Bursting the "Bubble:"

Minority Religions and Pluralism at Gustavus Adolphus College

A Thesis

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by

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Most importantly, I must thank my family, for truly being the motivation for my thesis, and helping me to live pluralism better than I articulate it. I dedicate this to my mother Vickie Dunlevy, for supporting me in all my endeavors and telling me that I truly can do it.

I typed frantically away at Raj's computer desk, trying to bang out three more pages for a draft of my religion thesis. Raj Sethuraju, the busy director of the Diversity Center and Associate Dean of Diversity at Gustavus Adolphus College, was naturally elsewhere; hence I had managed to snag his desk hours before the initial few pages were due. However, I was not thinking about the good fortune of using one of the better keyboards in the "D-Center." Rather, I anxiously thought, what more could I say on this topic? My brain felt barren, as if all my coherent thoughts had flooded onto the monitor and I was left with only with the capacity for basic human functions like breathing and circulation. Then, another student walked in, and asked if he might use the room. I absent-mindedly replied that he could use it as long as he did not mind my incessant typing. As I scrambled to put thoughts together, he nonchalantly placed his prayer rug down to face Mecca, and prayed. I paused briefly to listen to his swiftly spoken Arabic, and smiled to myself; perhaps religious pluralism is functioning better at Gustavus than I thought.

Multiculturalism, Diversity, Pluralism – these terms are often tossed about college campuses with the best of intentions, yet often without a thought as to what they mean, show, or imply. School administrators give lip service to the importance of diversity, learning about others, yet rarely does one see programs that reach a deeper meaning of these words, especially in regard to the complex topic of religion. I want to delve deeper here, exploring religion, pluralism, and minorities at Gustavus Adolphus College. Specifically, I want to know if those in the religious minority, explicitly non-Christians, are able to practice their faith on campus, what might possibly impede or assist the practice, and to place their experiences and Gustavus in the larger context of American religious pluralism.

As I embark on my study, I must first define my terms. In order to focus my thesis, I intend to concentrate on non-Christian religions. From personal experience, I know that there is a small contingent of "others" on campus, including Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu students, that I want to concentrate on. Are the people of these faiths able to properly practice the way they please? I have a hypothesis, also based on personal encounters; I believe that these practitioners of "minority" religions experience only a "pseudo-pluralism" on campus. (Pluralism is another term I intend to unpack later before I delve into my study.) As I have observed over my three and a half (almost four) years at Gustavus, these people are invited to share their traditions with the community on campus for educational purposes. However, only the better-known and more widely accepted holidays and traditions are invited to be the specified celebrations, rather than more important observances. These events are trotted out to showcase Gustavus' "diversity;" an admirable, (perhaps futile given the school's Swedish Lutheran heritage), task. I believe this mission to be on the whole unsuccessful because Gustavus is in fact not religiously diverse, nor are the students or administrators sensitive to non-Christian students. I see no problem with sharing one's religious traditions with the campus, but I do take issue with the possible cheapening of such rich heritages if they are used only to fill cultural event quotas and class requirements. Before I unpack these ideas as well, allow me to explain my choice for focusing on only non-Christian religions.

Besides focusing my thesis, I believe these other religious traditions reflect the most recent upheavals in America's dynamic religious landscape. One of the foremost academics on the edge of this scene is Diana Eck, a professor of comparative religions at Harvard University. Her book, A New Religious America, demonstrated how and why this landscape

is changing.[1] She points to the United States Immigration Act of 1965, which opened the door to immigrants of non-European countries, as a turning point in American religious history. Though there were already many residents from non-Western nations, this legislation, Eck argues, proved to be almost revolution. This immigration act made it possible for large groups and family units to permanently move and pursue the "American dream," settling not only in large cities but also in smaller towns and suburbs, thus placing themselves into mainstream American population. Therefore, I believe this study is important to documenting the changing religious American landscape, as well as on a smaller scale analyzing Gustavus as part of the nation.

After students graduate from this prestigious place, we will be thrust into the nation, the "real world," which most likely will not reflect the environment we spent the last four years in. Hence, I believe it is particularly important to focus on religious diversity, especially from the view of the religious minority. Understanding an issue from the view of minorities allows one to better grasp, solve, or understand it. Our religious lives inform and shape our civic lives, we as Americans must then understand where people are coming from in order to best function in a society. Gustavus means to educate its students in all facets of our lives, therefore it would behoove us to be taught about and experience our multireligious society.

Diversity at Gustavus

As the school's mission page on its website states, Gustavus is a "liberal arts college firmly rooted in its Swedish and Lutheran heritage."[2] From this, one can assume that Gustavus Adolphus College does not intend to promote or seek out diversity - social,

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[1] Diana Eck, A New Religious America (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2002).
[2] Gustavus Adolphus College Website, The Gustavus Mission Page; <http://www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/president/vision.cfm>

economic, ethnic, or religious. However, in the third part of the statement, it asserts that Gustavus also

> ...aspires to be a community of persons from diverse backgrounds who respect and affirm the dignity of all people. It is a community where a mature understanding of the Christian faith and lives of service are nurtured and students are encouraged to work toward a just and peaceful world.[3]

The college does not promise diversity of any specific type but does "aspire to be a community of persons from diverse backgrounds." The student body, however, is on the whole closer to the school's Swedish and Lutheran heritage (its specific make-up will be discussed later in this document). Therefore, perhaps Gustavus ought to be exploring new ways of enticing "diverse" students, faculty, and staff, those of different ethnic or religious backgrounds than the majority here, so that it may achieve this kind of community. Gustavus appears to be pulled (of its own accord) in two very different directions, either toward retaining its strong Lutheran and Swedish identity, or to promoting and actively seeking diversity in its many forms. This tension has the potential to be a destructive and oppressive force or an opportunity for positive learning and growth.

Other clues to Gustavus' identity, listed directly below the mission statement, are its five core values: excellence, community, justice, service, and faith. None of these values focus directly on diversity or pluralism, an understandable omission as the college has a strong ethnic and religious identity. As evidenced from the website and the college's identity, Gustavus does value faith; "Without expecting conformity to a specific religious tradition, we encourage an honest exploration of religious faith and seek to foster a mature understanding of Christian perspectives on life."[4] The Christian tradition is assumed to be the norm, the common heritage of all who are enrolled here. Based on the statistics, this is a very safe

[3] The Gustavus Mission Page.
[4] The Gustavus Mission Page.

assumption. In the fall of 2003, Gustavus reported that approximately 70.3% of its students were of some Protestant denomination, and 18.1% were Roman Catholic. About 5.5% were non-Christian, with a small percentage not reporting any affiliation or not answering the question at all. The majority of students, 55%, are even from the same general Christian denomination, Lutheran.[5]

Related to this question of identity is the "Faith and Learning" page of the school's website. It is one of the eight main links under the Gustavus header, signifying its importance alongside basic information about the institution, academics, athletics, arts, the school calendar, and news. President James Peterson is quoted on this page:

> The College encourages faith exploration by students and staff. We affirm the conviction that faith informs learning and learning informs faith. Curriculum aspects that address religion and faith are not aimed at conversion, but rather understanding.[6]

Though it may be safe to assume that the faith referred to here is a Christian faith, there is no explicit definition. Does this then allow for those in the religious minority to express their faiths? How should a Lutheran school accommodate those who are not Lutheran?

