

## 2 'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School Of Theology, In the Graduate Theological Union, at Berkeley

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### Editor's Introduction

"Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School" is one of six cases studies from ***Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue***.<sup>1</sup> Volume II in the Hartford Seminary Series on Innovation in Theological Education.

The book, as its name and the series name suggests, is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a

<sup>1</sup> David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, eds. (Hartford Seminary, 2009).

grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

### Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity*.

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than

nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

- 1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
- 2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
- 3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
- 4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
- 5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice.  
[[http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith\\_dialogue/guidelines\\_interfaith.php#goals](http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals)]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological

educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

### The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: ***Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education***, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

***'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley***, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of

dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

***World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology*, Robert Hunt.**

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

***Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary*, Yehezkel Landau**

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

***The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology*, S. Wesley Ariarajah**

The *Challenge of World Religions* case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

***Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story*, J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.**

The *Philadelphia Story* (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

***Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program*, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.**

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is

an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacities and preferences that will help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

### About the Editors

Heidi Hadsell is President of Hartford Seminary and Professor of Social Ethics. She is former Director, The Ecumenical Institute of The World Council of Churches Bossey, Switzerland and former Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty at McCormick Theological Seminary. She has served as a consultant to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches – Roman Catholic Dialogue; consultant for institutional change towards the globalization of theological education, Pilot Immersion Project for the Globalization of Theological Education, and consultant for curriculum design and organizational structure, Pilot Master's degree program for Public Administrators, Institute for Technical and Economic Planning, Florianopolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue*. Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education*. Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

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### Atmosphere and Context

Whatever you have heard about Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay Area is no doubt true -- at least somewhere within it -- because openness, progressiveness, freedom, and experimentation are valued cultural hallmarks here. But to focus more precisely on our subject, interfaith dialogue and its pedagogy: virtually every religion in the world is active here, whether old or new, in most if not all of its varieties, with intentionally overarching entities like the United Religions Initiative on an international scale, and the Interfaith Chapel at the Presidio on the local scale, besides. Diversity—as fact and as ideology—is in the air we breathe. And respect for that diversity is so effectively valued that offenses against it are amazingly rare. Presently and recently hegemonic values may take a pounding—and that may be relevant to the many of us who are of traditional churches—but it's secondary to our present point. To be interfaith is a part of diversity and of cool religion.

This case study illuminates the interfaith ethos of Berkeley through the particular lens of the course on Interreligious Dialogue that I taught at the Jesuit School of Theology in the Spring of 2007. I begin by stating the course's purpose, and follow that with a detailed description of its content. The different methods used are explained next, and finally I state the goals or outcomes of the course, with a reflection on what I would do differently next time.

The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, of which the Jesuit School is a member, advertises itself as the place “where religion meets

the world" ([www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)). Started forty-seven years ago as a consortium of nine Christian divinity and theology schools dedicated to ecumenical enrichment as well as more traditional priestly and ministerial training and graduate studies, the GTU has added centers in Jewish, Buddhist, and Orthodox Christian studies, and, newly, a center of Islamic studies. Student interest is relatively high in Buddhism and Islam, with considerable interest in Judaism and some interest in Hinduism—particularly Yoga—and in primal/indigenous religions and new religions.

The more particular context of the Jesuit School of Theology, besides its being Catholic, stems from the Jesuit character of the school, in that the Jesuits' Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, in 1995, identified interreligious dialogue as one of the top three priorities worldwide for Jesuits and their institutions. That priority has been implemented at JSTB in the form of a requirement that each Master of Divinity student take one course in either interreligious dialogue or ecumenism. A clear majority of the M.Div. students take either the Interreligious Dialogue course or one of the other courses that fulfills the dialogue requirement (Theology of Religions, the Theological Immersion course in either India or Indonesia, or the Christ, Krishna and Buddha course). Finally, an estimated one-third to one-half of the students—whether from JSTB or from other GTU schools—who take the Interreligious Dialogue course have not had a World Religions course. This affects the pedagogy, as we shall see.

And the most particular context is the students—thirteen of them in this Spring 2007 class. Four women, nine men; four international, nine American; four Jesuits, one Catholic sister, and seven Christian and one Buddhist/Christian laypersons; and six M.Div. students, and seven M.A. or other students. A Malaysian from Kuala Lumpur has considerable dialogue experience; two Vietnamese—one Jesuit and one sister—have experience with Buddhism. One American woman is deeply and reflectively involved in both Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism. A fifty-year old African-American man, experienced and thoughtful on race issues, is a student of Biblical languages, and wishes "to develop," as he wrote early on, "a model on ecumenism and religious pluralism." Two of the men have had some experience with evangelical Christianity. Finally for the moment, two of the Jesuits are Ph.D.'s—one in planetary physics and one in evolutionary biology—who are both involved in dialogues between science and religion.

And a last, general comment about JSTB students: most are not from Berkeley or the Bay Area, but come instead from an American and Catholic church situation where interfaith dialogue's importance is not as much a foregone conclusion as in Berkeley. So, our situation is not as untypical of a USA teaching situation as it might first appear.

### Four Purposes of the Course

1. To introduce an important and rather new aspect of Christianity in the world. For example, interreligious, or interfaith, dialogue dates, as an explicit movement among Catholics and Protestants in India only from the late 1950's (cf. J. Kuttianimattathil, *Practice and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue*, 62-63). Official approval on the Catholic side comes with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* in 1964. Dialogue's history may be brief, but some care must be taken with it in the course because of its sensitivity.

2. To describe the nature of dialogue and show its validity—theologically, spiritually, pastorally, socially, and otherwise.

3. To begin, in the students, a learning process of how to do dialogue—both exterior dialogue with others and interior dialogue with oneself and one's faith.

4. Pastorally, to teach students how to help others begin dialogues; and how to help with others' questions about dialogue and other interreligious relations.

### Content

Course Unit I: As for the meat of the course, I start off *in medias res* by assigning a vividly written book in which the author learns about dialogue, shows and engages in dialogue, reflects upon dialogue and raises the large Christian theological questions involved in dialogue, all while teaching a good deal about Hinduism and portraying Hindus both colorfully and credibly: Klaus Klostermaier's *In the Paradise of Krishna; Hindu and Christian Seekers*. Such a book is rare, and it's also valuable that this one was far enough ahead of its time (1969) that it has not aged yet.

