Paul F. Knitter's Proposal for Relational Uniqueness of Jesus

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Paul F. Knitter now propagates correlational theology of religions as well as relational uniqueness of Jesus and we in this paper look at these critically. The first section discusses the five theses on the uniqueness of Jesus proposed by Knitter. The second section is on the emerging issues such as exclusive statements of the Bible, Correlational dialogue, Jesus as Savior and Divine as well as the suggestion for simultaneous resistance and embrace. An evaluation of Paul F. Knitter by select theologians such as S.J. Samartha, Raimon Panikkar, John Hick as well as by the present author is the subject matter of the third section. Section four has indicated the concluding findings.

1. The five Theses

Knitter assumes that the five theses proposed by him can bring some clarity and direction to the debated issue of the uniqueness of Christ in a world of religious pluralism.[1] Thesis 1 is given as: *Given the nature and history of Christology, previous understandings of the uniqueness of Jesus can be reinterpreted.*[2] Interpreting this thesis it is said that in grasping, describing and proclaiming the person and work of Jesus, Christians can be open to new ways of talking, new images, deeper insights, even re-visions of how God has acted and is acting through him. Because throughout their history, Christian communities have moved around the hermeneutical circle of experience and interpretation or interpretation and experience.[3] The criterion for determining whether a new understanding of Jesus is valid or not is that the new understanding should flow from and nurture a saving experience of and commitment to Jesus (devotion) and a resolute following of him in the world.[4]

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Thesis 2 reads as follows: *Given the ethical imperative of dialogue, previous understandings of the uniqueness of Jesus must be reinterpreted.*[5] The imperatives can be both external (threats to glob and life in it) and internal (loving neighbours which is the first commission includes dialogue). Here surprisingly Knitter says that "not just the exclusivist but also the inclusivist understandings of the uniqueness of Jesus are impediments to real dialogue"[6] while his own position as per the five theses is criticised by others as inclusivism.[7]

Thesis 3 is : *The uniqueness of Jesus' salvific role can be reinterpreted in terms of truly but not only.*[8] It is not necessary to proclaim God's revelation in Jesus as full, definitive, or unsurpassable[9], rather "Christians must announce Jesus to all people as God's *universal, decisive,* and *indispensable* manifestation of saving truth and grace"[10] God's manifestation in Jesus is universal as it is meaningful not just for Christians but for peoples of all times. The revelation given in Jesus is decisive and normative as it shakes and challenges and calls one to change ones's perspective and conduct."[11] Jesus is normative in the sense "while Christians can imagine that God may have more to reveal to humankind than what has been made known in Jesus, they cannot imagine that such a revelation would contradict the central ingredients of the truth they have found in Jesus."[12] Knitter's exposition that the truth made known in Jesus as indispensable is problematic according to John Hick because if the meaning implied is indispensable for salvation. It makes Knitter exclusivist.[13] Paul Knitter in his response has clarified further what he means by indispensable saying that it is like a skill or insight like learning how to read and write or like a friendship that enriches our life, but which we know is not necessary to lead an adequate contented human existence.[14] Also he admits that Buddha may be as indispensable as Jesus.[15] Again we should remember here that he rejects the terms full, definitive and unsurpassable in explaining God's revelation in Jesus.[16] It is true that Knitter has also said thus:

> If we Christians are deeply convinced that whatever truth there may be in other traditions can be transformed and fulfilled in the word that has been given to us, we must

> be as deeply open to being transformed and fulfilled by the word spoken and embodied for us in persons of other paths. This new interpretation of Jesus' uniqueness seeks to promote the transformation of both other religions and of Christianity.[17]

It is mentioned that this mutual transformation is through dialogue, but the aspects of transformation are not identified.[18]

Thesis 4, reads thus: *The content of Jesus' uniqueness must be made clear in Christian life and witness. This content, however, will be understood and proclaimed differently in different contexts and periods of history. Today, the uniqueness of Jesus can be found in his insistence that salvation or the Reign of God must be realized in this world through human actions of love and justice.*[19] In explaining this thesis Knitter agrees that other religious traditions may have their own unique ingredients from which Christians must learn and perhaps be transformed such as Hinduism's insight into the non-duality between the ultimate and the finite; Buddhism's insistence that a transformation of our mindfulness through meditation is essential for any kind of genuine transformation on other levels; the insights of Native American spirituality into the sacredness of the earth; Islam's conviction that what is true in the spiritual — interior realm must be translated into the socio-political arena.[20] Here it may be pointed out that Christianity's unique ingredient for today can vary as per the diverse contents of the world, there is no one inclusive ingredient, a point Knitter who claims to be a pluralist has to learn. Salvation or well being for the world is just one aspect of the salvation announced by Jesus. Other religious experiences have to help us in arriving at the very content of the gospel of God in Jesus for a particular context.[21]

