

Religious diversity and religious tolerance

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Introduction. One characteristic way of looking at history views religious belief as the chief obstacle to tolerance. Dogmatically secure religious believers, so the story goes, have inflicted untold suffering on those they consider outside the moral and religious pale. When religious believers of one stripe come into contact with religious believers of another stripe, strife is inevitable. Expressions of intolerance are often exacerbated by the mere proximity of members of diverse religions. The mixing of ethnic (hence, in many cases, religious) communities places religious believers of one sort in contact with religious believers of very different sorts. Increasing religious diversity within a community is a predictor for increasing intolerance. Ridding the world of religious belief, to bring this caricature to conclusion, will rid the world of intolerance.

In this essay, I shall argue that religious commitment can and should provide ample justification for religious tolerance. Religious beliefs, at least a great many of them, contain the conceptual resources for the flourishing of tolerance. Although religious believers are often intolerant, specific religious beliefs can and should motivate practitioners to principled tolerance.

I will make my case for religiously-grounded tolerance within the context of religious diversity. I shall argue that certain skeptical understandings of religious diversity are not adequate for the grounding of tolerance. In addition, these skeptical views are not genuinely pluralistic. I will briefly present various understandings of religious diversity in contrast to the, I believe, skeptical views of John Hick. I don't intend this paper to be a critique of Hick. Rather I take Hick to be the best representative of a skeptical understanding of religious diversity motivated in part by the sincere desire for tolerance. The non-skeptical explanations of religious diversity provide, I shall argue,

adequate conceptual grounds, within the particular religious beliefs themselves, for the tolerance of other religious beliefs. Religious beliefs can and should be the friend, not the enemy, of tolerance.

Religious diversity.ⁱ Attempts to account for religious diversityⁱⁱ recognize the widely divergent beliefs held about the nature of ultimate reality. The pressures to understand diversity are often exacerbated by the belief that such divergent commitments have been obtained by apparently sincere and equally cognitively capable truth-seekers. John Hick's understanding of diversity goes even further: he claims that the diverse religious traditions are roughly equal in their ability to transform humans from egoism to altruism (from self-centeredness to what he calls 'Reality-centeredness'ⁱⁱⁱ).

Hick's explanation of religious diversity, *religious pluralism*, affirms a plurality of valid and equally efficacious transformational responses to the ultimate divine Reality; none of the religious traditions is transformationally privileged. Hick roots religious pluralism in *Kantianism* when he distinguishes between "the Real *an sich* (in him/her/itself) and the Real as humanly experienced and thought."^{iv} The various religious traditions are formed out of the awareness of the Real^v as experienced: "Our hypothesis is that they are formed by the presence of the divine Reality, this presence coming to consciousness in terms of the different sets of religious concepts and structures of religious meaning that operate within the different religious traditions of the world."^{vi} We may have access to the phenomenal world of religious experience, but we have no access to the divine noumenal world. We cannot encounter Reality in itself.

According to Hick, the major religions are correct but only insofar as they make claims about how ultimate reality is experienced or appears to us. Although we might be mistaken about reality, we can't be mistaken about how reality seems to us. Ultimate Reality appears, for example, to some as personal and to others as impersonal but we cannot move beyond appearance to reality. If religious assertions ascribe properties to

the Real as it really is, they are either unjustified, false or meaningless. Although the Real may appear as loving, kind, patient, just, jealous, rock or snake, what the Real really is is utter mystery. We cannot, due to human cognitive limitations and divine transcendence, peer behind the veil of religious appearances to Reality. The Real is, to borrow Locke's fetching phrase, something we know not what. Hick writes: "...we cannot apply to the Real *an sich* the characteristics encountered in its *personae* and *impersonae*. Thus it cannot be said to be one or many, person or thing, substance or process, good or evil, purposive or non-purposive."^{vii} Hick is therefore skeptical about any claims that reach beyond appearances to divine reality.

While Hick's Kantian explanation of religious diversity is not unreasonable, it by no means follows that everyone is required by reason to accept it. Indeed there are other, less skeptical, explanations of religious diversity which, so I have argued, are more rationally acceptable to most religious believers.^{viii} There are at least three other explanations, besides Hick's Kantian explanation, of religious diversity. (1) *The Cultural Filters Explanation* holds that ultimate Reality presents itself to people as it is in itself but the effects of one's socio-cultural background cause Reality to be understood in radically different ways. Even if one admits to cultural filters, one might still believe that their cultural filters distort reality less than others. That is, the Cultural Filters Explanation does not necessarily preclude access to divine Reality.

