

THEME TWO

CHRISTIAN MISSION AMONG OTHER FAITHS

Preface

This chapter was prepared by a core group led by co-conveners Lalsangkima Pachuau, Asbury Seminary, USA (Presbyterian, India) and Niki Papageorgiou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Orthodox, Greece). Other members of the group were Eunice Irwin, Asbury Seminary (Christian and Missionary Alliance, USA), John Azumah, London School of Theology (Presbyterian, Ghana), Michael Biehl, Missionsakademie, University of Hamburg (Lutheran, Germany) and Knud Jørgensen, Areopagos, Denmark (Lutheran, Denmark/Norway), who acted as secretary to the group. Gwen Bryde (Lutheran, Germany) was associated with the core group as youth representative and took part in its second meeting. Michael Jagessar, United Reformed Church (Guyana/UK) also gave input, first as a member of the core group and then in preparing an extensive bibliography on the study theme. The group met twice (in Hamburg); the first time in January 2009 to gather ideas and gain an overview of the topic, and the second time in August to review and edit the sections of the report.¹

At an early stage it was decided to collect position papers and case studies from a variety of persons with various backgrounds and experiences. The position papers include reflections on the theme from the following perspectives: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Ecumenical, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Adventist. Among the case studies are articles on Christian mission among Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, new religious movements and folk religionists. This material has been used as resource material and background for the report of the core group, and also to compensate in some manner for the lack of a broader consultation. The group intends to have all these papers published as a book on theologies of religion. All position papers are placed on the Edinburgh 2010 website.

1 Christian Mission among Other Faiths: A Centennial Historical Background

‘How should we relate with and witness to people of other faiths?’ This appears to be the most crucial missiological question facing Christians at the end of the twentieth century. While some go to the extent of consultative relations with the adherents of other faiths (under such rubrics as ‘wider ecumenism’), others look for peaceful manners of communicating the meaning of Christian faith with the intention of persuading (or converting) them to the faith. We shall identify a few crucial milestone-themes in the development of Christian

missiological thought on this topic between Edinburgh 1910 and Edinburgh 2010.

1.1 Edinburgh 1910 and fulfilment theory

Among the eight topics of the commissions in 1910, two of them – Commission I and Commission IV – had ‘non-Christian’ in the titles. While Commission I does not really deal with ‘non-Christian’ as such, Commission IV relates the missionary message to non-Christian religions. A questionnaire containing eleven questions was distributed to missionaries working among non-Christians around the world, and 187 responses were received.² Among the eight commissions, the responses to the questionnaire generated by Commission IV were considered to be the best and the commission attracted the ‘disproportionate attention’ of scholars in the succeeding decades. The Continuation Committee of Edinburgh 1910 seriously considered publishing the responses, but abandoned the attempt with ‘reluctance’, says Brian Stanley.³ As the commission’s report says, the focus was not on non-Christian religions per se, but on studying ‘the problems involved in the presentation of Christianity to the minds of the non-Christian peoples.’⁴ Though veiled by the reigning Western optimism and victorious spirit, it was one of the early serious empirical works on other faiths. The dominant theology of religions in Commission IV is ‘fulfilment theology,’ and the missionary task was concluded to be a humble enquiry and identification of “‘points of contact’ in non-Christian religions’, using them ‘to draw adherents of other faiths toward the full revelation of truth found in the Christ’⁵ The fulfilment idea is seen to be apostolic (or biblical) as the report explains:

We can see how the whole Apostolic view grew out of the twofold endeavour of those first missionaries of the Church to meet what was deep and true in the other religions, and to guard against the perils which arose from the spell which these earlier religions still cast upon the minds of those who had been delivered from them into the larger life of the Gospel.⁶

Since the theology of fulfilment caters more to the so-called ‘high religions’, other religious traditions, generally categorized as ‘animistic’, did not fit the theory so much. But the relatively small survey materials on primal (or ‘animistic’) religious traditions (27 responses, of which 16 were missionaries in Africa⁷) provided helpful material for later scholarship in the field.⁸

1.2 Continuity or discontinuity

The fulfilment theology at Edinburgh 1910 continued to be the dominant approach for much of the first half of the twentieth century. It was largely on the broad basis of the fulfilment idea that the emerging challenge of secularism was responded to in the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928, and in the influential ‘Laymen’s Inquiry’ published in 1932 as

Rethinking Missions. The latter proposed a radical departure for missionary motive and stirred much debate. It criticised the missionary denouncement of other religions, invited the missionaries to be co-workers with people of other faiths, and advocated that ‘the primary duty’ of a missionary should be presentation ‘in a positive form his [*sic*] conception of the true way of life and let it speak for itself.’⁹ It was this radical redefinition of the missionary’s work in relation to other (‘non-Christian’) religions that set the next major theme in motion – that of continuity or discontinuity – at the Tambaram (Madras, India) meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1938.

A Dutch missiologist and a former missionary to Indonesia, Hendrik Kraemer, wrote a preparatory text for the meeting, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. Written in seven weeks,¹⁰ this 450-page book was not easy to understand. While the thesis of the book may simply be stated as ‘discontinuity’ and not ‘continuity’, the manner by which Kraemer came to the point is complex and easily misunderstood. Against many false allegations later on, Kraemer showed a deep respect for all non-Christian religions saying, ‘the non-Christian religions are not merely sets of speculative ideas about the eternal destiny of man,’ but are ‘inclusive systems and theories of life’;¹¹ and the Christian attitude to them ‘has to be essentially [a] positive attitude.’¹² However, Kraemer made a great departure from the Edinburgh 1910 search for ‘points of contact’. He said that such a search for ‘points of contact’ is ‘a misguided pursuit’,¹³ and he argued that God’s revelation in Jesus Christ was ‘absolutely *sui generis*’ and could not be related to other religions. As Wesley Ariarajah rightly states, ‘The revelation of Christ, in his [Kraemer’s] view, directly contradicted all human religious life and wisdom’,¹⁴ and thus there cannot be continuity from non-Christian religions to Christianity. O.V. Jathanna summarises Kraemer’s view in the words, ‘the Christian faith is radically different from all other religions in that it is radically theocentric, even as a soteriological religion’.¹⁵

Kraemer’s book, his presentation in the conference, and the follow-up writings, stirred long debate. So polarized was the discussion that while James Scherer of the United States calls Kraemer’s book ‘the most famous book about mission theology of all time’,¹⁶ for C.F. Andrews, a missionary in India, it was to be dropped “unceremoniously” into the waste paper basket.¹⁷ The conference affirmed Kraemer’s main point while opposing his idea of radical discontinuity. It says,

...we believe that in Him [Christ] alone is the full salvation which man [*sic*] needs.... We do not think that God has left Himself without witness in the world at any time. Men [*sic*] have been seeking Him all through the ages. Often this seeking and longing has been misunderstood. But we see glimpses of God’s light in the world of religions, showing that His yearning after His erring children has not been without response.

In the succeeding discussions, it became clear that even those who follow Kraemer's discontinuity position do not necessarily agree with its radical nature. Lesslie Newbigin, for instance, while agreeing with Kraemer's discontinuity theory in general, does not agree that there is total discontinuity.¹⁸

1.3 Dialogue in the pluralistic context

By 1988, when the World Council of Churches (WCC) organised the fiftieth anniversary of the International Missionary Council's conference in Tambaram, it was clear that the ecumenical church had moved on from Kraemer. The main theme had become dialogue in the pluralistic context. Proponents of dialogue in Protestant ecumenical circles introduced their case by opposing Kraemer's position. In WCC circles, no one did more than Stanley J. Samartha to introduce the concept of inter-religious dialogue as he transformed his position as Study Secretary of the Word of God and Living Faiths of Men into the Director of the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies between 1968 and 1971.¹⁹

In this movement toward a dialogical approach, the WCC followed Vatican II developments in the Roman Catholic Church. The Vatican Council posited an affirmative posture not only toward non-Catholics, but also to non-Christian religions. In its document *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II states that the Catholic Church is not opposed to anything 'true and holy' in other religions. This was seen by many as a major departure from its traditional position. Theologies of religions such as Karl Rahner's 'anonymous Christian' theory and Raymond Pannikar's 'unknown Christ of Hinduism' followed up Vatican II in paving the way for a new and positive attitude to other religions. Asian Christian leaders and thinkers in religiously pluralistic neighbourhoods took the lead in this venture.

