

Is Jesus on the Side of the Non-Christian? **By Aimee Upjohn Light**

Abstract

In his *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* response to my piece *Hick, Harris and the Demise of the Pluralist Hypothesis*, John Hick continues to advocate a meta-approach to religious multiplicity which ignores the problems inherent in such a quest. Condemning tradition-bound approaches as “dogmatic theology,”¹ Hick remains unaware of the promise of progress which is yet unmined within the religions themselves. Specifically, this article proposes that by returning to Christianity as a rebellious religion of liberation—with a founder who witnessed to God’s absolute commitment to the oppressed and marginalized—we avoid the problems which undermine the pluralist hypothesis and the abstract, ontologically based positions which follow it. Further, we reap the good which pluralism was meant to accomplish, specifically the affirmation of multiple religions and the status of their members. The return to confessionally-based approaches is already taking place within inter-religious dialogue and theology of religions.² Making sure that this return is *not* a return to abstract Christian dogmatism and instead serves the aims of Hick’s pluralism should be the work of this generation of scholars. This article begins to point at how, for Christians, we can radicalize the current methodological paradigm shift to confessional, tradition-bound approaches and at the same time save this work from suffering the same problems as pluralism. We need to give our confessional return the content of liberation theology.

Though both liberation theologies and inter-religious dialogue in the Christian West are theological movements centrally concerned with social justice, the wisdom and methodology of liberation theology has not yet been often or thoroughly brought to bear on inter-religious work.³ Why this should be the case when Paul Knitter as far back his 1988 essay in the seminal book *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* called for the joining of liberationist and inter-religious work remains an open question.⁴ Yet when Christians do bring the understanding of liberation theologies to bear on inter-religious dialogue, the problems of Hick’s pluralist hypothesis and the continuing problems which plague Jacques Dupuis’s and S. Mark Heim’s work can largely be solved. In fact, applying the understandings and commitments of liberation theology to inter-religious dialogue is an extension of Dupuis’s and Heim’s crucial methodological shift back from the pluralist quest for a meta-narrative of religion to a creative but nevertheless confessional approach. Dupuis and Heim are absolutely correct that in the face of pluralism’s shortcomings we must return to our own tradition and its resources. Yet instead of returning to abstract onto-theologies as Heim and Dupuis do, themselves developed with the exclusionary interests of the tradition at heart, we ought to use the resources of the tradition which call the tradition itself to its own highest standards. These resources are to be found in liberation theology’s understanding of Jesus as on the side of the marginalized, oppressed and powerless. Thus, following Dupuis and Heim’s methodological paradigm shift, we return to a tradition-informed approach to inter-religious dialogue. Yet unlike Dupuis and Heim, we call upon the facet of our tradition that demands a preferential option for the poor, marginalized, and excluded as absolutely willed by God. By joining the methodological paradigm shift already taking place in the inter-religious conversation with the commitment of liberation theology to the marginalized, we arrive at the inter-religious table in the Christian-dominated West ready to say that Jesus is on the side of the non-Christian.

This article will describe the inter-religious conversation which has culminated in

Dupuis's and Heim's similarly flawed onto-theology, and then examine the commonality between and the specific problems which plague each position. The suggestion will then be made that we re-start the quest for a satisfactory position on religious multiplicity from precisely within the revelation of our own tradition: not by beginning with traditional abstract ontologies which cannot help but confer outsider status to persons who espouse different worldviews, but by beginning with the insight and wisdom of liberation theologies, specifically feminist and post-colonial theologies of liberation. In these theological worldviews, it is precisely persons who are oppressed, marginalized, and vulnerable because they do not inhabit the dominant paradigm who are understood to be the ones whose side God has taken. In the inter-religious conversation, it is typically the religious "Other" who is the outsider. She is the one whom our exclusivist, inclusivist and even pluralist and post-pluralist worldviews render either forsaken or included in the religious narrative derivatively, with status only as second-class, inferior citizen.⁵ The legacy of liberation theologies for inter-religious work is that, when the religious "Other" is understood as the marginalized and vulnerable one, she takes on the status of the very presence of God. Jesus, because he is on the side of the marginalized, is literally on the side of the non-Christian. Outsider-Insider status is reversed, and it is we who inhabit the dominant narrative who are faced with the quest for belonging in the kingdom⁶ of the one who takes the side of the subaltern, the One whom we call God. By using the resources of feminist and other liberation theologies, we avoid the problems faced not only by the pluralist hypothesis, but the post-pluralist positions which follow in its wake.

From the history witnessed to in de las Casas's *Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies*⁷ to the understanding which dominates many Western religious education classes today, the exclusivist understanding of who may and may not achieve salvation has functioned with disastrous consequences. Though the thought that persons who, simply by virtue of their birth, have not been given the live option⁸ of being Christian and thus cannot go to heaven is unpalatable to many, generations of Christians have been brought up with just this idea. In the midst of this widespread understanding appeared the Roman Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council.

The Council's documents, especially *Nostra Aetate*⁹ and *Gaudium et Spes*,¹⁰ clearly and deliberately articulated a contrasting vision. "Inclusivism," as this position was christened, held that non-Christians can indeed go to heaven. The good Buddhists, the devout Hindus, Jews, and Muslims could all attain salvation. What was and remains somewhat unclear is whether these religions were understood to function independently for their members as mediators of salvation by the agency of the Holy Spirit or whether these persons were understood to be saved derivatively through the mediatorship of the Church itself.¹¹ Analysis of the Conciliar documents is far beyond the scope of any article, and is indeed the subject of numerous dissertations and books. What is necessary to note for the present purpose of tracing the Western, Christian trajectory of inter-religious work is that—whatever interpretation we give the documents of Vatican II—inclusivism was a radical new proclamation on the part of some Christians that persons outside our faith tradition could be saved.

