

CHAPTER IV

O'COLLINS' UNDERSTANDING OF SYMBOLS, EXPERIENCE AND REVELATION, A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS IN THE CASE OF JACQUES DUPUIS

Notre monde devient chaque jour un peu plus multi-religieux et multiculturel. À la suite des phénomènes migratoires à l'échelle mondiale, les personnes de différentes religions vivent côte à côte.... Si le croyant n'est pas ancré dans sa tradition religieuse et dans sa communauté, il est souvent un interlocuteur peu fiable, et parfois même dangereux, dans le dialogue interreligieux. Et s'il a une connaissance et une compréhension insuffisante[s] des croyances et des pratiques de sa propre religion et de celles des autres religions, la cause du dialogue interreligieux en souffre grandement.¹

While understanding of one's own religion and engagement in his or her own religion are indispensable for those who want to involve into interreligious dialogue, they are also prerequisite for those who want to do the theology of religions. As a subcategory of theology, the theology of religions consists of "confession, reflection upon this confession, and cultivation of a set of virtues grounded in confession and reflection."² It must be distinguished from a comparative study of religions or philosophy of religions. While, methodologically, it can draw upon these disciplines, the starting point of the Christian theology of religions must be from God's revelation found in, and conceived by, the Christian tradition. It needs to uphold the Christian identity or Christian faith, while corresponding to the varying conditions of human existence, human experience, and the social, cultural and religious contexts in which people live.

¹ Paul Poupard, *Dialogue interreligieux: Situation actuelle, difficultés et espoirs. Les jeunes, espérance d'un monde multi-religieux*, in *Pro Dialogue*, 3 (2006), pp. 307-308.

² Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism, The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission*, Nottingham, Apollos, 2001, pp. 310-311.

Being grounded in Christology and theology of revelation, the theology of religions also needs to take into account the Trinitarian, Pneumatological, Ecclesiological, experiential, anthropological, contextual and ethical dimensions of Christian faith or Christian life.

Besides being confessional and faithful to its sources, this theology is also expected to be reflective and rational. It needs to furnish Christians with the ability to articulate and live their faith while opening to a dialogue with believers of other religious traditions, or even with those who do not attach to any religion. Like any other theologian, the work of a theologian of religions is a community affair in which he or she shares and responds to the community's experience and faith, which are formed, recorded, and renewed by the Scriptures and living tradition, in the current context of cultural and religious plurality.

While tackling and reconciling all the essential aspects of the Christian faith - specifically, Soteriological, Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological, Ecclesiological, experiential, contextual and ethical aspects, the Christian theologians of religions need to straddle two essential convictions, namely, the primacy and uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the legitimate role of the world religions in the order of salvation and revelation.

Bearing all these challenges in mind, in this chapter, I try to correlate O'Collins' theology with Dupuis' theology of religions.

It is obvious that O'Collins is much different from Dupuis in terms of his specialization in theology. O'Collins has been well-known for his fundamental theology, whereas Dupuis had a lifelong commitment in the theology of religions or interreligious dialogue. They are also different by the way in which their theology is accepted or viewed by the people. While O'Collins' theology is regarded as being in accordance with the official teachings of the Church or the orthodox Christian tradition, Dupuis' theology, and particularly his book "Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism," has been reluctantly received by many people and caught the attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) with a *Notification*.³

³ This *Notification* was made by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* of J. Dupuis. It was published on January 24, 2001.

Despite their differences, O'Collins is always ready to support his fellow Jesuit in clarifying the latter's theology and protecting it from misunderstanding or misinterpreting.⁴ Certainly, this is not a simply fraternal support. O'Collins has a theological foundation for doing so, which I try to elaborate in this chapter of my thesis. In order to make it easy to follow this theological collaboration, I will base the chapter on Dupuis' scheme's theology of religions. Comparative reflections will be presented as the chapter is developed, to see how far O'Collins' fundamental theology, especially, his understanding of symbols, experience and revelation (which were presented in the previous chapters) can validate or sustain Dupuis' theology of religions.

In fact, my goal in doing this is to make O'Collins' view of symbols, experience and revelation a theological foundation for a Christian self-understanding in relation to the world religions. However, to have a better understanding of the mutual support or compatibility between Dupuis' theology of religions and O'Collins' theology, along the work I will need to present specific (detailed) theological points of O'Collins' Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology. I will start first with Dupuis' understanding of the history of salvation.

1. *History as the History of Salvation*

For Dupuis, how we understand salvation history is the key element for Christianity when it seeks to situate itself in relation to world history and in relation to the history of other religious traditions and their salvific role. Dupuis tries to prove that the history of other religious traditions, the "non-biblical religions," is not excluded from salvation history. Concretely, we now look at his understanding of salvation in history.

⁴ Cf. O'Collins, *Jacques Dupuis, His Person and His Work*, in Kendall, Daniel and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *In Many and Diverse Ways, In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, New York, Orbis Books, 2003, pp. 23-27.

a. *Salvation History and World History*

Accepting the views of Mircea Eliade and Samuel Rayan on history as it is conceived in Judaism and Christianity, Dupuis presents history as “linear.”⁵ History has a goal, a destination, toward which it is being moved. Every event has meaning and value in itself and in relation to other events, especially in relation to the final goal of the whole of history.⁶ Dupuis quotes Rayan: “Historical events began to be regarded as Yahweh’s active presence. History appeared as a series of theophanies. Each theophany, each event, had its intrinsic value because it was Yahweh’s intervention with a view to the people’s final salvation.”⁷ Thus, Dupuis conceives of history as consisting of divine interventions and human freedom. For him, there is continuity in history between the past, the present and the future, which are all directed by one divine providence. “The past lived on in the present, which it had brought forth; in the present the future already existed in hope.”⁸

For Dupuis, salvation history did not begin with the vocation of Abraham, and may not be reduced to the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Rather, it “coincides and is coextensive with the history of the world.” Indeed, salvation history consists of the history of humankind and of the world. It was initiated by God from creation and will culminate in the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom in the final time.⁹

⁵ Cf. Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1997, pp. 212-215; Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*, New York, Harper and Row, 1959, pp. 88-89 & 106; Samuel Rayan, *Models of History*, in *Jeevadhara* 13 (1983), pp. 5-26.

⁶ Cf. Dupuis, “*The Truth Will Make You Free*,” *The Theology of Religious Pluralism Revisited*, in *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999), p. 230, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (originally published in French as *Jésus Christ à la rencontre des religions*, Paris, Desclée, 1989), New York, Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 114-115 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, in *Rivista di Teologia Morale* 40 (1999), pp. 678-679,

⁷ Rayan, *Models of History*, p. 10. See also Dupuis, *Religious Pluralism*, p. 213 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 114-116.

⁸ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 214. See also Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 678, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, in *Estudios Trinitarios* 32/ 1-2 (Enero-Agosto 1998), pp. 9-10 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 116.

⁹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 217, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 10, Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 120/4 (Octobre-Décembre 1998), 549-560 and Dupuis, *From Confrontation to Encounter: 2, God Is Always Greater*, in *The Tablet* (27 Oct. 2001), p. 1520.

Like Rahner, Dupuis regards human history as the story of “God-with-humankind.” Accordingly, it is “both divine revelation and salvation.” This position is supported by the idea of the universal will of God for human salvation for which Dupuis refers to 1 Tim 2:4. Dupuis goes on to say that the divine will of salvation for humankind is not subject to any condition except human freedom.¹⁰ In other words, God’s grace is at work or available at all times, in every space, in biblical as well as non-biblical religions.

Oscar Cullmann distinguishes “special salvation history” from “general history.” The former refers to the “sacred history” of Israel that was a preparation for the Christ-event and Christianity itself while the latter refers to the history of other peoples and other pre-Christian religions.¹¹ Dupuis goes beyond this idea by questioning whether other people’s histories cannot have, for their members, a role which is comparable to the one that the history of Israel had for its people in the order of salvation. The question which can be raised here is whether the special history of salvation extends beyond the boundaries of Hebrew-Christian tradition. Dupuis implicitly gives a positive answer to this, by referring to and quoting from the Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops: “Its experience of the other religions has led the Church in Asia to [a] positive appreciation of their role in divine economy of salvation.... The positive appreciation is further rooted in the conviction of faith that God’s plan of salvation for humanity is one and reaches to all.”¹²

One can see that O’Collins’ view of the relationship between the divine revelation and salvation not only has a compatibility with Dupuis’ understanding of the history of salvation and its operation in the history of humankind, but also makes the latter more discernible. It is so because once we admit that God’s revelation and salvation are not only related but also imply and even include each other, and that it is possible to use the terms “salvation” and “revelation” interchangeably; what is said of the history of revelation can be said of the

¹⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 217, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free, The Theology of Religious Pluralism Revisited*, in *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999), p. 230 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 9.

¹¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 219, Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Christian Concept of Time and History*, London, SCM Press, 1952 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 12-13 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 116- 117.

¹² Theological Advisory Commission (FABC) 1987, no. 48, p. 7 quoted in Dupuis, *Religious Pluralism*, p. 220. See also Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, in *Gregorianum* 75, 2 (1994), pp 221-222.

history of salvation and the other way around.¹³ As a result, O'Collins' assertion of the revelatory legitimacy of all things in nature, either inside or outside the Bible and the Christian tradition¹⁴ is just another way to express Dupuis' claim of the starting point (not just from the call of Abraham) of the history of salvation, or its universal coverage (not being confined to the history of the Hebrew-Christian tradition). It makes the latter more understandable. Likewise, it also makes Dupuis' view of salvation history (or revelation history in O'Collins' words) as coinciding with the history of the world much more comprehensible. Consequently, Dupuis' affirmation of the role of revelation and salvation in other peoples' histories (not Hebrew-Christian history) is also much more persuasive.

Both Dupuis and O'Collins affirm the salvific or revelatory values or means in nature or in the non-Christian world. They both also regard such values as of the divine intention and as being included in God's one plan of salvation or self-disclosure. However, they differ in using terms to express these values and the histories and religions in which they are found. Dupuis implicitly attributes them all to the "special" history of salvation, which, then extends beyond the Hebrew-Christian boundaries.¹⁵ This can well emphasize the divine intention and plan for salvation of all humankind, but faces difficulty in distinguishing these values and their religions with the values in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Perhaps, in expanding the "special" history of salvation beyond the Hebrew-Christian boundaries, Dupuis simply wants to emphasize that in God's plan, salvation or the history of salvation found in other religious traditions are no less important than what that is found in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that his saving love for all people is equally "special."

¹³ O'Collins refers to *Dei Verbum* and cites its article 2 as follows: "This economy of *revelation* is realized by deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other. As a result, the works performed by God in the history of *salvation* show forth and bear out the doctrine and realities signified by the words; the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they contain. The most intimate truth which this *revelation* gives us about God and the *salvation* of man shines forth in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and sum total of *revelation*."

See also O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 58-59, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 98 and O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 55, 86.

¹⁴ Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 62, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 97-98, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 90-91, O'Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, p. 133 and O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 48.

¹⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 31.

O'Collins, on the other hand, uses a “softer” language which confirms the salvific or revelatory values or means in the world religions as belonging to the one divine plan of salvation, but as a part of the “general” history of God’s self-disclosure. The latter is to be distinguished from the role or values found in the Jewish-Christian biblical tradition, which is part of the “special” history of salvation or revelation. From a Christian perspective, O'Collins’ “softer” expression is more convincing.

b. Covenants and Other Religious Traditions

In order to prove the salvific role of other religious traditions, Dupuis argues for the abiding value of covenants, which were established by God not only in Moses and Jesus Christ through the Hebrew-Christian tradition, but also in Adam and Noah with the Gentiles. Other peoples and non-biblical religions, thus, are also covered by covenants.

According to Dupuis, covenant refers to the divine way of dealing with humankind. It is initiated gratuitously by God in view of his personal relationship with humankind. The covenant that God entered into with Abraham, and later with Moses, and which made Israel the chosen people of God is obviously described in the Bible through the story of Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:17-21; 17:1-14), Moses, and the exodus stories (cf. Ex. 24: 1-11). This covenant not only makes Israel the chosen people of God; it also gives this people an identity, a foundation for religious experience, and the starting-point for a dialogue with God in salvation history and for reflection on Him.¹⁶

Through the covenant, the history of Israel became a history of salvation. However, this does not mean that all salvation history is the history of Israel, or that Israel’s history concludes all salvation, since a new covenant was made in Jesus Christ. This covenant is broader than the former one. It expands to all the Gentiles, the nations or all humankind. Yet, again Dupuis notes that these two covenants – the “old” and the “new” - do not make up the

¹⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 31, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 678-679, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, in *Estudios Trinitarios*, pp. 11-12, Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 223-224 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 118-119.

whole of salvation history. He refers to two more covenants that are mentioned in the biblical and Christian tradition.¹⁷

According to Dupuis, though the story of Adam (cf. Gen 1-5) does not explicitly speak of a covenant relationship between God and the first man, it does describe the intimate relationship of God's personal dealing with humankind through this first human being. Furthermore, Dupuis shows the biblical foundation of this first covenant in Sir 17:12, which speaks of the "eternal covenant" made by God with man in creation, and in Jr 33:20-26, Ps 89, which refer to a "cosmic covenant" by creation. This idea, according to Dupuis, was well understood by the Church Fathers as first universal covenant of God with humankind.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 231-232, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 31, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 118-119, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 32, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 118 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, pp. 10-11.

One can see that Dupuis' idea of God's universal covenant is much familiar with St. Justin Martyr's affirmation of God's universal salvation and revelation. Answering the question about the salvation for the Jews, who lived before the coming of Christ, particularly those who lived according to the law given by Moses, lived in the same manner with the patriarchs Jacob, Enoch, and Noah, St. Justin Martyr says:

"I said also, that those who regulated their lives by the Law of Moses would in like manner be saved. For what in the Law of Moses is naturally good, and pious, and righteous, and has been prescribed to be done by those who obey it; and what was appointed to be performed by reason of the hardness of the people's hearts; was similarly recorded, and done also by those who were under the law. Since those who did that which is universally, naturally, and eternally good are pleasing to God, they shall be saved through this Christ in the resurrection equally with those righteous men who were before them, namely Noah, and Enoch, and Jacob, and whoever else there be, along with those who have known this Christ, Son of God." (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Writings of the Early Church Fathers, Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I, Dialogue of Justin*, XLV, Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, a compact disc - CD).

With such a positive answer, for Justin, salvation not only can be achieved by the Jews who observed the Law, but also by all those who did that which is "universally, naturally, and eternally good." It became more explicit when he identified Christ with the Logos of which all humankind partakes.¹⁸ The Father acts through the Son; all divine manifestation of God through the Son or the Word is not limited to the Christian dispensation; in fact, it took place before the incarnation of the Word, among the Jews and even the Gentiles (See Roberts and Donaldson, CD: *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I, The First Apology of Justin*, XLVI).

Justin in a way admits implicitly the salvific values in philosophy and other religions by saying that the seed of the Word was implanted in the whole human race. For him, all the right principles that philosophers and lawgivers have exposed and articulated are owed to the Word that they have found and contemplated in part; the reason why there may be some contradictions is that they have not yet known the entire Word that is Christ (See Roberts and Donaldson, CD: *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I, The Second Apology of Justin*, VIII; X).

Thus, for Justin, there are revelation and salvific values in philosophy and different religious traditions, but the Logos is the unique source. Justin identified the Logos with Jesus Christ. In this sense he was able to justify the universal claims for Jesus. The difference among them corresponds to various forms of participation in the Logos that becomes more decisive in Israel and complete only in Christ Incarnate. Those who have known the Truth and lived righteously are Christians, because Christ is the Logos who is all Truth. All possessions of

With regard to the covenant with Noah, referring to Robert Murray's idea, Dupuis points out that this is the first time the term "covenant" is used by the Priestly writer in the cycle of Noah. This covenant is made by God through Noah with all of creation. Dupuis states: "The covenant with Noah is not to be understood as simply guaranteeing a knowledge of God through the elements of nature. It deals with a personal, universal intervention on the part of God in the history of the nations, previous to the subsequent covenant with the chosen people. The religious traditions of humanity are the chosen testimonials of this covenant with the nations."¹⁹

Regarding the Christian background to the idea of the four covenants in salvation history, Dupuis refers to Irenaeus who explicitly confirmed God's four covenants to the human race.²⁰

religious truth and religious conduct come to all people through a personal manifestation of the eternal Word fully realized in Christ (See also Lucien Richard, *What Are They Saying about the Uniqueness of Christ and World Religions?*, New York, Paulist Press, 1981, p. 17).