Interfaith dialogue, as it was introduced from the early 1970s, was a controversial subject matter, or it was treated so. Proponents such as Stanley Samartha insisted that any motive to convert the dialogue partner of another religion is unacceptable. The dialogue partner is to be treated with respect and should be received with openness. Any claim for superiority by Christians is considered an impediment for the practice of dialogue. Interpreted this way, many feared dialogue was a way of compromising their Christian faith, and thought that it rendered Christian mission meaningless. Along with dialogue came a controversial relativistic theology called 'pluralistic theology', which affirmed the salvific validity of different religions. Some pluralists were of the opinion that interfaith dialogue can happen only through pluralistic theology, thus confusing dialogue with pluralistic theology. Mission, for pluralistic theologians, has to be confined to what is morally just, dialogically possible and resulting in the common liberation of humanity, all of which aspects can be shared with people of other faiths.²⁰ Samartha, for instance, defines mission as 'God's continuing activity through the Spirit to mend the brokenness of creation, to overcome fragmentation of humanity, and to heal the rift between

humanity, nature and God'.²¹ In a gathering in 1986, pluralist theologians described themselves as those who 'move away from insistence of the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways'. They described this as 'the crossing of a theological Rubicon'.²²

Closely tied to the question of plurality and dialogue is the validity of religious conversion as a change of religion from one to another (inter-religious conversion). While most pluralistic theologians either minimize or question the validity of inter-religious conversion, conversion remains one of the most important self-defining topics for Evangelicals. It was on this issue that dialogue and evangelism or dialogue and mission were often set in tension. The tension has now been largely resolved in most Christian circles. As the ecumenical effort to forge 'a code of conduct on conversion' affirmed in 2006, 'while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities'.²³

Dialogue was confused with pluralistic theology, and continued to be treated by some with suspicion for quite some time. Other Christians came to interpret interfaith dialogue differently. As early as in the mid 1970s, Evangelical leader and thinker John R.W. Stott discussed 'dialogue' favourably as a mode of Christian mission. Drawing from the examples of the famous missionary to India E. Stanley Jones, who practised 'roundtable' conference as 'dialogue with Hindus', and Bishop Kenneth Cragg's work 'dialogue with Moslems', as well as Bishop David Sheppard's work on 'dialogue in industrial Britain', Stott advocated a true Christian dialogue as a way of doing Christian mission.²⁴ In the decades following Stott's work, other Evangelical Christians have spelled out an Evangelical theology of religions. While some have discussed the issue mainly in the new pluralistic context of the West, others such as Timothy Tennent have dealt with the issue in connection with the non-Christian religious faiths.²⁵ The recent works of Pentecostal theologians such as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen²⁶ and Amos Yong²⁷ have clearly signalled that theology of religions, with dialogue and witness in the pluralistic world as the core subject-matter, has come of age. In the Catholic Church, post-conciliar documents such *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991) seek to both correct what are perceived to be theological errors in interreligious issues and to connect the plural context with the church's faith.²⁸ Since the joining in 1961 of a large number of Orthodox Churches in the WCC, the Orthodox tradition has also contributed significantly in reshaping Christian missiological thought. Its pneumatological perspective of communion of the entire creation with God and theological-anthropological understanding of *theosis* or deification makes the Orthodox missiology a true invitation to the life of the triune God.²⁹

The plurality of religions has now been accepted as the fact of life. Christian mission cannot be conceived without acknowledging the plurality of religions and the demand for a dialogical mode of existence and way of witnessing.

Christians must treat people of any faith and no faith with genuine respect in their act of witnessing to the gospel.

2 From Geography to Scenarios

The developments described above occurred in a world which has dramatically changed during these last hundred years. Without using the term, the participants of the Edinburgh conference had envisioned a globalization of Christian faith, but, even more so, of Christendom. Their understanding of 'ecumenical' (*oikumene* – the whole inhabited world) referred to the sphere of Christian domination. The success of Christian mission would be the conquest of the 'non-Christians' in the form of an expansion of the territory of the Christian nations into the whole globe and thus the fulfilment theory for some implied the vision that eventually all other religions should vanish.

During the decades after the Edinburgh conference a multiplication occurred of churches, denominations, movements and confessions, such as Evangelical, charismatic, Pentecostal. In the same period the nascent Ecumenical movement became acutely aware that beyond the Protestant mission movement there were other and often much older churches living and witnessing to Christ in various cultures. Today we realise that among the various dialects of the Christian faiths, there are different understandings and hence different ways of analysing the missionary and religious situation in the world. Some Christians see regions or other religious groups under the shadow of sin or evaluate human activities in the light of the last judgment. Others emphasise the realm of spirits or powers and principalities fighting with or against God. Again others analyze the globe in social, political, economic terms and relate their faith response to what they conceive to be the challenges of the local situations and global tendencies. These are debates among Christians with differing world views which in some cases conflict with each other. For instance, while some Christians fight for liberation,³⁰ others call for evangelism of individuals. The debates, however, unlike at Edinburgh 1910, today cut across geographical boundaries and occur at the same time in various places and contexts. There they carry with them a former history of relating, as in the case of Christian and Muslim faiths as opposing forces; this lingers in the background of actual relations of Christians and Muslims.³¹ The debate on how to perceive the world and how to account for the presence of other faiths was opened towards the close of the twentieth century among Christians. It raises questions as to how we should understand Christian mission among other faiths: as a mission to non-Christians, as a mission among other faiths, or witnessing to Christ in the context of contemporary challenges in the mutually edifying fellowship of 'neighbours of living faiths and ideologies'.³²

These different Christian attitudes coexist along with those of adherents of other faiths and along with new religious movements which have sprung up after the Edinburgh meeting in 1910 and still continue to come into being.

Although estimates of numbers vary, there is general agreement that the Christian faith globally has the largest number of adherents, followed by the Muslim faith and Hinduism. The next group in size is that of ‘non-religious people’, by which David Barrett and his team understand persons without formal or organised religious relations, including agnostics, freethinkers, humanists and secularists. Two points however are noteworthy with regard to the numbers relating to Christianity. Firstly, in spite of all the many forms of mission the percentage of Christians in the world population did not significantly change during the last hundred years. Secondly, Christianity – in almost all its forms – has been grown significantly in the global South and this growth has taken place primarily in the postcolonial period.³³

From a sociological point of view the truly global religions are Christianity and Islam. They cross ethnic and national frontiers and are inculturated in various cultures and peoples. Other world religions like Hinduism and Buddhism are strong and dominant in their regions of origin and among migrating Hindus and Buddhists living in diaspora communities.³⁴ Buddhism as a missionary religion, and in various forms, has attracted some Westerners, and new religious movements growing out of Hindu traditions have found new adherents.³⁵ An awareness that the history of religions has not yet come to an end is one aspect of our theme ‘Christian mission among other faiths’.

