faith Meets Faith*.

Several books dealing with special topics deserve mention: Edgar Thompson's *The Word of the Cross to the Hindu* (CLS, 1956); G. Parrinder's *Upanishads, Gita and Bible* (Sheldon, 1962) and *Avatar and Incarnation* (Oxford, 1970); S. Kulandran's *Grace: A Comparative Study of the Doctrine in Christianity and Hinduism* (Lutterworth, 1964); K. Klostermaier's *Kristvidya: A Sketch of an Indian Christology* (Bangalore, 1967); and S. J. Samartha's *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ* (CLS, 1974).

C. Islam

An introduction to the voluminous literature on Christian-Muslim relations might well begin with J. W. Sweetman's four-volume work, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions* (Lutterworth, 1945-67). Other early titles of note are S. M. Zwemer's *Islam—A Challenge to Faith* (New York, 1907); C. H. Becker's *Christianity and Islam*, 1909 (Burt Franklin, 1974); T. Gairdner's *The Rebuke of Islam* (SPG, 1910); W. Muir's *The Apology of al-Kindi* (SPCK, 1911); D. B. Macdonald's *Aspects of Islam* (Macmillan, 1911); J. L. Barton's *The Christian Approach to Islam* (Pilgrim, 1918); L. E. Brown's *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia* (Cambridge, 1933); W. W. Cash's *Christendom and Islam* (SCM, 1937); L. Levonian's *Studies in the Relationship between Islam and Christianity* (Allen and Unwin, 1940); and J. T. Addison's *The Christian Approach to the Moslem* (Columbia, 1942).

A prodigious commentary on Christian-Muslim relations was launched in 1956 with Kenneth Cragg's *The Call of the Minaret*. That was soon followed with *Christian Presence amid Islam* (Oxford, 1959). Also important in this corpus of comparative scholarship are *The Dome and the Rock* (SPCK, 1964), *The Christian and Other Religion* (Oxford, 1977), and *Muhammad and the Christian* (Orbis, 1984). Other significant works to appear around this time are Eric W. Bethmann's *Bridge to Islam* (Southern, 1950); H. Spencer's *Islam and the Gospel of God: A Comparison of the Central Doctrines of Christianity and Islam* (SPCK, 1956); G. E. Marrison's *The Christian Approach to the Muslim* (Lutterworth, 1965); and Morris S. Seale's *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (Luzac, 1964).

A number of statements and discussion materials appeared in this time span; these included: *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians*

(Secretariat for Non-Christians, Rome, 1969) and *A New Threshold: Guidelines for the Churches in Their Relations with Muslim Communities* (British Council of Churches, 1976), by David Brown. The World Council of Churches published its papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue under the title, *Christians Meeting Muslims* (WCC, 1977). Other important works are W. M. Watt, *Islamic Revelation* (Edinburgh, 1969); William M. Miller, *A Christian's Response to Islam* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976); and Rudolf Frieling, *Christianity and Islam: A Battle for the True Image of Man* (Floris, 1978).

There is a great variety of formats among recent materials on Christian-Muslim relations. *Islam and Christianity* (Uzima, 1980), by B. D. Kateregga and D. W. Shenk, follows a statement/response style. Christian writer Michael Nazir-Ali offers an "appreciation" of Islam in *Islam: A Christian Perspective* (Westminster, 1983), while Ibn Taymiyya's *A Muslim*

Theologian's Response to Christianity (Caravan, 1984) represents the other side of the dialogue table. Kenneth Cracknell offers a challenge in *Christians and Muslims Talking Together* (British Council of Churches, 1984), while R. W. Rousseau documents progress to date in his anthology, *Christianity and Islam: The Struggling Dialogue* (Ridge Row, 1985). A good general study is Phil Parshall's *Beyond the Mosque: Christians within Muslim Community* (Baker, 1985).

Some special studies in the literature are Jacques Jomier, *The Bible and the Koran* (Desclée, 1959); Kenneth Cragg, *The Privilege of Man* (Athlone, 1968), *Alive to God: Muslim and Christian in Prayer* (Oxford, 1970), *Jesus in Islam* (Krishnagari, 1975); M. S. Seale, *Qur'an and the Bible* (Croom Helm, 1978); Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus and the Qur'an* (Oxford, 1977); J. I. Smith and Y. Y. Hadad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (State University of New York, 1981); Thomas O'Shaughnessy, *Word of God in the Qur'an* (Rome Biblical Institute, 1984); and N. M. Vaporis, *Orthodox Christians and Muslims* (Holy Cross, 1986).

V. BIBLIOGRAPHIES

For those who wish to do more research, an excellent entry to the literature is available in Gavin D'Costa's article "Bibliography: Christian Attitudes towards Other Religions," *The Modern Churchman*, New Series 27 (1985). Eric Sharpe's bibliographic essay, "Christian Attitudes to Non-Christian Religions: A Bibliographic Survey," *Expository Times* 86 (1975), reprinted in Sharpe, *Faith Meets Faith*, provides a similar overview with a concentration on the meeting between Christianity and Hinduism.

A brief listing of books to 1981 is available in *Faith Meets Faith*, edited by Anderson and Stransky. A more extensive bibliography arranged topically is included in *Christianity and Other Religions* (Fount, 1980), edited by John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite. For a comprehensive guide, see *Christian Faith amidst Religious Pluralism: An Introductory Bibliography* (Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, 1980), edited by Donald Dawe, Martha Aycok, S. Eleanor Godfrey, and John Trotti. A listing of periodicals is available in A. J. van der Bent's "The Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies in Current Periodical Literature," *Occasional Bulletin* 3 (1979).