¹⁹ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 33. See also Gen 6:8; 9:1-17 and Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1992, pp. 32-39, 173, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 11, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 118 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 230.

²⁰ Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 11, 8, in A. Cleveland Coxe (ed.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Mich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 429. See also Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 33 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 119.

St. Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyon, may be said to be the founder of the theology of history. He not only brought out the historical significance of the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, but also integrated the pre-Mosaic dispensation into the history of salvation. This leads to the affirmation of a salvific value of pre-biblical religions. He spoke of the possibility of salvation for those who had lived before the coming of Christ by presenting his theology of the revealing Logos, taking a more historical perspective on the presence of the Logos in religions. He said:

"He who worketh all things in all is God, [as to the points] of what nature and how great He is, [God] is invisible and indescribable to all things which have been made by Him, but He is by no means unknown: for all things learn through His Word that there is one God the Father, who contains all things, and who grants existence to all, as is written in the Gospel: 'No man hath seen God at any time, except the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father; He has declared [Him.]' Therefore the Son of the Father declares [Him] from the beginning, inasmuch as He was with the Father from the beginning, who did also show to the human race prophetic visions, and diversities of gifts, and His own ministrations, and the glory of the Father, in regular order and connection, at the fitting time for the benefit [of mankind].... And for this reason did the Word become the dispenser of the paternal grace for the benefit of men, for whom He made such great dispensations, revealing God indeed to men, but presenting man to God, and preserving at the same time the invisibility of the Father, lest man should at any time become a despiser of God, and that he should always possess something towards which he might advance; but, on the other hand, revealing God to men through many dispensations, lest man, failing away from God altogether, should cease to exist. For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God." (Roberts and Donaldson, CD: *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I, Irenaeus Against Heresies*, Book IV, Chapter XX, 6-7. See also Eugene Hillman, *Many Paths, A Catholic Approach to Religious Pluralism*, Philippines, Claretian Publications, 1991, pp. 27-28).

For Dupuis, the different covenants stand as the different forms of God's dealings with humankind "through the Logos." Thus, they do not destroy each other nor substitute for each other. He says:

They are Logosphanies through which the divine Logos 'rehearses,' as it were, his breaking into human history through the incarnation in Jesus Christ. As such, they relate to each other, not as the old that has become obsolete in the advent of the new that substitutes for it, but as the germ that already contains in promise the fullness of that plant which will issue from it.²¹

The significance of the covenant with Adam is the manifestation of a personal relationship between God and humankind, between Creator and creatures. Likewise, the covenant with Noah symbolizes God's personal commitment to all peoples, i.e., a universal intervention of God in human history. This is not just a kind of "natural religion" or "natural revelation." It indicates that other religious traditions besides the Hebrew-Christian tradition

Regarding the possibility of salvation for those people, Irenaeus mentioned the presence of the Logos, who has absolute power, is universal in humanity. Irenaeus especially showed out God's providence and universal care in stating: "For it was not merely for those who believed on Him in the time of Tiberius Caesar that Christ came, nor did the Father exercise His providence for the men only who are now alive, but for all men altogether, who from the beginning, according to their capacity, in their generation have both feared and loved God, and practiced justice and piety towards their neighbors, and have earnestly desired to see Christ, and to hear His voice." (Roberts and Donaldson, CD: *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I, Irenaeus Against Heresies*, Book IV, XXII, 2). Thus, for Irenaeus, there is possibility of salvation for the Israelites who looked for the coming of Christ, but also for those Gentiles who had come to believe in God as savior, and who could be said to have longed implicitly for the coming of Christ.

²¹ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 226. See also Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 230, 239, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 118-119 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 11.

Dupuis' idea of God's universal covenant and his theology of the Logos are not only compatible with Justin and Irenaeus, but also with Clement of Alexandria. Following Irenaeus, Clement further developed the Logos-centric theology. He asserted that the Logos at work in Judaism, as well as in the good things that philosophers and poets had to offer, is the very Logos who became incarnate in Jesus Christ (See Roberts and Donaldson, CD: *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume II, Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Heathen (Protreptikos)*, Chapter VII. See also Hillman, *Many Paths, A Catholic Approach to Religious Pluralism*, p. 28).

Clement also had a positive view of salvation for the Gentiles prior to the coming of Christ in holding that God's care is for all both Greeks and Barbarians, and that He is the Savior of all. In his own words: "And that He whom we call Savior and Lord is the Son of God, the prophetic Scriptures explicitly prove. So the Lord of all, of Greeks and of Barbarians, persuades those who are willing. He does care for all, which is befitting for Him who has become Lord of all. For He is Saviour; not [the Saviour] of some, and of others not. But in proportion to the adaptation possessed by each, He has dispensed His beneficence both to Greeks and Barbarians, even to those of them that were predestinated, and in due time called, the faithful and elect" (Roberts and Donaldson, CD: *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume II, Clement of Alexandria, The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book VII, Chapter II).

are also “in the state of covenantship with God.” Their members are also “covenant people” and may be seen as “people of God.”²²

All that Dupuis tries to do, in speaking of the four covenants, is to say that other people - those outside the people of Israel and Christianity - are included in God’s one plan of salvation, and that God is dealing, or in touch, with them, present or active in them. This viewpoint finds a total support from O’Collins in the above-mentioned assertion that the salvific or revelatory values or means found in nature or in the non-Christian world is of divine intention and is included in his one plan of salvation or revelation. However, one cannot see in Dupuis a clear distinction between the salvation history in the Israelite history and the history of salvation in other religions. O’Collins, instead, by his distinction between the revelation available in the Scriptures and in the Jewish-Christian tradition, and the divine revelation as a whole, makes a neat distinction between them. According to O’Collins, even though the Scriptures and tradition have a priority or special role in the history of revelation and in our understanding or experiencing God’s revelation, they are only a part of the latter and can never be identical with it.²³ Dupuis would totally agree with O’Collins on this point. The same can be said of the relationship between the history of salvation in the Israelite history and the whole history of salvation. Salvation or revelation history in the People of God or in the Jewish-Christian tradition is only a part (even though it is an important part) of the whole history of divine salvation and revelation, which gets beyond the Jewish-Christian communities.

c. *The Relationship between the Covenants*

Dupuis first speaks about the relationship between the covenant with Israel in Moses, the “old covenant” and that in Jesus, the “new covenant.” The former was not abolished by the latter, but is “unveiled by it.” Since God is faithful, his call and his gift are “irrevocable.”

²² Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 22, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 119-120, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, pp. 10-11, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 232-233.

²³ Cf. O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 130. See also O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, p. 75, O’Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 24-26, O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 225-226, O’Collins & Kendall, *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture*, pp. 7-8 and O’Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 104-105.

Israel, thus, was and still continues to be God's people. Dupuis writes: "The new covenant is no other than the first; it unveils the first by spreading abroad the splendor of the Lord which the first contained without revealing it fully. The new covenant of Jer 31:31-34 contains no reference to two distinct covenants but to one, which God will re-establish in spite of the people's infidelity."²⁴ Dupuis prefers to see the two covenants as a "one covenant and two interrelated ways" within one divine economy of salvation for humankind. Thus, the salvation of the Jews comes through the covenant established by God in Moses, which was perfected in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the covenant continues to be a way of salvation, but not independently of Jesus Christ.²⁵

What is said of the relationship between the covenant in Moses and that in Jesus Christ or the relationship between Judaism and Christianity could analogically apply to the relationship between the cosmic covenant in Noah and the covenant in Jesus Christ or the relationship between other religions and Christianity. Dupuis states: "Even as the Mosaic covenant has not been suppressed by coming to its fullness in Jesus Christ, neither has the cosmic covenant in Noah with the nations been obliterated by reaching in the Christ-event the goal for which it was ordained by God."²⁶ For Dupuis, non-biblical religions cannot be excluded from the so-called "special" salvation history.

With regard to the accusation that extra-biblical religious traditions or even the story of Noah rely on myth, Dupuis claims that myth is not exempted from carrying divine message. In fact, myth is not absent from the Hebrew-Christian tradition. The story of creation and that of Noah as well as the covenant with him are mythical or legendary. However, they carry divine revelation such as the relationship between humankind and God, the covenantship of all peoples with God. Likewise, the stories of Abraham and Moses, which are not free from mythical elements, present in a most excellent way the view of revelation as

²⁴ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 231. See also Rom 9:4; 11:1, 25-26, 29 and Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 230.

²⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 232, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 118, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 11 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 222-223.

²⁶ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 233. See also Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, pp. 11-12, Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 223-224, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p.119 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 231-232.

“God’s personal intervention in history.” Through the prophets, Israel gradually moves away from a mythical understanding to an historical one. Such a movement, according to Dupuis, “will be further accentuated in Christian view with the Christ-event standing at the midpoint of history.” However, this evolution does not “obscure the fact that cosmic religion already conveys a covenant relationship of God with peoples, expressed through the medium of story and legend. Nor has the revelatory function of myth in extrabiblical religions come to an end with the advent of historical consciousness.”²⁷ In this way, one could say that Dupuis implies the salvific role of other religious traditions for their own members and indicates that these religions have a legitimate role in God’s plan of salvation for humankind.

In defending the validity or function of the covenant God made with the people of Israel in Moses (the old covenant) and the cosmic covenant in Noah and their relationship with the new covenant (better and broader) made in Jesus Christ, Dupuis tries to prove that all these covenants are included in God’s one plan of salvation, and that non-biblical religions are also included in this plan. O’Collins would totally agree with Dupuis in stating that all non-Christian religions are included in God’s one plan of salvation or revelation, and that they play a legitimate role in the order of salvation or revelation. However, to avoid the misunderstanding that all means of salvation or revelation or all religions are equal in carrying salvific and revelatory values, O’Collins would prefer to attribute the so-called “special” salvation or revelation to that which is found in the Jewish-Christian biblical history or tradition.

2. *God’s Presence in History*

a. *God’s Presence in and through Jesus Christ*

1) *The Universality of the Logos, Christ*

In fact, both Dupuis and O’Collins rely on the biblical tradition to speak about the universal presence and efficacy of the Word of God, the Logos. In their understanding, the

²⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 230-231, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 233-234, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 11 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp.119-120.

Word of God involves both the “historical intervention” and the “cosmic action” of God.²⁸ That is to say, its effect or presence goes beyond all kinds of boundaries. It is not limited by space or time.

Both Dupuis and O’Collins also appeal to Justin and Irenaeus, the two Church Fathers of the second century AD, in identifying Christ with the Logos. Dupuis does so to justify the universality of Christ. Divine manifestation through the Son or the Word is not limited to the Christian dispensation. It took place before the incarnation of the Word, among the Jews and even the Gentiles. O’Collins, on other hand, does so (identifying Christ with the Logos) simply as a matter of fact. For O’Collins, Christ by himself is already universal: “there is no way to be ‘outside Christ,’ and no zone beyond him.” God’s salvation and revelation in Christ is for all. Christ’s presence, his work or his salvific and revelatory mediation is universal. They both acknowledge Christ’s universality as it comes from the “creative, revealing and redemptive Word,” the Logos. This Word (the Logos), according to both Dupuis and O’Collins, was active before the existence of Christianity and is active everywhere “beyond the visible Christian community.”²⁹

In brief, theologically speaking, Dupuis and O’Collins totally agree with each other in asserting that Christ is identical with the Logos, and that God’s presence in Christ is universal. For both of them, people of all nations and religions participate in, and benefit from, Christ’s salvation and revelation.

²⁸ Cf. Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520 and O’Collins, *Salvation for All, God’s Other People*, Oxford, University Press, 2008, pp. 231-232. See also Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, in T. Merrigan and J. Haers, eds., *The Myriad Christ, Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, Leuven University Press, 2000, p. 84.

²⁹ Cf. Dupuis, *Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ*, in Daniel Kendall & Stephen T. Davis (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology/ A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O’Collins*, New York/Mahwah, NJ., Paulist Press, 2001, pp. 320, 329-334, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 57-60, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 679-680, Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, pp. 529-530, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 236-237, O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 230-231 and O’Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, pp. 356-357 and O’Collins, *Jacques Dupuis, His Person and Work*, pp. 26-27.

2) *The Universality and Particularity of Jesus Christ*

Dupuis affirms the idea of Heb 1:1 and Vatican II (DV 4) that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is “God’s decisive word” to humankind, and that He “completes and perfects” revelation. In other words, Jesus Christ is the “fullness” of God’s saving revelation. The question is how can we understand Jesus Christ as the “fullness” of divine revelation, while accepting that this revelation still continues to occur in the world after Jesus? Do other religious traditions’ “sacred books” or “oral traditions” offer a merely “human discourse about God” or they rather contain a “word spoken by God?” Was divine revelation completed in Jesus Christ or can it be seen in some sense as an “ongoing process” both inside and outside Christianity?³⁰

Appealing to DV 4, Dupuis distinguishes the “fullness of revelation” from the “written word of the New Testament.” The fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ is distinct from “its transmission in the New Testament.” For Dupuis, the fullness of revelation in Jesus is a matter of “quality” rather than “quantity.” Jesus’ identity as Son of God makes him unique and the summit of divine revelation. However, the revelation in him is “not absolute,” but “relative.” It is so because the historical Jesus is unavoidably particular and conditioned. Christ’s universality does not rule out his particularity which imposes upon him “irremediable limitations.” Although his consciousness is that of the Son, it is still human and therefore limited. His revelation cannot exhaust the divine mystery. God’s saving revelation that took place before Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, will continue to happen after him in the world or in religious traditions. However, no other revelation can surpass or be equal with that of Jesus Christ.³¹

³⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, pp. 1520-1521, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 87, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 235, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 680-681, Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, pp. 530-531 and Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, in *Angelicum* LXXIV (1997), pp. 197-198.

³¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ*, pp. 335-336, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 248-250, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 233, 243, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 90-91, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1521, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 197-198 and Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, pp. 539-540.

Appealing to the general principle that truth or reality is distinct from the human understanding of it, Dupuis speaks of the distinction between our “human apprehension of Divine Reality” and God himself. This human apprehension is “fragmentary and time-conditioned.” All “human knowledge of God” (either before or after the divine revelation gets its climax in Jesus Christ), according to Dupuis, is “irremediably imperfect and provisional.” God is “absolute” and only he knows himself absolutely. Dupuis, then, consistently avoids the term “absoluteness” when speaking of Jesus Christ. For him, “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.”³²

In distinguishing Jesus’ revelation and salvation from those of God himself, Dupuis is in no way overlooking Jesus and his role in the order of salvation and revelation. He attributes to Jesus a “singular” uniqueness and “singular” universality, which, in his understanding, are different from “relative” uniqueness and “relative” universality. In this way, Dupuis considers Jesus the “constitutive universal Savior” of humankind. The uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ are neither “relative” nor “absolute,” but “constitutive,” such that Jesus’ Paschal Mystery is the “cause of salvation.” Jesus Christ is the “universal” Savior, but not “absolute” Savior “who is God himself.” Jesus Christ does not have an ultimate origin, but from the Father.³³

Appealing to the Roman Missal (particularly in the prayer for Tuesday of the 2nd week after Easter in the liturgy), Dupuis speaks of Jesus Christ as the sacrament of salvation, but not the Father, who is the “absolute” Savior as he is the original source of all saving acts. Accordingly, Christ could perhaps be called the “absolute Mediator,” while there are participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees. Obviously, such participated forms of mediation cannot be seen as parallel with the mediation of Christ. “There is one

³² Cf. Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 87, Michael L. Fitzgerald, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism by Jacques Dupuis*, in *Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, Pro Dialogo*, 108 (2001/3), pp. 339-340, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 235, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 282, 285, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 13-14, Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, p. 539 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 680-681.