The contexts in which these attitudes towards and conceptions of the others occur is often described with the term *globalization*, which is a complex concept. For the sake of our discussion we focus on globalization as a specific constellation of global relations and strategies affecting or even dominating local circumstances. Goods and international funds move freely around the globe but their trading is concentrated in only a few places in the world³⁶ and the consequences affect other places in diverse ways. (Bio-)technologies and also military technologies, which have become so threatening in the last decade, are produced in certain countries but put to use or even imposed on the other side of the globe where they are used to create economic or technological domination. Migration is a world-wide phenomenon; migrants move to selected places where only a few (and well educated) are welcomed, whereas the mass of the migrants who have left their homes because of economic threat are searching for a better life which the receiving societies are unwilling or unable to provide.³⁷ Information technology is globally present but causes a digital divide excluding those who ‘have not’ more effectively than frontiers. These examples demonstrate that globalization is a power constellation and generates new hierarchies and dependencies or oppression³⁸ and marginalization, and in some cases offers new opportunities and liberating interrelations.

To sum up, human life in the globalized world is not de-territorialised. Conflicts and violence, military action, famine and floods, affluence and poverty are concentrated in particular places on the globe with a shocking regularity over time. Seen critically in a non-Western perspective, globalization still knows a geography and therefore centres of powers³⁹. Most of these are

still localised in the global North; the present power centres are, however, no longer so clearly co-extensive with one geographical region since new power centres have come into being in the global South and East. Nor are they any longer co-extensive with the former power centres of Christianity because new power centres have emerged outside the North.

2.1 Scenarios

It is especially at the cross-sections of global and local powers that the questions of identity have become burning issues for national states, ethnicities, cultures, and also for religions. Against this background we shall look at ‘Christian mission among other faiths’, not by comparing, contrasting, or relating the Christian religion to other religions as was done in the report of Commission IV at Edinburgh 1910. Individuals or groups need to formulate their answers to these challenges. The challenges interact with and influence each other, compete and in many cases clash. To understand ‘Christian mission among other faiths’ means to perceive Christians as believing human beings among other believing and non-believing human beings, sharing, facing, or opposing each other in specific situations in which they live their faith and draw on their respective traditions. This aspect is captured by what the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue termed ‘dialogue of life’,⁴⁰ meaning that Christians and churches exist among other believers, among those who oppose religion altogether or feel they have moved beyond it. Christian mission witnesses to the incarnated Christ, and the faith thus finds expression, or is inculturated, in a ‘diapraxis’ (see below). To become a Christian should not mean to change one’s culture and thus to alienate oneself from those among whom one is living.

The dynamics of the meetings of the world religions are not only defined by their faiths, theologies, world views, and spiritualities. Local and/or global factors play an important role: Which faith group constitutes a majority or the marginalized? Are the practitioners allowed to act openly in their societies and is mission permitted? Transgressing the geographical and Protestant vision of Edinburgh, we today include the insights and approaches of churches and traditions which were not present in 1910, including some of the oldest churches in the world and some of the numerically strongest strands of Christianity (Orthodoxy, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal). Their approaches in mission, and more specifically to mission among other faiths, come into view.⁴¹ Mission is the task of the local churches, but what some call ‘reverse cross-cultural mission’ is going on at a large scale today. The missionaries of today may come from South Korea and work in Afghanistan or China or come from Ghana and work in Germany or Finland. Even where mission is not conceived in an ecumenical manner those who are in mission cannot overlook others being in mission.

Against this background a number of scenarios come to mind which characterize challenges of the present and the near future for ‘Christian mission

among other faiths' because they call for specific forms of missionary engagement in the contact with members of various faith communities. The way they relate to each other in multi-ethnic or plural situations may reach from opposition, which may eventually lead to violence or oppression of the others, to a dialogue of communities and individuals, or to a relativism in the guise of pluralism which dissolves any faith into a mere personal persuasion. Thus believers of various faith communities are forced to recognise to what extent their own religious perception of the situation and the motivations for their actions or their power aspirations contribute to the local constellation. This means that a dialogue of life is incomplete without a dialogue of faiths. Christian mission among other faiths has to be specific to the context Christians share with believers of other faiths.

2.1.1. Pluralism, multi-ethnicity, multi-cultural societies

Globalization has brought nations and cultures into closer contact, and Christian mission faces pluralism in various forms. Migration is one of the main reasons for the co-existence of different religions and faith groups within one region. The challenge to all faith communities today is to shift from tolerating a factual pluralism to a concept of religious pluralism which transcends earlier concepts like the fulfilment theory or the criteria of difference or continuity. In some regions of Africa and Asia, religious, ethnic, and cultural pluralism has always been a characteristic of society and has fostered concepts of more fluid or multiple identities. Some of the postcolonial societies, however, struggle in this respect. Whereas on a grassroots level believers of different faiths often live peacefully together, the situation changes when in such contexts a religious group identity becomes a political factor, as in some parts of Indonesia where Christians and Muslims clash, or as in India where groups have politicised Hinduism with the result that Christians and Muslims are accused by them of being non-Indians.

Led by politicized or even ethnicized religion, a lack of freedom of religion characterizes many parts of the world today. In some countries Christian believers and their congregations are forced to keep quiet, and any form of mission is judged to be illegal.⁴² The main challenge for the Christians in such a situation is probably how to stay faithful and live their faith among other faiths when they are not allowed to become publicly visible, or to receive new believers, and are constantly under suspicion for being 'unsafe' citizens. Pressure leads Christians to leave regions like Iraq, where churches and Christian communities are vanishing. We also note that other faith communities may perceive their existence in predominantly Christian cultures and nominally pluralist cultures along similar lines. Christian mission in such contexts has often been accused of being a colonial force. It is imperative to promote an understanding of mission as witnessing to Christ, meaning that Christians live together with those of other faiths. The fruitfulness of theologies of religion for such contexts will have to be proved by whether they help Christians to

interpret the plurality of religion in relation to pluralism in social and political life.⁴³

2.1.2. Urbanization

One scenario of growing importance is urbanization. Currently more than fifty percent of the world population and approximately fifty-eight percent of the world's Christians live in urbanized areas. We recognise an urban scenario in the metropolises of what used to be the first world, but the fastest growing cities are in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is estimated that in 2050 between 75-80 percent of the world's population will live in urban centres or regions, which also will comprise the majority of the Christians of the world. The hope for (better) economic opportunities will often, for the migrants, result in the loss of supportive community structures, a break-down of relations and of the extended family system, and possibly a weakening of values. Global religions, ideologies, new forms of living one's faith, new religious movements and cults emerge or re-arrange the balances in the communities or influence worship and bring new challenges of syncretism. A loss of identity and search for survival in the new context are also spiritual challenges which force people to reformulate their faith and identity. On the other hand, urban regions offer the possibility to integrate into new networks along old lines of adherence or to radically reformulate one's faith.

Urbanization is one aspect of migration, taking place both within countries and regions as well as being a global phenomenon. Approximately 175 million people, or three percent of the world's population are estimated to be on the move worldwide. Compared to 1910, when migration was mainly of European peoples to their colonies, migration from the North has declined. The countries of origin of people on the move today lie mostly in Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe, and the receiving countries are mostly in the global North,⁴⁴ although the countries hosting the highest percentage of migrants are oil-producing countries (Arab Emirates, Kuwait), and Asia hosts the largest refugee population.⁴⁵ Migration can be a transitory state in life or a definite change. Although reasons to migrate often are hunger, war, natural catastrophes, and lack of economic opportunities, the vast majority of people affected by these threats stay in the regions struck.⁴⁶ Migration is part of globalization but most countries have highly restrictive legislation which places migrants in the receiving countries in a situation of being tolerated but most often considered illegal. Migrants may find in their faith a resource for survival which will strengthen the cultural-linguistic expression of their faith as their identity. Faith, origin, and the search for a future, for identity and dignity blend together, and therefore this scenario is important for our theme.