Professor of Religion Darrell Jodock is featured prominently on the website as the Bernhardson Chair of Lutheran Studies. His comments shed considerable light on the categories most institutions of higher learning fall into, as either a sectarian school (associated with or affiliated to a church), or a secular school (not affiliated with any religion). In his comments to the Board of Trustees, he states that Gustavus does not exist to retain religious uniformity and identity, as is expected of a sectarian school. These types of schools view themselves as "religious enclaves" meant to be separate from secular society and maintain its

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[5] "Gustavus Adolphus College Fact Book," Office of Institutional Research, February 2004.
[6] Gustavus "Faith and Learning" Website, <http://www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/faith/welcome.cfm>

distinct religious identity and tradition.[7] On the other hand, Gustavus does not support all segments of society by disregarding religious diversity and giving simple equality to all, like a secular or non-sectarian school. These institutions value inclusivity and do not have one uniform religious identity. He suggests that a Lutheran college has a third option, a middle path, with qualities mixed from the above two identities. The traits I wish to emphasize pertain to religious diversity. He states that the Lutheran position

> ... takes a religious tradition very seriously and seeks to build its identity around it. This third path explores the riches of that religious tradition as part of its contribution to the community as a whole. But, unlike the sectarian model, it **seeks to serve the whole community and in doing so is ready to work with people of other religious tradition—indeed, welcome them into its midst... The third model takes religious diversity seriously enough to engage and struggle with it, while at the same time remaining deeply committed to the importance of its own Lutheran tradition**. Rather than an enclave or a microcosm, I think the third option as a well dug deep in order to provide something helpful for the entire community.[8]

Here the tension between Lutheran identity and drive for diversity is presented as constructive and positive. The dynamics between an institution with a Lutheran heritage and the real-world reality of religious diversity can bring about affirmative change in the world, as Jodock expands on later in his speech. He laments the fact that many students come to Gustavus unaware of the importance of "communal deliberation," the kind of conversation that can debate but on the whole is productive and educational for all involved.[9] The Lutheran tradition we have at Gustavus should teach students how to properly engage in serious constructive debate and conversation, in order to benefit themselves and society once they graduate. Even Martin Luther was a proponent of this type of discussion. In his remarks to the Board of Trustees, Jodock points out that Luther started the Reformation as a "fundamental

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[7] Darrell Jodock, "Remarks by Darrell Jodock to the Board of Trustees of Gustavus Adolphus College, October 27, 2002."
[8] Jodock (Emphasis added).
[9] Jodock

request... not that the church agree[s] with him but that a council be called to debate and to clarify."[10]

An additional piece of Gustavus' identity is the Chaplains' Office, the place where the greatest concentration of the Swedish Lutheran heritage of the college may be expected to reside. In an interview with Chaplain Brian Johnson, he discussed the college's Lutheran heritage, and how it is enacted. The Swedish church, he stated, has always been ecumenical; Nathan Soderblum, a bishop of the Swedish Lutheran Church, first brought the "Faith and Order Commission" to the World Council of Churches because he saw a need for an ecumenical response to problems such as world hunger, poverty, and injustice.[11] Johnson stated that Gustavus could be compared to other Lutheran institutions: Concordia, St. Olaf, and Augsburg College. We have a very different mission from them, however, as they were founded by Norwegian Lutherans. Due to Gustavus' Swedish Lutheran heritage, we have an ecumenical drive, although individual action is necessary to make this occur. Johnson believes that his task is to invite preachers and faith leaders, who represent every denomination, in order to instigate interfaith dialogue on campus, whether from outside individuals or those of other faiths here at Gustavus. However, he is "of two minds" in regard to Daily Chapel; this is a place for constructive interfaith dialogue to occur, and yet it is also a place of "ritual pattern" that can discourage such dialogue.[12] He wants to encourage interfaith dialogue wherever possible, but Daily Chapel (the service as well as the building it is held in, Christ Chapel) often "turns off" many speakers of different religious traditions. In general, Johnson prefers to have Gustavus faculty, staff, and students of different faiths speak here. He wants to foster real understanding, which requires forming relationships over time. Once one

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[10] Jodock
[11] Interview with Chaplain Brian Johnson, March 26, 2004.
[12] Johnson.

begins to see others as people, rather than as a religious "other," real learning can begin. This is difficult with off-campus presenters who speak and leave the same day.

Outside of Daily and Sunday Chapel, the Chaplains Office tries to establish faith groups, contacts, or resources, for people of each faith, bringing those of different faiths together, sometimes with off-campus organizations. Discussion has occurred in regard to establishing a Gustavus Interfaith Council, who could better welcome those of different faiths, especially first-year students. He believes that it is unfair for the minorities to "carry the load," therefore those who are proponents of ecumenicism and pluralism must "cultivate interfaith hearts" and do much of the work to bring about interfaith dialogue here.[13] He believes that Gustavus is leading nationally in this endeavor, but that there is still more work to be done, though the resources (money, staff, small amount of diversity) are slim.

Johnson thinks that each religious tradition has an aspect of conversion, in that each claims to be the sole owner of truth and must bring others to it. The Swedish Lutheran heritage grounds Gustavus in that religious-ethnic identity, and yet also pushes it toward proving an education through ecumeniscism and interfaith dialogue. Gustavus is proud of its Swedish Lutheran aspects, as evidenced in the strength of the Scandinavian Studies Department, the Saint Lucia Guild and celebration, and Christmas in Christ Chapel services. Along with that focus, he believes that the tradition tells us that we must be turned outward rather than inward. Johnson believes in "education as transformation," that in learning about another tradition and educating ourselves about others we will also better understand our own tradition.

In studying Gustavus' relationship to diversity, a tension apparently emerges. The school is closely tied to its Lutheran heritage and tradition and yet at the same time cognizant

[13] Johnson.

of and containing the reality of religious diversity. I do not believe the college is resolute or rigid in either identity; it aspires to be a welcoming community, open to new ideas and to change. Based on Jodock's and Johnson's positions of influence, as well as their ideas for Gustavus, the school appears to aspire toward this "third path" of interfaith dialogue. Gustavus seems to want to help the small minority of non-Christians on campus; however, I believe it is still attempting to figure out how that might occur. Is Gustavus on the "third path?" If not, then what actions need to be taken in order to get on it? Are there drastic changes that need to occur, or is the institution a model for other schools? And if changes are necessary, are they in turn feasible? I believe that in order to see where Gustavus should go we must first see how it does respond to diversity, and more specifically how a Christian institution might respond to religious diversity.

Responses to Religious Diversity

Christian relationships to other religions have always been tumultuous, given its beginning development to differentiate itself from Judaism and being surrounded by Roman religious traditions. Later, the Christian emphasis on missionary work and the "Great Commissioning"[14] of adherents to bring people to the faith solidifies its conversionary identity. In contemporary civilization, and in a multireligious society such as America, Christian responses to religious diversity are often centered more around one issue, rather then a general stance for all topics. These issues may include questions regarding the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, what is salvation, who is saved, the nature of sin, and perspectives on God. For example, a person may be an exclusivist in regard to who they believe goes to

[14] "And Jesus came to them and said… Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the names of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Matthew 28:18-20. HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version.

heaven (only true Christians), but an inclusivist on one's perceptions of God. One way to visualize the three main responses recognized and described by noted theologians is as a spectrum, defined by major characteristics and as three different cohesive responses; exclusivism at one end and pluralism at the opposite point, while inclusivism takes up the middle ground. It is important to remember that, though these three outlooks will be described as three individual views, real life situations rarely lend themselves to textbook definitions, and that outside of the classroom religious diversity engenders a range of possible responses.

Exclusivism

Christian exclusivism affirms that there is only one true religion, and that any other tradition that is not Christianity is therefore inherently false. At one extreme, these other religions are means that the Devil uses to mislead humans away from Christ. This stance is often defined in terms of salvation and concerned with the question of "who will spend eternity with God."[15] In practice, it ignores other religions or openly denounces them, and sometimes seeks to convert others to bring them to the Truth, to salvation, to help them. The basis for these views include many Biblical passages asserting the uniqueness of Jesus Christ,[16] and the "Great Commissioning" of believers to bring others to the truth. God in infinite mercy sent Jesus Christ to save all people, as all are in bondage to sin and unable to free themselves, in order that their souls might be saved from eternal damnation. This salvation and liberation from a fallen state can only occur through a personal relationship with Christ, and by no other religious path. Though this stance may seem harsh, it provides a clear understanding of right (Christianity) and wrong (other religions), and who is saved and who is

[15] David Basinger, Religious Diversity: A Philosophical Assessment (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 4.

