HESCHEL’S VIEW OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

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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

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

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were Pharaoh and Moses. Moses’ words were: “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me.” While Pharaoh retorted: “Who is the Lord, that I should heed this voice and let Israel go? [5] Religion and race. How can the two be uttered together? To act in the spirit of religion is to unite what lies apart, to remember that humanity as a whole is God’s beloved child. To act in the spirit of race is to sunder, to slash, to dismember the flesh of living humanity. Is this the way to honor a father: to torture his child? Abraham joshua heschel. I speak as a person who was able to leave Warsaw, the city in which I was born, just six weeks before the disaster began. My destination was New York, it would have been Auschwitz or Treblinka. I am a brand plucked from the fire, in which my people was burned to death. I am a brand plucked from the fire of an altar of Satan on which millions of human lives were exterminated to evil's greater glory, and on which so much else was consumed : the divine image of so many