³³ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 282-283; Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 87, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 244-245, Dupuis, *Notae on Some Recent Christological Literature*, in *Gregorianum* 69, 4 (1988), pp. 725-726, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 680-682 and Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, p. 544.

mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1Tm. 2:4). The uniqueness and universality of Christ the Savior are “constitutive” as his salvific work covers all humankind and all those who are saved are saved in Christ. This uniqueness and universality of Christ are based theologically on his ontological sonship in the Godhead (high Christology). Though “absoluteness” is not attributed to Jesus, according to Dupuis, the Christian claim to Him does not merely consist on his being “for me” “the path of salvation,” but “for all.” In other words, everyone finds “salvation in and through him.”³⁴

According to Dupuis, there is a “continuity-in-discontinuity” between Jesus and the Christ. One needs to acknowledge the “continuity-in-discontinuity” between different stages of Christology: between the Jewish Messiah and the fulfillment in Jesus, between the “prepaschal Jesus” and the “Christ of the apostolic kerygma,” between the “Christology of early kerygma” and “later biblical enunciations,” between the “New Testament Christology” and “that of Church tradition,” between the “state of kenosis” and the “glorified state.”³⁵

Dupuis’ idea of “discontinuity” involves the recognition of a real difference between each stage of Christology, between the “functional” Christology and the “ontological,” or even between “Jesus and the Christ.” Yet, the idea of “continuity” enables him to defend the one “personal identity” of the Son of God made flesh. Thus, “Jesus is the Christ” and “the historical Jesus is the Christ of faith.” There is a distinction, but also identity. There is a distinction but not a separation between Jesus Christ and the Word of God. Dupuis states:

Le mot clé est ici la “non-séparation” entre le Verbe de Dieu et Jésus Christ, d’une part, et entre le Jésus de l’histoire et le Christ de la foi, d’autre part. L’identité personnelle entre l’un et l’autre doit toujours être préservée en vertu du fait que l’être humain de Jésus a été assumé par

³⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, pp. 243-245, Dupuis, *Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ*, pp. 339-340, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1521, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology*, p. 89, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 12-13, Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, pp. 539-540 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 173-174.

³⁵ Cf. Fitzgerald, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism by Jacques Dupuis*, p. 340, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 295, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 199-200, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 244-245, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, 194-195 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 223-224.

la personne divine du Verbe dans le mystère de l'union hypostatique."³⁶

Dupuis' Christology rests on Jesus' personal identity as the Son of God. This is his theological foundation for the claim of the "constitutive uniqueness and universality" of Jesus Christ. Having affirmed Jesus Christ's universality, Dupuis, however, does not fail to see His particularity. He states: "The universality of the Christ who, 'being made perfect,' became 'the source of eternal salvation' (Heb 5:9) does not cancel out the particularity of Jesus. A universal Christ, severed from the particular Jesus, would no longer be the Christ of Christian revelation."³⁷

Dupuis' affirmation of Jesus Christ's uniqueness and universality does not hinder his positive view of other religious traditions. The historical Jesus or the Christ-event, according to him, cannot exhaust either divine revelation or divine saving power. Jesus Christ does not substitute for God. Rather, he is "the universal sacrament of God's will to save humankind." This, according to Dupuis, does not necessarily imply that Jesus is "the only possible expression of that will." He describes it as follows: "The mystery of the incarnation is unique; only the individual human existence of Jesus is assumed by the Son of God. But while he alone is thus constituted the 'image of God,' other 'saving figures' may be... enlightened by the Word or 'inspired' by the Spirit, to become pointers to salvation for their followers, in accordance with God's overall design for humankind."³⁸

In brief, for Dupuis, Jesus Christ' effect on salvation and revelation is unique, universal and unsurpassable, constitutive, but not "absolute" or "relative." He is not the "absolute" Savior, but the "absolute Mediator." There are participated forms of salvific and

³⁶ Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, p. 532. See also Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 295-296, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, 193-194, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 175-176 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 239-240.

³⁷ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 297. See also Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, p. 539, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1521, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 204-205 and Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 89.

³⁸ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 298. See also Dupuis, *Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ*, pp. 336-337, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1521, Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les Religions du Monde*, pp. 529, 532, 544, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 91 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 235 and Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, pp. 547-548.

revelatory mediation of different kinds and degrees in the Christian community itself as well as in other religious traditions. These participated forms of mediation cannot be parallel with the mediation of Christ, the “one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1Tm. 2:4).

Some have claimed that Dupuis regards the salvific work of the Logos and that of Jesus Christ as two separated paths of salvation. Others have warned Dupuis’ readers of the danger to separate the Eternal Word of God from Jesus Christ.³⁹ O’Collins’ interpretation of the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon and the Third Council of Constantinople can clarify or explain Dupuis’ terms and his theological point concerning the relationship between the Logos and the Incarnate Christ and their respective salvific works. According to O’Collins, Dupuis is faithful to these two Councils in distinguishing but not separating the divine and human natures and their respective salvific operations “within the one person of Jesus Christ.” Like them, he also claims the universal operation or presence of the Word of God in the world before and after the Incarnation, but never maintains “a personal distinction between the Eternal Word of God and the historical Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” Thus, there is the salvific operation of the Eternal Word of God, that of Jesus Christ and the respective salvific operations of his two natures. However, they all derive from “the *personal* identity of the Son of God” who works for the one divine economy of salvation.⁴⁰

Some people might puzzle over Dupuis’ statement of the salvation in Jesus Christ as “universal” and “constitutive,” but not “absolute.” However, it is quite compatible with O’Collins’ view of the divine revelation in Jesus Christ as “foundational,” “unsurpassable,” and “full,” but not “absolute.” For both Dupuis and O’Collins, it is because of his human nature or condition that Jesus’ revelation and salvation are not absolute. Absoluteness is reserved for God alone “who is totally necessary, utterly unconditional, uncaused and

³⁹ Cf. Henry Donneaud, *Chalcédoine contre l’unicité absolue du Médiateur Jésus-Christ? Autour d’un article récent*, in *Revue Thomiste*, 102/1, janvier-mars 2002, p. 46 and The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Notification*, January 24, 2001, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Cf. O’Collins, *Jacques Dupuis, His Person and Works*, in Daniel Kendall and Gerald O’Collins (eds.), *In Many and Diverse Ways, In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, New York, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2003, pp. 23-24, 26-27, O’Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, in *Gregorianum* 84, 2 (2003), pp. 356-357.

unlimited.” Thus, God alone is the absolute savior and the absolute fullness of his saving revelation will not happen until the second coming of Christ.⁴¹

The statement concerning the limitation of Jesus’ revelation can also find its further support in O’Collins’ notion of symbol. For O’Collins, symbol is not identical with, or equal to, what it symbolizes. There is always a gap between them. Being limited by nature, symbol can never capture the full reality that it symbolizes. Symbol reveals as well as conceals what it symbolizes. Thus, as God’s revealer and the symbol of God, Jesus or his revelation (God’s manifestation in him) cannot exhaustively express the divine mystery or God himself. The gap between the symbol and what it symbolizes, according to O’Collins, in the case of Jesus or God’s revelation, brings in the element of hope, and invites us to look for the plenitude of God’s self-revelation to come (Rom 8:24-25; 1 Cor 2:9).⁴²

While his notion of symbol is a strong support for Dupuis’ assertion of the limitation of Jesus’ revelation or salvation, O’Collins’ view on the means and mediators of the divine revelation can also comfortably accommodate Dupuis’ emphasis on the continuity of God’s saving revelation in the Christian community as well as in the world and other religions. As we have seen, for O’Collins, everything and everyone (both inside and outside the Christian community) can be the means and mediator of the divine revelation. People of all nations continue to experience God’s saving revelation via such means. While Dupuis regards the salvific and revelatory mediations or values outside Jesus Christ as “participated” forms in His absolute mediation, O’Collins sees them as “dependent” on the foundational saving revelation in Jesus Christ.⁴³ These two expressions are, in fact, interchangeable.

Dupuis’ idea of the continuity of revelation can also be well grounded in O’Collins’ view of the relationship between God’s revelation and human experience, according to which, there is no divine revelation or divine self-communication outside human experience. God’s

⁴¹ Cf. O’Collins, *Jacques Dupuis, His Person and Works*, pp. 24-25, O’Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, pp. 353-354, The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Notification*, 1-4 and Donneaud, *Chalcédoine contre l’unicité absolue du Médiateur Jésus-Christ ?*, pp. 50-51.

⁴² Cf. O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 100, O’Collins, *Jacques Dupuis, His Person and Works*, p. 24, O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 165-166, O’Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, pp. 253-254.

⁴³ Cf. O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 230-231, O’Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, p. 133, O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 94-95, O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, pp. 90-91.

self-disclosure always takes place within human experience if it happens at all.⁴⁴ It only actually takes place whenever and wherever it is experienced. It is “present and at work” through all our activities, experiences and situation: both in a religious context and in all aspects of daily life. Both individuals and the community continue to experience God’s self-communication through “the signs of the times” as well as through the collective experiences.⁴⁵

For O’Collins, experience of the divine self-communication or revelation, which might have happened in the past, never takes place once for all. It continues to occur and remains alive in the memory of the people. We can never exhaust, or succeed in interpreting once, and for all times, the sense or meaning of those past or present events of God’s self-communication. They continue to be remembered, ritually re-actualized, reinterpreted and re-expressed until, and for the service of, the coming of God’s kingdom.⁴⁶ This is quite companionable with Dupuis’ idea of the distinction between our “human apprehension of Divine Reality” and God himself as well as his idea of the continuity of God’s revelation in the world, as we mentioned above. Thus, for both Dupuis and O’Collins, we can always have a fresh experience of God’s revelation besides what we already foundationally experienced or apprehended in Jesus Christ.

To sum up, O’Collins and Dupuis share the same view on uniqueness, universality and particularity of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation and revelation. Likewise, they agree and support each other in expressing the continuity of God’s saving revelation in the world or in different religious traditions. The salvation and revelation in Jesus Christ is unique, universal and unsurpassable, but remains limited. Salvific and revelatory mediations or values, wherever found in the world, “participate” in, or “depend” on, those of Jesus Christ. There is only “one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1Tm. 2:4).

⁴⁴ O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 59. See also O’Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 27- 29, O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 87-88 and O’Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 102.

⁴⁵ Cf. O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 100-101, O’Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, pp. 125-126, O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 87-88, O’Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 101 and O’Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 52.

⁴⁶ O’Collins, *Cristo, Nostra Pasqua e Nostro Futuro*, p. 204. See also O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 99-101, O’Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, pp. 127-128, O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, pp. 42-43 and O’Collins, *Jesus Risen*, pp. 156-157.

b. *God's Presence in and through the Holy Spirit*

Dupuis insists that Jesus Christ is the center of Christian faith and the source of human salvation. Though he develops a theology of the Logos and makes a distinction between the Logos and Jesus Christ, this Logos, according to him, is inseparable from Jesus Christ. Likewise, in proving the legitimate salvific ways of non-Christian religions or their possession of divine revelation, he tries to point out the universal presence and activity of the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of Christianity both before and after Jesus Christ. This Spirit, who is at work in other religious traditions, however, does not work for another economy of salvation than that of Jesus Christ. Instead, all his work is to make it possible for human beings to be related to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, the constitutive Savior. More precisely, both the Spirit and Jesus Christ work for the one divine economy of salvation.⁴⁷

One can see that Dupuis' attempt to illustrate the universal presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, who together with Jesus Christ works for God's one economy of salvation and revelation, is well supported by O'Collins' understanding of experience, especially his understanding of transcendental or religious experience. It also finds a strong theological base in O'Collins' view on the Trinitarian aspect of the divine saving revelation. For O'Collins, there is always a universal aspect, an infinite and spiritual horizon in all our experiences. "An ultimate element" is present in every human experience. In our experience, we not only experience ourselves and the direct objects of experience, but also, to a certain extent, experience the absolute horizon of being or God himself who is revealed in all our activities. This is to say God is universally present in the world. The Trinitarian God is involved in all our human experiences. The divine salvation and revelation that we experience or receive, is understood, interpreted and expressed as salvation and revelation from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸ The presence or activity of the Holy Spirit is more specified in his references to the Scriptures, and the teachings of the Church as we shall see.

⁴⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ*, pp. 320-322, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, pp. 1520-1521, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 236-237, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 87-91, 95, Merrigan, *Exploring the Frontiers*, p. 353, Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, p. 529, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, p. 549, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 216-217 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Riveduta*, pp. 674-675.

⁴⁸ Cf. O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 118, O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 48, 91-92, O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 181-182, O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 224-225 and O'Collins & Farrugia, *Catholicism, The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 137-138. See also Gal 4:6, Rom 5:5; 8:26.

In fact, Dupuis and O'Collins share the same view on the universal presence of the Holy Spirit and cooperation between the Spirit and Christ in the order of salvation and revelation. They both refer to the Scriptures to speak of the active and universal presence of the Holy Spirit. For them, the active presence of the Holy Spirit, the source of "inner renewal" is not confined to the chosen people or the Christian community. The out-pouring of the Spirit, at the Pentecost event as well as before, extends beyond the Christian boundaries. The message, which was entrusted to the Apostles, was to be addressed to all; the different languages implied the universal mission of the Apostles. Thus, the pagans also received the same Spirit that was conferred upon the Apostles. The spiritual freedom, the gift of faith and the love of God, which have been given to us by the Holy Spirit, are not the monopoly of Christians. Instead, the gift of faith made by God is also given to the "holy pagans of the cosmic covenant" (Rom 5:5; Heb 11:4-17).⁴⁹

While Dupuis speaks of the Spirit's presence in the "pagans" that is evident in the Spirit's fruits of their lives, such as "charity, joy, peace, longsuffering, availability, goodness, trust in others, gentleness, self-mastery," O'Collins is, in the same line, speaking of the Spirit's active presence "in the hearts and lives of Gentiles" which enables these "outsiders" to live according to God's will. Such active presence of the Spirit gives life and hope "not only to all human beings but also to the entire created world."⁵⁰

Referring to the Pauline theology, Dupuis, on the one hand, claims the universality of Jesus Christ's activity through the Holy Spirit, and on the other hand, distinguishes the different levels of this influence in the Church and in the world. While the Church is the "inner circle, the immediate sphere of the activity of Christ through his Spirit," the world is the "outer circle." Likewise, the Spirit is the soul of both the Church and the world, but He is so "in a special way" to the former. The activity of the Holy Spirit is universal. His fruits have

⁴⁹ Cf. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 154-155, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 675-676, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, pp. 458-459, O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 145-146, O'Collins & Farrugia, *Catholicism, The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 137-139 and O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 180-182. See also Acts 2:6-11, 8:29; 10:19; 15:8; Rom 1:16.

⁵⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 155, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 245-246, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, p. 549, O'Collins & Farrugia, *Catholicism, The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 149-150, O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 167-168 and O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, p. 225. See also Gal 5:22-23 and Rom 2:14-16.

already been manifest. However, creation still waits for the “plenitude of its salvation” to come when the “ultimate restoration” takes place. Compatibly, O’Collins speaks of the Spirit as “the soul or vital principle of the Church” and as the mediator of Christ’s dynamic presence to the Church and the world. The Spirit, according to O’Collins, is not only the “primary” agent of the Church’s mission, but also the one who “works to transform everyone and everything in the world.”⁵¹

To further develop the view of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the world beyond the visible Christian boundaries, Dupuis looks into the Church’s teachings, according to which the Holy Spirit was already actively present in the world even “before Christ was glorified.” The out-pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost upon the Apostles was not the beginning or the end of his presence or mission. That same Spirit who had been with “the patriarchs, the prophets, the priests, the saints who lived in ancient times,” and who was with the apostolic community, summons all people to Christ.⁵²

Dupuis’ assertion concerning the universally active presence of the Holy Spirit in the world both inside and outside the Christian tradition is fortified by both Dupuis and O’Collins in their references to Pope John Paul II’s two Encyclical Letters, namely, the *Redemptor Hominis* and the *Dominum et Vivificantem*. Appealing to the Pope, they strongly assert the presence of the Holy Spirit in everyone’s heart and in every authentic prayer. The Spirit, according to them, however, is at work not only in different religious activities or religious traditions and their adherents, but also in the cultures, in all spheres of humanity and in all human beings, both before and after Jesus Christ.⁵³

⁵¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 156-157, Col 1:15-18, 2:19, Eph 1:22-23, Rom 8:23-25, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 242-243, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Riveduta*, pp. 667-677, O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 224-225, O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 180-181.