[16] For example, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6, HarperCollins Study Bible.

not. Exclusivist ideas can be seen in attempts to openly convert adherents of other religions, or simply in acting on the principles of one's religion one's "actions to speak louder than words" in order to bring people to God.

An institution with this outlook may be Bethany Lutheran College, in nearby Mankato, Minnesota. A superficial analysis shows their mission statement as clearly defining the school to be part of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod intent on teaching in accord with the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. The school "expects" students to attend chapel, in order to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by means of His Gospel."[17] The overwhelming majority of students at Bethany, seventy percent, are Lutheran, but they do accept "students from all Christian faiths."[18] Also, spiritual life on campus is described as having a "Christ-centered focus," offering Daily Chapel, Vespers Service, Sunday Worship, Bible studies, and "Lutherans for Life," a student organization dedicated to the pro-life cause, as opportunities for students to develop their faith.[19] Based on this evidence, Bethany Lutheran College seems to be of the exclusivist outlook, promoting the Christian faith as the only and best way to prepare students for the world.

However, some Christian theologians have disagreed with the exclusivist stance, claiming that it is "offensive to other communities and inconsistent with central Christian doctrines," as noted theologian and Dominican priest J.A. Dinoia states.[20] From a Christian perspective, the position of exclusivism allows salvation only for those who, before death, explicitly embrace Christianity and baptism. He states that this idea contradicts traditional

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[17] Bethany Lutheran College Website, "Our Mission," <http://web.blc.edu/about/mission/>
[18] Bethany Lutheran College Website, "Common Admissions Questions," <http://www.blc.edu/admissions/learnaboutbethany/faq/>
[19] Bethany Lutheran College Website, "Spiritual Life at Bethany," <http://www.blc.edu/admissions/learnaboutbethany/spirituallife/>
[20] J.A. Dinoia, The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 36.

interpretations of Christian doctrines, in that many exclusivist writings were meant to discourage schisms from occurring in the early Christian church, and were not intended to be applied to other religions.[21] David Basinger, a Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Roberts Wesleyan College, also offers a critique of the exclusivist position, as being contradictory to the Christian notion of a loving, merciful, and just God. He considers two different options to disavow exclusivism - those who state that God's reasoning exists beyond humans and that there may be other ways for non-Christians to attain salvation. Ultimately he concludes that these explanations, though valid and thought provoking, are not the best arguments against exclusivism. He believes that God's over-powering grace and love toward humanity is still the best counter to the exclusivist stance; a loving, omniscient God could not abandon such huge sections of humans.[22] However, many exclusivists could argue that God has not abandoned them; an ambassador of love, mercy, and grace, has already been sent, Jesus Christ. All that is left is for others from different religions to accept Christ and become a Christian.

Inclusivism

Next in the spectrum is inclusivism, which states that while another religious tradition may have a touch of truth and some incomplete access to the divine, it is still not as authentic as the Christianity, the way for the world to access God and attain salvation. John B. Cobb Jr., Professor Emeritus at Claremont School of Theology, describes Wolfhart Pannenburg's inclusivist stance (when he discusses his own self-understanding as a pluralistic Christian) in Transforming Christianity and the World. A German Lutheran theologian, Pannenburg

[21] Dinoia, 35-7.
[22] Basinger, 4.

"envisions that ultimately Christianity will supercede all other religions."[23] Inclusivism can be a way to reconcile Jesus Christ as the one way to God and salvation, and yet also account for other religions, in that all will someday be reconciled and brought to God in the context of Christianity. This leaves the hope that non-Christians, someday or after death, will realize Christianity is the way and attain true salvation. This claim is based on the uniqueness of Christ, as well as Christianity's highly developed eschatology (plan for the end times) of universal resurrection.[24] Dinoia describes inclusivism as attempting to demonstrate that all religions are seeking a Christian salvation, freedom from sin and a better life in the next world based on a relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit made possible by the Son Jesus Christ, and only in those terms. Even those who may be unaware of it need Jesus as their Savior. John Hick, a noted pluralist theologian, uses a solar system metaphor to describe inclusivism; as the sun shines upon the earth, God's light shines directly onto Christianity, which is then reflected as secondary, weaker rays to the other world religions.[25] Karl Rahner described his inclusivist concepts in terms of "anonymous Christians." He believed that there were many people before and after the time of Jesus Christ that were or never will be able to know Him, which contradicts the love and saving grace of God. He resolved this paradox by arguing that there are "anonymous Christians" in the world, those who live a moral, good, and faithful life though they are not even aware of Christianity. They are able to participate in God's grace in the world, though if and when they encounter Christianity they will recognize it as the truth.

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[23] John B. Cobb, Jr., Transforming Christianity and the World: A Way Beyond Absolutism and Relativism (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 46.
[24] John B. Cobb Jr., Christian Theology, ed. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 367.
[25] John Hick, "Is Christianity the one true religion, or one among others?" 2001, www.johnhick.org. <http://www.johnhick.org.uk/article2.shtml>

This position is harder to see in practice, as it tends to be a gray area between two polar opposites. One possible example may be St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. Their mission statement presents a possible conflict similar to Gustavus', in that the college is "rooted in the Christian gospel, and [incorporates] a global perspective."[26] This institution endeavors "to be an inclusive community, respecting those of differing backgrounds and beliefs,"[27] therefore opening a door to the possibility of inclusivism, though the terms "inclusive" and "inclusivism" are not perfectly synonymous.[28] They also maintain a status of being a "college of the church," with many links devoted to what this means.[29] Martin E. Marty, a highly respected American theologian at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is quoted in one such link as saying this may entail faculty being "friendly" to this identity, but not requiring faith tests or the like.[30] Does this mean inclusivism is St. Olaf College's stance, as professors are asked to show favor or openness to the Christian identity of the school? In comparison, Gustavus does not have any such requirement or condition, although the question of professors' relation to minority religions and Christianity was outside the scope of my research. Being a "community of [Christian] faith" is also emphasized here, though the St. Olaf Student Congregation mission affirms that they support the spiritual growth of the entire St. Olaf community. However, their mission statement is not as strongly worded as other institutions; it does not mention working for diversity, as Gustavus' does, or how the "global perspective" is achieved. This institution appears to promise inclusive respect, but not much beyond this basic principle.

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[26] St. Olaf College Website, "St. Olaf Mission Statement" Page, <http://wwws.stolaf.edu/president/guidingdocuments/mission.html>
[27] "St. Olaf Mission Statement."
[28] "Inclusivism" used here is a theological stance pertaining to different religions, while "inclusive" is an adjective meant to include all.
[29] St. Olaf College Website, "College of the Church" Page, <http://www.stolaf.edu/church/whatis.html>
[30] Martin E. Marty, "A College of the Church at the Millenial Turn." St. Olaf College Website, "College of the Church," <http://www.stolaf.edu/church/whatis.html>

Pluralism

As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "pluralism" is

> 3a: a theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality, b: a theory that reality is composed of a plurality of entities, 4a: a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization.[31]

Pluralism can describe both a state of a nation, many religions coexisting, or a theological position. I am most concerned here with the theological definition and implications of pluralism. Rather than the "multiple ultimate realities" the stance may suggest, pluralism claims there are "many theistic perspectives offer equal access to the truth."[32] Regarding salvation, pluralism understands that each religion has a valid path to God. This salvation can come from the work of all religious communities, under a variety of "scheme-specific descriptions," each tradition striving to ameliorate the conditions in the world and have a relationship with the divine based on their own teachings.[33] Dinoia calls this version of salvation "reality-centeredness," and cites John Hick, who also promotes this orientation, stating that religions should be appraised based on how their adherents are focused on fostering social reform in the change from self to reality-centeredness. [34] Therefore, a Christian strives to have the best relationship with God/Jesus/Holy Spirit, while the Buddhist seeks enlightenment. Overall, the most pressing issue for Christians is how to reconcile the uniqueness of Jesus Christ with a theology that seems to deny its exclusivity and distinctiveness.