Thesis 5 says: *The orthodoxy of this pluralistic reinterpretation of the uniqueness of Jesus must be grounded primarily in the ability of such a reinterpretation to nurture a holistic Christian spirituality that is, a devotion to and a following of Jesus. The proposed understanding of Jesus as God's truly but not only saving word does meet this criterion.*[22] Knitter has the experience of Jesus as the place in which one encounters God, the place in which one's life is transformed.[23]

"As a pluralist Christian, even though I do not feel it possible or necessary to affirm that Jesus is the only Savior, I still experience him to be so truly a Savior that I feel impelled to cast my lot with him."[24] What the pluralist Christians find in Jesus, the way he reveals God and God's reign to them, leads them to expect that there are other ways and other words. The God of unbounded love in speaking truly in Jesus, reveals that God cannot speak only in Jesus.[25] Jesus' uniqueness is not a matter of superiority or arrogation of privilege, but a matter of distinctness, of specialness that will surely be different from but not necessarily better than the other.[26] "To feel and proclaim that Jesus is divine is to encounter him, as God's sacrament — as the embodiment, the historical reality, the symbol, the story that makes God real and effective for me".[27] He also says that he can endorse that explanations of what it means to call Jesus divine that have been proposed by Christian theologians such as Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Küng and Monika Hellwig.[28]

2. The Emerging Issues

a. Exclusive Statements of the Bible:

In his response to responses Knitter addresses to six areas or general issues namely the Bible, the nature of dialogue, Jesus as Savior and Son of God, the Reign of God, mission and the Spirit.[29] On the Bible he suggests that we can best interpret the 'one and only' statements about Jesus in the Bible by using a hermeneutic of discipleship, the truth of such passages lies primarily in calling us to discipleship rather than in giving us a definitive, philosophical definition of who Jesus was and how he lines up with other religious figures.[30]

According to Knitter the exclusive statements in the Bible are telling us that we run a great risk if we do not listen to and follow Jesus; there is a positive element in this negative language.

> 'No other name' as performative, action language, is really a positive statement in its negative couching; it tells us that all peoples must listen to this Jesus; it does not tell us that no one else should be listened to or learned from. The stress, then, is on the saving power mediated by the

> name of Jesus, not on the exclusivity of the name: If in our dialogue we find that this power of liberation is experienced through other names then the spirit of this passage in Acts would call us to be open to them.[31]

The early Christians excluded other religious options or figures because such options were opposed to Jesus' vision of the Reign of God; if other visions could either enhance or be enhanced by the Christians vision of how all may have life and have it more abundantly, then they are "with us" and not to be excluded or stopped (Mk. 9.40).[32] There are two central norms in Christianity namely the Bible and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit within the experience of the community. Though the Bible says that in Christ Jesus God is indeed revealed 'fully'; we should never think that we have grasped the fullness of who God is.[33]

b. Correlational Dialogue:

Regarding dialogue, Knitter suggests to make a distinction between heart and mind, between act of faith or act of religious experience and the content of faith, between religious commitments and religious doctrines; at the level of the former, the claims made may be definitive and unsurpassable, but at the level of the latter those claims are made in a relative manner.[34] This he calls as a 'correlational model for interfaith dialogue', claiming that correlational is a much better adjective than pluralistic to describe a viable dialogue or theology of religions.[35] To quote:

> *A correlational model for interfaith dialogue* calls upon all to view and approach other religious believers in such a way that an authentic *co-relation* can exist among them. The goal is to maintain *real relationship,* to do all one can to keep from cutting off the relationship or maintaining it by subordinating one participant to another. This means that while I will speak my convictions and my mind clearly and strongly, I will do so in such a way that allows you to do the same. This reflects... making absolute claims in a relative manner. In such a correlational model, all religions are viewed from the beginning of the conversation, not as necessarily, being *equal* or the *same* in their truth claims (whether that is so can be known only in dialogue) but as