⁵² Cf. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 158, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 242-243, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 208-209 and Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, pp. 548- 549. See also AG 4-5 & 15.

⁵³ Cf. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 158-159, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, pp. 547- 549, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Riveduta*, pp. 675-676, O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 227 and O’Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, pp. 348-349. See also GS 11; RH 6 & 12; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 5 & 53.

In fact, both Dupuis and O'Collins are very consistent in their Trinitarian theology. For them, whenever God personally deals with human beings this is done by God, as "God is Father, Son, and Spirit." Likewise, the divine self-bestowal is the "communication of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit." The Spirit is the "only possible point of entry" for human beings to enter into the divine life. The encounter, either between God and human beings, or between human beings and God, always takes place in the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, every "authentic experience of God is an experience in the Spirit." It is necessary to distinguish between "pre-Christian grace and Christian grace." However, neither of the two is without the presence of the Holy Spirit. The difference is that in the former case, the divine grace took place through the Word (not yet incarnate) in the Spirit, while in the latter one, it occurred through Jesus Christ (the incarnate Word) in the Spirit. Thus, the grace of God to human beings today occurs in the same Spirit as it did before the Christian dispensation or even before the covenant with Israel. All people of faith live by the Spirit and respond to the Spirit's call.⁵⁴

The Spirit, according to Dupuis, plays a special role in all the stages of that salvation history. He is the agent in each covenant that God made with humanity. He is revealed and manifested throughout the course of the history of salvation. The scriptures of other religious traditions, thus, in Dupuis' view, though not without error, yet contain the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the words of God. They are to be seen as willed by God.⁵⁵

For Dupuis, although these scriptures deserve to be called "holy scriptures," they are neither equal to, nor have the same "official character" as, the Old Testament, or the "definitive value" of the New Testament, which report the "unique signification of the word of God." Dupuis, however, does not "cheapen" the religious value in other religious tradition's scriptures. For him, "the seeds of the Word contained in their scriptures are

⁵⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ*, p. 320, Fitzgerald, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis, p. 339, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 166-167, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 87-88, O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 91-92 and O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 224-225.

⁵⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 242-243, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 168-172 Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 212-213, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 677-678 and Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 222-223.

seminal words of God, from which the influence of the Holy Spirit is not absent.” Furthermore, Dupuis affirms that the words of God in these scriptures are of values not only to their members, but also to us Christians. He states: “Certain aspects of the divine mystery may actually be given more emphasis in other sacred scriptures than in the New Testament.... Contact with non-biblical scripture - practiced within their own faith - can help Christians to a more in-depth discovery of certain aspects of the divine mystery that they behold fully revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁶

Dupuis’ assertion concerning the seeds of the Word and the Spirit’s inspiration in the scriptures of non-Christian religions whose values are beneficial not only for their adherents, but also for us, the Christians, is well supported by O’Collins’ emphasis on the universally active presence of the Holy Spirit in the world or in every stage of the history of salvation and revelation. Furthermore, it is strongly fortified by O’Collins’ Ambrosiaster-adopted principle: “*quidquid enim verum, a quocumque dicitur, a Santo dicitur Spiritu*” (whatever truth is said by anyone is said by the Holy Spirit).⁵⁷

To sum up, Dupuis and O’Collins are not only in accordance with each other in their theological viewpoint concerning the universally active presence of the Holy Spirit, but also in their use of resources and references to illuminate the view. For both of them, the Holy Spirit is universally at work in human beings, in the world and in different religious traditions. The salvific and revelatory values, which are found in the scriptures of other religious traditions, are not limited to their members, but in a real sense, extend to Christians.

⁵⁶ Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 177. See also Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 245-246, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 247-248 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 684-685.

⁵⁷ Cf. O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 226-227, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 17, Col. 245B, O’Collins & Farrugia, *Catholicism, the Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 150-151 and O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 167-168.

c. *God's Presence in the Church*

In fact, Dupuis did not provide a separate discussion of ecclesiology. He spoke about the Church mostly in the context of its relation with Jesus Christ, the world religions and the reign of God. Appealing to the teachings of the Church, especially to the post-conciliar documents, and some contemporary theologians, Dupuis speaks of the Church's role in human salvation, and its distinction from, and its relation to, the kingdom of God. In doing this, he wants to prove that the members of other religious traditions do not necessarily depend on the Church's mediation for their salvation. Their own religions have a valid place in mediating salvific work and grace for humankind.⁵⁸

Referring to Vatican II, Dupuis firmly asserts the necessity of the Church in the order of salvation. The Church, as being "in Christ, in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all human beings" (LG 1) is the "universal sacrament of salvation" (LG 48). "The Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation" (LG 14).⁵⁹ But what does it exactly mean, what is the nature of this universal necessity of the Church in the order of salvation, and relation to Jesus Christ and his mission? Are Jesus Christ and the Church in the same order in mediating God's salvation? Does the Church function as universal mediation while everyone necessarily participates in the mediation of Jesus Christ?

For Dupuis, there are two extreme positions that one needs to avoid. Both of them are equally unsustainable. Firstly, one should not place the Church's necessity and universality on the same level with that of Jesus Christ, which would imply the literal understanding of the ancient axiom, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Secondly, one should not reduce the Church's necessity and universality by limiting its function and operation to its members only. This, according to him, would be equivalent to asserting that there are "two parallel ways of salvation without any mutual relationship both derived from the unique mediation of Jesus

⁵⁸ Cf. Fitzgerald, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis, p. 340, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 250, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 685, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 347 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 145-146.

⁵⁹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 347, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 95, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 685 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 250.

Christ, yet one operative for the members of the Church while the other comes into play for people who are saved in Jesus Christ outside of it.”⁶⁰

To arrive at the right position, Dupuis first, studies the relationship between human beings and the Church, then, the Church’s mediation, and its function as the sacrament of the Kingdom of God.

1) Human Orientation to, and Relation with, the Church

Referring to the Second Vatican Council, Dupuis speaks of a precise distinction between the Church and those who are outside it, according to which, the term “members” is not attributed in every case. Likewise, the term “*votum*” is addressed to catechumens only (LG 14). However, “all are called to this catholic unity.... and in different ways belong to it (*pertinent*) or are ordained to it (*ordinantur*)” (LG 13). People of all nations and all religions are called by divine grace to God’s salvation. While Catholics (members) are seen as being “fully incorporated into the Church,” “the catechumens are united to the Church” thanks to their desire of joining it. Other Christians, who are incorporated into Christ, are also joined to the Church for many reasons (LG 15). Finally, non-Christians “are ordained in various ways to the People of God” (LG 16). They, however, are not ordained towards it by a desire, either explicit or implicit.⁶¹

Non-Christian believers, thus, according to Dupuis, are those who “can be saved through Jesus Christ without belonging in whatever way to the Church.” These believers, however, are “oriented” towards the Church which contains the fullness of the means of salvation. This observation by Dupuis is further confirmed by his quotation from the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*: “For such people, salvation in Christ is accessible in virtue of grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them

⁶⁰ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 347. See also Fitzgerald, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism by Jacques Dupuis*, pp. 340-341, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 250, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 685 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 146.

⁶¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 348, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 145-146, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 688- 689 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 250-251.

formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation” (RM 10).⁶²

2) *The Church, Universal Mediation?*

If there is already the universal mediation of Jesus Christ in whom all people, both Christians and non-Christians without being the Church’s members are saved, then, in what sense can the Church be seen as mediation? Is it possible to conceive that the Church has “universal mediation” for human salvation, while considering that persons outside the Church are saved by and in Jesus Christ? How is the mediation of the Church understood in the “strict theological sense?”

For Dupuis, as mentioned before, one should note that the “mediation” of the Church, if it exists, would never be equal to, or substitute for, that of Jesus Christ, but would be always subordinated to it. This idea is founded on the Constitution of Vatican II on the Sacred Liturgy, which states: “Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebration. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anyone baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings” (SC 7).⁶³

There would be no difficulty in asserting that through proclaiming the word and celebrating the sacraments, the Church is truly mediating the salvific work of Jesus Christ. However, for Dupuis, there is still the question of whether or not it is necessary to say that such mediation by the Church covers all people, including other religious traditions’ members, who are saved in and by Jesus Christ. This is so because it seems that the grace of the Eucharist is for the sake of the unity in the Holy Spirit of the Church’s members. Dupuis gives a positive answer to this question, considering that the Church’s intercession is for the

⁶² Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 349. See also Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 251-252, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 146 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 689.

⁶³ Cited in Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 349-350. See also Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 252, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 685 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 106.

salvation of all. Nevertheless, a further question arises: whether or not this intercession could be properly understood as mediation in the “strict theological sense,”⁶⁴ since it is the risen humanity of Jesus that is the “obligatory channel” of His universal mediation for human salvation. Based on the fact that “the Church prays and intercedes for all people that salvation’s grace in Jesus may be granted to them,” Dupuis uses the terminology of scholastic theology to identify the “mediation” of the Church. For him, in this case, the causality seems to be of a “moral” rather than of an “efficient” order. Thus, it is not proper to speak of the Church’s mediation for all in a strictly theological sense. In fact, the relationship between the Church and the members of other religious traditions is in “the moral order” and of “finality,” but not in “the order of efficiency.”⁶⁵

Thus, joining Vatican II, Dupuis asserts the necessity of the Church for salvation as the “universal sacrament of salvation (LG 14; 48). However, this necessity, for him, does not imply “a universal mediation in the strict sense, applicable to every person who is saved in Jesus Christ.” Rather, it opens up the possibility of other mediations, among which are other religious traditions. Therefore, the necessity of the Church should be seen as the “sacramental sign of the presence of God’s grace among people.” This divine grace is also operative outside the boundaries of the Church, while the Church is its sacramental sign.⁶⁶

3) *The Church, Sacrament of the Kingdom of God*

Relying on the encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (RM 20), and the document, “Dialogue and Proclamation” (DP 35), Dupuis distinguishes the Church from the Kingdom of God, which is a “wider reality,” “a universal reality.” The Church, thus, is not identical with the Kingdom, which is only definitively present at the end of time with the coming of Christ. In this perspective, Dupuis shows how the role of the Church should be understood in its unique

⁶⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 350.

⁶⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 350-351, Eucharistic Prayer III, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 223, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 95 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 689.

⁶⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 352, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 161, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 223 and Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 688-689.

and special relation to the Kingdom, while affirming the active presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside the boundaries of the Church, in other religious traditions.⁶⁷

Using scholastic terminology and notions from sacramental theology, Dupuis applies the distinction between the sign and the reality signified to the relationship, in history, between the Church and the Kingdom of God. Moreover, for Dupuis, according to sacramental theory, “God is not bound by the sacraments.” Consequently, one can achieve God’s Kingdom - the reality without belonging to the Church - the sacrament. The members of non-Christian religions have been members of the Kingdom without recourse to the Church’s mediation. This, however, is in no way to deny the Church’s role. The Church, for Dupuis, has a special significance. Willed by God, the Church is the efficacious sign of the reality of the Kingdom of God in the world and in history. Being the sacramental presence of the Kingdom of God, the Church receives from Christ “the fullness of the benefits and means of salvation” (RM 16).⁶⁸

Being a sacrament of God’s kingdom in history, for Dupuis, does not necessarily make the Church a universal mediation that covers other religious traditions’ members, who could be part of the kingdom by the mediation that is available in their own traditions. He says:

That the Church is sacrament of the Reign of God, universally present in history, does not necessarily imply on its part a universal mediatory activity of grace in favor of the members of other religious traditions who have entered the Reign of God by responding to God’s invitation through their faith and love.... We could uphold a ‘mediation’ of their own religious tradition in their favor.⁶⁹

If the members of other religious traditions have entered the Kingdom of God without recourse to the mediation of the Church, one may ask whether or not the evangelical mission of the Church is still necessary. Referring to the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Dupuis

⁶⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 353, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 250-254, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 688 and Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, pp. 549-550.

⁶⁸ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 354-355, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 253, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, p. 552 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 114, 116.

⁶⁹ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 355.

describes one of the essential reasons for the continuous mission of the Church, which must bear witness to the Kingdom and serve it. “The Church serves the Kingdom by spreading through the world the ‘Gospel values’ which are an expression of the Kingdom and which help people to accept God’s plan” (RM 20).⁷⁰ However, as sacramental reality, the Church will disappear when the fullness of Kingdom has come, because the sign will lose its *raison d’être* when the reality is actualized. The essential nature of the earthly Church consists in pilgrimage towards the promised future. Thus, when the Church completes her earthly task, it will be absorbed in the eschatological Kingdom where both its members as well as the members of other religious traditions are welcomed.⁷¹

One can see that the most obvious difference between Dupuis and O’Collins in these theological points is found in the way they express the universality of the Church’s mediation for the salvation of all. Dupuis speaks of the universal mediation of the Church as of a “moral,” rather than of an “efficient,” order. Thus, for him, the Church’s mediation is not universal (for all) in a “strictly theological sense.” In his view, the relationship between the Church and the members of other religious traditions is one of finality, not of efficiency. Although the Church, according to him, remains “the efficacious sign, willed by God, of the presence of the reality of the Kingdom of God in the world,” it does not exercise a “universal mediation” in the order of salvation in a strictly theological sense. O’Collins, on the other hand, explicitly objects to the idea that the Church’s universal prayer, and hence, its mediation for all, is “merely a moral cause.” Christians, according to him, are called to intercede for all people. Their prayers or intercession, hence, the Church’s mediation, effect the salvation of all people both Christians and non-Christians.⁷²

In fact, what makes the difference between Dupuis and O’Collins concerning their view on the universal mediation of the Church is that Dupuis considers only the saving dimension of that mediation whereas O’Collins takes into account both its saving and

⁷⁰ Cited in Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 356.

⁷¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 357, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 114, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 255-256 and Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, p. 553.

⁷² Cf. O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 250-251, O’Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 327-328, O’Collins, *Cristo, Nostra Pasqua e Nostro Futuro*, p. 204, O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 99-101, O’Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, pp. 127-128 and O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, pp. 42-43.

revealing dimensions. For O'Collins, the mediation of the Church or of other religious traditions should be always considered in these two dimensions. While the role of the Church is blurred in the order of salvation, because all who are saved are saved by Jesus Christ, it is more obvious in the order of revelation, because God's revelation continues to happen in the Church through preaching, praying, teaching or celebrating the sacraments, and so forth. Apparently only the Christians are the beneficiaries of these sacred activities. But every revealed truth or every revealed light has its universal value.⁷³

Dupuis and O'Collins, in fact, basically share the same theological view on the Church, the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, non-Christian religions and their adherents in the order of salvation. They both distinguish the Church from the Kingdom of God and distinguish the mediation of the Church from that of Jesus Christ. Dupuis' idea of the Church as the universal sacrament of God's Kingdom is very compatible with O'Collins' view on the Church as existing for, and at the service of, the Kingdom of God, a "wider reality." Likewise, even though they use different terminologies to speak of the Church's mediation (that of "moral order" or "of finality" in Dupuis and that of an effective order in O'Collins), they both agree that the mediation of the Church comes from the participation in that of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Dupuis' affirmation of the necessity of Jesus Christ (obligatory channel) for the salvation of all, and the sacramental role of the Church in the order of salvation, is also theologically well-suited with O'Collins' view on the Church's mediation as participation in that of Jesus Christ.⁷⁴

For both Dupuis and O'Collins, Christians and the members of other religious traditions share together the universality of the Kingdom of God that was inaugurated by God in Jesus Christ. They all are called to build this Kingdom in the world and journey together towards the fullness of that Kingdom. The Church is universal sacrament of the Kingdom of

⁷³ Cf. O'Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, pp. 347-349 and O'Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, p. 207. See also O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 58-59, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 98 and O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 55, 86.

