Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council

by

Mahmut Aydin

Table of Contents

Preface

George F. McLean

As one who writes the history of philosophy, reading this work of Mahmut Aydin, Modern Western Christian Theolo-gical Understanding of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council, has been a most exciting experience. For it is a veritable case study of a most dramatic transformation of human vision in the compass of my own experience, both as a Christian and as a philosopher. Moreover, in the light of the dramatic ways in which human communities – specifi-cally the Islamic and Christian world – have fallen apart at the very prelude of the new millennium, it provides dramatic insight into future threats and possibilities.

The background is, of course, the perduing and mutual negative understanding which has at least accompanied and intentionally stimulated the long history of competition and conflict between peoples in extensive parts of the world. If the future of increasingly global interchange is to be peaceful rather than conflictual, this negative mutual inter-pretation must be overcome. This work describes the truly amazing progress in this regard which has been made in but the last half century.

The key, I believe, is the shift noted by Gabriel Marcel, namely that while he never ceased to hold to the one Absolute, he began to think rather in terms of those who think or respond to that one. In other words, beginning from a shared confession among the religions that because there could be but one path thereto, attention to the amazingly disparate and dispersed condition of humanity has come to suggest that religions as paths to God must be diverse in order to converge rather than diverge.

The work rightly focuses upon the developments since the Second Vatican Council for that was the religious watermark which opened the general post war cultural shift from a top-down ideological outlook to a bottom-up under-standing of all in terms of the exercise of human freedom by persons and peoples. Ultimately this consists in the response of the human heart to the love by which all has been created. Philosophically this is termed a phenomenological approach, namely bringing the hidden values of human consciousness into the light. This took place in Vatican II in the early 60s, decisively before its general affirmation by the Paris riots of '68.

This shift in perspective can be reflected upon at a number of levels. Because the shift took place in time it is possible that they are not mutually exclusive but that a number o these could have been true at different times and to different degrees. Hence it can be understood that the efforts to state this could be a bit inept and allow for misinterpretation and suspicion that they were really covert attempts to continue the earlier efforts at conversion from, rather than promotion of, in multiple and convergent pathways.

But if it is wrong to consider these steps as deceptive tactics in the service of the old strategy, it is equally wrong to consider them in humanistic terms as simply a secularizing affirmation of a common humanity. For what is ultimately true here is not the human in and of itself but the shared origin and goal of all humans. This is what entails dialogue. Perhaps indeed the emphasis upon duality and difference in the term "dialogue", would be better converted into the unitive and convergent emphasis had by the term "cooperation" and the mutual assistance this implies. It retains the plurality of all finite beings and endeavors but sets these rightly in their essential, indeed radical, relation to the one. This indeed charts the terrain, for to understand the multiple ways of experiencing and interpreting relations to God a hermeneutic method is needed. That is, we need to begin from the multiplicity of the human experiences of God and response thereto in terms, e.g.,

of contemplation in Buddhism, of prophecy in Islam, of love in Christianity, of messianic expectation in Judaism, and of union in Hinduism. It is essential to recognize these differences of horizon, the gifts to religious understanding and life which each makes possible, and that each religion shares or proclaims its proper insight and commitment. Lack of this hermeneutic consciousness leaves one in the outmoded suspicion that any such proclamation is an attempt to convert or supposes some primacy. This demeans the proceedure to being an excercise of political power where parity between peoples was the goal, rather than the Truth which makes one free and is the fulfillment of all.

This hermeneutic turn can help with the issues of shifting focus from the multiple key religious figures of a Buddha, Christ or Muhammad to the One God. This abstractive process is presented as a step toward neutrality, but as characteristically Western it is rightly noted as a Western rationalistic imperialism at the impoverishing expense of the religious histories and heritage, of the religious experiences and commitments of all peoples. Its effect would be to reject the religious history of all peoples as characteristic personal responses of each people to God in terms of its archetypal religious figure. It is difficult to see how John Hick can at the same time describe so beautifully the mode in which the figure of Christ is the key to the religious response of Christians and yet wish to relativise this response to God. The task would seem to be rather to understand how this, and the response of others in terms of their own religious figures, is truly decisive and ultimate.

Another ploy would appear to be the effort to shift the discussions from the theoretical to the practical, from attention to the religious figures themselves to the quality of the activity by people which they inspire, from orthodoxy to orthopraxis. But carried out in its own terms the result is to shift from religion to ethics, from response to God to action between humans and in terms of humans alone. The religious concern is not only with poverty and the distribu-tion of riches, but with what poverty does to closing off hope and response to God or to inspiring self-transcendence and hence concern for others.

This can be properly understood if one follows the existential turn so that being is not an ultimate abstraction but divine life erupting into time. Read in these terms one is concerned with divine life in man and human life in God. But this requires precisely not merely action but under-standing, not merely praxis but speculative grasp of what is going on. This challenges one to deepen and enrich life in one's heart and deeds. Again the attempt to promote dialogue by deadening or rejecting this effort at under-standing, by forgetting or renouncing rather than by discovering and enriching, has been rightly repeated by the major Churches charged pastorally with this task of mutual understanding.

The work then rightly focuses upon the development in the Christian theological understanding of Muslims in the last 50 years. It has been dramatic; all depends upon its continuation and formation in practice. Perhaps no where is it more sensitive than the understanding of Christ as savior in relation to non-Christian religions and their key figures. Since the Second Vatican Council the Church has consis-tently opened toward a sense of interreligious cooperation, beginning from the recognition of other religious traditions as authentic ways to God and the practical guidelines to implement this recognition. In a first step these have concentrated on cooperation between religious peoples in action programs for human progress. This in turn has given new importance to the theological questions of the status of the key figures of Muhammad and of Jesus. In part these understandings have tended to complement and enrich one another and theologians have been quick to suggest how Muhammad can be understood in the tradition of the Jewish prophets, especially if seen in terms not only of recalling the peoples from idolatry, but of

leading them to a new religious commitment to the one God and life in his image. For Christ this prophetic figure of Muhammad has in turn enabled Christian theologians to refresh their understanding of Jesus as not only a God incarnate but as leading his people to the Father.

But is it possible to set a special role for those two religious figures in a manner that enriches both communi-ties without subordinating one to the other.

This work might be continued with a suggestion first, that in these discussions, even those Christian theologians most anxious to reach out to Moslims may be too focused upon the issue of salvation and specifically of saviors. The religious path has multiple dimensions and it is not sup-pressing that disparate and diverse peoples have focused upon different submissions. These are neither contradictory nor dispensible facets of the religious pilgrimage of a people. All aspects are required and all can contribute. What may be disruptive, however, is that each religious tradition focuses upon terms of one only particular dimension of religious relations to God. This may well be taken as implying a supremacy of one. Or if Christians more than others are focused upon salvation, this could be seen as implying a negative reading of other key religious figures who have never wanted to connect themselves primarily in these terms. There are two responses to this. One is to insist on reading all in terms of salvation, but then to water down the reality of salvation so that any religious leader qualifies as savior. This has been a factor in the approach of some theologians and entails a reductivism that the Churches themselves cannot accept.

The other response is to appreciate the legitimate diversity of many paths to God and to recognize that each has its implications for theology. Thus the Christian focus on salvation entails special attention to the real difference between sin and salvation and to the difference this makes. Hence, Christian history has naturally evolved an ontic theological exploration of the holiness of the savior, of his mediation as son of God and man, of the nature of the cross, and of the resurrection. This is echoed, but never equaled in the Muslim sense of Mary and Jesus as alone untouched by evil, and the sense of personnel resurrection and judgement. In a parallel the sense of Jesus as prophet pointing out the way to God echoes but never equals the Muslim sense of the role of the Prophet. This has ontic implications for all humans as well, not only for how they act, but for who and what they are. Dognas are not blind affirmations, but the deep discovery of a community regarding essential nature and identity.

These progress in dialogue which searches not for a least common denominator between the multiple religious commitments, but for the proper contribution of each to religious self-understanding and to the point of their convergence as imaged by Isaias' Holy mountain where all peoples will converge to sing their praise and thanksgiving to God who is truly Father, to the Son who is the fullness of divine truth and to the Spirit of Love who works in all hearts as Savior and Prophet or in Hindu terms the One who is the Existence (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*) and Bliss (*ananda*) from which, in which and into which we all converge.

Introduction

This study examines contemporary Christian perceptions of Islam which have emerged from the context of the Christian-Muslim dialogue and the Christian theology of religions. It centres upon the new realisations which Christians have reached both officially and individually in their relations with Muslims.

As is well known, in our post-modern world, which has become a "global village" where religious and cultural pluralism seem an inescapable reality, we are witnessing the beginning of a new age in relationships between Christians and non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. A number of significant factors have contributed to this development, among them an explosion of knowledge in the West about non-Christian religions, developments in the scientific study of religion, and personal contacts between Christians and non-Christians due to travel opportunities and massive immigration from East to West.[1]

The renowned historian of religion, W. Cantwell Smith, highlights this new situation as follows:

> The religious life of mankind from now on, if it is to be lived at all, will be lived in the context of religious pluralism. This is true for all: not only for humankind in general on an abstract level, but for each as individual persons. No longer are people of other persuasions peripheral or distant, the idle curiosity of travellers' tales. The more alert we are, and the more involved in life, the more we find that they are our neighbours, our colleagues, our competitors, our fellows. Confu-cians and Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims are with us not only in the United Nations, but down the street. Increasingly, not only is the destiny of our civilisation affected by their actions; but we drink coffee with them personally as well.[2]

This new age is challenging Christians to ask the following questions concerning the religious status of non-Christians:

- If God is the God of humanity and has a universal will to save mankind, why is the true religion, the right approach to God, confined to a single strand of humanity, so that it has not been available to the great majority of the thousands of millions of human beings who have lived and died from the earliest days until now?
- If God is the Creator and Father of all, can God have provided true religion only for a chosen minority?[3]

In this challenging situation, Church authorities have launched institutionalised dialogue events involving people of other faiths in general and Muslims in particular in order to foster mutual

---

[1] For these factors see Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983), pp.1ff; John Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 1995), pp. 12-13; Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods Many Lords; Christianity Encounters World Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), pp. 18-29; Charles Kimball, *Striving Together: A Way Forward in Christian-Muslim Relations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), pp.48-56.

[2] Wilfred C. Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), p. 11.

[3] Hick, "Foreword", in Smith's *Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. vi.

understanding, stimulate communication, correct stereotypes and explore similarities and differences. To this end, the Roman Catholic Church set up the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions and the World Council of Churches the Sub-Unit for Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies. And both have published such significant documents as the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* [1965] and *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* [1979].

Parallel to these official developments, more and more leading individual Christian thinkers have begun to be interested in the relationship between Christians and non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. Their studies have focused both on the leading figures and teachings of non-Christian religions, and on the relationship between Christians and other religions. Some have gone as far as to say that a Christian theology which develops without taking into account the challenge of world religions will no longer be a credible theology.[4]

These are all signs that within only a few decades the Christian view of non-Christians and their religious traditions has undergone an epoch-making change, and the relationship between Christian and non-Christians has become an increasingly important issue for both official Church authorities and individual thinkers.

Scope of this Study

The topic for this study is Western Christian theological understanding of Islam in the post-Vatican II period. Our primary aim as a Muslim student of dialogue is to study and evaluate the Western Christian dialogue initiatives both institutionally and individually. In so doing, we also pursue the question of whether a meaningful and productive theological dialogue between Christians and Muslims can be possible. By the term theological dialogue, we mean how Christians may seek officially and individually to explain the contemporary meaning of their own religious traditions in relation to the intellectual and theological challenges made by other religious traditions in the process of dialogue.[5]

There are a number of reasons for choosing this topic. The first is that we have noticed that almost all researchers who have been interested in this topic have studied either only the official dialogue initiatives of the major Churches[6] or the pattern in Christian theology related to other religions by classifying these patterns into theological types.[7] None of them has studied the issue by taking into account both the official and individual dialogue initiatives of Western Christians.

---

[4] See Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, pp. ix-x; Hans Küng, *et al.*, eds., *Christianity and World Religions; Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993 first published in 1986), p.xiii; Frank Whaling, *Christian Theology and World Religions: A Global Approach* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1986), p. 5ff; David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Interreligious Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 90; W.C. Smith outlines the nature of the challenge of this new age for Christian theologians as follows: "From now on any serious intellectual statement of the Christian faith must include, if it is to serve its purposes among men, some doctrine of other reli-gions."(Smith, *Faith of Other Men,* p. 133).

[5] Diana Eck identifies six different kinds of interreligious activity that are presently described as dialogue. These are: Parliamentary Dialogue, Institutional Dialogue, Theological Dialogue, Dialogue in Community, Spiritual Dialogue, Inner Dialogue and Literary Dialogue (Diana Eck, "What Do We Mean by 'Dialogue'? A Survey of Types of Interreligious Dialogue Today", *CD*, 11(1986), pp. 5-15.

[6] See Robert B. Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church Since Vatican II; An Historical and Theological Study* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987).

[7] Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*; Arnulf Camps, *Patterns in Dialogue: Christianity and Other Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983); Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Towards the World Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1985); Harold Coward, *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* (Maryknoll:

The second reason is that in a situation in which the future of our world depends on "peace among the various religions"[8] in general and on establishing better relations between Christians and Muslims in particular, Muslims are still hesitant with regard to the nature of dialogue. Although there are a number of reasons for this uncertainty,[9] it seems that the main one is that as far as we know there is no study from the Muslim side which examines Christian dialogue initiatives. By carrying out this study, we want to encourage Muslims to study and evaluate Christian dialogue initiatives more deeply in order to get to know their dialogue partners. We believe that this is the best way to remove Muslim hesitancy and create an equal dialogue environment between Christians and Muslims.

The third reason is that as a Turkish Muslim whose government wants to be a member of the European Union, my understanding of the nature of Western Christians' dialogue initiatives towards Muslims may contribute in a small way towards the integration of my country into Europe.

With regard to the scope of our study, as the title indicates there are three main intentions. Firstly, our research covers the period from the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1964, to the present day. The reason for taking this as a starting point is that, for the first time in the history of Christianity, in this Council, non-Christian religions were officially considered as entities which Christians should respect and seek to discover. Secondly, we focus our attention on Western Christian perceptions although we are aware of the different attitudes among Africans and Asians. Thirdly, we concentrate upon documents, statements and reports published by the official bodies of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, and the published writings of leading individual thinkers. Fourthly, we limit our discussion in the Second Part to three particular issues, the status of the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad and the person of Jesus. The reason for this is that although there are other theological questions which need to be studied and discussed in order to reach a deeper harmony and comprehension between Christians and Muslims,[10] these topics have been among the leading subjects of Christian apologetics and polemics with regard to Islam from the advent of Islam to the present day. There is also a language limitation. In our research, we have restricted ourselves to examine only those sources produced in English. The reason for this is that most of the major sources are available in English and English translation, and so permit this study to be carried out with ease.

Outline of the Study

Our study consists of two main parts. In the first part, we study "Official Christian Teachings about Non-Christians in General and Muslims in Particular." By the official teachings we mean the documents, statements and conference reports of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.

Orbis Books, 1985); Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Whaling, *Christian Theology and World Religions*; Michael Barnes, *Religions in Conversation: Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism* (London: SPCK, 1989); Glyn Richards, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London: Routledge, 1989).

[8] Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

[9] See Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Macmillan, 1997); Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

[10] See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Comments on a Few Theological Issues in Islamic-Christian Dialogue", in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad & Wadi Z. Haddad, eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounter* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995), pp. 457-467.

In the first chapter of this part, after giving a brief history of Catholic teaching prior to the Second Vatican Council, we analyse the epoch-making statements of this Council concerning the relationship between Christians and non-Christians in order to observe how they perceive non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. In the second chapter, we study post-Conciliar documents in the Roman Catholic Church in order to see developments in interfaith relations after the Second Vatican Council. First, we review the dialogue activities of the Secretariat [Pontifi-cal Council] from its establishment in 1964 to the present day. Second, we examine the statements of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. Finally, we study the documents of the Secretariat such as *Guidelines for Dialogue* [1969, 1981], *Dialogue and Mission* [1984] and *Dialogue and Proclamation* [1991].

In the third chapter of this part, we examine the official teachings of the World Council of Churches. We begin with the Kandy Consultation in 1967, firstly because in this consultation significant changes became visible concerning the relationship between non-Catholics and those who belong to other faiths, and secondly, because this consulta-tion reflects similarities with the statements of the Second Vatican Council. In this chapter, we do not begin our examination with specific documents or statements, but with the major conferences and assemblies of the WCC. For, unlike the Second Vatican Council's Statements which resulted from discussions at the one Council, the WCC's significant statements such as *Guidelines on Dialogue* [1979] came out as a result of a process of discussions in these meetings.

The second part of this work is a study of "The Responses of Contemporary Christian Scholars to Crucial Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue." While the official bodies of the major Churches show great interest in initiating a new process with Muslims, they do not deal in any detail with crucial theological questions which form part of Christian-Muslim dialogue. So, in this part, we examine three significant theological questions, Christian thinking about the status of the Qur'an, the nature of the prophethood of Muhammad, and reflections upon the person Jesus Christ from within dialogue thinking.

We study these issues in the writings of Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars who have actively participated in interreligious dialogue and whose views have contributed to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. These thinkers are: the leading figures Wilfred Cantwell Smith, William Montgomery Watt, Kenneth Cragg, Hans Küng, John Hick, Paul Knitter, and two lesser known figures in this field, Keith Ward and David Kerr. The significance of these thinkers will be explained in the relevant chapters. While the views of these thinkers cannot be taken as the basis for generalisations, they can be taken as concrete illustrations of the main points of current Christian debate on these issues.

In the fourth chapter, we study "Contemporary Christian Evaluations of the Status of the Qur'an" by following the writings of Watt, Smith, Cragg, Küng and Ward in order to answer the question: Can Christians accept the Qur'an as the Word of God which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad? In the fifth chapter, we examine "Contem-porary Christian Evaluations of the Prophethood of Muhammad" by studying the views of Watt, Cragg, Küng and Kerr in order to discover whether it can be possible for Christians to acknowledge Muhammad as a prophet without giving up their own faith. And in the sixth chapter, we consider "Contemporary Christian Evaluations of the Status of Jesus" by following the writings of Hick, Knitter and Küng in order to observe how the person of Jesus is understood by Christians in their relationship with people of other faiths. In each chapter, after giving the accounts of every thinker, we offer a Muslim evaluation of their arguments.

Objective of This Work

The first objective of this study is to explore the theological implications of the contemporary official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches on non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular from a Muslim point of view.

The second objective is to uncover how much individual scholars have tried to produce new solutions to some of the major theological problems which have affected Christian-Muslim relations from the advent of Islam up to our day.

In the light of the above two objectives, the final objective of this study is to discuss whether both Christians and Muslims are ready to bring up theological issues in the dialogue in order to establish a meaningful and productive theological encounter.

In short, our task in this study is to present as coherently and impartially as possible the Muslim response to the attitude of the main Western Christian official bodies, the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, and to discuss some major theological issues as they are addressed in contemporary Christian thinkers' works.

A Personal Comment

As a Turkish Muslim student of dialogue whose govern-ment wants to be a member of the European Union, we believe that the study of Western Christian perceptions of Muslims has special importance. As is well known, after the collapse of the Cold War, Islam has often been portrayed as a new threat to the West. For example, the civilizational approach of the American analyst, Samuel P. Huntington, divides the world into the "West" and the "rest."[11] His presentation of Islam as a new threat for the West draws parallels with the Crusades, and latches onto a vision of the mad Muslim already etched in popular minds.[12]

In this respect, when Turkey applied to join the European Union, the medieval image of the Turks reappeared in the minds of some Western people who argued that Turkish people have no place in Europe because of their Islamic identity and culture. However, some circles in Europe and Turkey consider this Islamic background of Turkey as an advantage, since the Turkish Islamic mentality could be a means for peace between Muslims and others.[13] In subscribing to this last point we suggest that by accepting Turkey into the European Union, the Christian West might show its own sincerity about entering into dialogue with Muslims. In this context, we believe that this study will help to show Muslims that the European Union is not necessarily a Christian club, and that they should not fear that they may be excluded because of their religious persuasion.

