Chapter Two

Religious Pluralism: Nature and Implications
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William Troll in his book *An Introduction to the Study of Religion* defines Religion as the varied, symbolic expression of, and appropriate response to, that which people deliberately affirm as being of unrestricted value for them. In order to understand better the origins of unity in religions, it seems necessary to deliberate on the literal and terminological definitions of religion from the view of sociologists, and then theologists who have spent a long time in studying the comparative history of religions. The term religion means a variety of things to different people. The *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* defines religion as “a belief in an invisible superhuman power together with the feelings and practices that flow from such a belief.” The *American College Dictionary* defines it as “the quest for the values of the ideal life, and for the means of achieving them, and includes a worldview that relates this quest to the surrounding universe”. The terms religion is ambiguous to the extent that, one, it is actually defined in a number of ways, second, these definitions emphasize several distinguishing characteristics and third, some of them are in conflict with some others.

*Universal Dictionary of the English Language* defines it as a specific system of belief in God, including a group of doctrines concerning Him, and His relation to man and the universe.

*Karl Marx*, the father of communism, defines religions as “the sigh of the oppressed creature... it is the opium of the people...Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself.”

*John B. Magee*, The author of *Religion and Modern Man*, offers the following definition,” Religion is the realm of the ultimately real and ultimately valuable”. Here
religion is defined as the true and ultimate measure of people’s existence, the final test of life’s meaning. This is in direct contrast to the Marx’s view of religion as an illusion.4

Nature of Religious Pluralism

For almost 1500 years the three great monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have lived together, for better or worse, in relationships ranging from mutual respect and toleration or persecution. Moreover, the world into which they came to knew of yet other religions, even if the Abrahamic faiths often dismissed these in disparaging terms as idolatry or superstition, and more new religions have emerged, or have been discovered, during the course of their history. So there is a sense in which religious pluralism as a phenomenon has always been with us.5

The religious pluralism is a doctrine according to which some sort of favorable attribution is ascribed to a plurality of religions. This makes it crystal clear that we can expect to find a wide variety of positions that could be covered by the term “religious pluralism”. The variety is so wide that the claim that someone accepts religious pluralism in this sense is almost trivial.6 Phenomenologically, the term religious pluralism refers simply to the fact that the history of religions show a plurality of traditions and a plurality of variations within each. Philosophically, however, the term refers to a particular theory of the relation between these traditions, with their different and competing claims. This is the theory that the great world religions constitute variant conceptions and perceptions of, and responses to the one ultimate, mysterious divine reality.7

Roger Boase argues that the concept of religious pluralism is the notion that no single religion can claim a monopoly of the truth. This has gained wide currency during the last two decades as people have become increasingly aware of the need to break
down barriers of mutual prejudice by engaging in interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Now, however, as a result of recent political events, this concept and the interpretation of religion and culture that it presupposes is increasingly under assault. The language of dialogue is being eroded by the self-fulfilling prophecy of a "clash of civilization" and the nightmare of "total war".  

According to the Encyclopedia Wikipedia Religious Pluralism/diversity is the coexistence and the peaceful relations of multiple religions and the worldview systems. (Views of truth) As a synonym for religious tolerance, which is a condition of harmonious co-existence between adherents of different religions or religious denominations. The most important value is that of mutual respect and tolerance, so that different religions can co-exist and interact without anyone being forced to assimilate to anyone else's position, in conflicts that will naturally arise out of diverging interests and positions. These conflicts can only be resolved durably by dialogue which leads to compromise and to mutual understanding.

*John Hick* an important authority on pluralism states; “different religions are legitimate responses to the same ultimate reality (the real?) And various religions are historically and culturally conditioned interpretation of this same reality, salvation is occurring roughly to the same extent within the major religions”. To him various religions therefore are to be affirmed as equally legitimate alternatives.

*Peter Byrne’s* introductory essay to *Religious Pluralism* explains Religious Pluralism as, not to the fact that there is a plurality of religions in the world, but to one intellectual response to that fact.

To *Farid Esack* ‘it is the acknowledgement rather than tolerance of otherness and diversity, both within the self and within the other. In context of religion it means
acceptance of diverse ways of responding to the impulse, which may be both innate and socialized, within each human being towards the transcendent.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Seena Fazel} argues that religious pluralism is the theory that the great world religions constitute varying conceptions of, and responses to, the one ultimate, mysterious divine reality.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Diana Eck} identified the theme about Pluralism that it is not simply the same thing as diversity. One may have people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds present in one place, but unless they are involved in an active engagement with one another, there is no pluralism. In other words, pluralism is not and cannot be a nonparticipant sport.\textsuperscript{14}

The word pluralism as defined earlier, means the condition or the character of being plural or multiple. Thus the religious pluralism means the condition of believing in multiplicity of religions, or to accommodate the views and ideas of others as well and accepting the differences between beliefs of one another.

One of the indirect consequences of globalization is the emergence of religious pluralism. Some faith communities confront religious pluralism with fear, seeing it as a threat to the uniqueness of their belief. They respond by building and living in a ghetto of exclusivity. Other faith communities regard religious pluralism with tolerance. Accepting the differences between beliefs, they attempt to find common ground, thus maintaining an open house of inclusiveness.

We know a great deal about the interaction of religious communities within states and societies. Religious pluralism beyond the nation has received much less attention. The "Clash of Civilizations" controversy has obscured the emergence of a new transnational religious landscape marked by both inter-religious cooperation and
conflict. Over the past two decades, global migration patterns and modern communications technologies have spawned more active transnational religious communities. This has generated a new religious pluralism with two salient characteristics. More global religious identities have encouraged inter-religious dialogue and greater religious engagement around questions of international development and conflict resolution. At the same time, more intense inter-religious competition has contributed to controversy over the meaning and scope of religious freedom.

**Global Religious Identities:** Most work on globalization casts religion in a defensive role, as a local or national reaction to global economic, cultural, and political forces. Less understood, but equally important, is the emergence of religious communities as key transnational actors increasingly engaged with other faith traditions and concerned with global issues. The formation and contestation of more global religious identities has both reflective and ethical dimensions. On the one hand, it entails wrestling with the implications of religious pluralism for received understandings of truth. This involves communication and dialogue across religious traditions. On the other hand, more global identities encourage a reframing of received ethical commitments to peace and justice as transnational, and not just local or national imperatives. This broader ethical horizon increasingly informs religious engagement and collaboration around global issues including peaceful conflict resolution and economic and social development.