Early in the first class I quote Muslim-Christian dialogue expert Dr. Thomas Michel, SJ's informal but perceptive remark (directed to Christians): "What inter-religious dialogue really means is how we relate to people who have no interest in becoming Christians" (*National Jesuit News*, November 1997, 7). This puts concisely the vast numbers and worldwide scope of dialogue, and is helpful as to attitude on both sides as well. Historical and, especially, definitional dimensions of dialogue need to be worked on early in the course. And so, along with Klostermaier's book, I assign the Second Vatican Council declaration on the Catholic church's relation with other religions, *Nostra Aetate* ("In our Times"). Additionally, we read the most authoritative Catholic teaching on dialogue since Vatican II, Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* ("The Mission of the Redeemer," n. 55-57), which advances the theology of dialogue significantly, especially with respect to the role of both Word and Holy Spirit in the world's religions (cf. n. 28).

Further initial reading includes "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," the fifth decree of the Jesuits' Thirty-Fourth General Congregation (1995). The points of greatest emphasis here are two: 1) the very useful formulation of the "fourfold dialogue," and 2) the most complete definition, of a number which we look at, of dialogue. The first elaborates four ways, or modes, of dialogue: "The dialogue of life . . . the dialogue of action . . . the dialogue of theological exchange . . . the dialogue of religious experience" ("Our Mission . . .," n. 4). And the second gives us a definition of dialogue more adequate than John Paul II's similar one, "a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 55), by saying: "Dialogue means all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment" (Cited in footnote 14 of "Our Mission . . .," from the 1978 Vatican document, "Dialogue and Mission," n. 3).

Finally, I make the course's first three weeks a unit by requiring a four-page paper on Klostermaier's book at the third week's beginning. In this way the students can join their first, vicarious participation in dialogue, with Klostermaier and his partners, to a good preliminary grasp of the definitions and modes of dialogue set forth in the Vatican and Jesuit documents. This combination of a paper completed and some definition achieved makes for some of the liveliest discussion in the course. Three moments from Klostermaier stood out in this year's discussion. First, several students found the beautifully written but

terrifying chapter, "Theology at 120 F[ahrenheit]," in which a goat dies of heat stroke and Klostermaier compares his struggle to write an article in this atmosphere of heat and death with the seventy-degree comfortable library conditions of European theologians, an apt and memorable example of contextual theology—a special emphasis of JSTB and GTU well applied here to dialogue theology. Secondly, Klostermaier's extensive scriptural and meditative dialogue and deep friendship with the Hindu renunciant, Swami Yogananda, show students both a path to God highly valued by Hindus and the place of friendship, which I like to teach as the first pillar of dialogue (cf. Chapter 5, "Yoganandaji, My Brother"). And later, the elderly Krishna devotee, Gopalji, impresses students with his advanced love of God as he and Klostermaier reveal to each other the birth-stories of Krishna and Jesus—especially when Gopalji asks the unexpected but beautifully Hindu questions: "Do you think we will be together in eternity? . . . Would you consider me a Christian, as I am?" (op. cit., 82). An obvious teaching-point is that surprising questions should be expected in dialogue—indeed, such questions show a dialogue to be authentic. In sum, then, the beginning of the course offers some Hindu content and some realistic Hindu-Christian dialogue situations in the reading while devoting the class teaching time to the definitions, modes, and other basics of dialogue.

Course Unit II: Raimon Panikkar's brief but rich series of essays, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Revised Edition, New York: Paulist Press, 1999), is the basis of the course's next unit. Adopting a traditional Indian scholarly style which I believe fits the thought of this Indian/European dialogue theologian, I portray myself as the commentator needed to explain and teach the often concise and elliptical sayings, or *sutra*-s, of the master. Guru Panikkar introduces some useful vocabulary, or "rhetoric", into the discussion of dialogue, by explicating five theological "attitudes" which are common in the practice of dialogue. Panikkar and others have made these attitudes clichés; one might even say ruts—in the road of discourse about dialogue. But Panikkar hasn't invented them. They were already very much present, though often unconsciously, in people's use.

In "exclusivism," the attitude that my faith excludes your faith (and all other faiths), and is the true faith, Christians recognize—or if they don't, some reality therapy can easily enough be given—their own faith's traditional position. Panikkar helpfully shows how such a position can be expressed in sophisticated terms. But he also leaves no

doubt about its inadequacies. "Inclusivism"—that my religion somehow includes and yet is also more complete than your religion—comes next. And it exists in sophisticated forms, such as that my Christianity "fulfills" your religion (and all other religions), or that your sincere and faithful non-Christian practice shows that you are really an "anonymous Christian," or that your religion—of love of God, for example—is absolutely valid as far as it goes, but Nondualist Vedanta Hinduism's union of Atman with the non-personal Brahman both includes and surpasses your religion; or, more generally, that all sincere believers are *muslim-s* in that they all manifest "submission," or "surrender" (*islam*) to God. Class discussion can be expected—and planned on—to liven up at this point. Many points of information about the theologies and religions mentioned are asked for. And some find that, when Panikkar judges this attitude also too one-sided and "superior" for today's world, they're not so certain they want to give up on inclusivism yet. Philosophical as well as theological thinking becomes part of the process now, too, because while exclusivist thinking often manifests a naïve realist epistemology, inclusivist thinking is prone to be so broad in its assertions as "to make truth purely relative".

"Parallelism" is the next attitude Panikkar introduces. It is an example of a larger attitude—"pluralism"—that forms the third of the now classic set that interreligious dialogue theologians and dialogue practitioners all too tirelessly talk about: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Pluralism is a relationship of the many religions in one or another kind of equality: each relating to an unnamed God, Reality, or Absolute; or, as with Panikkar's example here, proceeding more or less equally along parallel lines toward a final consummation; or embodying other modes, generally of a plural equality moving toward a final unity. The very title, pluralism, seems to forbid putting a cap on how many such theologies there might be. Indeed, Panikkar's major affirmation about the value of pluralism is that it should insist on "keep[ing] the . . . dialogue permanently open".