In carrying out this study, we are well aware that there are many ways of causing offence to the dialogue partner. For example, it can be argued that such terms as "non-Christian", "non-Muslim" or "people of other faiths" cause offence to the dialogue partner because they identify others in

---

[11] Samuel P. Huntington, "A Clash of Civilisations", *FA*, 72/3 (1993), pp. 48-69; also see J. Moltmann & H. Küng, "Editorial: Islam--A Challenge to Christianity", in Küng & Moltmann, eds., *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity, Concilium* (London: SCM Press, 1994), pp. vii-viii.

[12] See, Philip Rees, "World Apart", *NS*, August (1997), p. 32-34.

[13] Such accounts can be seen in exprime minister and former President Turgut Özal's understanding of the relationship between Turkey and Europe (Turgut Özal, *Turkey in Europe and Europe in Turkey*, (Lefkose: Rustem and Brother, 1991).

terms of what they are not.[14] However, although we are aware of this risk, we do use these terms because they have been widely used in the documents, statements and writings which we have considered.

---

[14] Isaac H. Victor, *The Emerging Christian Theologies of Islam: A South Asian Christian Evaluation of the Documents of SVC, the WCC and the Lausanne Covenant Programmes,* unpublished PhD thesis, (Birmingham: CSIC, 1988), pp. 163-164.

Part One
Official Christian Teachings about Non-Christians in General and Muslims in Particular

Chapter 1
The Catholic Church's Teaching with Special Reference to the Second Vatican Council

1.1.   Introduction

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council on non-Christian religions has been regarded as an important beginning and an epoch-making breakthrough in the Catholic Church's relationship with non-Christians and their religious traditions. For the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, the *magisterium* (the teaching office of the Catholic Church) has spoken about non-Christian religions as entities which the Church should respect and with which Christians should enter into dialogue. In this chapter we will examine the conciliar documents which deal with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular in order to investigate their contribution to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. In the light of the statements of the Second Vatican Council, we will ask how the Catholic Church theologically perceives non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. We will also note which aspects of Muslim life and religion are emphasized, omitted or hardly mentioned in those statements.[15]

We believe that it is necessary to examine the text concerning Muslims in conjunction with other conciliar texts which refer to non-Christians in general, since the conciliar statements about Muslims can only be understood within the context of the Vatican II's general theological teaching concerning non-Christian religions and their followers.[16]

1.2. A Brief History of Catholic Teaching until Vatican II

It is important to recall the official Catholic teaching about non-Christians up to the Second Vatican Council in order to see clearly to what extent the conciliar statements affected the Roman Catholic Church's attitude to non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. Up to the Second Vatican Council the official Catholic teaching concerning non-Christian religions was mainly concerned with the possibility of the salvation of non-Christians. During that period the major issue discussed among Church authorities and individual theologians was the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* [there is no salvation outside the Church].[17] A brief history of this axiom will highlight how it developed and applied to non-Christians in the history of the Catholic Church.

The German theologian Hans Küng traces the roots of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* to Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen and all the Greek fathers.[18]

---

[15] For similar questions see Mikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), p.10; Geoarges C. Anawati, "Excursus on Islam", in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, v. 3 (London: 1969), pp. 151-155; Christian Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", to be published in J. Waardenburg, ed., *Christianity and Islam: Mutual Perceptions since the Mid-20th Century* (Kampen: Kok Agora), p. 2.

[16] Joseph Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims: The Church's Consideration of Islam in Vatican II and its Resonance in Subsequent Christian-Muslim Relations* (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1987), p. 12.

[17] Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 10.

[18] Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1978 first published in 1968), pp. 313ff; Küng, "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation", in J. Neuner, ed., *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), p. 31; also see Molly T. Marshall, *No Salvation outside the Church? A Critical Inquiry* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), pp. 11ff.

F.A. Sullivan indicates that this axiom was first offered by Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria, as follows:

> Be not deceived, my brethren: if anyone follows a maker of schism, he does not inherit the Kingdom of God; if anyone walks in strange doctrine, he has no part in the passion.[19]

It is argued that the intention of Ignatius in this passage was only to warn Christian schismatics and heretics in order to assure the unity of the Church, and not to condemn those who belonged to other religions.[20] In the third century, too, the above statement of Ignatius was formulated by Origen in the East as "Let no man deceive himself, outside the Church no one is saved", and Cyprian in the West as "if there was one who outside the ark of Noah could escape, then also one who is outside the Church may be saved."[21] Thus, it was argued that when Origen and Cyprian formulated the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* it was directed against their contemporary schismatics and not those who belonged to other religions. Concerning the application of this axiom in the first three centuries, Sullivan argues that when the early Church Fathers spoke of those who were excluded from salvation by reason of their being outside the Church, they were directing this as a warning to Christians who were considered to be guilty of committing the grave sin of heresy and schism, since there is no indication that that axiom was applied to anyone other than Christians at a time when Christians were persecuted as a minority.[22] Paul Knitter stresses that during this period the early Church Fathers – Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen – acknowledged the availability of an authentic revelation and salvation for all people without making any distinction.[23] These arguments imply that in the first three centuries the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* applied only to heretics and schismatics in order to keep the unity of the Church and did not apply to those who belonged to other religions. Therefore, the question arises as to how the axiom started to apply to those who were not members of the Church.

At the end of the fourth century when Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman empire, the Church Fathers widened the scope of the axiom by applying it not only to the Christian heretics but also to those who belonged to other religions.[24] Especially with the influence of St. Augustine, the attitude of the Church towards those who belonged to other religions began to shift toward exclusivism, since according to Augustine, the statements of Mark 16:15-16 indicate that faith and baptism together are necessary for salvation. Further, Augustine stressed that those who had heard the message of the Gospel but had not become Christians were guilty because of their rejection of the Gospel message, and their salvation could be found only in the Church.[25] Thus, the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* began to apply to anyone who was outside the Church such as pagans and Jews. Much later Muslims, referred to as Turks, were added to this list. In short, there was no longer any hope of salvation for anybody who did not accept Christ by becoming a

---

[19] Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church: Tracing the History of the Catholic Church Response* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 18.

[20] Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church*, pp. 18-19.

[21] Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation: The Salvific Meaning of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Poona: Pontifical Athenaeum, 1971), p. 13.

[22] Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church*, p. 23.

[23] Knitter, *No Other Name?,* p. 121.

[24] Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church,* p. 27.

[25] Sullivan*, Salvation outside the Church,* p. 35.

member of the Church after hearing about him.[26] Prior to Augustine, the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* applied only to those who had spoiled the unity of the Church by separating themselves from her. But, from Augustine onwards it began to be used as a delimiting means to exclude from salvation those who did not belong to the Church.

The Magisterial statements of the fourth Lateran council [1215] declared, for the first time that "there is indeed one universal Church of the faithful outside which no one at all is saved."[27] In his bull *Unam Sanctam* [1302], Pope Boniface VIII moved the axiom a step further by expressing the necessity of acknowledging papal authority as well as being a member of the Church in order to reach salvation. He declared this as follows: ". . . outside of whom (Church) there is neither salvation nor remission of sins . . . it is absolutely necessary for salvation of all human beings that they submit to the Roman Pontiff."[28] In the Council of Florence (1442), too, for the first time in her history the Catholic Church officially declared that:

> no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life. . . . No one can be saved, no matter how much alms one has given, even if shedding one's blood for the name of Christ, unless one remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.[29]

As we can see from the historical development of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*, in the course of time the scope of exclusiveness of the Catholic Church was getting wider and during the medieval period, when knowledge of the wider world was severely limited and Western Christen-dom threatened by the Muslim Ottoman army, there was almost nobody who questioned the implication of the above axiom. However with the discovery of America in 1492 and the voyage of Vasco da Gama around the Cape of Good Hope to India in 1497, the eyes of Western Christians were opened to the existence of whole countries and continents of people who had never had a chance to hear and respond to the message of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, attempts began to be made to rethink the Church's attitude to other religions in the light of this new and wider knowledge of other people in other continents. These changes came about in the characteristic Roman Catholic way of continuing to pay allegiance to the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* in its original form, but at the same time adding further inter-pretative principles which would alter the dogma as far as its practical effect was concerned.[30] For instance, Pope Pius IX in his Allocution *Singulari Quadam* (1854) stated that:

> It must, of course, be held as of faith that no one can be saved outside the apostolic Roman Church, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood. Yet, on the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who are in ignorance of true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.[31]

---

[26] Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 113.

[27] J. Neuner & J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Banglore: Theological Publication in India, 1996), p. 16.

[28] Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 281.

[29] Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 383-384.

[30] See Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, pp. 69ff.

[31] Neuner& Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 386.

As can be seen from this passage, for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church an exception was made for those whose ignorance was invincible. Being a member of the Church was not necessary for those who were in ignorance of the Christian faith. Although Pope Pius IX did not spell out how those people would attain salvation, his statement can be regarded as a positive development, since it implied that there would be the possibility of salvation without embracing the Christian faith.

Another Roman Catholic stratagem to get round the implications of a literal interpretation of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* makes use of the terms "implicit faith" and "a baptism of desire." Examples of this can be found in Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis* and his letter to the Archbishop of Boston in 1949. For example, in *Mystici Corporis* [1943] Pope Pius XII stated that those who have a certain unconscious desire and wish to join the Church may be related to the Mystical Body of Christ, and, thus, they may attain salvation.[32] In his response to the Archbishop of Boston, concerning the Leonard Feeney case[33] Pope Pius XII stated that implicit faith and baptism of desire can be enough to reach salvation.[34]

Thus, we may conclude that the traditional Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* went through the following stages from its advent prior to Vatican II. Firstly, the axiom was produced by the Church Fathers to fight Christian heretics and schismatics in order to reestablish the unity of the Church. Secondly, after the third century, through the influence of St. Augustine, its scope was widened to include those who did not become members of the Church, and up to the age of discovery it continued to be understood literally, i.e. in an exclusive way. Thirdly, after the age of discovery, influenced by various events and the inspiration of theologians the Church authorities started to use different expressions such as "implicit faith" or "baptism of desire" to lighten its strongly exclusivist character. These inclusive expressions can be regarded as positive developments as it seems that in the end sincere members of other religious traditions were assumed as members of the Church in some way. Because of this implication, these kinds of inclusive terms can be regarded as bridges through which the Church can go beyond her exclusive attitude toward people of other faiths. In this connection, as John Hick rightly argues the terms, "implicit faith" and "baptism of desire" should be regarded as "epicycles" which "have served a useful purpose," in order to rescue the Church from exclusivism. But, nevertheless they can only operate as an interim measure, since they are fundamentally weak arguments, accepted for the sake of intuitively accepted conclusions until better arguments are found."[35]

1.3. Theological Interpretation of Non-Christian Religions

---

[32] Neuner& Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 300-301.

[33] In this case, Archbishop Feeney was excommunicated by the Pope because of his insistence on a literal interpretation and application of the dogma "outside the Church there is no salvation," along the lines of the Council of Florence by defining a dogma of faith, and anyone who denies it, or waters it down, is guilty of heresy. This literal under-standing of the traditional dogma means that there is no possibility of salvation for those who do not live and die as a Roman Catholic. (Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church*, pp. 135-136).

[34] Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 306. Pope Pius XII declared that, "To gain eternal salvation it is not always required that a person be incorporated in reality *(reapse)* as a member of the Church, but it is required that one belong to it at least in desire and longing *(voto et desiderio)*. It is not necessary that this desire be explicit. When one is invincibly ignorant, God also accepts an implicit desire, so called because it is contained in the good disposition of soul by which a person wants his or her will to be conformed to God's will."

[35] Hick, *God and Universe of Faiths* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993 first published in 1973), p. 124.

Parallel to the above official developments in the under-standing of the traditional axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, the twentieth century has witnessed the rise of individual theologians endeavouring to find theologically sound and positive interpretations of the axiom in order to develop a more positive Catholic theology of religions. After the age of discovery although a number of theologians produced fragmentary comments concerning the position of non-Christians, they were not able to have much influence on the official teaching. As a result they became marginalized, having ideas outside the official view.[36] But after the second half of the twentieth century, theologians began to influence the official Catholic teaching indirectly, as we will see below. Within this context, the views of two Catholic thinkers, Louis Massignon and Karl Rahner, will be briefly considered. Massignon was a French Islamicisit and mystic who played an influential role in the developments of Christian-Muslim understanding in the twentieth century. Rahner was a dogmatic theologian who dealt with the question of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions before Vatican II. Both of them have influenced the conciliar teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

1.3.1. Louis Massignon and Karl Rahner

Louis Massignon[37] was one of the leading Catholic Islamicists whose thoughts influenced the official Catholic attitude towards Muslims and led the Church to open up dialogue with the Muslim world. S.H. Nasr considers him as "a sort of guiding light for a whole later generation of Catholics interested in Christian-Muslim relations."[38] Basetti-Sani states that Massignon, during his life, was actively involved in developing Christian-Muslim relations by setting up the *Badaliya*, a spiritual organisation, in order to introduce Jesus Christ to Muslims "by means of fraternal understanding and zealous charity."[39] Because of the above importance of Massignon in the development of Christian-Muslim relations, we will summarize his views on Islam and highlight his contribution to the texts of the Second Vatican Council concerning Muslims.

Massignon's most important contribution to the changing Catholic views on Islam was firstly, his inclusion of Muslims in the Abrahamic tradition by connecting them to Abraham via Ishmael. By doing this, he considered Islam within the context of God's plan of salvation which was promised to Abraham. Secondly, he relates the three monotheistic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, together by pointing out that Judaism is the religion of hope, Christianity is the religion of love and Islam is the religion of faith. He explained this argument as follows:

> Islam is first and foremost a testimony (*shahada*) through which we express our adoration for the only and merciful God of Abraham. If Israel is rooted in hope and Christianity is devoted to charity, then Islam is centred around faith. Islamic observance is first and foremost the memorandum [the recitation] of a creed, while Jewish observance ritualises the commandments provided in the sworn covenant

---

[36] See Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, p. 82ff.

[37] Concerning the life of Massignon, see Giulio Basetti-Sani, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist; Prophet of Interreligious Reconciliation* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974); Herbert Mason, *Testimonies and Reflections; Essays of Louis Massignon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989); Bert Breiner, "Louis Massignon - An Interpretive Essay", *Newsletter*, CSIC, 14 (1985), pp. 19-26.

[38] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "In Commemoration of Louis Massignon: Catholic Scholar, Islamicist and Mystic", in *Presence de Louis Massignon; Hommages et temoignages* (Paris: Editions Maisonneuve Et Larose, 1987), p. 55.

[39] Basetti-Sani, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist*, pp. 91-92.

and Christian observance, after the truth of its creed and the obligations of its own commandments, uses the sacra-ments to sanctify the virtues.[40]

Within this context of the Abrahamic tradition, Massig-non urged Christians to recognise the Qur'an as an authentic religious mystical source, since, according to him, the Qur'an is in line with the Old and New Testament confirming their truth. The Qur'anic confirmation of the virgin birth of Jesus and veneration of Jesus and his mother Mary led Massignon to reach this conclusion. What attracted Massignon in the Qur'an was its assertion that there is grace in human history and that Mary and Jesus are signs of God. In this it takes no advantage for itself. According to Massignon, the Qur'an, as a revelation transmitted to Muhammad by the angel, operates as a mediator between God and human beings.[41]

Concerning the Prophet Muhammad, Massignon dis-missed the belief that Muhammad was the 'anti-Christ' as certain sections of the Church had presented him in the past.[42] He emphasised the sincerity of Muhammad, noting the following points as proofs. In Mecca, he received revelation to preach. He behaved like a prophet and tried to explore the unity [Oneness] of God. In Medina, he established such foundations as ritual prayer. He rejected the Jewish claims concerning Jesus by confirming his virgin birth. He saved Ishmael from being excluded from the divine promise. Although Massignon acknowledged that Muhammad was a true and sincere prophet, he considered his role in this prophethood to be that of a *prophete negatif,* in the sense that he denies God being more than what he affirms him to be.[43] Thus, Massignon contributed to the Copernican shift in the Christian attitude towards Islam by insisting on the need to move "from mission to dialogue" in Christian theology.[44] In this sense, he meant that "instead of viewing Islam from outside, and 'attacking it tooth and nail', one must situate oneself, 'by a Copernican revolution, at the very centre of Islam, there where that spark of truth dwells from which all the rest is invisibly and mysteriously sustained'."[45]

With regard to Massignon's impact on the conciliar texts regarding Muslims, Christian Troll indicates that Massignon influenced the contemporary theological developments of the Catholic Church because of his scholarly authority and his friendship with the Catholic hierarchy, such as Msgr. J.B. Montini who became Pope by taking the name Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council. Although, Massignon himself did not take part in the preparation of the conciliar texts on Muslims because of his death in 1962, Troll argues that his views on Islam became leading guidelines for those who prepared the consiliarose texts.

Troll continues his argument concerning the influence of Massignon on the conciliar texts on Muslims by insisting that if those texts are compared with Massignon's views, it is not difficult to see his effect. To show this, he points to the similarities between Massignon's views and the council statement as follows:

> The Church looks with esteem on the Muslims . . . Abraham seen as the type and
> symbol of Muslim faith . . . The special mention of the veneration in which many

---

[40] Basetti-Sani, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist*, p. 110.

[41] Pierre Rocalve, *Louis Massignon et L'Islam* (Damas: Institut Francais De Damas), 1993, pp. 37-43.

[42] Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", p. 10.

[43] Rocalve, *Louis Massignon et L'Islam*, pp. 45-49.

[44] See Karl- Josef Kuschel, *Abraham; A Symbol of Hope for Jews, Christians and Muslims* (London: SCM Press), 1995, p. 219.

[45] Caspar, *Traite De Theologie Musulmane: Histoire De la Pensée Religieuse Musulmane*, Tome 1 (Rome: P.I.S.A.I, 1987), p. 80.

Muslims hold Mary the Virgin . . . The special mention of Muslim prayer and fasting which had been the subject of such deep interpretations by Massignon and had been perceived and repeatedly presented by him as a precious spiritual link between Muslims and Christians.[46]

Troll concludes his evaluation of Massignon's influence on the Catholic Church's positive attitude towards Muslims by stressing that "Massignon has singularly contributed towards changing Christian-Muslim relations from a sterile and destructive confrontation to a fruitful dialogue and cooperation in the service of the One God of all human-kind."[47]

Karl Rahner a prolific German Jesuit whom many consider to be the most influential Catholic theologian in the second half of the twentieth century, has developed a phrase concerning the position of non-Christians which has become the trade mark of his views and the focus of discussions about what is generally called Catholic "inclusivism" since the 1960's.[48] During the Second Vatican Council Rahner exercised enormous influence on the final shape of many conciliar documents as one of the official theologians of the Council.[49]

Rahner started to reflect upon the position of non-Christians and their religions in his lecture "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions"[50] delivered in 1961 before the Council and continued to write about this issue after the Council.[51] In our examination of Rahner's views concerning the position of non-Christians we will focus our attention on his earliest writing "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" (1961) for two reasons: first, this essay reflects his main teaching concerning the subject; second, this essay was produced by Rahner before the Council.

Rahner's main intention in his views on non-Christians was to break down the tradition of *pessimistic* Christian exclusiveness and to speak *optimistically* of God and His saving will.[52] For that reason he is regarded by Catholics as a leader of a new way of thinking in their approach to other religions by emphasising that these religions are not only reflections of man's natural cognition of God. According to Rahner, divine religions are something more than mere expressions of "natural religions", because they include the mediation of grace and thus add something to

---

[46] Troll, "Islam and Christianity Interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Christian Scholar of Islam: the case of Louis Massignon (1883-1962)", *IMA*, 15 (1984), pp. 163-164.

[47] Troll, "Islam and Christianity Interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Christian Scholar of Islam", p. 165; also see Caspar, *Traite De Theologie Musulmane*, p. 81; Neal Robinson, "Massignon, Vatican II and Islam: As an Abrahamic Religion", *ICMR*, 2/2 (1991), pp. 182-205.

[48] See Maurice Boutin, "Anonymous Christianity: A Paradigm for Interreligious Encounter", *JES*, 20 (1983), pp. 602-629.

