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**THE GENEROUS GOD OF THE RELIGIONS**  
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## The Generous God of the Religions Part I

### Context - Religious Pluralism

There was a time when people who lived in a specific place shared a single culture & religion. Now: global travel, communications, immigration, refugees: rubbing up against others who differ. However committed we may be to our own faith, we are regularly confronted with people whose commitments offer a different claim about what is worth believing. Take US: in addition to the indigenous religions of the Native Americans and the homegrown religion of the Mormons, there are Christians of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant persuasion, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities, groups that follow Zoroastrian, Jain, Sikh, Confucian, Daoist, Shinto, and Baha'i traditions, and religions from the Caribbean such as Santería and Voo'dou ... (own experience?).

Immediate challenge - social & political: how to live with respect and tolerance in civil society. Given the history of violence between religions, this is no small thing. But intertwined with this is a burning theological question: how to be faithful to one's own beliefs while making space for the undoubted difference of others. Fundamentalist response: circle the wagons tightly to defend one's identity by declaring all others simply in error. Relativist response: flattens out differences, it doesn't much matter which religion people choose since all are variations of a common essence. Dialogic response: engage others with critical respect and affection, sharing the wisdom of their own tradition and seeking to learn that of others.

For Christians this option, practiced by both individuals and institutional churches, places the God we believe in a new context. The spiritual wisdom, practice of goodness, and undoubted devotion of people of the world's other religions makes clear that while in Jesus Christ Christians have a unique encounter with God's ways in the world ~ who else holds dear such belief in incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection! ~ we do not have a monopoly on either truth or virtue. The question becomes: what has God been up to outside our tribe? And how does that affect our own faith?

### The Back Story in Church Teaching

The evolution of this issue can be charted in three great and shifting questions. Can individual persons who are not Christian, that is, they are not baptized and do not believe in Jesus Christ, be saved? If yes, are they saved through the practice of their religion or despite it? If through, then do these religions enjoy a positive meaning in God's one plan of salvation for

the whole human race? The sequence entails thinking about the religions in the light of the universal significance of Jesus Christ at the core of Christian faith.

1. *First question.* The question about the possibility of individual salvation can be considered settled in the affirmative. For centuries the church held a largely pessimistic view. It was hard even for members of the church to get to heaven let alone those without benefit of the true faith, although the idea of “implicit faith” held the door slightly ajar for those outside the church. The Second Vatican Council was a watershed for this question. Without ambiguity it endorsed an optimism of grace. *The Constitution on the Church* teaches:

Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to know His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. - LG 16

And in (*Gaudium et Spes* 22): “we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every person the possibility ...” of salvation.

Thus did the church let go of its traditional pessimism and taught that the mercy of the living God reaches beyond Christian word and sacrament.

2. *Second question.* What role, then, do the religions play in the salvation of individuals? Are they positive paths, neutral institutions, or downright obstacles? For many moons of centuries theology dismissed other religions as pagan inventions or condescended to them as deficient ways people had of stumbling toward the divine. But conciliar teaching points to a more positive assessment.

“The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people.” (*Nostra Aetate* 2)

Consequently, church members are exhorted to a course of action:

prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people, as well as the values in their society and culture (NA 2).

Catholic thinking on this second question developed rapidly after the council. The argument crafted by Karl Rahner remains highly influential. Given that human beings are not pure spirits but embodied spirits-in-the-world with a social nature, all our relationships are mediated through the structures present in society in history. The same holds true for relationship with God. It is unthinkable that salvation could be achieved as a private, interior reality outside of historical structures. Since the religions with their teachings and rituals embody experience of the divine, these concrete religions become the mediation of salvation in various cultures.

JP II: God “does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression” (*RM* 55).