Exciting and progressive as inclusivism may have been, it was soon apparent that there were aspects of the position that were far from affirming of the value of non-Christian traditions and their members. Though these outsiders might attain salvation, we were still left with the vision of a God who chose to reveal the good news only to some, and who left the majority of persons over time in ignorance and delusion about both the nature of God God's self and the religious end for which human beings are destined. Though better than damning the majority of the world's population over time to hellfire, this conjectured state of affairs left us with the view that most people—even

saved people—live in error. Worse yet, we were left with an ungenerous God.¹²

Out of this dissatisfaction was born the pluralist hypothesis. Most systematically put forward by John Hick in his seminal work *An Interpretation of Religion*,¹³ pluralism held that all religions put their adherents in relationship with the same ultimate reality, which Hick called the Real, and that they help their members attain the same religious end, which Hick formulated as the transformation from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness.¹⁴ To date, there exists no more than cursory analyses of pluralism's shortcomings, yet even these broad-stroke critiques¹⁵ were enough to hasten the demise of the pluralist hypothesis. It is worth spending time looking into the internal inconsistencies that do, in fact, plague the position. The generalizations to date were enough to call post-pluralist positions such as those of Dupuis and Heim into being. Yet when we are confronted with the more concrete particularities of the problems in Hick's pluralist hypothesis and the trajectory of inter-religious work which his position has spawned, we cannot help but realize the continuing need to construct an alternative to the abstract onto-theological inter-religious positions which we have followed to date.¹⁶

First, there is nothing "plural" about the pluralist hypothesis, for it affirms itself to the exclusion of the religions with which it actually conflicts. Thus pluralism is better called "unilism," as it is another exclusionary truth claim. Second, Hick cannot offer the pluralist hypothesis as one of his mythological, transformational truths and hence cannot recommend his own position. Third, even if Hick somehow manages to offer pluralism as a mythologically transformational truth, pluralism's very appeal to a mythological theory of truth in order to avoid conflicting truth claims—whether between religions or between itself and particular religions—fails to conceal an actual reliance on a propositional theory of truth. Pluralism is then subject to the same critique which succeeded against pragmatic theories of truth, and Hick's mythological theory of religious truth falls apart. Finally, the pluralist hypothesis turns out to be a religiously non-realist position, shattering any confidence we might have in the veracity of religious experience. Instead of explaining religions, pluralism explains them away.

First, though the aim of the pluralist hypothesis is to affirm multiple religions, it actually contradicts them all, affirming only itself as the right metaphysical understanding. In the words of Paul Griffiths, "I know better what you are doing than you know yourself."¹⁷ Pluralism understands the religious object beyond and behind the formulations of all the religions as "the Real," and the religious end behind all formulations as the transformation from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness. This construal of a nebulous something that then explains the understandings of each tradition and a goal behind heaven, moksa, and Enlightenment is extremely appealing in its evening out of multiple religions' truth claims to partial formulations of a greater religious object. Yet the Christian does not understand herself as referring to this nebulous "Real," but to the God who incarnated uniquely and absolutely in Jesus Christ. The Muslim does not take himself to be praying five times daily to this Real who gives equal access to itself through Hinduism and Judaism as it does through Islam. The Jew does not pray nor does the Buddhist meditate so that she can attain transformation from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness as the supreme religious goal. However appealing Hick's formulations may be, the Real as the universal religious object and the transformation from self- to Reality-centeredness as the universal religious end contradict both the formulations and self-understandings of the world religions about their religious objects and religious ends. The Muslim does not understand himself to be praying to "the Real" and headed for a transformation to "Reality centeredness." Instead, he prays to Allah, who is the only God and understood most adequately in Islam. The Theravada Buddhist does not believe she is in relationship with "the Real"

and destined for “Reality centeredness.” In fact, she may understand these concepts as illusions of permanence which must themselves be overcome. Even the Christian, whose religious background not-so-covertly fuels Hick’s vision of the Real and persons’ religious end, does not understand God nebulously as “the Real.” Instead, she takes God to be the specific God of Jesus and the historical Christian tradition. Thus instead of affirming multiple religions, pluralism contradicts each and every one to the degree it makes particular truth claims. Called “pluralism” to denote its honoring of multiplicity, Hick’s pluralist hypothesis is better called “unilism,” since the pluralist must endorse her own formulation of the universal religious object and religious goal to the exclusion of all other formulations.¹⁸ Instead of affirming multiple religions, pluralism denies them all to the degree which they diverge from the pluralist vision in favor of religious specificity.

Second, the force of Hick’s pluralist hypothesis comes largely from its belief that religious understandings are true not to the degree that they explain things correctly, but to the degree that they transform their members to Reality-centeredness. Even if a religion turned out to be right about its delineation of God or Allah or Kalpic cycles, the religion’s correctness would be irrelevant. The measure of a religion’s truth is its transformation of people away from self-centeredness, not whether the religion “gets things right.” Ordinarily one thinks of a strong connection between proper understanding and proper behavior or being in the world: I correctly understand the pane of glass in front of me is a window, not a door, so I exit the room another way. Hick severs this connection between true belief and proper conduct or outcomes. One might believe, falsely, that the Great Pumpkin created the world and is coming at midnight to save us.¹⁹ If this belief leads the person to let go of self-centeredness and become focused on a vague source of the universe and engage in good works, this Pumpkinite religion would be true according to Hick’s vision. Thus it is not the veracity of the proposition “Jesus saves” or “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet” which makes Christianity or Islam true, but the degree to which their members become oriented towards the Real and away from their own self-interests. The way this takes place is through spiritual practice—prayer, meditation, right living, and participation in community worship and devotion. Yet the pluralist hypothesis does not impel us to particular forms of life or practice. There is no community of pluralists who pray, meditate, live in certain ways, or practice devotion to the Real together. Thus, the pluralist hypothesis cannot recommend itself as one of these transformationally or mythologically true positions. Instead, it can only recommend itself as a propositional truth claim about the nature of what is. In fact, it seems clear that this is what Hick offers pluralism as, yet as a literal or propositional truth, pluralism is then subject to serious challenge on Hick’s own grounds.

