

**ASIAN
HORIZONS**

Vol. 7, No. 3, September 2013

Pages: 568-581

WAS JACQUES DUPUIS A NEO- RAHNERIAN?

Gerald O'Collins, SJ[†]

*Australian Catholic University and MCD University of Divinity,
Melbourne*

In a 1998 review of Jacques Dupuis' *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Gavin D'Costa argued that "Dupuis is basically a Rahnerian... Theologically, he carries on from where Rahner left off."¹ After Dupuis died in 2004, D'Costa repeated this judgement about Dupuis. When critically examining what he called the "structural inclusivism" of Rahner in *Christianity and World Religions*, D'Costa introduced Dupuis and named him a "neo-Rahnerian."² In writing of interreligious dialogues, D'Costa stated that Dupuis at various points not only paralleled Rahner's thought but had also "developed" it.³

Elsewhere D'Costa has classified Dupuis differently. When dealing with pluralist arguments and, in particular, with the writing of Paul Knitter, D'Costa remarked: "This emphasis [Knitter's emphasis] on

[†]**Gerald O'Collins, SJ:** After receiving a PhD from the University of Cambridge, taught for 33 years at the Gregorian University (Rome) where he was also dean of the theology faculty (1985-91). As well as publishing hundreds of articles in professional and popular journals, he has authored or co-authored sixty published books. The latest include: *Rethinking Fundamental Theology* (Oxford University Press), *Believing in the Resurrection* (Paulist Press) and the first volume of his memoirs, *A Midlife Journey* (Connor Court and Gracewing). He is an adjunct professor of Australian Catholic University and a Fellow of the MCD University of Divinity. Email: ocollins@unigre.it

¹J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997; G. D'Costa, review in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 59 (1998) 910-14, at 910.

²G. D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, 19-23, at 22.

³G. D'Costa, "The Trinity in Interreligious Dialogue," in Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, ed., *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 573-85, at 578-79.

the Spirit as a way of endorsing other religions as God-given and inspired, without having to have an anonymous Christ present, is to be found in the works of [Roger] Haight, [Georges] Khodr, Knitter, and, with a twist, Dupuis."⁴ "With a twist"—an unusual theological expression—presumably means "with a small variation." Whether or not the picture of the Spirit present and Christ absent accurately presents the views of Knitter, not to mention Haight and Khodr, the passage gravely misrepresents what Dupuis had written in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*: the universal presence and activity of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are distinguishable but never separable.⁵ But, finally, in a 2013 essay "Christian Theology of Religions," D'Costa abandoned this attempt to link Dupuis with Knitter and other pluralists, and once again labelled Dupuis a "neo-Rahnerian."⁶ Hence D'Costa's most recent (is it his final?) label for Dupuis is that of being a neo-Rahnerian.

As far as I know, however, no other theologian has labelled Dupuis a "Rahnerian" or "neo-Rahnerian." They had their chance to do so; there were well over one hundred reviews (in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages) of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, as well as articles in journals and chapters in books, dedicated in whole or in part, to a critical evaluation of Dupuis' views.⁷ But nowhere was Dupuis described as a Rahnerian or neo-Rahnerian. At most what you find are remarks that associate Rahner and Dupuis, as holding inclusive views in the

⁴G. D'Costa, "Pluralist Arguments," in Karl J. Becker and Ilaria Morali, ed., *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Survey*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010, 329–44, at 337.

⁵See e.g. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 321, 367.

⁶G. D'Costa, "Christian Theology of Religions," in Chad Meister and James Beilby, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Modern Christian Thought*, London/New York: Routledge, 2013, 661–72, at 666. As far as I can find out (with the expert help of Simon Wayte), before D'Costa in 2009 first called Dupuis a neo-Rahnerian, the term had appeared in the London *Tablet* for 29 June 1996. In an article on "Girard's Breakthrough," James Allison referred approvingly to John Milbank's 1990 book, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, and spoke of "neo-Rahnerian individualism" (849). But Allison did not apply the term to Dupuis, nor had Milbank, who had simply written of Rahner's 'integralism' (p. 220).