⁷⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 354-355, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 254, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, pp. 552-553, O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, p. 250, O'Collins, *Christ and the Religions*, 356-357, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 327-328 and O'Collins, *Jacques Dupuis, His Person and Works*, pp. 27-28.

God, while other religious traditions also exercise a certain mediation of the Kingdom, “different, but no less real.”

3. *Non-Christian Religions in the Divine Economy of Revelation and Salvation*

Throughout his discussion of the history of salvation, the mediation of Jesus Christ, the universal presence of the Holy Spirit, and the mediation of the Church, Dupuis always indicates the salvific and revelatory values of the world religions. In fact, his ultimate aim in doing so is to prove the validity or the legitimate place of the world religions in the divine economy of salvation and revelation while maintaining Jesus Christ as the fullness of God’s revelation and as the one who constitutes human salvation. In order to achieve this he seeks to find out how these religions operate in the order of revelation and salvation, how they share our ultimate goal (God), how they function as ways of salvation. Let us start here with Dupuis’ understanding of the relationship between the divine revelation and the world religions.

a. *The World Religions and God’s Economy of Revelation*

While Dupuis does not pay much attention to the order of revelation in speaking of the Church’s mediation for all including non-Christians, he does take into account the revelatory dimension in considering the role of non-Christian religions in God’s plan for human salvation. In fact, what he states of God’s covenants in relation to the divine economy of salvation is also applicable to the divine economy of revelation. According to him, there is only one history, the history of salvation which covers the entire history of humankind. God made covenant not only with Israel, but also with all the nations. The culmination of the divine-human covenant is achieved in Jesus Christ. In the same way, there is only one and universal divine revelation, which is not confined within biblical history, but extends to all salvation history or the history of the world. The fullness of that divine revelation is Jesus Christ.⁷⁵ In order to get into a more detailed discussion of Dupuis, let us look at his understanding of God’s universal revelation.

⁷⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 95, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, p. 259, Dupuis, *La Teologia del*

1) *The Universality of Divine Revelation*

Appealing to Vatican II and O'Collins, Dupuis states that since divine revelation is manifested in God's deeds and words, and since God has offered salvation to all mankind throughout history, God's revelation is universal.⁷⁶ This is to say, God's revelation is found in different religions. However, the concept of revelation, according to Dupuis, is understood differently from one religion to another. Within the Christian theology of revelation, the emphasis has shifted from revelation as "primarily doctrine or communication of divine truths" to "event and divine self-disclosure." Referring to Avery Dulles, Dupuis speaks of five models of revelation, according to which revelation is viewed as "doctrine"(1), "history" (2), "inner experience" (3), "dialectical presence" (4), and "human awareness" (5). Among these, models 3 and 5, which understand revelation as "inner experience" and as "human awareness" respectively, are applicable to other religious traditions.⁷⁷

For Dupuis, one could assert *a priori* the universality of divine revelation as well as the presence of divine truth in religious traditions. He states: "Religions have their original source in a divine self-manifestation to human beings."⁷⁸ However, for him, it is important to acknowledge some fundamental distinctions among different religions. There is the distinction between the "monotheistic" or "prophetic" religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - and the "mystical" ones from the East. There may be a "common historical origin" or a "family resemblance" among the prophetic religions. Likewise, the mystical religions have common traits such as "wisdom" or "gnosis." However, between the two groups, there exists a deep difference to the extent that it leads to distinct worldviews. These differences ought to be taken into account in the search for revelation in other religions.⁷⁹

Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata, pp. 678-679, Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, p. 547 and Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 212-213.

⁷⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 236. See also DV 2 and O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 238-239 and Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, pp. 100, 107, 121, 177.

⁷⁸ Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 96.

⁷⁹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 240, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 686-687, Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, pp. 557-558 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 149-150.

According to Dupuis, many people who live under the “cosmic covenant” can encounter the “true God.” This is so, because God always takes the initiative in every divine-human encounter. There must always be a personal relationship between man and God in prayer. In fact, for Dupuis, an authentic prayer indicates that God, in whatever way, “has undertaken the initiative of a personal approach to human beings in self-revelation and has been welcomed by these human beings in faith.”⁸⁰

Religious experience can be achieved by people of all times. In other words, divine revelation is available to all. However, for Dupuis, religious experience does not necessarily entail a perfect concept of God. There is a “gap between religious experience and its formulation.” Accordingly, we can never have access to the religious experience of others in its real status. The language that expresses or communicates this experience cannot do this adequately. Thus, in order to explore the religious experience of others and “the hidden elements of truth and grace” in it, one must go beyond the concepts that express the experience. There can be genuine experience found in faulty concepts.⁸¹

Religious experience in the oriental religions “is not always expressed in terms of personal relationship with God.” Dupuis refers to the case of Hinduism, where *advaita* mysticism conceives religious experience as “an awakening to one’s identity with the Brahman.” Likewise, Buddhism has a “nontheistic appearance” and implies an “impersonal Absolute.” It is different in the case of Christianity and other monotheistic religions, where “religious experience takes the form of an interpersonal dialogue” between God and human beings. For Dupuis, the mystical religions originating from the East are characterized by apophaticism, while the monotheistic or prophetic religions are characterized by cataphaticism. According to him, the reason for the limitations of the concept of God in the mystical Asian religions is that they lack the advantage of God’s revelation in the history of Israel and, especially, the “decisive self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 239, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 214-215, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, p. 245, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 682-683.

⁸¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 240, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 216-217 and Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, p. 558.

⁸² Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 240-241, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, p. 555 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 288-289.

The limitations of those religions in enunciating religious experience do not mean the absence of divine revelation, nor does such revelation occur apart from the revelation in Jesus Christ. Dupuis states:

Despite the limitations marking the enunciation of the experience of God in those traditions, still, wherever there is genuine religious experience, it is surely the God revealed in Jesus Christ who thus enters into the lives of men and women, in a hidden, secret fashion. While the concept of God remains incomplete, the interpersonal encounter between God and the human being - for which God takes the initiative, awaiting the response of faith on the part of the human being – is authentic.⁸³

Dupuis emphasizes that the only source of religious experience or of divine revelation is the one God who has revealed himself in the whole of human history, and fully so in Jesus Christ. God is one who has revealed himself “in many and various ways” and culminating in Jesus Christ. What Dupuis says of the Trinitarian God working in salvation history is also found in his discussion on divine revelation. Every personal communication of God necessarily involves the Triune God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Appealing to the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Dupuis speaks of the Spirit as the one who sows the “seeds of the Word” in different cultures and religious traditions (RM 28). The universal presence and activity of the Holy Spirit extend to all people of all times. Such “seeds of the Word” are found especially in the scriptures of the world religions, which are considered by Dupuis bearers of God’s revelation.⁸⁴ To further discuss this we now turn to the next section.

2) *The Scriptures of the World Religions - Bearers of God’s Revelation*

For Dupuis, there is a distinction between divine revelation, propheticism, and scripture, but these realities are bound together by many relations. Furthermore, prophecy,

⁸³ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 241. See also Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, pp. 248-249, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 120-122, Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, p. 547 and Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 214-215.

⁸⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 96, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 242, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, pp. 249-250.

which he understands as an interpretation of the divine will and the divine interventions in the history, is not exclusively a privilege of Israel. The Old Testament itself also admitted the oracles of Balaam (Num 22-24) as real prophecy originating from God. Prophets have been found both inside and outside Israel, before and after Jesus Christ. Appealing to Robert Charles Zaehner,⁸⁵ Dupuis speaks of Muhammad as a genuine prophet. Moreover, according to him, although the entire Qur'an is not the "authentic word of God," and although it is not free from errors, it still contains divine truth, which is the "word of God uttered through the prophet." Dupuis goes on to say that the monotheistic message of Muhammad "indeed appears as divine revelation mediated by the prophet." This revelation, for him, "is not perfect or complete," but "no less real."⁸⁶

Along the same line, Dupuis seeks to prove that the scriptures of other religious traditions in general can be seen as the "word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and addressed by God" to human beings. In other words, he attempts to show that they can be regarded as sacred scriptures in a theological sense. He, therefore, points out how these scriptures are connected with God's decisive word addressed to humankind in Jesus Christ. Invoking the idea of the universal activity of the Spirit, Dupuis holds that "the religious experience of the sages and *rishis* (seers) of the nations is guided and directed by the Spirit."⁸⁷ This takes place not for their own sake alone, but also for the sake of the peoples. God has wanted to speak to the peoples through their prophets. The "social character of the sacred scriptures" is willed by God. These scriptures, thus, contain "word of God to human beings in the words of the *rishis*." This, however, does not mean that the whole content of these scriptures is the word of God. Neither are they God's decisive words to humankind. In fact, they contain many elements which are just "human words concerning God."⁸⁸ Dupuis states:

⁸⁵ Dupuis refers to Robert Charles Zaehner, *Concordant Discord: The Interdependence of Faiths*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 23-29.

⁸⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 244-245, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, pp. 23-25, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 123-124.

⁸⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 247, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 94-95.

⁸⁸ Cf. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 172-173, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 233-234, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 247 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 236-237.

The personal experience of the Spirit by the *rishis*, inasmuch as, by divine providence, it is a personal overture on the part of God to the nations, and inasmuch as it has been authentically recorded in their sacred scriptures, is a personal word addressed by God to them through intermediaries of divine choosing. In a true sense, this word may be called “a word inspired by God,” provided we do not impose too strict a version of the concept and that we take sufficient account of the cosmic influence of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁹

While affirming the word of God and divine revelation contained in the scriptures of other religious traditions, Dupuis in no sense overlooks the function of Jesus Christ. For him, Jesus Christ is the fullness of revelation. However, the revelation in Jesus is not absolute, but relative, since although Jesus is Son of God, he is also a human being; his human consciousness is limited. The revelation in Jesus does not prevent the divine revelation from happening continuously in history before and after the Christ. By different manners and forms, divine revelation has taken place throughout history. Here, Dupuis distinguishes three stages of revelation, which, however, do not necessarily follow a chronological order. In the first stage, God reveals himself to human beings through the seers and the sages. The scriptures of the world religions contain traces or bear witness to this revelation. In the second stage, “God speaks officially to Israel by the mouth of its prophets.” The Old Testament is the record of this revelation. The divine revelation in both of these stages, however, is ordered towards the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ – the third stage. The New Testament bears witness to this decisive word of God.⁹⁰

For Dupuis, the divine revelation in different stages throughout salvation history is differentiated, yet complementary. The scriptures of the world religions, according to him, although they can be called a “divine word,” do not possess the “official character” of the Old Testament. The terms “word of God,” “sacred scriptures,” and “inspiration” are applicable to sacred writings of the religious traditions in a broad sense, but not without a “valid theological foundation.” They express the same reality, which the entire revelation carries at different

⁸⁹ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 247-248. See also Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 173.

⁹⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 246-247, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 249-250, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, pp. 1520-1521, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 93-95.

stages of salvation history. Although the revelation in Jesus Christ is the decisive word of God, there is still room for a complementarity to the expression or manifestation of that divine word, offered not only by the Old Testament, but also by the non-biblical scriptures. Dupuis goes further in asserting that the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ does not prevent the possibility of the word of God in other religions from possessing a salvific value both for their own members as well as for others including Christians.⁹¹

To sum up, for Dupuis, God's revelation is not limited or confined to Judeo-Christian tradition or to any other religious tradition. Like the active presence of the Trinitarian God, the divine revelation is also universal. It is found in all the world religions. There might be differences from one religion to another or among all groups of religions, concerning their understanding of revelation, their concept of God and their formulation of the religious experience. Likewise, the level or intensity of the divine revelation might be found differently from one religion to another. Furthermore, religions might have many errors and limitations including limitations or errors concerning their perception of God. However, genuine religious experiences and genuine revelation are always found in every religion. Moreover, the same God, who revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ, is the only source of all these experiences and revelation, and the only God human beings encounter.

Divine presence and intervention are not exclusively a privilege of Judeo-Christian tradition. God is truly present in the real prophecies, genuine prophets, and sages, of the world religions. Their scriptures can be regarded as "divine word" or bearers of God's revelation. They have a "valid theological foundation. They are also inspired and willed by God although they are not free from errors." Still they do not possess the "official character" of the Judaist-Christian Scriptures. Likewise, despite its genuine value, the revelation which is found in those scriptures or in the world religions is subordinate to the revelation in the Old Testament and together with the latter ordered towards the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ.

One can see that Dupuis' affirmation of the genuine religious experience or revelation in the world religions despite all their differences and limitations is well supported by

⁹¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 251-253, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 236, Dupuis, *God Is Always Greater*, p. 1521, Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, p. 559 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 238-239.

O'Collins' assertion of the revelatory legitimacy of all things in nature, either inside or outside the Bible and the Christian tradition,⁹² and especially, his understanding of religious experience. As we have seen, for O'Collins, there is always a universal aspect, an infinite and spiritual horizon in all our experiences. "An ultimate element" is present in every human experience. In our experience, we not only experience ourselves but also the absolute horizon of being or God himself who is revealed in all our activities despite our errors or limitation.⁹³ If God is universally and actively present or reveals himself in and through everything in the world, he must be present or reveal himself (even in a special way) in all religions. Furthermore, for O'Collins, there is always a gap between our understanding or experience and reality. Thus our experience or concept of God can never be perfect or absolute. It is also culturally, historically and religiously conditioned.⁹⁴ This explains well Dupuis' observation of the differences among religions concerning their concept of God and their formulation of religious experience.

One might be struck by Dupuis' statement that the world religions' scriptures can be called the word of God, and that they are inspired and willed by God despite their many errors and myths. This statement, however, can be well explained by O'Collins' understanding of the Scriptures in the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to O'Collins, there are also many matters recorded in different sections of the sacred Scriptures, which do not seem to be related to the divine revelation. Such sections, in O'Collins' opinion, can be seen as a presentation of human sins and failures in responding to the divine revelation's overture. On the other hand, to a certain extent, God is also at work in human love, ordinary experience and reason, as well as in those ancient religious regulations and myths. However, certainly, such sections of the Scriptures express more the human status and less God's saving revelation. There are parts of the Bible which report or convey the divine revelation less intensely and directly than others. "An inspired record is one thing, revelatory 'content' is another."⁹⁵ This can be well

⁹² Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 62, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 97-98, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 90-91, O'Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, p. 133 and O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 48.

⁹³ Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 48, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 118 and O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 102.

⁹⁴ Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 42-43, O'Collins, *Experience*, p. 308, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 99 and O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 175.

⁹⁵ Cf. O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 131-132, O'Collins & Kendall, *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture*, pp. 34-36, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of*

applicable to Dupuis' understanding of the revelatory values found in the scriptures in the world religions.

Finally, one can see that Dupuis' division of the divine revelation into three stages is fully compatible with O'Collins' distinction between God's revelation before Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ and after Jesus Christ. Both hold that God's revelation reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, and all revelations are subordinated to, and oriented toward Jesus Christ, the fullness of revelation. They also absolutely agree with each other in the view on the priority of the Old and New Testaments in the order of revelation. This is to say revelation found in the scriptures of the world religions is not at the same level with the revelation in the Judaic-Christian Bible. It does not have the same or official character of the latter. However, it is not less real.

b. Non-Christian Religions, Ways of Salvation

1) A Common Ultimate Goal

Dupuis somewhat agrees with John Hick in asserting that all religions have the same ultimate goal. Dupuis and Hick, however, differ from each other in their identification of that goal. Hick uses the term "the Real" instead of "God" to describe the common end to which all religions are directed.⁹⁶ For him, "God" is too concrete, while "the Real" is more suitably abstract and so can be applied to all religious traditions, including those which seem to have different concepts of divinity such as personal and impersonal. In contrast, Dupuis shares O'Collins' view of the Christian faith in affirming not only the common end of all religions as God, but even as the God "who revealed himself in Jesus Christ."⁹⁷ This idea of Dupuis is

Catholic Christianity, pp. 105-106, O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 110-111 and O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 236-237.

⁹⁶ Dupuis refers to John Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths*, London, SCM Press, 1995, pp. 17-18, 112. One can also find this idea of Hick in Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*, Philippines, Claretian Publications, 1985, pp. 148-149.