As a literal truth, the pluralist hypothesis cannot be a position to which we should convert, because it is not transformationally true. Literal truths do not engender what Hick calls an “appropriate attitude” as a response to the Real. To recap: whether or not a religious account of the world corresponds to the way things are is irrelevant for Hick. Instead, religions are important and true according to how they cause members to live. Pluralism’s explanatory power is thus irrelevant or at least unimportant. The question is: does pluralism lead people to altruistic spirituality? Insofar as there is no community of pluralists worshipping and engaged in charitable works, it seems pluralism is not “true” in Hick’s religious sense. Thus we should not practice pluralism, but our own religions, which are those which lead to transformation. According to Hick’s own standards, insofar as pluralism goes against the particular grain of our own traditions and does not issue in spirituality, only explanation, we must choose our own traditions instead of pluralism because they will center us on the Real.

Even if Hick somehow manages to argue adequately that pluralism has

transformational power and is thus a type of mythological truth worthy of our conversion, Hick's idea of a mythological truth still conceals a reliance on a propositional theory of truth and, as such, falls apart. It is subject to the same critique leveled against Richard Rorty's pragmatist theory of truth. Like Rorty's pragmatist understanding, Hick's version of "truth" attempts to eschew correspondence theory in which a sentence is true to the degree it matches what exists in the world or describes a state of affairs. By substituting the understanding of religious truth as that which transforms, Hick hopes to avoid the clash between religious truth claims, holding them together as different but equally effective ways of changing people's attitudes. Like Rorty's understanding of truth as that which is useful for navigating the world, Hick believes "truth" has to do with assertions' usefulness and effects.

A common critique of Rorty's pragmatist theory of truth unfortunately applies equally well to Hick's mythological understanding. While the pragmatist attempts to claim that truth is functional, working within a system only within which it obtains, he must at the same time claim that "this pragmatist understanding of truth" is true. The attempt to say that sentences do not link up with the world in a one-to-one correlation is violated by the required belief that the pragmatic understanding of truth corresponds with the world is in exactly this way.²⁰

Hick's mythological theory of truth also requires that the mythological theory of truth corresponds with the way things are, or assent to the proposition that "the mythological theory of truth is true." It thus conceals a reliance on exactly the propositional or correspondence theory of truth that it seeks to avoid. The pluralist hypothesis cannot insist on a mythological theory of truth, for the concept itself is self-refuting.

Pluralism's final shortcoming is perhaps its most serious. In order to hold that religions equally access this nebulous Real behind their formulations, Hick maintains that we can say absolutely nothing of it. The Real is beyond all of our concepts, all of our language, beyond the act of thinking itself. What this means is that we cannot even predicate causality of the Real.²¹

Hick bases his Real on the Kantian noumenon, the *ding an sich* or thing in itself behind the way a thing appears to us as phenomenon. Hick is, however, beyond Kantian in his views.²² The Real is absolutely unknowable. It is untouchable by our concepts. Even saying that it "exists" is going too far. Positing it is, according to Hick, merely the simplest way to account for the world religions. The Real is Hick's minimalist pluralist hypothesis: that which is the least required to explain religious diversity. What Hick does not note is that, though he tries to eschew religiously factual predications, he must rely on veridical experience of the Real which itself depends on the predication of causality. We must be able to at least predicate causality of the Real in order to sensibly claim that it is acting upon us and members of other traditions.²³

By refusing to ascribe anything—and this must include causality—to the Real, Hick loses his hold on veridical religious experience. If we cannot say of the Real that it acts on us, then we cannot trust our experience, which says that it is the Real which is acting upon us. We could be imagining, engaging in wishful thinking or hallucinating. Hick's whole work is based on trusting experience. Trust in the streams of religious experience is the basis for his project, the starting point of his work. Just as it is rational for non-believers to trust in their lack of religious experience or their experience that de-verifies religious hypotheses, and just as it is rational for people to trust their everyday experiences that planes fly, balls bounce, and dogs bite, it is rational for persons with religious experience to trust or believe in that experience. Without trust or belief—or any reason to believe in—in religious experience, there is no reason to explain the myriad religious experiences of which we have knowledge with the hypothesis of the Real.

A simpler explanation might be that experiences of any nature are all illusory since religious experiences are so widely divergent. If religious experience is not trustworthy, there is no reason to posit a something behind all the religions. Instead of affirming the legitimacy of the diversity of religions as responses to their common object, pluralism severs the link between religious experiences and their proposed explanation. Pluralism substitutes a foreign explanation for religious experiences which are understood according to one's own tradition. What we have in Hick is a case of religious non-realism, where there is nothing behind religion, and no reason to explain it as more than wish-fulfillment or fantasy. By formulating the Real in the way Hick does, we cannot say that it exists, and thus lose the explanation for the multiplicity which we were trying to explain. Pluralism is ultimately bad news for each and every religion, not the good news for multiplicity which it was intended to be. Instead of explaining the multiplicity of religions, pluralism explains them away.

Pluralism's flaws are serious enough that it seems impossible for us to adopt the position as our own with any intellectual integrity. Its lure for some time was also, however, strong enough that scholars were hard pressed to put forward any alternative vision. So pressing was the desire, yet so out of reach was the possibility of a unifying and affirming vision of religious multiplicity, that arguably the only systematic attempt made between the 1989 advent of Hick's *Interpretation of Religion*, the 1997 appearance of Dupuis's, and then the 2001 publication of Heim's work, was by Schubert Ogden in his book, *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?*²⁴ In this work, Ogden countered the pluralist hypothesis with the weaker claim not that there *are* multiple true religions, but that there *may* be. The breadth of Ogden's scholarship and his deep understanding of the literature up until that point ensured that he would not repeat the logical inconsistency already seen to be at the heart of pluralism—yet his modest proposal was hardly a satisfactory development.

Thus it was eight years later that Jacques Dupuis courageously published his book *Toward A Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*.²⁵ Monumental in its status as a work written by a prominent Roman Catholic priest which sought to affirm the independent value to the world's religions, Dupuis's work was sweeping in scope. Dupuis anchored his proposal solidly in his work as a Patristics scholar, tethering his constructive vision to the pneumatology of Irenaeus. Just as Irenaeus held that the *logos* was at work in the Greek philosophers and in Judaism, Dupuis held that the *logos* and the Holy Spirit continue to be at work in the religions of our day. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Confucianism, and other traditions are all vehicles of delivery for the grace of God and the attainment of salvation for their members.