Many religious traditions attribute false religious beliefs to moral or spiritual failure. (2) *The Perversity Explanation* maintains that there is a determinate way that Reality is experienced but human wickedness perverts beliefs about Reality -- those who hold incorrect views are willfully or self-deceptively insincere. This view, of course, provides conceptual space for some religious believers to claim that they have access to divine Reality while others do not. In the secular west, however, it is considered improper (even impolite) to attribute false religious beliefs to human moral failings.

Equally unpopular is any claim by religious believers that they have received

special information about ultimate Reality, which information has not been made available to others. (3) *The Informationally Privileged Explanation* claims that there is a determinate way that Reality reveals itself to all people, say through experience, nature or morality, but some people have been given more information about Reality--perhaps through revelation--than others.

The three alternatives to religious beliefs hold at least one matter in common. They are explanations of religious diversity which permit (logically) the belief that some religious believers may have at least some, no doubted limited, access to divine Reality. These non-skeptical explanations of religious diversity do not preclude substantive truth-claims about ultimate reality. They account for diversity without diminishing the metaphysical commitments of religious believers. These less skeptical explanations of religious diversity, I shall argue, provide fitting religious grounds for tolerance.^{ix}

Diversity and intolerance. The pressures of religious diversity for tolerance are clear: to maintain that's one's own religious beliefs are true and, therefore, that all religious competitors are false seems arrogant and intolerant. Should we think, like Hick, our *prima facie* justified religious beliefs are merely how things seem to us but not the way things really are? To do so violates our ordinary intuitions about beliefs. When we make or hold judgments, we maintain beliefs as true. Although we are not infallible inquirers, our beliefs aim at the truth. When we believe something it is because what we believe seems to us to be true, or likely to be true, or more likely to be true than its competitors. What other stance should one hold towards one's beliefs? That they are, near as we can judge, false? If we believe something, we believe it to be true.

But holding religious beliefs (as true), so the story goes, precipates religious wars and persecution. Religious intolerance on the part of religious believers seems inevitable. A desperately short list of religious intolerance includes the ancient Hebrew rout of the Amalekites, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Wars of Religion, Muslim attacks on Jews

and vice-versa and the bombing of abortion clinics. Intolerance, it seems, goes hand in hand with religious belief. It looks like the best way to produce tolerance, therefore, is simply to eliminate religious belief.

I will argue, to the contrary, that tolerance makes sense only against a backdrop of deep religious and moral conviction. Judgments of tolerance and intolerance require a conception of the good or the true. Accounts of diversity that maintain that ultimate skepticism or agnosticism is the preferred posture to assume on matters religious and moral cannot coherently be tolerant. Furthermore, I shall root tolerance in the nature of persons, arguing that tolerance requires a thick conception of the self, a conception of considerable religious import.

Tolerance analyzed. Although people with deep and sincere moral or religious convictions are often intolerant, deep and sincere moral or religious convictions can provide the preconditions of tolerance. Tolerance finds conceptual space in the middle ground between intolerance and indifference. Modern defenses of tolerance often err on the side of indifference: one maintains a *laissez faire* attitude toward people of differing moral and religious practices not by cultivation of the virtue of tolerance but, because of one's moral and religious uncertainties, one simply does not care what others believe or do. Without a robust sense of rightness with respect to religious beliefs^x or moral character and actions, tolerance is simply not possible. One may prefer cultivated indifference to principled tolerance because it conduces well to a more peaceable society. That may be, but we are trying to understand the virtue of tolerance without the loss of genuine diversity.

Tolerance comes from the Latin *tolerare*, to bear or endure; it connotes putting up with a weight or a burden. Tolerance is, at first blush, the disposition to endure or bear peoples' beliefs and practices that one takes to be either false or immoral. Tolerance assumes that some beliefs and practices are true or right and that others are false or

wrong. The beliefs and practices that one finds true and right are not burdensome, but there must be, for tolerance to be possible at all, some beliefs or practices that are burdensome. Because of my moral and religious judgments I am in a position to tolerate people^{xi} with differing beliefs and practices.

Disagreement alone, however, is not an adequate precondition of tolerance. People routinely disagree about matters they take to be trivial or unimportant; but this sort of disagreement does not require tolerance. I prefer vanilla ice cream and you prefer chocolate. I don't tolerate your chocolate preference because I simply don't care about your ice cream preferences. Tolerance requires, in addition to disagreement, an element of caring which is usually rooted in a deep commitment to the belief or practice in question. Tolerance requires such caring because it is not indifference. The sort of caring relevant to tolerance must be deep enough to create a burden, which is why tolerance usually arises in connection with matters of fundamental human concern.