### New Context - 4 dialogues

3. *Third question.* the debate now turns lively over the question of how then to understand the religions in God's design to save the human race, given the central role Christians believe Jesus Christ to have in that same design. The nerve center for groundbreaking reflection on this question has been Asia. There Christians number roughly 3% of the population of 3.5 billion people. More than half of the Christian population of Asia lives in the Philippines, so bracketing that country for a moment leaves Christians as 1.5% of Asian people, scattered over that vast continent. This tiny Christian minority has necessarily lived their faith rubbing shoulders with the surrounding religions. The pioneering insight resulting from this context has made its way into church documents authored by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (14 countries + 10 associate members).

They see the church as a small group living amid a teeming mass of people many of whom are worn down by dehumanizing poverty yet rich in cultures and religions that give them dignity. The burning question is how to proclaim Christ as this tiny minority amid crushing poverty and competing religious systems. Rather than putting the institutional church at the center of Christian life and working to "plant the church" by conversions, although such are welcome, the bishops propose that the church's mission to proclaim Christ can best be carried out by promoting the kingdom of God, the reign of God's compassionate justice and peace. A huge shift of focus! This entails first and foremost a dialogue with the poor, their cultures, and their religions. As one Indian bishop put it, "This dialogical model is the new Asian way of being Church, promoting mutual understanding, harmony, and collaboration." It commits the church to the work of liberation with the poor, to the task of inculturating the church's western patterns into eastern forms, and to interreligious dialogue at every level.

Asian bishops call for and practice four forms of dialogue: life, action, prayer, and theological exchange.

\*dialogue of life - neighbors', holidays, births/weddings, deaths, etc.

\*dialogue of action - collaboration for social justice. Brings about mutual discovery: eg Aloysius Pieris in Sri Lanka: Having heard and actually seen how the Four Noble Truths enable Buddhist partners to participate in the transformation of village life, Christians come to appreciate this path. Correspondingly, Buddhists gain a better grasp of Christians' belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus, seeing how such commitment sustains efforts to transform society even in the face of apparent hopelessness.

\*dialogue of prayer - a. Assisi - JP II to Curia: Noting that all the participants at Assisi had prayed for peace in accord with their own religious identities, the pope continued that nevertheless the gathering had been a "wonderful manifestation of the unity which binds us together beyond the differences and divisions which are known to all." The reason for this is radically theological: the presence of God. "We can indeed maintain that every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person." Sense God in the other.

b. inculturation - vignette: In the mid-1990's I traveled to India for a Vatican-sponsored conference on Jesus Christ amid the savior figures of the world's religions (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue vs Secretariat for Non-Christians). One day during the conference the Catholic participants celebrated the Eucharist in a new rite recently approved by Rome. Using symbols drawn from Hinduism, this liturgy had a distinctly eastern cast. The presiding priests wore saffron shawls; both they and the congregation sat on pillows in the lotus position (if one could manage it!). The opening penitential rite ended with forgiveness being signified as we each received the *bindi* or red dot, placed between the eyes as symbol of a third eye that seeks wisdom within. Before the gospel was read we swallowed a spoonful of rose-scented water, which became a cushion within us where the word of God could enter and dwell. After the consecration of bread and wine we chanted the Sanskrit acclamation "*Om, Shri Yeshu Khristaya namaha ... Om,*" over and over again, and then lapsed into a profoundly quiet, peaceful, meditative silence. At the kiss of peace we bowed toward each other with folded hands as is the custom in India. Throughout the Mass there was abundant use of Indian musical instruments and chants, incense, and marigold flowers as one would find in Hindu temple service.

I have never been at a liturgy like this. Its effect was profoundly calming and strangely awakening. It was obviously still a Catholic Mass, but the power of the Hindu symbols had a transforming effect. Pressed into service to celebrate death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, these symbols came already saturated with millennia of religious experience that approached the Holy One in non-personal terms. They loosened the grip of my predominantly western imagination which is still fundamentally anthropomorphic, and freed the mystery of the God to be beyond all telling, yet ever more profoundly near.