Even if we read the documents of the Second Vatican Council as holding tenuously to the necessity of Jesus himself and the Holy Spirit for the salvation of members of non-Christian religious traditions, Dupuis is clearly a radical step beyond *Nostrae Aetate* and *Gaudium et Spes*. When read in the context of later Church documents—*Dominus Iesus (DI)* and *Dialogue and Proclamation (DP)* in particular, documents which certainly depart from Vatican II—in flavor if not seeking to reverse its teachings outright. Dupuis's proposal cannot but be seen as courageous. To hold clearly that non-Christian religions are mediators of salvation without the necessity of the Church acting as middleman clearly counters the spirit of *DI* and *DP*, both of which represent a political shift within the Church that had already gained great momentum at the time of Dupuis's work. That he was sanctioned should have come as no surprise.²⁶

What is fascinating about Dupuis's inclusive pluralism is that he seeks to hold together both orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and does an extremely clever job. By appealing to the pre-incarnate *logos* and then the Holy Spirit as the activity within non-Christian religions, Dupuis accounts for religious multiplicity as actively willed by God. Inclusive

pluralism sounds very much like it is affirming religious multiplicity by recourse to traditional Christian teachings.

Such, unfortunately, is not *quite* the case. Though for many the following critique may not be upsetting, for the very persons Dupuis's proposal is meant to appease and enlighten—traditional Catholics, especially the hierarchy—the critique makes inclusive pluralism an unacceptable option. While Dupuis accounts for multiple religions by using the traditional notions of the Holy Spirit and preincarnate *logos*, he separates the preincarnate *logos* from the person of Jesus, effectively creating a fourth person of the Trinity.

While the *logos* did pre-exist the incarnation, the two are ontologically inseparable in Catholic teaching. Salvation is not mediated by some free-floating, independent agent called “the word” who then just happened to take form as this person from Judea who was the son of Mary. Instead, the *logos* is absolutely and essentially tied to the person of Jesus, and the incarnation is a necessary part of the *oikonomia*, God's bringing about of salvation for humanity. The *logos* is the pre-existent third person of the Trinity, who is one with Jesus incarnate. Dupuis separates the two so that the one may be at work before the advent of the person of Jesus, and in communities and persons with no historical relationship to the one we call savior. Only after Jesus may one say that the *logos* incarnate is at work.

Thus traditionalists must fail to be satisfied. On the other side of the coin, and more relevant to the narrative of inter-religious work under discussion, Dupuis's move to account for religious multiplicity by recourse to our own ontology is methodologically identical to the move made by S. Mark Heim in his book *The Depths of the Riches*. Both seek to give independent soteriological²⁷ value to the multiple religions, but *this value is accounted for by our own ontology*.

Thus in Dupuis's inclusive pluralism, non-Christian religions are truly effective mediators of salvation, but this is explained in terms of their mediation of two persons of the Christian Trinity. While these traditions may be valuable apart from Christianity, their own self-understanding remains terribly misguided about the nature of what they are accomplishing and how they are accomplishing it. Though Dupuis holds that Christians can and ought to learn from Buddhists and Hindus and Jews because they have wisdom-responses to God we may not yet have attained, it is nonetheless the case that their ultimate explanations of the world and its source and end remain at the very least partial, and at the very worst misguided. Though granting separate value to religions apart from their participation in the Church, inclusive pluralism still accounts for the existence of multiple religions by recourse to our own abstract ontology. Non-Christian religions remain secondarily or derivatively good, with their value derived from participating in a vision of which they do not consider themselves a part.

Thus Dupuis's inclusive pluralism is objectionable both to magisterial adherents concerned with orthodox understandings of the unity of Christ incarnate and the *logos*, and also to those on the quest for a truly affirmative understanding of the status and dignity before God of non-Christian religions and their members. Whichever audience Dupuis's *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* is thought to best address, the progress it makes is tempered by the problems it creates given the concerns of either group.

S. Mark Heim offers an alternative post-pluralist vision in his book *The Depths of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*²⁸ in which he uses the relational nature of the Christian Trinity as a whole to account for religious multiplicity. Especially exciting to feminists and followers of contemporary Greek Orthodox thinking on the Trinity,²⁹ Heim's multiple religious ends thesis affirms that different religions are giving primacy to and responding primarily to different aspects of God's nature, and that

the religious ends that members of these religions seek are relationships with the different *personae* of the Trinitarian God. While only Christians attain the fullness of salvation in union with the blessed Trinity as a whole, Jews and Muslims have sought and come into communion with God the Father; Hindus with Christ as incarnation; and Buddhists attain Nirvana, which is participation in the space between the persons of the Trinity. Cleverly giving non-Christians the ends they desire and preserving the Trinitarian formulation of God, Heim's M.R.E. thesis is novel in its approach. For the first time in inter-religious conversation, a Christian is finding a way to hold that non-Christians actually attain their specified religious ends. Instead of attempting to affirm the religions themselves, or the value of their members in our own framework, Heim affirms the existence of the ends each religion points its members towards.

Yet because these ends are accounted for by the Christian Trinity, union with the entirety of God's nature must still be privileged as the fullness of salvation. Anything other than the beatific vision is a partial and thus inferior manifestation of relationship with God. After the appealing idea that multiple religious ends are but *different* ways of relating to God, Heim resorts to ranking the ends. After Christians, Jews and Muslims fare best, as their relationship with God the Father is the next fullest participation in divine life. Hindus are next in line in Heim's evaluation, as relationship with God incarnate is still better than the relationship with God experienced by Buddhists—participation in the nothingness, the space between the persons of the Trinity which makes the *personae* possible. Ultimately, Nirvana is but a small taste of participation in divine life.