⁷For a bibliography of reviews of and reactions to *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, see Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins, ed., *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003, 270–81; for further comments (in English and Italian) on Dupuis' work, see G. O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate," forthcoming in *Theological Studies*.

theology of religions. They have developed similar ideas that justify setting themselves side by side. Thus Francis Clooney wrote of “those inclusivists theologies in the great tradition of Karl Rahner, SJ, and Jacques Dupuis, SJ, that balance claims to Christian uniqueness with a necessary openness to learning from other religions.”⁸ Yet did Dupuis not merely stand side by side with Rahner but also depend on him in a way that would justify D’Costa’s judgement?

Differences and Similarities

Since Rahner was born in 1904 and Dupuis in 1923, they more or less belonged to successive generations. Rahner completed his higher studies in Austria, Germany, and Holland, whereas Dupuis completed his in Belgium, India, and Italy. Rahner’s doctoral dissertation in theology at Innsbruck dealt with a patristic theme (the church born from the wounded side of Christ), whereas Dupuis wrote his doctorate (on Origen) for the Gregorian University (Rome). A common interest in the fathers of the church brought Dupuis and Rahner together. Moreover, over the years Dupuis reviewed various works by Rahner: notably, seven volumes of his *Theological Investigations* and his 1976 classic, *Foundations of Christian Faith*. It was in 1983, the year before Rahner’s death, that Dupuis published his last review of a book by Rahner.⁹ Nevertheless, as he spent 36 years of his life in India and (even after being appointed to the Gregorian University in 1984) remained until death in 2004 a member of the Calcutta Jesuit Province, the interfaith setting for Dupuis’ work set him apart from Rahner, who passed most of his life in the traditionally Catholic countries of Austria and Germany.

Rahner was famously interested in and influenced by the philosophy of Joseph Maréchal and Martin Heidegger, and went on to develop his own theological/philosophical anthropology. Some misguided, latter-day critics dismiss Rahner as primarily a philosopher, who dabbled in theology. Even such critics could never make such comments about Dupuis. Of course, he grew to appreciate classical Hindu philosophy and, unlike Rahner, enjoyed a close knowledge of Hinduism in general. But the major strength from which he drew came from his encyclopaedic knowledge of modern

⁸F.X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 16.

⁹For details, see *In Many and Diverse Ways*, 232, 234, 235, 237, 239, 240, 241, 243, 245, 247, 248, 249.

theologians and of the history of Christian doctrine. From 1960 to 2004, Dupuis published in *The Clergy Monthly* (renamed in 1974 the *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*) and in the *Gregorianum*, 562 reviews of books, mainly written in (or translated into) English, French, and Italian.¹⁰ Decades of work as editor of those journals also involved reading articles submitted by theologians working around the world.

A common, scholarly interest in publishing the doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church associated Dupuis and Rahner. In 1938 Josef Neuner and Heinrich Roos brought out *Der Glaube der Kirche in den Urkunden der Lehrverkündigung*, a compendium of documents on the Catholic faith, gathered according to themes and arranged in twelve chapters, each with a brief introduction. Rahner edited the subsequent six editions of this volume, until Karl-Heinz Weger took over the eighth edition in 1971. In 1967 an English translation of the sixth edition appeared.¹¹ Rahner also served as editor for the 28th to the 31st edition (1952–57) of *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, a work launched by Heinrich Denzinger in 1854. While very many of the same documents are published in both volumes, “Denzinger” differed from “Neuner-Roos” by being arranged throughout in a chronological (and not a thematic) order and by publishing the documents in their original languages (mostly Greek and then Latin).

After the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), Dupuis and Neuner (now a colleague teaching theology in India) set themselves to prepare an updated collection of doctrinal documents, gathered in 23 thematic chapters (each with their own introduction) that followed an opening section on “symbols and professions of faith.” Assisted by eight other professors, Neuner and Dupuis produced in 1973 the first edition of *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Developments of the Catholic Church*. Dupuis continued this project, enlisting other colleagues in the work, which grew from the 711 pages of the original edition to the 1135 pages of the seventh edition.¹²

¹⁰For details of reviews, see *In Many and Diverse Ways*, 231–69. Given the large number of books which Dupuis regularly reviewed, the fact that over the years he reviewed seven volumes of *Theological Investigations*, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, and a few other works by Rahner did not mean paying more than ordinary attention to him.

¹¹*The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, trans. Geoffrey Stevens, Cork: Mercier, 1967, described as “compiled by” H. Roos and J. Neuner and “edited by” K. Rahner.

