Review of Knitter’s Typology

- **Replacement Model:**
  - Christianity, the “only way,” replaces other faiths (either totally or partially)

- **Fulfillment Model:**
  - Christianity is the “true” religion but it does not reject, but rather “confirms” good elements in others

- **Mutuality Model:**
  - a “rough parity” between all religions; all ways lead to the same end goal

- **Acceptance Model:**
  - there are real differences among religions and they are legitimate (different ends in different religions!)
An Assessment

- Gains and Problems in the Replacement Model (s)
Fulfillment and Pluralistic Models
FULLFILMENT MODEL

The Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology of Religions
While Christ is the only Savior and only source of salvation, people in other religions, who never heard of Christ, may be saved because of the universal effects of Christ’s work.

Two requirements:
- People follow the “light” of their religions as best as they can.
- People pursue moral precepts in the structure of their religion as best as they can.

N.B.: This is NOT “works-righteousness”
Background of Contemporary Catholic View of Religions

- Until Vatican II, Catholics (with most other Christians) affirmed the “Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus” principle
  - N.B: historical background of the slogan

- The Thomistic doctrine of “nature-and-grace”
  - “Grace of God does not nullify but rather helps perfect nature”

- The importance of ecclesiastical structures and hierarchy
Vatican (1962-65)

- Documents relevant to theology of religions
  - *Nostra Aetate* (on other religions)
  - *Ad Gentes* (on mission)
  - *Lumen Gentium* (on church)
  - *Gaudium et Spes* (on modern world)
1) The possibility of salvation to people of other faiths because of Christ

People of “good will” and desire to live according to the light given them, can be saved because of Christ.

- *Ad Gentes (# 7)*: Those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the gospel, God can lead to that faith without which it is impossible to please him.

The universal working of the Spirit in making the “paschal mystery” of Christ available to all people.

- *Gaudium et Spes (# 22)*: All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all individuals of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all human beings are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being associated, in a way known to God, with the Paschal Mystery.
The Value of Religions as the “preparation for the Gospel”

- The religions are in various ways related to the church; there is a kind of “hierarchy of religions”
- LG # 14-16:
- **1st level**: full incorporation: members of the Catholic Church
  - **2nd level**: inquiring members
  - **3rd level**: other Christians: while they are not true “churches”, they are true Christians
  - **4th level**: OTHER RELIGIONS
    - Judaism; Islam (monotheism)
    - Hinduism (polytheism)
    - Buddhism (non-theism)
    - Others: atheists...
3) The superiority of Christian Faith and the Need to do Mission

- The best example is *LG # 14-17*:
- Before speaking of relation to other religions, # 14 says that the “church is necessary for salvation”
- Then # 17 says:
- As the Son was sent by the Father, so He too sent the Apostles, saying: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...". The Church has received this solemn mandate of Christ to proclaim the saving truth from the apostles and must carry it out to the very ends of the earth.
An Assessment

- Gains and Problems in the Fulfillment Model?
Pluralistic Theologies of Religions

Mutuality and Acceptance Models
Review of Knitter’s Typology

- **Replacement Model:**
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Pluralistic theologies in Knitter’s typology

- Two forms of Pluralism:
  - Mutuality and Acceptance

- Mutuality Model: “Three Bridges”
  - Philosophical-Historical: Hick
  - Religious-Mystical: Panikkar
  - Ethical-Practical: Knitter; Liberationists
Background issues

- The Importance of Enlightenment and Modernity
- Until the time of Enlightenment, all Christians – despite their hermeneutical and doctrinal differences – had taken the Bible as the divine revelation, the Word of God
The Critique of Christian theology

- The “rationality” of Christianity: whatever is in keeping with modern rational thinking, can be accepted, that which is not, should be either rejected or reinterpreted
- Suspicion of miracles and supernatural
- The Quest of the Historical Jesus
- Doctrinal Criticism...
General Features of Pluralistic Theologies of Religions

Mutuality Model
Features of Pluralism: Mutuality Model

- All religions, notwithstanding apparent differences, have the same ultimate reference point, be that a personal God (as in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity), or a deity or pantheon of deities (as in Hinduism), or some kind of "ultimate reality" (as in Buddhism that does not have any concept of God at the center)

- There is thus an assumption of the "rough parity" between religions
Features of Pluralism: Mutuality Model

- No religion has the right to impose its own supremacy or truth on others.
- On the contrary, religions should give up their desire to convert others and instead, seek for common basis.
Features of Pluralism: Mutuality Model

- Epistemologically, no religion has an access to the (absolute) truth
- At their best, religious concepts are approximations or myths or metaphors
- Rather than propositiona, religious terms such as “incarnation” or “resurrection” are “metaphorical” or “mythical”
Features of Pluralism: Mutuality Model

- While many religions have “mediators” (Jesus Christ) or “founders” (Gautama Buddha) who enjoy a highly elevated and special status, none of them is exclusive of others.