[49] See William V. Dych, Karl Rahner, *Oustanding Christian Thinkers Series* (London: Geoffrey Chapman), 1992, pp.12-13.

[50] Karl Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", *Theological Investigations*, v.5 (London: Longman& Todd, 1966).

[51] These writings are: Rahner, "Anonymous Christians" in *Theological Investigations*, v.6 (London: Longman & Todd, 1969), pp. 390-398; Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church", in *Theological Investigations*, v.12 (London: Longman & Todd, 1974), pp.161-178; Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian'" in *Theological Investigations*, v.14 (London: Longman & Todd, 1976), pp. 280-298; Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and Explicit Faith" *in Theological Investigations,* v. 16 (London: Longman & Todd, 1979), pp. 52-59; Rahner, "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions", in *Theological Investigations*, v. 17 (London: Longman & Todd, 1981), pp. 39-50; Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation", in *Theological Investigations*, v. 18 (London: Longman & Todd, 1984), pp. 288-295.

[52] Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 29.

man's relation with God as creature to his Creator.[53] Rahner argues that non-Christian religions "not only contain elements of natural knowledge of God but also supernatural instances of the grace which God presents to man because of Christ."[54]

Rahner for the first time spells out his views on Christianity's relation to non-Christian religions under four theses. Before elaborating on these theses it is appropriate to recall Rahner's main objective in developing them. He says

> We simply want to try to describe a few of those basic traits of a Catholic dogmatic inter-pretation of the non-Christian religions which may help us to come closer to a solution of the question about the Christian position in regard to the religious pluralism in the world today.[55]

Within the context of this objective, Rahner develops his first thesis by announcing Christianity as the only "absolute religion." He says "Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion intended for all men, which cannot recognise any other religion beside itself as of equal right."[56] He also defines Christianity as the valid and lawful religion through which God provides salvation to all people in Christ.

The question of how this Christian salvation could be available for non-Christians led Rahner to develop his second thesis as follows:

> Until the moment when the gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion does not merely contain elements of a natural knowl-edge of God, elements, moreover, mixed up with human depravity which is the result of the original sin and later aberrations. It con-tains also supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to man as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason a non-Christian religion can be recog-nised as a lawful religion.[57]

This thesis, as can be seen, is very much related to Rahner's understanding of the relation between nature and grace. For, according to him, nature and grace are not terms which describe phases conceived as entirely separate or distinct in the lives of either persons or communities. Rather, according to him, grace is conceived as operating in a person's life prior to any conscious response to the gospel and also as operating anonymously in that person's religion. Rahner believed that it is unlikely that anyone could find salvation without being a member of a religion, since humans are by nature social beings, and since religion itself is both a social as well as an individual phenomenon.[58] Because of this, Rahner regarded non-Christian religions as "lawful" religions given by God to persons in a given social and historical context to be the means through which they can be saved. Alan Race concludes that we may say Rahner regards non-Christian

---

[53] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 131.
[54] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 121.
[55] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 117.
[56] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 118.
[57] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 121; A lawful religion means here an institutional religion whose 'use' by man at a certain period of time can be regarded on the whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and, thus, for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation (p. 125).
[58] See Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp.122-126.

religions as "vehicles of salvation, available to individuals in their particular and differing historical settings, and given by God for the purposes of achieving the saving relationship."[59] However Rahner in this thesis puts a time limitation for non-Christian religions by stressing that non-Christian religions were "lawful" reli-gions which contained supernatural grace-filled elements until Christianity came into the world. This implies that they are no longer lawful religions.

This first thesis that Christianity is the absolute religion and the source of salvation, and the second thesis that non-Christians and their religions are not excluded from God's salvation, led Rahner to develop his third thesis in order to reconcile the first and second theses to determine the position of non-Christians and their religions in relation to Christianity. In this thesis, Rahner points out:

> If the second thesis is correct, then Christianity does not simply confront the member of an extra-Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who can and must be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian.[60]

Here, Rahner is expressing his main argument con-cerning non-Christians by claiming that though those people are not aware of it, their religions become lawful ways of salvation through Jesus Christ, who is anonymously present within them.

In his fourth and final thesis, Rahner outlines the Church's function in the light of the logical conclusion of the previous theses. He argues that in an anonymous Christian world the Church should regard herself not:

> as the exclusive community of those who have a claim to salvation, but rather as the historical tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church.[61]

Because of this hiddenness, Rahner argues that the mission of the Church should be to serve non-Christians in the name of Christ with the hope that one day their implicit and hidden desire will be explicit by becoming members of the Church. So, the most significant side of this thesis is that the aim of the Church is to be an example for others, not only to make them members.

In short, according to Rahner's understanding all grace is by definition supernatural grace. On the basis of this, he succeeds in creating a foundation for a new type of theological approach to non-Christian religions. This new model reconciles and holds together the universal salvific will of God, and that salvation comes through God in Christ and in his Church.

As has been observed up to now, these two influential Catholic thinkers, Massignon and Rahner, have made many positive statements laying the foundation for a different approach in the development of a positive Catholic teaching on non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular.

1.4. The Second Vatican Council and Non-Christian Religions

---

[59] Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism,* p. 47.
[60] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 131.
[61] Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p.133.

In considering the teaching of the Second Vatican Council we will focus our attention mainly on its most significant document, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions."[62] (This document is known as *Nostra Aetate* because of its opening words.) In doing so, we will also refer to the related statements of the other docu-ments especially "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,"[63] which is known as *Lumen Gentium*. In our examination of these documents, our primary purpose will be to observe the teaching of the Second Vatican Council about Muslims, following its general teaching about non-Christians. A brief history of the *Nostra Aetate* records how and why the Catholic Church produced it.

As noted earlier, the Second Vatican Council was regarded as an important beginning for the Catholic Church in contacting non-Christians and their religious traditions. This Council was formally inaugurated on the 11th October, 1962, by Pope John XXIII, in accordance with his announce-ment on the 25th January, 1959. It went on until 8th December, 1965. There were altogether four sessions, one each year. After the first session Pope John XXIII died and his successor Paul VI was elected in his place. According to Pope John XXIII, the need for such a council was to update the Church [*aggiornamento*], since he thought that the Catholic Church was becoming outdated and less relevant in the context of modernity and of contemporary world events.[64] In this council sixteen documents were agreed upon and promulgated. There is no doubt that the most important of these documents concerning non-Christian religions was *Nostra Aetate*. For, until this declaration the Catholic Church was not officially interested in establishing a dialogical relationship with non-Christians and thus had not produced any positive official document on this issue.

At the beginning of the Council, Pope John XXIII did not make any statement on non-Christian religions with the exception of Judaism. At the time he was greatly concerned about anti-Semitism within the Church. Some Jewish leaders were fearful that this Council would increase anti-Semitism. The French Jewish scholar, Jules Isaac, outlined this anxiety of Jews to the Pope in a private conversation.[65] Thereupon, Pope John appointed Cardinal Bea to prepare a conciliar declaration that would be concerned with Jewish people in order to clarify who the Jews were and what the relation between Church and synagogue should be.[66] The text was completed only after the death of Pope John XXXII and introduced by Cardinal Bea to the Council as part of the document on ecumenism on 19th November in 1963.[67]

But it met with opposition especially from Arab and Asian bishops. A number of bishops considered the declara-tion to be outside the Catholic concern for ecumenism. Some bishops who

---

[62] See "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions", in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II; The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975, pp. 738-742.

[63] See "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church", in Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, pp. 350-423.

[64] Thomas Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", *IBMR*, 9 (1985), p. 154.

[65] John M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions; Introduction and Commentary", in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, v. 3 (London: 1969), pp. 17-18; Tamara Sonn, "The Dialogue between Islam and the Judeo-Christian Tradition" in C. Weihsun and G. E. Spiegler, eds., *An Analysis and Sourcebook of Developments Since 1945; Religious Issues and Interreligious Dialogues* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 440.

[66] Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", p. 155; Sonn, "The Dialogue between Islam and the Judeo-Christian Tradition" pp. 440-441; also see Reinhard Neudecker, "The Catholic Church and the Jewish People", in R. Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987)*, v.3 (New York: Paulist Press), 1989, pp. 283-323;

[67] Robert Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II: On the Tenth Anniversary of Nostra Aetate", *Encounter*, 21 (1976), p. 1.

came from Arab countries regarded this text as support for the political state of Israel.[68] Others insisted that if the Council invited Christians to show a more positive attitude towards Jews, then a similar attitude should be encouraged towards Islam. Upon these objections, the text was postponed for further discussion and revision.[69] Mean-while, the desire of some Council Fathers, emerging positive ideas about Islam and the influence of Massignon led Pope Paul VI to ask the conciliar commission to prepare a text on Islam like the one prepared on the Jews.[70] Finally, the prepared text which deals with non-Christian religions was discussed and promulgated under the title of "Declaration on the Relationship to Non-Christian-Religions" at the 7th session of the council on the 28th October, 1965.[71]

The Finnish theologian, Heikki Ruokanen, indicates that at the time of the promulgation of the *Nostra Aetate* there were some conservative bishops who opposed its promul-gation theologically by arguing that this document would lead to indifference to the Church's missionary activity and, even, put an end it by regarding all religions as of the same value.[72] In response to this sort of criticism, Cardinal Bea expressed the main aim of the *Nostra Aetate* as follows:

> The purpose of the Declaration is not a complete exposition of these religions, nor of their discrepancies among themselves and from the Catholic religion. This council rather intends through this Declaration to show that there is a bond between man and religions which is meant to be the basis of dialogue and of collaboration. Therefore, greater attention is paid to those things which unite us, and are helpful in a mutual approach.[73]

As has been seen in this brief history of the emergence of the *Nostra Aetate*, this most important and controversial document of the Second Vatican Council on non-Christian religions came out as a result of objections of some Council Fathers to the Council's intention to produce a document on the Jews. Now, we will move to observe how this accidental document deals with non-Christians and their religions.

1.4.1. *Nostra Aetate*

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, with the declaration of *Nostra Aetate,* non-Christian religions began to be regarded as entities that the Church should respect. Christians and non-Christians were encouraged to dialogue with each other. Within this context, this declaration insisted upon the essential unity of the human race, based on the fact that all men and women have God as their Creator and their Ultimate Goal.[74] Ruokanen remarks that in this declaration the Church wanted to express common elements which unite all religions by leaving aside offensive

---

[68] Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", pp. 122-123.

[69] Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II", p. 2.

[70] Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions at the Second Vatican Council", *IBMR*, 9(1985), p. 56.

[71] See Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", p. 129; Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in Catholic Church since Vatican II*, p. 28.

[72] Roukanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions,* p. 42.

[73] Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", p. 157.

[74] *Nostra Aetate* 1:1

terminology such as "pagan", "idolatry", "error" or "fallacy" terms which the Church had been using previously in her state-ments about non-Christians and their religions.[75]

The opening sentence of this declaration notes the idea of progress of humanity towards unity as follows:

> In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions.[76]

This expression also explains the reason why the Church has to possess a more positive attitude towards non-Christians. The second sentence indicates that the Church has a special duty to promote this unity of humanity by declaring:

> Ever aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she [the Church] reflects at the outset on what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them.[77]

According to this passage, the Church takes the respon-sibility of promoting the unity of humankind and fellowship among people and nations.

Nostra Aetate further stresses the brotherhood of all people irrespective of their race, colour, religion, and other perspectives of life by maintaining that Christians:

> cannot truly pray to God if [they] treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image. Man's relation to God the Father and man's relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that Scripture says, 'he who does not love, does not know God (Jn. 4:8). There is no basis therefore, either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people and people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it. Therefore, the Church reproves any discrimination against people, any harassment of them on the basis of their race, colour, condition in life or religion.[78]

According to this passage there are two important essential foundations of the brotherhood of all people. The first, God is Creator of all people. That is, all people have been created by the same God; the second, the dignity of the human being because of his/her creation in God's image. Because of these common elements between Christians and non-Christians, the Church urges her followers to treat others with respect and love, since their relationship to God depends on their relationship to others.[79]

In this declaration, the Catholic Church makes a clear examination of the religions of the world by defining what is common for all people as follows:

---

[75] Roukanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 7.

[76] *Nostra Aetate* 1:1.

[77] *Nostra Aetate* 1:1.

[78] *Nostra Aetate* 5:1-3.

[79] See Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, pp. 50-51.

All men form one community. This is so, because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving design extend to all men against the day when the elect are gathered in the holy city which is illuminated by the glory of God, and in whose splendour all peoples will walk.[80]

By taking this common point, the *Nostra Aetate* considers all religions as expressions of the human search for truth. In this respect, it implies that the both moral and the religious aspects of any religion may be acceptable as means to reach salvation. Thus, for the first time the Roman Catholic Church acknowledged as legitimate both the search for God by those outside herself and the kernel of truth in non-Christian religions. In this respect, the *Nostra Aetate* states:

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.[81]

In this passage the Council Fathers spell out one of the most significant points of the *Nostra Aetate*. For it implies that the Catholic Church implicitly accepts the possibility of revelation in other religions by acknowledging what is true and holy in them. But, on the other hand when we investigate this passage deeply the following questions stand out: Who will decide what is true and holy in non-Christian religions? By which criterion will it be decided? In our opinion, Ruokanen's analysis of this passage answers these questions.

Ruokanen, in his comment on the above passage, argues that "religions contain religious truth only insofar as they reflect something of the Christ-centred truth, or have some sort of reference to the truth revealed in Christianity, or at least seek that truth which became plain in Christ."[82] For according to him, the Latin verb *veritas,* which is used in the original passage of the *Nostra Aetate*, expresses the Christian truth. This, also, can be seen clearly in the following con-ciliar expressions which declare Jesus Christ as the truth. *Ipse Christus est veritas* 'Christ himself is the embodiment of the truth'[83] which is *veritas revelata.*[84] V*eritas catholica*[85] or *veritas evangelica.*[86]

In the light of this interpretation of Ruokanen, what is true and holy in non-Christian religions depends on how much they reflect the Christian truth. In other words, the acceptability of the

---

[80] *Nostra Aetate* 1:2; When we look at the book of "Revelation" in the New Testament, we encounter the similar passage dealing with the eschatological vision of the nations (Revelation, 21, 22). According to K. Cracknell, the expressions of this passage deal with the eschatology of nations and peoples and challenge the theologies which speak of the eschatology of a single people, and which suggest that God has but one single pattern of working in his saving action toward humankind. If God wants to save all nations and so He is at work in various ways to do this, Christians have to accept that their partners in the process of dialogue have truth in their holy books and their religious traditions are valid. (K. Cracknell, *Towards A New Relationship, Christians and People of Other Faith* (London: Epwort Press, 1987), pp. 51-52).

[81] *Nostra Aetate* 2:2

[82] Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, pp.59-60.

[83] *Ad Gentes* 8:1.

[84] *Lumen Gentium* 35:4.

[85] *Lumen Gentium* 25:1.

[86] *Nostra Aetate* 4:6; Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions,* p. 60; also see Pietro Rossano, "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism in Roman Catholic Perspective", in G.H. Anderson & T.F. Stransky, eds., *Christ's Lordship & Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 96-110; Paul Hacker, "The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions: Some Critical and Positive Reflections", *ZMR*, 2 (1971), pp. 81-97.

religious truth of non-Christian religions by the Church depends on their compatibility with the Christian truth. This, too, means that non-Christian religions do not have independent revelation apart from Christian revelation. But what they have is a partial reflection of the exhaustive Christian revelation in Jesus Christ. Further-more, Ruokanen asks how much and what kind of religious truth the *Nostra Aetate* sees in non-Christian religions. He points out that two different answers can be given to this question. On the one hand, the Church seems to admit that there is much good in regard to common human morals in the other religions. On the other hand, she advocates that these moral goods and religious truths of other religions are to be tested by the Christian revelation and truth.[87] The following passage of another conciliar document, *Lumen Gentium,* supports Ruokanen's argument: "whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the gospel and given by Him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life. . . ."[88]

At this point, we may say that although the Council Fathers acknowledged the availability of goodness, truth and holiness in the life of those who belong to other religions, on the other hand they indicated that those elements are associated with evil, darkened by the absence of the light of the Gospel and restricted in their perfection by their separation from their author.[89]

After accepting the truth of other religions, provided that they are compatible with the Christian truth, the *Nostra Aetate* invites Christians to acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods which are found in non-Christian religions and their adherents through "collaboration with the followers of other religions."[90] This declaration also suggests three guidelines to show Christians how to behave to non-Christians when they encounter them. "The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions while wit-nessing to their own faith and way of life."[91] As we can see in this expression, the Church recommends to her adherents three ways of relating to followers of other religious traditions. The first one is to enter into discussion or dialogue [*colloquia*] with them. The second is to collaborate [*collaboratio*] with them on social issues such as justice, world peace, human welfare and social ethics. Thirdly, during the first and the second stages to tell them about one's own beliefs and way of life and enter into dialogue with them.[92] In fact, not only Christians but also non-Christians would do well to follow these guidelines when they encounter followers of other religious traditions, because they can be seen to be some of the necessary conditions of a fruitful dialogue. Those who participate in that process will have the opportunity get to know his/her dialogue partner. After this stage, the participants can reach a position in which they can work together in order to solve their common problems. During the first and second stages, the participants may find opportunities to tell their own beliefs to each other not to convert them but to share their religious experiences. We turn now to examine closely the Council's statements about Muslims.

1.5. The Second Vatican Council and Muslims

---

[87] Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 61; Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions", p. 58.

[88] *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

[89] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, pp. 21-22.

[90] *Nostra Aetate* 2:3

[91] *Nostra Aetate* 2:3.

[92] See Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, pp. 86-87.

As mentioned above, the Second Vatican Council, at its beginning, had no intention of making any statements concerning Muslims or the adherents of other religions except the Jews. This intention had to change following the reactions and objections of Arab and Asian bishops to the declaration about Jews, and the influence of some Orienta-lists, such as Massignon. As a result, a more positive attitude towards Muslims began to come out as the Council proceeded, and at the end two important passages emerged. One is in *Lumen Gentium* 16 and the other is in *Nostra Aetate* 3. We will analyse these two texts together by taking into account their main theological themes, namely, the monotheistic character of Muslim belief, Abraham as the common father, Muslim veneration of Jesus and his mother Mary, the eschatological belief of Muslims, the religious and moral life of Muslims, and the possibility of salvation for Muslims, so as to expose their implications for Christian-Muslim dialogue. The reason we take these two texts together is that although their promulgation did not occur at the same time, they originate from the same Council context. While doing this, firstly, we will explain what the conciliar statements say; secondly, we will discuss what they accomplished; finally, we will do an assessment of those statements.

1.5.1. Muslim Doctrine of God

Concerning the Muslim doctrine of God, both *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* declare:
> Muslims worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to man.[93]

> [the Muslims] acknowledge the Creator and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.[94]

As can be seen from these two statements, the Council officially declares that Muslims worship God, not Muhammad or other gods as was claimed in medieval times.[95] In doing so, the Roman Catholic Church acknowl-edges the first and most important article of Muslim faith, namely the oneness of God (*tawhid)* by using the Qur'anic terms such as Merciful, Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.[96] Now, we will search out what the Council Fathers mean by these attributes of God.

God is Living and Subsistent (*al-hayy al-qayyum*): This attribute of God was expressed by the Council Fathers in Qur'anic terms. The reason for this, Caspar remarks, was to avoid such terms that "would have no meaning for Muslims or could be misunderstood" by them.[97] God is Merciful and Almighty [*al-Rahman- al-Rahim* and a*l-Qadir ala kulli shay*]: Here, the Council Fathers mention the most frequently used Qur'anic attributes of God. Muslims always repeat these

---

[93] *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

[94] *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

[95] In the medieval age, it was claimed that Muslims were idolaters, because they did not worship one God but a false trinity which consisted of Tervagan, Muhammad, and Apollo (R.W. Southern*, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harward Unv. Press, 1962), p. 32; Albert Hourani, *Europe and Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 9; Thomas Michael, "Christianity and Islam; Reflections on Recent Teachings of the Church", *Encounter*, 112 (1985), p. 3.