Whether as attitudes or as rough and ready theologies, this triad of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism arouses lively and welcome discussions, in class and in papers, throughout the course. One drawback, however, is that the discussions tend to limit themselves to these three, as if they were the only alternatives. What starts off as an attractive field of theological debate acquires some aspects of a prison. And so I introduce, somewhere in the middle of the discussion, Paul

Knitter's valiant attempt to remedy this defect. In his *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), Knitter increases the number of alternatives to four: exclusivism becomes "the replacement model—"Only One True Religion"; inclusivism becomes "the fulfillment model—"The One Fulfills the Many"; pluralism becomes "the mutuality model—"Many True Religions Called to Dialogue"; and a new "acceptance model" is introduced ("Many True Religions: So Be It"), exemplified according to Knitter by some newer approaches, among them comparative theology. This newer classification of four may not be utterly comprehensive or correct, either, I emphasize, but it reopens a theological field that had become too narrow. Finally, with respect to both sets of terms: they may not be perfect, but they help students begin to speak with confidence of dialogue and its theology.

Panikkar adds to the useful 'rhetoric' that he is building for dialogue by explaining five "models", which he says are "root metaphors" that are meant "to open" the dialogue, though they may not be useful for closing it. In my opinion three are more useful pedagogically. The first is "the rainbow model", in which the white light "of reality" shining through the prism "of human experience" is diffracted into innumerable colors—"traditions, doctrines, and religions". Two helpful image/insights, at least, come from this. First, speaking of any object that receives the beam of white light, Panikkar says:

The real body that has received the entire beam of white light keeps for itself all the other colors so that it would not accord with truth to judge a religion only from its outer color (16).

The way the other colors are present in the religion, I add, is to be discovered by and in dialogue. Second, within the spectrum's green area, all will look green, while "[a] similar object within the red area will look reddish". Thus, I suggest, within Buddhism, love will take on a 'compassion' coloring. In Christianity, it might be more a self-sacrificing love between equals; in Judaism, covenant loyalty or loving-kindness (*hesed*), and so forth.

Panikkar next develops a highly complex but credible geometrical model which he calls "The Topological Invariant". Its richest pedagogical output, I suggest, is the discovery of homeomorphisms between religions, which are not analogies but rather "functional



equivalents". Thus students would be able to see that "Brahman" and "God" occupy the same place structurally, and perform the same function, in Hinduism and Christianity, respectively. I give as further examples *moksha* (liberation, freedom) and salvation, and karma and providence. And I give as an example of an apparent but false homeomorphism the Christian trinity and the Hindu *trimurti* (triad, of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer). For, while the trinity is arguably the central teaching of Christianity, the *trimurti* has a comparatively derivative and subordinate role in Hindu theology.

For what he calls his "Anthropological Model", Panikkar takes a language as a root metaphor for a religion. A language and a religion both seem complete in themselves, but in fact both are capable of growth and do grow. And each has relations with neighboring languages/religions, borrowing and influencing and being influenced. Further, says Panikkar: "Religions are equivalent to the same extent that languages are translatable, and they are unique as much as languages are untranslatable". Both languages and religions have "terms," which both know of and which can be translated. But each also has "words", which are unique, culture-specific, laden with emotion and history and personal belonging, and are untranslatable. Whereas "ideal", "creed", even "Supreme Being" are terms, "Allah", "Krishna", "Kali", "Jesus"—perhaps even "cross" and *jihad* are words, I propose. In addition, a person in dialogue must learn her dialogue partner's religion, and be able to convey it thoroughly and recognizably, without forgetting her own, just as a good translator must master the foreign language and convey it well in her own. And finally, this model helps on the subject of comparative religion, for it suggests, says Panikkar, that "there is no language (religion) except in concrete languages (religions)". And, consequently, "... a nonreligious neutral 'reason' cannot 'pass comparative judgments in the field of religions'. The encounter of religions would thus seem to require a new method, from within religions, not from outside them.

**Pedagogy:** To relate in an ongoing way with our main topic: discussion can be lively, during this Panikkar period of the course, on any or all of the four topics, at least:

1) Panikkar's three "attitudes" of exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism (or Knitter's proposed revision of the scheme into four models); 2) The "fourfold dialogue," or four ways of doing dialogue—in terms of which ways are more appropriate, even essential, for certain groups and

circumstances; 3) Panikkar's three models—rainbow, geometric, and language; and 4) various teachings of the religions—at this point mainly Hinduism, because of Klostermaier's and Panikkar's frequent reference to it, but regularly about Islam, too.

Discussion can be lively both from the viewpoint of students' wanting to ask questions or offer their experiences about these matters, and from the viewpoint of the professor's being able to initiate lines of discussion about these topics or combinations of them. Such student questions can call upon the experience of the professor. Or the professor can start a discussion about an area he senses a weakness or lack of understanding in. Or the professor can request input from one of the students whose cultural or dialogue experience makes her strong in an area in which most other students are "at sea."

Panikkar's second chapter, "The Dialogical Dialogue," is central theologically and philosophically to his presentation of dialogue, and to my dialogue course as well. Theologically, he quickly makes his position clear by rejecting both the monistic and the dualistic positions, asserting instead: "Ultimately I am pleading for an advaitic or nondualistic approach". I explain immediately that "nondualism" (Sanskrit *advaita*) is the central teaching of the Hindu Vedanta system which holds that reality is neither distinctly two nor simply one. But since nondualism has more than one form, I summarize three of them, to provide detailed background. Shankara's nondualism teaches that the deepest human reality, the Self or Atman, is nondifferent from the Absolute Being/Consciousness/Joy, or Brahman, and that the appearance of difference which is the world is illusion, or *maya*. His opponent Ramanuja taught a different Vedanta philosophy—that Brahman/Vishnu, souls, and the world constitute a "Nondualism of the differentiated Reality" (*Vishishtadvaita*), since souls and material things are real but are modes of Vishnu/Brahman, not ultimately different from him. Vallabha's nondualism, known as "Pure Nondualism" (*Shuddhadvaita*), is a third kind, a pantheism which contends that everything and everyone is Krishna/Brahman, even Maya, who is real but is a power of Krishna/Brahman. Within this context it is possible to understand Panikkar's "cosmotheandric" philosophy/theology, which is a nonduality of three interacting poles, or "a threefold polarity" — the world (Greek *kosmos*), God (*theos*), and humanity (root *andr-*). Of the three Hindu nondualisms noted above, I suggest that Panikkar is closest to Ramanuja's "nondualism of the differentiated Reality."