2.1.3. Marginalized aboriginal and indigenous peoples

At the opposite end of a global map of such scenarios are the aboriginal and indigenous peoples. An estimated 300 million belong to this group and are

concentrated in seventy countries on all continents. Despite their unique cultures they share a specific blend of ethnic, cultural, economic, political, and religious identities which distinguish them from the surrounding dominant societies and the national states of which they are considered citizens. Many aboriginal cultures retain stories of being assigned geographical locations on the earth. They respectfully embraced many of the customary laws they inherited from their ancestors who, they believe, received these directly from the Creator. These remain binding upon all descendents as a covenant sign of the group's response to the gifts of the Creator. They mark their right relationship to the cosmic and to one another, and define how they relate to their environment and people beyond the confines of their community. Through these the people live with structure, order and certainty. In the history of mission we see how entire peoples became Christian, and then struggled with how to reconcile their identity with the new faith, and also with how to relate their community sense and constitutive exclusion lines to an understanding of being part of a universal church. Most of the Christians in the global South today originally came from these primal religious and cultural traditions.

The life and environment of aboriginal peoples are endangered today. The traditional religion, or a revitalised version, cannot always help to ensure survival. For instance, where religion is linked to land and the land is taken away in the name of modernization or the development of the nation-state, these groups do not only become homeless or displaced, but also become rootless peoples without a future. The globalized world does not easily tolerate enclaves, and in many cases the dominant societies are not willing to recognise the rights of these communities.⁴⁷ Christian mission among aboriginal peoples must ask how Christians and Christian churches will be engaged in fighting for their rights. And how they should relate to them in witnessing to Christ. Are they willing to recognise how aboriginal or indigenous peoples which have become Christian may enrich Christian faith by their ways of inculturation?⁴⁸

2.1.4. Information technology, cyberspace and virtual realities

The advanced electronic communication systems are offering new channels for communication transgressing the medium of written text by including records of spoken word, sound and image. They even offer new forms of co-presence and interaction and thus formulate new challenges and opportunities for mission. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, groups or individuals adhering to different religions have globally and locally been using the internet for propagating their beliefs.⁴⁹ Virtual space and communication via the worldwide web can create interactive transnational communities of reference which ensure a presence also where the religion in question is not found. Classic traditions and their institutions, organisations, groups, individuals, and cults populate cyberspace in order to influence individuals. Through the internet, traditions or beliefs reach far beyond the actual region of their presence, and can therefore create a kind of globalized consciousness for their

adherents. Such global interaction can affect their perception of the actual situation and influence the actions they take locally. Where access to the internet is available on a broad basis a multitude of presentations of faith and religion coexist separated from the physical church or group in which they are based, which makes it difficult to ‘discern the spirits’. Also websites for interreligious dialogue and mutual cooperation have sprung up. This scenario is very influential, especially among youth in the West and in the technologically advanced sectors of Asia.

2.2 Conclusions

The scenarios presented are not the only ones which could be described. But through them we see clearly the global spread of Christian faith, and they help to identify present and future challenges to the global Christian faith community. A hundred years after the Edinburgh conference these scenarios testify to the shift from distinguishing between a Christian and a non-Christian world to recognising a global world. Christians and people of other faiths face an enormous diversity of global and local expressions of Christian faith and ways of witnessing to Christ. In this context we propose to reflect on our theme more from the perspective of the other. A theology which recognises the dignity of human beings as created by the one God cannot deny such dignity and respect to others; it will therefore want to honour their faith. Not religions, but human beings meet and share, ignore or enrich one another, clash and fight. Phenomena like religiously tainted violence and fundamentalism are not best approached as if they were caused by religion or mission. They are better understood as attitudes of human beings engaging in conflicts in which they activate their religious convictions and power aspirations to understand their situation and to search for possibilities to act and to change it.

3 Perspectives and Hermeneutical Reflections

Because Christians believe that what God has done in Jesus Christ is good news for all, Christians are called to share the good news in the power of the Spirit. This is the *raison d’être* for mission. This mission takes the concrete form of witness (*martyria*). Mission is therefore to share one’s faith and conviction with other people, inviting them to discipleship, whether they adhere to other religious traditions or not. Such sharing is to take place with confidence and humility.⁵⁰ Our faith is about discovering grace in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Vulnerability is therefore how we encounter the others, without forgetting the faith we are stewards of.

3.1 Dialogue, witness and mission

Mission is what the church is sent to *be* – *koinonia*, community, presence, nearness, worship. Mission is what the church is sent to *do* – *diakonia*, care, service. Mission is what the church is sent to *say* – *kerygma*, proclamation of

the gospel, dialogue, apologetics. The overriding concept is that *mission is witness to others about the gospel*. *Martyria* is the sum of *kerygma*, *koinonia* and *diaconia* – all of which constitute dimensions of witnessing: ‘We are using a missiological hermeneutic when we read the New Testament as the testimony (witness) of witnesses, equipping other witnesses for the common mission of the church’.⁵¹

Dialogue is, in this perspective, part of what we are sent to *say* and thus a key expression of witness. Dialogue means witnessing to our deepest convictions, whilst listening to those of our neighbours in a two-way exchange. Without such commitment to others dialogue becomes mere chatter, in the same manner as it becomes worthless without the presence of the neighbour. This emphasis on ‘neighbour’ further means that we cannot dialogue with, or witness to, people if we from the outset resent their views. The scenarios presented above describe how all of us live in a multi-religious setting, in situations where coexistence with believers of other faiths is part and parcel of our daily life (even though the power relations among people may be very asymmetric). Christian theology must therefore be a theology of dialogue⁵². And it must be a theology of inculturation and contextualization – in conversation with and listening to the local context and its culture and religion. Contextualization is not an alternative to mission, but a specific way of being in mission. In the same way dialogue is not an alternative to mission, but a specific way of being in mission.

Dialogue is only possible if we proceed from the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been relating to people within the context of their own culture and conviction. God is there before we come (Acts 17) and our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there. We therefore take off our shoes as we approach men and women of other living faiths. Dialogue is a way of taking seriously that all humans are created in God’s image. The other is always ‘you’ – someone that I listen to because there is something valuable to listen to from any human being created in the image of God. In the same manner I too share with others what is on my heart – what I have seen and heard and touched with my own hands (1 John 1:1-2).

Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann uses the term ‘othering’ to remind us of the importance of not seeing the religious other as a counter-object but rather ‘the risky, demanding, dynamic process of relating to one that is not us’.⁵³ In a similar manner some Orthodox theologians advocate making the ‘other’ a partner.⁵⁴ To evolve such a mindset, Kärkkäinen says, Christian churches and congregations should be encouraged and empowered to initiate patient training and education with regard to such issues as:

- Raising the awareness and importance of interfaith engagement, which means venturing outside one’s own safety zone and making oneself vulnerable.

- Helping deal with our fears of the other that often include not only the generic fear of the ‘stranger’ but also the tendency to ‘demonize’ others’ religion and beliefs
- Facilitating the study of another religion in order to gain a more accurate portrayal of another person’s beliefs and sensitivities, including the capacity to interpret the meaning of rites and rituals.⁵⁵

Another metaphor for ‘othering’ is that of ‘hospitality’, a concept that we know from Scripture as well as in various cultural contexts, and which is used in a WCC document from 2006. The metaphor is here used as the hermeneutical key to a Christian understanding of dialogue with others.⁵⁶

Just as *martyria* expresses itself in dialogue, it also encompasses *diakonia* and *koinonia*. Dialogue aims at joining hands. At a personal and relational level a dialogue relationship carries with it a concern for the welfare of my sister and brother in terms of being a neighbour. In the larger context – in the Christian fellowship with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others – dialogue has to do with reducing the images of hostility of one another, developing relationships across the barriers of faith, race, gender and cultural background, and stimulating common action for the sake of society. This is often called *diapraxis* (bringing together dialogue and praxis). There is a growing need for such diapraxis, especially in the form of community-oriented dialogue. It is important to meet neighbours, colleagues and groups in the community with an attitude of sharing and listening. In that way we can get to know each other better, create friendships and relationships across barriers of ethnic, cultural, social, political and religious differences. Joining with others of different background in community projects for peace, human rights, social activities, health improvement, political freedom and democracy is an important aspect of being in dialogue with others.