> having *equal rights*. Thus if I feel impelled to make normative or absolute truth claims in the conversation, I will do so in a way that still recognizes and allows for my partner to do likewise. This means that I am open to the possibility that my normative claim may be corrected or 'normed' by what my partner has to say. So even though... we don't begin a correlational dialogue with pre-established claims of 'superiority', through the dialogue participants may come to the conclusion that a particular Christian truth claim is superior to a Hindu claim — or vice versa.[36]

According to Knitter Christians should understand mission not as something they have to reconcile with dialogue, but as dialogue.[37] Dialogue is the broder, more inclusive reality and hence it is not dialogue that is included in mission but it is mission which is included in dialogue; proclamation and witness which have always been considered the heart of mission are an integral part of dialogue.[38] "...In calling upon Christian is to evangelize in the dialogue, I am also calling upon them to be evangelized. If there is a hidden inclusivism in what I am proposing, it cuts both ways...This I think, is a determining difference between a correlational and an inclusivist model for dialogue; the traditional inclusivist would find it difficult to allow for this effect."[39]

c. Jesus as Savior and Divine:

In what sense should Christians must continue to proclaim Jesus as Savior and divine? Knitter in explaining Jesus as Savior, like Schubert Ogden[40] opts for 'representational Christology': "Jesus' life-death-resurrection saves, not by constituting or causing God's saving love, but rather, insofar as he re-presents for us the re-creative love of God that is inherent in the divine nature and is poured out on all creation."[41] If such a perspective is agreeable, then Christians can be open to the possibility of other representations or revelations of the love of God.[42] In presenting Jesus as divine also he continues a representational approach. To quote:

> When Christians announce Jesus as divine they are attempting to articulate two realities, one functional and the other ontological: (a) Functionally or personally, Jesus is for them the perfect sacrament of God — to meet Jesus

> is to meet the Divine; in the way he mediates God to them, he is God for them, (b) Ontologically in order to explain the way Jesus functions as such a sacrament, he must have been, and must be, 'oned' with God in a manner beyond full human comprehension, his very being must participate in the being of God.
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> If such an understanding of Jesus' divinity... is valid, then I believe it allows for the possibility that what happened in Jesus in order to enable him to function the way he did (as God's sacrament) can happen, analogously in other, very different instances or persons.[43]

Moreover even in traditional theology the second person of the Trinity is not identified with the person of Jesus in which case that Person or the Word of God is free to operate and take seminal from elsewhere.[44]

Thus according to Knitter the uniqueness of Jesus is a 'relational uniqueness':

> In the view of Jesus' uniqueness we have been discussing, he has to stand with others. We've been talking about a relational uniqueness, not a solitary uniqueness that pushes others out of the picture. To affirm Jesus as truly God's Word is to award him a distinctiveness that is his own; to add that he is not solely God's Word is also to see that distinctiveness as one that has to be brought into relationship with other possible Words. Jesus is a Word that can be understood only in conversation with other Words.[45]

Here he clarifies his view in relation to other contemporary thinkers. In the view of Anthony Kelly, the Christian affirmation of God as Word in history lays the foundations for a 'global conversation'[46] A claim for a definitive revelation is always a claim for perspectively interpreted revelation, holds Frans Jozef van Beeck.[47]

According to William Thompson if God is a self-emptying God, he/she has disclosed himself/herself in the various religions, we have to recognize not only the uniqueness and the possible decisiveness of many religions but also their need to complement each other.[48] Thus relational uniqueness has also been termed as 'complimentary uniqueness' or 'inclusive

uniqueness'.[49] John Cobb also points to the same complementary understanding of uniqueness of his writings. Jesus according to him is the way open to other ways; we should strive to share what has been exclusive to Christianity as we appropriate what has been exclusive to other traditions and there need not be any conflict between the exclusive claims.[50]

d. A stand which Resists and Embraces:

Knitter prefers the term 'relational' rather than 'complementary' or 'inclusive' uniqueness. This is because Christ can and sometimes must conflict with other unique claims in the sense Christians may have to be ready to take strong stands, sometimes in opposition, to the claims of others.[51] Referring to Charlene Spretnak[52] he brings out the difference between Asian as well as primal religions and Semitic religions:

> For Buddhism, and perhaps generally speaking for the Asian and primal religions, love of neighbour results from the experience of the Divine or of Enlightenment. For Christianity and perhaps generally speaking for the Semitic religions, such love of neighbour enters into and conditions, the very experience of the Divine. Such differences are extremely significant; they are not, however, simply exclusive of each other.[53]