Because of the depth of care about matters of fundamental human concern, it is easy to see why human beings seem naturally inclined to intolerance. We invest our selves into the things we care about and those who disagree with us deny that our concerns are worthy of such care and investment. Moral and religious disagreement are threats because of this devaluing of the other's beliefs and practices. When we find the other a burden, we naturally wish to preserve our own cares and investments. This often leads to dismissing, alienating or persecuting people with differing practices and beliefs.

One may, of course, devalue the other person's beliefs without devaluing the person who holds those beliefs. The tolerant person wills to treat the person with significantly differing beliefs and practices as intrinsically valuable in spite of that person's rejection of her fundamental human concerns. Tolerance is the cultivated disposition to subdue our natural inclination to distance, reject or persecute others whose beliefs and practices differ from our own. The tolerant person is, rather, disposed to recognize the other as an object of inestimable worth. The tolerant person says, in

effect, “Our fundamental disagreement does not diminish my estimation of your worth as a human being and, therefore, though I disagree with your beliefs or practices, still I will endure them.” Intolerance, on the other hand, acceding to the natural inclination to devalue the other, encourages the rejection of the person.

Valuing the other does not entail respecting the beliefs and practices we disagree with, although we might. Should we, for example, respect the beliefs and non-violent practices of the Nazi sympathizer, racist or homophobe? Some beliefs and practices are judged as so odious one simply cannot accord them respect or admiration. Tolerance requires respecting the Nazi, racist and homophobe but it does not require respecting their beliefs and practices. The tolerant person will not allow the disrespect she accords those beliefs to effect in her a corresponding devaluing of the persons who hold them. Of course, the tolerant person might both respect the person and their practices. She might, for example, respect the beliefs and practices of others because she judges them to be the plausible outcomes of sincere truth-seeking.

Tolerance is not without limits. Let me pursue this by reviewing my understanding of tolerance. Tolerance is a virtue: a disposition to behave in certain ways in appropriate circumstances. This disposition issues forth in behavior, the kind of behavior that conduces to living well among people with deeply different beliefs and practices from one’s own. This disposition requires cultivation because of our natural inclination to view the other as a burden and to devalue the other. It includes an element of caring about beliefs and practices, on the one hand, and about persons, on the other hand. But this respect may call not for enduring the other’s beliefs and practices, it may also call for correction. The virtue of tolerance does not require unlimited acceptance of the other’s beliefs and practices, it finds its proper expression as the mean between the extremes of the indifferent and the intolerable.^{xii} Virtue terms are not simple descriptors of certain types of human behavior. Courage, for example, is not reducible to doing this or that in times of war or persecution. Nor does courage demand unlimited ignoring of

perils. The courageous person endures some fears and not others. Likewise, tolerance does not require unlimited endurance of all beliefs and practices. The tolerant person will endure some beliefs and practices and not others.

Religious belief and religious tolerance. The virtue of tolerance comports well with religious or moral conviction. This is so for three reasons. First, tolerance and intolerance require a conception of the true or the good. It is only out of such a conception that our own beliefs and practices emerge and take form, and without these beliefs and practices we are incapable of judging the beliefs and practices of others. In other words, without disagreement there is no burden to bear, nothing to tolerate. It is the weight of disagreement, about matters of fundamental human concern, that makes tolerance possible. It is only when one is faced with belief/practice competitors that the virtue of tolerance can be called upon to resist the temptation toward dogmatism, arrogance, and intolerance. Religious believers, of course, have a conception of the true and the good.

Second, respect for persons, which is the root of principled tolerance, is well-grounded in theistic conceptions of persons as bearers of intrinsic value. I can tolerate the beliefs and practices of the other when I recognize the other as a person of intrinsic and inestimable worth. Only a thick, perhaps even religious, conception of persons can coherently ground that worth. The conception of persons as icons of God, divine image-bearers, objects of divine love, or some other suitably thick conception of persons, can account for the intrinsic and inestimable worth of human beings. The value attributed to human beings must be sufficiently weighty to counterbalance the burden of the other's beliefs or practices. The caring involved with respect to persons is rooted in respect which, for the religious believer, is well-grounded in the *imago dei*. Moreover, a religious conception of the creatureliness of persons--as finite, frail and fallible--leads us to expect human error, perhaps especially when it comes to matters of fundamental human concern. Human creatures lack the god's-eye point of view and so are fallible, but they

are, notwithstanding, created in God's image.