[96] Related Qur'anic verses see *Qur'an* 1:3; 2:255; 112:1ff; Concerning the common points of Christian and Muslim doctrine of God see Maurice Borrmans, "The Doctrinal Basis Common to Christians and Muslims and Different Areas of Convergence in Action", *JES*, 14/1 (1977).

[97] Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II; 1-7; see, Qur'an 2:255.

attributes in their prayers and daily lives. Concerning the significance of these two attributes, Borrmans remarks that to stress that God is Merciful and Almighty "means that God's mastery over everything is tempered by His Mercy. . . ."[98]

God has spoken to men: It is believed in both Islam and Christianity that God has spoken to humankind in various ways such as through the prophets, Jesus Christ and the Qur'an. While both Christians and Muslims believe that God has spoken to them through the prophets, they differ on the way this has happened. For instance, while Christians maintain that God has spoken through his son Jesus Christ, Muslims believe that He has spoken to them in the Qur'an. The Council's reference to God as Speaker or in other words Revealer can be regarded as having a very positive development, indeed. For, although it does not explicitly indicate that God has spoken to Muslims in the Qur'an through the Prophet Muhammad, one can draw this conclusion. This conclusion can mean that the Catholic Church acknowledges Islam as a prophetic religion like Judaism and Christianity, since it refers implicitly to the Islamic revelation, the Qur'an, without passing any judge-ment. In this respect, Borrmans points out:

> the Council's intention is not to evaluate the authenticity of the revelation to which Islam appeals, but to recognize that Islam, unlike all theism which originate solely from human efforts, claims to be the fruit of a personal, divine word and therefore a revelation in the strict sense. The Muslim believer accepts the Word of God because God reveals, and this allows Christians to regard the faith of such a believer as subjectively supernatural and therefore salvific.[99]

God is humankind's judge on the last day [*malik yevm-al- dinn*]: Here, the Council announces that God is the Judge on the Last Day. By doing this, it indicates that both Muslims and Christians believe there is no one who will judge mankind other than God on the Last Day.

As has been observed so far, the Council's acknowledge-ment of Muslims as fellow believers in God with Christians, should be regarded by Muslims as a very positive develop-ment, since it rules out any supposition that Muslims worship a God other than Christians worship.[100] In other words, the Council stressed that the God of Muslims is the true God whom the Christians worship. However, besides these very positive developments, there are some short-comings in the above conciliar statements. For example, the Council Fathers carefully chose those divine attributes which substantially conform to the attributes of God in Christianity.[101] By doing this, the Council gave the impression that the Muslim and Christian doctrine of God is the same. However, as Caspar rightly remarks, "The focal point and the nature itself of the faith in God in Islam and within Christianity are radically different."[102] For that reason, the Council should have expressed the difference to avoid misunderstanding by those who do not know anything about the Muslim doctrine of God. This misunder-standing can lead Christians to Christianise Islam. Some Christian

---

[98] Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", *PMVB 74* (1978), p. 12.

[99] Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 12.

[100] David Thomas, "A Christian Theology of Islam", unpublished essay, CSIC, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, p. 1-10.

[101] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 40.

[102] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 40.

scholars of Islam such as Basetti-Sani and Kenneth Cragg have been accused of doing this by their Christian colleagues.[103]

Another shortcoming in the conciliar statements on Muslims was the omission of the second part of the first article of the Muslim creed, namely that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Although it can be argued that the Council implicitly referred to the Prophet Muhammad, the Council Fathers preferred to be silent on this issue. In this respect, Farrugia says that "any possible reference to him which might be understood as indicative of some sort of theological appreciation of the most important prophet for the Muslims" was omitted.[104] Anawati, too, indicates that the Council Fathers chose to be silent on the most sensitive issue of Muslim faith, namely, the prophethood of Muhammad. But he adds, "Once the dialogue is under way, this central point will have to be considered in more detail."[105] On this issue, Muslim scholars, too, rightly maintain that there is no possibility for dialogue unless the prophethood of Muhammad is considered by Christians.[106] The Swiss theologian, H. Küng, too, indicates that if the Catholic Church wants to establish a fruitful dialogue with Muslims, she must speak about Muhammad with greater respect, just as she did in the conciliar statements about Muslims.[107]

In short, as Anawati rightly points out this official recognition by the Catholic Church of the God of Islam as the one, living and true, merciful and almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, "is a more important step in the context of relations between Christians and Muslims."[108] Farrugia, too, indicates that this positive appreciation of the Muslim doctrine of God will be accepted as common ground and a standpoint for a better dialogue between Christians and Muslims.[109] Further, the Council's acknowl-edgement of the most important Muslim attributes of God by referring to the Qur'anic terms, indicates that in the process of dialogue Christians can benefit from the Qur'an in order to express their doctrine of God.

1.5.2. Our Common Father Abraham

Concerning the Islamic reverence for Abraham, the Council Fathers declared that

> They [Muslims] strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own.[110]

> . . . the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham. . .[111]

---

[103] See Willem Bijlefeld, "The Danger of 'Christianizing' our Partners in Dialogue", *MW*, 57(1967), pp. 172-177; Charles Adams, "Islamic Religious Tradition", in Leonard Binder, ed., *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences* (New York: John Wiley &Sons, 1976), pp. 29-95.

[104] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 63.

[105] Anawati, "*Excurcus* on Islam", pp. 151-153.

[106] See Nasr, "Response to Hans Küng" in *MW,* 77 (1987), pp. 96-102.

[107] Küng, *Christianity and the World religions*, p. 27

[108] Anawati, "Excursus on Islam", p. 153.

[109] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 41.

[110] *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

[111] *Lumen Gentium* 16:1

These two passages clearly consider Muslims as being within the context of the Abrahamic faith. The Council Fathers acknowledge that Muslims strive to submit themselves to God as Abraham did. In fact, the Qur'an itself calls Muslims to do this by announcing Abraham as a model in faith and his religion as a pure and unambiguous monotheism.[112] Within this context, the Council Fathers recognised Muslims as partakers of the Abrahamic faith as are Christians. However, they failed to mention whether Muslims are historically linked to Abraham. Borrmans concludes that the Council "was not concerned with certain assumptions that would make Abraham the genealogical ancestor of Arab Muslims."[113] Caspar, in his comment on the above Council statement concerning the connection of Muslims with the Abrahamic faith, also maintains that Abraham

> finds his true place, according to the Muslim and Christian faiths. Abraham is not the genealogical ancestor, the father according to the flesh, of Muslims; for that has no religious value at all, even if we disregard the historical aspect. But he is their father in faith, as a type and model of a heroic submission, with an active and confident faith, in the paradoxical will of God who asked him for the sacrifice of the son of the promise. It is in this sense that Abraham is the father of all believers.[114]

As has been observed so far, parallel to its statements on the Muslim doctrine of God, the Second Vatican Council includes Muslims in the Abrahamic faith possibly because of the influence of Massignon.[115] However, there is a significant difference between the Council and Massignon in this issue. While Massignon connected Muslims to Abraham via his son Ishmael, the Council does not speak about his historical link with Muslims. Anawati in his comment on this issue maintains that the Council Fathers were "most cautions of all with regard to the question of the Muslems' historical link with Abraham and thus with true revela-tion."[116] Perhaps, this silence should not be regarded as very important, since the Qur'an presents Abraham not as the possession of a single community but as the model in faith for all humankind.[117]

Briefly, in these passages the Council Fathers drew attention to the Muslims' constant search for the will of God and their continuous endeavour for whole-hearted sub-mission to the faith of Abraham. Borrmans comments that "it was out of respect for this faith that Vatican II acknowl-edged the importance of the fundamental Muslim religious attitude, the total submission of the soul to God's decrees" and "fittingly recalled that Abraham was the model for the Muslims' faith and obedience."[118] Thus, the Council regards Abraham "as a type and model of heroic submission the father of all believers; it is in this sense that he is the common father of Jews, Christians and Muslims."[119]

---

[112] See *Qur'an* 6:120-123.

[113] Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 12; also see Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 5.

[114] Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 5.

[115] For Massignon see section 1. 3.1.

[116] Anawati, "*Excurcus* on Islam", p. 153.

[117] See *Qur'an* 3: 65-67.

[118] Borrmans, "The Muslim Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 12.

[119] Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 5; for further information about Christian and Muslim perception of Abraham see, Kuschel, *Abraham*.

1.5.3. Muslim Veneration of Jesus and Mary

Concerning the Muslim esteem of Jesus and Mary, the Council says that

> Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honour, even at times devoutly invoke.[120]

As has been observed above, the Council dealing with the Muslim doctrine of God, and also with Abraham as a common father of faith, highlighted common elements between Christians and Muslims. Here, however it refers to their main difference. The Council Fathers state that although Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet and praise his mother Mary, they do not recognise his divinity as Christians do. It is interesting that in presenting this great difference between Christians and Muslims concerning the person of Jesus, the Council does not criticise the Muslims' perception of Jesus as some Christian thinkers, as do Kenneth Cragg.[121] Farrugia maintains that the only reason the Council Fathers remained silent on the Muslim perception of Jesus as a human prophet was for the sake of dialogue.[122]

The Council also appreciated the Muslims' respect for Mary. The possible reason for this appreciation is that Mary the mother of Jesus has a high status among Catholics. The above conciliar statement implies that those who esteem Mary can be appreciated by the Catholic Church. Also, as has been noted in section 1.3.1. the prolific Islamicist Massignon urged Christians to recognise the Qur'an as an authentic religious and mystical source because of its positive statements about Jesus and Mary.

Farrugia maintains that the Council appreciates the Muslims' veneration of Jesus and his mother Mary in accordance with the statement of the *Nostra Aetate* that the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in non-Christian religions. He states that by praising the Muslim perception of Jesus the Council may want to show that Islam may "reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men", although its teaching differs in many ways from the Christian teaching. Thus, he indicates that the council statement on Muslims' esteem of Jesus means that "although the eminent identity of Jesus recognised in the Christian world is absent in Islam, the historical figure of Jesus and his relevance to God's plan of salvation are not totally ignored."[123] Briefly, the Council's appreciation of the Muslims' esteem of Jesus and Mary creates a common ground for better relations between Christians and Muslims.

1.5.4. Eschatological Beliefs of Muslims

> Concerning Muslim eschatology, the Council says that "Further, they await the day of judgement and reward of God following the resurrection of the dead."[124]

---

[120] *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

[121] The Anglican Bishop and Islamicist, Kenneth Cragg, expresses his sadness concerning the Muslim perception of Jesus as a prophet by stating that "In conforming Christ to its own conception of the successful prophet, Islam has robbed him of himself, transformed him into an unrecognisable Jesus." (Kennth Cragg, *Call of Minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 261-262).

[122] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 45.

[123] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 49.

[124] *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

In accordance with its acknowledgement of the Muslim God as the Master of the Day of Judgement, the Council highlights the basic eschatological beliefs of Muslims namely, the belief in the Last Day, resurrection, judgement and retribution. This text shows one of the essential beliefs in the Christian and the Muslim faith, as Troll points out by saying:

> The modalities and the criteria of this judge-ment can differ from one theology to the other. It remains that, according to the Qur'an as well as according to the Gospel, everyone will be judged by their actions.[125]

Caspar too, in his comment on this text, remarks:

> Eschatology is important, both in Islam and Christianity, for the meaning it gives to the world and to the lives of men; a meeting with God at the end of the time, when true values will be revealed. It is this direction and eschatological tension which gives full meaning to human activity in this world.[126]

As we have observed, here, too, the Council Fathers seem to highlight only the common points of the eschatological beliefs of Christians and Muslims without speaking about their differences. In this respect, Borrmans indicates that "at this level of generalisation it may be said that Christians and Muslims are in agreement, whatever may be their differ-ences in substance or form."[127] Briefly, by highlighting the main points of convergence between the Christian and Muslim eschatological beliefs, the Council implies that Muslims, who worship the same God as Christians, do this in order to attain God's grace and salvation in the Day of Judgement.

1.5.5. Religious and Moral Life of Muslims

The Council makes the following statement concerning the religious and moral life of Muslims:

> they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, almsdeeds and fasting.[128]

As we have observed so far, the Council defined Muslims as those who believe and worship God by trying to submit themselves to Him as did Abraham, and as those who believe in the Day of Judgement in which the dead will be resurrected. Here, the Council highlights how Muslims worship God. In doing so, it indicates that Muslims try to live a righteous life and worship God by way of prayer, almsgiving and fasting in order to obtain God's reward in the Hereafter.

There are two significant points here. The first is the Council's esteem of the Muslims' religious and moral lives. In this respect, Borrmans suggests that the Council Fathers reflected on their admiration for the religious and moral lives of Muslims to specify the reasons why the faith and life of the followers of Islam are worthy of the esteem of Christians. He says, "It was out of respect for this faith that Vatican II wished to stress the importance of the funda-mental religious attitude, the total submission of the soul to God's decrees. The Muslims are known to be proud of being

---

[125] Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", p. 8.
[126] Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p.5.
[127] Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 13.
[128] *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

faithful and obedient servants, who extol 'God's rights' before thinking about 'human rights'."[129] As we will see in the Second Chapter, the religious and moral lives of Muslims has been highlighted with great esteem by Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II in their speeches to Muslims.[130]

The second point is the Council's appreciation of the three main pillars of Muslim faith. However, it is well known that there are five main pillars of Muslim faith. These are: the profession of faith in the One God and in the prophethood of Muhammad [*shahada*], the observance of daily ritual prayers [*salat*], the giving of alms [*zakat*], fasting in the month of Ramadan [*sawm*], and the pilgrimage to Mecca [*hajj*]. The question, here, is why the Council just mentioned three of these articles of Muslim faith, namely *salat, zakat* and *sawm* by giving partial attention to *shahada* and totally omitting *hajj*?

Caspar who was a member of the commission which prepared the text concerning Muslims, justifies this omission by claiming that those three pillars of Muslim faith which the Council mentioned "are indeed the most important, by way of the place which they occupy in the religious life of Muslims and their religious significance."[131] Caspar continues to defend the Council's omission of *hajj* by arguing that the great majority of the Muslims turn out to be unable to participate in the pilgrimage to Mecca, and moreover, its prescription is limited to once in a Muslim's life-time.[132] Farrugia, too, maintains that the reason of the Council's omission of some Muslim beliefs and devotional acts is that:

> The council never intended to produce a complete exposition of the doctrinal and devotional characteristics of Islam. Its consi-deration of such Islamic themes as those which eventually appeared in the promulgated texts was essentially functional and subjected to its declared desire for a positive relationship with the Muslims.[133]

After these explanations for the Council's omission of some pillars of Muslim faith and devotional acts, we can argue that for whatever reason it does seem that the Council Fathers producing the conciliar statements concerning Muslims, only noted those doctrinal and devotional acts of Muslims which are substantially compatible with Christian doctrines and devotional acts. Caspar supports this view when he says that while the Council appreciated the moral life of Muslims, it was "more concerned with the principles of Christian morality than with the values to be found in Muslim family life as it is really lived."[134] Crollius explains that the reason the Council only mentioned those Muslim elements which are compatible with the Christian elements was to proclaim "biblical monothesim in its Judeo-Christian form."[135]

However, in our opinion this may be explained as follows: Starting from the advent of Islam to the second half of the twentieth century, the Christian World has regarded Islam either as a heretical religion or as an extension of the Judeo-Christian tradition. While prayer, almsgiving,

---

[129] Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", pp. 12-13

[130] See Chapter Two section 2.3 and 2.4.3.

[131] Caspar, "La religione musulmane", p. 228 cited in Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 56.

[132] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 56.

[133] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 57.

[134] Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 6; also see Anawati, "An Assesment of the Christia-Islamic Dialogue", in K.C. Ellis, ed., *The Vatican, Islam, and the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp. 51-68.

[135] Ary A. Roest Crollius, "The Church Looks at Muslims", in Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987),* p. 327.

and fasting, which are regarded as the devotional acts in the Judeo-Christian tradition were mentioned, the second part of the *shahada* and pilgrimage to Mecca were omitted in this declaration. If the Council had mentioned these two in its document, it would have meant that the Catholic Church regarded Islam as a separate religion outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. This admission would compel the Church to re-read its own beliefs and doctrines.

1.5.6. Salvation of Muslims

Concerning the possibility of salvation for the Muslims, the Council declares that

> . . . the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslems.[136]

By the promulgation of this statement, the Council clearly includes Muslims within God's plan of salvation. This is a very bold statement indeed, since it ends the traditional Catholic belief that *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*. This inclusion of Muslims in God's plan of salvation can be regarded as one of the important contributions of the Council to the development of the Catholic Church's relations with Muslims, since it implies that Muslims have a place in God's plan of salvation because they acknowledge God as their Creator. Although the Council does not mention the Muslim faith "Islam" in its statements, one can accept that the Catholic Church admits that the faith of Muslims' "Islam" has a special position in God's plan of salvation as a strict monotheistic religion by taking into account the Council's recognition of Muslims as fellow believers in God, and its appreciation of the religious and moral lives of Muslims.[137]

Farrugia, in his comment on this text, argues that by this statement the Council wanted to state that God's grace is available for Muslims so that they attain eternal salvation. He also says that the acceptance of Muslims within God's salvation "puts them in relation to 'the people of God' to which 'those who have not received the Gospel are related in various ways'." He further states that the Council text does not explain the nature of these "various ways" nor does it clarify "the modality of the Muslims' inclusion in the plan of salvation."[138] As has been observed in section 1.3.2., before the Second Vatican Council Rahner spelled out similar views concerning the possibility of salvation for non-Christians.

Apart from the above theological statements, there are also other declarations in the *Nostra Aetate* which provide some principles for development of Christian-Muslim understanding in practical issues:

> Over the centuries many quarrels and dissent-sions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual under-standing; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.[139]

---

[136] *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

[137] Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christians*, p. 78; Concerning this point, Crollius incorrectly argues that the Council's appreciation of Muslims' doctrinal, religious and moral elements could not be used "as arguments to prove that the plan of salvation also embrace Muslims", since it clearly contradicts the Council statement itself (Crollius, "The Church Looks at Muslims", p. 327)

[138] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 62.

[139] *Nostra Aetate* 3:2.

As can be seen from this passage, the Council, first of all, concedes that there have been many quarrels and unpleasant situations between Christians and Muslims. Then it offers the following steps in order to overcome those events. Firstly, the Council invites both Christian and Muslims to forget the past. This is a very challenging invitation, indeed. Forgetting the past is not an easy task because it involves our memory. If we were to lose our memory, we would not remember who we were. Because of this, we do not think that the Council actually wants Christians and Muslims to forget their past for the sake of better relations with each other. What the Council is asking is that both Christians and Muslims should not take the past as examples for their present and future relations with each other. Otherwise, as one Muslim thinker comments, 'forgetting the past' is "a contradiction of the Qur'anic spirit, simply because the Qur'an reminds us of the past 'in order to reconcile with the present and future'."[140] In this respect, Caspar comments that the above text of the Council:

> Focuses the perspectives of understanding and cooperation, present and future, between Christians and Muslims. The past of hatred and wars should not be 'forgotten', not ignored but left behind. Mutual understand-ing, objective and respectful, still demands a great deal of effort and progress on either side. But Muslim-Christian 'dialogue' itself must be behind it in order for it to become cooperation between believers towards the same end; together to face the challenges of modern thought and civilisation, not only to preserve faith in God, especially among the young, but also to allow genuine and committed faith to play its part in saving our civilisation from the dangers brought upon it by its neopaganism and in building a better world. This means to promote social justice, among the classes of every nation and between rich and poor countries; to uphold moral values, not only by 'moralism' but by a life in conformity with faith; to preserve or restore peace; to allow people more real freedom, in all ways which are compatible with the common good especially religious freedom.[141]

After overcoming the past, too, the Council encourages both Christians and Muslims to make a sincere effort for mutual understanding and to work together in protecting and promoting for the benefit of all men, social justice, good morals as well as peace and freedom.