The way Christians diagnose what is wrong with the world, what the remedy must contain again is distinctive — the cause of the suffering have to do with the way people treat each other, have to do with practices and systems of injustice. An analysis of pain includes the way human greed and ignorance lead to programs and systems of injustice.[54] "Both diagnosis and medicine must be social; one must examine not just the human heart but political and economic policies. Besides changing or enlightening the heart, one must address the Pharaohs, the lawyers and chief priests, the kings, popes and presidents."[55] The distinctive contribution of Christian thought here is, in the struggle against injustice one is going to suffer and fail, but this itself is the victory.[56]

In his correlational dialogue he includes the suffering persons and the suffering Earth. The dialogue is shifting from

theocentric approach to soteriocentric approach based on the common ground of global responsibility for eco-human well-being.[57] In his book *No Other Name?*[58] Knitter had attempted to assemble a theological case that a person is not at all abandoning the Christian witness contained in scripture and tradition but deeply understanding and preserving it when one sublets the Christocentric approach to other believers with a theocentric one. As the Divine Mystery we know in Jesus and call theos or God, is greater than Jesus, we have to be open to the possibility that other religions may have their own valid views of and responses to this mystery. Other faiths would not have to be unilaterally 'included' in Christianity, rather all faiths need to be included in each other as all of them continue their efforts to be faithful to the inexhaustible Mystery or Truth. He had many critics and in his book *One Earth Many religions*[59] he considers that the best way to respond to the many criticisms about the way he is calling religious persons into correlational dialogue is to include suffering persons and the suffering Earth in that dialogue, the most effective way to carry on a correlational dialogue among religions is to make it a globally responsible dialogue.[60] He says:

> *In No Other Name?* I ended up proposing a 'non-normative, *theocentric'* approach to dialogue based on the common ground of shared religious experience... Having been shaken by the voices of the suffering and the voices of theological critics both from within Christian communities and the academy, I would now like to plot the course. ...of what might be called a multi-normed soteriocentric' (salvation centered) approach to dialogue based on the common ground of global responsibility for eco-human well being.[61]

But as we have seen above, his 'Christian' perspective can come into conflict with other claims and then he has to take a strong stand of his own, a stand without excluding the other, a stand which is always 'connected' and nonviolent, a stand which simultaneously resists and embraces:

> In all our liberative dialogues, we must learn to resist *without excluding, to resist and at the same time embrace.*

As necessary and morally imperative as our resistance and opposition may be, they must also always be 'connected' and nonviolent. This, I believe, is one of the most complex and difficult challenges for a globally responsible multi-faith dialogue.[62]

3. An Evaluation by select Theologians

a. The present Author

The paradox is that such a stand point makes Knitter simultaneously an exclusivist and a pluralist. He would say that he is still a pluralist, but in reality he is an exclusivist. It is not yet clear how he is correlating the views of people of other faiths with his own Christian view. Though he claims that his project is for a pluralist theology of religions (he prefers now the terminology 'correlational theology of religions)[63] his view of the relational uniqueness of Jesus in dealing with the issue of the love of the neighbour and the earth as pictured in *Jesus and the Other names makes* it a non-relational theology of religions. In his understanding of Jesus he prefers to maintain conflict with other unique claims. His view does not even come near 'the relational distinctiveness' about which S.J. Samartha has talked since the mid-eighties,[64] though outwardly they may look alike. The Indian Samartha is much more positive in his approach to other faiths. But the pity is that there is not even one reference to him in Knitter's recent books.[65] From the relational distinctiveness of Christian faith, years ago India has advanced to the relational convergence of religious experiences and Knitter is not aware of these developments.[66]

Rather than projecting a preformulated understanding of Jesus' uniqueness, why cannot the very meanings related to the person and function of Jesus emerge in the context of our receiving insights from other religious experiences?[67] Have Western theologians like Knitter ever thought of such a possibility? If not, is it not time yet to ponder over such a possibility? When will theologians like Knitter realise that it is the hermeneutical context or the contextual socio-politico-religio-cultural realities which decide the content of our knowledge and experience of the Gospel? Knowledge is

formulated in the very knowing process and understanding the Gospel of God in Jesus is a continuous integrated non-dual divine-human process. Nothing is pre-given or pre-formulated. We cannot accept some timeless interpretation from somewhere and make it applicable to our context. Understanding and interpretation belongs exclusively to us and to our context, and there is the possibility for the emergence of new meanings of the Gospel in the process of this.[68]

b. S.J. Samartha

S.J. Samartha has given three points in response to Paul F. Knitter's interpretation of Jesus[69] and these are worth noting in this context: (i) The term 'unique' should be reserved, only for the Absolute or God or Truth or Sat, and the term 'distinctive' can be used to describe (rather than qualify) the relative *responses* to the Absolute in the great religious traditions of humanity.[70] Samartha says:

> It is perhaps philosophically more reasonable, theologically more convincing and ethically more helpful to reserve the term 'unique' for God or the Absolute or *Sat* or Ultimate Reality, and use the adjective 'distinctive' to qualify different responses to the Mystery of God. This does not diminish the 'uniqueness' of Christ *for Christians,* but provides theological space and philosophical freedom to recognize the commitments of people of other faiths. Only God is unique; all human responses to God are 'distinctively relative.'[71]

(ii). The criteria to judge the validity of any claim to be 'unique' have to be mutually accepted criteria, not just from intra-Christian but also from inter-religious experience.[72] Mutually acceptable criteria of philosophical reasonableness, theological credibility, ethical helpfulness and the possibility of sharing insights into spiritual life in an inter-religious context are more important than the criteria of devotion and discipleship within the intra-Christian context.[73] (iii) In the increasing tempo of dialogue between cultures, civilizations and religions in the world today, when so many fundamental issues touching the future of humanity are at stake it is not justifiable to spend so much spiritual and theological energy

on an intra-Christian debate on the 'uniqueness' of Jesus Christ without at the same time giving serious attention to inter-religious issues.[74] There is far greater promise in testing the credibility of any reinterpretation or revision or qualification of the 'uniqueness' of Christ in the context of a pervasive and living cultural dialogue with liberal Hindus than in battling with Christian or Muslim or secular fundamentalists or with the ecelesiastical authority, is the experience of Samartha.[75]

c. Raimon Panikkar

According to Raimon Panikkar rather than 'uniqueness' we may have to talk about 'distinctiveness'[76] uniqueness being a pseudo-problem as others in Christian history such as issues of nature and grace, prediationation and free will, the Almighty and the reality of evil, creation in time or for time.[77] Christ's uniqueness becomes a problem when we link up this concept with 'universality'[78] Panikkar further says:

> We face a dilemma. Either we defend the universality of Christ above, behind, or through all cultures, or we bestow universal and absolute value to one single culture or group of cultures, namely, that doctrinal world for which the statement makes sense.
>
> In the first case we should fall into utter silence and cannot speak of uniqueness, because the moment we utter a word we do it within a particular culture. A Kenotic Christ is neither unique nor not unique, because "it" does not admit any qualification. In the second case the uniqueness has been transferred to an entire cultural set. And this, in fact, was a common belief during many centuries. It is the very nature of colonialism: Cultural monism.
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> Indeed, we may find a transcendental relationship between what Christians call Christ and what other cultures and religions may express with a set of homeomorphic equivalents. But in this case the uniqueness of Christ has been relativized and brought into the field where it has an accepted meaning. Christ is then the logotype, as it were, of the Christian language. May I recall that the relativity I am espousing has nothing to do with relativisim?[79]

Pluralism, for Panikkar, is not an attitude which posits that there are many true religions or many authentic Christs—

albeit with different names. Truth is not plural but pluralistic in the sense that the pluralistic attitude is fruit of the experience that we are not the masters of truth and can thus only decide about truth in each particular case through dialogical discourse.[80] Christ's uniqueness lies for him in the lived experience that one is at once finite and infinite. There is a link between the two and the Christian name, but only the Christian name for this link, for such a mediator, is Christ.[81]

d. John Hick:

John Hick is of the view that Knitter's explanations of the five theses at certain crucial points are ambiguous capable of being understood in both pluralist and inclusivist ways.[82] His definition of pluralism as announcing the *possibility* of many true religions, both exclusivists and inclusivist may hold with the addition that actually that is not the case.[83] "Knitter argues that 'it is probable that God's love will be found in and through other religions, thus rendering them, at least to some extent, true'... This is an accurate delineation of Christian inclusivism."[84] According to Hick pluralism, as opposed to this perspective, holds that we have as much reason to think that the other great world religions are true and salvific as to think this of Christianity.[85] From Knitter's position, dialogue among equals, dialogue as "a level playing field" is not possible.[86] Knitter's expounding the key word truly (God was truly at work in Jesus but not only in Jesus) as meaning that "Christians must announce Jesus to all peoples as God's *universal, decisive and indispensable* manifestation of saving truth and grace" again is problematic.[87] Universal and decisive yes, provided other gospels are also accepted in the same way. Indispensable is a problematic word. If the meaning implied is indispensable for salvation, Knitter become an exclusivist, because there cannot be more than one indispensable gospels.[88]