**International Religious Freedom.** Over the past decade, transnational religious activity has also been a source of competition and conflict. Greater international engagement and national religious pluralism have raised a host of legal and political questions. The contestation of religious freedom, its meaning and the application has moved up the global agenda. The norm of international religious freedom was enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and subsequently
developed as a component of international law. Since the late 1990s, the US government has made the promotion of religious freedom an explicit goal of its foreign policy, encountering indifference from some states and hostility from others, notably China and Iran. We are seeing the emergence of a new politics of religious freedom at the intersection of transnational religious activism, international law, and national interests.\footnote{15}

**Historical development of Religious Pluralism**

Historically speaking, religious pluralism emerged as a theological position defended as such among Christian thinkers only in the twentieth century. Prior to that there were thinkers of various religious persuasions who advocated something that today we might call religious pluralism, at least in the form of a degree pluralism, but modern religious pluralism arose specifically in reaction to widespread Christian views about salvation.\footnote{16}

It was *Ernst Troeltsch*’s essay “The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions” (1923) that primarily inflicted the idea of religious pluralism in the mind of Western intellectuals. Later, the historian Arnold Toynbee has written a book entitled *Christianity Among the Religions of the World* (1957). Later Wilfred Cantwell Smith and John Hick have developed hypothesis of religious pluralism. Wilfred Cantwell Smith as a historian of religion approaches religions from a historical point of view. He speaks of a unity of humankind and states that those who believe in unity of God should prepare themselves to accept a unity of humankind’s religions history. For him every religion is a historical process, a growing organism that he calls a cumulative tradition. Therefore, a historical religion cannot be a static entity but a dynamic and developing course. Each religion shares a common history. But this does not mean that all religions are the same. They are different but
historically inter-connected; they have interacted with the same thing and with each other. Ultimately all religions have contributed to the same religious history.\textsuperscript{17}

Cantwell Smith claims that although a unity of religious history of humankind is an empirical fact for those who observe it, the adherents of a religion are traditionally trained not to see it. Adherents of religions generally perceive their religion through theological perspective. Hence believers traditionally have got to know and acknowledge their own religion depending upon the features that differ from other religions not that overlap with others. As far as inter-religious relationship is concerned, people tend to speak of more on diversity rather than unity, dissimilarity than similarity.\textsuperscript{18}

Cantwell Smith argues that a theology of a religion as a systematic formation of beliefs and doctrines is a way to the Absolute; it cannot be considered itself as absolute at all. For him to regard a theology or even a religion as absolute is "idolatry". He believes that it is a mistake to identify one's own "religion" or tradition with God, or with absolute truth. To consider religion as divine rather than as avenue to, or from the divine is also a mistake, since religion is constructed and developed by human beings. He states:

For Christians to think that Christianity is true, or final, or salvific, is a form of idolatry. For Christians to imagine that God has constructed Christianity, or the Church, or the like, rather than He/She/It has inspired us to construct it, as He/She/It has inspired Muslims to construct what the world knows as Islam, or Hindus what is miscalled Hinduism, inspired Bach to write \textit{B. Minor Mass} or Ramanuja to write his theological commentaries, or Pancapana (if it was indeed he) to build Borobudur, that is idolatry. To mistake them, however, for God Himself, or mistakenly to elevate any one of them to some divine status, is to commit the fallacy of looking at the
window rather than through it to God, and giving it the honor, dignity, deference, due only to God.\textsuperscript{19}

As far as the great religions of humanity such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism are concerned, Cantwell Smith reaches three important points:

a. Every absolute truth claims to religions are not absolute at all, since all religions have been constructed through inspiration of God. Hence truth claims of these religions cannot be taken as literally true.

b. Every religion is a part and parcel of the same religious history of humankind. Each religion is a dynamic historical process. Therefore, it is wrong to speak of them as if they are static, unchanging and concrete belief systems. Thus Islam or Christianity of today is quite different than Islam and Christianity of Middle Ages.

c. If one perceives the great religions of humankind through, not ready-made concepts such as “religion”, “Christianity” and “Hinduism” but through observing religious practices of the adherents of these religions, one would easily acknowledge that beyond all diversities, disagreement, differences and even conflicts there should exist a unity which, the religious history of humankind is manifesting.

A contemporary philosopher of religion John Hick has developed a proper hypothesis of religious Pluralism. As Cantwell Smith approaches the issue from a historical perspective, Hick, as a philosopher, takes the issue into consideration from a philosophical perspective and formulates a hypothesis of religious pluralism to solve the question of Plurality of religions. For this purpose, Hick simply applies Kantian noumenon and phenomenon distinctions into the world of religions. As Kant has formed his epistemological system by depending upon experience, Hick developed his hypothesis of religious pluralism through relying on religious experience. Hick claims that the great religious traditions affirm that beyond our ordinary experience there is a limitless greater and higher Reality. Further each tradition, according to Hick, speaks also that the divine Reality exceeds the reach of our earthly perception.
From this Hick moves further and claims that there is ineffable and unspeakable divine Reality that what Hick calls the Real \textit{an sich}. This is the ultimate ground of gods of religions. In other words, images of God which have been constructed through their respective historical religious experience are the manifestations of Ultimate Reality of the Real \textit{an sich}. At first level, the Real \textit{an sich} discloses itself as personae and impersonae of Deity. Hence the real as personal is known in Christianity as God the \textit{Father}; in Judaism as \textit{Adanoi}, in Islam as \textit{Allah}; in Indian tradition as \textit{Shiva} or \textit{Vishnu}. Each deity as a person lives and has been experienced in a particular faith community. Hence the concept of \textit{Yahweh} lives and has developed through the interaction of the Real \textit{an sich} to Jewish community. \textit{Shiva} on the other hand is quite different personae who lives in Indian religious history and has different features and religious functions. So do \textit{Allah} and Heavenly Father. Each image of deity lives in different worlds of faith. For Hick, \textit{Yahweh} and \textit{Shiva} are not rival gods, but rather two different historical personae through which the Real \textit{an sich} has been presented itself and has been responded to. On the other hand, the Real \textit{an sich} has been experienced as impersonae in \textit{Brahman}, the \textit{Dharma}, the \textit{Tao}, \textit{Nirvana}, \textit{Sunyata} and so on.