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[31] Merriam-Webster OnLine, "pluralism."
[32] Basinger, 5.
[33] Dinoia, 37.
[34] Dinoia, 41.

As cited by Dinoia, Langdon Gilkey, Professor Emeritus of Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School, advocates a possible position where religions might retain the unique elements in their conceptions regarding their doctrines, but drop their claims as absolute paths, since even Christianity has been shown to change its position throughout history.[35] Pluralism does not advocate treating religion as a kind of cafeteria, picking and choosing the pieces one desires. This attitude devalues the religious system and cheapens the nature of the divine in worship. Cobb calls for pluralism "that allows each religious tradition to define its own nature and purposes,"[36] thus prohibiting one relative rule to be thrust upon each tradition, giving each a "common denominator" feeling. Pluralism then does not deny all traditions under the guise of simple devalued equality and mire itself in relativism; as stated before, each religion (in its entirety) is extremely important in a person or community's relationship with the divine.

To quote Thomas Aquinas from a talk given by John Hick, "Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower."[37] Religions develop as the human responses to the ultimate reality of the divine, or Allah, or YHWH, or God. From a relationship with the divine, human responses are then grounded in and reflect our cultures and experiences. Hence even within religious traditions and cultures the human perspectives of God are variable and bring about a fuller picture of our Maker. Thus, it is understandable that the human understandings of God are different across cultures. As Cobb phrases it, as he echoes the early twentieth-century German theologian Ernst Troeltsch, even the different forms of Christianity are intimately connected to the cultures in which they function. "Although religion exists as a distinct element in each tradition, in its actual forms it cannot be abstracted from the culture as

[35] Dinoia, 51.
[36] Cobb, 65.
[37] Hick.

a whole… We must accept Christianity as absolute for us, while recognizing that other religions may be absolute for other cultures."[38]

On example of an institution of higher learning perhaps employing a pluralistic outlook is Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Though they do not show one cohesive mission, their website emphasizes their academic strength and selectivity. Their Office of the Chaplain is meant to

> ...help deepen the spiritual and ethical life of the campus… explore the integral relationship between faith and learning, connecting the work of the mind with the heart and soul. We serve people of all faiths as well as those exploring spirituality in their lives.[39]

They also coordinate events with the local congregations of any faith, support student religious organizations and service projects. This appears to be a pluralistic mode, in its emphasis on supporting all religious traditions, as well as supporting service projects to better the community. The language employed here is much less exclusivist than Bethany College, and more pluralist than St. Olaf's emphasis on being a "college of the church."

Others have found basic problems with these categories. As mentioned before, rarely are the stances of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism seen as three separate positions, especially in their real-world application. I believe that Basinger brings up an important point, in that often in real life, people do not choose simply one stance and apply it to each situation. He states that he has many students

> …who are hard exclusivists with respect to the question of who can spend eternity with God, but are pluralists with the respect to the question of who can experience God now. So the terms in question [exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist], I believe, need to be applied on a case-by-case basis.[40]

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[38] Cobb, 23.
[39] Carleton College Website, Office of the Chaplain Page, <http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/campus/chaplain/>
[40] Basinger, 6.

Similarly, one critique of pluralism asks how the theory of pluralism can be transformed into practice. William R. Hutchinson echoes this problem in his book concerning the history of religion in American. As he discusses movements of the twentieth century, he shows one of the problems is converting a "stance into something more than a plausible but empty formula; more specifically, how to achieve a new symbiosis between pluralism and unity without returning to the traditional melting pot formula…?"[41] Correspondingly, Diana Eck states "diversity alone does not constitute pluralism."[42] Eck describes many qualities of what religious pluralism should look like, beyond inclusivity and diversity. She describes pluralism as an ongoing approach, as organic as the religions it is engaged with.

Eck continues that pluralism has four defining characteristics that resist "unprincipled relativism and therefore moral decay."[43] First, it goes beyond mere diversity, that active and willing participants must create it. Second, it journeys beyond mere tolerance into ideas of active understanding, a willingness to destroy derogatory stereotypes and foster new relationships. Third, pluralism does not equal relativism[44]; rather, it is the encounter between religious differences and faithful commitments, thus still upholding one's sacred beliefs. Finally, as stated before, pluralism is a process, an organic interaction.[45] According to Eck, examples of this kind of interaction can best be seen in the work of interfaith dialogue groups, organizations across the country and globe that seek greater understanding of the divine through the interactions of different religious groups, as well as conflict resolution regarding disputes between religious factions. America is a unique example of a nation with a complex

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[41] William R. Hutchinson, Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 234.
[42] Eck, 22.
[43] Eck, 69.
[44] "Relativism" can be defined as the belief that there is no absolute truth, there is no good or evil, and that religious traditions are the same and therefore unimportant.
[45] Eck, 69-72.

relationship with pluralism, as it contains a myriad of different religions, not all of which agree. In analyzing this land, I hope to draw connections to Gustavus, its similarities to the United States, and why religious pluralism and diversity are issues for both.

American Religious Pluralism

Many scholars discuss the "de facto" or default religious pluralism in America, also described as "unintentional pluralism." These terms are defined as the result of immigration and development of radically different faiths as they arrive, grow, and interact in close physical proximity. America is a unique nation, one built upon lofty ideals of religious freedom and tolerance. However, this lofty paradigm has not always been the lived reality as the nation has settled, pushed west, was industrialized, and grown to be a world power. With a historical perspective, many actions that may seem atrocious now were seen as normal back then, such as the persecution of Catholics in most of the original colonies or the practice of moving Native Americans onto reservations and forbidding them to practice their faiths. Today we as Americans may see these acts as ignorant and oppressive, and yet hate crimes still occur even as we become further aware of the religious diversity in our own backyards. The seemingly distant "others," the practitioners of religions that were once so strange and remote, have now become the next-door neighbor.

One such occurrence of unintentional pluralism showed two very different congregations literally becoming next-door neighbors. Diana Eck, in her book A New Religious America, tells of the story of two religious groups in Fremont, California - St. Paul's United Methodist Church and the Islamic Society of the East Bay - who were each looking for a place to built new worship areas. The citizens of the neighborhood wanted a park, but were unable to pay for one. The two congregations wanted an area to build a church

and a mosque, and agreed to give part of the land to the community for a park. By coincidence, the two very different religions ended up as neighbors, both apprehensive to be so close and hopeful that they could be an example to the nation. Through the legal work and red tape that came along with such a venture, the mosque and the church seemed wedded together, as one member of the planning committee put it. Even if another organization were to buy the land in the area, they too would have to abide by the intricate set of agreements and easements agreed upon by agreed by St. Paul's United Methodist Church and the Islamic Society of the East Bay.[46] As they were "married" in the eyes of the city planners, they also decided to build a shared parking lot so as to have bigger facilities each. The Muslims needed it for large Friday worship, as the Methodists were to use it mostly for their Sunday services. They finally broke ground for their church and mosque in 1993, and Eck followed up on it seven years later. Though they do not interact as much as they would like, as the mosque has been quite busy organizing a school on the site, each congregation has stated that it very much enjoys the other as a neighbor.