¹²*The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2001.

During the years of Vatican II, Rahner proved an outstanding and influential *peritus*, and after the Council closed in December 1965 he contributed much to the analysis and dissemination of its teaching.¹³ Dupuis wrote two popular articles on the Christocentrism of Vatican II,¹⁴ was deeply involved with implementing in India the conciliar reform of the liturgy, and ensured that the Council's teaching was adequately represented in *The Christian Faith*. After his transfer to the Gregorian University, in 1985 he became editor of the *Gregorianum*, and quickly made the journal a means for discussing and promoting the teaching of Vatican II.¹⁵ Both before and after he transferred to the Gregorian University, Dupuis attended (as an interpreter) four of the bishops' synods held in Rome (1974, 1983, 1985, and 1987). A long article he published after the 1974 synod (on evangelization) showed how deeply committed he was to implementing Vatican II's teaching on the collegial co-responsibility of all the bishops "with Peter and under Peter."¹⁶

Thus far, in exploring the question of whether Dupuis could or even should be called a neo-Rahnerian, I have sketched some of the background data that either bring Dupuis and Rahner together (e.g. an effective desire to make the doctrines of the Catholic Church available and a deep commitment to the teaching of Vatican II) or set them apart (e.g. Rahner's philosophical concerns and strengths, on the one side, and the interreligious setting for much of Dupuis' academic life and his familiarity with Hindu thought, on the other). We could press ahead and invoke further relevant data. While both of them, for instance, revealed the impact of their Ignatian roots, Rahner differed from Dupuis by persistently publishing in the areas of Christian spirituality and preaching. But, since it is apropos of the theology of religions that D'Costa has applied to Dupuis a Rahnerian label, we should focus on that specific area and test the validity of D'Costa's judgement on *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*.

¹³From vol. 5 to vol. 22 of *Theological Investigations*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966–91 Rahner repeatedly reflected on Vatican II, with thirteen chapters expressly dedicated to conciliar topics and other chapters regularly quoting or at least referring to the Council's teaching. Rahner was also an influential member of the editorial committee for H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 5 vols, London: Burns & Oates, 1967–69.

¹⁴For details, see *In Many and Diverse Ways*, 233.

¹⁵For details, see G. O'Collins, *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006, 45–47.

¹⁶This article is reproduced in G. O'Collins, *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, 173–201.

But to do that we need to remember that this book followed *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* and *Who Do You Say that I Am?*, and so appeared as the third in a trilogy.¹⁷ Unlike many commentators on Dupuis' thinking, Mara Brecht has recognized how his thinking about other living faiths and Christianity's relationship to them should be explored within the context of his integral Christology. She writes: "unless one reads his view of religious pluralism through the lens of his [total] Christology, one mistakes its status."¹⁸ Like her, Don Schweitzer clearly acknowledges how *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* was the third work in a trilogy. He is thus at pains to evaluate Dupuis' reflections on Christianity and world religions within the context of his complete Christology which Dupuis developed in a Trinitarian key.¹⁹ Only that context will enable us to evaluate the accuracy of naming Dupuis a "neo-Rahnerian."

Earlier Statements

Even before examining *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, we should, however, recall some earlier statements by Dupuis (in 1971 and 1976) that foreshadowed what he would later elaborate. Terrence Merrigan has recalled a 1971 conference at which Dupuis and Yves Congar differed on the value of other religions in mediating salvation for their followers. Congar refused to say that "these religions are divinely legitimated *in themselves* and *as such*."²⁰ Speaking at the same conference, Dupuis took a different line: "it is said that, though non-Christians are saved due to the sincerity of their subjective religious life, their religion has for them no objective salvific value. However, the dichotomy on which this restriction is based, is seriously inadequate. Subjective and objective religion can be distinguished; they cannot be separated." Dupuis went on to say that it is "theologically unrealistic to maintain that, though non-Christians can be saved, their religion plays no part in their salvation."²¹ This led him to the conclusion: "no religious life is

¹⁷J. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, trans. Robert R. Barr, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991; *Who Do You Say that I Am?*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994.

¹⁸M. Brecht, "The Humanity of Christ: Jacques Dupuis' Christology and Religious Pluralism," *Horizons* 35 (2008) 54–71, at 54.