After all the above analysis of the conciliar statements concerning Muslims and Christian-Muslim understanding, we may highlight the theology of those statements as follows. Our above examination of the conciliar teaching on Muslims implies that the underlying attitude seems to be that the normative expression of truth is the Catholic doctrine. In this respect, where the Muslim faith, or in other words Islam, agrees with this it is right, and where it departs from it, it is wrong. This indicates that the Council dealing with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular defends the centrality of the Roman Catholic Church.

While doing this, as has been observed so far, the Council leaves unexplored the status of Muslim faith, Islam, as a religious tradition into which the above particular elements of faith fit. Thus, we may argue that the Second Vatican Council opens the way for a more positive Christian approach towards Muslims and their faith, but it remains silent about Islam as an alternative expression of truth. This means that by producing the conciliar statements about Muslims, the

---

[140] Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, p. 55.
[141] Caspar, *Traite de Theologie Musulmans,* p. 87.

Catholic Church wants to open the way of dialogue with Muslims while keeping open the door for proclamation. In other words, dialogue and proclamation are found in the conciliar teaching side by side.[142]

1.6. Salvation within Non-Christian Religions

As has been seen at the beginning of this chapter, the traditional Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* was preserving its strong position as an official teaching of the Catholic Church in her relation with non-Christians prior to the Second Vatican Council, although the Church authorities were using different expressions to lessen its strong implication. In the light of our examination of the conciliar teaching about non-Christians, we will consider the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the question of salvation of non-Christians. Our primary objective will be to illustrate whether the conciliar teaching went beyond the traditional Catholic axiom that *Extra Ecclesiam Null Salus*? If it did, how far?

To get a proper answer to our above questions, it is necessary to elaborate not only on the teaching of the *Nostra Aetate,* but on all other documents which deal with the question of salvation. For, as observed above *Nostra Aetate* speaks about non-Christian religions with sympathy and in a tone of goodwill. And while doing this, although it clearly recognizes the universality of God's salvation by indicating that "His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men."[143] It does not clarify how this event would be possible. For that reason, we will look at other conciliar documents which deal with this question in order to find some answers to the above questions. By so doing, we will start with the momentous statement of *Lumen Gentium* which was promulgated before *Nostra Aetate* because it brings to an end officially the status of the traditional axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus.*

In *Lumen Gentiun* on the one hand, the Church is seen as the necessary element for attaining salvation[144] by stressing that Jesus Christ is active in the world in order to lead all people to her.[145] On the other hand, it asserts that right behaviour is enough to be acceptable to God and to attain salvation by declaring that "at all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to Him (God)."[146]

In another passage, non-Christian religions are divided into two groups. The first group, i.e those who hear the Christian message and "know that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ but explicitly reject the Church", cannot attain salvation.[147] The second group, i.e. those who do not know the Gospel and do not enter into the Church, but "seek God with sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their action to do God's will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience" can succeed in attaining salvation.[148] This passage can be regarded as the most significant conciliar text concerning the issue of salvation for non-Christians, since it gives three conditions of salvation. These are (1) not deliberately refusing to accept the Gospel or to enter into the Church; (2) seeking God, the Creator with a sincere heart and open mind; (3) carrying out God's will as they know it through their conscience.

---

[142] As we will see in the next chapter, the relatioship between dialogue and proclamation has been discussed by the Catholic authorities in the post-conciliar period (see Chapter Two section 2.6.)

[143] *Nostra Aetate* 1:2.

[144] *Lumen Gentium* 14:1.

[145] *Lumen Gentium* 14:2.

[146] *Lumen Gentium* 9:1.

[147] *Lumen Gentium* 14:1.

[148] *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

When we compare this statement with the traditional teaching of the Church, it is obvious that the Catholic Church explicitly acknowledged the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, making a 180 degree turn on the question.[149] For, this statement implies that one does not need to follow the Gospel message by being a member of the Church when one encounters it. What one needs is not to deny the Gospel message deliberately by indicating that it is not truth. In fact, this is very similar to the Islamic teaching. In Islam, when those who belong to other faiths meet the Qur'anic message, they do not need to follow it in order to get salvation. But they must not deny that it is truth from God.

This positive side of this passage, as Ruokanen rightly argues, does not mention the possible contribution of non-Christian religions to provide salvation for their followers. According to this passage, their salvation comes not from their own religion but from a natural knowledge of the One God and natural moral law.[150] It can be concluded, therefore, that although the Catholic Church acknowledges the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, she does not recognise that their own religions are ways of salvation for them. For what *Lumen Gentium* 16 indicates concerning the possibility of salvation of non-Christians is that the activity of God's salvific grace is not restricted to the visible boundaries of the Church, so that even those who "through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart" have a real possibility of attaining salvation when, "moved by grace", they "try in their actions to do God's will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience." When we compare the teaching of this passage with the views of Rahner which he laid out before the Second Vatican Council, we realise that his views are more positive than the teaching of the Council, since Rahner included not only non-Christians but also their religious traditions in God's plan of salvation by regarding them as "lawful religions."[151]

In *Gaudium et Spes* [Joy and Hope]*,* the Council asserts that all humankind is one and the same, and the Holy Spirit offers to all people the possibility of becoming partakers of the paschal mystery by declaring "since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery."[152] Although this passage does not give any positive implication about the possibility of salvation through non-Christian religions and salvific value of their religions, it can be regarded as significant in regard to its reference to the universal grace of God, since, according to this passage, God calls all people to be partakers of His grace; because He created them in His image; and because all have the same origin and also the same theological destiny.[153]

In *Ad Gentes Divinitus* [The Universal Sacrament of Salvation], unlike the *Lumen Gentium 16*, it is asserted that those who know about the Church but refuse to be members of it cannot attain salvation. This document indicates that only those who are ignorant of the Church can attain salvation.[154]

As has been observed so far, the Council explicitly cancelled the age-old Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* by stating that there is salvation outside the Church. Although this is a positive development, there is ambiguity in its teaching, since it still maintains that "the Church is

---

[149] See Kuschel, *Abraham*, pp. 134ff.

[150] Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christians,* pp. 99-100.

[151] See section 1.3.1.

[152] *Gaudium et spes* 22:5.

[153] *Gaudium et spes*. 29:1; Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christians,* pp. 95-96.

[154] *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 7:1.

necessary for salvation" and that it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, with its all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be found.[155] In the light of this ambiguity, the question is that if there is salvation for non-Christians without being members of the Church, what is the role of their own religious traditions? Are they ways of salvation for their followers? As has been noted above, the Council neither explicitly indicates that they are ways of salvation nor that they are not ways of salvation. For that reason, there is disagreement among Catholic theologians about the interpretation of the conciliar statements on this issue. For example, while Knitter and Stransky argue that the conciliar statements affirm not explicitly but implicitly that the non-Christian religions are ways of salvation,[156] Ruokanen claims that from the conciliar statements one cannot conclude that they recognise

> any divinely approved alternative ways of revelation and salvation, or any reinterpreta-tion of the standard doctrine in Christology and soteriology. The Council did not recognize the salvific efficacy of other religions in particular; but it did recognize the general salvific presence of God's grace in all the universe God created.[157]

Our examination of the conciliar statements about non-Christian religions show that the Council acknowledged the possibility of salvation of non-Christians by implicitly implying that non-Christian religions are independent ways of salvation for their followers. Although, on the one hand it acknowledges that "grace and truth" are available in those religions, on the other hand it argues that they are made available in them though the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. This seems to be a negative implication of the Council's teaching, but within the broader theological context of the conciliar statements it would be more appropriate to interpret the silence of the Council positively instead of negatively in order to appreciate its contribution on this issue.[158]

In short, we may conclude that the documents of the Second Vatican Council accept the possibility of salvation for non-Christians provided that they follow the orders of their conscience without rejecting deliberately the Gospel message and entering into the Church. By doing this, it is emphasised that the religious tradition of those people does not play a role in the salvation of their followers because they are not included in God's plan of salvation. This implies that non-Christians can attain salvation not through their own religious traditions but in spite of them. Although the conciliar teaching maintains that the divine grace of salvation is available for all human beings, it does not attempt to clarify the actual manner by which this grace operates amongst the non-Christians and refrains from defining the measure of this grace.[159]

1.7. An Assessment of the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council

---

[155] *Lumen Gentium* 14.

[156] Knitter, "Roman Catholic Approaches to Other Religions: Developments and Tensions", *IBMR*, 8(1984), pp. 50-54; also see Knitter, "Interpreting Silence: A Response To Mikka Ruokanen", *IBMR*, 14(1990), pp. 62-63; Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", pp. 154-158; David Wright, "The Watershed of Vatican II: Catholic Attitudes towards Other Religions", in A.D. Clarke & B.W. Winter, eds., *One God One Lord; In a World of Religious Pluralism* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991), pp. 153-171.

[157] Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions", pp. 57.

[158] Knitter, "Interpreting Silence: A Response to Mikka Ruokanen", p. 62.

[159] Farrugia, *Vatican II and The Muslims*, p. 15; also see, Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation*, p. 91; James Dupuis, "The Salvific Value of Non-Christian Religions", in M. Dhavamony, ed., *Evangelisation, Dialogue and Development,* Documenta Missionalia 5 (Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972), pp. 169-194.

Our above examination of the conciliar statements indicates that they contain very positive statements concerning non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular and their religious traditions. For example, in *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church "proclaims", "acknowl-edges", and does not reject what is true and holy in them", but "preserves and promotes" them;[160] in *Ad Gentes*, she encourages her followers to "respect and love", to "know" the people among whom they live and to "prepare dialogue with non-Christians."[161]

Nevertheless, all those positive expressions are not enough to establish and develop fruitful dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, because there are a number of expressions which negatively affect the process of dialogue especially with Muslims. We can summarise the deficiencies of the Council's statements as follows. Firstly, there are expressions which speak about the necessity of evangelisation of non-Christians. While, on the one hand, the Council acknowledged all those elements in non-Christian religions namely, the "truth and grace"[162] "true and good"[163] and "precious religious and human elements"[164] it emphasised, on the other hand, that Christ must be proclaimed as "the way, the truth, and the life" and ". . . in whom God reconciled all things to himself, men find the fullness of their religious life."[165]

Regarding the possibility of salvation outside Christianity, the Council indicates the necessity of mission and evangelisation of non-Christians. For instance, in different places of the conciliar statements, it is spoken about the necessity of proclamation, evangelisation, and conversion to open the minds of non-Christians to hear the Gospel.[166] What all these statements indicate is that there is certainly a tension between the appreciation of other religions and the call for evangelisation. Although this tension does not prevent dialogue, it makes it difficult. However, in our opinion, the difficulties should be overcome for the sake of dialogue.

Secondly, non-Christian religions are seen only as a preparation for the Gospel. According to Vatican II all good elements which are found in the life of individual non-Christians are to be regarded as *preparatio evangelica*. "Whatever good or truth is found among them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him Who enlightens all men that they may at length have life."[167]

Thirdly, the Council Fathers tries to patronise non-Christians by seeing their truth as a reflection of the Christian truth which illuminates all the world and by regarding the Catholic Church as the champion of the spiritual, moral social and cultural elements of other religions.[168]

The weak points of the conciliar text on Muslims must also be noted. Firstly, the major weakness of the Council statements is that they do not mention Islam as a religious system apart from the Judeo-Christian tradition but speak about the Muslims, their doctrines and their religious and moral lives. In other words, by referring to Muslims and not to Islam the Council puts stress on individual Muslim men and women and not on their faith. By doing this, the Council Fathers do not wish to give the impression that Islam, with all the claims it makes, is a means of salvation

---

[160] *Nostra Aetate* 2.

[161] *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 11: 1; 41:5.

[162] *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 9.

[163] *Lumen Gentium* 16.

[164] *Gaudium et spes* 92:4.

[165] *Nostra Aetate* 2:2; see also J. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ Encounter at the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), pp. 137-138; Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation*, p. 65-66.

[166] See *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 13:1; 15:8; 39:1; 40:2.

[167] *Ad gentes Divinitus* .9; *Lumen Gentium* 17

[168] *Nostra Aetate* 2:2-3.

for their followers. Secondly, although the Council speaks about the first article of the Islamic faith, it omits the second part of this article by leaving out the prophetic mission of Muhammad through whom the Muslims profess to have access to the final revelation. The Council also leaves out the last pillar of Islamic faith, i.e. the pilgrimage, by citing prayer, almsgiving and fasting as acts of Muslim faith.

Although the conciliar teaching about non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular has many shortcomings, there are also very positive and significant points in this teaching. We will highlight these points with regard to the Christian-Muslim dialogue. As Farrugia rightly points out, Muslims must concede to the conciliar statements, for "not only is it the first time in over thirteen centuries of more or less difficult co-existence that the Church takes an official stance regarding the Islamic religion as proposed in the religious attitude of its adherents but also, in so doing, the practical and doctrinal perspectives have been openly conducive to future dialogue between Christians and Muslims."[169] The Council statements provide the following epoch-making points.

Firstly, for the first time by those conciliar statements the Catholic Church officially acknowledged the presence of truly religious values in the Muslims' faith and religious beliefs. Secondly, through those statements, the Catholic Church acknowledges that both Muslims and Christians are worshipping the same God although they express their beliefs differently. Thirdly, the Catholic Church for the first time in her history officially acknowledged the Muslims' esteem and veneration of Abraham, Jesus and Mary. Fourthly, for the first time, the Catholic Church called both Christians and Muslims to come together by forgetting the past and striving sincerely for mutual understanding in order to "promote and preserve peace, liberty, social justice and moral values" for the benefit of all humankind.

Briefly, these significant points indicate that the teaching of the Second Vatican Council made tremendous progress in the way of establishing better relations with Muslims. Without these advances, it can be argued, today's dialogical relationship between Christian and Muslims would have been much more difficult.

It seems that the conciliar statements on Muslims imply that Islam is put on the general formula of recognition, that in it the truth of Christianity which illuminates all people can be recognised by Christians. Yet, Muslims are seen as being outside the biblical history of revelation "like all the other 'Gentiles'."[170] Concerning this point, i.e. the double standard of the conciliar texts on Muslims, the German Islamicist, Hans Zirker, rightly asks, "Is it really enough for a Christian theology first to put Islam with all the other religions . . . and secondly, in addition, to list the individual elements which it shares with the biblical tradition?"[171]

When we take the Second Vatican Council's teaching as a whole, we may argue that in these Council documents the Catholic Church has moved away from exclusivism to inclusivism concerning her attitude towards non-Christians. Because, as Fitzmaurice rightly remarks, on the one hand those documents assert that salvation of humankind depends on the Christ event in one way or another; on the other hand they acknowledge that there are "real holiness and moral goodness" in the lives of those people.[172]

---

[169] Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims,* p. 70.

[170] Kuschel, *Abraham*, p. 216.

[171] Hans Zirker, *Islam: Theologische und Gesellschaftliche Herausforderung* (Dusseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1993), p. 27 cited in Kuschel, *Abraham*, p. 217; also see Troll, "Christianity and Islam: Mutual Challenges: Hans Zirker's recent work on Islam", *OCP*, 61 (1995)., pp. 571-580.

[172] Redmond Fitzmaurice, "The Roman Catholic Church and Interreligious Dialogue: Implications for Christian-Muslim Relations", *ICMR*, 3/1(1992), p. 92; Fitzmaurice, *What Will the Third Vatican Council have to say about*

It seems that the most serious aspect of the conciliar texts on Muslims is their silence on the revelation and the prophethood of Muhammad. As we have observed above, although in these texts the Council Fathers have spoken about Muslims, their belief of One God, the Hereafter, their moral goodness, and some Islamic devotions [prayer, almsgiving, and fasting], they have not said anything about the prophethood of Muhammad and the Qur'an which are central to the faith of Muslims. In our opinion, the reason for this omission was not to regard Islam as a separate religion, through which people reach salvation. If the Council spoke of Muhammad as a Prophet of God, then the Catholic Church would have to acknowledge his prophethood, and as a consequence of that the divine origin of the Qur'an which was revealed to him from God. As a result, the Church would have to accept the presence of prophethood after Jesus, and the continuity of revelation after the New Testament. It seems that the reason for the silence of the Council Fathers on these two issues is that they did not want to acknowledge Islam as a religion apart from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

If we take the conciliar statements on Muslims as a point of departure rather than a goal for a better dialogue between Christian and Muslims, we may say that Muslims can recognise this Council as an epoch-making breakthrough in the history of Christian-Muslim relations and appreciate it by hoping that the Church authorities will continue to produce a more positive statement on Muslims by overcoming the weak points of the Council which we have indicated above. In the light of this hope, we shall analyse post-Vatican II developments in the next chapter.

In short, in our opinion, the most important contribution of the conciliar statements on Muslims is their encourage-ment to Christians and Muslims to forget past hostilities and to discover the deep religious character of each other's religion by doing objective research. By concluding this chapter, we would like to point out that our examination, so far, has shown us that while some people regard the conciliar statements as being too cautious, others consider them as a bold step forward. Whatever one's interpretation concerning these statements, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council did succeed in clarifying a broad theolo-gical foundation.

In the next chapter, we will examine post-conciliar developments concerning the Catholic Church's relationship with non-Christians in order to observe how far the Roman Catholic Church developed her relations with non-Christians after the Second Vatican Council.

Relations between Christians and People of other Faiths, Occasional Paper 14, (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1997).

Post Vatican II Developments in the Catholic Church's Teaching on Non-Christian Religions in General and Muslims in Particular

2.1. Introductıon

In this chapter, we will examine post-Vatican II develop-ments by starting from the establishment of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions to the present day. Our main objective will be to illustrate how far the Catholic Church has developed its relations with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular after the SVC. We will explore briefly the establishment, goal and the dialogue activities of the Secretariat. Then we will examine Pope Paul VI's and John Paul II's teachings concerning the Catholic Church's relations with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular in order to demonstrate the attitude of the Magisterium. Finally, we will focus our attention on the documents of the Secretariat. Within this context, we will highlight the significant points of *Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims* [1969,1981]. Then we will analyse the documents "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orienta-tions on Dialogue and Mission" [1984]; and "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" [1991] which seek to explain the relationship between dialogue, mission and proclamation according to the Secretariat.

2.2. The Establıshment of the Secretarıat for Non-Chrıstıan Relıgıons

It was established by Pope Paul VI in May 1964 to undertake the dialogue activities of the Catholic Church before the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*. In 1989, it was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialo-gue.[173] The establishment of this Secretariat can be regarded as one of the most important fruits of the positive state-ments of the Second Vatican Council concerning non-Christian religions. Prior to that council the Church had not felt a need to set up a similar foundation to organise its relations with non-Christians. Pope Paul VI announced his intention to found the Secretariat in his opening speech of the second session of the Council in 1963. It was given the task of initiating dialogue with followers of other religions and has adhered fairly closely to the understanding of the goal of dialogue as defined by Pope Paul VI in his *Ecclesiam Suam*, as we will see later, and the Conciliar documents, as these have been analysed the previous chapter.[174] Its legal objective was expressed in the *Regimini Ecclesiae* as follows:

---

[173] For the sake of clarity we will use 'The Secretariat' up to 1989 and then, too, we will use "Pontifical Council" when we are referring to this organisation.

[174] Concerning the history of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions and the development of Roman Catholic teaching on Intereligious dialogue, see Pietro Rossano, "The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions from the Beginnings to the Present Day: History, Ideas, Problems", *Bulletin*, 41-42(1979), pp. 88-109; Francis A. Arinze, "Prospects of Evangelisation with Reference to the Area of Non-Christian Religions, *Bulletin*, 59 (111-140; Jean L. Jadot, "The Growth in the Roman Catholic Commitment to Interreligious Dialogue Since Vatican II", *JES*, 20/3 (1983), pp. 365-378; Michael Fitzgerald, "The Secretariat for Non-Christians is 10 Years Old", *Islamochristiana*, 1 (1975), pp. 87-96; Fitzgerald, "25 Years of Dialogue: The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue", *Islamochristiana*, 15 (1989), pp. 109-120; Aylward Shorter, "The Secretariat For Non-Christians", in Hastings, ed.,

> To search for methods and ways of opening a suitable dialogue with non-Christians. It should strive, therefore, in order that non-Christians come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians and that, in their turn, non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life.[175]

It seems that this passage clearly states that one of the main objectives of the Secretariat is to acquaint non-Christians with Christianity. Also the following explana-tions of the first president of the Secretariat supports this view.