I don't think it will surprise the reader to learn that it was at about this time in this year's (Spring 2007) course that I asked the students to begin considering for future discussion whether a World Religions course, or at least significant World Religions information, is needed in order to do this dialogue course well. Results of this reflection will be presented later.

Panikkar continues to describe his central philosophy/theology by specifying its "epistemological formulation", and, a bit later, its "anthropological assumption". Epistemologically, subject-object knowing cannot completely handle the encounter and dialogue of religions, according to Panikkar, because such knowing cannot be adequate to the knower as knower. And the knowers themselves, the "I" and the "thou" in the encounter of religions, are precisely where the deepest dialogue, which Panikkar calls "the dialogical dialogue", takes place—without excluding the "dialectical dialogue" of "I" and "thou" and "it" (material objects, concepts, beliefs, etc.). And Panikkar makes the point anthropologically when he defines the human person as follows:

The anthropological assumption is that Man is not an individual but a person, that is, a set of relationships of which the I-Thou-It, in all the genders and numbers, is the most fundamental. (24)

The dialectical dialogue proceeds in its valid and needful way, by knowing the facts and knowables of one another and each one's faith, while the dialogical dialogue adds the greater depth, because it is "I" and "thou" relating in such a way that they are not entirely different from one another, and neither is the "It" of their religious faiths and their symbols. Thus does Panikkar's cosmotheandric nondualism express itself as far as human knowing and human nature are concerned. Or, since Panikkar's own summary from a slightly different angle might be better:

The relevance of the dialogical dialogue for the Encounter of religious traditions and the so-called Comparative Religion is obvious. I cannot really know—and thus compare—another ultimate system of beliefs unless somehow I share those beliefs, and I cannot do this until I know the holder of those beliefs, the you—not as other (that is, nonego), but as a you. . . (26)

(Note: Panikkar uses "thou" and "you" interchangeably in these pages.)

Panikkar's point is to *add* something to dialectics without denying its validity. Dialogical dialogue *limits* the rational and conceptual thinking that is dialectics by refusing to admit its totality. But it *complements* dialectics by doing justice to the interpersonal—the "I-thou" and its context, which is ontologically present and valid and true, but which cannot be captured by conceptual knowing. Panikkar affirms this and adds to the scope of dialogical dialogue when he says: "Dialogical dialogue is in its proper place when dealing with personal, cross-cultural, and pluralistic problems . . . with situations not totally reducible to the logos".

At this point I teach that here, in Panikkar's second chapter and in his third chapter, "Faith and Belief," we see and learn about the path of a person (Panikkar) who is in the dialogue of religious experience and the dialogue of theological exchange—particularly the former. And I use this moment and context to introduce a principle: that we should see all the levels of the fourfold dialogue—even the deeper ones which not all of us may participate in. Because thus we can see the validity of dialogue—not to mention its depth and beauty. For it has been my and others' experience that these deeper levels of dialogue—especially the dialogue of religious experience—ground and validate our work on the first two levels (dialogue of life and of action); and the first two levels would not last long without (at least) the religious experience level. It is important that the converse is also true: thus, when a student asked whether levels three and four of dialogue were less valid if levels one and two were not present, I happily answered yes.

In his third chapter, "Faith and Beliefs," Panikkar courageously takes on one of our subject's central questions: how does dialogue affect my faith? He approaches the question of faith and beliefs in dialogue by using a fitting combination of autobiography, philosophical anthropology, and theology. In what he calls an "objectified autobiographical fragment", Panikkar recounts his discovery and refusal of religious exclusivism—the exclusivism, rather clearly, of his own Roman Catholicism. He later indicates what he discovered positively when he says: "What I should like to stress is the way faith prompts one to link up different kinds of religion".

Next, Panikkar weds philosophical anthropology fruitfully to autobiography in his definition of faith. For he teaches that faith is each person's connection with "transcendence, with what stands above me . . . with the beyond, however you choose to envision it". Faith is not merely occasional and religious, according to Panikkar, but is a person's

moment-to-moment connection with his or her future, destiny, dreams, and, yes, salvation ("The business of faith is preeminently to save us".) Faith has to do with all our intentionality, desire, creativity, and volition. Belief, then, is our formulation of our faith to ourselves (and others). Beliefs are essential to our faith—as essential as words are to our thought. But, since faith actually connects with the "beyond", which is transcendent and thus inexpressible, faith is not identical with belief(s). Panikkar gives the example of the believer and the atheist. Both have faith in the truth, but one expresses it by the belief "God exists," and the other by the contradictory belief "God does not exist."

The reason that Panikkar takes such care to demonstrate the distinction between faith and beliefs is that he finds himself, in the process of "understanding" the beliefs of his partner in dialogue, somehow sharing those beliefs so that he "judge[s] [them] to be somewhat true", and reaches "convincement" concerning them. In this way they can become beliefs of his faith. Pedagogically at this point I attempt to give some examples of such beliefs, and two profound teachings, central to their religions, come to mind. From Hinduism, the Atman/Brahman identity, by which the deepest interior reality, or "self" (*atman*) of the human person is discovered to be nondually identical with the Absolute or Supreme Being (*Brahman*), the foundation of all reality, is one. And from Buddhism, the chief metaphysical teaching, called "Dependent Co-Arising" or "Conditioned Co-Production" (*pratitya-samutpada*), whereby everything comes into being and passes out of being dependent upon everything else, so that, this and this being present, that arises, and this and this being absent, that perishes, is another example. This "understanding" is a splendid attempt by Panikkar to ground and explain the kind of "mutual enrichment" of faith which Pope John Paul II and others have spoken of as part of the definition of dialogue.

In such considerations of faith, belief, and convincement, the deeper dimensions of dialogue begin to become clear. Panikkar recognizes this by identifying dialogue in the most central Christian terms:

At this juncture, the dialogue of which I speak emerges not as a mere academic device or an intellectual amusement, but as a spiritual matter of the first rank, a religious act that itself engages faith, hope, and love. Dialogue is not bare methodology but an essential part of the religious act par excellence: loving God above all things and one's

neighbor as oneself . . . Love for our neighbor also makes intellectual demands . . . (48-49).