According to Hick, since each tradition manifests a different aspect of the same divine Reality, it would be inappropriate and even wrong to put one against other to judge, which is true. In other words, since they reveal the Real in such a different light, they are independently valid. For him, however; only criterion that we put forward in determining validity of these religions is their stereological efficacy. For Hick, the great world traditions, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism have in fact proved to be the paths through which believers are enabled to advance in transformation from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness. In other words, those traditions that produce saints are authentic ways to the Real.\textsuperscript{20}
In traditional societies religion or tradition was the only normative system. Whereas in most of the modern societies, there are dichotomies. Religion and modern law as two different normative systems competes and conflicts in the social domain. This of course creates fragmentation, discrimination, exclusion and dichotomy in some modern Muslim societies.

We have briefly touched upon two Western forms of religious pluralism. Both have taken the issue from theoretical perspectives. For a better comparison what we need here is to be practical, i.e. legal implementations of religious pluralism. For this purpose, I would like to examine Antony Allott's article entitled as “Religious Pluralism and Law in England and Africa: a case study”. Allott identifies six different forms of the relationship between religion and law. The first is fusion where law and religion are seen as part of the same cultural complex. The second is a fusion where a ruler or promulgator of laws seeks to make them confirm his own religious perception. The third is co-ordination- religious and legal systems exist in parallel lines. The fourth is subordination where religion is subordinated to the law. Fifth is toleration where the law tolerates the dictates of religion. The sixth is suppression where the law aims to outlaw it.\(^\text{21}\)

In most of the traditional societies, the relation between law and religion was an example of fusion. The relation between law and religion in the most of the Muslim countries can be described as toleration and to some extent suppression. On one hand, the law in some Muslim countries tolerate religious practices; on the other hand, religion is not being approved as the source of legitimacy and law. In fact the rules of religion do not have legalistic value. Allot sees the contemporary British society as an example of toleration since the law neither favors nor prevents the religious practices.\(^\text{22}\)

The most common and perhaps acceptable attitude of the modern state towards religion is toleration. From a religious perspective this attitude might not be
welcomed, since in this case religion has been put under the authority of law. In other words, if the law wishes it can tolerate religion. But religion especially great religions such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism are not just only set of beliefs and the practices of certain rituals. They have institutions, law and culture. The modern state might tolerate a freedom of religious association, a right to promote religious and philosophical ideas. It may tolerate religious practices. When a religion includes religious laws into the domain of religious practices, then naturally the modern state sets a limit to freedom of the behavior of religion. This cannot be characterized a pluralism of course. For instance, Allott points out that English law does not tolerate a polygamous character of marriage, which Islam tolerates, and ritual killings of animals for food, which are the dictates of Islamic and Jewish law.23

Religious pluralism is concerned with recognition of diverse religious systems, and with regard to legal system it involves the recognition of diverse religious laws. In some of the western societies, while theoretical religious pluralism was celebrated, legalistic pluralism in a practical domain was not equally recognized. If the practical pluralism is in force, the Muslims who are minority in the western societies have right to demand that no law or regulation with regard to them should be made that contradicts the commands of Islam. They have a right to demand flexibility in personal law not in common law.

As Allott puts forward the current law of England today whether statutory or common does not recognize any religious point of view and act accordingly. It is a state of neutrality and toleration towards any religion. But he does not mean that the current English law has been totally divorced from its Christian background. It has covertly strong Christian connotations. Catholic, Jews and Muslims for a long time were under legal disabilities. Despite the legislation, equity before the law has not been achieved yet. A Jew or a Catholic or a Muslim still disqualifies for accession to the throne.24 As Allott admits, English law domestically does not recognize religious
personal laws as valid. For those who live in England permanently, there is only one system of personal law in force. British Parliament issued the Matrimonial Proceedings Act in 1972 to repeal the polygamous marriages. Hence, English court can exercise matrimonial jurisdiction over marriages formed under a law permitting polygamy. In this sense English law is not religiously pluralistic.

There are also some pluralistic factors in English law today. For instance, in 1973 legislation introduced for those who ride motorcycle must wear helmet. The Sikhs challenged this law. Male Sikhs claimed that religion orders them to wear turbans and they cannot wear helmet. In 1976, government took a softer option and led to the modification of law. Motorcycle Crash helmet (Religious Exemption) Act provided the law should not apply to any follower of Sikh religion when wearing a turban. The Slaughterhouses Act exempts slaughter by the Jewish method for the food of Jews and similarly by the Muslim method for the food of Muslims from the requirements of the Slaughter of Animal Act 1933. Allott concludes that there have appeared great demands for a pluralistic legal system in Britain and other First World countries and predicts that the law of England in twenty first century would differ dramatically in order to accommodate that demand.

On the other hand, in some of the Muslim countries, a legal religious pluralism seems to have been achieved at least formally. Article 13 of the constitution of Iran says: “Iranian Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians are the only accepted religious minorities and they are free to practice their religious ceremonies within the law and in personal behavior and religious teachings act according to their customs”. From this we understand that the religious rights of minorities at least in terms of law have been guaranteed by the constitution of Iran. According to Article 64, religious minorities can represent themselves in the parliament of Iran. Now different Christian sects appoint their own MP in the parliament.
Islamic Perspective on the Emergence of Multiple Religions

The Qur'an asserts that all mankind has been one single religious community, all mankind by virtue of their humanity share in the *din-al-fitrah* (*kana al-nasu ummah wahidah*)\(^\text{28}\)

Since the earliest period of the Muslim history, they have been conscious of the religious diversity of the human race and have dealt with the issue. In the discussion above, W.C. Smith has shown the unique attitude of Islam to the multiplicity of religions. Muslim tradition debated the nature of religious diversity since its inception and invested considerable effort in trying to understand its significance and the background for its development. Furthermore, classical Muslim literature reflects intense curiosity concerning the religious history of mankind, form the creation onwards. Numerous verses of the Qur'an express the existence. For various reasons discussed in the tradition, dissension set in afterward, the primordial faith became corrupt and distinct religious communities came into being. Several verses of the Qur'an are devoted to descriptions and appraisals of religions other than Islam. Qur'anic exegesis, hadith and jurisprudence have expanded the treatment of this topic and contain wide-ranging discussions of the religious traditions encountered by Muslims in the nascent stage of their history: idolatry, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Sabianism. A whole literary genre, known in Arabic as *al-milal wa al-nihal*, developed since the eleventh century onward and includes detailed treatment of Jewish, Christian and Muslim sects, as well as extensive descriptions of the religions and philosophies of Iran, India and Greece.