¹⁹D. Schweitzer, *Contemporary Christologies*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010, 115–25.

²⁰Quoted by T. Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar in Roman Catholic Theology of Religions: The Case of Jacques Dupuis," in Gabriel Flynn, ed., *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005, 427–57, at 452; emphasis original.

²¹In a lecture given in April 1961, Rahner expressed a similar conviction, but typically he spoke of what was anthropologically rather than theologically realistic.

purely natural," and "no historical religion is merely human."²² In this debate with Congar, Dupuis argued that the objective reality of religions cannot be separated from the subjective experience of those religions, and that the religions embody something more than the merely human, so as to be in some sense divinely legitimated in themselves and as such.

Merrigan rightly recalled the 1971 conference, and commented that Dupuis was more or less working out what he had already said at this conference when he wrote in 1997: "in the overall history of God's dealings with humankind," the world's religions express "distinct modalities of God's self-communication to persons and peoples."²³ Merrigan could also have cited some comments from Dupuis on Pope Paul VI's 1975 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which followed the 1974 synod on "Evangelization of the Modern World." Dupuis had attended the synod not only as an interpreter but also as secretary to Archbishop (later) Cardinal Lawrence Picachy of Calcutta, adviser to Archbishop Angelo Fernandes, and collaborator of Fr. Duraisamy Simon Amalorpavadass, one of the two secretaries for the synod.²⁴ After summarizing accurately and fully *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in his final pages Dupuis showed how this document failed to reflect the open attitude of the synod on a number of important issues: evangelization itself; particular churches and small communities; indigenous liturgy, catechesis and theology; and *non-Christian religions*. Apropos of the last point, he urged that these religions should be seen not "merely as expressions of human aspirations towards God but [also] as embodying for their followers a first, though incomplete, approach of God to human beings."²⁵ Here, even

Given their social nature and radical solidarity with each other, for followers of other religions to "have a positive saving relationship with God, they are going to have it *within that religion*" which is at their disposal: K. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," trans. Karl-Heinz Kruger, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, 115–34, at 129; emphasis added.

²²Dupuis, as quoted by Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar," 453. Here Dupuis agreed with the view, promoted by Henri de Lubac, Rahner, and others, that human beings are created with a supernatural goal, which is intrinsic to human nature as it actually exists. Hence there is no such thing as the "purely natural" or the "merely human." For further details, see G. O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 53–54.

²³Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar," 453. Merrigan is quoting Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 212.

²⁴See O'Collins, *Living Vatican II*, 233–34.

²⁵J. Dupuis, "Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI," *Vidyajyoti* 40 (1976) 218–30, at 230.

more clearly than what he said at the 1971 conference, Dupuis prefigured what he would develop in his 1997 book.

In terms of the issue being explored in this article, neither in 1971 nor in 1976, when he espoused a more open view on the divine involvement in and salvific value of other religions, did Dupuis do so as if he were a neo-Rahnerian carrying on where Rahner had left off. At the 1971 conference Dupuis was driven by dissatisfaction at what he heard from Congar. In his 1976 article he showed how Pope Paul VI had failed to reflect the more open attitude towards "non-Christian religions," which Dupuis had heard expressed at the 1974 synod. Dissatisfaction with what Congar and Paul VI said and long experience of the religious "others" motivated Dupuis' remarks rather than any desire to take further the thought of Rahner.

The First Two Works of a Trilogy

In the opening volume of Dupuis' trilogy, the first part of the book explored some Hindu themes and the second part examined what is involved in confessing Christ as "one and universal." Rahner may be strongly represented in the bibliography,²⁶ but he appears in the text merely three times and then only briefly.²⁷ More attention is paid to Panikkar, whose positions Dupuis presents and, to some extent, questions.²⁸

In *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, Dupuis discusses in one page "the inclusive paradigm" of Rahner, which holds together Christ's role as "God's definitive revelation and the absolute Saviour" with the efficacious "elements of grace" to be found in other religious traditions. It is through a commentary from Gavin D'Costa

²⁶Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, 281–96. The bibliography lists 22 entries under the name of Rahner, but eighteen of these entries are all particular chapters in *Theological Investigations*, and only four are books. The eleven entries that follow the name of Raymond Panikkar are all books.