In response to a suggestion that the age of mission was over, by establishing a special Secretariat for dialogue with other religions, the first President of the Secretariat, Cardinal Paulo Marella, pointed out that "far from being an alternative to the mission . . . dialogue represents, on the contrary, its way and its method in the context of contem-porary society."[176] He went on to argue that this is not to suggest that the task of the Secretariat overlaps that of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He stated that the objective of the Secretariat is "closely connected with but distinct" from that of the Congregation. For that reason the purpose of the Secretariat can be under-stood not as direct evangelism but as a form of *preparatio evangelica*. Marella made clear this objective by stating that the Secretariat

> certainly does not aim at obtaining the conversion of the interlocutor at once, because it respects his dignity and his freedom. It aims, however, at his advantage and would like to prepare him for a fuller communion of sentiments and convictions.[177]

He then informed the Council Fathers that the Secretariat was set up "to establish good relations with people of other faiths on a human level"[178] not on a religious level. By arguing this, it seems that Cardinal Marella implies that the Church wants to establish friendly relations with non-Christians on a practical level, not on a religious or theolo-gical one. In so doing, he made it clear that the Church does not want to convert people of other religious traditions but will seek to prepare them for the Christian faith.

After the closing session of the Council, the Secretariat undertook the Catholic Church's dialogue activities with non-Christians. We will briefly analyse the dialogue activities of the Secretariat by dividing them into four periods according to its presidents. The reason for this approach is that the president who is in charge of the Secretariat has often followed different policies from his predecessor.

2.2.1. The Period of Cardinal Marella [1965-1973]

Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 185-187; James H. Kroeger, "Milestones in Interreligious Dialogue", *World Mission*, August (1997), pp. 22-26.

[175] Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, "The Attitude of the Church towards Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission", *Bulletin*, 56 (1984), p. 127.

[176] Paulo Marella, "Nature, Presuppositions and Limits of Dialogue with Non-Christian Religions", *Bulletin*, 10 (1969), p. 9.

[177] Marella, "Nature, Presuppositions and the Limits of Dialogue with Non-Christians", pp. 9-10;

[178] Fitzgerald, "The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions", p. 91.

During this period, the Secretariat authorities decided to prepare its plans and projects in accordance with the task to which the Church and the Pope Paul VI had called it.[179] The members of the Secretariat published a number of booklets[180] which were designed to provide guidelines for those engaging in interreligious dialogue and to encourage Christians to have a better understanding and knowledge of the beliefs and practices of their dialogue partners. During this period, the Secretariat started to publish a quarterly *Bulletin* to provide information and documentation, and to provoke reflection on issues relating to dialogue.[181] In these publications, dialogue was defined as any type of friendly encounter between Christians and non-Christians.[182] The significant points of these publications can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, in accordance with the main objectives of the Secretariat a distinction was made between *human* and *religious* dialogue. In human dialogue, the followers of different religions come together to face some common human problems posed in the society in which they live. Religious dialogue, on the other hand, has to do with the discussions of religious beliefs, practices and customs. According to those publications, in both these types of dialogue, the emphasis should be on the interpersonal encounter between the participants and should be under-stood as a meeting between persons, not as a meeting between religious systems and beliefs.[183]

Secondly, these publications highlighted the common elements between Christians and non-Christians. One of the most significant common points which makes dialogue necessary for Christians with non-Christians is the common humanity which all people share.[184] [This point was also expressed in *Nostra Aetate* as we have observed in the previous chapter, and the Kandy Consultation of the WCC in 1967 which we will look in the next chapter]. Other common points regarded as significant for dialogue are the truth and goodness which can be found in all religions. In these publications, it is indicated that God's word is present among all men and women, and God's supernatural revela-tory presence may be found in other religions.[185]

Thirdly, these publications spelled out the objectives of interreligious dialogue as follows: To improve and promote friendly relations between the adherents of different religions by breaking down hostilities and prejudices through personal meetings; to develop the idea of a common humanity between participants in dialogue; and to prepare the way through which the gospel can be proclaimed to all people.[186] These objectives of dialogue seem to imply that the establishing of friendly relationships with non-Christians by disregarding past hostilities and prejudices is urged by the Church in order to prepare the way through which Christians can proclaim the Gospel message in a better way to their dialogue partner.

Besides these publications, the Secretariat convened a number of general meetings with its own consultors to discuss its future policies and to evaluate its own activities in order to prepare the groundroots of dialogue with non-Christians. The significant outcomes of its consultors' meetings can be summarised as follows: Firstly, it was felt that although non-Christian religions contained

---

[179] Fitzgerald, "The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions", p. 93.

[180] *Towards the Meetings of religions: Suggestions for Dialogue, General Section*, The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions (Vatican City: Polyglot, 1967); The Secretariat For Non-Christian Religions, *Guidelines For A Dialogue between Muslims and Christians* (Rome, 1969)); *Meeting the African Religions, The Secretariat For Non-Christian Religions* (Rome, 1969).

[181] Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II,* p. 53.

[182] Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II,* p. 56.

[183] *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians*, pp. 7-8.

[184] *Guidelines for a Dialogue BetweenMuslims and Christians*, pp. 34-35.

[185] *Meeting the African Religions,* pp. 124-125.

[186] *Meeting the African Religions,* pp. 124-125.

real goodness and values which Christians should respect, they did not have the fullness of divine revelation that Christianity had.[187] Secondly, four consultors group were set up to deal with the approaches to the major world religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and African traditional religions. Concerning Islam, it was recommended to the Church authorities to make greater efforts to make Christians aware of the need of entering into dialogue with Muslims.[188] During this period, although the Secretariat itself did not sponsor any dialogue meeting, its representa-tives joined some dialogue meetings which were organised by the WCC, as we shall see in the next chapter.[189]

In short, during this period, 1967-1973, the Secretariat set up its structures, determined its objectives and policies for dialogue with followers of other religions inside and outside the Church. The Secretariat also produced some publica-tions and developed some guidelines to prepare its members to enter into dialogue with others by knowing something about them.

2.2.2. The Period of Cardinal Pignedoli [1973-1980]

After finishing its interior structure, the Secretariat, under the presidency of Cardinal Pignedoli, opened its door to the world in order to enter into dialogue with non-Christians. The emphasis shifted from studies and preparing guidelines to personal encounters.[190] As soon as he became president of the Secretariat, Pignedoli sent a letter to all Catholic Bishops to ask them to establish commissions for entering into dialogue with non-Christians in their region. Obtaining the approval of the Pope, he prepared an annual programme. According to this programme, the Secretariat would continue its dialogue activities in accordance with its aims which had been determined and defined in the previous period. Christian dialogue partners should be prepared to familiarise themselves with the traditions of non-Christians by gaining knowledge about them in order to develop and promote friendship and hospitality. Local churches should be urged and supported in their relationships with the adherents of non-Christian religions.[191]

In this period, the Secretariat sponsored and co-organised some dialogue meetings with people of other faiths, established a cooperation with the World Council of Churches, and its members visited different Muslim countries to exchange information and experience. The most significant dialogue meeting between Christians and Muslims was gathered by the initiation of the Libyan government in Tripoli [1976]. Because of its importance for the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue, some of its relevant points will be highlighted.

In this meeting both Muslims and Christians came together for the first time in the history of the Secretariat "to create a new atmosphere of mutual confidence between the Muslim and Christian world."[192] The main objective of this meetings was expressed as follows:

> They (both Muslims and Christians) have agreed that the aim of this dialogue is the exchange of the knowledge and ideas that contribute to a better mutual knowledge of history and civilisation between the partici-pants of the two religions, in order to clarify the convergence and differences sincerely and objectively, allowing each

---

[187] Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II*, pp. 80-81.

[188] "Recommendation of the Four Section addressed to the Secretariat", *Bulletin,* 18(1971), pp. 213-214

[189] Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II,* p. 101.

[190] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Recognise The Spiritual Bonds Which Unite Us, 16 years of Christian Muslim Dialogue* (Rome: 1994), p. 49.

[191] Rossano, "The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions", pp. 96-97.

[192] "Text of the final declaration of the Tripoli Seminar", *Bulletin*, 31 (1976), p. 14.

party to cling to its beliefs, its obligations and its commitments in a spirit of concord and mutual respect.[193]

In its final report of this meeting, both Muslim and Christian participants agreed to make a number of recommendations to create a more positive environment for dialogue. In our opinion two of them were very important from the theological point of view. The first one was the acceptance of a common revelatory heritage and acknowl-edgement of all the prophets without disparaging and discrediting them.[194] To Muslims, this recommendation implied that the Roman Catholic Church intended to speak about the prophet Muhammad in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue. The intention can be regarded as a very significant development in the post-conciliar period, since as observed in the previous chapter, the Church Fathers preferred to be silent on this issue in the conciliar statements of the Second Vatican Council.

In the Tripoli meeting the Catholic Church seems to have broken its silence by taking the first step towards an acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad. For example, Fr. Jacques Langfry, in his presentation, asked Muslims for forgiveness for injurious remarks made about Muhammad by Christians in the past. According to him, in this new process starting with the Second Vatican Council, Christians should be more respectful towards the Prophet Muhammad as the prophet of Islam.[195]

The other issue was the insistence on the necessity of religious freedom for the followers of both religions and the condemnation of proselytism. The report says:

> With a view of a real co-operation between the Muslim world and the Christian world, the two parties recommend ending all pressure exerted by Christians on Muslims to turn them away from their beliefs, or by Muslims on Christians for the same purpose.[196]

Clearly this meeting established a basis for both Christians and Muslims to break down the barriers of hostility and prejudice about each other which formed in the history of Christian-Muslim relations.

In addition to the above activities, a Christian-Muslim research group was established by the coming together of a number of Christian and Muslim scholars in 1977. The main task of this group was to work together in order to determine the theological basis and framework of Christian-Muslim dialogue. The members of this group have been working together since that day. Although, this group does not directly represent the official view, we may say that the Christian side's views are the indirect reflections of the official Catholic teaching concerning Christian-Muslim dialogue,[197] because some members of the Catholic side, such as Robert Caspar, were among those who prepared the conciliar statements concerning Muslims.

2.2.3. The Period of Archbishop Jadot [1980-1984]

---

[193] "Text of the final declaration of the Tripoli Seminar", p. 14.

[194] "Text of the Final Declaration of the Tripoli Seminar", p. 17.

[195] "Report on the 'Seminar on Islamic-Christian Dialogue' held in Tripoli (1st-5th February 1976", *Bulletin*, 31 (1976), p. 9.

[196] "Text of the Final Declaration of the Tripoli Seminar", p. 19.

[197] Concerning the establishment of this research group see *Islamochristiana*, 4 (1978), pp. 175-186; Muslim-Christian Research Group, *The Challenge of the Scriptures: The Bible and the Qur'an* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), pp. 1-7.

Under the presidency of Archbishop Jadot, the Secretariat focused its attention on encouraging local Churches to organise regional dialogue meetings with their Muslim neighbours by indicating that "the really pivotal dialogue was that carried out between Christians of the local Churches and Muslims of the same country."[198] Archbishop Jadot also indicated that because of the monotheistic character, fast spreading and socio-political teaching Christians should give Islam and its followers special attention and priority in their dialogue activities.[199] Within this context the function of the Secretariat was seen as an initiator, collaborator and supporter of local Churches.

There were no significant dialogue meetings which we can deal with here concerning Christian-Muslim dialogue. But there were two important events during this period. The first one was the publishing of the revised edition of the *Guidelines for Dialogue between Muslims and Christians* [1969] by Maurice Borrmans in 1981.[200] The second one was the promulgation of the document "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions; Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission"[201] by the Secretariat in its Plenary Assembly in 1984. Detailed information of these two documents will be given below.

2.2.4. The Period of Cardinal Arinze [1984-]

With the presidency of Cardinal Arinze, another shift occurred in Secretariat dialogue policy. During this period the Secretariat was renamed as the Pontifical Council for Interrreligious Dialogue as noted above. The Pontifical Council focused its attention on organising study groups and participating in academic seminars in order to discuss and seek out areas of cooperation between Christians and Muslims.[202] There have been a number of study meetings between the Pontifical Council and different Muslim organisations. For example, it jointly organised three study meetings with the Royal Academy for Islamic civilisation in Amman, Jordan in relation to following issues: "Religious Education in Modern Society",[203] "The Role of Women in Society according to Islam and Christianity",[204] "Nationalism Today: Problems and Challenges."[205] Also, the Pontifical Council co-sponsored another three study meetings with the World Islamic Call Society on the following issues: "Mission and *Da'wah*",[206] "Coexistence between Religions: Reality and Horizons"[207] and "The Media and the Presentation of Religion."[208] It also jointly

---

[198] *Recognizing the Spiritual Bonds*, p.50.

[199] Fitzgerald, "Twenty-five Years of Dialogue", p. 115.

[200] This revised version was prepared by Borrmans and published by the Secretariat in French in 1981 under the name of *Orinetations pour un Dialogue entre Chretiens et Musulmans* and was translated into English by R. Marston Speight under the name of *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christian and Muslims* and published by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1990 (Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

[201] Sesretariat for Non-Christian Religions, "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions. Reflections and orientations on dialogue and mission", *Bulletin,* 56 (1984), pp.126-141.

[202] *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds*, p.70-71; Fitzgerald, "Twenty-five years of Dialogue", p. 116.

[203] See *Islamochristiana* 16 (1990), pp. 220-221.

[204] See *Islamochristiana* 18 (1992), pp. 318-321.

[205] See I*slamochristiana*, 20 (1994), p. 323.

[206] See *Islamochristiana*, 16 (1990), pp. 294-295.

[207] See *Co-existence between Religions: Reality and Horizons, A Consultation between Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and World Islamic Call Society* (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1990).

[208] See *Islamochristiana*, 20 (1994), p. 242.

coordinated a colloquium together with the Iranian authorities in Iran under the title of "A Theological Evaluation of Modernity"[209] in 1994.

Cardinal Arinze outlines the above study meetings between Christians and Muslims as having helped to build bridges of friendship and trust and to enable Christians and Muslims to study together and focus on what they can do to make society better."[210] Furthermore, Arinze remarks that Christian-Muslim dialogue meetings have shown that "Belief in God has to be the foundation for fruitful Muslim-Christian relations, respect for the principle of religious freedom will help and human values can be promoted together."[211]

In this period the Pontifical Council also prepared a joint declaration together with the Congregation for the Evange-lization of Peoples in order to highlight the relation between dialogue and proclamation under the title "Dialogue and Proclamation; Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."[212] The analyses of this document will be given below.

Besides the above dialogue activities of the Pontifical Council under the presidency of Cardinal Arinze, two plenary assemblies were convened in order to discuss and evaluate the Catholic Church's dialogue activities with the followers of non-Christian religions. These occurred in 1992 and 1995.[213] Our examination of these assemblies shows that there are a number of important points which came out affecting the Catholic Church's relations with non-Christians in general and Muslim in particular. The points can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, it was acknowledged that dialogue is a part of evangelisation, as was stated by Pope Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* in 1990.[214] Secondly, although it stated that the main objective of dialogue should be mutual enrichment, and that Christian values could be regarded as "a source of enrichment for others," it omitted to say that the values of other religions might be a source of enrichment for Christians. Thirdly, the possibility of conversion in the process of dialogue was acknowledged by indicating that conversion "is not the direct aim of dialogue, but if through dialogue some are led to embrace Christianity, this is a source of joy for Christians." This principle can be accept-able as long as it is not regarded as one of the main objectives of dialogue. Lastly, it emphasised that Christians should enter into dialogue with followers of other religions in the name of Jesus Christ to show that his love embraces all things.[215] It seems that in this statement what Muslims attribute to God is attributed by Christians to Jesus. For that reason we argue that if Muslims and Christians enter into dialogue with people of other faiths in the name of God rather than the name of Islam and the Church, this would be acceptable to both Muslims and Christians and lead to establishing a better and fruitful relationship between them.

From the Muslim point of view, we argue that the above points of these plenary assemblies have negative implica-tions for interfaith dialogue. Through these points, it seems that Christian participants of dialogue are urged to evangelise their non-Christian partners by proclaiming the Christian message to them and in the end leading them to convert to Christianity.[216]

---

[209] See *Islamochristiana*, 21 (1995), p. 172.

[210] Arinze, "The Way Ahead for Muslims and Christians", *Pro Dialogo, 91* (1996), p. 27.

[211] Arinze, "The Way Ahead for Muslims and Christians", p. 28.

[212] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, "Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ", *Bulletin* 77 (1991), pp. 201-250.

[213] For detail information about these plenary assemblies, see *Bulletin 82*, 28/1(1993), pp. 1-98 and *Pro Dialogo*, 92/2 (1996), pp. 153-274.

[214] We will examine the related statements of this encyclical below.

[215] Fitzgerald, "Plenary Assembly 1995: An Overview*", Pro Dialogo*, 92/2 (1996), pp. 150-152.

[216] Fitzgerald, "Plenary Assembly 1995", p. 150.

Besides these negative implications of the plenary assemblies of the Catholic Church, there are also a number of positive implications of the dialogue activities of the Pontifical Council concerning Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Firstly, the Church authorities were encouraged to study non-Christian religions in general and Islam in particular in order to know the religious beliefs and practices of their dialogue partners. In this way both Christians and their dialogue partners would acquire objective knowledge about each other leading to the development of mutual under-standing between them.

Secondly, one of the most significant principles of a fruitful dialogue was reiterated by the Pontifical Council as follows: Dialogue should occur between the followers of different religions and not become a meeting between religious systems. If the opposite of this is argued, then that activity would not be dialogue but a clash between religions. For example, if a suitable environment for dialo-gue has not been established, discussions on religious issues such as beliefs and doctrines could lead participants to dispute with each other by claiming that their own religious traditions are better or superior.

Thirdly, as a continuation of the above points, it was announced that the principle of sharing a common humanity should be the main reason for establishing a better society in which adherents of different religious traditions can live together peacefully.

Fourthly, a first step was taken by the Catholic Church to deal with the theological questions in Christian-Muslim dialogue. As pointed out above, in the Tripoli meeting the Christian participants spoke of Muhammad, using positive statements.

2.3. Pope Paul VI and His Dialogue Activities [1963-1978]

Paul VI was elected Pope during the Second Vatican Council and stayed in this job until his death in 1978. During his pontificate, starting from his earlier days he made great efforts to create a positive dialogue environment for a better relationship between Christians and non-Christians. In doing so, he established the Secretariat for non-Christians, and then issued his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*[217] to determine the Secretariat's policy in its relation to people of other religions, which led to the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*. He also issued an exhortation entitled *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,[218] in 1975, and made a number of visits to various Muslim countries to promote interreligious dialogue with Muslims. In order to appreciate his contribu-tion to the development of dialogue these events will be examined by following their chronological order.

2.3.1. *Ecclesiam Suam*

This encyclical of Pope VI was issued in 1964 three months after the establishment of the Secretariat in order to outline the theological and pastoral bases for entering into dialogue with people of other faiths.[219] Dupuis states that this encyclical urged the Council Fathers to assume a more positive attitude towards followers of other religions and indicates that because of its character the Pope became known as the "Pope of Dialogue."[220]

---

[217] Pope Paul VI, *Paths of the Church, Ecclesiam Suam, Encyclical Letter of Paul VI* (Boston: St. Paul Books& Media).

[218] Pope Paul VI, *"Evangelii Nuntiandi"*, in M. Walsh & B. Davies, eds., *Proclaiming Justice and Peace* (London: Collins), pp. 204-242.

[219] *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds*, p. 7.

[220] Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 240.

In this encyclical all humanity was described in terms of four concentric circles, the innermost of which was represented by the Roman Catholic Church. The outermost circle represented those who did not believe in the existence of God. The third circle was made up of those who were worshippers of God through the great world religions of Asia and Africa namely, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. The second circle from the outside and directly surrounding the Roman Catholic centre represented those who were Christians but are not subjects of the Holy See. It seems that this description implied that the Pope regarded the Catholic Church at the centre of the spiritual world and that the further any group deviated from teachings and practices the further away from the centre it stood. This description also implies that the purpose of dialogue between Catholic Christians and others is to draw them into the centre. It would seem that the aim of dialogue was to make members those who were outside the Catholic Church.