The development of mankind's religious diversity as seen by the Muslim tradition is that the phenomenon of religion started contemporaneously with creation. Since the very beginning, Allah gave divine guidance to all. Adam was His first prophet, followed by a long succession of prophets and messengers who were entrusted time
and again with communicating Allah’s message to all created beings, both men and Jinn. Though the message was identical in its essentials because all prophets preached absolute monotheism, it varied in particulars and the detailed laws ordained for the various communities were not identical. Barring idolatry, which was never considered as possessing divine origin, all the prophetic religions that had existed prior to the mission of Muhammad (saw) were initially true and reflected the divine will. At a certain stage of their development, however, Judaism and Christianity deviated from their pristine condition and became hopelessly corrupt. A prophetic mission would have been required to ameliorate this situation. However, no prophets were sent to accomplish this task between the missions of Jesus and Muhammad and, consequently, true religion ceased to exist. Only with the emergence of Islam in the seventh century, the situation was transformed. The final and immutable expression of divine will, designed for all humanity, appeared on the scene. Muslim traditionists frequently express the idea that the coming of Islam completed rather gave perfection to Judaism and Christianity. The Judaism, Christianity and other religions continued to exist during the Islamic period and religious diversity is still in evidence; yet much of its erstwhile legitimacy has been true faith, clearly exalted above all others.^^

Religious pluralism has emerged as a new discipline aiming towards the attainment of reasonable standards of mutual understanding among different world religions. The crucial issue, however, is how to qualify the term reasonable when the standards of reasoning themselves are possible objects of plurality? It was rightly noted by D’Arcy^^ that we might have to reckon with different varieties of pluralism as with different religions! Nonetheless we may settle down to a sound workable definition to Pluralism from McLennan’s treatment to the term as a model concept expressing our acknowledgement of multiplicity and difference across and within particular social fields and discourses,^^ rather than a coherent body of theory or a particular
school of thought. On similar grounds, we can treat the term religious plurality to represent our acknowledgement; we can treat the term religious plurality to represent our acknowledgement to multiplicity and difference across and within world religions rather than adherence to a coherent theological doctrine.\(^{32}\)

**Religious Pluralism as an Ethical Code**

What seems to be problematic about religious plurality is not simply the persistence of theological differences among different religious. Differences do persist in almost all human discourses, particularly in social sciences where disagreement between rival hypotheses may hardly attain any ultimate resolution. After all, the main target of religious pluralism is to eliminate the social tension arising from religious differences rather than to resolve them in a short period of time. If the existing psychological barriers among the different religions are carefully lifted, religious differences will boil down to the other usual differences within human communities, thus furnishing a healthy environment for a constructive dialogue. The ultimate resolution of religious differences, as believed by Muslims, shall take place in the Day of Resurrection. But out of keen sincerity and care, Muslims are exhorted to persuasively warn non-believers of this Day without any compulsion.

Expectedly, promoting an ethical code of global humanism, universal justice, and tolerance among the different religions, rather than forging a new theological doctrine for religious pluralism ideally lifts such psychological barriers, said Breitling. The latter approach tends to characterize the works of many Western Writers, like Breitling himself who concludes his discussion of religious pluralism by defining it as “the theological concept of God as a finite being”.\(^{33}\) Similarly Coward presents a critical presentation of religious pluralism within the World leading religions, concluding his effort with a theological theory of Islamic Pluralism;\(^{34}\) on the other hand, Aslan provides a theological theory of Islamic Pluralism, which he
concluded from a discussion of John Hick's religious pluralism as opposed to Sayyid Hossain Nasr's philosophy.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Conditions for the Existence of Religious Pluralism}

Freedom of religion encompasses all religions acting within the law in a particular region, whether or not an individual religion accepts that other religions are legitimate or that freedom of religious choice and religious plurality in general are good things. Exclusivist religions teach that theirs is the only way to salvation and to religious truth, and some of them would even argue that it is necessary to suppress the falsehoods taught by other religions. Some Protestant sects argue fiercely against Roman Catholicism, and fundamentalist Christians of all kinds teach that religious practices like those of paganism and witchcraft are pernicious. This was a common historical attitude prior to the Enlightenment, and has appeared as governmental policy into the present day under systems.

Many religious believers believe that religious pluralism should entail not competition but cooperation, and argue that societal and theological change is necessary to overcome religious differences between different religions, and denominational conflicts within the same religion. For most religious traditions, this attitude is essentially based on a non-literal view of one's religious traditions, hence allowing for respect to be engendered between different traditions on fundamental principles rather than more marginal issues. It is perhaps summarized as an attitude which rejects focus on immaterial differences, and instead gives respect to those beliefs held in common.

The existence of religious pluralism depends on the existence of freedom of religion. Freedom of religion exists when different religions of a particular region possess the same rights of worship and public expression.\textsuperscript{36}
Chapter Second

Inter-religious Pluralism (between different religions)

1. Jewish views

Religious pluralism is a set of religious worldviews which hold that one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and thus recognizes that some level of truth and value exists in at least some other religions. As such, religious pluralism goes beyond religious tolerance, which is the condition of peaceful existence between adherents of different religions or religious denominations. Within the Jewish community, there is a shared common history, a shared language of prayer and study, a shared Bible and a shared set of rabbinic literature, thus often allowing for Jews of significantly different worldviews to nonetheless recognize some level of common values and goals.37

a. Classical Jewish views

- General classical views on other religions

Traditionally, Jews believe that God chose the Jewish people to be in a unique covenant with God, described by the Torah itself, with particular obligations and responsibilities. Sometimes this choice is seen as charging the Jewish people with a specific mission to be a light unto the nations, and to exemplify the covenant with God as described in the Torah. This view, however, did not preclude a belief that God has a relationship with other peoples rather, Judaism held that God had entered into a covenant with all mankind, and that Jews and non-Jews alike have a relationship with God.