Dialogue is a *basic way of life* because Christians share life and contexts with neighbours of other faiths. This implies that they establish dialogical relations so that there is hope of mutual understanding and fruitful co-existence in multi-religious and pluralist societies. If it is a basic way of life, then the arena for dialogue cannot be limited to the media, the public sphere and scholarly discussions and debates. Rather dialogue has to do with family, working place and neighbourhood. A very high percentage of people in the West have never had a conversation about faith with people of another faith. Dialogue here is therefore a matter of creating meeting places and using opportunities.

Dialogue is no a substitute for mission or a hidden form of mission. Mission and dialogue are not identical, neither are they so opposed to one another. One can be committed to dialogue and to Christian witness at the same time: ‘We affirm that witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it’.⁵⁷ The Christian faith cannot surrender the conviction that God, in sending Jesus Christ into our midst, has taken a definite course of action and is extending to us forgiveness,

justification, and a new life which, in turn, calls for our response in the form of conversion.⁵⁸

3.2 *Christian mission in a pluralist world*

The scenarios above have described aspects of the pluralist and multi-religious global setting. An essential point of entrance into a Christian view on how to relate to this global context is the WCC statement at San Antonio in 1989: ‘We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ. At the same time we cannot set limits to God’s saving power.... We appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it’.⁵⁹

Living in a plural context has for centuries been the daily experience of most of the world. Accepting to live in a pluralist world implies that mission will not attempt to ‘conquer’ the world in any religious or other sense. Pluralism is the context of Christian mission among other faiths. The claims of rationalism have, in Western culture, left people with a heritage that gives priority to the world of facts in the public realm while faith and values belong to the private sphere. In the private sphere Western culture has accepted pluralism. The Christian faith, together with other religions and religious worldviews, has been relegated to this sphere where pluralism reigns in a growing jungle of religiosity and individualised values. One consequence is that we have lost the concept of Christian faith as *a public truth*; that is, as a truth that relates to all of us and which has importance for society and community.⁶⁰ This development may be acceptable for religious views and for new spiritualities which view themselves as attaining to an esoteric *gnosis* in closed circles. For the Christian faith it is different: The Christian faith is a confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, not only my Lord or the Lord of the church, but the Lord of creation. This confession cannot be relegated to the sphere of the individual, and it cannot accept that there is more than this reality – the reality over which Christ is Lord.

Christians do not accept being relegated to the private sphere. However, where Christians express this conviction or act accordingly, they accept that in the public space their voice is one voice among others because they are committed to pluralism. The missionary theologian Lesslie Newbigin calls this *committed pluralism*, in contrast to *agnostic pluralism*.⁶¹ Agnostic pluralism has renounced any talk about knowledge and truth in relation to faith. Committed pluralism, on the other hand, takes other worldviews seriously and dares to raise questions about the other’s faith.

We enter the dialogue on the basis of our own belief or confession – and recognise that others will do the same. This stance implies that truth is to be found in a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ as he is known through a life lived in the community of disciples, in faithfulness to the tradition about him, and in openness to all truth which may be discovered in history. Our commitment is to a historic person and to historic deeds. Without these events, our faith would be empty. There need not be any dichotomy between ‘confessing Christ’ and

‘seeking the truth’. As we meet the other, we expect to hear and learn more of truth. Granted, we shall interpret these new truths by means of the truth we have already committed our life to. Our encounter with Christ through Scripture and faith represents our ultimate commitment. And we expect that our neighbour will have his or her faith commitment.

There will be many different answers to the question of Christian understanding of other faiths:

- Other religions and ideologies are wholly false; non-Christian religions are the work of the devil and demonic cunning
- Other religions are a preparation for Christ (which the gospel fulfils; this was the view of Edinburgh 1910; cf. section 1 above); there are essential values in other religions
- An understanding, emphasised by Orthodox theologians, of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in creation, culture and religions⁶²
- The Roman Catholic view of the world religions as concentric circles (with the Catholic Church as the centre)
- Karl Rahner’s view of non-Christian religions as the means through which God’s salvation in Christ will reach those who have not been reached by the gospel (‘anonymous Christians’)
- The view that religions are worlds in themselves, with their own structures and worldviews. They face in different directions and ask different questions. The gospel relates differently to Islam than it does to Hinduism or Buddhism. And the differences are for real. Other religions are not a sort of reduced copy of Christianity or simply echoes of Christianity’s own voice⁶³.

The view of those who collaborated to write this paper is that religions are ambiguous responses to divine revelation. Within every religion, also in Christianity, there is a dark side, but Christians will also recognise ‘revelation’ in all of them, particularly in terms of creation. Christians may cautiously claim that every part of the created world and every human being is already related to Jesus (cf. Paul’s speech on Areopagos where the presence of the altar for the unknown God implies that God is already there). Everything was made through the Logos, he is the life of all, and he is the light that gives light to every man. Christians will recognise the presence and work of Jesus not only within the area where he is acknowledged. In every human there is not only a moral consciousness (Rom 2:14-15), but also a religious consciousness.⁶⁴ This does not imply that everything is light; both Scripture and experience make it clear that there is also darkness, but the light shines in the darkness. And this light will also shine in the lives of all human beings: The Christian confession does not imply that we should deny the reality of the work of God in the lives and thoughts and prayers of men and women outside the Christian church. Neither do we deny the dark side of religion – every religion including Christianity –

but this dark side does not prevent us from seeing the light of God in the lives of men and women who do not acknowledge him as Lord.

For Christians the cross of Jesus exposes our rejection of God and our sin – and God’s way of meeting this rejection. The power of God is hidden on the cross *sub contrarie specie*, Luther said; that is, under its contradiction. Christians believe that what looked like defeat turned out to be victory. This historic deed – the turning point of history – ‘stands throughout history as witness against all the claims of religion – including the Christian religion – to be the means of salvation....religion is not the means of salvation’⁶⁵. At the same time the cross becomes *the master clue* for Christians in our common search for salvation. And it is along the same way that we wonder whether we who follow Christ, can be saved apart from all who have not yet had the opportunity to respond to the gospel.