\*dialogue of theological exchange - theologians, monks and nuns who follow the monastic vocation, or pastoral leaders speak face-to-face, or engage each other's texts. James Fredericks story of Krishna and the *gopis*. According to this popular Hindu story, Krishna, the deity who represents the sweetness and passion of divine love, comes to a village late one night, playing enchanting music on his flute. All the milkmaids (*gopis*) awaken and join in dancing with him. Then jealousy sets in as each wants to him for herself alone. Krishna disappears. On the head of their sorrow he reappears with his music, this time multiplying his presence so that for every *gopi* there is Krishna gazing into the eyes of his beloved. Krishna's love is such that there is enough to go around, no matter how many milkmaids join the dance.

In Fredericks' analysis, Christians have been no strangers to the fault of the milkmaids, seeing themselves as possessing God's love to the exclusion of Jews, the pagans, the "others." The obvious point is that those who try to possess divine love for themselves alone succeed only in making it disappear from their own lives. We cannot hoard; we can only dance. This wisdom deepens when the *gopi* story is read in tandem with Jesus' well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. Here the father is extravagantly generous but the elder brother, like the milkmaids, resents that love is being lavished on another and claims his own superior right to it. Jesus' parable suggests that there is enough of God's forgiving love to go around. The God of Jesus dances with tax collectors, plays the flute for sinners. In the end we are left with the elder son, confronting a decision: to go into the banquet, sharing the love poured out on good and bad alike, or to stay out in the cold, nursing our resentment.

At times claims do conflict, and the dialogue of theological exchange requires that the truth of one's own tradition cannot be bartered away. But even stubborn points of religious difference remain places where the heart can listen and the mind can think. The effort infuses new vitality and insight into Christian faith, leading as it does to deeper, more appreciative knowledge of the expansiveness of a loving God.

Based on their experience with this open approach, the church in Asia has offered a positive assessment of the religions in God's continuing plan of salvation. The "new way of being church" is bringing new discoveries of divine presence beyond church boundaries. Dialogue has such a powerful effect not only because one is exposed to new ideas intellectually but also because spiritually, in the words of John Paul II, "by dialogue we let God be present in our midst; as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we open ourselves to God."

### Brakes

In the midst of this ferment, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith raised a red flag of warning in its declaration *Dominus Iesus* (*The Lord Jesus*, 2000). Concerned that appreciating religious pluralism may well lead to relativism, it sets forth what must be upheld. Most centrally Christians need to maintain the salvific role of Jesus Christ which is "unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute" (par. 15). The complete character of revelation in Christ, furthermore, entails that the Catholic Church alone is the universal sacrament of this mystery, having an indispensable relation to the salvation of every human being.

From this standpoint, *Dominus Iesus* then draws conclusions about the other religions. They are not complementary to the Catholic faith. It may not be said that their sacred texts are inspired. The Holy Spirit does not work salvifically in them apart from Christ. Regardless of what one might think at first, this does not lessen the Church's sincere respect for the religions of the world. Citing Vatican II, the document acknowledges that various religious traditions "offer religious elements which come from God" (par. 21). Some of their prayers and rituals may open the human heart to the action of God. Some of their sacred texts are "instruments by which countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain their life-relationship with God" (par. 8). Still, regarding the religions themselves, this document made a negative judgment: "*objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation." (par. 22)

This declaration met with a decidedly mixed reception. Many commentators applauded its emphasis on the saving centrality of Christ and its call to avoid responses to religious pluralism that would water down Christian faith. But the torrent of criticism from religious leaders and scholars across a broad spectrum shows that something essential was seriously missing. The vexation stemmed mainly from the way it denigrated the value of other religious traditions. Virtually all critics noted that this declaration seemed to come out of a vacuum, displaying no concrete knowledge of others gleaned from interreligious dialogue which might have tempered its judgments. Some noted a certain illogic: if the grace in sacred books comes from Christ, as *Dominus Iesus* maintains, then the grace contained in the Sutras and the Upanishads, the Qur'an and the Dao-de-jing must be from God, and these texts cannot be mere

human inventions, as the declaration also asserts. If the religions contain elements that “come from God,” then does not the judgment that they are “gravely deficient” rebound to insult the divine manner of acting in the world? For all of its positive statements about the presence of the Spirit in other religions, this declaration’s negative assessment of their identity before God was seen by many engaged in interreligious dialogue to be deeply wounding, rife with potential for violence, and in need of correction.