Heim is forced into this problematic ranking by the thesis that it is, as in Dupuis's inclusive pluralism, our Christian ontology which accounts for non-Christian religions, or in this case ends. Both inclusive pluralism and the M.R.E. thesis are methodologically identical in reaffirming that non-Christian religions—whether in their salvific efficacy or efficacy at attainment of other religious ends for their members—are accounted for by the God of Christian understanding. Heim's non-Christians attain the ends they seek, but similarly to Dupuis's inclusive pluralism, they do so because of their participation in the rightness of an abstract ontology which is different from their own. They get what they want, but not for the reasons they think. This is far from granting multiple religions and their members equal status. Again, affirmation of difference is derivative and grants only second-class status to the Other and her tradition.

The conundrum of post-pluralist inter-religious positions is that they remain on the quest for an abstract, ontological explanation that will affirm religious systems which stand in conflict with their own. The critique of pluralism as "unilism," its failure to recommend itself over religiously transformational positions with their concomitant ways of life, its reliance on a propositional theory of truth, and its disclosure as a religiously non-realist position ought to be enough to halt the quest of this narrative trajectory which has been shown to instantiate further internal inconsistency. The attempt to work outside of or invert our own abstract, onto-theological thinking results in self-contradictions, for we cannot at the same time hold that our explanation is right and that other, conflicting explanations are right. This is the insight that drove Dupuis and Heim back into a confessional stance in the first place. Yet by turning to confessional *ontology* rather than the radical example of Jesus which we find in liberation theologies, Dupuis's and Heim's creative and courageous work becomes subject to the self-contradiction which plagued Hick's onto-theological pluralism.

We need not attempt to get beyond or invert our own religious traditions to achieve the inter-religious affirmation so many have sought. We do, however, have to abandon the quest for an abstract ontological explanation, and turn instead to other resources which do the work we seek. Herein lies the gift of liberation theologies,

especially feminist and postcolonial theologies, for Christians and those whose work is informed by Christianity. When we approach our tradition from the call of the marginalized, the oppressed, and the vulnerable, we hear the cry for justice. We hear the message that the God we understand to have revealed God's very self in the crucified, broken one is clearly the God of the poor. God did not choose the incarnation as a way to reveal power, wrath, and glory. Instead, God chose to reveal God's very self as open, receptive, and loving to the persons society judged unwelcome: the sick, the shunned, the powerless who were so by virtue of their station in life. Whether because of ethnicity (the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15 or the Good Samaritan of Luke 10), their sex (Mary and Martha sitting with Jesus in Luke 10, the woman anointing Jesus' feet with her hair and oil in Luke 7:44, the woman at the well in John 4:1-26), their work (the tax collectors and prostitutes mentioned in Matthew 21:32 who will be going to heaven), or their health conditions (persons suffering from leprosy or other conditions in Luke 7:21-2), in Christianity we believe that God affirmed that it was *these* persons who were and remain God's chosen people.³⁰ It is not the rich, not the accepted, not the powerful—not the “insiders” who inhabit the dominant paradigm of success and belonging on whose side God revealed God's self to be. Instead, God is specially on the side of those whom the dominant paradigm of this fallen world casts out to the margins. Further, God witnessed to us by example that God is found in the suffering, broken persons society crucifies for calling out for a new vision and way of life. Those whose messages are *not* heard, *not* adopted as truth by those in the majority, are where God incarnates God's self. We need not attempt to escape or invert our ontological theory as Hick and then Dupuis and Heim did. Instead, we can draw from the heart of our tradition in the person of Jesus to affirm the worth and standing and privileged epistemology of those outside the dominant narrative—in this case the non-Christian and her religious tradition.³¹

Within the intra-Christian theological narrative of liberation, these people are the landless, the poor, women, persons of color, Latinos and Latinas, gay men and lesbian women, H.I.V. positive persons, and the homeless.³² When postcolonial theory comes to the fore, these people include the colonized, the raped, those whose cultures and ways of thinking have been eradicated by invading societies whose visions and ways of life were thought to be superior. Whatever stripe of liberation theology we look to, the call is for attention to and care for the weak as the locus of God and God's saving presence.

In the words of Kwok Pui Lan, postcolonial theology is a “reading strategy and...practice which seeks to unmask colonial [or dominant] epistemological frameworks, unravel Eurocentric [or dominant] logics, and interrogate stereotypical cultural [or dominant] representations.”³³ It is a way to lay bare the prejudices and cultural stereotypes that cover up the good news of God's liberating message. In the words of Elizabeth Johnson, feminist theology seeks the good of “women and all marginalized persons.”³⁴ Throughout liberation theologies from Gustavo Gutierrez³⁵ to Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz,³⁶ from Kwok Pui Lan's postcolonial message to Rosemary Radford Ruether's feminist ecological work,³⁷ the call is made to see God where God resides: in the suffering of powerless creation.

When we carry the methodology and insight of liberation theologies outside the intra-Christian dialogue to inter-religious work, the oppressed, vulnerable, shunned outsiders are clearly those—when viewed from the economically dominant Christian West—who do not share our religious vision and economic resources in the Christian West. To the degree one feels or claims superiority, by the methodology and insights of liberation theology, she must hold that those who fall outside the dominant narrative are privileged. If we are to look for God's very presence in those who inhabit the margins of society and belongingness, then there is no better place to look than to those categories

of person who have been sidelined by our Christian claims which are now the dominant narrative in the West and too often unconsciously influential in the developing world.³⁸ Whether exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist, or post-pluralist, these models guaranteed and continue to guarantee that anyone who disagrees with Christian ontological explanation is an outsider: someone whose participation in the good news is at worst impossible and at best derivative and secondary through the sheer force of our dominant narrative. Liberation theology has worked for the good of the economically poor, women, women of color, Hispanic women, and the colonized, to name but some categories of the vulnerable. It is now being put to use to work for the well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons. It is time to put liberation theology's insight and commitment to work in the inter-religious arena so that persons who are marginalized by their practice of religion—who suffer discrimination, condemnation, shunning, and lack of power due to their inhabiting of a marginalized group are similarly seen as occupying a privileged epistemic location.