Biblical references as well as rabbinic literature support this view: Moses refers to the "God of the spirits of all flesh" (Numbers 27:16), and the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) also identifies prophets outside the community of Israel. Based on these statements, some rabbis theorized that, in the words of Nethanel ibn Fayyumi, a Yemenite Jewish
theologian of the 12th century, "God permitted to every people something he forbade to others... And God sends a prophet to every people according to their own language." (Levine, 1907/1966) The *Mishnah* states that "Humanity was produced from one man, Adam, to show God's greatness. When a man mints a coin in a press, each coin is identical. But when the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, creates people in the form of Adam no one is similar to any other." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5) The *Mishnah* continues, and states that anyone who kills or saves a single human, not Jewish life, has done the same (save or kill) to an entire world. The *Talmud* also states: "Righteous people of all nations have a share in the world to come" (Sanhedrin 105a).

A traditional Jewish view is that rather than being obligated to obey the *613 mitzvot* of the Jews, non-Jews should adhere to a list of commandments under seven categories that God required of the children of Noah, *(i.e. all humanity, ten generations prior to the birth of Abraham and the origin of Judaism).* According to Jewish law, to be considered morally good, gentiles need to follow only these laws, and are discouraged from converting to Judaism.

According to the *Talmud*, the seven *Noahide Laws* are

to refrain from bloodshed and murder *Shefichat damim*
to establish laws, *Dinim*
to refrain from idolatry, *Avodah zarah*
to refrain from blasphemy, *Birkat Hashem*
to refrain from sexual immorality, *Gilui arayot* (traditionally, incest, sodomy between males, bestiality, adultery)
to refrain from theft, *Gezel* and
to refrain from eating a limb torn from a still living animal, *Ever min ha-chai*.38
b. Modern (post-Enlightenment era) Jewish views

- **Views on dialogue with non-Jews in general**

Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis engage in interfaith religious dialogue, and while most Orthodox rabbis do not participate in it, yet a small number of Modern Orthodox do.

Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, former Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue of Great Britain, describes a commonly held Jewish view on this issue: "Yes, I do believe in the Chosen people concept as affirmed by Judaism in its holy writ, its prayers, and its milennial tradition. In fact, I believe that every people - and indeed, in a more limited way, every individual - is "chosen" or destined for some distinct purpose in advancing the designs of Providence. Only, some fulfill their mission and others do not. Maybe the Greeks were chosen for their unique contributions to art and philosophy, the Romans for their pioneering services in law and government, the British for bringing parliamentary rule into the world, and the Americans for piloting democracy in a pluralistic society. The Jews were chosen by God to be 'peculiar unto Me' as the pioneers of religion and morality; that was and is their national purpose."

The German-Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) taught that "According to the basic principles of my religion I am not to seek to convert anyone not born into our laws....We believe that the other nations of the Earth are directed by God to observe only the law of nature and the religion of the Patriarchs...I fancy that whosoever leads men to virtue in this life cannot be damned in the next."³⁹

- **Views on Jewish-Muslim dialogue**

Many Jewish groups and individuals have created projects working for peace among Israelis and Arabs, most of which have as one of their goals overcoming religious prejudice.
The viewpoint of Conservative Judaism is summarized in *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism*. This official statement holds: "As Conservative Jews, we acknowledge without apology the many debts which Jewish religion and civilization owe to the nations of the world. We eschew triumphalism with respect to other ways of serving God. Maimonides believed that other monotheistic faiths, Christianity and Islam, serve to spread knowledge of, and devotion to, the God and the Torah of Israel throughout the world. Many modern thinkers, both Jewish and gentile, have noted that God may well have seen fit to enter covenants with many nations. Either outlook, when relating to others, is perfectly compatible with a commitment to one's own faith and pattern of religious life. If we criticize triumphalism in our own community, then real dialogue with other faith groups requires that we criticize triumphalism and other failings in those quarters as well. In the second half of the twentieth century, no relationship between Jews and Christians can be dignified or honest without facing up frankly to the centuries of prejudice, theological anathema, and persecution that have been thrust upon Jewish communities, culminating in the horrors of the Shoah (Holocaust). No relationship can be nurtured between Jews and Muslims unless it acknowledges explicitly and seeks to combat the terrible social and political effects of Muslim hostility, as well as the disturbing but growing reaction of Jewish anti-Arabism in the Land of Israel. But all of these relationships, properly pursued, can bring great blessing to the Jewish community and to the world. As the late Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel put it, "no religion is an island."

**Christian views**

**a. Classical Christian views**

Christianity teaches that mankind's nature is corrupted and damaged, and that the result of such damage, known as Sin, is damnation. To avoid such a fate, Christianity
teaches that Jesus was God made flesh in a literal manner, and that he suffered, died, and rose again so that the divine punishment intended for those who did not have a relationship with God would instead fall upon Jesus himself, and that by accepting various beliefs about Jesus and God and repenting, a person could then have a meaningful relationship with God and avoid damnation, and be given gift of eternal life in Heaven. as well as have his spiritual natures repaired and renewed so that he was no longer inherently corrupted by sin.

Christians hold that the consequence of self-separation from the triune God, (caused by Sin), who they view as the ultimate source of all life, is eternal death. Some view Christianity as a form of egalitarianism, because it teaches that all humanity potentially has equal access to salvation: a person simply has to renounce their sins and sincerely believe in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Christians have traditionally argued that religious pluralism is an invalid or self-contradictory concept. Maximal forms of religious pluralism claim that all religions are equally true, or that one religion can be true for some and another for others. This, Christians hold to be logically impossible. (Most Jews and Muslims similarly reject this maximal form of pluralism.) Christianity insists it is the fullest and most complete revelation of God to Man. If Christianity is true, then other religions cannot be equally true, although they may contain lesser revelations of God that are true. So the pluralist must either distort Christianity to make it pluralistic, or reject it and acknowledge that one cannot be a complete pluralist.