As the argument over *Dominus Iesus* shows, there is no consensus over Question #3 - the vital issue of what God intends by the existence of multiple religious paths. *Dominus Iesus* is one way to interpret the religions in light of faith in Jesus Christ, but people in dialogue who themselves confess Christ as the Way have experienced a reverence for other religions that points to a broader, deeper, wider play of God’s merciful ways. The third question emerges with all its complexity: holding faithfully to Jesus Christ, how does one make room theologically for God’s handiwork in the other religions? And what glimpse in turn does this open onto the living God?

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## The Generous God of the Religions Part II

### I. Key Christian Truths

#### *1. The Plenitude of God*

To begin with, the age-old truth that the incomprehensible mystery of God lies beyond all human control and understanding. Rather than signifying divine absence, this points to a divine overabundance that fills the world to its depths and then overflows. There is no end to the being and fullness of God who creates heaven and earth and is continuously present and active throughout the world, all ages and all cultures. Throughout history this gracious mystery approaches us with little theophanies, signs and revelations and events that invite us into relationship. As Jeannine Hill Fletcher suggests, this is the starting point for Christian response to religious diversity. A plenitude in God that is beyond imagination.

#### *2. The Presence and Activity of the Holy Spirit*

Speaking as a Christian within a trinitarian framework, a number of thinkers in dialogue now suggest that theology’s lens for reflecting on this issue should be a theology of the Holy Spirit. The actual presence of God drawing near and passing by throughout the whole world, the Spirit is the giver of the inmost, divinizing gift of grace to all human beings. Every personal encounter of God with human beings occurs in the Spirit, and it is in the Spirit that people make their response. This presence of the Spirit is a power and a joy, an outpouring and a gift. It is not controllable by any institution or community but is effective beyond the confines of the church, bringing forth fruits of holiness in the church, we hope, and also in people who do not partake of Christian word and sacrament. Like the wind blowing where it will, the Spirit creates authentic experience of the one God’s saving presence throughout the world wherever people live their lives with integrity.

In a problematic way theology has often subordinated the mission of the Spirit to that of Christ, thereby tying salvation very tightly to the church which carries forth Christ's mission in the world. In truth, the crucified and risen Word of God and the church which proclaims God's mercy in him are constitutive for the salvation of all. In Jesus Christ God's saving activity reaches its greatest intensity in the concreteness of history - "The Word became flesh ...". But the manifestation of God's presence and activity in the religions cannot be limited to what has been revealed in Jesus Christ and proclaimed by the church (... finite ...). While such manifestation would never be contradictory to Christian revelation, God being faithful and not two-faced, it might be different. Michael Amaladoss SJ of India put it this way: "The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. But she does not just repeat what Jesus has done in the Christian community. Otherwise the other religions would not be different."

At the outset this opens the possibility that others might have distinct encounters with the divine which don't deny what we know through Jesus, but can be new resources for Christian exploration into the overabundance of God.

### 3. *The Person and Mission of Jesus Christ*

What to do? See Jesus as the incarnate Word, crucified and risen, who instead of lording it over other manifestations of God in the world instead washes feet.

The incarnation was an act of humility. Refusing to cling to divine glory, Christ divested himself and became like a lowly slave - *kenosis* (Phil 2:5-11). Paul's insistence that Jesus' role as savior is tightly tied to this act of self-emptying gives a specific shape to divine love.

It also undergirds the self-giving manner of Jesus' ministry as seen in the gospels. He preached the *reign of God*: a rich symbol that appears at the center of his life and ministry, this points to the situation that will prevail when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven: the lion will lie down with the lamb; armies will beat their swords into ploughshares; the woman will find her lost coin, the shepherd his sheep; the blind will see, the lame walk; all people will have their daily bread; the oppressed will be set free; tears will be wiped away. In a word, peace and justice, the blessings of life will prevail for the earth and all its inhabitants. The gospel accounts of Jesus' words and deeds show how this promise out works out in the concrete, linking his salvific role with practices of service: feeding, healing, teaching all who would listen, challenging the scornful powers-that-be. The disciples are called to do likewise. In these ways the reign of God already begins to take root in the world, through their lives.