Thus the corrective to tradition-based inter-religious work is simple: turn to the example of Jesus himself, not the theory which later came to explain him. Reject the abstract onto-theological approach. In adopting the insight and methodology of liberation theologies in our approach to inter-religious work, we reverse the narrative of alterity. She who was thought to embody absence comes immediately to signify divine presence. She who was the one left out, whom we thought was the problem of the "Other" which needed solving, is the insider and locus of God's special presence. Though like the Pharisees who were the privileged class of Jesus' day we Christians in the West may not be receptive to the liberating message, our resistance ought not block the clear wisdom that is available to inter-religious work from liberation theology. She who is marginalized, excluded from the dominant narrative, is exactly the presence of God. When the message of liberation theology—that God is on the side of the oppressed—is carried to inter-religious dialogue, the result is clearly that we must say that the God of Jesus is on the side of the non-Christian.

If it is the non-Christian who is the marginalized one and the marginalized are God's chosen people, where does this leave the Christian? Are we of the dominant narrative now the subaltern? The beauty of the Christian message is that there is enough God to go around. The rich man may have a harder time, but it is possible that he, too, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Women were among Jesus' followers and most beloved friends, yet James and John left their worldly situation and became followers as well. Gentiles became swept up in the movement, and the Good Samaritan is clearly one whom Jesus helps up as an example—without his ever having changed his beliefs or status as one with the resources to help the downtrodden. Christianity is potentially good news for all, even the privileged, if they are willing to follow Jesus' example of behavior toward the weak and disincluded. The understanding of God as abundant across categories, not stingily present, needs reclamation. This is why some of us remain confessional Christians (meaning practicing, believing, participating), even when our tradition has been used and continues to be used for harm.

Dupuis and Heim are a significant step forward, because their systems allow that God wills the way of the religious "Other." She is not merely saved—or does not merely attain her religious end—*despite* the system to which she belongs. She attains her religious fulfillment *because* of her own religion. Her salvation or attainment of religious end is a direct consequent of the way God willed her into being through God's own nature. Whether through the Holy Spirit or the function of various persons of the Trinity, God intentionally reaches out to all persons, thus eviscerating the problematic consequence of holding to the typical Trinitarian God who ignores the vast majority of God's created people over time.

We do not, however, have to juryrig our own ontology. Doing so got both Dupuis and Heim into difficulties. For Dupuis, the preexistent *logos* became separated from the incarnate Christ, creating a fourth person of the Trinity. Further, non-Christians remain misguided about their religious beliefs and ends, continuing the tradition of a God who chooses or allows most persons to live in ignorance and error. For Heim, non-Christians get different but lesser religious ends than salvation, the very concept of human nature is called into question, and non-Christians are again wrong about their religious beliefs. The creative, courageous work of both Dupuis and Heim shows that the continued attempt to work with abstract ontology in order to grant insider or equal status to persons outside our religious traditions is as problematic as it is helpful.

Dupuis's and Heim's methodology is, however, crucial. In the face of pluralism's internal problems, turning away from the quest for a meta-position on religions is imperative, even if they only went so far as to return to a tradition-bound ontology. Yet we must radicalize the content of that turn. Let us turn back to our own tradition but turn that tradition on its head. The witness of Jesus himself gives us license to do just this, and the methodology and commitment of theologies of liberation show us what to do. Jesus is on the side of the marginalized and powerless, the non-Christian. We need look no further than the self-understanding of the one who theory would tell us is the mediator of salvation to find our greatest resource for affirming the religious Other.

My response to Hick is that I am not a dogmatic Christian theologian. I am, and others of this new generation of scholars are as well, heartbroken fans of the pluralist hypothesis. In the wake of its shortcomings, we are scrambling within our own inescapable traditions to find the resources to approximate the goods which Hick's all-inclusive Real and the transformation from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness were meant to accomplish. In my own tradition, the radical God of Jesus comes to the rescue. She has taken a preferential option for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. Christianity is our dominant narrative. God is on the side of the non-Christian.

Aimee Upjohn Light is Assistant Professor of Theology at Duquesne University and the author of the forthcoming book *God at the Margins: Interreligious Thought and Feminist Theology*, the editor of the forthcoming volume *Identity and Exclusion: Interreligious Dialogue and Postmodernity*, as well as the editor of numerous articles and presentations on interreligious work and feminist theologies.

¹ Hick actually writes that *I* am a “dogmatic Christian theologian,” something that made my head of department laugh and which, since I teach at a Roman Catholic university, I will save to one day use to defend myself to the bishop. Ad hominem quips aside, one can understand Hick to be saying by extension that when one does what I suggest one cannot help but do—namely, restrict the quest for affirming religious multiplicity to tradition-informed approaches—one is doing dogmatic theology.

² The distinction in terminology is important, and worthy of an article examining the evolution in the use of these two terms. “Inter-religious dialogue” has, for some time, been taken to mean inter-religious engagement done from a neutral stance, in which one does not privilege her own tradition's truth claims. “Theology of religions,” on the other hand, meant engagement from a standpoint with commitment to one religion. Today the two are difficult to separate, as the trend in “inter-religious dialogue” is to engage in conversation from a standing in one's home religion. See, for instance, much of the work in *The Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue*. I deliberately use the terms “inter-religious

dialogue” and “theology of religions” here to include both recent conversations which are now overlapping and becoming one as confessional approaches dominate the work.

³ Jeannine Hill Fletcher’s book *Monopoly on Salvation: A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism* (NY: Continuum, 2005) begins to challenge this claim. As more women and liberation theologians become engaged in the inter-religious work which is today taking off like wildfire—see, for instance, the two new journals *The Journal of Inter-religious Dialogue* and *The Journal of Comparative Theology* devoted to the topic—it is to be hoped that the gap between these two facets of systematic theology will close.