Third, theism, at least in its Judeo-Christian-Muslim forms, has a rich conception of freedom. Theists believe that God created humans with morally significant freedom and that God values free moral and spiritual development. Human freedom permits both remarkable creativity and unspeakable horror. And it should not go unnoticed that the holy writ of the three great monotheistic religions--Judaism, Christianity and Islam--disavows the notion that God is intolerant (at least ante-mortem) of the multifarious uses of human freedom. God willingly endures wickedness without immediate punishment.

A rich conception of persons as finite creatures, endowed with divinely instilled value, and free to carve out their own character, combines to provide a rich foundation for the valuing of persons.

If tolerance is to be a virtue whose cultivation can be plausibly defended, persons must be endowed with adequate and recognizable worth. If one is unable to ground the intrinsic dignity and worth of fellow human beings, tolerance will lack any substantive justification. Without metaphysical grounding, there is no rational justification for the respect necessary for tolerance. Why believe people are possessors of inestimable worth and value? Instead, why not conceive of persons whose beliefs and practices differ from one's own as sub-human and, therefore, their beliefs and practices as unworthy candidates for tolerance? Why not think that those of differing beliefs are religiously and morally substandard both in belief and character? What story can the pluralist tell about why we should resist the tendency to denigrate the other?

Principled tolerance, then, bears up the person who holds differing beliefs and practices of fundamental human concern and urges us to say, "I will resist the temptation to think of myself as better than you due to our differing beliefs and practices. I value you as a person, a divine image-bearer. I will work to create a society wherein your beliefs and practices may shape your life as you see fit."

The tolerant person may also add: "But, I disagree with you and here's why."

Tolerance does not mean that we will not try to persuade the other of the error of his or her ways (after all, we believe them to be mistaken on matters of fundamental human concern). We do respect them and, out of respect, wish them to order their lives properly around the true and the good. Respect is the precondition of genuine dialogue. But we might likewise be mistaken. Intellectual and moral humility, borne of a profound awareness of one's own finitude and creatureliness, should also sincerely add, "And I recognize that I might be mistaken, that I might be the one with blind spots; you tell me why you think I'm wrong." When faced with religious diversity, mutual respect finds its initial expression in tolerance and then in genuine dialogue.

Clarifications. Let me summarize my argument so far: Because tolerance requires deep and sincere convictions, one must distinguish tolerance as a morally valuable characteristic from apathy, unconcern, or blandly "being nice." Tolerance is morally worthwhile when we do not share the beliefs and practices of others, but nevertheless value them as people. This valuing is possible among practitioners of various religious traditions because of their rich conception of human dignity and worth which, they believe, is rooted in divine reality. In addition, we might also respect the plausible outcomes of honest and sincere and morally sensitive truth-seeking within a context of appreciation for the diversity of human cultures.^{xiii}

My argument preserves the conviction of believers of various religious traditions that their beliefs are, perhaps uniquely, true. I object to the pluralist's use of "true" to mean "accepted as true by a particular tradition but ultimately unverifiable and perhaps cognitively meaningless"; I want a robust, realist sense of "true." Religious beliefs reach right up and into the divine Reality. But even if it is reasonable for adherents of incompatible traditions to believe what they do is really true, they cannot all be right; some, perhaps even all of them, might be wrong. If I can be warranted in believing my own tradition is uniquely true, then I am warranted in believing the others are wrong.

Objection #1: From this it follows, given my use of these terms, that we ought not to respect those false beliefs, though we ought to tolerate them. Wouldn't it be much wiser, if we so choose, to commit ourselves by faith, to hope that our (my) tradition is pretty much on the right track while recognizing that it, too, is subject to cultural astigmatism and all the rest, and to extend, not just tolerance, but respect to those other traditions that deserve it.

Response: This sort of objection is based in misunderstanding. I do not claim that no beliefs and practices should be respected, only that tolerance does not *require* respect for beliefs and practices. I might not respect the beliefs of the neo-Nazi sympathizer, try as I might, but I might respect the beliefs and practices of the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim as plausible outcomes of sincere truth-seeking. I might not, of course, and if not, tolerance demands that we respect the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim. The issue of faith and hope will be addressed in reply to the next objection.