²⁷Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, 109; see 136. On pages 129–30, Dupuis detects ambiguity in the difference between Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" and "explicit Christianity," but finds this ambiguity "erased" in his *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych, New York: Seabury Press, 1978. What Dupuis does not, however, note is the way in which Rahner did more than merely clarify the difference between "anonymous" and "explicit" Christianity. He distanced himself from the language of anonymous Christianity"; for details, see O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 56–57.

²⁸Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, 184–88.

himself that Dupuis takes up Rahner; Dupuis ends the page by endorsing D'Costa's account and drawing from him a long quotation.²⁹ At this point Dupuis raises no objection to the language of "definitive" revelation and "absolute" Saviour.

Three years later in *Who Do You Say I Am?*, Dupuis inevitably introduced Rahner much more frequently: in fact, fifteen times. That book went, of course, beyond questions of Christ and other religions to present itself as a broad introduction to Christology, an area in which Rahner had developed important views through various essays in *Theological Investigations* and in the long Christological section of *Foundations of Christian Faith*.³⁰

In the course of summarizing several anthropological approaches, Dupuis presented Rahner's transcendental Christology with appreciation but drew attention to its limited biblical basis.³¹ He cited Rahner's response to the question of divine immutability being qualified through the incarnation,³² as well as Rahner's reflections on the human self-awareness and knowledge of Jesus.³³ Apropos of the human freedom of Jesus, Dupuis obviously found Rahner's argument congenial, quoting the same passage three times: "his [Christ's] humanity is the freest and most independent, not in spite of, but because of its being taken up, by being constituted as the self-utterance of God."³⁴

In *Who Do You Say I Am?*, when Dupuis came to reflect on the situation of the followers of other faiths in the light of the person and work of Christ, he argued that "an open Christocentrism... represents the only way available to a Christian theology of religions truly worthy of the name."³⁵ When taking up, once again approvingly, D'Costa's *Theology of Religious Pluralism* and its presentation of Rahner's inclusive Christology, Dupuis repeated word for word, with

²⁹Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, 109; Dupuis cites G. D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, 136.

³⁰Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 176–321.

³¹Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 24–25.

³²Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 91–92.

³³Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 117, 121.

³⁴Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 95, 118, 136–37. Here Dupuis quotes Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," *Theological Investigations*, trans. Kevin Smyth, vol. 4, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974, 105–20, at 117.

³⁵Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 160.

only a few sentences omitted, what he had already written in *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*.³⁶ There is no hint here of Dupuis wanting to develop further Rahner's inclusive thought and thus prove himself worthy of being named a "neo-Rahnerian."

The Third Work in the Trilogy

Three years later in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, the longest discussion of Rahner's views comes in a section on "anonymous Christianity." Dupuis examines various objections to this notion, and endorses a "brilliant" article by D'Costa when responding to the criticisms. Nevertheless, Dupuis does not personally appropriate the theme of "anonymous Christianity," when explaining how salvation through Christ reaches "the others."³⁷ He ends this section by remarking that "Karl Rahner has had his followers and sympathizers," names ten of them, but evidently does not want to take a place on that list.³⁸

Elsewhere Dupuis endorses Rahner's clear distinction (but not separation) between the Church, Christ, and the kingdom of God established in him, when expounding the role of the Church as "the sacrament" of the kingdom.³⁹ But he finds difficulty when Rahner calls the other religions "lawful" up to a point and up to a time. This "weak expression" supposes "their provisional and transitory character."⁴⁰ Dupuis also expresses serious difficulties with Rahner's talk of the "absoluteness of Christianity" and of Christ as "absolute

³⁶*Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, 104–10, correspond to *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 157–62.

³⁷Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 143–49; on D'Costa, 147, fn. 15.

³⁸Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 149.

³⁹Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 353–56. In his review of this book for *The Journal of Theological Studies*, D'Costa wrote of Dupuis "severing" Christ and his kingdom from the Church and so "breaking the indissoluble bond between Christology and ecclesiology" (910, 912, 913). This extreme language of "severing" and "breaking" does not express accurately what Dupuis wrote: for instance, "The presence of the Church as sign in the world bears witness... that God has established in this world his Reign in Jesus Christ (*Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 354).

⁴⁰Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 314. For Dupuis, to call Hinduism, for instance, provisional and transitory would ignore much historical data: Hinduism as a way of salvation has endured and often endured vigorously for twenty centuries after the time of Christ. Below we take up this question biblically and historically.