Students need to consider, then, whether and how dialogue is a "religious act." Another way in which Panikkar in this context speaks of the deep dimensions of dialogue is when he says, while defining faith: "So one thing faith effects is salvation . . ." A person's or group's deeper dialogues, upon which many lesser ones can be based, bear upon salvation itself.

Course Unit III: The course's second half (but third unit) begins with Jacques Dupuis' voluminous presentation of the history of Christian theology's relations with other religions, followed by his essay precisely *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997; history and essay are in the same volume). While positive theological relations have not been numerous in Christian history, Dupuis shows some fruitful moments in at least three eras: among the early Church Fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria; in medieval times Ramon Llull of Barcelona, Francis of Assisi (briefly but importantly), and Nicholas of Cusa; and in the era of the great overseas discovery professors in Spain and Rome like Domingo Soto, Robert Bellarmine, and Juan de Lugo as they reflected on the theological consequences of there being so many "new" peoples in the world. In addition, his theological exploration, in the early Fathers mentioned, of the doctrine of "Word" (Logos) of God—both before and after the Word became flesh in Jesus—yields some of the richest possibilities for relating Christian revelation with other religions. Discussion of this theological question offers a great pedagogical opportunity as well. For what Dupuis is doing by exploring what God the Word (Logos) did with respect to humanity before becoming enfleshed in Jesus—as described in John's Gospel 1.1-14—is establishing a *locus theologicus* (literally a "theological place"; but, used as a technical term, "a legitimate basis for theologizing") for relating Christian revelation with other religions and their followers. This is important, I teach, because establishing *loci theologici* for doing interreligious theology from a Christian standpoint has been difficult. Usually scripture (strictly the Bible), authoritative Church teachings such as the Councils, the Church Fathers, and perhaps the great Scholastic or Reformation theologians have been admitted as *loci*, and frankly, those sources don't say much about other religions. So, the dialogue experts and theologians who are experiencing how important and enriching are the other religions are striving to identify such *loci*

*theologici* and get them accepted. This, I suggest, is one of the important things Dupuis is doing.

Many questions of theological meaning, history and system dominate the discussion and affect the pedagogy and timing during these classes. But let me briefly give examples of thematic statements by Dupuis that my students and I have found creative. The first is an analogy, in which Dupuis opines that, just as the Second Vatican Council has made it clear that the proper relationship between the other Christian churches and ecclesial communities and the Roman Catholic Church is no longer merely that of offending servants who need to bow before their longsuffering Mistress, so there is greater interdependence and mutuality now between the other religions and Christianity. Another rich statement develops the idea that it is trinitarian theology, among the theologies possible in Christianity, that best reflects the plurality of the real situation in the world of religions (206); and thus a theology, and even Christology, of Spirit should prevent a simplistic and improper "Christomonism". And finally, Dupuis puts forth a thesis against reducing salvation history to the Judeo-Christian tradition (217). This is a theologian's prophetic plea that salvation history be seen as coextensive with the history of creation, i.e., of all peoples. I present this as a plea based on Dupuis' dialogue experience, because in another place he says, about a statement of theologians writing at a distance from religions other than their own:

What strikes the eye in comparing this last text with the Asian ones is the difference of perception which prolonged, everyday interaction with the members of other religious traditions provides, concerning their significance and value in God's plan for humankind (315).

This unit of the course also requires reading, reflection, and discussion of *Dominus Iesus*, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's declaration in 2000. Its subtitle is the best summary of its contents: "On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church." My reasons for teaching this controversial document are two: 1) I would not be teaching the full Catholic position on dialogue, to many Catholics who need to go honestly into dialogue, unless I taught this work; and 2) the declaration is in some parts a reaction to Jacques Dupuis' book.

I find, and declare, strong agreement with *Dominus Iesus*' main teaching—against the sort of relativism in religion and truth that says simply: "One religion is as good as another" (#22). And I point out that such relativism interferes with a clear missionary proclamation of the Christian message. And, after leading discussion and answering questions on the main topics—Christ, Church, and salvation—I make my major criticism: that *Dominus Iesus* has tried perhaps prematurely to resolve the tension in certain questions—a tension which needs more time in dialogue to mature. I mean such questions as the (other) religions and revelation, the religions and salvation, the notions of faith *versus* belief as discussed in this declaration, the Kingdom of God and the religions, and so forth. In that respect I find my previous emphasis on establishing some new *loci theologici* natural to repeat here. Lastly we discuss how the declaration's treatment of Logos theology—especially as it carries over to the same congregation's *Notification* on Dupuis' teaching — seems, in its opposition to the Logos' activity with respect to other religions before becoming incarnate in Jesus, to be condemning Dupuis' theology on that subject. And it is even possible that Dupuis' aforementioned analogy between greater ecumenical equality among the churches and greater equality of the religions led to the assertion in *Dominus Iesus* that several "ecclesial communities" were not "Churches in the proper sense", which those churches took as a stinging insult—and that from a line of questioning which was not even part of the declaration's main subject matter.

Course Unit IV: For the final unit, the course works in a more practical way, first on a kind of religion—indigenous religion—and then on two of the religions that American Christians are most often in dialogue with—Islam and Buddhism. I treat indigenous religion because of the exhortation in the Jesuit document "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," which says:

This dialogue of theological exchange can more easily be carried on with religions which have a written tradition. However, the dialogue with indigenous religions is equally important. These religions express a sense of the divine and the transcendent which must be "approached with great sensitivity, on account of the spiritual and human values enshrined in them" (n. 4, with quote from *Dialogue and Proclamation*, n. 14).

I have chosen Michael Kirwen's *The Missionary and the Diviner*, although it is about African rather than American indigenous religion,

because of its literary and scholarly excellence and because it is not just *about* dialogue—with proper qualification, it *is* dialogue. A similarly good, or nearly as good, book on dialogue with Native American religion, however, I would adopt immediately.

Of the many revealing issues that Kirwen highlights, one of the most useful pedagogically is the utter transcendence of the Luo people's High God Kiteme, compared with the relative immanence of the Christian God/Christ/Spirit as perceived by the Luo diviner Riana. For besides the great theological discussions it engenders both in the book and in class, the purity and supremacy of Kiteme gives the lie effectively to the term "animism", by which Luo and other indigenous religions all over the world are inaccurately labeled—implying that the religions are controlled strictly by small-scale spirits barely distinguishable from nature.