This type of neighborly pluralism is may seem heartwarming and accepting, seeing synagogues, churches, mosques, and temples living, growing, and worshiping alongside each other. However, Eck raises an important question here, asking if these types of interactions are genuine "corridors of communication? Bridges of relationship?"[47] These places of worship may be just next-door, but are they interacting and enacting new understandings? As each congregation noted in the preceding anecdote, though they share a parking lot and the city planners consider them wedded together, they do not interact as much as they had hoped or would like. Is theological pluralism truly occurring?

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[46] Eck, 350.
[47] Eck, 351.

Later in her book, which studies the changing diversity of the American religious landscape, Eck states that some are striving for intentional, theological pluralism. She asserts that the "interfaith agenda, in all its complexity, is now America's agenda."[48] Partners in Dialogue in Columbia, South Carolina, the InterFaith Conference of Washington, D.C., and the Mall Area Religious Council of the Mall of America in Minnesota are all examples of smaller conferences popping up across the country, echoing the larger national organizations, such as the Interfaith Alliance, dedicated to interfaith dialogue and theological pluralism. Though many of these groups have traditionally included the "people of the Book" (Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims), recently many Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jain congregations have been petitioning for acceptance. Organizations such as these are working to achieve pluralism that will help America to function better as a multireligious society. They work to bring different religions together in dialogue, mediate differences, promote understanding, awareness, civil rights, justice, and safety through religious services, cultural, educational, and social events, and take political action when necessary. These groups also reflect the changing outlook and lives of everyday Americans by their very existence. Eck mentions one story specifically:

> One woman described herself as an Irish Catholic married to a Muslim man, raising her children as Muslim but also influenced by Hinduism. When she had a severe back problem, her physician, a Chinese chiropractor, suggested she take up the form of Hindu yoga called hatha yoga. Rather than dwell on the differences, she confessed, "I am filled with the joy of these confluences."[49]

William R. Hutchinson's book Religious Pluralism in America focuses more on the "de facto" or unintentional pluralism mentioned earlier, but discusses a few aspects of theological pluralism. Also a professor at Harvard Divinity School, as is Eck, he concentrates

[48] Eck, 370.
[49] Eck, 371.

on describing different religious movements and how they have interacted, while Eck focuses on the past thirty years and offers prescriptions for pluralism. Hutchinson states that new movements in the twentieth century recognize the "symphonic" character of pluralism. In order for America to live up to its ideals, "inclusion" cannot be on any one group's terms, and that the society must include all of its members when civically and socially organizing itself. All of these ideas can be traced to the original beliefs inherent in the founding of America and the American Constitution.[50] Hutchinson is arguing, with a historical perspective, that intentional, theological pluralism is a positive value and a right (versus a privilege) available to all in America. The work of interfaith dialogue and theological pluralism appears to be occurring slowly but in a constructive path toward a better social and civic organization.

Many scholars believe that theological, intentional pluralism, as opposed to "de facto" or unintentional pluralism, is the best model for America given its grand variety of religious diversity and high ideals of religious freedom. Eck states that:

> Today, the United States is in the process of understanding and negotiating the meaning of its pluralism anew... to understand who 'we' are in the new millennium, it is clearly critical to hear the voices of America's many religions, new and old, in shaping a distinctively and boldly multireligious society. It is critical to hear and value the many new ways in which the variety of American peoples bring life and vibrancy to the whole of our society. Today we have the unparalleled opportunity to build, intentionally and actively, a culture of pluralism among the people of many cultures and faiths in America.

I believe that Hutchinson would agree with her here. He asserts that a "revised social covenant" cannot be constructed "without a frank and strong affirmation of pluralism as a major principle."[51] He goes on to say that tolerance and inclusivity are already parts of the American social fabric, and pluralism goes beyond even inclusivity, to mutual respect without patronizing minorities.

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[50] Hutchinson, 236.
[51] Hutchinson, 234.

Another religious historian also sees America evolving socially and theologically toward pluralism, akin to Hutchinson's perspective. Charles H. Lippy, in his volume Pluralism Comes of Age, makes pluralism appear to be inevitable, a natural theological effect from the subsequent necessary interactions of the many faiths that have settled here.[52] He sees America as setting an example to the world, in that "pluralism does not undermine common life but seems to enrich it," as pluralism comes of age in the twentieth century.[53]

As modern intentional pluralism develops, Eck states, it "requires two-way traffic;"[54] In one of her many anecdotes, Eck cites a Muslim man who was bemused by the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in his daughter's high school textbook. Starting at the local level, he eventually formed the Council on Islamic Education, thus shaping the future of education in America for young Muslims.[55] In this way pluralism can inform our lives, making us more aware of the experiences of the "other," which in our multireligious society is necessary. Both at Gustavus and "the real world," most people assume that others have a Christian background, which can start interactions off in the wrong manner. Hence, interaction and knowledge of others is imperative in a country like America.

Intentional, theological pluralism can be seen as the best model for America because it does not call for one religion, but rather lifts up all traditions as being special, unique, and divine, akin to America's original ideals of freedom and democracy. Eck uses the famous motto from the American seal, *E Pluribus Unum*, "From Many, One," as a cultural, and never religious, model. This principle was meant, she says, for our public lives, not our faith lives; "the *Unum* will be civic oneness of commitment to the common covenants of our citizenship

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[52]Charles H. Lippy, Pluralism Comes of Age (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 162.
[53] Lippy, 162.
[54] Eck, 361.
[55] Eck, 287.

out of the manyness of religious ways and worlds."[56] Pluralism does not advocate an amalgamation of religions, nor does it allow one to pick and choose the pieces one wants. Each of these views rejects the sacredness of a religious tradition, as a religion is a system and looses some of its divine aspects when it looses components.

Though the most common metaphor for America is the "melting pot," a melting together of many elements to become one, there is a call for a better description for the interactions of religions. Especially in a culturally diverse society, religion is often deeply rooted in one's ethnicity and culture. The "melting pot" calls to mind images of amalgamation, of all elements combining to become another, of losing one's cultural and religious identity in the dissolving process to become part of the larger whole that does not respect the uniqueness of one's faith. Horace Kallen, a Jewish immigrant who settled in America in the early 1900s, first identified "cultural pluralism," and was one of the first to attack the "melting pot" imagery. Kallen proposed that America is rather like a symphony; with nothing "fused" or "melted" but each group working together voluntarily with their specific uniqueness adding to the harmony of the whole.[57] Eck expands on this image:

> ...the symphony of society, each retaining its difference, all sounding together, with an ear to the music of the whole... The symphony image needs some modification, however... A symphony is usually written in its entirety before it is played, and no society or nation has such a script. The work of cultural pluralism requires revisiting and reclaiming the energy and vision of democracy in every generation and with every new arrival. Perhaps we need to stretch our imagination to something more akin to jazz, for in jazz the playing is the writing. And because it is not all written out, it requires even more astute attention to the music of each instrument; it requires collaboration and invention among the players.[58]

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[56] Eck, 31.
[57] Hutchinson, 194-5.
[58] Eck, 58.

Though she calls the work "cultural pluralism," I believe this metaphor is an excellent mode of thinking about religious pluralism. As mentioned before, pluralism is an ongoing, organic approach, just as religions themselves are not irrevocably set in stone or Scripture. As pluralism grows and develops in the wider scope of the national landscape, so too does it play out on the smaller stages such as Gustavus Adolphus College. First let us see how Gustavus compares to the nation as a whole, and then analyze the religious diversity in each to best understand pluralism at this institution.