The church, therefore, as it is *in via*, does not face the world as the exclusive possessor of salvation, nor as the fullness of what others have in part, the answer to the questions they ask, or the open revelation of what they are anonymously. The church faces the world, rather as *arrabon* of that salvation – as sign, first fruit, token, witness of that salvation which God purposes for the whole.⁶⁶

There is in the Good News *a scandal of particularity* in the way God relates to the world. It is this scandal of particularity that we meet in the Christ revelation. At the same time we cling to God’s ‘amazing grace’ and the confidence that this grace is sufficient for us and all other creatures. So there is a ‘*wideness in God’s mercy*’⁶⁷ where the narrow boundaries of the church are widened through what in Orthodox theology is called, ‘the economy of the Spirit’.⁶⁸ Down through history we find theologians who have spoken about God’s work in the world and the possibility of salvation beyond explicit Christian faith:

- Justin Martyr believed in *logos spermatikos*, or seed-bearing word, by which he affirmed the seed of the revelation in Christ in existing cultures.
- Clement of Alexandria proposed that God had given the law to the Jews and philosophy to the Greeks.
- Irenaeus, like his contemporaries, assumed that the gospel had been taken throughout the world by the apostles. Had he known otherwise, he would still have been optimistic about the salvation of the unevangelized since Christ’s incarnation implied for him a recapitulation of the history of fallen humanity, and since people will be judged according to the privilege of revelation that they have received.
- *Lumen Gentium* from Vatican II states that ‘those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek

God...'.⁶⁹ Even in the more strict declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000) it is emphasised that 'the salvific action of Jesus Christ...extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity'.⁷⁰

- Martin Luther rarely spoke about the unevangelized. However, in his commentary on Romans (1515), he writes about those who have not heard the gospel that 'all people of this type have been given so much light and grace by an act of prevenient mercy of God as is sufficient for their salvation in their situation, as in the case of Job, Naaman, Jethro and others'.⁷¹
- The Christian apologist J.N.D. Anderson affirmed the uniqueness of Christ but also affirmed that where the God of all grace has been at work in the hearts of individuals, they too may profit from this grace.⁷²
- Harold A. Netland, an Evangelical missiologist, encourages Evangelicals to explore the implications of trinitarian theology for our understanding of other religions and advocates a 'dynamic tension between the universality of the triune God and the particularity of the incarnate word...'.⁷³
- Alister McGrath, a contemporary evangelical Anglican⁷⁴, states:

We cannot draw the conclusion....that only those who respond will be saved. God's revelation is not limited to the explicit human preaching of the good news, but extends beyond it. We must be prepared to be surprised at those whom we will meet in the kingdom of God⁷⁵.

In the same manner, as in the San Antonio statement of the WCC mission conference in 1989, we affirm the uniqueness of Christ: Anyone who ever has been, is now or ever will be saved is accepted by God on the grounds of the sacrifice of Christ and our identification or union with him. There is no other ground. To this should, however, be added that God gives to every human being a revelation sufficient to elicit saving faith; no one will be condemned because of lack of revelation. In conclusion, we can never solve the creative and dynamic tension between being both missionary and dialogical.

3.3 *Pneumatological approach*

When the Roman Catholic Church accepted the idea that salvation beyond its own boundaries was possible, yet through Christ, it affirmed the Spirit's work elsewhere, leading to greater interest in dialogical engagement with other religions.⁷⁶ Dramatic change in the doctrinal position of Roman Catholics raised difficult questions about where and how to locate the work of the Spirit in the religions. Recently, Pentecostal-charismatic scholars began a conversation to identify God's work through the activity of the Spirit and spirits among non-Christians, bringing them to faith.⁷⁷ The Holy Spirit's role in other religions raises two issues of significance for Christian mission among other

faiths: (1) the relationship of Spirit and spirits in the religions; and (2) primal religion as the basic structure for understanding spirituality in the religions, with Israel's religion as a foundation for Christian witness.

3.3.1 Pneumatological dimension in a Christian theology of religions

The dialogue movement assumes the Spirit's activity mediating witness of the gospel in conversations with people of other religions. A pneumatological approach goes farther to identify dynamic moments when Spirit-induced phenomena happen in individuals and in religions. Kirsteen Kim calls this new area 'mission pneumatology'.⁷⁸ Pentecostal scholar Amos Yong seeks evidence of the (Holy) Spirit and the spirits at work in people of other religions, but holds in theological tension Christian orthodoxy and openness. His approach, probing aspects of 'one-Spirit' and 'many spirit' cosmologies, anticipates God's revelation to be present in areas of: the Ultimate powers, the lesser powers, ancestors, nature, human and other spirits in religions or new spiritualities. This approach is along the lines of what may be broadly termed 'discerning of Spirit(s)'.⁷⁹ In his method Yong does fresh exegesis of biblical accounts describing persons of other faiths living in proximity to Jewish or Christian communities. He examines language from texts that describe interactions, suggestive of witness, to detect the dynamics between the (Holy) Spirit and spirits. Believing a spiritual dimension exists in all religions as well as in Christianity, his immediate concern in mission is to become aware of, yet not accept uncritically, accounts of how people in the religions have spiritual relationship with the powers, their community and their world.⁸⁰

This focused investigation across cultures and religions locates patterns of receptivity and response from people in the religions. Like data may be found in similar religious contexts revealing the nature of the Spirit's witness of Christ. Such pursuit is limited by the Christian belief that we may expect but cannot determine absolutely the work of the Holy Spirit whose task it is to 'testify to Christ and make him known so that people will believe' (John 14-16).

3.3.2 Recovery of pneumatological foundations from primal religions and worldviews

Primal and aboriginal religions, as described before, have been recovered as a resource for witness. Edinburgh 1910 participants opined that the Christian gospel was unlikely to be readily accepted into Africa because of its strongly held traditional religious beliefs, in which there were no inherent concepts upon which to build the Christian message.⁸¹ A century later African Christians, missiologists and historians argue the opposite, attributing conversion of more than fifty percent of the population of Africa, and much successful spreading of Christianity in the West, largely to the witness of Pentecostal Christians from the global South.⁸² Scholars now ascribe the spread of African Christianity to the fact that it became so well adapted to its base of primal religion.⁸³ The

worldviews of primal people and people of the Old Testament have similarities, and parallels exist between primal religious and Pentecostal groups.

The uniqueness of the primal worldview rests in an inherent belief of indigenous peoples that creation is a living system, a network of spiritual relationships in which they find themselves. Creation is invested with the Spirit that gives life and power to control and guide all things. Amos Yong, writing about the implications of such a worldview to create capacity for a holistic relationship to God, summarises his discussion on the pneumatological theology of creation, speaking of Old Testament scriptures, by saying, ‘Most important, the spiritual and the material realms are intertwined both ontologically and epistemologically. Regarding the former, the Spirit both hovers over the waters of creation and gives the breath of life; the human is intimately and intricately connected with the orders of creation’.⁸⁴ Both traditional believers and Pentecostals rest their faith on being in relationship with the powers and following the design of creation. This theo-cosmic posture grounds all else. For this reason, pneumatological foundations are basic to Christian witness among other religions, and a starting point is exploring the Spirit(s) dimensions of faith.

The basic religious insight that Christians from primal backgrounds gain is that Christ is Creator God, the Lord of creation. Initially, their worship occurs while encountering the Spirit in creation. Later, after indigenous people accept Jesus Christ as Lord of the new creation, who made salvation possible by restoring harmony to all things through his sacrifice, worship becomes adoring the triune God and pursuing the kingdom of God on earth. If Pentecostal spirituality can be described as a re-emergence of ‘primal spirituality’ in postmodernity,⁸⁵ it is well suited to challenge spiritualities of Western Christianity and theistic or meta-cosmic religions because it relates to the creation and the Spirit. The Pentecost narrative is comprehensive, affirming unity in diversity, engaging many traditions but pointing each to a single reality.⁸⁶ The Apostle Paul invited diverse people in Athens to consider Christ on the basis that the Spirit’s power in creation was from God who made all things, and present in the Son, the risen Christ, whom God has declared as Lord (Acts 17).

Pentecostalism’s apologetic is experiential, not merely rational. Pentecostals participate in a persuasive sharing of life in the Spirit. When Christians from the global South living as immigrants in situations of struggle manifest vibrant faith and tenacious hope in God for daily needs, such evident faith challenges secularists. When Western Christians attempted spiritual warfare to reach people with alternative spiritualities they largely failed, but a constructive pneumatological approach may have succeeded because identities are restored through spiritual relationship—a new self-understanding that they are made in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and belong to the people of God.⁸⁷ By healing prayers sin is overcome and harmony brought to the community.⁸⁸

The pneumatological approach arose because Christians needed categories and criteria by which to search out the (Holy) Spirit among the spirits in the religions. In Pentecostal churches, spiritual phenomena abound: worship offers immediate access to divine power; signs and miracles happen in response to faith; personal empowerment flows as tongues and ecstasy strengthen daily life; exhortation comes through words of knowledge and wisdom; the Word is spoken by messengers appointed to guide the community.⁸⁹ The blessing of wellbeing is felt, the harmony of all creation, while in mystical communion with nature.