One other useful example is the pastoral question raised when another healer-diviner, Okech, perceives that the lay trainee whom the missionary has brought with him has a rare disease, and offers to heal her. The subsequent conversation between missionary and trainee, and the further consideration, by the Christian leaders of the place, of the pastoral/interreligious issue surrounding such a healing, are pedagogically helpful for illustrating that difficult pastoral questions for one's own church, etc., will arise from the dialogue of the religions. The professor's or students' experience can give rise to a fruitful discussion here.

The all-important topic of dialogue with Islam comes next. And I assign for reading and discussion Maurice Borrmans' *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, because, though this short book is twenty-five years old, it is wondrously packed with valuable information and advice. Early on, for example, Borrmans analyzes four different Christian-Muslim circumstances, along two axes—whether the Christian churches in the region are ancient or new, and whether the majority population is Muslim or Christian. As the examples given seem to be largely from "Old World" countries, I make some analyses based on the recently changing New World circumstances. And I teach a principle for dialogue as well: In beginning and continuing a dialogue, strategize *where* you are and what is possible by reason of where you are. Likewise with the other well known question-words: *who?*, *what?*, *when?*, *why?*, *how?* Such strategizing should not be a fearful attempt to eliminate the unknown, of which there will be much in any case. Rather it attempts to identify possibilities and avoid what does not apply.

Of relevant Qur'an passages, there are at least two which instruct Muslims to dialogue with other believers, particularly with Jews and Christians ("People of the Book"). One runs: "Call thou (people) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition and dispute with them in the better way" (Qur'an 16:125). A further passage provides to Islam something that the Bible does not provide for Christians — a theology of religions, i.e., a statement of the meaning and place of other religions in God's plan: "... had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie with one another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return" (Qur'an 5:48; page 40; oddly, Borrmans does not finish the sentence: "and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance" [Arberry's translation]). Muslims cite this verse often in dialogue.

Finally--typical of the sophisticated contrasting advice Borrmans gives in different keys--we hear of both difficulty and profound hope in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Difficulty attends the religions being contradictory to each other in their both claiming universality, in their strong disagreements about revelation and scripture, and in their vastly different teachings with respect to God and Jesus, so much so that the author advises: "Undertake the impossible, but accept the provisional". Lest this be considered pessimistic, however, or giving up too easily, Borrmans elsewhere emphasizes that at the "more specifically religious level" (30) of dialogue, it is one another's salvation that the partners seek: "This, then, is a sharing of the values of faith and can become a 'dialogue of salvation', as the participants face the ineffable mystery of God".

The course's final book, Ruben Habito's *Living Zen, Loving God* helps in at least three ways. Primarily, it introduces students to the many possibilities of Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Secondly, it gives at least one good example of interreligious theology. And finally, it "is a pioneering example of interspirituality," as dialogue expert Wayne Teasdale says in a blurb at the very beginning of the book (I take 'interspirituality' as equivalent to 'interreligious spirituality'). The instance of interreligious theology comes in the course of Habito's explaining the *kensho* (enlightenment) experience he had while meditating on and "living", day and night, the famous *koan* "Mu". Two different Zen masters confirmed the validity of the Christian Habito's enlightenment experience. And, in terms of explaining it, Habito interprets it as a discovery of his "original nature" or "Buddha-nature"

(7). Quoting Ephesians 1.4 then, and citing no fewer than seven other passages from New Testament epistles, Habito carefully points out what “can perhaps be called our *Christ nature*”. And he further relates this Christ nature with the “Spirit” that is the “Breath” of the body of Christ, as in *Romans* 12.5.

A strong example of interreligious spirituality is the entire chapter called “The Enlightened Samaritan: A Zen Reading of a Christian Parable”. Perhaps two of the many points will suffice here. First, recalling that the lawyer asked Jesus what he had to do “to attain eternal life”, Habito reveals, with the help of analogy with the all-absorbing concentration needed to practice the koan Mu, that ‘eternal life’ is not just the after-life, but this present and this future lived with complete intensity, like the opening announcement in Mark’s Gospel: “The Realm of God is at hand!” (Mk. 1.15). Secondly, Habito notes that the word translated as “compassion” in the Samaritan story is more deeply emotional in the Greek; it means “to be moved in one’s gut” (76)—viscerally. And the point is for that depth of feeling to become spontaneous and habitual. To make this point, Habito cites a Zen master’s answer when asked how the Bodhisattva of Compassion uses her thousand hands: “It is like adjusting a pillow with an outstretched hand in the middle of the night”: so spontaneous and natural should be our compassion.

## Methods

I’ll treat **Meditation** first, since it is done at the beginning of class, and throughout the course from beginning to end. The idea originated with dialogue pioneer Dr. Matthaeus Lederle, SJ, in Pune, India, who said, as I was interviewing him in 1980 in preparation for my new “Hindu-Christian Dialogue” course: “Jim, you must give them some *sadhana* (roughly, ‘spiritual practice’), as we do in our dialogue sessions here.” Many colleagues in India agreed, and I was so inclined. So, we do a meditation, or prayer, or combination of the two, for the first ten minutes of each class (2-3 minute introduction, 7-8 minute meditation). I often use Anthony de Mello’s book *Sadhana* for its Buddhist meditations of awareness of body and breath; also, many Bible passages, such as the Beatitudes (Mt. 5), or the Passover meal (Ex. 12); the *Cloud of Unknowing* meditation; several passages from the Hindu Upanishads and *Bhagavad-Gita*; the *Fatiha* and other *Qur’an* passages; a Buddhist ‘*Kuan-yin* with a Thousand Hands’

compassion meditation, and others, with some repetitions. The main purpose is atmospheric and mood-setting; sometimes the goals of Buddhist meditation, calming down and sharpening up (*samatha* and *vipasyana*), seem to be achieved. But it’s also partly content-oriented, as can be seen from the many different religions and types of meditation. This introduces an element of religious practice throughout the course as well, making the course matter more concrete. Finally, it shows students how easy it is to lead such exercises, in dialogue sessions or other helpful contexts. Does it work? To judge by the pin-drop silence, yes definitely. Evaluations also mention it favorably—commenting negatively on any omission or shortening. What doesn’t work? An important point for discernment needs to be made: that neither make-believe nor coercion of students’ beliefs are sought—quite the contrary—and yet the content or practice presented should be considered seriously.