⁹⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *Religious Pluralism*, pp. 307-313, O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 137, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 43-44 and O'Collins, *Cosa si Dice di Gesù Cristo?*, p. 175.

also different from that of S. Mark Heim, a pluralist who confirms the plurality of religious ends. For Heim, the diversity of religious ends characterizes the various religions.⁹⁸

In justifying his idea of the common ultimate religious end of all religions, Dupuis has recourse to the common origin and destination of the human race. According to Dupuis, human beings are profoundly united by their origin in God and by their orientation towards him. This idea of Dupuis finds its strong support in O'Collins' commentary on human beings' instinctive search for God, according to which, instinctively we all try to get away from fatality and absurdity. We want to live and to search for our life's meaning and truth. We want "to love and to be loved." This search for the experience of meaning and love in life is innate to human beings. It implies our search for God who is life, meaning and love in their fullness.⁹⁹ Thus, asserting different religious ends, in Dupuis' opinion, would be discriminatory or exclusivist. On the other hand, describing the ultimate goal of religions as "the Real" the way Hick does, is not in accordance with the Christian tradition. For both Dupuis and O'Collins, our ultimate goal in life is the Triune God, the Ultimate Reality, who remains "beyond our human grasp," but "has nevertheless revealed himself in Jesus Christ."¹⁰⁰

Appealing to Keith Ward,¹⁰¹ Dupuis speaks of different religious traditions as a "further diversification in the way of conceiving" the ultimate goal of humankind. Theological concepts may differ from one religion to another. They, however, do not necessarily prevent the "convergence" of the religions – their final goal. This, in fact, was already well justified by O'Collins' distinction, noted above, between our understanding or experience and reality which corresponds to Dupuis' affirmation of the genuine experience of God or divine revelation in the world religions despite many differences among them

⁹⁸ Cf. Dupuis, *Religious Pluralism*, pp. 307-313 and S. Mark Heim, *Salvation: Truth and Difference in Religion*, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1995, pp. 131, 160-163.

⁹⁹ Cf. O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 117-119, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 216-217 and O'Collins, *Experience*, p. 308.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 308, 312, O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 37-38, 138, O'Collins, *Experience*, p. 308, O'Collins & Kendall, *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture*, pp. 23-24, O'Collins, *Easter Faith: Believing in the Risen Jesus*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation, a Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 310, 338.

regarding their concept of God.¹⁰² Dupuis' idea of the common religious end will be further discussed in the following section.

2) *“Many and Various Ways”*

Dupuis in his affirmation of the universal presence and activity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit already implies the mediating role of religious traditions. Trinitarian Christology, which is the foundation for both O'Collins and Dupuis in their affirmation of divine revelation occurring in religious traditions, is also the principle allowing them to insist on the salvific role of the world religions.

Referring to Thomas Aquinas,¹⁰³ Dupuis speaks of the substantial relationship between the human body and the human soul. Human beings, for him, are essentially historical. As spirits, they are persons “only to the extent that they are incarnate.” The same is true for religious life, which, according to Dupuis, “cannot consist in purely spiritual states of soul.” Religious life, for him, needs religious symbols, rites and practices, through and in which it comes to expression. Thus, religious life cannot stand without religious practice. In the same manner, there is no faith without religion.¹⁰⁴ The necessity of religion for the religious life of human beings is also confirmed by the anthropological principle, according to which human beings are inevitably related to others. As one can become and grow as a person only through interpersonal relationship with others, so religious persons cannot stand as separated individuals, but only as members of a particular religious community. It follows that whenever members of any religious tradition have any experience of God, their respective religions must contain, “in their institutions and social practices, traces of the encounter of human beings with grace.” There can be no dichotomy between the religious life of individuals and their religion. Dupuis draws a further conclusion and claims that one cannot

¹⁰² Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 42- 43, O'Collins, *Experience*, p. 308, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 99, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 313-314.

¹⁰³ Cf. *Summa Theologica* (S.T.), I, qq. 75-76.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 316, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 103, 147-148.

hold that the adherents of religious traditions achieve salvation simply because of their personal religious life, while their religious traditions have no salvific meaning for them.¹⁰⁵

Dupuis explicitly asserts the mediation of religious traditions in admitting that they somehow contain and signify God's presence to humankind in Jesus Christ. He states: "Indeed, their own religious practice is the reality that gives expression to their experience of God and of the mystery of Christ. It is the visible element, the sign, and the sacrament of that experience. This practice expresses, supports, bears, and contains, as it were, their encounter with God in Jesus Christ."¹⁰⁶ Dupuis, however, distinguishes the mediation of religious traditions from that of Christianity and of Jesus Christ. Although they are a certain mediation of grace, "the religious practices and sacramental rites," according to him, "are not on the same footing as the Christian sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ." Still, Dupuis claims that there is only one mystery of salvation, which is present to all people both inside and outside Christianity's boundaries.¹⁰⁷

One can see that Dupuis' assertion of the necessity of religion, religious symbols, rites and practices for our religious life or for our relationship with God is especially compatible with O'Collins' understanding of the human condition and function of symbols in human life as well as in religions. As we have seen, for O'Collins, human beings, by nature, are *social* and *institutional*. Their reason and their physical existence "in space and time" make them "social and institutional" beings.¹⁰⁸ Their "space and time existence" also means that they are "beings of history and tradition." They not only make their history and tradition, renovate and reinterpret them, but also read and live new experiences in the way that is formed or at least influenced by tradition. Traditions always make available to them a social way to evaluate

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 318, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 128-129, 149-150 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, p. 222.

¹⁰⁶ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 319. See also Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1521 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 129.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 319, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 249, Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 95 and Merrigan, *Exploring the Frontiers*, pp. 350-351.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 131. See also O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 37-38, and O'Collins, *Experience*, p. 308.

new situations, new events and affairs.¹⁰⁹ All these imply the necessity of religion for human beings' religious life.

In O'Collins' understanding, human life is also *symbolic*. As a being that is both material and spiritual, the human person is essentially symbolic (*homo symbolicus*) and expresses itself in symbolic acts. All that we do and experience among ourselves as human beings and in relation to God begins and ends in symbols. It is through symbols that we experience God and his self-revelation or communication. Moreover, if God wants to communicate with human persons, his communication or revelation must take the form and road of symbols.¹¹⁰ This emphasizes Dupuis' affirmation of the necessity of religious symbols, rites and practices in religions for our religious life.

O'Collins not only shares Dupuis's opinion concerning the necessity or function of symbols, rites and practices in religious life, he also offers a great illumination for those who would like to understand Dupuis' distinction between the mediating values of the world religions, of their symbols, rites or practices and that of Christianity and of Jesus Christ. For O'Collins, like all other symbols, those symbols that represent or symbolize God's revelation are also historical no matter what form they take: persons, events, words and so forth. This is to say they are historically and culturally conditioned. Thus, even though they all express or stand for heavenly realities and give sacred meaning, they do so at different degrees or intensity. One symbol may carry or give more revelatory and salvific values than another, depending on its nature or status.¹¹¹ This illuminates Dupuis' affirmation that the mediation of the world religions, their practices and sacramental rites are not at the same level with that of Christianity and its sacraments which were instituted by Jesus Christ. The question is how we can discern such salvific values or mediation in the world religions or in their symbols and practices. For this we now move to the next section.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 131. See also O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 110-111.

¹¹⁰ Cf. O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 98-99, 108 and O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 97-98.

¹¹¹ Cf. O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 100-103.

c. The Expression of Saving Values and Their Convergence

1) Discerning Saving Values

A concrete criterion to discern salvific values such as divine revelation and grace is “love,” which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-24), the central revelation in Jesus Christ, the sign of God’s presence. For Dupuis, “the practice of *agapé* is the reality of salvation, present and operative in human beings in response to God’s self-disclosure and revelation.”¹¹² Though it may be described in different ways by various religious traditions, love is universally proposed and lived by religious traditions and their members. Appealing to P. Starkey,¹¹³ Dupuis speaks briefly of the universalism of love in some of the great religions. According to him, in the Jewish scriptures, though there is less obligation to love enemies, people are called to live a life of charity, compassion, kindness, respect and justice. Likewise, in the Qur’an, the practice of charity extends at least to all Muslims. For Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, *agapé* is even more universal. The foundation of Hindu *agapé*, which is addressed to all, is the dignity of human beings in relation to God. Buddhist *metta* (love) is to treat kindly not only friends and neighbors, but also enemies. Moreover, *jen* in Confucianism is the love that is universally active in all human relationships.¹¹⁴

For Dupuis, although none of these are equal to the “radicalism” of the Christian Gospels, *agapé* in the religious traditions is the sign of the mystery of salvation working in them. Religious traditions, thus, are the “many ways” in which God has disclosed himself to the nations throughout human history. They all contain divine grace and revelation. Though remaining incomplete, through faith and love, they lead their followers to God and salvation. In other words, they are paths of salvation.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 323, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue Interreligieux à l’Heure du Pluralisme*, p. 559, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, p. 217 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 31.

¹¹³ Dupuis refers to P. Starkey, *Agapé: A Christian Criterion for Truth in the Other World Religions*, in *International Review of Mission* 74 (1985), pp. 425-463.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 322-325 and Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, p. 234.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 325, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, pp. 36-37, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 150-151.

Although he is not much involved in the study of the saving values or grace in the world religions, O'Collins' understanding of the Christian faith essentially matches Dupuis' criterion for discerning God's presence, his salvific and revelatory values, and his grace in the world religions. As we have seen, according to O'Collins, faith presupposes confession, commitment and confidence to God's revelation. While *confession* is the "*fides quae*" or the *orthodoxy* (content) of faith, *commitment* is the "*fides qua*" or the *orthopraxy* (practice) of faith. The actual commitment or *orthopraxy* is "the *obedience* of faith" (Rom 1:5), a personal submission to God. According to O'Collins, faith's content (*orthodoxy*) would never have come up or made any sense without the act of faith – the commitment (*orthopraxy*).¹¹⁶ Faith, for him, is not simply believing in a set of truths or asserting some objective facts. The confession of truth in faith's response to the divine communication is, in fact, activated and accompanied by commitment and confidence or hope. While confession is identical with *knowing*, confidence with *hoping*, commitment is referred to our act of *loving*.¹¹⁷ If love or loving is an act of faith, and faith is our response to the divine communication or revelation, then love must be an indispensable criterion for us to discern the salvific and revelatory values or divine grace in the world religions as Dupuis does.

2) "Complementary Values and Convergent Paths"

Accepting the elements of "truth and grace" in the religious traditions and their function as paths of salvation, Dupuis goes further by putting side by side the claims to "uniqueness" that some great religions make for themselves or for their founders and those that are made for Jesus Christ in Christianity. These claims, according to him, "more often than not contrast sharply with those made by Christianity" about Jesus.

¹¹⁶ Cf. O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 137-138, O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 44, Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, pp. 3-4, O'Collins and Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 295, O'Collins & Kendall, *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture*, pp. 21-23.

¹¹⁷ O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 149. See also O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 117-118, O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 58-59, O'Collins, *Easter Faith: Believing in the Risen Jesus*, pp. 58-59, O'Collins and Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 377-378, O'Collins, *Has Dogma a Future?*, pp. 54-55 and O'Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, pp. 64-65.

Appealing to Reinhold Bernhardt,¹¹⁸ Dupuis speaks of the parallel between the position of Jesus Christ in Christianity and that of the Qur'an in Islam. Just as Jesus is regarded as the "definitive Word of God made man" in Christianity, the Qur'an is seen as "the final word of God revealed through the prophet Muhammad." For Christians, Jesus is of primary importance. He is "the Word-made-flesh," and through him God's word is revealed. In Islam, the Qur'an is fundamentally important, while Muhammad is only important because he is the channel conveying "God's eternal word." Thus, the claims to uniqueness in Islam are primarily about the Qur'an. It is said: "This book is not to be doubted. It is a guide to the righteous" (Surah 2:2); "he that chooses a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the world to come he will be one of the lost" (Surah 3:19).¹¹⁹ This, however, does not mean an exclusive claim against Judaism and Christianity, the predecessors of Islam. Islam understands itself inclusively as the completion of the revelation in these "religions of book."¹²⁰

Hinduism, for Dupuis, could be characterized as inclusive. It sees all religions as different ways directed to the same Ultimate Reality. Krishna seems to be presented as a universal Savior not only for those who believe in him, but also for those who with sincere hearts adore "other gods."¹²¹

Appealing to Aloysius Pieris, Dupuis speaks of the complementarity between the *agapé* in Christianity and the *gnosis* in Buddhism. Neither of these core experiences of the two traditions is fully adequate. They need to open themselves to their mutual complementarity. Dupuis quotes from Pieris:

In Buddhism the core-experience lends itself to be classed as *gnosis* or "liberative knowledge"; the corresponding Christian experience falls under the category of *agapé* or

¹¹⁸ Cf. R. Bernhardt, *Christianity without Absolutes*, London, SCM Press, 1994, pp. 101-105.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 289.

¹²⁰ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 289-290, Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 22-23 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 123-124.

¹²¹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 290, Dupuis, *Le dialogue Interreligieux à l'Heure du Pluralisme*, p. 559, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 202 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 236-237.

“redemptive love.” Each is *salvific* in that each is a *self-transcending* event that radically transforms the human person affected by that experience.... Both *gnosis* and *agapé* are *necessary* precisely because each in itself is *inadequate* as a medium not only for experiencing but also for expressing our intimate moments with the Ultimate Source of liberation. They are, in other words, complementary idioms that need each other to mediate the self-transcending experience called “salvation.”¹²²

According to Dupuis, for Pieris, both *gnosis* and *agapé* are “legitimate languages of the *human* spirit,” the languages that “the same *divine* Spirit speaks alternatively in each one of us.” The core-experience of Christianity is not merely *agapé*, but “*agapé* in dialogue with *gnosis*.” Likewise, the corresponding experience of Buddhism is not simply *gnosis*, but “a *gnosis* intrinsically in dialogue with *agapé*.”¹²³

Speaking of the soteriological role of other saving figures, Dupuis makes a striking parallel between Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha, the historical founders of Christianity and Buddhism respectively. In doing so, Dupuis wants to show the possibility of a mutual complementarity between the salvific values which other saving figures carry and express in their religions, and the salvific value of Jesus Christ.

Just as Jesus is called “the Anointed One” in Christianity, the Buddha is honored as the “enlightened one” in Buddhism. The names of both Christ and Buddha are associated with the religions they founded: Christianity and Buddhism respectively. However, the salvific role attributed to Buddha is not the same as the one Christianity ascribes to Jesus Christ. For the Theravada, Buddha is not conceived as a savior, but as a “pathfinder” and “truth-discoverer.” Although Buddha is regarded as the savior in the Mahayanist school, he is deified. For Christians, Jesus the Savior is God humanized. Nevertheless, neither Jesus Christ nor Buddha is a “unique” savior in an exclusivist sense. “What saves is the mediating reality itself,” which is identified with the Word. For Dupuis, “it is legitimate to speak of different manifestations of the Word in history. The Word that ‘enlightens every human being’ (Jn 1:9) is the source

¹²² Aloysius Pieris, *The Buddha and the Christ: Mediators of Liberation*, in J. Hick and P. Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, New York, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1987, p. 167. See also Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 326-327.