In Christian faith, Jesus Christ is *the* sacrament of the encounter with God. Through his life, death, and resurrection God has forged a saving bond with the human race that cannot be broken. Conversely, his words and actions reveal the heart of God: Jesus is the face of God's mercy in person; the cross brings God's love into the depths of our death; Christ's resurrection is the pledge of life eternal for all persons, indeed the whole cosmos. This is a sacrament, an historical moment/event that signals a broader economy, the presence of divine compassion coextensive with the whole history of humankind.

It is odd, when you think about it, that for centuries belief in Christ was used to obscure the work of God in other religions rather than to expand our appreciation of it. An imperialist framework for christology is the reason for this, I suggest. Tied to expanding hierarchical authority, this interpretation of Christ made the argument that since the Word is incarnate in Jesus, then God is not present elsewhere, or at least not so truly and lovingly. An aggressive pattern of thinking led to the conclusion that since Christ is number one, no other religion is all that worthy of attention. Not only was divine presence denied elsewhere, but Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life was brandished triumphally like a stick to render others inferior. The God of Jesus Christ became a figure of closedness rather than openness.

Understanding Jesus Christ as the sacrament of God salvation enfleshed in history under the sign of *kenosis* and interpreting his significance in the light of his preaching the reign of God makes possible a more generous view. Christians need not, indeed must not, abandon the faith that Jesus is in person Wisdom made flesh whose advent holds saving significance for the whole of humankind, nor stop explaining to others the beauty of the gospel and its effect on our lives. This is the treasure entrusted to our hands in the living tradition of Christian faith. But in the midst of earth's history that limits every divine manifestation and human insight, this proclamation should be done in the spirit of the same humble self-emptying that we are talking about. As Joseph Hough put it, "It is essential for Christian faith that we know we have seen the face of God in the face of Jesus. It is not essential to believe that no one else has seen God and experienced redemption in another time and place." When placed within an expansive appreciation of what the Holy One has been up to, even the doctrine that Jesus Christ has a salvific role that is "unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute," as *Dominus Iesus* phrases it, need not, indeed must not, mean that other traditions have been deprived of God's gracious presence and action. Holding our truth as absolutely true does not mean we have to consider ourselves in possession of all the truth worth having. For God "is greater than our heart" (1Jn 3:20), and claims the freedom to be Love at work in all lives and traditions. With this line of thinking we can understand that the life-giving presence of God in Jesus and the community that bears his presence onwards in history need not, indeed must not, rule out other people experiencing God's intentional activity through different means generated by the same Spirit. Rather than denying this presence, the advent of the Word of God in the flesh in Jesus Christ points to divine mystery everywhere present, and explicitly so in the religions. In a word, the incarnation of God in the person and history of Jesus Christ is unique and universal, but there is yet more to divine plenitude.

## II. The Significance of the Religions

In light of these Christian insights into God, Christ, and the Spirit, theology in dialogue returns to the third great question about the meaning of the religions. To explore this further, I'd like to use the theology of Jacques Dupuis in his book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. (Belgian Jesuit, 40 yrs. in India, Vatican investigation; OK; superb line of thinking).

He suggests that we perform a thought experiment: try to take a God's-eye view of history. Admittedly this is impossible, not to say presumptuous. But if we could see the sweep of history from God's point of view, what would be the meaning of the plurality of living faiths with which Christians are surrounded? If there is only one God, then presumably there is one plan by which providence intends to bring all people into saving union. This plan presumably has an internal consistency, God not being scatter-brained. By this line of thinking we may reach the realization that the divine design for the salvation of the world is *multifaceted*.