3.3.3 Power encounter

The word pair ‘power encounter’ is fairly recent, but intends to describe an ancient phenomenon: The powerful encounter when two religious worldviews and two religious groupings clash. The prime examples in the Bible include Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and Jesus’ battle with Satan and his driving out of evil spirits as signs of the advent of the kingdom. Up through the history of the church there are many examples of such power encounters from situations where the Christian faith was crossing cultural and religious boundaries. Examples are also known from the recent and contemporary history of mission. The phenomenon is widespread among indigenous Christians and charismatic and Pentecostal churches in the global South.

Originally the confession of faith according to the Apostles’ Creed was prefaced by renouncing the devil and all his works and all his being. This renouncement is still in use in some churches and is particularly being used at baptism, to ensure and proclaim that the devil has no rights anymore to this infant or adult, who immediately after is marked with the sign of the cross. In this sense baptism is a power encounter, reminding the devil that he has lost the battle on Golgotha on Easter morning. In some settings renouncing the devil also implies the removal and burning of fetishes belonging to the person to be baptised (e.g. in Ethiopia). This biblical image reminds us that faith is God drawing us to himself and thus to turning us away from what can be called demonic in all religions. This reality must follow us into dialogues of religion and particularly in our encounter with religious practices invoking the spirits. The encounter with New Spiritual Movements has again brought this reality home to a Western culture that thought it had got rid of the primitive notion of ‘devil’. In the practice of some of these movements, the door to an occult jungle of spirits and ‘forces’ is made wide open. Often this has resulted in personalities being invaded and in communities being demonized.⁹⁰

Some would say that the matter of power encounter also relates to some of the major destructive forces in the world, such as the use of violence and war to solve conflicts, the oppression of women, discrimination against others (apartheid, casteism, ethno-centrism), and the distortion of sex and sexual abuse.⁹¹

People of faith must discern and respond to the spirit dimensions of the religions and their environment – although these are conceived in different ways. The new approach widens evidence and introduces vocabulary to facilitate interreligious dialogue on the spiritual level and concerning experience of the Spirit. Mission pneumatology is a helpful and hopeful task.

4 Challenges and Questions for Continuing Discussions:

1. How do we understand mission in the religiously pluralistic context of today, and how has the concept of mission been shaped by our understanding of other religious faiths and our relationship with people of other faiths?
2. What ways of doing mission to and among people of other religious beliefs are respectful to and not hurting the feelings of other faith communities?
3. How may churches in the West gain new insights from churches in the global South about witness and dialogue in a pluralistic setting? What could churches in the global South gain from discussion on pluralism in the North?
4. Does the focus on the Holy Spirit in creation, culture and religion provide new avenues for a Christian theology of religion?
5. Can there be ‘un-baptised’ and/or ‘churchless’ Christianity (as some call it)? Should the church encourage un-baptised or churchless Christianity depending on the context?

Endnotes

¹ Two other significant Edinburgh 2010 events feed into this theme: the consultation on ‘Mission as Reconciliation in Pluralistic Contexts’ organised by Philip Sieuw at the Seminari Theoloji Malaysia consultation on 8-11 June 2009, and the Pre-centenary Edinburgh 2010 Study Conference on Christian inter-religious relations at the United Theological College, Bangalore on 17-19 July 2009, organised by Marina Behara. The results of these will be included in the report of the Edinburgh 2010 conference, June 2010.

² Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 235. Only three of the 11 questions dealt specifically with the nature and characters of other religions. These are questions 2, 6, and 8.

³ Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, 245.

⁴ World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier, 1910), 1.

⁵ Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, 212.

⁶ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission IV*, 215.

⁷ Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, 235.

⁸ See J. Stanley Friesen, *Missionary Responses to Tribal Religions at Edinburgh, 1910* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

⁹ William Ernest Hocking (ed.), *Rethinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1932), 40.

¹⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 181.

¹¹ Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in the Non-Christian World* (London: International Missionary Council, 1938), 102.

¹² Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, 104.

¹³ Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, 134.

¹⁴ Wesley Ariarajah, *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Thoughts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 66.

¹⁵ O.V. Jathanna, *The Decisiveness of the Christ-event and the Universality of Christianity in a World of Religious Plurality* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1981), 94.

¹⁶ James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House), 17.

¹⁷ C.F. Andrews quoted by T.V. Philip, *Edinburgh to Salvador: Twentieth Century Ecumenical Missiology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 194.

¹⁸ Joe M. Thomas, 'Continuity, Discontinuity, and the Finality of Christ: A Theological Essay on the Thought of Lesslie Newbigin and Hendrik Kraemer', *Dharma Deepika: A South Asian Journal of Missiological Research* 29/1 (January – June, 2009), 28.

¹⁹ See Stanley J. Samartha, *Between Two Cultures: Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World* (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 38-75.

²⁰ See, *inter alia*, Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 108-153; S. J. Samartha, *One Christ – Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 162-175.

²¹ Samartha, *One Christ – Many Religions*, 170.

²² John Hick & Paul F. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), viii.

²³ World Council of Churches, 'Toward a Code of Conduct on Conversion' (draft), available at www.oikoumene.org (accessed August 5, 2009).

²⁴ John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 58-81.

²⁵ See Timothy C. Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002).

²⁶ Kärkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*.

²⁷ See Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

²⁸ See William Burrows (ed.), *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 'On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate' (1990); Pontifical Council For Inter-Religious Dialogue, 'Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ' (1990). Documents available at www.vatican.va.

²⁹ Petros Vassiliadis, Niki Papageorgiou, George Kondortha & Nikos Dimitriadis, 'Mission among Other Faiths: An Orthodox Perspective', a position paper submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

³⁰ The recent consultation on 'Christian mission among other faiths' at Bangalore repeatedly addresses liberation and fighting for justice (2.5.6) and violence (5.6) in the context of mission. 'Report cum Statement of the consultation at the United Theological College, Bangalore, India, 2009. Towards Edinburgh 2010. A Consultation on "Christian Mission among others Faiths"'. Papers available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

³¹ J. Azumah, 'Christian Mission and Islam', position paper submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), 2-3, available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

³² 'Report cum Statement, Bangalore', 8.

³³ D. B. Barrett *et al.*, 'Missiometrics 2008: Reality Checks for Christian World Communions', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32 (2008), 27-30.

³⁴ The term 'transnational' names these movements which are crossing frontiers and cultures but are not global in the sense of being present everywhere. In the context of our theme 'transnational' applies especially to local ethnic-religious diaspora communities which are however in constant relation to their home communities. S.L. Pries, *Die Transnationalisierung der sozialen Welt. Sozialräume jenseits von Nationalgesellschaften* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009), 16. P. Aghamkar submitted a position paper on an Indian Christian attempt to relate to Indian migrants residing in the US by revisiting the Hindu Diwali festival. P. Aghamkar, 'A Christian Diwali: Contextualizing Witness as Celebration with the Hindu Community', paper submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

³⁵ See Ole Skjerbaek Madsen, 'The Church's Encounter with New Spiritualities', a position paper for Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

³⁶ Pries, *Transnationalisierung*, 29.

³⁷ T. Prill, *Global Mission on our Doorstep. Forced Migration and the Future of the Church* (Münster: Monsenstein & Vannerstadt, no year).

³⁸ The 'Report cum Statement, Bangalore' cautions against the mammonization of structures and relations (6) and greets chances to work together in issues like environmental issues or in fighting HIV/Aids (7).