America Versus Gustavus

As compared with the majority of the United States, Gustavus' statistics are slightly skewed. Our age sets us apart, as nearly all Gustavus students are between the ages of 18 and 22, and the rest of the nation depicts the entire continuum of the human life cycle. How else does our school on the hill compare to the nation. As the United States Census Bureau learned in 2000, the population of America is approximately 281,421,906.[59] The ethnic percentages are as follows (as taken from the U.S. Census Bureau except for Gustavus)[60]:

	U.S.	Minnesota	Gustavus
White persons, percent, 2000	75.1%	89.4%	93.6%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000	12.5%	2.9%	0.8%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000	12.3%	3.5%	0.8%
Asian persons, percent, 2000	3.6%	2.9%	3.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2000	0.9%	1.1%	0.2%

The census was not useful when researching statistics about religion, as Public Law 94-521 prohibits the Bureau from asking questions concerning religious affiliation. However, a

[59] United States Census Bureau, State and Country QuickFacts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>

[60] Ibid, Gustavus statistics added by author, from "Gustavus Adolphus College Fact Book," source: International Education Office, Table E.6.

number of other agencies have made it their mission to document statistics concerning religions worldwide.

"Adherents.com" is a website devoted to cataloging the growing faith movements and their followers around the world. The site contains over 41,000 adherent statistics and religious geography citations, collected from government census reports, organizational reporting, and secondary literature. It has no religious affiliation of its own in researching statistics on over 4,200 religions, denominations, faith, and tribes. In one of their most often cited studies, the National Survey of Religious Identification (ARIS) surveyed 113, 000 Americans (approximately 0.04% of the population in 2001) about how they identify themselves religiously:[61]

Religion	2001 Est. Adult Pop.	% of U.S. Pop., 2000
Christianity	159,030,000	76.5%
Nonreligious/Secular	27,539,000	13.2%
Judaism	2,831,000	1.3%
Islam	1,104,000	0.5%
Buddhism	1,082,000	0.5%
Agnostic	991,000	0.5%
Atheist	902,000	0.4%
Hinduism	766,000	0.4%
Unitarian Universalist	629,000	0.3%
Wiccan/Pagan/Druid	307,000	0.1%
Spiritualist	116,000	
Native American Religion	103,000	
Baha'i	84,000	

Though this chart is informative, it may be an incomplete survey. It may have taken place in a location with little ethnic, religious, or socio-economic diversity. Many new immigrants of "world faiths," Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists for example, often are not part of such

[61] Top Twenty Religions in the United States, 2001 (self-identification, ARIS), <http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html#gallup>

surveys as they are unable to afford phones, and are frequently forgotten as part of the American religious landscape. Studies such as these are not to be taken as reality, only as a close estimate of the truth. However, the study verifies that Christianity is the overwhelming majority, the dominant religious tradition in America, which is very close to the truth despite survey deficiencies. If the majority of the nation is Christian, why then does pluralism matter, especially at Gustavus?

From a meeting with Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Affairs Hank Toutain, I was able to obtain information about the religious make-up of Gustavus. All first-year students are required to fill out an exhaustive survey for institutional information, which includes a question regarding what faith each student most identifies with. In Fall 2000, with the school population at 2525, and in Fall 2003, with a student population of 2533, the school was approximately:[62]

Denominations	**% Student Pop, 2000**	**% Student Pop, 2002**
Lutheran	55.9%	55.9%
Roman Catholic	18.0%	18.0%
Other Religion	4.9%	5.0%
Methodist	4.7%	4.7%
Presbyterian	3.0%	3.0%
Not Reportable	2.8%	2.8%
Other Protestant	1.9%	1.9%
Baptist	1.7%	1.7%
United Church of Christ	1.6%	1.6%
Episcopalian	1.3%	1.3%
Jewish	0.3%	0.3%

This depiction is much like the one reflected by the accreditation self-study conducted by the college in the 2002-2003 academic school year, which compares many statistics and findings to a study in 1993. This study covered all aspects of the college, including the administrative hierarchy, department duties, faculty profiles, revenue generators, etc. One

[62] "Gustavus Adolphus College Factbook."

smaller section focused on students, their demographics and involvement. Regarding student make-up, the study concluded:

> Consistent with its origins, location, and mission, Gustavus continues to be a school that attracts students who strongly identify with the Christian faith. Approximately 55% of students in 2001 reported their religious affiliation as Lutheran, compared with 58% in 1993. An additional 15% of students reported a protestant denomination other than Lutheran (14% in 1993) and 19% identified themselves as Roman Catholic (16% in 1993). The college has noted a change in the religious affiliation reported by students. In 1993, 0.8% reported their affiliation as "non-Judeo-Christian"; 5% did so in 2001. The change, however, may reflect increasing uncertainty about religious categories rather than increasing diversity among out students.[63]

In 2004, propelled by a few tenacious admissions counselors, professors, administrators, and a now vibrant Diversity Center attempting to recruit students of non-white, non-Lutheran backgrounds, the college is increasing its awareness of the diversity on campus. However, as Eck states, "diversity alone does not constitute pluralism."[64]

At the beginning, pluralism requires basic recognition of religious diversity, that each tradition is completely equal and valid. It can then develop into rich relationships between different groups, each sharing, growing, and learning about one another and working to make this world better. I believe that Gustavus is at the early stages of such pluralism, and realizing the range of experiences on this campus. The change can be seen in the growing number of new religiously diverse programs. School-sponsored weekly Ramadan dinners, which began Fall 2003, invited non-Muslims to participate and learn more about this holy Muslim month of fasting. The second annual Diwali festival encouraged the entire campus to enjoy the Hindu celebration of lights. The Fourth Annual Traditional Pow Wow called students, faculty, staff, and the St. Peter community to experience the culture and spirituality of the indigenous

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[63] Gustavus Adolphus College, Self-Study for Comprehensive Evaluation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, 2002-2003. p. 2-1.
[64] Eck, 22.

peoples of Minnesota. Gustavus is changing, whether through a superficial recognition of outside diversity or a heartfelt desire to demonstrate the diversity of its own students. I believe that Gustavus has an obligation to recognize the religious minority on campus and do all it can to accommodate these communities, based on the mission statement and its "Faith and Learning" guidelines.

As further evidence that Gustavus has an obligation toward its religious minorities, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership recently published a report, "2004 State of Students of Color."[65] Its findings state that, based on the current demographics of Minnesota, the number of white students enrolled in K-12 education is declining, as the number of students of color enrolled in K-12 education is increasing, especially with the influx of new immigrant communities.[66] Based on these statistics, taken from the data of Minnesota public and private schools, they project that the demographics of Minnesota colleges and universities will also change drastically within the next decade. Though the report focuses on ethnicity rather than religion, the two aspects are closely linked. For example, many students that report themselves as African-American are part of the new immigrant communities from Somalia, which are predominantly Muslim. As the majority of Gustavus students are from Minnesota, and the ethnic (and subsequent religious) make-up of Minnesota is changing, it would therefore behoove Gustavus to recognize this trend. If more of its future students may be Muslim, the school should learn more about its current Muslim students and invite them to fully participate in their faith on campus. In order to best fulfill its mission statement of a "diverse community," as well as stay true to its ecumenical Swedish Lutheran heritage, Gustavus must be conducive to the different religious expressions of faith.

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[65] Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, "2004 State of the Students of Color: Building Alliances for Student Success."
[66] MMEP, 4.

Minority Experiences at Gustavus

In conducting my research, I first obtained permission from the Gustavus Department of Institutional Research. I contacted students individually for interviews, explaining to them that I was conducting interviews for my thesis about minority religions on campus. I told them the three questions I would be asking them, that their identity would be protected, and gave them the option of refusing an interview. Of ten students I approached, five responded for interviews; two Jewish, two Muslim, and one Wiccan student.