This design reaches its highest historical density in Jesus Christ with significance for all. Yet the eternal Word of God is not constrained, not exhausted, not all used up in this one particular history, nor is the Spirit of God thereby limited in her outpouring into the world. Rather, God's gracious initiative lays down different paths in different cultures, times, and places inviting people to share divine life. Assuming that the real presence of grace and truth can only have a divine origin, the religions can be seen as God's handiwork. Their saving figures and sacred texts, their creeds, moral codes and rituals, are nothing less than divine work present in the world through Word and Spirit: "Other religious traditions represent true interventions and authentic manifestations of God in the history of peoples." Their very existence reveals the overflowing generosity of God who before, during, and after the coming of Christ approaches all people with the invitation to divine life.

Moreover, Their very variety manifests the bountiful depths of the living God, which is never spent. "More divine truth and grace are found operative in the entire history of God's dealings with humankind than are available simply in the Christian tradition."

In a word, the living God is not a Christian. Rather, the incalculable mystery which the Christian scripture dares to call Love (1 Jn 4:8 and 16) dazzles our imaginations with the diversity of saving patterns of engagement throughout history.

Dupuis sharpens this point by framing the issue in technical terms. Does religious pluralism exist *de facto*, meaning is it just a fact of the world today, a regrettable one meant to be overcome by the eventual conversion of all to Christ in the church? Or does religious pluralism exist *de jure*, meaning is it a good intended by God "in principle"? In other words, in terms of God's intent, is the plurality of religions only permitted or positively willed? The discoveries experienced in interreligious dialogue lead him to suggest *de jure* as the more adequate answer. Virtually every church pronouncement since Vatican II, including *Dominus Iesus*, has acknowledged the presence and activity of the Spirit in the religions themselves. Is this just haphazard behavior on the Spirit's part, a casual engagement with people's spiritual quest willy-nilly? Such superficiality is unthinkable. If the Holy Spirit is actually God, then in the religions God is acting "in principle." The religions, then, exist as part of "God's own plan for humankind." Religious pluralism can be seen as part of God's single, rich, intricate design for the salvation of the human race, one divine love working itself out through a multifaceted plan.

This positive assessment of pluralism is profoundly theological. It rests not on the value of diversity in general as seen in biology and culture, but on a glimpse of God's rich plenitude. Dupuis' words capture the realization of those who have walked this road of prayerful experience and reflection: "The expansiveness of God's inner life overflowing outside the Godhead is the root cause for the existence in history of divergent paths leading to a unique common goal, the absolute mystery of God." As different paths to salvation, the religions belong to the overflowing communication of the triune God who speaks "in many and diverse ways" to peoples and nations, as the letter to the Hebrews attests (1:1). Like everything in our fractured world, including Christianity, religions exist under the sign of ambiguity, good and evil, grace and sin mixed. But their positive wisdom and grace, brought about by the Spirit of God, allows the judgment that religious pluralism is a divine gift. In principle it rests on the magnificent, superabundant generosity of God who is Love.

### Conclusion

Actual dialogic encounter with other religions is leading theology to a glimpse of the overflowing generosity of the living God who has left no people abandoned but has bestowed divine grace on every culture in the concrete. Rabbi Jonathan Sachs (chief rabbi of Great Britain) proposes some arresting analogies to show the enrichment this can bring. What would faith be like if we acknowledged the image of God in another, whose truth is not our truth? It is like feeling secure in one's own home, yet moved by the beauty of foreign places, knowing they are someone else's home, not mine, but still part of the glory of the world that is ours. It is like being fluent in English, yet thrilled by the rhythms of an Italian sonnet. It is like realizing that your life is a sentence written in the story of your own faith, yet pleased to know that there are other stories of faith written in other lives, all part of the great narrative of God's call and humanity's response. Those who are confident in their faith are not threatened but enlarged by the different ways of others. As we discover deeper truth than what we thought we possessed as a monopoly, the dignity of difference becomes a source of blessing.

This is a grace of our age: encountering multiple religious traditions widens the horizon wherein we catch sight of the loving plenitude of God's mercy.

N.B.: This talk is based on Elizabeth Johnson's book, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*, Chapter 8: *Generous God of the Religions – Religious Pluralism*; Continuum International Publishing Group; N.Y., N.Y.