Second, a few remarks are required about the **papers**, in addition to what written assignments normally yield. I assign the first paper quickly — at two weeks — so as to get an initial read of the student as to dialogue, based on Klostermaier’s very vivid presentation. I explicitly require the paper to be at least half personal reflection, so as to make such reflection a habit throughout the course in all the written assignments. The most frequent form this reflection takes is as what I call “interior dialogue” (others sometimes call it “inner dialogue” and it is one of the meanings of Panikkar’s term “intrareligious dialogue”). This is the dialogue that necessarily goes on within oneself between the faith or faiths one is learning about and one’s own faith. Panikkar says of it, for example: “I would like to begin again by stressing the often-neglected notion of an *intrareligious* dialogue, that is, an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter in the depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level” (73-74). For many years both students and I have found interior dialogue one of the course’s most fruitful categories (cf. my “The Hindu-Christian Dialogue and the Interior Dialogue,” in *Theological Studies* 44/4, 1983, 587-603).

Thirdly, the **immersion** at a temple, mosque, synagogue, meditation center, or monastery is an important element of our course. I consider it preferable that this be a ‘real-life’ experience, and thus involve spontaneity both on the student’s part and the religious center’s, rather than being too pre-arranged or ordered to formal dialogue. But by way of preparation, I give the students a handout

which lists three or four good centers each for Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in the Berkeley area, with internet addresses and phone numbers, plus the names of some GTU professors whose advice might help. And I instruct the students to visit the center they choose at least three times. As to dialogue, I specify that they should be quite open about their being there to fill a dialogue course requirement, but should expect and engage in dialogue only if and as it develops, as it frequently does. To try to force dialogue in two or three meetings might be counterproductive, and in any case, informal dialogue more often goes deeper, and longer, than formal dialogue. I give a second handout which suggests how the students might best write up their 9-10 page report on this immersion, due in the course's tenth week. Such questions—after a description of the place, whom they met, and what happened—as “what have you learned?”, “is there scope for dialogue there?”, “has this ‘worked’, or can it work?”, “what does this do to your interior dialogue, or your commitment to external dialogue?”, and others are suggested. The results are varied, exciting, and helpful; many students report the immersion to be the most worthwhile part of the course. For a few of the good responses, please read on.

Fourthly, some further word is needed about the place of **discussion** in the course—especially since it strongly affects one-fourth of the course grade. As in many courses, informational questions will abound—in this case mainly about the less known religions being considered. Theological questions are also frequent, and these lead to invaluable and sometimes long discussions. But as far as discussions which can be planned, my experience is that the best ones are sparked by 1) the interesting personalities whom we see in dialogue, or 2) the papers the students have just done. So, I bring up Klostermaier's vivid friendship with Swami Yoganandaji, and the arresting questions Gopalji asks him about religion, and see where these can open up students' faith along new lines. Likewise with the hour-long video I show, *A Human Search: The Life of Father Bede Griffiths* (More Than Illusion Films: Sydney, Australia), sometimes there's question of whether one can “go that far” and still be Christian. And on point two above, it was students who years ago alerted me that it was when they'd just finished papers that they were most ready to discuss.

Arguably the best student input and discussion of this spring's course came when I asked eight students—generally the ones who had participated little in discussion to that point—to do a ten-minute presentation on their ‘immersion’ visits to mosques, meditation-

centers, etc., and their resulting papers. I thought three particularly good. Our Vietnamese Catholic nun went to a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in San Jose, where she spoke with “an old Buddhist nun.” The Catholic student admitted to us that she had never found Buddhist temples good for anything but “landscape.” And the old nun wasn't answering her theological dialogue questions very well, either. She was only saying things like: “What would it be like if Buddha and Jesus met today?” It would be wonderful, thought the old nun. In fact, “When you and I meet Jesus and Buddha meet today.” Our student eventually “got” that this was what dialogue is, and now goes back to the temple. And our Jesuit physicist went to a different Buddhist monastery, “just to fulfil the requirement,” and at first felt ignored by the monk in charge. But soon he met the monastery's novice monk—also a first-rate scientist and interested in the science-religion dialogue as well as Buddhist-Catholic dialogue. A regular dialogue friendship has resulted. Finally, our Baptist student went to a local Hindu meditation center. But the monk in charge didn't seem interested in dialogue or much else. The posted meditation and lecture hours also happened to conflict with the student's class hours. Only one layman talked with him and helped him a bit. But our student found that he learned more, through *not* getting into dialogue, about what he wanted in dialogue, and *that* he wanted dialogue, than he probably would have under so called ideal conditions.

Further matter for discussion sometimes comes from the professor's own dialogue experience, and it can be fruitful, especially when the professor knows when to close his mouth (more about that later). Finally, there's great unpredictability in discussion of vast religions looked at from new angles. So, both originality, good judgment, and self-discipline are imperative on the professor's part, and even then there are going to be many questions, topics, and stories unfinished.

## Goals/Outcomes

The big-picture goal is to get students into and involved in the important new dimension of human, world-wide religious life that is dialogue, so they might realize that dialogue is, as Panikkar says, “a religious act”. Partly propaedeutic to dialogue, but partly achieved only in dialogue, is a real experience of how impressive and important

religions other than their own are—a repeated experience, preferably, with context and believers of another religion. Finally, to begin to establish in the students a pastoral ability to help their church, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc., and its individual members, with relations with other religions. Important subsidiary goals such as learning things about religions other than one's own, and making great progress towards one's own theology of religions, are realistically attainable as well.

### What Would I Do Differently?

I might best start with some changes in course mechanics. One of the most involved students suggested that the course meet once a week, for nearly three hours, rather than the present twice a week. This was after very fruitful theological discussions in two successive classes had been cut short by the clock. Other students agreed, and so do I. Each format has had its advantages over the years, but I think the long class (with an intermission) more likely protects thorough discussion. Further, I would lengthen the papers slightly—the first two papers to five pages each, the “immersion” paper to ten, and the final paper to 14-15 pages. The papers are the lone requirements apart from discussion, and this measure would prevent especially the first two from being done too lightly. In addition, a good guest speaker could help distinctly in one or two of the weeks. Also, I am considering changing Borrmans' book on Christian-Muslim dialogue, because of certain student objections, if I can find a book as good or better (a report from '09: Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *The Heart of Islam* works very well). And finally, based on one student's accurate criticism of his/her professor, I need to know when to stop talking (the point was made that even for writing the course evaluations I had talked so long that there wasn't enough time to do them well. Guilty!). Pedagogically this bears upon the question of how much of the professor's own dialogue experience can help. It can help much, as long as it stops short of the course being about the professor.