The motive of dialogue between Christians and non-Christians was expressed by the Pope as the Church's love for all humankind, since he says that this is itself an expression of God's own love for all men and women.[221] In the encyclical the Pope also encouraged Christians to enter into dialogue with non-Christians to preserve and promote religious freedom, human brotherhood, social welfare and civil order.[222] These points were highlighted later in *Nostra Aetate* as noted in the previous chapter.

As far as the methodology of dialogue is concerned *Ecclesiam Suam* speaks of two types of dialogue. The first is concerned directly with the preaching of the gospel. In this type, dialogue is described as "a method of accomplishing the apostolic mission" and as a "way of making spiritual communications" with the followers of other religious traditions. The second type of dialogue is considered as a form of pre-evangelisation. Concerning this type, the Pope indicates that by working with others within the context of a common effort to solve the problems of humanity, feelings of good will toward the Christian faith can be engendered in the dialogue process among the followers of other religions who will then become more open to the missionary proclamation of the Church.[223]

Concerning the objective of dialogue, too, the Pope emphasised that he is not interested in religious discussion with the members of other religions for its own sake. He says the Church's main purpose in this process is to win souls, not to settle questions definitively.[224] Here, the Pope clarifies the above intention of the Catholic Church concerning the aim of dialogue by maintaining that in the process of dialogue the main objective of the Church is not to discuss the religious issues, but to prepare non-Christians to be receptive to the Christian faith.

In *Ecclesiam Suam*, for the first time in the history of the Papacy, Muslims and their religion, Islam, were praised by the Pope who declared that "the Muslem religion especially, is deserving of our admiration for all that is true and good in its worship of God."[225]

Finally, the Pope warned Christians not to change their missionary policy toward those who belonged to other religions in the process of dialogue by pointing out:

> The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of the truth. Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. Our apostolate must not make vague compromises con-cerning the principles

---

[221] *Ecclesiam Suam* 70ff.
[222] *Ecclesiam Suam* 108.
[223] *Ecclesiam Suam* 81.
[224] *Ecclesiam Suam* 66.
[225] *Ecclesiam Suam* 107.

which regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith both in theory and in practice.[226]

In short, according to *Ecclesiam Suam* the main aim of the interreligious dialogue was to preserve and promote religious freedom, human brotherhood, social welfare and civil order. And in this process, it says, Christians should use dialogue either as a tool for mission or as a form of pre-evangelisation by avoiding religious discussions with the members of other religions. This last sentence opened a discussion among Catholics between entering into dialogue with non-Christians and the Church's evangelising mission among the Catholic authorities, as we will see below.

2.3.2. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

After the close of the Second Vatican Council, the conciliar statements concerning the importance of dialogue between Christians and non-Christians caused some problems with respect to the relationship between dialogue and evangelisation. While some Christians regarded the dialogue as a new tool to convert non-Christians by preaching the gospel to them, others thought that the Church was about to give up evangelisation.[227] To deal with this confusing situation concerning the relationship between evangelisation and dialogue a Synod of Bishops was convened in Rome in 1974. In the end the participants could not produce a proper statement and handed the matter to the Pope. He produced an exhortation called *Evangelii Nuntiandi* as a response to the synod decision in 1975. Although it mostly concerns the need for evangelisation in the modern world, the Pope speaks of the religions of the world in one passage within the context of the Church's evangelising mission.

In this section, the Pope urges Christians to esteem and respect non-Christians for the following reasons: They represent the living expression of the spiritual lives of millions of peoples; they embody the human search for God for thousand of years and, although imperfect, they do so with deep sincerity and righteousness; they have taught generations of people how to pray; they contain innumerable "seeds of the Word"; they constitute a true "preparation for the Gospel."[228] These statements of the Pope are similar to the conciliar ones as observed in the previous chapter.

The Pope invites Christians only to show respect for other faiths, not to enter into dialogue with their followers. He even avoids using the word dialogue in any part of this exhortation, although he was called the "Pope of dialogue" because of his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*.[229]

In this exhortation, the Pope clearly portrays the non-Christian religions as incomplete searches for God. He argues that they cannot establish an authentic and living relationship with God because they do not have super-natural elements. On the contrary, he says, "The Church finds support in the fact that the religion of Jesus, which she proclaims through evangelisation, objectively places man in relation to the plan of God, with his living presence and with his action." Because of this, he maintains "the proclamation of Jesus Christ" should be the essential duty of the Church.[230] When we compare the statements of the Pope on this point with the views of Rahner and the conciliar documents as expressed in the previous chapter, it could be argued that the Pope has

---

[226] *Ecclesiam Suam.* 88.
[227] See Mariasusai Dhavamony, "Evangelisation and Dialogue in Vatican II and in the 1974 Synod", in Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987),* pp. 264-281.
[228] *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 53.
[229] See Dhavamony, "Evangelisation and Dialogue in Vatican II and in the 1974 Synod", p. 278.
[230] *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 53:2-3.

taken a step backwards with regard to the values of the non-Christian religions. For, while Rahner and the conciliar statements accept the availability of supernatural elements in non-Christian religions, the Pope openly rejects this in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

Regarding Pope Paul VI's negative attitude towards non-Christian religions after the positive statements of the Second Vatican Council, Sullivan discloses that the negative attitude of the Pope started with a sermon in Rome in 1966. In this sermon, the Pope declared that non-Christian religions "are attempts, efforts, endeavours; they are arms raised toward heaven to which they seek to arrive, but they are not a response to the gesture by which God has come to meet man. This gesture is Christianity, Catholic life."[231]

According to Sullivan,[232] there are two possible reasons for this negative attitude. One of them was the influence of the writings of some French Catholic theologians such as Jean Danielou. To support this argument, Sullivan points to the noticeable similarity between the Pope's sermon in 1966 and his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* on the one hand, and Danielou's article written in 1964,[233] on the other.

Another reason might have been the increasingly positive approaches of some Catholic theologians towards non-Christian religions. Before the promulgation of the *Nostra Aetate,* the Council had already said something positive concerning the possibility of salvation for non-Christians. Following this, in a conference on "Christian Revelation and World Religions," some theologians such as Küng consi-dered non-Christian religions as the "ordinary way of salvation" while accepting Christianity as the "extraordinary way of salvation."[234] The Pope considered that this sort of distinction could only impede evangelisation,[235] and was an excuse to justify giving up the work of evangelisation.[236]

There seems to be a double standard in Pope Paul VI's views concerning non-Christians and their religions. On the one hand, he tried to show the Catholic attitude towards other religions positively by saying Christians admire and esteem those people "who adore the One and Unique God."[237] In his face to face meetings with non-Christians – for example in meeting with the Grant Mufti of Istanbul – he tried to remove the anxieties of followers of those religions concerning the relationship between dialogue and mission. On the other hand, in his addresses to Christians he insisted on the necessity of evangelisation to convert those people by indicating that non-Christian religions have been unsuccess-ful in bringing their followers to an authentic relationship with God.

In short, as has been observed, it is very difficult to say that Pope Paul VI's statements have had positive theological implications for the development of interreligious dialogue by going

---

[231] *L'Osservatore Romano, March 23* (1966), p. 1.

[232] Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church*, pp. 186-187.

[233] In that article Danielou says that "The religions are a gesture of man towards God; revelation is the witness of a gesture of God towards man. The religions are creations of human genius; they witness to the value of exalted religious personalities, such as Buddha, Zoroaster, Orpheus. But they also have the defects of what is human. Revelation is the work of God alone. Religion expresses man's desire for God. Revelation witnesses that God has responded to that desire. Religion does not save. Jesus Christ grants salvation *(Jean Danielou, "Christianisme et religions non-chretienes", *Etudes*, 312 (1964), pp. 323-336 cited in Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, p. 187).

[234] Küng, "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation", pp. 25-66.

[235] *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 80:2.

[236] *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 80.

[237] For Pope Paul VI's statements concerning Muslims see, Pope Paul VI, "To the Representatives of Muslims in Turkey", in Francesco Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church 1963-1995* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997, pp. 149-150; "To the Islamic Community of Uganda", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 164-165; "To the New Ambassador of Pakistan", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 168; "To the Faithful of Indenesia", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 176-177.

beyond the statements of the Second Vatican Council. In spite of this, Muslims should appreciate Pope Paul VI's dialogue initiatives, because of his opening the doors of the Vatican to non-Christian, especially Muslim delegations. By doing this, Pope Paul VI became the first Pope who opened the doors of the Vatican to Muslims.

2.4. Pope John Paul II and His Dialogue Activities

As soon as he was elected Pope in 1978, Pope John Paul II started to express the official Catholic understanding towards other religions by issuing his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* 1979.[238] In 1990 he published another encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*.[239] In addition to these encyclicals, the Pope visited a number of Muslim and non-Muslim countries and accepted delegations from other religions in the Vatican in order to promote interreligious dialogue with followers of non-Christian religions. Pope John Paul II's dialogue activities will be examined by dividing them into three groups namely, the encyclicals, addresses to Christian and non-Christian religious leaders on several occasions, and speeches to Muslims during his visits to Muslim countries.

2.4.1.Encyclicals

As noted above, Pope John Paul II published two significant encyclicals which have significant implications concerning the relationship between Christians and non-Christians. Here, the related passages of these two encycli-cals will be considered.

2.4.1.1. *Redemptor Hominis*

Although this encyclical was prepared to reflect upon the role of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of the world within the context of the teaching of the Church, it can be regarded as an important official document because of its encourage-ment to Christians to enter into dialogue with non-Christians after the Second Vatican Council. Three passages of this encyclical in particular are directly related to non-Christians and their religions. The important points of these passages will be highlighted.

In the first passage, the Pope urges Christians to come together with adherents of non-Christian religions to establish better relations "through dialogue, contacts, prayer in common, investigation of the treasure of human spiritua-lity."[240] In the second passage, he praises the state-ments of Vatican II which urge Christians to respect and esteem the spiritual values of non-Christians religions by declaring that:

> The Council document on non-Christian religions is filled with deep esteem for the
> great spiritual values, indeed for the primacy of the spiritual, which in the life of

---

[238] *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul*, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (Ottowa, 1980).

[239] Pope John Paul II, "*Redemptor* Mission: An Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate", W.R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue; Reading Redemprotis Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 3-55.

[240] *Redemptor Hominis* 6:3.

mankind finds expression in religion and then in morality, with direct effects on the whole culture.[241]

Also, the Pope states that there are some values and truth in non-Christian religions by arguing that the values of those religions are the result of the Spirit who is universally active in the world, and the truths of those religions, too, are "reflections of one truth, 'the seeds of the Word'."[242] It seems that these two arguments imply that non-Christian religions do not have as complete revelation as do Christians, but have partial reflections of the exhaustive Christian revela-tion. By arguing this, Pope John Paul II recalls the statement of the *Nostra Aetate*.

In the third passage, too, the Pope stresses that the strategy of the Church in her missionary activities toward non-Christians should be carried out within the context of "esteem, respect and discernment." He maintains that "the missionary attitude always begins with a feeling of deep esteem for 'what is in man', for what man has himself worked out in the depths of his spirit concerning the most profound and important problems."[243] In fact, this statement implies that there is a missionary mandate beneath the Christian esteem and respect for non-Christians.

2.4.1.2. *Redemptoris Missio*

This encyclical was issued in 1990 to express the validity and universality of the Church's evangelising mission by reflecting upon the following questions:

> Is missionary work among non-Christians still relevant? Has it not been replaced by inter-religious dialogue? Is not human development an adequate goal of the Church's mission? Is it not possible to attain salvation in any religion? Why then should there be missionary activity?[244]

The Pope also dealt with the issues concerning the Catholic Church's relation with non-Christians to determine the relationship between dialogue and mission. He reserved three passages to discuss the Catholic Church's relation with non-Christians under the title "Dialogue with our Brothers and Sisters of other Religions" in chapter five of the encyclical. Those passages need to be examined to find out how the *Magisterium* perceives interreligious dialogue within the context of the Church's missionary activities.

In the first passage, the Pope describes dialogue as "a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment" and then sees it "as a part of the Church's evangelizing mission", since, according to him there is "no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue."[245] Also, in this passage, he maintains that in the process of interreligious activity dialogue should be implemented by Christians "with the conviction that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone posses the fullness of the means of salvation."[246] At this point, Eric J. Sharpe

---

[241] *Redemptor Hominis* 11:2.
[242] *Redemptor Hominis* 11:2.
[243] *Redemptor Hominis* 12.
[244] *Redemptoris Missio* 4:3.
[245] *Redemptoris Missio* 55:1.
[246] *Redemptoris Missio* 55:3.

rightly asks the following questions, "If the other religious traditions do not possess the fullness of the means of salvation, what do they possess?"[247]

In the second passage, after repeating his *Redemptor Hominis* statement and the conciliar statement in *Nostra Aetate* concerning the requirement of esteem and respect of the Church for the values of non-Christian religions because of the availability of the Spirit in them, the Pope goes on to say that during the dialogue process Christians can find the "seeds of the Word" and "a ray of that truth which enlightens all men" in their dialogue partners' religions. He also asks that in that process non-Christian religions should be seen as positive challenges for the Church. For, he states that, thanks to dialogue the challenges of those religions" stimulate the Church both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and the working of the Spirit" in non-Christian religions.[248] Here, the Pope recalls the conciliar statements which consider the truth and holy things of non-Christian religions as partial reflections of the Christian truth namely Jesus Christ. In other words, the Pope's statement means that the truth and holy things of non-Christian religions are the result of the hidden presence of Christ and Holy Spirit in them.

In the third passage, the Pope urges both Christians and non-Christians to develop the "dialogue of life" by sharing their spiritual experiences and trying to build "a more just and fraternal society."[249] This means living together with people of other faiths as neighbours by establishing mutual respect and mutual understanding with them. In our opinion, this sort of dialogue can be regarded as the ideal dialogue which is necessary for people living together peacefully with those who belong to other faiths. As we will see in the next chapter, the World Council of Churches has emphasised this type of dialogue in its documents almost on every occasion.

In addition to these passages, there are also some important statements which relate to the Catholic Church's attitude towards non-Christians. For example, at the begin-ning of the encyclical the Pope announces Jesus Christ as the "one saviour of all, the only one able to reveal God and lead to God" by arguing that "salvation can only come from" him.[250] Undoubtedly, this implies that no one else can grant salvation. Knitter indicates that by stressing this absolute-ness and superiority of Jesus for salvation, the Pope is saying that "whatever other 'mediations' of God's love there may be in other religions, 'they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his'."[251] Knitter further clarifies that with this argument the Pope does not only reject "just parallel revelations that would be equalised, but he also rejects complementary revelations that could learn from each other."[252]

After this announcement, the Pope maintains that this "salvation is offered to all" by declaring:

> The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be concretely available to all. But it is clear today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the Gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions.

---

[247] Eric J. Sharpe, "Mission between Dialogue and Proclamation", in Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue,* pp. 161-172.

[248] *Redemptoris Missio* 56.

[249] *Redemptoris Missio* 57.

[250] *Redemptoris Missio* 5:1.

[251] Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 133; *Redemptoris Missio* 5:4.

[252] Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names*, p. 133.

For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation.[253]

When this passage is examined, it can be seen that it reflects the main teaching of both Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church concerning the position of non-Christians in the process of interreligious dialogue after the Second Vatican Council and even before it. The following points can be drawn from the above passage.

The salvation granted by Christ primarily for those within the Church is available universally for all people. Normally, to attain this salvation it is necessary to accept the Gospel message or to enter into the Church. But, in today's world there are many good people in other religions whose social and cultural conditions do not allow them to accept the Gospel message or to enter into the church. For those people salvation becomes available through the grace of Christ by the help of the Holy Spirit. This passage implies that non-Christians, one way or another, should be con-nected with the Christian message or Christianity to attain salvation because their own religious traditions do not have salvific value to provide salvation to them. Briefly, this passage of *Redemptoris Missio* indicates that there is the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, but this occurs not through their own religious traditions but through the hidden presence of Christ and the universal activity of the Holy Spirit in them.

In fact, this kind of understanding is not new and particular to Pope John Paul II, since similar ideas had been developed by Pope Pius XII and Karl Rahner before the Second Vatican Council, as we have observed in the first chapter. The arguments of this passage are particularly compatible with Rahner's theses concerning Christianity's relationship with non-Christian religions. For that reason, we may say that Rahner's views concerning non-Christians became the official teaching of the Catholic Church roughly thirty years after their development by Rahner.[254] It should be clarified, however, that with regard to the function of the Church there is a difference between Rahner and Pope John Paul II's views. For, while the Pope gives the Church a very significant place because of her function of making Christ known in the world, Rahner questions this function of the Church because of the objective nature of Christ's action.

As has been seen, in *Redemptor Hominis* and *Redemtoris Missio,* Pope Paul II's affirmation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of non-Christians can be regarded as a positive development. However, in his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* [1994] he seems rather negative by arguing that non-Christian religions are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and Christianity. These are seen in terms of God's self-communication in his Son, incarnate in response to the universal human search for God expressed in the religious traditions. He states that "The Incarnate Word is the fulfill-ment of the yearning present in all the religions of mankind: this fulfillment is brought about by God himself and transcends all human expectations. Christ is the fulfillment of the yearning of all world religions, and as such, he is their sole and the definitive completion."[255]

2.4.2. Addresses to Christian and Non-Christian Religious Leaders

---

[253] *Redemptoris Missio* 10.
[254] See Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christians Religions", pp. 115-134.
[255] Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 108.

In addition to the statements of these two encyclicals, there are also other significant statements in Pope John Paul II's various addresses which will be highlighted.

In his address to the leaders of non-Christian religions, during his visit to India, the Pope remarked that thanks to dialogue, which depends on mutual respect and mutual understanding, followers of different religions can over-come barriers and difficulties to create a more friendly environment as they try to solve problems and promote common ideals of humanity.[256]

In his address to the Roman Curia after the World Day of Prayer in Assisi[257] with the followers of various religions, he repeated his argument concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit in all people by declaring that "every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person."[258] Thus, the Pope acknowledged the active presence of the Holy Spirit in non-Christian religions. Also, in this address, he advocated that the Assisi meeting with the representatives of various world religions was "the visible expression" of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning non-Christian religions, since, according to the Pope, this meeting verified the Council's idea that all humanity has the same divine origin and non-Christian religions have some values.[259]

In his letter to the Bishops of Asia in 1990, the Pope condemns those who adopt a pluralist theology of religions. As we will see in further chapters, the pluralist theologians such as Hick, Smith and Knitter argue that the Church or Christ or even Christianity is one way of salvation among many other ways.[260] The Pope rejects all these views by arguing that they contradict the Gospel message. In this letter he also maintains that to accept the possibility of salvation for non-Christians because of the hidden presence of Christ and the universal activity of the Spirit is not an obstacle to calling them to be members of the Church by being baptised.[261]

2.4.3. Pope John Paul II's Statements Concerning Muslims

Besides his encyclicals and addresses, Pope John Paul II has visited a number of Muslim states and delivered a number of crucial speeches to the Muslim audiences during those visits. In those speeches the Pope usually tried to emphasise what Christians and Muslims have in common.[262]

---

[256] Pope John Paul II, "Address to the Leaders of Other Religions", in Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, pp. 409-410.

[257] The Pope convened religious leaders around the world in Assisi on October 27, 1986 in order to pray for world peace. The primary purpose of this meeting was to display to the entire world a commitment to peace and to do so in religious way (see *Bulletin*, 22 (1987), pp. 11-160; A. Camps, "The Prayers for Peace at Assisi, October 27, 1986: What was Shared", eds. Jerald D. Gort *et al., On Sharing Religious Experience; Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 255-266; Francis Arinze, "The Engagement of the Catholic Church in Interreligious Dialogue since Assisi 1986", *Pro Dialogo*, 95/2 (1997), pp. 204-212).

[258] Pope John Paul II, "Address to the Roman Curia", in Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, p. 411.

[259] Pope John Paul II, "Address to the Roman Curia", p. 414.