⁴ It is characteristic of institutional power structures that movements which share commitments are kept separate from each other, with the understanding that the aims of both cannot come about so that a person has to choose his or her commitments. Take, for example, the movements for women’s ordination and married clergy within the Roman Catholic Church. It is frequently conceded by moderate members of the hierarchy that we may, one day, see married clergy. Thus we will never need women priests, or so the argument goes. Pitting one group demanding equal rights against another, what is often called the “divide and conquer” method, is common and effective. And when an institutional religion is so all-pervasive in its exclusionary tendencies—from silencing radical calls to social and economic action in Latin America to excluding women from the priesthood and non-Christians from equal standing before God—it is difficult to imagine the dominant thinking and practices in even one of these subjects changing, let alone all of them. Thus many of us come to do inter-religious work *or* liberation theology *or* feminist theology *or* eco-theology. We feel we will be more effective in bringing about change if we focus our efforts on one facet of injustice. And while this may be true in the short run, separating calls for justice, which are all rooted in similar understandings of the God of radical presence, love and justice belie the truth that the entire order of privileged hierarchy needs to change. Imagine a Church in which traditional liberation theologians, feminists, womanists, mujeristas, queer theorists, eco-theologians and people doing inter-religious work all stood together shouting “Justice!” How much more powerful we would be all standing together. Ensuring this does not happen is the business of institutionalized systems of injustice, and the very reason why “cross-over” between religious discourses is imperative.

⁵ This will be especially problematic for Heim’s Multiple Religious Ends Thesis, in which non-Christians achieve religious ends derived from the Christian Trinity and which are thus inferior to full Christian understanding of God and full soteriological attainment. The worst part of Heim’s M.R.E. thesis is that if God knowingly creates persons who will only have the option of choosing non-Christian religious ends, God has created persons for different, unequal ends. If one takes teleology seriously, being slotted for different, more and less valuable ends destroys the idea of human nature, and has the potential to justify ranking the value and potential uses of what is ordinarily—nowadays, at least—considered equally valuable human life. See *The Depths of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), throughout.

⁶ I deliberately use the term “kindom” instead of “kingdom” following feminist and liberation theologians, most recently the authors in *Shoulder to Shoulder: Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*, Edited by Susan Abraham and Elena Procaro-Foley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010). Because *kingdom* signifies hierarchical domination and

the continuation of unequal relationships between subjects, feminist and other liberation theologians are trading this term in for *kindom* to signal the existence of right relationships at the coming of the eschaton.

⁷ Bartholomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

⁸ William James first coined the term “live option” to refer to what choices are actually possible and realistic for people in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Classic Books International, 2010), throughout.

⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non Christian Religions* (Boston: Pauline Books, 1965).

¹⁰ The Catholic Church, *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965).

¹¹ It seems clear that the Council documents are deliberately and exceedingly careful to juxtapose these two possibilities. There are certainly places in *Nostra Aetate* especially where it sounds very much as though religions are agents of grace in their own right, yet others where Jesus and even the Church are clearly said to be necessary agents of mediation. Though there is a vociferous movement in the Roman Church today to be “conciliar,”—code for re-reading Vatican II in such a way as to negate the independent value of non-Christian religions—this movement is indubitably historically inaccurate. Whether we accept Vatican II or reject its nuanced articulations, we ought certainly to take the Council for what it was: a radical moment in the history of Christianity, and one which had great confidence in the present workings of the Holy Spirit.

¹² Gandhi is reputed to have first coined this phrase regarding the paucity of incarnation in Christianity.

¹³ John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹⁴ Though it is the subject of another article, it should be strongly noted that this formulation of spiritual transformation is extremely problematic when viewed in light of Valerie Saiving Goldstein’s seminal piece “The Human Situation: A Feminine View,” *The Journal of Religion* 40: 100, Issue 2, April 1960 and much feminist theology which comes after her work. Several essays in the collection *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies From the Underside*, Edited by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engels (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998) as well as the first three essays in *Shoulder to Shoulder: Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010) are all strongly rooted in Saiving Goldstein’s critique. These are but the first two of many feminist works which come to mind as tracing their heritage back to what has come to be known as the logic of “the sin of hiding.” Serene Jones, in her *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000) 193 and following, continues to make extensive use of Saiving Goldstein’s observations, and highlights the many feminist theorists and theologians who surround her and who work to honor the subjectivity of women. Hick’s understanding that the problematic human condition can and should be universally

characterized as self-centered utterly ignores Saiving Goldstein's thesis that women (and other marginalized persons) suffer not from self-centeredness but a lack of self. To suggest that all persons should work towards becoming less self-centered and move towards centering on the Real fails to take into account that women and other marginalized persons first need to develop a sense of self, a centered subjectivity which is to be honored before God or the Real, before we might rightly be directed to become more outwardly centered, even towards the Ultimate. To encourage persons who lack developed subjectivity to become more selfless is to exacerbate, not ameliorate, their sin. Thus feminists accuse Reinhold Niebuhr, as well as the Christian tradition at large, of basing all sin in the sin of pride. This understanding makes the spiritual situation of women worse rather than helping them towards soteriological transformation, as those who already behave in selflessly self-destructive ways are urged to give more to others rather than take stock of and honor their own flourishing. See again Serene Jones's *Cartographies of Grace* throughout. Because Hick, just like Niebuhr, universalizes selfishness or self-centeredness as the universal human condition, his thinking is vulnerable to the same critiques that have problematized Niebuhr's work and much Christian theology.

¹⁵ The first of these critiques was made by Paul Griffiths, both in his lectures at the University of Notre Dame in the summer of 1993, and then in his book *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994). Though he does not mention Hick by name, see his critique of esoteric expressivism and its internal incoherence. Also see Delmas Lewis's article "On Grading Religions, Seeking Truth, and Being Nice to People—A Reply to Professor Hick," in *The Journal of Religious Studies*, 19 (1983): 75-80. S. Mark Heim was clearly also aware of pluralism's problems and working towards his counter proposal when he wrote *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1995) which was then followed by his constructive vision of multiple religious ends accounted for by the Trinity in *The Depths of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

¹⁶ An even more detailed analysis of the pluralist hypothesis's shortcomings will be presented in the forthcoming book *Pluralists, Feminists, Panentheists: The Cosmological Shift Behind Inclusive Theologies*. At this time, an abbreviated version of the critiques which nonetheless contains the essence of what is at stake should be convincing enough.