To some Christians, it appears to be a contradiction for non-Christians to acknowledge the validity of Christian prayers or sacraments, but continue to deny the beliefs which underlie those prayers and sacraments. The central sacrament, the Eucharist, for example, is believed to be the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ (in some branches of Christianity; this is a belief held by those who subscribe to trans-substantiation); belief in its efficacy is based on the belief that it really and truly is. If
a person were to deny that the Eucharist is Christ's body and blood, that would amount to denying that it unites us to God, imparts grace, or administers any other benefit, save possibly through a sort of psychological placebo effect.41

b. Modern (post-Enlightenment era) Christian views
In recent years, some Christian groups have become more open to religious Pluralism; this has led to many cases of reconciliation between Christians and people of other faiths. The liberalization of the majority of Seminaries and theological institutions, particularly in regards to the rejection of the notion that the Bible is a divinely authored document, has facilitated a much more human-centered and secular movement within mainstream Christian denominations, particularly in the United States. Most mainstream churches no longer hold to exclusivist views on salvation. In some cases, these changes in denominational doctrine are so pronounced that the entire basis for the organization's original founding no longer exists. Many denomination Christian Churches are essentially Unitarian Universalist churches, with a different name.

The most prominent event in the way of dialogue between religions has arguably been the 1986 Peace Prayer in Assisi to which Pope John Paul II, against considerable resistance also from within the Catholic Church, invited representatives of all world religions. This initiative was taken up by the Community of Sant'Egidio, who, with the support of John Paul II, organized yearly peace meetings of religious representatives. These meetings, consisting of round tables on different issues and of a common time of prayer has done much to further understanding and friendship between religious leaders and to further concrete peace initiatives. In order to avoid the reproaches of syncretism that were levelled at the 1986 Assisi meeting where the representatives of all religions held one common prayer, the follow-up meetings saw
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the representatives of the different religions pray in different places according to their respective traditions.42

2. Hindu views

The Hindu religion is naturally pluralistic. A well-known Rig Vedic hymn stemming from Hinduism claims that "Truth is One, though the sages know it variously." (Ekam sat vipra bahudā vadanti) As such the Hindu religion has no theological difficulties in accepting degrees of truth in other religions. Just as Hindus worshiping Ganesha is seen as valid those worshiping Vishnu (who accepts all prayers), so someone worshiping Jesus or Allah are accepted. Indeed many foreign deities become assimilated into Hinduism, and some Hindus may sometimes offer prayers to Jesus along with their traditional forms of God. For this reason, Hinduism usually has good relations with other religious groups accepting pluralism. In particular, Hinduism and Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam, coexist peacefully in some parts of the world.43

3. Sikh views

It is claimed that the Sikh Gurus (religious leaders) have propagated the message of "many paths" leading to the one God and ultimate salvation for all souls who tread on the path of righteousness. They have supported the view that proponents of all faiths, by doing good and virtuous deeds and by remembering the Lord can certainly achieve salvation. The students of the Sikh faith are told to accept all leading faiths as possible vehicle for attaining spiritual enlightenment provided they faithfully study, ponder and practice the teachings of their prophets and leaders. The holy book of the Sikhs called the Sri Guru Granth Sahib says: "Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran are false. Those who do not contemplate them are false."44

The Guru Granth Sahib also says that Bhagat Namdev and Bhagat Kabir who were both believed to be Hindus, both attained salvation though they were born before
Sikhism took root and were clearly not Sikhs. This highlights and reinforces the Guru's saying that "peoples of other faiths" can join with God as true and also at the same time signify that Sikhism is not the exclusive path for liberation. Again, the Guru Granth Sahib provides this verse: "Naam Dayv the printer, and Kabeer the weaver, obtained salvation through the Perfect Guru. Those who know God and recognize His Shabad ("word") lose their ego and class consciousness."  

Most of the 15 Sikh Bhagats who are mentioned in their holy book were non-Sikhs and belonged to Hindu and Muslim faiths, which were the most prevalent religions of this region. Sikhs have always been eager exponents of interfaith dialogue and will not only accept the right of other to practise their faith but have in the past fought and laid down their lives to protect this right for others. See the sacrifice of the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadar who on the final desperate and heart-rendering pleas of the Kashmiri Pandits, agreed to put up a fight for their right to practise their religion. In this regard, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru writes in the Dasam Granth: He protected the forehead mark and sacred thread (of the Hindus) which marked a great event in the Iron age. For the sake of saints, he laid down his head without even a sign. For the sake of Dharma, he sacrificed himself. He laid down his head but not his creed. The saints of the Lord abhor the performance of miracles and malpractices.

For these reasons, the Sikhs have promoted their faith as an Interfaith religion and have taken a lead in uniting all the different religions of the world so that together peace and prosperity can be found for all the peoples of this Globe and the suffering of the poor of the Third world can be properly addressed together. The message of unity of the faiths is summed up in this quotation from the Guru Granth Sahib: "One who recognizes that all spiritual paths lead to the One, shall be emancipated. One who speaks lies shall fall into hell and burn. In all the world, the most blessed and sanctified are those who remain absorbed in Truth."
4. Jain views

One of the fundamental features of Jainism is *Anekantavada*, or the doctrine of non-onesidedness. Jain philosophy accepts the relativistic view of looking at things from all points of view. *Anekantavada* requires that one should not reject a view or a belief simply because it uses a different perspective. One should consider the fact there may be truth in other’s views too, and no one should insist that their philosophy, sect or religion, or their perspective is the only true one. (Reference, same as below)

5. Buddhist views

The wisdom tradition of Buddhism necessarily entails a plural position since it is a middle way tradition which ideally eschews extremism of any sort, but fundamentally does not adhere to ideas of religious syncretism. The earliest reference to Buddhist views on religious pluralism in a political sense is found in the *Edicts* of Emperor Ashoka:

"All religions should reside everywhere, for all of them desire self-control and purity of heart." {Rock Edict Nb7 (S. Dhammika)}

"Contact (between religions) is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions."{Rock Edict Nb12 (S. Dhammika)}

Ethnocentrism of any sort (including the idea of belonging to a 'school of Buddhism' as well as evangelism and religious supremacism) is in Buddhist thought, rooted in self-grasping and reified thought - the cause of *Samsara* itself. However, that is the official view of traditional Buddhism, Buddhists understand that "ignorance" or "avidya", which is akin to "original sin" in Buddhism, is the source of all misunderstandings, war and turmoil. The removal of that ignorance takes time and effort on the part of everyone, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike. Buddhism isn't
about easy miracles or cures, but hard won liberation through constant effort and striving to destroy ignorance.