Knitter's interpretation of Christianity's unique feature as a concern for social justice reflects only what Christianity ought to be and not what it really is, as historically Christianity has validated and is still validating wars, slavery, patriarchy, immense hierarchical in equalities, colonial exploitation, and anti-Semitism,[89] "The creation of peace and a rational

conservation of the earth's limited natural resources in a just and sustainable world economy ought to be the aim of people of all religions".[90] Knitter involves in an ambiguous use of language when on the one hand he says that the recognition and announcement of Jesus' divinity remains integral and essential to a pluralist Christology and on the other he also says that the divinity of Jesus means that he is 'the symbol, the story that makes God real and effective for me".[91] Also Knitter's presentation of Christian pluralism does not take adequate account of the great non-theistic religions.[92]

4. Conclusion

Thus Paul F. Knitter prefers to call his position as correlational theology of religions, rather than pluralist theology of religions. He prefers the usage 'relational uniqueness' of Jesus to 'complementary' or 'inclusive' uniqueness. This is because his understanding of Christ *can* and sometimes *must* conflict with other unique claims in the sense Christians may have to be ready to take strong stands, sometimes in opposition to the claims of others. For example if for Asian and Primal religions love of neighbour results from the experience of the Divine, for Christianity such love of neighbour enters into and conditions, the very experience of the Divine. But it should be noted that Knitter's interpretation of Christianity's unique feature as a concern for social justice reflects only what Christianity ought to be and not what it really is, as historically Christianity has validated and is still validating wars, slavery, patriarchy, immense hierarchical inequalities, colonial exploitation and anti-Semitism. Rather than projecting a preformulated uniqueness for Jesus, the very meanings related to the person and function of Jesus may have to emerge in the context of our receiving insights from other religious experiences. Also we should note that only God is unique; all human responses to God are 'distinctively relative'. The criteria to judge the validity of any claim to be 'unique' have to be mutually accepted criteria, not just from intra-Christian but also from inter-religious, experience. Rather than 'uniqueness' we may have to talk about 'distinctiveness', uniqueness being a pseudo-problem. A Kenotic Christ does

not admit any qualification. Christ belongs to Christian language; people of other faiths may have equivalents.

Paul F. Knitter through his five theses has shown that the uniqueness of Jesus' salvific role can be reinterpreted in terms of truly but not only. According to him it is not necessary to proclaim God's revelation in Jesus as full, definitive or unsurpassable, rather Jesus is God's universal, decisive and indispensable manifestation of saving truth and grace. Such a reinterpretation nurtures a holistic Christian spirituality i.e., a devotion to and a following of Jesus. The truth of the exclusive statements in the Bible lies primarily in calling us to discipleship rather than defining who Jesus was. A correlational model for interfaith dialogue calls for making absolute claims in a relative manner. In it all religions are viewed not as necessarily being *equal* or the same in their truth claims but as having *equal rights.* Jesus' life-death-resurrection saves not by constituting or causing God's saving love, but, rather, in so far as he represents for us the love of God. In such representational Christology Christians can be open to other representations or revelations of God's love. In presenting Jesus as divine also, Knitter follows a representational approach. Functionally in the way Jesus mediates God to us, he is God for us and ontologically Jesus must have been one with God in a manner beyond full human comprehension. But analogously what happened to Jesus can happen to other persons. Still the truth is that even though Knitter, speaks about equal rights for all religions and for Jesus and other representations of God's love, these are mere words only, we are yet to see him really meaning them, as he in his understanding of Jesus, we saw, prefers to maintain conflict with other unique claims.