Aside from those particular points, I want to give more thought to the differences within students' knowledge of relevant materials—especially the so called world religions. This factor has been important every year, but especially important in this Spring 2007 dialogue course and in my Fall 2006 Theology of Religions course. I get a read early in the course by having students introduce themselves, and asking them to

give some other information on a card. But more planning is needed on how, once certain different “sectors” of knowledge-level have been identified in the course, to keep the differing persons and sectors “in” the course, rather than lost in the profound discussions of a few, for example. Lack of knowledge of world religions not their own was, as I suspected, frequently reported as one of the differentiating factors among students. Of the five (out of eleven) evaluations which mentioned this specifically, the most eloquent suggested:

Perhaps some more structured time spent on presenting foundational beliefs of each religion would be useful for students with little or no background. “Comparative Theology” seemed to come up in a more ad hoc way, which can be confusing for those without even the barest foundations in the tenets of a religion.

I have subsequently devoted fifty to sixty minutes each to presentations of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, with positive student response. I have come to think this necessary in a theology school which does not separately require a world religions course.

And last of all let me give an example of “if I had it to do over again . . .” It occurred to me only after the dialogue course's end that, in the case of an excellent student who is quite fully involved in two religions, rather than letting her do her course ‘immersion’ in the second, newer religion, I should have had her immerse in another, third religion. Because, as we set it up, she wasn't dialoguing with a religion relatively new to her, which is the point, but with two religions she knew deeply. Next time, then . . . (by the way, I did tell her).



## GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION – JSTB

**RSFT3179 Interreligious Dialogue**

James D. Redington, SJ

Spring Semester 2007

This course will involve both study and immersion: study of the history and theology of dialogue chiefly but not exclusively in Catholic Christian circles; immersion by writing and by regular involvement with local temples, mosques, synagogues, meditation centers, etc. Lecture with discussion and meditation. Reflection and research papers, focusing on one's own interior dialogue as well as exterior dialogue. Fulfills the JSTB M.Div. interreligious dialogue/ecumenism requirement.

Required Reading:

***In the Paradise of Krishna (= Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban)***, by Klaus Klostermaier. Available used via Amazon, etc.

Vatican II's ***Nostra Aetate***, Pope John Paul II's ***Redemptoris Missio*** (#55-57), and Jesuit General Congregation 34's Decree #5, "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," all easily downloadable.

***The Intrareligious Dialogue***, by Raimon Panikkar. Revised edition. Paulist PB.

***Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism***, by Jacques Dupuis. Orbis Books PB.

The CDF Declaration ***Dominus Iesus*** (from Google, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), etc.).

***The Missionary and the Diviner***, by Michael Kirwen. Orbis Books PB.

***Guidelines for Dialogue between Muslims and Christians***, by Maurice Borrmans. Paulist Press PB.

***Living Zen, Loving God***, by Ruben Habito. Wisdom Publications PB.

Course Requirements:

Feb. 12 Due date for a 3-4 page report-with-reflection paper (= Paperette) on Klostermaier's book.

Mar. 12 Paperette based on Vatican documents, Panikkar and Dupuis so far.

Apr. 12/16 Enhanced paperette (8-9 pp.) on one's dialogue immersion in a local temple, mosque, synagogue, meditation center, etc. (as explained by Prof.).

May 17 Due date for a 12 page final paper on a topic, person, question, etc., connected with interreligious dialogue. Bibliographical help available, but one's own research encouraged.

Grading: 15%, 15%, 20% for first three; 25% final paper; 25% class participation and discussion, including attendance.

Class Meetings and Reading Assignments:

Jan. 29-Feb. 1 Introduction, meditations, Vatican II and John Paul II. Klostermaier 1-74, **NA, RM**.

Feb. 5-8 Deeper on Vatican Documents and Klostermaier. Klostermaier 75-118; Jesuit Dialogue Decree.

Feb. 12-15 Paperette on Klostermaier due on 12. Classes on Jesuit decree, then Panikkar. Panikkar xv-xx, 1-22; Dupuis 1-52.

Feb. 22 Panikkar's 'Attitudes and Models'. Panikkar 23-40; Dupuis 53-109.

Feb. 26-Mar. 1 Panikkar on Dialogue. Panikkar 41-59; Dupuis 110-70.

Mar. 5-8 Panikkar on Faith and Beliefs. Panikkar 61-71; Dupuis 170-234.

Mar. 12-15 Paperette due Mar. 12. Dupuis, for a change. Panikkar 73-83; Dupuis 235-304.

Mar. 19-22 More Dupuis; and Bede Griffiths. Panikkar 103-117; Dupuis 305-390.

Apr. 2-5 Concluding Dupuis and Panikkar; beginning *Dominus Iesus*. ***Dominus Iesus***; Kirwen vii-xxv.

Apr. 9 *Dominus Iesus*; then: Dialogue with African Religions. Kirwen 1-77.

Apr. 12 No class meeting. Vaishnava-Christian Dialogue in Wash., D.C.

Apr. 16-19 Enhanced paperette due Apr. 12 or 16. Dialogue in Africa. Kirwen 77-131; Borrmans 1-3, 9-27.

Apr. 23-26 From Africa to Islam. Borrmans 28-87.

Apr. 30-May 3 Dialogue with Islam. Borrmans 88-114; Habito ix-xvi, 1-25.

May 7-10 Dialogue with Buddhism. Habito 27-101.

May 14 Final Class. Dialogue Present and Future. Habito 103-114.

May 17 Due date for final paper.

**Note:** For our April 23 class period, our class and Dr. Marianne Farina's "Islamic Philosophy" class, at the GTU Dean's invitation, met in the GTU Library Board Room with 14 Muslim professors of Islamic subjects from universities in Indonesia. Format was: a 12-minute presentation by one of the visiting professors on 'Reason and Faith in Islam'; then questions and discussion or dialogue by students of professors, then by professors of students, etc.