¹²³ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 327, Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, p. 559, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 216-217 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, p. 31.

of the ‘enlightenment’ of Gautama-the-Buddha; the same became flesh in Jesus Christ.” This does not mean each and every manifestation of the Word has the same significance. In comparison with the enlightenment of Buddha, the incarnation of Jesus has a “historical density of its own.”¹²⁴ Again here, this does not prevent the mutual complementarity between the two religions which they founded, Buddhism and Christianity or between Christianity and any other religion. Dupuis states:

It is therefore legitimate to speak of complementarity and convergence between Christianity and the religious traditions. “Complementarity” is not intended here unilaterally, as though values found outside were destined to be one-sidedly ‘fulfilled’ by Christian values and to be merely “integrated” into Christianity. It is a question of a mutual complementarity, in which a dynamic interaction between those traditions and Christianity results in mutual enrichment.¹²⁵

In concluding this discussion, Dupuis regards the relationship between the non-Christian religious traditions and the mystery of Jesus Christ as consisting in their convergence. They all are various manifestations of the divine mystery and paths to salvation throughout history. Still, they are not equal. Jesus Christ is the “integral figure of God’s salvation,” while the religious traditions “represent particular realizations of a universal process, which has become preeminently concrete in Jesus Christ.”¹²⁶

O’Collins is not much involved in the study of the world religions or a comparative study of religions, as compared with what we have seen in Dupuis. However, O’Collins’ account of the means and mediators of God’s saving revelation can certainly accommodate Dupuis’ above concluding statement. One can see that O’Collins’ assertion of the unique, universal and foundational mediation of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation and revelation is well-matched with Dupuis’ affirmation of Jesus Christ as the “integral figure of God’s

¹²⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 219, 327-328, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 202 and Dupuis, *La Novedad de Jesucristo Frente a las Religiones Mundiales*, pp. 29-30.

¹²⁵ Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 97. See also Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 687.

¹²⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 96-97, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 328 and Dupuis, *Le dialogue interreligieux à l’heure du pluralisme*, pp. 558-559.

salvation.” Likewise, his view of the salvific and revelatory mediations or values found in the world as participating in, or depending on, those of Jesus Christ is also compatible with Dupuis’ claim of the world religions as presenting “particular realization of a universal process, which has become preeminently concrete in Jesus Christ.” Thus, the statement of the world religions as “ways of salvation” cannot be understood as if they were independent from Christ - the unique way of salvation. Likewise, one cannot interpret Dupuis’ idea of the salvific and revelatory complementarity of the world religions as if these were needed to complete the salvation and revelation in Jesus Christ. These religions and their saving and revealing mediation depend on, or participate in, the one divine economy of salvation which is preeminently actualized in Jesus Christ. They can, however, enrich us (Christians) spiritually and make “the one divine mystery” more vivid.¹²⁷

O’Collins’ statement of the one divine economy of salvation and revelation can also shed much light on Dupuis’ assertion concerning the convergence of the world religions which function as various manifestations of the divine mystery and paths to salvation throughout history. According to O’Collins, it is the same Trinitarian God who is the ultimate source of salvation and revelation and is universally at work in the world. Thus, Christianity and the world religions, despite their differences, can still share the same revealed truth and salvific values as well as the ultimate source of salvation and revelation, God himself. In other words there is convergence between them.¹²⁸

4. Concluding Remarks

Although there is no adequate analysis to classify all paradigms in approaching the theology of religions, one could divide them into three basic positions: “exclusivism,” “pluralism” and “inclusivism.” For exclusivism, “only those who hear the Gospel proclaimed and explicitly confess Christ are saved.” On the contrary, pluralism considers “all religions

¹²⁷ Cf. O’Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 230-231, The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Notification*, 6-7, O’Collins, *Jacques Dupuis*, pp. 24-25, O’Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, p. 133, O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 94-95, O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, pp. 90-91.

¹²⁸ Cf. O’Collins, *Rivelazione: Passato e Presente*, pp. 132-134, O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, p. 130, O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, p. 75, O’Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 24-26, O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 225-226, and O’Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 104-105.

are equal and valid paths to the one divine reality and Christ is one revelation among many equally important revelations,” whereas for inclusivism, “Christ is the normative revelation of God, although salvation is possible through religions other than Christianity.”¹²⁹

If one regards exclusivism as Christocentrism, and pluralism as theocentrism, Dupuis’ theology of religions could be seen as “theocentric Christocentrism.” For Dupuis, it is necessary to have a Trinitarian Christology in accessing to the theology of religions.¹³⁰ While we need to affirm the universality of Jesus Christ as Savior, the salvific value or even the validity of other religions for their adherents, we also need to remember that this Jesus Christ never works alone for the salvation of humankind, but together with the Holy Spirit. And both Christ and the Spirit work for God the Father’s one economy of salvation, who is the ultimate source of salvation. Salvation is a work of the Trinitarian God.

Dupuis takes the claims of pluralism and exclusivism, and tries to reconcile the two. His approach to the theology of religions is different from the pluralist “paradigm” which denies the universal saving operation of Jesus Christ.¹³¹ It is also different from exclusivism which rejects other paths of salvation.¹³² Dupuis goes beyond Christocentrism and theocentrism, which, in fact, call for each other.

Dupuis gives more room for the world religions in the order of salvation than Barth and other exclusivists do.¹³³ In fact, Dupuis’ theology of religions, though distinct from inclusivist theology, seems compatible with it. His understanding of salvation history is very

¹²⁹ See Gavin D’Costa, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, in *Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs* 9, Leuven, Peeters, 1992, p. 140.

¹³⁰ For Dupuis, a “model” is different from a “paradigm;” the latter excludes any other, whereas the former can combine and even complete others. See Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 226.

¹³¹ Cf. Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name, A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, Philippines, Claretian Publications, 1985, p. 23, John Hick (ed.), *Jesus and World Religions*, London, SCM Press, 1977, pp. 168-169 and Lucien Richard, *What Are They Saying about the Uniqueness of Christ and World Religions?*, New York, Paulist Press, 1981, pp. 24-25.

¹³² Cf. Knitter, *No Other Name?* pp. 75-87. See also D’Costa, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, pp. 140-141.

¹³³ Cf. D’Costa, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, pp. 140-141 and Knitter, *No Other Name?*, pp. 75-78

close to that of Rahner,¹³⁴ one of the inclusivists who had a strong influence on the Catholic view of the world religions. However, Dupuis goes further than Rahner. His presentation of the four divine covenants with the human race throughout history, and his Trinitarian Christology, allow him to speak positively not only of the possibility of salvation for people “outside the Church,” but also of the salvific role of religious traditions in history as well as in the divine plan of salvation for humankind. This helps him to avoid the pluralism's disregard to religious particularity, while maintaining God's universal salvific will for humankind.

Dupuis also goes further than Rahner in affirming not only the elements of revelation in other religions and their sacred scriptures, but also the complementarity of such revelation for the revelation in Christianity. For him, “more divine truth may be found in the sum total of the sacred scriptures of religious traditions than is available in the Christian tradition alone.” Although for him the revelation in Jesus retains a special and unsurpassable character of the fullness of divine revelation, such “fullness” is related to quality rather than to quantity. It “does not exhaust the mystery of God.”¹³⁵

Dupuis seems to agree with pluralism in recognizing and speaking of the limitation of Jesus' humanity. God's revelation in Jesus Christ, according to him, remains “incomplete” and “relative” or “limited” and “finite.” However, this “pluralist thinking” of Dupuis is different from that of the “pluralist paradigm.” His idea of the “complementarity of revelation” found in other religious traditions does not mean the “relativist plurality of religious truth” which is held by pluralist theologians. Other revelations can be complementary to, but not “parallel,” with the revelation Christians experience in Jesus. The unique and transcendent character of revelation in Jesus Christ is never in question. It does not need to be “supplemented” by other revelations.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Cf. Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, pp. 142-145, Rahner, *Nature and Grace*, in *Theological Investigations* 4, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966, p. 183; cf. Maurice Wiles, *Christian Theology and Inter-religious Dialogue*, London, SCM Press, 1992, pp. 54-55; cf. J.A. Di Noia, *Karl Rahner*, p. 194.

¹³⁵ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 388, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 235, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 109-110 and *Christianity and Other Religions: From Confrontation to Encounter:1, the Storm of the Spirit*, in *The Tablet* (20 Oct. 2001), p. 1485.

¹³⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make you Free*, pp. 235-236, Merrigan, *Exploring the Frontiers*, pp. 355-358, Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 203-204 and Dupuis, *La Fe Cristiana in Gesù Cristo in Dialogo con le Grandi Religioni Asiatiche*, pp. 238-240.

According to Dupuis, one of the reasons why exclusivist theologians have a negative view of other religions is that they do not pay enough attention to, or ignore the fact that the work of salvation is the work of the Trinitarian God, which started even before the world began. It is not “reservedly” offered by Jesus Christ. Like Dupuis, Rahner (an inclusivist) also emphasizes that the God of salvation is the Trinitarian God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, Rahner seems to neglect the eschatological perspective of revelation, the limitation of Jesus’ human nature, and thus, the distinction between the act of the Word and that of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. This leads Rahner to affirm that the revelation in Jesus Christ is a perfect or absolute one, which, for Dupuis, only takes place at the eschaton.¹³⁷

Dupuis’s Christology is distinct from pluralism, which sees the doctrine of Incarnation of the Word as possessing symbolic-mythic significance. Dupuis makes a distinction between the saving action of the incarnate Word and the wider saving action of the eternal Word. In doing this, he is in no sense separating the Word from Jesus Christ or denying Jesus Christ’s personal identity with the eternal Word. Though the Incarnate Word of God remains the eternal Word of God, the economy of the latter is wider than that of the former. Dupuis, however, does not invoke a Logocentric paradigm, which he has already rejected. The incarnation of Jesus Christ, according to Dupuis, marks “the unsurpassed – and unsurpassable – depth of God’s self-communication to human beings.”¹³⁸

For Dupuis, it is important to recognize that the work or the action of the Holy Spirit is not limited or bounded. Emphasizing the universality of the Spirit’s active presence, Dupuis in no way invokes a “pneumatological paradigm.” Likewise, he does not invoke a “Christological” paradigm or Christocentrism. For him, the action of the Holy Spirit before the incarnation ought to be seen “in view” of the Christological event, but this does not mean that the whole action of the Holy Spirit is reduced to the action of the Word. There is only one economy of salvation, but the Word and the Holy Spirit can be seen as the “two hands” of

¹³⁷ Cf. Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, pp. 133-134 & 174, Di Noia, *Karl Rahner*, pp. 198-199. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 105-109 and Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 185-188.

¹³⁸ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 195-196, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 237-240 and Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 203-203.

God, which “have and keep their own share” in that economy “in accordance with their character.”¹³⁹

By his distinction between the act of the Logos and that of Jesus Christ, and by the emphasis on the unbounded operation of the Holy Spirit for human salvation, Dupuis can maintain the one salvific economy of the Trinitarian God and the special function of Jesus Christ in that economy; while also affirming the salvific role of the world religions and the complementarity of their revelation.

Dupuis would agree with pluralism in affirming Jesus Christ’s limitation. However, his Christology is entirely different from that of the pluralists. For him, there is only one Christ who is Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man and mediator. It is the nature of Jesus Christ, as both divine and human (infinite and finite, respectively), that makes his mediation unique and makes him the most qualified mediator.

Dupuis would agree with Rahner in speaking of Jesus’ uniqueness and universality. However, he is different from the latter in understanding that the uniqueness and universality of Jesus are “constitutive.” Jesus Christ, for him, is the “constitutive and relational” Savior. This does not mean Jesus Christ and his salvation are “relative” (as it does in pluralism), or “absolute” (as in exclusivism and inclusivism). The “absolute” Savior, according to Dupuis, is the Father, who is the original source of all saving activity. Jesus Christ, instead, could be called the “absolute Mediator.” He is considered “constitutive” savior because his Paschal Mystery is the “cause of salvation.” He is “relational” savior because he is involved in the entire design of God for human salvation.¹⁴⁰

As we have seen, Dupuis not only admits the saving value in the world religions, but also asserts its Christological and Pneumatological dimensions. The saving value in religious traditions, according to him, does not depend on the *Logos* alone, but also on the Holy Spirit and the Christ event. This distinguishes Dupuis’ position from logocentric, pneumatological,

¹³⁹ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 195-198, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 243, Dupuis, *God is Always Greater*, p. 1520, Dupuis, *Le Dialogue Interreligieux à l’Heure du Pluralisme*, pp. 547- 549.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, pp. 174-175, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 282-283, RM 5, Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, pp. 243-244 and Merrigan, *Exploring the Frontiers*, p. 355.

and christocentric paradigms. His view on the saving value in other religious traditions is also different from that of pluralism. For him, the mediations by other religious traditions are in no way conceived as “parallel” with, or “alternative” to, the mediation of Jesus Christ. They are not contradictory to his mediation, but essentially “relational” to it and “ordained” to it. This notion of Dupuis could be seen as a vision of the “fulfillment theory” in the sense that the Christ event is the perfect mediation, which “fulfils” what is imperfect in other mediations.¹⁴¹

Both exclusivism and inclusivism speak of the necessity of the Church. However, they differ from each other in understanding and explaining that necessity. For exclusivism, salvation is offered by Christ but in the Church; for inclusivism, salvation by Christ is available even outside the Church, but all grace is related to her. Dupuis’ idea is closer to the inclusivist view, but he explicitly speaks of the fundamental differences between the necessity of the Church and her mediation, and that of Jesus Christ, while maintaining the legitimate role of the religious traditions in the order of salvation.¹⁴²

For Dupuis, the Church’s necessity and universality are not on the same level with those of Jesus Christ. It seems that Dupuis is more comfortable speaking of the Church’s mediation or significance, rather than her necessity. Of course, this mediation, according to him, is never equal to, and can never substitute for, or be independent from, that of Jesus Christ, but subordinated to it. It consists in the Church’s announcement of the Word and her sacramental ministry. Thus, it is possible to say that the mediation by the Church extends to all people, including other religious traditions’ members, considering that her intercession is for the salvation of all. However, Dupuis locates the Church’s mediation or intercession more in the “moral order” than in the “efficient order.” Members of other religious traditions do not necessarily depend on the Church’s mediation for their salvation. Yet, in different forms, they are “oriented” towards the Church, and the mediation in their religious traditions is also ordained to her.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 246, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, pp. 675-676, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 152-153 and Dupuis, *Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde*, p. 529.

¹⁴² Cf. Knitter, *No Other Name*, p. 85, D’Costa, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, pp. 141-142, RM 9 & 18, LG 9 & 20, GS 22, DI 16, 20.

¹⁴³ Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 349-351, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Rivisitata*, p. 685 and Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 106.

Dupuis' idea of the relationship between the Church and the kingdom of God makes clearer the place of the Church in relation to human salvation and in history. He claims a close connection between the Kingdom and the Church while maintaining the distinction between the two. The kingdom of God in history is a reality that extends beyond the boundaries of the Church and is shared by both Christians and the members of other religions. The reality of the kingdom is universal while the Church stands in relation to that kingdom, which she is called to serve and announce.¹⁴⁴

To sum up, exclusivism relies on the basic affirmation of the Christian tradition's faith, namely, the necessary mediation of Jesus Christ, while ignoring another equally important aspect of that faith: the universal will of God for human salvation. As result, it fails to recognize the positive values and the role of the world religions, especially concerning the salvation of their adherents. The exclusivist verdict that "other religions are unbelief, false and useless" is untenable from both the biblical and theological perspectives.

In contrast to the exclusivists, pluralism overemphasizes the affirmation of the universal will of God for human salvation, but neglects or even rejects the necessary role of Jesus Christ in human salvation. Some have accused the pluralists of "naïve relativism and ahistorical idealism." Others have condemned their biblical interpretation. Moreover, others have accused them of being self-contradictory, since they fight for "pluralism" and end up with homogeneity in postulating the sameness or uniformity of religions. Some of the pluralists have separated "the Christ" from Jesus of Nazareth or even denied his historicity.

Dupuis's acknowledgment of the historical, cultural and human factors of religions and the limit of Jesus' humanity seems to be on a par with the affirmation of pluralism regarding the limitations of all religions and of Jesus Christ. However, his theological perspective, especially his concern to remain faithful to the Christian tradition, is totally different from the pluralist theology of religions. Using the framework of Schleiermacher, one could say that, for Dupuis, religions have both "finite" and "infinite" elements. Their historical conditions or limitations must be distinguished from their divine causes, which

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Dupuis, *The Truth Will Make You Free*, p. 254, Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 353-354, Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 145-146 and Dupuis, *Le Dialogue interreligieux à l'heure du pluralisme*, pp. 550-553, .

alone can explain the existence of religions.¹⁴⁵ Dupuis' understanding of the historical and human imperfection of religions is different from the "naïve relativism" of the pluralists. Likewise, the pluralist idea of the sameness of all religions is untenable as one encounters the varieties of religions and their practices. Religions share some common aspects but also manifest considerable differences.