Dalai Lama has repeatedly pointed out that any attempt to convert individuals from their beliefs is not only non-Buddhist, but abusive: the identification of evangelism as an expression of compassion is considered to be false, and indeed the idea that Buddhism is the one true path is likewise false for Buddhists. What Buddhists are encouraged to do is to act as sensitively and appropriately to each situation as they can, and in the process not allow any reifying views obscure their capability to do so. Buddhists are supposed to use their understanding of the shortfalls of the world as the basis for compassion, and then focus this compassion on their own development: as enlightened beings, they will be able to deal more adequately with the sufferings of the world.

In brief then, the expression of compassion is done so in the languages and beliefs that Buddhists find around them. For instance, when Buddhists talk with Christians, it is an abuse to deny Christ, God or the immortal soul- what they can hope to do is to help people within their own belief structure to greater insight and greater kindness. Indeed what Buddhist philosophers such as Nagarjuna and Candrakirti demonstrated so well is that Buddhists can use language to defeat language. Buddhists can use the conventions of the world to reveal them for what they are, within the contexts that they find them. If Buddhists wish to help those around them, they are admonished to continually demonstrate examplary behaviour, displaying a way of being that inspires everyone to better themselves, which is contextual, sensitive, and everyone-centred. These positions hold for both inter-religious and intra-religious pluralism.

6. Bahá'í views

Bahá'u'lláh, founder of Bahá'í Faith, urged the elimination of religious intolerance. He taught that God is one, and Has manifested Himself to us through several historic Messengers. Bahá'u'lláh taught, therefore, that Bahá'ís must associate with peoples of
all religions, showing the love of God in relations with them, whether this is reciprocated or not.

Bahá'ís refer to the concept of Progressive Revelation, which means that God's will is revealed to mankind progressively as mankind matures and is better able to comprehend the purpose of God in creating humanity. In this view, God's word is revealed through a series of messengers: Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, and Bahá'u'lláh (the founder of the Bahá'í Faith) among them. In the Book of Certitude, Bahá'u'lláh explains that messengers of God have a two-fold station, one of divinity and one of an individual. According to Bahá'í writings, there will not be another messenger for many hundreds of years. There is also a respect for the religious traditions of the native peoples of the planet who may have little other than oral traditions as a record of their religious figures.

With regard to the pluralism vs relativism argument above the Bahá'í Faith holds that such contradictions or differences among religions are due to one or another of several possible explanations but so maintaining that the divine basis of the religions are all true while allowing for differences to arise on non-essential (though sometimes still important) doctrines. The first that some laws are eternal and unchangeable and consistent across religions while other do vary as according to the expressed choice of the Founder of the Religion decides one-way or another perhaps more in tune with the needs of the era of the new decision. The second possible reason for the differences among the religions is that the problem isn't in the statements in the scriptures but to the exclusivity expressed by limited human understanding. Essentially this is a test against the hubris of thinking that just because something is stated clearly that all the meaning is equally clear and no further learning is needed. For example the contradiction of whether Jesus was crucified or not (in Christian vs Islamic points of view) it comes down to what was crucified, or more properly, what Jesus really is. If you say he is a body, then both
scriptures can be interpreted in support. If you say he is a soul, then clearly a soul cannot be kept nailed to a cross, indeed a nail cannot touch a soul. So those who see only the body nailed do not grasp the reality of the soul - something both scriptures support. See section IV,C. The redeeming function of the sacrifice of Jesus is not impuned according to the Qur'an. However, it is important to note that while this contradiction can be explained, not all contradictions have been explained - it's an exercise for the reader after all. The third way religions can differ is in matters that are purely made up by human authority which is to say that the respective scriptures are not in conflict but the religious practices are.\textsuperscript{51}

**Types of Religious pluralism**

1. *Soteriological religious Pluralism* is defined in terms of salvation. According to an "equality Sotereological Pluralist", a plurality of religions may be considered equally effective in guiding people to salvation. A "degree Pluralist" would hold that people may be guided to salvation through a plurality of religions, although some ways will be more effective than others, either by providing guidance that is easier to follow, or that need to a higher degree of salvation, or that is more suitable to guide a greater number of people to salvation.

2. *Normative religious Pluralism* pertains to how adherents are to treat the followers of religions other than their own. An "equality Pluralist" in this regard would claim that there should be no difference at all in one's behavior toward persons of different religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{52}

3. *Epistemological religious Pluralism* is the view that all the major religions are equally justified according to some proposed criteria of epistemological justification or warrant. This way of putting the matter focuses on the beliefs regardless of who holds them. We could call this *epistemological belief pluralism* as opposed to
epistemological agent pluralism, which would deny that the followers for any particular religion had any epistemological advantage in their beliefs over the followers of any other religion. Of course this would be an equality pluralism, which means that we should regard the followers of all the major religions as epistemic peers. An epistemological degree pluralist would hold that the adherents of several religions may differ to some degree in being justified in holding their beliefs, but that these differences are not sufficient for only one group to be justified and the rest unjustified. Again, this could be defined as a belief Pluralism or as an agent pluralism.\(^{31}\)

4. *Alethic religious pluralism* is about the truth of beliefs rather than their justification. Unlike epistemological pluralism, there is no division here between belief pluralism and agent pluralism. An equality pluralism here would be the position that all the major religions are equally true.\(^{54}\)

5. *Ethical religious pluralism*: Religions are not theories, nor can they be reduced to their creeds. They also have a practical side. The practical aspect of religions can give rise to two sorts of Pluralism. First, one might claim that the major religions counsel equally noble moralities, either with regard to the values they instill, the obligations they place upon their adherents, or the virtues they encourage. Let us call this *ethical religious pluralism*. Like epistemological pluralism, ethical pluralism may take the form of an *agent pluralism* or a *precept pluralism*. Agent ethical pluralism holds that the adherents of no particular religion are morally superior to those of any other. Precepts pluralism is the claim that the moral precepts taught by the major faith traditions are equally right. Once again, this type of pluralism can be formulated as an equality pluralism or a degree pluralism. There are two main approaches to ethical precept equality pluralism. One way is to accept a version of moral relativism. Each religion’s morality is excellent by its own lights, and there is
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no absolute position from which one could be said to be better than any other. The other way, which is more commonly proposed, is to claim that the fundamental moral principles of all the major religions boil down to some common set of moral principles, such as the Golden Rule, and that the particular differences in moral systems are unimportant.