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3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p.5
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
7. Cf. John Hick, 'Five Misgivings' in *Ibid.*, pp. 79-84.
8. Paul F. Knitter, "Five Theses on the uniqueness of Jesus' in *Ibid.*, p.7
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8
10. *Ibid.*, p.8
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10
13. cf. John Hick *op.cit.*, pp. 81-82
14. Paul F. Knitter, "Can our 'one and only' also be a 'one among many'? A Response to Responses" in *The Uniqueness of Jesus op.cit.*, p.117
15. *Ibid.*
16. Paul F. Knitter, Jesus and the Other names. *Christian Mission and Global Responsibility,* Oxford : One World, 1996, pp. 73-76. For his elaboration of Jesus as universal, decisive and indispensable cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-80. Thesis 3 is thus elaborated in *Ibid.*, pp. 72-83.
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19. *Ibid.*
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25. *Ibid.*
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33. *Ibid.*, p.148.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-155.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, p.176.

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43. *Ibid.*, p.158.
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48. William M. Thompson, *The Jesus Debate,* New York : Paulist Press, 1985, pp. 388-93.
49. cf. also Gabriel Morgan, *Uniqueness,* MaryKnoll : Orbis Books, 1992.
50. John Cobb Jr., "The Meaning of Pluralism for Christian self-understanding" in *Religious Pluralism* ed. by Leroy S. Rouner, Nortre Dame : University of Nortre Dame Press, 1984, pp. 161-179; "Beyond Pluralism" in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions,* MaryKnoll : Orbis Books, 1990, pp. 81-95.
51. Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names Christian Mission and Global Responsibility, op.cit.,* pp.81-82.
52. cf. Charlene Spretnak, *State of Grace : The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age,* San Fransisco : Harper 1991, Chapter 5.
53. Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names, Christian Mission and Global Responsibility, op.cit.,* p.99. In Paul Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions. Multfaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility,* MaryKnoll : Orbis Books, 1995, pp. 104-112, he is but not denying the possibility of religions working together for eco-human wellbeing.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100
55. *Ibid.*, p.101.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
58. cf. Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions,* London : SCM Press, 1985.
59. cf. Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions, Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility op.cit.*
60. *Ibid.*, p.17.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*, p.166.
63. *Ibid.*, p.16.
64. S.J. Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow. Christ in a Multi-religious

Culture" in the *Myth of Christian Uniqueness,* ed. by John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, MaryKnoll : Orbis, 1985, pp.70, 79-82.

65. In many cases Ignorance and in other cases deliberate neglect of the theologians of the South by those of North is my recent experience in U.K. and the American Paul F. Knitter is not an exception here.
66. cf. K.P. Aleaz, *The Role of Pramanas, in Hindu-Christian Epistemology,* Calcutta : Punthi Pustak, 1991; *Harmony of Religions. The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda,* Calcutta : Punthi Pustak, 1993; *The Gospel of Indian Culture,* Calcutta : Punthi Pustak, 1994; *Jesus in Neo-Vedanta. A Meeting of Hinduism and Christianity,* Delhi: Kant Publications, 1995; *Dimensions of Indian Religion. Study, Experience and Interaction,* Calcutta : Punthi Pustak, 1995; *Christian Thought Through Advaita Vedanta,* Delhi : ISPCK, 1996; *An Indian Jesus from Sankara's Thought,* Calcutta; Punthi Pustak, 1997,
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Theology of Religions, Birmingham Papers and Other Essays,* Calcutta: Monmita, 1998.
69. Samartha is responding to a 1993 essay of Knitter entitled 'Five Theses on the Uniqueness of Jesus' in his book *Between Two Cultures. Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World,* Geneva : WCC Publications, 1996, pp.157-166.
70. *Ibid.,* pp. 159-160.
71. *Ibid.,* p.165.
72. *Ibid.,* pp. 160-165.
73. *Ibid.,* p.165
74. *Ibid.,* pp. 165-166.
75. *Ibid.,* pp. 160-165.
76. Raimon Panikkar, "Whose Uniqueness" in *The Uniqueness of Jesus. A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter, op.cit.,* p.112.
77. *Ibid.,* p.111.
78. *Ibid.,* p.113.
79. *Ibid.,* pp. 113-114.
80. *Ibid.,* p.114.
81. *Ibid.,* p.115.
82. John Hick, "Five Misgivings", in *Ibid.,* p.79.
83. *Ibid.*
84. *Ibid.,* p.80.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.,* p.81.
87. *Ibid.*
88. *Ibid.,* pp. 81-82.
89. *Ibid.,* p.82.
90. *Ibid.,* p.83.
91. *Ibid.,* pp.83-84.
92. *Ibid.,* p.84.