Student A:

She strongly identified with the title, "token Jew girl," as she is often invited to represent all of Judaism to many events. Frequently called upon by the Chaplain's Office, the Diversity Center, and most recently by Student Faith Advocates, she stated that if it's related to Judaism, she is invited. She herself is in fact a converted Jew, with Methodist roots. She said that most people in the area who are practicing Jews attend a synagogue in the Cities, and are Reformed Jews. In order to practice her faith, she said that she often reads the Scriptures on her own, though not as often as she "probably should," and has not been able to the synagogue since she was home for break. Being kosher on campus is almost a non-issue, since she has no knowledge of how food in the Gustavus Cafeteria is prepared. She recently had met with a professor in the Religion Department, in which they discussed how to attract Jewish students to Gustavus. Their ideas included asking the cafeteria to prepare and advertise their vegetarian food as being kosher. She believes it would require a minimum effort on the part of the kitchen staff, and would carry much more meaning for the students; a small step for Gustavus would show to Jewish students that the school is taking steps to accommodate

them. Providing instruction in Hebrew this year, she said, was also an important step in recognizing Jewish students and the relationship in the Jewish and Christian heritage. This professor is in fact going to approach the President this week. In her opinion, the biggest hindrance Gustavus poses to her, as a Jew is being part of a choir. It requires that she sing at four Sunday services a semester, many Wednesday Daily Chapels, and every Christmas in Christ Chapel rehearsal and performance. These experiences "really turn me off," she said, "I hate it." She then switched topics to an interesting fact; Gustavus once had a rabbi on staff in the Religion Department, approximately three or four years ago, but he was "encouraged to leave" by the faculty and administration, according to her sources.[67] She wondered about why there is Jewish faculty in other departments, and yet none in the Religion Department, at a school with "a Judeo-Christian orientation (emphasis on Christian)." Another aspect of being part of the religious minority on campus that she dislikes is not being able to find a "nice Jewish boy." Though she is not looking to get married as soon as she graduates, she still feels hindered by the fact that Gustavus does not encourage Jewish students to attend. What does help was the Jewish Organization of Gustavus, J.O.G., which includes about twelve faculty members and eight students (note: two of whom are twins, two are roommates, and two are best friends). This group is great in that they provide rides to and from synagogues, someone to talk to, who shares the same experiences. Just knowing that there are other Jews on campus is a comfort to her.

Student B:

He stated that he had always had trouble going to synagogue, and here at Gustavus it's worse (in that he very rarely attends). He identifies himself as a Jew, and is very much supported by his family. He feels that other Jews like himself are "turned off" by the

[67] However, many administrators and faculty have disputed this report.

atmosphere here at Gustavus. If he had not been pushed by others in the community to represent his faith, he stated he most likely never would have. It helps him to know that there are a group of Jewish professors, and that he can go to them at any time if he has a problem (even though he never has). He also mentioned that having very accepting, open, and respectful friends is also very supportive for him, and he appreciates that they push him to contribute to the community. He stated that "the network pushes J.O.G.," but that it is hard for all of them to get together. Last semester they had one party and one meeting. He often uses humor in regard to his religion as a coping mechanism, especially in regard to the swim team, a tight-knit group he is very involved with. He mentioned how some first-years on the team, upon finding out that he is Jewish, attempt to make "dumb jokes...all ignorant and lame." He would like to see larger meetings between the Gustavus Jewish community, and for another student (A) to have a position in the group and to be recognized for all her hard work; possibly have a hired spot in Church Relations. He was very excited to graduate and leave Gustavus, perhaps join a different synagogue with different people, who are closer to his age and interests. He also mentioned that finding a Jewish girl is a factor, that it is hard to be in a serious relationship with someone of a different faith, and that Professor Andy Vaughn is "pretty cool," in regard to Judaism and teaching Hebrew.

Student C:

His first semester here at Gustavus was very difficult, both in general and as a Muslim, especially being away from family and mother most importantly. Initially his roommate seemed to be an easy-going individual, but as the year went on problems began to surface. During Freshman Orientation another student in their dorm made a comment about terrorists, and his roommate just laughed along. He believed that, though the roommate never said

anything, his praying five times a day bothered him, as well as Student C's friends when they came over to the room. In fact, after a while it appeared to Student C they he was trying to compete with him religiously by putting up Christian-centered posters and reading his Bible whenever Student C seemed to read his Qu'ran. In general, saying his prayers are the most difficult part of his everyday worship, especially finding a place to pray. As he has moved to a campus-owned house, life is somewhat easier. He finds it very helpful that there are other Muslims and campus and that people here are on the whole very "cool" with his praying on campus, either in Raj's office, the P.A.S.O. (Pan-Afrikan Student Organization) office, rooms or hallways in the library. When people do see him in the library, or Raj's office, they occasionally ask what he is doing out of curiosity or ignorance, and he likes explaining his prayers. Sometimes he prays quickly, though he know the Qu'ran teaches one not to, so that people do not think he is a "crazy person." He misses his high school in "the Cities;" it provided a clean place for Muslim students to pray, cleaner food, and speakers on Fridays (akin to a preacher on Sundays). He was used to the food at home, and often misses it. Food was especially an issue during Ramadan, as it was not open before sunrise, and he did not want to disturb his roommate by fixing breakfast that early in the morning. He says that the hardest thing to deal with here is being able to "find a clean place to pray," somewhere where people do not walk where he can lay his prayer rug and say his prayers. He would like that to change, as well as some of the food practices in the Caf. He would appreciate it if, for example, workers in the Deli station would change their gloves after they touch the ham (as it is considered unclean), and change spatulas in the Pizzeria between cheese and meat pizzas. Also, he added that he would also like to have at least one day off for Eid, like his high school and MSU do.

Student D:

She said she has never had a bad experience as a Muslim at Gustavus, that the religion has never been a factor here. She feels "more special," that she is not like "everyone else." She feels she offers a different perspective, as she is often the only non-white student in her classes, and that others (students and professors) appreciate this. She feels the Diversity Center is a great help, especially with the series of Ramadan dinners. Breakfast here at Gustavus makes her mad, as the only meat products they cook at that time are pork products. I mentioned that they had *hallel* meat today, and she said, "That's weird" with a smile. She came here not expecting much, as Gustavus is a predominantly Scandinavian Lutheran college, and she is content with the way things are. She concluded that she had "never really thought about these things before."

Student E:

She is the only Wiccan on campus that she is aware of. She stated that many people are very accepting and "cool" with her beliefs. Usually people are unaware of her faith, but she has had one bad incident that did frighten her. Another student came up to her in the hallway of the Sohre dormitory, shoved his finger onto her necklace (at the base of her throat), and told her she was evil. She was aware that the student had been drinking, and does not blame him, though the experience left her a little rattled. Rather, she felt that he was ignorant and needed further education about others' beliefs and practices. She usually wears a necklace signifying her beliefs, although some have confused her a Satanist, as they wear the same design flipped upside down. She believed that this is what the other student may have thought she was. Sometimes she hides her necklace, turns it around so that others may not see the design and ask. However, she appreciates it when others ask her about it, and does not

mind explaining her beliefs to better educate people. She wants people to talk, to learn, to experience more, and see the diversity here. She finds it very helpful that many professors and fellow students are so accepting of her and her faith, but finds it hard to worship because of certain dorm policies. Most Wiccan rituals, she said approximately seventy percent, require lighting candles in a personal space, which are prohibited in dorms. She wished that the school could provide her with a place on campus, specifically her room, in which she could worship, as going off-campus is difficult and impersonal. She felt that the school needs to talk more about its differences, to heighten its awareness of the diversity of already has. It promises to be an open place, and yet she believed this is very contrary to the reality here. She has now begun wearing her necklace regardless of looks of questions she may receive, and will only talk about it when others ask. Besides the candle policy, she would like people to change their minds, or at least open them. She wants to educate others, perhaps have a professor or someone from the coven in Mankato come and give a small talk about Wicca, or even start a student organization. She believes that there are others on campus who share her beliefs, but are afraid to "come out of the broom closet."