Saviour.” His reason is “that absoluteness is an attribute of the ultimate Reality of Infinite Being, which must not be predicated of any finite reality, even the human existence of the Son-of-God-made-man. That Jesus Christ is ‘universal’ Saviour does not make him the ‘Absolute Saviour,’ who is God himself.”⁴¹

Beyond question, there is a similarity between the inclusive views of Rahner and Dupuis: both hold that final salvation comes only through Christ, that God’s saving will is effectively universal, that grace is everywhere present and operative, even if often hidden and unperceived, and the other religions have a positive role for the salvation of their followers. But such similarity does not mean that the (slightly) later writer, Dupuis, in his three books published after Rahner’s death showed himself, in any proper sense of the word, a “neo-Rahnerian.”

Sometimes the prefix “neo-” can prove useful in mapping what has been retrieved and developed in Christian theology. Thus, for instance, a Panorthodox Conference held at Athens in 1936 launched an attempt to develop an Orthodox theological synthesis by retrieving the teaching of St Gregory Palamas (d. 1359). Some of the notable Orthodox theologians in the twentieth century may be usefully classified as “neo-Palamite”: George Florovsky (1893–1979), Vladimir Lossky (1903–58), Paul Evdokimov (1901–70), John Meyendorff (1925–92), and Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (b. 1934).

We have noted serious differences between Rahner and Dupuis, which militate against calling Dupuis a “neo-Rahnerian.” We will note further differences in the final section, which examines *Christianity and the Religions* (Italian original, 2001),⁴² a book that significantly clarifies the views of Dupuis and introduces *for the first time* in his publications the term “inclusive pluralism.”⁴³

Christianity and the Religious

Right up to 2013, D’Costa has failed to list or refer to Dupuis’ final work, *Christianity and the Religions*. Nevertheless, without providing any reference, in 2009 D’Costa wrote of Dupuis calling his own position “inclusivist pluralism.”⁴⁴ (Dupuis, in fact, used the term

⁴¹Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 282.

⁴²J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.

⁴³J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 95, 95, 255.

⁴⁴D’Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 34.

“inclusive pluralism,” without introducing the neologism “inclusivist.”) How did D’Costa learn of the expression that Dupuis, only at the end, employed to describe his position? Had he in fact read *Christianity and the Religions*, even if he did not refer to the book or even list it in his bibliographies?

Here Dupuis differed, since he was always clear about the material that drew (approvingly) from D’Costa and where he had found it. We noted above how Dupuis in the first volume of his trilogy, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, quoted and endorsed what D’Costa had written in a 1986 work, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. In his final book Dupuis once again made a “special mention” of the same book for having shown how “the three basic positions of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism” derive from “contrasting attitudes” towards “two basic axioms”: “the universal salvific will of God” and “the necessity of the mediation of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁵ Right through to that final work that Dupuis was perfectly clear when citing D’Costa, and persistently did so with approval.

At the end, while continuing to express approval for what D’Costa had written, Dupuis pulled further away from Rahner. Let me conclude with four points that illustrate the differences.

First, we have seen how in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* Dupuis objected to Rahner’s language about the “absoluteness of Christianity” and about Christ being “absolute Saviour.” In *Christianity and the Religions* Dupuis not only repeated these objections but also continued to maintain some other terminology that also set him apart from Rahner. In *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Dupuis recalled how Rahner had talked of God being “definitively” communicated in Christ.⁴⁶ But already in that book Dupuis avoided following Rahner in using “definitive,” and preferred to speak of Christ as being the “constitutive” Saviour in whom God was “decisively” revealed.⁴⁷ In *Christianity and the Religions* Dupuis saw no reason to change his language about Christ being “God’s decisive revelation and constitutive [and not ‘absolute’] Saviour.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 89

⁴⁶Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 144.

⁴⁷For instance, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 248, 294, 305.