Objection #2: One might think that my notion of tolerance encourages dogmatic arrogance or unfounded and irrevocable certainty of believers because of their exclusive lock on truth. Such arrogant and dogmatic people merely "put up with" or "endure the burden" of sharing the world with traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. But perhaps this sort of tolerance is not morally worthwhile enough.

Response: It does not follow from the fact that people hold beliefs firmly that they are, thereby, dogmatic or arrogant. Firmness of belief is not dogmatism or arrogance. The simple believer may hold her beliefs firmly but in humility, perhaps out of gratitude to God. She may be willing to change her beliefs (but judge the possibility of such change extremely unlikely) and she may respect the beliefs of those who disagree with her. Accepting her beliefs as true does not entail dogmatism or arrogance. It is undeniable and indeed lamentable that many religious believers do accede to dogmatism, arrogance and even intolerance. But this is a moral failing on their part--due to the unsubdued natural inclination to devalue others and, I believe, to exalt their self^{xiv}-

-not a consequence of firmly held beliefs.

Tolerance is only one of many virtues in the neighborhood of beliefs and practices. A relevant virtue is epistemic humility. This virtue, I believe, cuts against arrogant and dogmatic certainty. As argued above, nothing I have written about tolerance suggests that firmly held religious beliefs entails arrogance and dogmatism. All I have argued is that one might be justified in holding one's realistic beliefs about God. I believe that the proper attitude, given our cognitive limitations, is to hold to such beliefs--even if *prima facie* justified by religious experience, believing what one's parents have taught, intuition, consideration of all of the available evidence, and the like--is with some degree of doubt. Surely the evidence of diversity must give one pause: with the teeming host of competing religious beliefs, the probability that one has gotten it all right is certainly very small. And the justificational edge that one gains is surely insufficient to overcome *all* of the doubts that afflict the belief that, across space and time, one has gotten it right and everyone else has gotten it wrong.

Surely it is possible to have deep and sincere religious (and moral) convictions, and believe them to be true in the robust, realist sense of "true," without being *sure* that I'm right and everyone else is wrong. Perhaps, and here is another value in the neighborhood of religious tolerance, the smug certainty of some committed exclusivists deprives faith of its transformative value just as profoundly as loss of belief does. The alternatives are not trying to center our lives around "something-we-know-not-what" on one side and absolute certainty of exclusive truth on the other. Surely it is possible, for example, for Christians to commit themselves to Christ as an act of faith, in a spirit of hope yet also in "fear and trembling," deeply aware that this commitment is not the only one a rational and sincere truth seeker might make.^{xv}

Pluralism and diversity. I have argued that religious believers who maintain the truth of their religious beliefs (as indicative of divine reality, not of appearance) have a

conceptual advantage over Kantian agnosticism when it comes to the virtue of tolerance. The advantage is two-fold. First, Kantian agnosticism provides an inadequate religious grounding of the value of human persons. Second, Kantian agnosticism precludes genuine religious diversity.

How can Kantian agnosticism ground the value of human persons? Kantian agnosticism buys peaceful coexistence and salvific generosity at a price: as reality claims, all religious beliefs are either unjustified, false or meaningless. There is the further possibility that behind the veil of appearance lies nothing or no one interested in human beings and their transformation. It is difficult to see how one might ground the infinite value of persons in “the something we know not what.” Surely some theological or metaphysical possibilities are conducive to grounding human worth and dignity and some are not. I see no reason to suppose that complete agnosticism about ultimate reality provides beliefs about the value of other human beings adequate to ground principled tolerance. Mere religious appearance is surely not adequate to ground human value. In addition, beliefs which are about the appearances are only sufficient to motivate rational belief and action if one takes them to be indicative of reality.^{xvi} One loses one’s motivations to believe and act insofar as one comes to believe that one is caught up in appearance and not reality. Kantian agnosticism simply cannot avail itself of sufficient theological resources adequate to ground human dignity and worth.

There may be other ways for a Kantian to ground respect for persons. The Kantian might ground respect for persons, as did Kant, in rationality. I don’t preclude non-religious grounds for respect. However, it is my intention to argue that non-skeptical, realist religious beliefs can provide such grounds without loss of genuine diversity. Can the appeal to rationality ground respect without loss of diversity?

Kantian agnosticism is a threat to the very diversity it claims to endorse. There may be a plurality of adequate transformational responses to the divine, but every belief about ultimate reality needs to be rejected and replaced with beliefs about appearances.