6. The second sort of pluralism that arises in consideration of the practical aspect of religion pertains to specifically religious obligations instead of moral obligations. Is it possible to fulfill one's religious obligations equally through adherence to any of a plurality of religions? Those who reject deontological religious pluralism would give a negative answer. They hold that God has commanded all of humankind at the present time to accept a specific religion. Choice of religion is not a matter of personal preference because of the normative pluralistic claim that no one should impose any religious pluralism usually take religious choice to be a matter of personal preference because of the normative pluralistic claim that no one should impose any religion on any one. However, normative and deontological pluralism should not be confused. One may endorse normative pluralism while denying deontological pluralism, that is, one may affirm that people should make their religious commitments in accord with their own personal consciousness, and reject the notion that whatever they decide is in accord with the commands given by God through revelation. Indeed, this can be will argued that this sort of position is more consistent with a sound Islamic theology than a blanket acceptance of pluralism.

7. The sort of pluralism advanced by writers such as Ramakrishna (1834-86), Madame Blavatsky (1831-91), Rene Guenon (1886-1951) and Frithjof Schuon (1907-98) could be called hermetic religious pluralism. According to this theory, despite their exoteric differences, all the major religions share a common esoteric core. Although the thesis of hermetic pluralism is characteristically left rather vague,
it is generally presented as the claim that the major religions lead to the same goal, which is a perennial wisdom comprising various metaphysical principles. A hermetic pluralist could claim that all the major religions are equally effective means for reaching this knowledge, or merely that the ultimate wisdom is the same, or that some essential portion of it is common to the esoteric traditions of the major religions.55

Responses to Religious Diversity.
In the discourse on religious pluralism there is a group of scholars who try to explore the dominant tendencies and traits in different religions, group them under the terms exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.
The 20th century has seen an explosion of publicly available information concerning the wider religious life of humanity, as a result of which the older western assumption of the manifest superiority of Christianity has lost plausibility in many minds. Early 20th century thinkers such as Rudolf Otto, who saw religion throughout the world as a response to the Holy, and Ernst Troeltsch, who showed that sociocultural Christianity is one of a number of comparable traditions, opened up new ways of regarding the other major religions. Given that the central concern of both Christianity and other great world faiths is salvation, every religion almost today adopts one of the three mains points of view.
Exclusivism,56 which holds that my religion is the correct or true one and all others are false,57 and the particular tradition alone teaches the truth and constitutes the way to salvation or liberation, is a natural initial stance for any religious movement coming into existence through a new revelatory event and seeking to establish itself in a relatively inhospitable environment. Indeed, the more hostile the environment, the more emphatic the exclusive claim to truth and salvation has normally been.58 Given that the central concern of both Christianity and the other great world
faiths is salvation. Thus Christians have stressed the words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John, "No one can come to the Father, but by me" (jn, 14:6).

The exclusivism holds that there is salvation only for Christians. This theology underlay much of the history outlined above, expressed both in the Roman Catholic dogma extra ecclesiam nulla salus ("outside the church no salvation") and in the assumption of the 18th and 19th century protestant missionary movements that outside the proclaimed Gospel there is no salvation. Thus exclusivism became deeply entrenched, and through the assumption that only Christians can be saved came much of the motivation for the missionary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Likewise, among Muslims there is an assertion which exhibits a powerfully exclusivist outlook. And Jews cherish their ethnically exclusive identity as God's chosen people. Hindus revere Vedas as eternal and absolute, and Buddhists have often seen Gautama's teachings as the dharma that alone can liberate human beings from illusion and misery.

It is being argued that exclusivism is, indeed an almost inevitable outlook for anyone brought up within a particular tradition whose boundaries are the boundaries of ones intellectual world. Criticism of the exclusivist assumption arises with an awareness of other streams of religious life and particularly through encounter with their best fruits regarding the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to a radical reentering in the divine. It then becomes evident that the creative and value enhancing results of the human awareness of the divine are not confined to one's own tradition, and other traditions are then likely to appear as ways, though sometimes strangely different ways, of responding to the same transforming divine reality.

Inclusivism one religion is the true one (mine), but many other religions do also have real values. The move, among both Roman Catholics and Protestant, has been toward Inclusivism. The above given perception has led to exclusivist theologies and
religious philosophies, according to which one particular tradition presents the final truth while other traditions, instead of being regarded as worthless or even demonic, are seen to reflect aspects of, or to constitute approaches to, that final truth. Thus Hindus may regard other religions as so many paths to the one divine reality, but tend also to see them as ministering to different stages of spiritual development. According to Advaita Vedanta, worship of a personal god occurs at a lower level than absorption into the trans-personal Brahman. Buddhists likewise often see aspects of the dharma reflected incompletely in other traditions. And Muslims have their conception of the "People of the Book" which some have extended to include religions beyond Islam.  

The exclusivist outlook was eroded within advanced Roman Catholic thinking in the decades leading up to the second Vatican Council (1962-65) and was finally abandoned in the council's pronouncements. Within protestant Christianity there is no comparable central authority, but most Protestant theologians, except within the extreme Fundamentalist constituencies, have also moved away from the exclusivist position.  

The Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner expressed the exclusivist view by saying that good and devout people of other faiths may, even without knowing it, be regarded as "anonymous Christians," Others have expressed in different ways the thought that non-Christians also are included within the universal scope of Christ's salvific work and their religions fulfilled in Christianity. 

Jewish thought includes the concept of the righteousness of all nations, who will have a share in the world to come (Tosefta Sanhedrin 8.2). Such exclusivist views presume the centrality and normative-ness of one's own revelation or illumination but are concerned, in a spirit of ecumenical tolerance, not to condemn those who are religiously less privileged because they have been born into other traditions.
Pluralism: The third position, to which a number of individual theologians have moved in recent years, is Pluralism. According to this view, no specific religious perspective is superior and more than one basic theistic systems or variant thereof are equally close to the truth.\textsuperscript{69} This is also viewed that the great world faiths, including Christianity and Judaism are valid spheres of a salvation that takes characteristically different forms within each, though consisting in each case in the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to a new orientation toward the Divine Reality. The other religions are thus not secondary contexts of Christian and Jewish redemption, but independently authentic paths of salvation. The pluralist position is controversial in Jewish and Christian theology because it affects the ways in which the doctrines of the Chosenness of the community and the atonement of Christ, and the Trinity are formulated.\textsuperscript{70}
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