

PHILOSOPHIA CHRISTI

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Editor's Introduction

When I sit down to write an editor's introduction, it is usually the first time I get to see the entire typeset version of a new issue of *Philosophia Christi*. Even though I have read many of the articles and notes before, they all seem more compelling when brought to the lovely ordered pages.

I remember eleven years ago when we worked on the first issue. The articles, notes, and reviews were great, but the more exciting part was the crisp printed product that put scholarly chaos into tidy submission. The hard work of page design paid off. Except for the recent addition of abstracts on the first page of each essay, it is the same basic layout—and in my view it is still a thing of beauty. Special thanks to Gary Hartenburg who has been our typesetter and technical editor for the last few years—all while completing a doctorate in philosophy at the University of California—Irvine. (Unsolicited sidenote: Gary would be a terrific catch for the philosophy or humanities department at your institution.)

An aesthetically pleasing print setting is the only fitting place for some of the wonderful essays and book reviews in this issue. A double helping of gratitude is in order for longtime EPS member and leader Dr. Chad Meister for organizing the EPS session at the AAR on religious diversity and then pulling it together for a print version. If you like it as much as I do you may be requesting it for your students to read. We will be ready with reprints for you when the time comes.

As usual, too many terrific articles, notes, and reviews to highlight in this brief space. So just dive in and enjoy. I hope to see you in downtown New Orleans for our annual meeting, or out at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for the EPS apologetics conference. For more information about our annual events, please visit www.epsociety.org.

Craig J. Hazen
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Religious Diversity:
A Dialogue

Guest Editor's Introduction

Religious diversity may well be one of the greatest challenges currently facing Western culture, and few issues are more troubling to Christians than how to understand Christian truth claims in relation to the claims of the many other faiths in the world. From the time of the Protestant Reformation to the early twentieth century, diversity in religion in the West primarily had to do with disagreements within the bounds of Christianity in its multiple manifestations. While such disagreements are still with us, the burning issues these days have more to do with the variety of religious beliefs outside Christianity—beliefs which in many ways are incongruous if not contradictory to Christian faith.

Given the significance of religious diversity, in particular the issue of religious exclusivism, I thought it warranted an extensive dialogue.¹ So, at the American Academy of Religion conference in Chicago this past October—an event rife with religious diversity and disagreement—I invited three leading thinkers (two philosophers and a theologian), who have spent a good deal of time working on the subject, to engage in a dialogue. I asked Professors Paul Moser and Keith Yandell to hone in on the theme of religious exclusivism, and Professor Paul Knitter—a prominent religious pluralist—to respond to them. In a packed room they executed their tasks graciously, engagingly, and brilliantly. So I proposed to the editors of *Philosophia Christi* that we publish the lively dialectic that occurred at this symposium, and they kindly agreed. In the three essays that follow, then, Moser, Yandell, and Knitter have taken their presentations from the AAR conference and recrafted them for publication in this journal.

In the opening article Paul Moser sets the stage by first noting that some religious positions logically exclude other religious positions, and so they cannot all be true. This is logical religious exclusivism, and he argues that while this position merits our acceptance, so do other forms of theistic religious exclusivism. The thrust of the essay focuses on what Moser calls inclusive Christian exclusivism—an exclusivism that includes the notion that while one may volitionally, *de re*, yield to God's unconditional love, there may nevertheless be no acknowledgment *de dicto* of God or God's love. This form of exclusivism, he argues, is universally redemptive and directs one toward a God of perfect love, perfect moral righteousness, and hiddenness—a God he argues is reflected in the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament.

In the next article Keith Yandell begins by noting some of the fundamental differences between several of the major religious traditions, as viewed from within those traditions themselves, and documents the *de facto* reli-

1. For further discussion of many of the prominent themes related to religious diversity, including epistemological ones such as exclusivism and pluralism, see my forthcoming volume, *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

religious exclusivism inherent within them. After expounding the religious pluralist reaction to exclusivism, he then assesses and critiques two prominent versions of pluralism—one by John Hick and another by Paul Knitter. Religious pluralists, he argues, impose on the traditions a perspective they do not hold, but offer a reductionist account of them instead.

In his response, Paul Knitter first challenges Moser to move from his inclusive exclusivism to what he (Knitter) calls Christocentric pluralism—the view that the love of Christ and God is unconditional and unbounded such that while Jesus saves by revealing God’s unconditional love, we should be open to there also being other revealers of such love. He then challenges Yandell to be a more apophatic philosopher of religion—one who recognizes that religious experience and language are ultimately beyond final human comprehension. As such, Knitter argues that religious dialogue at its best involves honest exchange and deep listening as well speaking to the other in a shared effort to come to a fuller grasp of the truth. He suggests that rather than affirming that one has achieved the full and final word on all claims to truth, a person should listen openly to what the religious other has to say. Dialogical engagement entails the recognition that we all have something to learn from the other, and he argues that the best starting point for such an encounter is a dialogue of ethical action which addresses unnecessary human and environmental suffering.

My hope is that you find this interaction engaging and challenging to your own religious perspective and that these essays might encourage further dialogue on this important issue.

Chad Meister
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