That Hick and other religious pluralists expect people to thusly devalue the metaphysical commitments of their religious beliefs seems clear. But it is precisely these metaphysical commitments that create the diversity which generates this entire discussion. Making everyone a Kantian agnostic would reduce diverse religious beliefs to a single set of beliefs. It would also reduce the element of caring about one's beliefs which is necessary to tolerance and, it seems to me, to diversity. Diversity is deep and important disagreement about matters moral and religious. Should everyone become Kantian pluralists, all of our disagreement would be shallow and unimportant (and recognized as such). Again, we might be more likely to be nice to one another under such circumstances but there would be no genuine diversity and, therefore, no possibility for tolerance.

Conclusion. Religious belief is often portrayed as the inevitable enemy of tolerance. I have argued that this caricature is deeply mistaken. Tolerance is a virtue that requires deep religious or moral conviction. Moreover, it is rooted in a conception of the self that is rich enough to ground respect. The virtue of tolerance issues forth in the kind of behavior that conduces to living well among people with deeply different beliefs and practices from one's own. This disposition requires cultivation because of our natural inclination to view the other as a burden and to reject the other. Skeptical accounts of religious diversity undermine this religious grounding of tolerance and threaten the very diversity they wish to preserve. The Judeo-Christian-Muslim conception of creation in the image of God is adequate to ground the respect for persons conceptually necessary for tolerance.

NOTES

ⁱThis summarizes a much longer and more thoroughly developed argument in Kelly James Clark, “Perils of Pluralism,” *Faith and Philosophy* Vol 14, No. 3, July 1997, 303-320.

ⁱⁱFor this section only, I will use the term ‘religious diversity’ as a roughly descriptive term. I prefer the term ‘religious pluralism’ but Hick’s understanding of religious pluralism is both explanatory and evaluative. Since we are discussing Hick’s view here, it is important to separate the clearly descriptive from the less clearly explanatory.

ⁱⁱⁱThis terminology occurs regularly in Hick’s writings. See, for example, John Hick, *Disputed Questions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 144.

^{iv}John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 39. The Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena is apparent. I shall continue to refer to this as a Kantian view, although I don’t believe that it is Kant’s view. Kant contends that we ought to and can have true beliefs about God as he is in himself. To live as we ought to live, according to Kant, we must have realist beliefs about God. I shall argue that to be tolerant, we must have realist views both about God and about human nature.

^v“The Real” is the ultimate divine reality. In the west, the Real is often called “God.”

^{vi}Hick, 41.

^{vii}John Hick, *The Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 246-247.

^{viii}See my “Perils of Pluralism,” *Faith and Philosophy* Vol 14, No. 3, July 1997, especially pp. 305-317.

^{ix}For a great portion of religious believers, it is more reasonable for them to believe that their beliefs are true (of the divine Reality and not simply of appearances). Suppose that one is brought up in a particular religious tradition to hold certain beliefs about God, or that one comes to hold certain beliefs about God on the basis of a putative religious experience, or that one makes the considered and sober judgment that the best explanation of a variety of factors is that God, as described by a specific religious tradition, exists. In any of these cases one’s belief in God as specified will be *prima facie* justified, or so it seems to me. Relevant justifying conditions include accepting things on the testimony of those whom one trusts, on the basis of experiences, or on the basis of inference to best explanation of a variety of data. In the case of religious belief, one typically affirms that God or Ultimate Reality really is or is like the way he or it have been described by one tradition or another. That is, most religious believers are realists concerning their beliefs about God or Ultimate Reality.

^xMy understanding of religious belief does not preclude atheism.

^{xi}Tolerance can and should be extended to groups of people. Our intolerant practices often involve groups rather than individuals.

^{xii}I am aware that raises a complex set of nesting issues. There is no theory-free, religiously neutral understanding of the indifferent and the intolerable. This issue is addressed, at length, in Kelly James Clark and Kevin Corcoran, “Pluralism, secularism and tolerance,” under consideration.

^{xiii}I am grateful to Drew Hinderer for his critical and constructive comments throughout this entire section.

^{xiv}I argue for the latter in my *When Faith Is Not Enough* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), chs. 8-9 .

^{xv}She may also leave the question about whether there may be other paths to salvation an open one and extending respectful appreciation to those who have responsibly chosen a different path. One finds in many traditions the claim that some worshippers are beset with misunderstanding, confusion, small mindedness and error, and the gods to whom

they pray may be no more living than a stone. One may hope, as I do, that still God may recognize even garbled transmissions as meaningful and honor the relationship expressed in them with transformative influence.

^{xvi}Here is at least one place where Hick's Kantian view departs from Kant's view.