HESCHEL'S VIEW OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Harold Kasimow

ABSTRACT

A number of prominent Christian theologians who have contemplated the issue of religious diversity speak of three major models for approaching it: exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist. Claiming that "diversity of religions is the will of God," Abraham Joshua Heschel was certainly no exclusivist. But he also was neither a pluralist nor an inclusivist in the way these terms are commonly used by Christian theologians. Much like the Dalai Lama's perspective on Buddhism vis-à-vis other religions, Heschel's distinctive Jewish approach to religious diversity transcended the categories created by Christian scholars.

KEYWORDS

Key words: Heschel; God; religious diversity; interfaith relations; exclusivism; inclusivism; pluralism; Dalai Lama

FULL TEXT:

PDF

doi: https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v2i2.1419

Heschel outlines four dimensions of religious experience that are important for members of different faiths to incorporate in their dialogues with each other: 1) The creed and doctrine, 2) Faith and inward intimacy of religious belief, 3) The sacred acts of religion, 4) The context of religion with reference to community, history, and covenant. Heschel envisioned the basis of meeting with other groups as an acknowledgement that all religious traditions are pathways with which to reach God and are all means to an end. The authors declare no conflicts of interest. Cite this paper. Goodman, A. (2018) Navigating Turbulent Religious Diversity in Global Health. Open Journal of Social Sciences, 6, 50-53. doi: 10.4236/ss.2018.610005. Heschel was and Kasimov is a survivor of the Shoah. This painful reality pushes them into the depths of how to understand humanity and the relationship between humans and God, including the question most strongly raised by Elie Wiesel: How can one believe in a just and loving God as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible after God seemingly abandoned the Chosen People in the death [End Page 471] camps? How can humans open themselves to other humans after the evil of so many humans' perpetrating the Shoah? It narrates Heschel's "path to God," which can be traveled by people of other faiths. It delves into religious diversity and the truths that can be found in other religions.