¹⁷ Griffiths used this wording in lectures at the University of Notre Dame in the summer of 1993.

¹⁸ Interestingly, the Anglo American philosopher Nicholas Rescher makes a similar point in his orientational pluralism. See Nicholas Rescher *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Rescher is also used by S. Mark Heim in his *Depths of the Riches*, see footnote 5.

¹⁹ This is, of course, a variant of Paul Griffiths's famous example in *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991).

²⁰ This criticism is made by Daniel Dennett, Hilary Putnam, and Paul and Patricia Churchland, to name but a few.

²¹ Hick should admit that a few things can be predicated of the Real—causality, that it engenders the appropriate responses which he says constitute the attitudes of the religions and that it exists. This would protect pluralism against non-realist charges. Even limited predication would, however, clearly make use of a propositional theory of truth, which is what Hick attempts to avoid.

²² Kant at least held that the transcendental concepts like number applied to the noumenon, which is Kant's idea upon which Hick is basing the Real. Though no concepts apply to the Kantian divine, Hick is using the noumenon instead of the divine as the Real. Thus he seems to be taking Kant a step further by excluding all predication of the noumenally-based Real. It seems fair to say that being an inconsistent Kantian is what gets Hick into trouble.

²³ Hick does not give an adequate explanation of how the Real acts on us, which is exactly the point. While it is supposed to be the cause of all religions, he cannot even predicate that it exists, let alone how it acts.

²⁴ Schubert Ogden, *Is There One True Religion or Are There Many?* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992). S. Mark Heim also wrote the book *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), but this book was far less of a systematic vision than a critique of positions to date and the beginning of his thinking on both the work of Nicolas Rescher and the Trinity—both central resources for his later work *The Depths of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (see also footnote 11).

²⁵ Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001).

²⁶ We laughed in a Ph.D. seminar I taught, when we noticed that many covers of students' newer copies of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Ends* had been misprinted. Though Dupuis was eventually cleared and the book re-printed with a warning in the front, these book covers read only *Toward a Theology of Religious Ends*, omitting the word *Christian*, and it was surmised that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith might have gotten to the publishers since Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope!

²⁷ In Heim, of course, we cannot speak about “soteriology,” because the term is Christocentric. Heim is not asserting that non-Christians attain salvation, but rather that they attain their own ends through the agency of the Trinity. Better, in Heim one ought to speak about “ends-attaining” value, but this is perhaps too awkward to be viable in writing.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ I have in mind the hybrid group of Trinitarian theologians following Catherine Mowry Lacugna who turn to relational ontology. In Lacugna's book *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), Lacugna made extensive use of John Zizioulas's work, especially that which culminated in his *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997). *God For Us*, though it was not a self-professedly feminist work—and Lacugna

herself in 1993 lectures at the University of Notre Dame declared that she was not a feminist theologian—was the advent of relational ontology in Roman Catholic thinking. Many Catholic feminist theologians are indebted to Lacugna, though not all realize that she was the first to introduce the relational ontology which is now sometimes taken for granted and which is operative in Heim's Multiple Religious Ends thesis.

³⁰ Many of these figures have also been retrieved as having great significance in ways the patriarchal Christian tradition has overlooked or covered up. The woman at the well accepts Jesus as the messiah and goes and converts her people—something prophets do. The woman who anoints Jesus' feet foretells his death, for anointing with oil was a practice surrounding burial—also the function of a prophet. For how and why we have withheld this title from women in the Bible, see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

³¹ Of course one cannot escape the confines of her or his social-historical, epistemic location, and must always acknowledge the role which this location plays in the reading of texts, including and perhaps especially sacred texts. Yet the move to privilege a Biblically rather than a dogmatically or doctrinally-based Christianity which is here proposed ought not to be seen as threatened by the problematic of hermeneutics. Instead, by returning to text which is always and everywhere shaped by reader commitments but which indisputably contains multiple stories about the one who reaches out to the marginalized, we prioritize the stories which—no matter how they are interpreted—multiply witness to Jesus (whatever his status or our location) as committed to the oppressed. This return to a Biblically based Christianity is one way to be a confessional Christian, but will be challenging to those traditions—e.g. Catholicism and Anglicanism, for example—which are rigorously bound by dogmatic confessions.

³² It is Marcella Althaus-Reid who has now pushed liberation theology past its own margins. She not only included gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons in the call for justice, she intersected Latin American social and economic theologies of liberation with sexuality. Althaus-Reid thus engenders a new, multivalent vision of liberation. This methodology—of crossing concerns which ordinarily remain bifurcated—is an excellent example of the vision suggested in the first footnote of this article that liberation theology meets inter-religious work. See Marcella Althaus-Reid, ed., *Liberation Theology and Sexuality* (Chippenham: Anthony Rowe Ltd., 2006) See also my review in Blackwell's *Reviews in Theology and Religion*, Spring 2010.

³³ Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), p.2. I add the language of “dominant” not to detract from the postcolonial project but to re-cast attention to the common, broader commitment of all liberation theologies in their particularity. One should never detract from the particularity of the postcolonial project, as to do so reinstates the Eurocentric bias which is at issue. Thus I consciously use Kwok Pui-Lan's to make my inter-religious point about the usefulness of liberation theologies, but do not want to appear to usurp or take lightly the importance of the particularity of her work.

³⁴ Throughout her book *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), this definition of feminism and feminist

theology has become commonplace. See also Serene Jones's *Cartographies of Grace*, previously mentioned, especially the introduction.

³⁵ See, among other works, his *We Drink From Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

³⁶ See both *En la Lucha/In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology, 10th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003) and her short essay on the remnant in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Edited by Mary Potter Engels and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

³⁷ See, from among many other examples, her *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

³⁸ See, of course, the blossoming work in postcolonial theory. A main theme in pocol theory is how indigenous people are unwittingly formed by the colonizer's culture, religion and mentality and that it is crucial to actively resist the colonizer's imaginative mindset and retrieve indigenous religion, culture and self-understanding. Whether this is possible and how retrieval is itself subject to the imprint of colonialism is, of course, the problem.