⁴⁸Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*: e.g. 90, 158, 220–38, 256. Apropos of terminology, we should also note that, like the documents from Vatican II, Dupuis

Second, Dupuis had already joined Aloysius Pieris in raising an issue that lay outside Rahner's concerns: the "complementarity" between Christianity and other religious traditions.⁴⁹ In using this language, Dupuis never intended to claim that the revelation which reached its fullness in Christ needed to be filled out by other religious traditions. Rather he used that term in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* to indicate how some elements of the divine mystery can be vividly expressed by the practices and sacred writings found beyond Christianity. In prayerful dialogue with other traditions, Christians may "hear" something which enriches them spiritually.⁵⁰ They can receive as well as give, as the closing message of the 1977 international bishops' synod on catechetics recalled (no. 5). Nevertheless, to express Christian faith in the fullness of the divine self-revelation in Christ, it may have been better for Dupuis to have qualified from the outset the kind of complementarity he had in mind. In *Christianity and the Religions* he called this complementarity "asymmetrical," an adjective that brings out the Christian belief that in Jesus Christ the divine revelation enjoys a unique fullness and that there is no gap to be filled by other revelations and traditions.⁵¹ But as found either in Dupuis' 1997 book or in that of 2001, his discussion of "complementarity" did not find a counterpart in Rahner's theology of religions.

Third, as D'Costa himself remarked in his 1998 review of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Dupuis distinguished himself from Rahner through his thoroughgoing Trinitarian emphasis.⁵² Dupuis remained concerned with the universal presence of the Word and the Holy Spirit, the two hands of God, as St Irenaeus called them.⁵³ Rahner took up the presence of Christ in other living faiths,

never called those of other faiths "pagans," whereas Rahner continued to use this term; for details see O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 52–53.

⁴⁹Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 326–29.

⁵⁰Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 326–28. See G. O'Collins, *On the Left Bank of the Tiber*, Ballarat, Vic: Connor Court, 2013, 248–49.

⁵¹Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255–58.

⁵²D'Costa, *Journal of Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 911. Others have also noted the significance of Dupuis' Trinitarian emphasis; see e.g. Daniel L. Migliore, "The Trinity and the Theology of Religions," in Miroslav Wolf and Michael Welker, ed., *God's Life in Trinity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006, 101–17; Jon Paul Sydnor, 'Beyond a Text: Revisiting Jacques Dupuis' Theology of Religions,' *International Review of Mission* 96 (2007) 56–71.

⁵³Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 81, 90–95, 100–15, 156, 178–180.

albeit a presence mediated in and through the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, D'Costa rightly recognized the Trinitarian nature of Dupuis' theology of religions, an emphasis that emerged even more strongly in his final work.

Fourth, Dupuis had already expressed "caution" about a distinction encouraged by Rahner: namely, that between "special" and "general" salvation history.⁵⁵ In *Christianity and the Religions* Dupuis repeated even more strongly his misgivings about such a distinction.⁵⁶ It was attention to *the biblical witness* that fuelled these misgivings. In his 1997 work, Dupuis had already alluded briefly to the "permanence" and relevance for human kind of the divine covenants with Adam and Noah.⁵⁷ But his 2001 book shows how he now felt supported by the work of Adolfo Russo in holding the multiplicity of particular histories of salvation⁵⁸ Russo had argued that, just as the Mosaic covenant remained "irrevocable," so too, in a similar (but not precisely the same) way, "those covenants that God has made with the other peoples of the earth, symbolically present in the Adam event, and more specifically in the story of Noah," are not rendered merely provisional or obsolete by the incarnation.⁵⁹ If D'Costa had read *Christianity and the Religions*, he could have seen that it was not a desire to remove any Rahnerian notion about "the provisional status of other religions as salvific structures" that prompted Dupuis into querying the "provisionality" of those faiths.⁶⁰ It was because he had been helped by Russo that Dupuis drew out the permanent implications of the biblical witness about the divine covenants made with Adam and Noah.

All in all, a careful examination of Dupuis' work on the theology of religions militates against calling him a neo-Rahnerian. Rather, while developing some views that find similar counterparts in Rahner's writing, he also differs from him in significant ways. Setting the two great theologians side by side, we find dissimilarity along with similarity. We do not throw light on Dupuis' theology by labelling him a "Rahnerian" or a "neo-Rahnerian".

⁵⁴K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William V. Dych, New York: Seabury Press, 1978, 311–21.

⁵⁵K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 153–61; see Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 219–20.

⁵⁶Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 102.

⁵⁷Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 32–33.

⁵⁸Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 100–03.

⁵⁹Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 109.

⁶⁰D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 22.