- Claims such as that “Jesus is the only way” can only be applied to Christian faith but not to all religions.
John Hick’s Pluralistic Views

A Leading Christian Pluralist
A. Background

- From conservative evangelical to self-described pluralist
  - a. Conversion and early theological work
  - b. The rise of pluralistic convictions
A. Background

- Phenomenological similarity of religions based on a wide exposure to various religions especially in the East
- Assumption of the common core of all religions notwithstanding differences in manifestations
B. Key Claims

- The mythical (or metaphorical) nature of religious language: religious terms are not “facts” or propositions
  - Key to negotiating differing beliefs; e.g. incarnation
- “Copernican Revolution”
  - God at the Center (“complementary pluralism”)
  - “Ultimate Reality” at the center
- Revised Christology: *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*
  - Reinterpretation of all traditional doctrines: “degree” vs. “substance”
  - Reinterpretation of “salvation”
Review of Knitter’s Typology

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Raimundo Panikkar

Biographical note:
- half-Indian (from India) and half-American

Key Claims
- God as “mystery”
- “Cosmo-theandrim” (cosmos, theos, anthropos)
  - Christians name this Trinity, other religions other ways
  - The Trinitarian structure genuinely reflects the structure of reality
Pluralistic Christology: “Universal Christ and Particular Jesus”: “Jesus is Christ but Christ is not Jesus”

- Logos or Christ has been incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, but incarnation is not limited to Jesus

- Unlike Hick, Panikkar does not dream of elimination of differences but rather coming together in some way or another religious sensibilities
Paul Knitter: Theocentric Christology

- **Biographical Note**
  - Knitter takes biblical Christology “seriously” but not “literally”
  - Jesus Christ is “unique” in that he is authoritative revelation of God, but there may be other savior figures among religions
  - **Constitutive versus Representational** Christology: the latter holds up Jesus as a decisive embodiment of God’s saving love
Jesus’ Role in Liberation

- Knitter locates the “uniqueness” of Jesus in his capacity to elicit a proper incentive and response to promoting the welfare of all persons, especially of poor and underprivileged.
  - This “relational uniqueness” is inclusive of others
- The focus of Christian mission shifts from proclamation to service and dialogue.
  - “global responsibility”
- praxis over theory
An Assessment

- Gains and Problems of the Mutuality Model
Acceptance Model

General Features
Knitter: General Features of Acceptance Model

- The Rise of Postmodernity with its focus on differences and alterity
- “Big narratives” and universal explanations are under suspicion
- Differences are not only real but they are incommensurable
Knitter: Three categories of Acceptance Model

- (1) Postliberalism (G. Lindbeck)
- (2) Many religions = Many Salvations
  - S. Mark Heim
- (3) Comparative Theology
Acceptance Model

S. Mark Heim’s Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends
Criticism of Pluralisms (of Mutual Model genre)

Biographical Note

- Heim believes these are not pluralisms but new forms of universalism, “anonymous imperialists”
- Denial of real differences between religions
- They owe too much to Western Christianity’s conflict with modernity
- Failure to facilitate genuine dialogue, respect, and cooperation
A Trinitarian Theology

- Trinity represents unity within diversity; because of the diversity in the Godhead, there is diversity to the religious ends among religions
  - Each religion has their own specific end: *nirvana* for Hindus; heaven for Christians

- These different ends corresponds to the diversity in the Godhead and are thus God-willed
  - There could be movement among religions from one end to another, but that is not a task for us
A Trinitarian Theology

- Christian salvation = communion with the Triune God
  - if others do not reach it – or even desire it –, their own end may be valid for them, but not for Christians
An Assessment

- A) Acceptance Model in General
- B) Heim’s trinitarian approach