Student F:

She states that she does not really have any experiences here on campus as a Buddhist, but that she was raised a "strong Buddhist," and has found many parallels here with Christianity. However, she does get "really excited" when she does meet another Buddhist here (which is not too often). It helps her faith in that her friends here are extremely supportive and open-minded, but that public prayers make her feel very "singled-out" when shoe does not expect them, as she is not a Christian and is often unsure as how to act. It also

helps knowing that there is another professor here who is Buddhist. She recognizes that this is a Lutheran college, and therefore does not know any changes should would or could suggest.

Analysis

What is the state of minority religions here on the Gustavus campus? What conclusions can be drawn from these students' stories? I believe that as evidenced from these students' experiences, one can see that Gustavus is attempting to live up to its mission statement. First this is achieved by the presence of these students here. By building programs that bring students of similar faiths together, this then provides a support community for them to feel welcome. Most recently, in the past two academic years (2002-3, 2003-4) events are beginning to take root to educate the community about the religious diversity here at Gustavus. In this third stage of evolution, the early inklings of pluralism are able to occur. More interfaith dialogue can happen as students of religious minorities feel comfortable on campus, and therefore feel free to express themselves.

Therefore, is this an expression of pluralism here on campus? My hypothesis was that there exists a sort of "psuedo-pluralism" on campus; those of minority faiths are invited to share their only better-known and more widely accepted holidays with the community on campus for educational purposes. These events are trotted out to showcase Gustavus' "diversity," and sometimes seems as though they exist only to fill cultural event quotas and class requirements. Through this study, I believe my initial idea is only slightly correct. Gustavus seems to be at the beginning stages of pluralism. The intention of the institution is not to cheapen or disrespect any other religion, but that this occurs inadvertently because of a lack of education. Pluralism occurs when different religions recognize the divine in each other

Though it is unabashedly a Swedish Lutheran institution, is Gustavus providing a community for its students' education? As the statistics show from the section "America Versus Gustavus," the school mostly reflects the religious make-up of the nation in terms of non-Christian religions, though it has more reported Christians, 89.0%, than the rest of America, 76.5%. Also, in terms of faith and learning, and in light of Jodock and Johnson's comments, is the school living up to its heritage? I agree with Chaplain Johnson here, and believe that that the school is not doing enough to best stay true to its Swedish Lutheran heritage. Though the Ramadan, Diwali, and Pow Wow celebrations are indications toward a direction of pluralism and interfaith dialogue, they are still not part of the larger campus consciousness. These events do not appear to be a large factor in campus life, though promoting a diverse community is part of Gustavus' mission. Generally, events such as these have low attendance, and therefore do not educate the larger campus community.

Though there does exist a general sense of tolerance or "Minnesota nice" at Gustavus, I believe that pluralism requires a larger leap than simple nods at numerical diversity. The above stated events are a start. The students suggestions, including places to pray, kosher food, and further educational events, are perhaps necessary to edify Gustavus students and thus send them out into the world with a more pluralistic understanding. America seems destined to be a pluralistic nation, built on ideals of religious freedom and equality. Hence, it is in Gustavus' best interests to promote pluralism and interfaith dialogue, as an institution intent on education in a diverse community with an open-minded Swedish Lutheran heritage.

Conclusion

As I began my study on non-Christian religions here at Gustavus, I developed a hypothesis based on my own initial observations over the past three, nearly four, years. Gustavus has a "pseudo-pluralism" model, in that the school encourages others to share and practice their different religious beliefs as long as these events fit within the framework of the college. After studying the school's mission statement, remarks from Professor Jodock, and analyzing the attitude and intentions of the Chaplains' Office, a tension emerged concerning Gustavus identity. Gustavus Adolphus College seems to be pulled toward both preserving its Swedish Lutheran heritage and cultivating a diverse community to foster education. This tension seems to be directed toward positive, constructive ways, especially for those in the religious minority. As suggested by both Jodock and Johnson, Gustavus ought to promote interfaith dialogue; to both make non-Christian students comfortable on campus and further educate the campus community on the whole.

In order to see the ways a church-related institution of higher learning could possibly react to religious diversity, I consulted many theological perspectives on religious diversity. In the course of this work, three main potential responses emerged along a spectrum as stances Christians could take in regard to non-Christians. Exclusivism states that Christianity is the one true path to God, and that salvation can only come within Christian terms. Next on the continuum lies inclusivism, stating that each religion has a small aspect of the divine, but that eventually Christianity will supercede them all. Lastly lies pluralism, which affirms that each religion is a valid path to the divine or enlightenment, and salvation occurs when each

tradition works together to ameliorate the world. Many scholars believe that this last model, pluralism, is the best mode of functioning for a multi-religion nation such as America.

American religious pluralism functions in many cities, with the rise of both local and national interfaith dialogue organizations. Most recently, these kinds of groups have also begun to infiltrate suburbs and more rural areas, bring different religions together to discuss both problems the religions may have with each other, as well as social or civic problems in their communities. Can Gustavus be seen as a microcosm of America, and practice pluralism in order to best accommodate its non-Christian students and better educate its Lutheran ones?

Gustavus is very similar demographically to America, though it does have more Caucasian, Asian, and Christian students. Therefore, as the school does not represent the world Gustavus students will enter, pluralism is necessary to educate them about different beliefs. Our civic and social ideas are informed by our religious beliefs, and it would behoove students to understand these ideas before they enter the world. As evidenced from the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership document, the incoming students Gustavus will receive in the next decade will also be quite different from the ones currently enrolled. Consequently, it would also benefit the school to understand how best to accommodate students of non-Christian backgrounds before they arrive, if they choose to study here.

The current students stories vary according to their own unique experiences and expectations, whether as a Jew, Muslim, Wiccan, or Buddhist. On the whole, they appreciate that there are parts of the Gustavus system that are working to promote their interests. For example, JOG was very highly praised for bringing Jewish students and faculty together, as well as the support for Muslim students found in the Diversity Center for holy days and daily prayer. However, the everyday practice of their faith seemed not to be as much as a concern

as was educating the larger campus. Many cited that more events were needed in order to dispel misconceptions held by many Gustavus Christian students.

Gustavus does seem to be striving for a diverse community, as stated in its mission statement, though the demographics display a homogenous student body that speaks of its Swedish Lutheran heritage. Therefore, as evidenced by the school's identity as an ecumenical Swedish Lutheran school striving for a diverse community, I believe that pluralism is a valid and necessary mode for Gustavus to interact with those in the religious minority. Currently, this sort of "lip service" to diversity may appear to be a form of inclusivism. However, I believe that pluralism will better educate the school for the impending different student body, as well as the current students before they enter the wider American or international community.

What might this pluralism entail, and where is the school to go from here? The student interviews suggest a few changes, such as food preparation, a place to pray, class exemptions for certain holy days, or education events. However, my study did not address the school's likely responses to these suggestions. Also important to consider are counter-arguments mentioned by different faculty and staff. Some current students, faculty, and influential alumni feel that Gustavus is already doing enough to accommodate those who are not Christian. They believe that the school should focus more on its Swedish Lutheran heritage, which a pluralistic attitude at Gustavus might "water down" that tradition, into relativism. Besides administrators' reaction, what might be student responses in regard to Gustavus accommodating students of non-Christian religions?

I believe that my study is a start for the school to better follow its mission statement and stay true to its ecumenical Swedish Lutheran heritage. Diversity, whether it be ethnic,

religious, socio-economic, or of another kind, is undeniably one of the pressing topics on campus. I hope that my data can be used to foster greater understanding between administrators and students, in order to better educate Gustavus students about their world outside the "bubble."

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