³⁹ S. Randeria & A. Eckert (eds), *Vom Imperialismus zum Empire. Nicht-westliche Perspektiven auf Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009).

⁴⁰ See Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 'Dialogue and Proclamation' in Burrows, *Redemption and Mission*, 93-118, especially 104.

⁴¹ See position papers for Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 on confessional approaches to mission among other faiths, available at www.edinburgh2010.org: Vassiliadis *et al.*, 'Mission Among Other Faiths. An Orthodox Perspective'; Harold A. Netland, 'Christian Mission among Other Faiths: The Evangelical Tradition', position paper submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

⁴² For some hints to reactions, see Azumah, 'Christian Mission and Islam', 4.

⁴³ See for instance, H. Ucko, 'Christian Mission among Other Faiths', against V.-M. Kärkkäinen, 'Theologies of Religions. A Position Paper', both papers submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

⁴⁴ Jehu J. Hanciles, 'Migration and Mission: The Religious Significance of the North-South Divide', in Andrew Walls & Cathy Ross (eds.), *Mission in the Twenty-first Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), 118-29

⁴⁵ Prill, 'Global Mission', 32, 35.

⁴⁶ An estimated overall migration stock of 175 million in 2000 against a figure of 975 million alone suffering from hunger. See www.welthungerhilfe.de/hunger_spezial.html.

⁴⁷ An interesting example for a different approach to an originally indigenous religion by W. Abimbola, *Ifá Will Mend Our Broken World: Thoughts on Yoruba Religion and Culture in Africa and the Diaspora* (Roxbury, MA: Aim Books, 2003).

⁴⁸ See for instance, M. Vargas, 'A Neopentecostal Experience of Bolivian Aimara people', unpublished paper submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), available at www.edinburgh2010.org; or G. Chamorro, *Auf dem Weg zur Vollkommenheit. Theologie des Wortes unter den Guaraní in Süd-Amerika* (Exegese in unserer Zeit, 11), (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003).

⁴⁹ See for example, Gary Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "'Get on the Internet!" Says the LORD': Religion, Cyberspace and Christianity in Contemporary Africa', *Studies in World Christianity* 13 (Dec 2007), 225-242; Kirsteen Kim, 'Ethereal Christianity: Reading Korean Mega-Church Websites', *Studies in World Christianity* 13 (Dec 2007), 208-224.

⁵⁰ Notto R. Thelle, 'Mission to Buddhists?', position paper, submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010 (2009), 9, available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

⁵¹ Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2000), 53-55.

⁵² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 483-84.

⁵³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 1.

⁵⁴ Vassiliadis, 'Mission among Other Faiths'. Cf. also (Archbishop) Anastasios Yannoulatos, 'Problems and Prospects of Interreligious Dialogue: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective', *Ecumenical Review* 52/3 (July 2000), 351ff.

⁵⁵ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 'Theologies of Religions'.

⁵⁶ 'Religious Plurality and Christian Self-understanding', preparatory document for the World Council Of Churches Assembly, Porto Alegre, 2006. See also Ucko, 'Christian Mission among Other Faiths'.

⁵⁷ World Council of Churches, *The San Antonio Report* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990).

⁵⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 1991, 488.

⁵⁹ WCC, *The San Antonio Report*.

⁶⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1986), 21-41.

⁶¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989).

⁶² Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World. A Global Conversation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007), 51-52.

⁶³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

⁶⁴ Terrance L. Thiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove & Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 107-110.

⁶⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1978), 200.

⁶⁶ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 203-204.

⁶⁷ Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).

⁶⁸ Vassiliadis, 'Mission among Other Faiths'.

⁶⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (1963), §16. Available at www.vatican.va.

⁷⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus* 'Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church' (2000), §12. Available at www.vatican.va.

⁷¹ Pelikan, Jaroslav (ed.), *Luther's Works* (St Louis: Concordia, 1972), 25:181, quoted in Thiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?* 57.

⁷² J.N.D. Anderson, *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1970).

⁷³ Harold A. Netland, 'Christian Mission among Other Faiths'. See also Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

⁷⁴ See also Alister McGrath, 'Evangelism and Apologetics' (2009), position paper submitted to Study Group 2, Edinburgh 2010, available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

⁷⁵ Alister McGrath, 'A Particularist View: A Post-Enlightenment Approach', in John Hick, et al. (eds), *More than One Way? Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 65-70.

⁷⁶ Vatican II awakened the Church to recognize the wider work of the Holy Spirit in the world, leading to ecumenical openness and restoration of relations with other Christian churches; the documents affirmed the 'pre-eminence' of the Spirit's role as the 'principal agent' of the church mission *ad gentes* (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 'On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate' (1990), §§21-30. Available at www.vatican.va). Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World*, 146-47.

⁷⁷ Works of two authors, Amos Yong and Kirsteen Kim, provide a sample of the new approach: Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*; Kim, *The Holy Spirit*.

⁷⁸ Kim, *The Holy Spirit*, 140.

⁷⁹ Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*.

⁸⁰ The terms 'One Spirit' and 'many spirits' distinguish cosmological answers to the question of whether power is concentrated in a single Spirit or many spirits? Amos Yong's discerning of the work of God in 'one Spirit' and 'many spirits' cosmologies allows that the Holy Spirit need not be christologically perceived (Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 68), but that criteria for discernment of the Spirit cannot be other than Christological (Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 167). Yong's project fits with Ole Skjerbaek Madsen's investigation of new spiritualities and new religions, where followers have rejected a personal understanding of the Divine or Source. A point of contact in witness, both would agree, should be initially along the lines of what has been received and experienced as truth; the hope is also that the person might recognize the *logoi spermatikoi* within the new spirituality, at least God's Spirit being still present if only identified in the initial dialogue leading to Christ (Madsen, 'The Church's Encounter with New Spiritualities').

⁸¹ Harold F. Miller, 'Closure for an African Century,' *Occasional Papers* 26 (An oral version of the paper was presented to the annual Mennonite retreat at Limuru, Kenya, Dec 1998); accessed online at: mcc.org/respub/occasional/26closure.html on August 27, 2009.

⁸² Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of the Global Christianity* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 8.

⁸³ Harold W. Turner, 'The Religious Reactions of Primal Societies to Higher Cultures: A New Field in the History of Religions', a lecture at the Centre for the Study of New Religious Movements in Primal Religions, Birmingham, United Kingdom, 1986; Gillian M. Bediako, "'All Believers Are Primalists Underneath': Towards a New Appreciation of Old Testament Religion as Primal Religion', a lecture at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, Michigan, July 2007; Andrew Walls, 'Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 119-39.

⁸⁴ Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 300

⁸⁵ Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostalism and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Cassell, 1996).

⁸⁶ Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit*, 162, paraphrasing Amos Yong's investigation of a 'unity in diversity' theme in the account of Pentecost, describes how '...on that occasion the Holy Spirit is seen to be the ground of personal encounter and of personal identity in community, establishing eschatological reconciliation'. See Amos Yong, "'As the Spirit Gives Utterance": Pentecost, Intra-Christian Ecumenism and the Wider *Oikumene*', *International Review of Mission* 92/366 (Apr 2003), 299-314.

⁸⁷ Madsen, 'The Church's Encounter with New Spiritualities'.

⁸⁸ Marcelo Vargas describes indigenous Christian spirituality among the Aimara people in Bolivia as they are nurtured in the Power of God Church in his article, 'A Neopentecostal Experience of Bolivian Aimara People'.

⁸⁹ Vargas, 'A Neopentecostal Experience'.

⁹⁰ See *inter alia* Madsen, 'The Church's Encounter with New Spiritualities'.

⁹¹ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers. Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984); Kim, *The Holy Spirit*, 150-6.