



## Extracts of Teachers' Notes from Film Four

### *Dare to Know*

Influenced by Kant's phenomenal/noumenal distinction, Hick believed that religious people of whatever faith experience the Real through their own culturally-shaped lenses. Reinforced by visits to India, Hick began to speak of religion in terms of "*one light, but many lamps*", a view expressed in a book he edited, with the provocative title *The Myth of God Incarnate*. In 1993 Hick published *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (1993), concluding that "*a non-traditional Christianity can see itself as one among a number of different human responses to the ultimate transcendent Reality we call God*". This position saw him become at once a world authority on interfaith relations and beyond the pale for evangelical Christians.

Hick argued that a literal understanding of Jesus as the Son of God forced Christianity to be over-dogmatic. In contrast, by understanding language about Christ as the language of myth and metaphor, we can say that the Logos of God was working in the person of Jesus just as it worked "*in various ways within the Indian, the Semitic, the Chinese, the African.... forms of life*".

As Hick's views developed, so too did his theological understanding and he went on to develop interpretations of doctrine such as incarnation, atonement and trinity not as metaphysical truths but as metaphorical ones; arguing that such an understanding increases, not diminishes, the importance of Jesus in today's world. The world has need of God, whatever religious tradition we use to talk of Him.

### Recapitulation Theory

***'He became what we are so that we might become what He is'***  
**(Irenaeus)**

Irenaeus' had a much more mystical understanding of the Incarnation than many of the Church Fathers and his recapitulation theory teaches of man's close relationship with God. As the head of humanity, Jesus both heals and leads us in the struggle against evil. Famine, war, disease and death are symptoms of that evil – but God experienced it on our behalf. And won. Aligned to this is the ancient understanding of *theosis* certainly present in the early church as the quest for mystical



union with God. When the Desert Fathers retreated to their caves this is what they sought. It is within Eastern traditions that we generally find people seeking the divine within themselves, but actually the West has exactly the same perception, expressed by mystics throughout the ages.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Maybe we think of the people around Jesus as being different to ourselves. They lived 2000 years ago after all. As a quick look at our underlying assumptions, answer the following as 'knee jerk reactions'. Don't think about what you are answering – just answer it. True or False (in your opinion).
  - a) 2000 years ago people were more 'primitive' than they are now
  - b) They didn't understand the physical causes of many illnesses
  - c) They saw glory as being the same as strength
  - d) They were more frightened by things such as thunderstorms
  - e) They believed in God without question
  - f) They expected the end of the world
  - g) They didn't have fire or the wheel or bread
  - h) They didn't live in houses with glass windows
  - i) Everyone believed in resurrection of the dead
  - j) Many people did miracles
  - k) Many people had disciples
  
2. Now look at those same statements and decide which are actually *unknowable*. Either the question is phrased in such a way as it cannot be properly answered, or you don't have sufficient information to answer it. Or maybe it's just irrelevant – yes the people were different but they were not so different as to make them unrecognisable or untrustworthy.