

Response to Richard Plantinga's
"One God, Many Faiths: Reformed Theology Engages Religious Pluralism"
- John Y. Lee, 1/28/12

My response to Richard Plantinga's talk is *not* a non-Reformed response to his Reformed response to pluralism. Take my talk as "another Reformed response to a Reformed response to pluralism."

With much of what Richard Plantinga has presented this morning, I am in agreement. My difference will be only with *stress*. And the main point of stress – the difference – has to do with what I call the "epistemic status of hope." Plantinga has mentioned a book by Hans Urs Von Balthasar, the book translated in English as *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"*? Let me quote a few lines from the last section of this book, the section under the heading, "The Obligation to Hope for All":

Then faith in the un-boundedness of divine love and grace also justifies *hope for the universality of redemption*, although, through the possibility of resistance to grace that remains open in principle, *the possibility* of eternal damnation also persists. Seen in this way, what were described earlier as limits to divine omnipotence are also canceled out again.... For us, there is only knowledge of the possibilities in principle and, on the basis of those possibilities in principle, an understanding of the facts that are accessible to us.

The hope of salvation for all rests on the *possibility* that God's love and grace will save all. Hope, in other words, is grounded in the knowledge of possibility. Hope is different from certainty. And I think we need to keep this difference firmly in mind. The two vices of hope, according to Aquinas, are despair and presumption. Presumption is the unquestioned certainty that one is saved.

But if we accept hope, then we should accept the other side of hope: that is, *concern* – the concern that the possibility may not come out true. There is a two-sidedness to hope: hope on one side and concern on the other side. Both together are compatible. Both hope and concern create a tension. This tension should be maintained.

If we go away from Plantinga's talk this morning feeling comforted and secure that we do not need to share the good news of Jesus with our neighbors, then our response is really ungrounded and inexcusable. We can hope for our neighbor's salvation but we also need to be concerned as well.