All that Dupuis wants to do is to seek to combine a phenomenological view with a believer's advocacy of religions. His theology of religions seeks to reconcile two opposite positions: exclusivism and pluralism. This does not mean that it is identical with inclusivism. The main difference between Dupuis' position and inclusivism, is that Dupuis sees the salvific value in other religions as a result of the saving activities not only of Christ, but also of the Holy Spirit and the eternal Word. Furthermore, he not only affirms the world religions as paths of salvation, but also the possibility of a complementarity between revelation in the world religions and the revelation which Christians experience in Jesus Christ or in Christianity. His position could be called "inclusivist pluralism."¹⁴⁶

Even though he is not much involved in the theology of religions O'Collins not only personally clarifies and defends Dupuis' theology of religions, but also holds a theology, particularly a view of symbols, experience and revelation which offers a good theological groundwork for Dupuis's thought.

O'Collins' account of the co-existence between the divine revelation and salvation is not only compatible with Dupuis' understanding of the history of salvation and its operation in the history of humankind, but also makes it more understandable. One can see that his assertion of the revelatory legitimacy of all things in nature, either inside or outside the Bible and the Christian tradition, can well explain Dupuis' claim concerning the starting point (not just from the call of Abraham) of the history of salvation, or its universal coverage (not being confined to the history of the Hebrew-Christian tradition). Likewise, it also makes clear Dupuis' view of salvation history as coinciding with the history of the world which leads to

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion, Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, translated and edited by Richard Crouter, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 65-66.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Dupuis, *Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 96-97, Merrigan, *Exploring the Frontiers*, pp. 354-355, Dupuis, *La Teologia del Pluralismo Religioso Riveduta*, pp. 690-691 and Dupuis, *Cristo Universale e Vie di Salvezza*, pp. 212-213.

an affirmation concerning the role of the world religions and their histories in the order of salvation or revelation.

O'Collins' distinction between the revelation available in the Jewish-Christian Scriptures and the divine revelation as a whole can also illuminate Dupuis' distinction between the salvation history in the Israelite history and the whole history of salvation. According to O'Collins, even though the Scriptures and the Judeo-Christian tradition have a priority or special role in the history of revelation and in our understanding or experience of God's revelation, they are only a part of the latter and can never be identical with it. The same can be said of the relationship between the history of salvation in the Israelite history and the whole history of salvation which Dupuis develops. Salvation or revelation history in the People of God or in the Jewish-Christian tradition is only a part (even though it is an important part) of the whole history of divine salvation and revelation, which goes beyond the Jewish-Christian communities.

In defending the validity or function of the covenant with the people of Israel in Moses (the old covenant), the cosmic covenant in Noah and the new covenant (better and broader) in Jesus Christ, Dupuis tries to prove that all these covenants are included in God's one plan of salvation, and that non-biblical religions are also included in this plan. This could cause a misunderstanding that all means of salvation and revelation or all religions are equal in carrying salvific and revelatory values. O'Collins' distinction between the "general" history of salvation or revelation and the "special" one can avoid this misunderstanding and further explains Dupuis' affirmation that the salvific or revelatory values or means in nature or in the non-Christian world are of the divine intention and included in God's one plan of salvation or self-disclosure. It also makes Dupuis's distinction between the salvific and revelatory mediation of the world religions and that of Christianity more visible. This distinction is blurred when Dupuis states that the "special" history of salvation goes beyond the Judeo-Christian boundaries.

By sharing Dupuis' idea concerning the universally active presence and efficacy of the Eternal Word of God - the Logos - O'Collins fortifies Dupuis' affirmation with regard to the salvific and revelatory values or mediation of the world religions whose ultimate source or cause is God himself. Even though Christ by himself is already universal and God's salvation and revelation in Christ is for all, the affirmation of the forever presence of the Word of God

in the world makes the salvific and revelatory elements or values of the world religions more intelligible.

Dupuis' account of the salvific operation of the Eternal Word helps him to express the universally active presence of God in the world religions as well as their saving and revealing values or mediation. This, however, has caused certain anxieties and even misunderstanding that he would declare the salvific operation of the Logos and that of Jesus Christ to be two separate paths of salvation. Some people are also afraid that Dupuis would lead to a separation between the Eternal Word of God and Jesus Christ. O'Collins' interpretation of the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon and the Third Council of Constantinople can well clarify Dupuis' theological point, and thus rule out those apprehensions. It helps to make clear that Dupuis distinguishes but never separates the two natures and their respective salvific operations within Jesus Christ. Likewise, it also makes more comprehensible Dupuis' assertion concerning the universal work of the Eternal Word in the world before and after the Incarnation, and his rejection of any personal distinction or separation between the Logos and Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This leads to a proper understanding of Dupuis that there is salvific operation of the Eternal Word, that of Jesus Christ and the respective salvific operations of his two natures, which all derive from the one person of the Son of God who works for the one divine economy of salvation.

Dupuis' characterization of the salvation in Jesus Christ as "universal" and "constitutive," but not "absolute" has also puzzled certain people. However, it is well justified by O'Collins' view of the divine revelation in Jesus Christ as "foundational," "unsurpassable," and "full," but not "absolute." For O'Collins (and also for Dupuis), it is because of his human nature or condition that Jesus' revelation and salvation remain less than absolute. Absoluteness is reserved only for God who is totally and necessarily unconditional. God alone is the absolute savior. The absolute fullness of the divine revelation will not happen until the second coming of Christ.

Dupuis' statement concerning the limitation of Jesus' salvation and revelation can also find further support in O'Collins' notion of symbol, according to which, symbol is not identical with, or equal to, what it symbolizes. Being limited by nature, symbol can never capture the full reality that it symbolizes. As God's revealer or as the symbol of God, Jesus or the divine saving revelation residing in him, cannot exhaustively express the divine mystery

or God himself. However, the gap between the symbol and what it symbolizes in the case of Jesus or God's revelation, constructively introduces the element of hope, and invites us to look for the plenitude of God's saving revelation to come.

While his notion of symbol is a good justification for Dupuis' assertion concerning the limitation of Jesus' revelation or salvation, O'Collins' understanding of the means and mediators of the divine revelation also accommodates Dupuis' claim regarding the continuous nature of God's saving revelation in the Christian community, in the world and other religions. For O'Collins, everything and everyone (both inside and outside the Christian boundaries) can be the means and mediator of the divine revelation. People of all nations or religions continue to experience God's saving revelation via such means and mediators. These affirmations of O'Collins, in fact, are further expressions of Dupuis' idea that God's saving revelation continuously takes place in the world. Moreover, O'Collins' distinction between those revelations in the world and the revelation in Jesus Christ as "dependent" and "foundational" revelations respectively, also makes clear Dupuis's view of the salvific and revelatory mediations or values now in the world as "participating" in the mediation of Jesus Christ.

Dupuis' idea of the continuity of revelation is also a good fit with O'Collins' view of the relationship between God's revelation and human experience, according to which, there is no divine revelation or divine self-communication outside human experience. Experience of the divine self-communication or revelation, which might have happened in the past, never takes place once for all. It continues to occur and remains alive in the memory of the people. We can never exhaust, or succeed in interpreting once for all times, the sense or meaning of those past or present events of God's self-communication. They continue to be remembered, ritually re-actualized, reinterpreted and re-expressed until, and for the service of, the coming of God's kingdom. We can always have a fresh experience of God's revelation.

In order to prove the legitimacy of the world religions in the order of salvation and revelation Dupuis tries to demonstrate that their salvific and revelatory values or elements are not only the results of the Eternal Word's universally active presence or operation, but also those of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, according to him, plays a special role in all the stages of salvation history. He is the agent in each covenant that God made with humanity. The scriptures of other religious traditions though not without error, yet contain the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit and the words of God. They are also willed by God. All these ideas of Dupuis are well grounded in O'Collins' Trinitarian theology and his assertion of the universally active presence of the Holy Spirit in the world and in every stage of the history of salvation and revelation. Likewise, they are also fortified by O'Collins' adopted principle from Ambrose: "*quidquid enim verum, a quocumque dicitur, a Santo dicitur Spiritu*" (whatever truth is said by anyone is said by the Holy Spirit).¹⁴⁷

One might be puzzled by Dupuis' statement that the scriptures of the world religions can be called the word of God, and that they are inspired and willed by God despite their many errors and myths. This statement, however, can be adequately explained by O'Collins' understanding of the Scriptures in the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to O'Collins, there are also many matters recorded in different sections of the sacred Scriptures, which do not seem to be related to the divine revelation. There are parts of the Bible which report or convey the divine revelation less intensely and directly than others. "An inspired record is one thing, revelatory 'content' is another."¹⁴⁸ This can certainly apply to Dupuis' understanding of the revelatory values found in the scriptures of the world religions despite the errors either in the scriptures or in these religions themselves.

One can be entirely convinced by Dupuis' view that the mediation of the Church is subordinate to that of Jesus Christ and that the Church exists for, and is at the service of, the Kingdom of God, a "wider reality." Yet, he or she might not be so comfortable when Dupuis speaks of the universal mediation of the Church as being of a "moral," rather than of an "efficient," order (according to Dupuis, the Church's mediation is not universal (for all) in a strictly theological sense as we have seen). O'Collins himself also explicitly objects to the idea that the Church's universal prayer, and hence, its mediation for all, is "merely a moral cause." Christians are called to intercede for all people. Their prayers and intercession or the Church's mediation have a universal effect on the salvation of all people both Christians and non-Christians. What makes the difference between Dupuis and O'Collins concerning their view on the universal mediation of the Church is that Dupuis considers only the saving

¹⁴⁷ Cf. O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, pp. 226-227 and *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 17, Col. 245B.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. O'Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, pp. 131-132, O'Collins & Kendall, *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture*, pp. 34-36, O'Collins & Farrugia, *The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 105-106, O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 110-111 and O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 236-237.

dimension of that mediation whereas O'Collins takes into account both its saving and revealing dimensions. While the role of the Church is blurred in the order of salvation, because all who are saved are saved by Jesus Christ, it is more obvious in the order of revelation, because God's revelation continues to happen in the Church through preaching, praying, teaching or celebrating the sacraments, and so forth. And every revealed truth has its universal value.

In fact, their difference here is more of terminology and of accent, rather than that of theological view point. There is a common term which can express both their views of the Church's mediation, either in the order of salvation or that of revelation, and hence, fill up the gap between them, if we want to say so. That is the term "instrumental." Their views indeed imply the "instrumental function"¹⁴⁹ of the Church when we speak of her salvific role as well as revelatory role which participates, or depends on, the function of Christ.

One can see that Dupuis' affirmation of the genuine religious experience or revelation in the world religions despite all their differences and limitations is confirmed by O'Collins' assertion of the revelatory legitimacy of all things in nature, either inside or outside the Bible and the Christian tradition, and especially by his understanding of religious experience. According O'Collins, there is always a universal aspect, an infinite and spiritual horizon, in all our experiences. God is revealed in all our activities despite our errors or limitations. If God is universally and actively present or reveals himself in and through everything in the world, he must be present or reveal himself (even in a special way) in all religions. Furthermore, O'Collins' understanding of the gap between our understanding or our experience and reality, and his view on the cultural, historical and religious conditions or limitations of our experience, in fact, are further explanations of Dupuis' observation of the differences among religions concerning their concept of God and their formulation of religious experience.

In asserting the presence of the divine revelation in the world religions Dupuis in no way makes it equal with the revelation found in Jesus Christ or in the Judeo-Christian tradition and Scriptures. To distinguish them he speaks of the three stages of the divine

¹⁴⁹ In fact, Harold Coward uses the term "instrumental function" to speak about the role of all religions, "the means by which the One is reached." (See Harold Coward, *Pluralism in the World Religions, A Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2000, pp. 141-142).

revelation. This division is further explained by O'Collins' distinction between God's revelation before Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ and after Jesus Christ, and by his affirmation of the priority of the Old and New Testaments in the order of revelation.

Dupuis not only admits the salvific and revelatory values in the world religions, but also asserts the necessity of religions themselves for our religious life or for our relationship with God. This assertion of religion's necessity is well justified by O'Collins' account on the human condition, according to which human beings, by nature, are *social* and *institutional*. They not only make their history and tradition, renovate and reinterpret them, but also read and live new experiences in a way that is formed or at least influenced by tradition. Traditions always make available a social way to evaluate new situations, new events and affairs. All these imply the necessity of religion or religious tradition for human beings' religious life or for their relationship with God.

Dupuis' affirmation concerning the necessity of religious symbols, rites and practices for our religious life or for our relationship with God also finds strong support in O'Collins' understanding of symbols and their functions in human life and in religions. For O'Collins, human life is *symbolic*. All that we do or experience among ourselves or in relation with God begins and ends in symbols. It is through symbols that we experience God and his self-revelation or communication. Moreover, O'Collins says that if God wants to communicate with human persons, his communication or revelation must take the form and road of symbols. Thus, religious symbols, rites and practices in religions are needed for our religious life.

O'Collins' understanding of symbols sheds a great deal of light on Dupuis' distinction between the mediating values of the world religions, of their symbols, rites or practices, and those of Christianity and of Jesus Christ. For O'Collins, like all other symbols, those symbols that represent or symbolize God's revelation are also historical, no matter whatever form they take. Even though they all express or stand for heavenly realities and give sacred meaning, they do so at different degrees of intensity. One symbol may carry more revelatory and salvific values than another, depending on its nature or status. It is in this line that Dupuis claims that the mediation of the world religions, their practices and sacramental rites are not at the same level with that of Christianity and its sacraments which were instituted by Jesus Christ.

Since there are many and various differences among religions, including the differences concerning their concept of God, it is necessary to have a criterion to discern God's presence or the divine saving and revealing elements in the world religions. The essential criterion, according to Dupuis is love – *agapé*. This is well supported by O'Collins' understanding of the Christian faith. Faith, according to O'Collins, presupposes *confession*, *commitment* and *confidence* to God's revelation. The confession of truth in faith's response to the divine communication is, in fact, activated and accompanied by *commitment* and confidence or hope. While confession is identical with knowing, confidence with hoping, *commitment* is referred to *loving*. If love or loving is an act of faith, and faith is our response to the divine communication or revelation, then love must be an indispensable criterion for us to discern the salvific and revelatory values or divine grace in the world religions, as Dupuis does.

Acknowledging God's presence and the salvific and revelatory values or mediation in the world religions, Dupuis in no way ignores the special role of Jesus Christ for human salvation. Dupuis' affirmation of Jesus Christ as the "integral figure of God's salvation" is well justified by O'Collins' assertion of the unique, universal and foundational mediation of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation and revelation. Dupuis' claim that the world religions are "ways of salvation" is also further explained by O'Collins' view of the salvific and revelatory mediations or values found in the world (religions) as participating in, or depending on, those of Jesus Christ. In this way, Dupuis' idea of the salvific and revelatory complementarity of the world religions cannot be interpreted as being needed to complete the salvation and revelation in Jesus Christ. These religions and their mediations, however, can enrich us (Christians) spiritually and make "the one divine mystery" more vivid.

O'Collins' statement of the one divine economy of salvation and revelation can also serve as a good foundation for Dupuis' assertion concerning the convergence of the world religions which function as various manifestations of the divine mystery and paths to salvation throughout history. It is the same Trinitarian God who is the ultimate source of salvation and revelation and is universally at work in the world. Christianity and the world religions, despite their differences, can still share the same revealed truth and salvific values as well as the ultimate source of salvation and revelation, God himself. In other words there is convergence among religions.

In brief, O'Collins' account of symbols, experience and revelation gives us a sound basis for explaining Dupuis' theology of religions. O'Collins' understanding of symbols, experience and revelation, and Dupuis' theology of religions standing together can serve as a comprehensive and systematic Christian self-understanding in relation to the world religions, tackling and reconciling all the essential aspects of the Christian faith - specifically, Soteriological, Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological and Ecclesiological, experiential, contextual and ethical aspects - in trying to straddle two essential convictions, namely, the primacy and uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the legitimate role of the world religions in the order of salvation and revelation.