[260] See chapter six concerning the pluralist understanding of Jesus and salvation.

[261] Pope John Paul, "Letter to the Bishops of Asia", in Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, p. 415.

[262] Concerning the Pope's speeches to Muslim audiences, see Pope John Paul II, "To the Catholic Community of Ankara (11.29.1979)", in Gioia, ed. *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 219-222; "To the Muslim Leaders of Kenya (Nairobi, May 7, 1980)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 226-227; "To the Leaders of Ghanaian Muslims (Accra, May 8, 1980)" in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 229; "To the Representatives of the Muslim Community in France (Paris, May 31, 1980)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 233-234; "To the People of Pakistan (Karachi, February 16, 1981)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 234-235; "To the Representative of Muslims of the Philippines (Davao, February 20, 1981)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 235-237; "To the Representatives of the Muslims of Belgium (Brussels, May 19, 1985)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 284-

His most famous speech delivered on 19th of August in 1985 to Muslim youths in Casablanca, Morocco[263] will be examined as an example. This speech would seem to cover most of the points mentioned in his other speeches.

First of all, he reminded the youth that Christians and Muslims have many things in common as human beings and as believers in God. As human beings, he said, both Christians and Muslims live in the same world, a world that is "marked by many signs of hope, but also by multiple signs of anguish." As believers, too, both Christians and Muslims "believe in the same God, the one God, the living God, the God who created the world and his creatures to their perfection" by accepting Abraham as their model. This God wants all believers to respect every human being, by regarding him/her "as a friend, a companion, a brother" or sister; to help him/her "when he is wounded, when he is abandoned, when he is hungry and thirsty, in short, when he no longer knows where to find his direction on the pathways of life."

Secondly, after summarising the teaching of Vatican II, the Pope told the youth that his coming to meet them was proof of the spirit of that teaching, in which the Church committed itself to seek collaboration among believers. For Christians and Muslims this collaboration or dialogue as well as joint witness to God "in a world which is becoming more and more secularised at times even atheistic", is more necessary today than ever. He added that as believers both Christians and Muslims must give witness to the spiritual values which the world needs, such as the worship of God, "prayer of praise and supplication", and the search for God's will. This sort of witnessing, he maintained, should be carried out within the context of respect for others, since "everyone hopes to be respected for what he in fact is, and for what he conscientiously believes."

Thirdly, the Pope urged Muslim youth to combine their love, self-discipline and collaboration with others, and struggle against the ills of the world such as racism, mis-understanding, wars, injustice, and unemployment in order to build a better and peaceful world, a world of the twenty-first century.

Lastly, he encouraged Christians to respect the religious approach of Muslims and recognise the richness of their religion by esteeming their own religion. The Pope finished his speech by praying "O God, author of justice and peace, grant us true joy and authentic love, as a lasting fraternity among all peoples. Fill us with Your gifts for ever."

Recently, In his *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* [1994], Pope John Paul II reserves one chapter on Islam under the name "Muhammad?." It is very strange that although he calls that chapter Muhammad with a question mark, he does not mention his status or role in Islamic faith. The most challenging part of this chapter is that, on the one hand, the Pope expresses his deep respect and esteem of the religious life of Muslims as he did in his *Redemptor Hominis* by declaring:

285; "To the Professors from Turkey in Rom (Rome, May 12, 1989), in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 4030404; "Message to All Muslims in Favor of Lebanon (Rome, September 7, 1989)", pp. 416-417; "To the Participants in a 'Colloquium between Christians and Muslims' (Rome, December 7, 1989)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 424-425; "Message to the Faithful of Islam at the End of the Month of Ramadan (Rome, April 3, 1991)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 451-543; "To the Islamic Leaders of Senegal (Dakar, February 22, 1992)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 475-479; "To the Representatives of the European Islamic Community (Assisi, January 10, 1993)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 504-505; "To the Representatives of the Muslims of Benin (Parakou, February 4, 1993)", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 506-507. For further information about the Pope's teaching about Muslims see, Michel, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching About Islam In His Adresses To Muslims", *IMA*, 18 (1987), pp. 67- 76; Jan van Lin, "Mission and Dialogue, God and Jesus Christ", in Gé Speelman *et al*, eds, *Muslims and Christians in Europe: Breaking New Ground* (Uitgeverij Kok: Kampen, 1993), pp. 162-178.

[263] Pope John Paul II, "The Speech of the Holy Father John Paul II to Young Muslims During His Meeting With Them at Casablanca, Morocco", *Encounter*, 1985, pp. 1-10.

> The religiosity of Muslims deserves respect. It is impossible not to admire, for example, their fidelity to prayer. The image of believers in Allah who, without caring about time or place, fall to their knees and immerse themselves in prayer remains a model for all those who invoke the true God, in particular for those Christians who, having deserted their magnifi-cent cathedrals, pray only a little or not all.[264]

But, on the other hand, he criticises the Muslim doctrine of God because of its rejection of the Christian teaching of God and doctrine of the Incarnation by arguing:

> In Islam, all the richness of God's self-revelation, which constitutes the heritage of the Old and New Testament, has definitely been set aside. He is ultimately a God outside of the world, God is only Majesty, never Emmanuel. Islam is not a religion of redemp-tion. There is no room for the Cross and the Resurrection. Jesus is mentioned, but only as a prophet. The tragedy of redemption is completely absent. For this reason not only theology but also the anthropology of Islam is very different from Christianity.[265]

As can be seen in the first quotation, the Pope praises Muslims because of their loyalty to observing daily prayer and belief in God under any circumstances. In this sense it seems that he encourages Christians to follow their example. But, in the second one his attitude towards Islam seems rather negative. He strongly reproaches Islam for not accepting the Christian teaching of God. This quotation also implies that Christianity is superior to Islam. By criticising the Muslim doctrine of God the Pope moves away from the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* which praises that doctrine as observed in Chapter One, section 1.5.1.

In short, as his predecessor Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II has also taken the teaching of Vatican II as the basis for his own teaching about non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. On almost every occasion he recalls the conciliar statements by praising them. But, unlike Pope Paul VI he uses the term "dialogue" very often in his encyclicals and addresses both Christian and Muslim audiences by encouraging all people to come together to establish better relations with each other. In this sense, it can be said that this Pope has seen the dialogical approach as a necessity for better relations towards those who belong different religious traditions.

Further, our examination shows that his teaching differs from Pope Paul VI with regard to contexts and addressees. For example, when the practical issues such as peace, justice, and human welfare are mentioned the Pope employs very positive statements. He even calls non-Christians brothers or sisters. But when theological issues are discussed, his attitude becomes rather negative. With regard to the question of salvation Pope John Paul II strongly argues that there is only one way to salvation and that it is the Christian way namely through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, he tries to extend this exclusively Christian salvation to non-Christians by reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. He maintains that Jesus Christ is at work in non-Christian religions through the Spirit who is universally available and active in every religious tradition.

Concerning his teaching about Muslims, we may say that while in most statements the Pope seems to go beyond the conciliar statements by calling Muslims brothers and sisters and praising

---

[264] Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), p. 93.
[265] Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 92-93.

their worship on every occasion, in some of his statements he seems to move away from the Council's positive attitude towards the Muslim doctrine of God.

Briefly, from the theological point of view we may conclude that in his recent statements, such as *Redemptoris Missio* and *Tertio Millennia Adveniente,* Pope John Paul II seems to urge Christians to return to the pre-conciliar period in which non-Christians have been seen related to the Church by "implicit faith" or "baptism of desire" or as "anonymous Christians." In this sense, instead of going beyond the teaching of Vatican II, Pope John Paul gives the impression that he wants to go back to the pre-conciliar period. It could be argued that the most important reason for this negative development is the shift of Christian theology of religions from inclusivism to pluralism as is seen in the writings of some renowned theologians.

After examining the highly official Catholic Church's statements which were produced by the Popes, we will move to elaborate on less official Catholic statements which were developed by the Secretariat [Pontifical Council]. In doing so, we first of all will consider the significant points of *Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims* [1969, 1981], before turning to examine two significant documents of the Pontifical Council namely *Dialogue and Mission* [1984]and *Dialogue and Proclamation* [1991].

2.5. *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*

As indicated above, the Secretariat published its first guidelines in 1969 and within ten years it became clear that those guidelines had played an important role in Christian-Muslim relations. For that reason the authorities of the Secretariat decided to bring out a new edition by taking into account new developments in Christian-Muslim relations. This new edition was produced by Fr. M. Borrmans in French and then translated and published in English in 1990, as has been noted in section 2.2.1. Although this *Guidelines* seems to be the work of Borrmans, it was authorised by the Pontifical Council. For that reason we consider it as an official statement.

Some important points of these two guidelines should be noted. Cardinal Arinze, the President of Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, states that the main objective of these guidelines was "to provide a basic knowledge of Islamic beliefs and practices so that Christians may be better prepared to engage in dialogue with Muslims."[266] Both of them affirm the absolute necessity of dialogue with Muslims, with the caution that their goal is not to "fix definite formulae for such a dialogue, but rather define the spirit in which it should take place."[267] The 1969 *Guidelines* states the general aim of the dialogue as a stimulation to "those taking part not to remain inert in the position they have adopted, but to help all concerned to find a way to become better people in themselves and to improve their relations with one another. . . ."[268] The 1981 Guidelines remarked that "true dialogue involves the bold venture of individuals who wish to be enriched by their differences, to share their common values, and to respond as individuals to the calls the Lord addresses to each one most intimately."[269]

Without going into detail[270] concerning the content of these guidelines, we would like to point out their most significant points concerning the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue. These

---

[266] Arinze, "Preface to the English Translation", in *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, p. 5.

[267] *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians*, p. 9.

[268] *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians*, p. 10.

[269] Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, p. 10.

[270] For detailed information of the context of these *Guidelines* see John Renard, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Review of Six Post-Vatican II, Church-Related Documents", *JES*, 23/1 (1986), pp. 69-89.

are their statements about Islam as a religion and the Prophet Muhammad. These two points were ignored in the conciliar statements as noted in the first chapter.

The first point is that Islam is regarded as a religious system which Muslims follow during their lives. The 1969 *Guidelines* defined Islam "as a faith, as progress towards God and the final realisation of all man's potentialities."[271] Troll rightly pointed out that Christians can "esteem" and "respect" Muslims only if they consider Islam "first of all as a faith."[272] The 1981 *Guidelines*, too, consider Islam "as a monotheistic and prophetic religion having ties – not yet well defined – with the Judeo-Christian tradition, and as a faith in which the Abrahamic model of faith and submission to God is upheld in all its implications."[273] But, as Troll indicates these *Guidelines* abstain from giving details in this issue.[274]

The second point concerns the Christians' view of the Prophet Muhammad. On this issue the 1981 *Guidelines* urge Christians to leave aside negative and prejudiced judge-ments which come from past polemics and apologetics. It says that

> Christians should assess an objective way, and in consonance with their faith, exactly what was the inspiration, the sincerity and the faith-fulness of the Prophet Muhammad, making their judgement within the framework, first, of his personal response to the commands of God, and then on a wider scale, that of the working of providence in world history.[275]

Although, here, for the first time the Catholic Church officially speaks of Muhammad as a prophet, this should not be understood that the Church acknowledges the prophethood of Muhammad as Muslims do. Later these *Guidelines* are seen to regard Muhammad, on the other hand, as a "great literary, political and religious genius", who possessed particular qualities which enabled him to lead multitudes to the worship of the true God. On the other hand, the *Guidelines* suggest that Christians can find "evidence of certain mistakes and important misapprehen-sions" in his teaching.[276]

Further, the *Guidelines* remark that Christians can find some elements of prophethood by saying, "His faith in the One God is a constant of his message and of his life his call for justice and for human dignity is a cry that cannot be silenced." They finish by encouraging Christians to use the statement of the Patriarch Timothy of Baghdad in their evaluation of the prophethood of Muhammad. "'Muhammad followed the way of the prophets for he surely conformed to their example, without, however, corresponding fully to the One whom they foretold."[277]

The views of individual scholars on the prophethood of Muhammad have influenced the Catholic Church's view of the Prophet: the statements used in these *Guidelines* con-cerning the status of the Prophet Muhammad are similar to those of individual scholars such as Watt, Cragg and Küng.[278]

---

[271] *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians*, p.143.
[272] Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", p. 14
[273] Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, p. 113.
[274] Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", p. 14.
[275] Borrrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, p. 57.
[276] Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, p. 58.
[277] Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, p. 58.
[278] Concerning individual scholars views on the Prophethood of Muhammad see Chapter Five.

2.6. The Documents of the Secretariat concerning the Relationship between Mission, Proclamation and Dialogue

As has been observed in the previous chapter, the conciliar statements, the activities of the Secretariat, the statements of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, and the *Guidelines for Dialogue* all have urged Christians to enter into dialogue with non-Christians by listening to, and learning from, them. This openness to other religions caused some anxieties and ambiguities about the mission policy of the Catholic Church in the minds of both Christians and non-Christians. While some Church authorities considered dialo-gue an alternative to mission, some non-Christians regarded dialogue as a new missionary policy of the Catholic Church with conversion as its focus.

Our main objective in studying the significant documents of the Pontifical Council concerning the relationship between mission, dialogue and proclamation is to observe what the Church authorities have done to remove the anxieties of both Christians and non-Christians concerning the function of dialogue. When the authorities of the Pontifical Council began to discuss the relationship between dialogue, mission and proclamation in its various plenary meetings they produced two significant documents, namely, *Dialogue and Mission* [1984] and *Dialogue and Proclamation* [1991]. The essential points of these two documents with regard to interreligious dialogue can be summarised as follows.

2.6.1. *Dialogue and Mission*

The main objectives of the promulgation of this document are spelled out as follows: To reflect on the Church's experiences of interreligious dialogue over 20 years;[279] to offer solutions to "difficulties which can arise from the duties of evangelisation and dialogue which are found in the mission of the Church";[280] and to help people of other faiths to understand more accurately the Church's approach towards them in the process of dialogue.[281]

In the promulgation of this document, Pope John Paul II considers dialogue as a fundamental duty of the Church for the following reasons: God is the Father of the entire human family; Jesus Christ has joined every person to himself; and the Holy Spirit works in each individual.[282] The Pope considers this dialogue as a dialogue of salvation because it finds its place within the Church's salvific mission. He urges Christians to carry out this duty by avoiding "exclusivism and dichotomies", since according to him "authentic dialogue becomes a witness and true evangelisation is accomplished by respecting and listening to one another."

In the first section, the document describes mission as a special activity through which the Church makes itself fully present among peoples. It states that this missionary function of the Church includes "the simple presence and living witness of the Christian life";[283] the service of humanity; liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation; dialogue in which Christians meet followers of other religions in order to discover the truth and come together to solve the common problems

---

[279] *Dialogue and Mission* 5; Concerning for further information see, Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation", in Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue,* p. 129-131; The question of the relationship between mission and dialogue is also very much discussed by individual thinkers. For example see P. Mojez & L. Swidler, eds., *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

[280] *Dialogue and Mission*. 6

[281] *Dialogue and Mission* 7

[282] Pope John Paul II, "Address of the Pope at the conclusion of the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat*", Bulletin 56*, 19/2 (1984), pp. 122-123.

[283] *Dialogue and Mission* 13.

of humanity; and the announcement to them of the good news of the Gospel. This document also affirms that every Christian should respect others and recognise their freedom by rejecting any form of coercion to convert them.[284] The most significant point of this section is that for the first time in an official Roman Catholic document dialogue "with the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together toward truth and to work together in projects of common concern" was included among the main duties of the church's mission.[285] By this inclusion dialogue became a necessary norm for Christians.

Although this can be seen as a positive development, the document also adopts the old-age missionary instructions of St. Francis of Assisi as a mission policy of the Catholic Church in the contemporary world instead of developing a more open approach to world religions.[286] In this respect, the Roman Catholic Church urges its followers to establish good relations with non-Christians not to acknowledge their ways as true and acceptable to God, but to prepare a suitable environment to proclaim the Gospel message to them. Thus, this kind of understanding can lead us to conclude that the main purpose of the Catholic Church in its dialogue with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular is to prepare them for the Christian faith. The statement of the head of the Society of Jesus, Peter H. Kolvenbach, con-cerning the nature of Christian Muslim dialogue supports this conclusion. He maintains that the Catholics are taking part in dialogue with Muslims in a spirit of friendliness and love in order to bear witness of the Christian faith to them.[287]

In the second section, dialogue is seen as "a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit which guides one's conduct."[288] It indicates that this kind of dialogue wants the dialogue partners to show "concern, respect, and hospitality toward the other" by leaving "room for the other person's identity, his modes of expression, and his values." Because of these characteristics of dialogue, the document regards it as "the norm and necessary manner for every form of Christian mission",[289] and urges all Christians to "live dialogue in their daily lives."[290]

This document identifies four different types of dialogue, namely: dialogue of life, dialogue of deeds, dialogue of specialists, and dialogue of religious experience to encourage Christian dialogue partners to adopt dialogical attitudes towards other people as a way of life.[291] In the context of these types of dialogue, the document regards dialogue not only as a distinct aspect of evangelisation, but also as "an attitude and a spirit" and "the norm and the necessary manner of

[284] *Dialogue and Mission* 18.

[285] *Dialogue and Mission* 13; also see, Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names*, p. 137.

[286] It quotes those who "through divine inspiration would desire to go among the Muslims can establish spiritual contact with them [Muslims] in two ways: a way which does not raise arguments and disputes, but rather they should be subject to every human creature for the love of God and confess themselves to be Christians. The other way is that when they see that it would be pleasing to the Lord, they should announce the word of God (*Dialogue and Mission* 17).

[287] Renzo Giacomelli, *Men of God: Men for Others* (New York: St Paul Publications, 1994), p. 110.

[288] *Dialogue and Mission* 29.

[289] *Dialogue and Mission* 29.

[290] *Dialogue and Mission* 30.

[291] *Dialogue and Mission* 29-35. These types of dialogue were also highlighted by the recent document of Pontifical Council (see *Dialogue and Proclamation* 42). Apart from these types, a number of individual scholars have sugested diverse typologies and different types for dialogue. For example, E. Sharpe broadly classifies dialogue into four different kinds namely, discursive dialogue, human dialogue, secular dialogue and interior dialogue (Sharpe, "The Goals of Interreligious Dialogue", in Hick, ed., *Truth and Dialogue: The Relationship between World Religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), pp. 77-95). D. Lochhead too speaks about four types of dialogue namely, dialogue as negotiation, dialogue as integration, dialogue as activity and the dialogical impera-tive or dialogue as relationship (see Lochhead, *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. 59-81).

every form of Christian mission, as well as of every aspect of it, whether one speaks of simple presence and witness, service, or direct proclamation."[292]

In the last section, the document highlights the relation-ship between mission and dialogue. On the one hand, it states that "missionary proclamation has conversion as its goal: 'that non-Christians be freely converted to the Lord under the action of the Holy Spirit'." By arguing this it gives the impression that in the process of dialogue Christians should proclaim their faith to their dialogue partner by hoping to convert them to Christianity through the universal activity of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, by defining conversion as "the humble and penitent return of the heart to God" it calls all people, Christians and non-Christians, to this conversion.[293] By arguing this, it implies that the spirit of conversion is not to convert from one faith to another but is to convert to the way of God.

Further, the document urges Christians to enter into dialogue with non-Christians by recognising "seeds of goodness and truth" wherever they exist in order to built up genuine peace in the world by promoting social transforma-tion and overcoming racial, social, and religious differences, and accomplishing mutual understanding among all people.[294] Thus, dialogue is considered by the Secretariat as a way of coming together to establish mutual understanding and mutual enrichment between people of different faiths.

In this official Catholic document for the first time dialogue is defined as walking together with people of other religions in order to seek "truth and to work together in projects of common concern." This is regarded as one of the principal elements of the Church's mission.[295] On this point, Knitter rightly argues that the document did not say anything about how such dialogue as"' walking together toward truth' was to be integrated and balanced with other aspects of the Church's mission, especially its duty to proclaim."[296]

This document offers three solutions concerning the relationship between dialogue and mission. Firstly, it presents the evangelising mission of the Church so compre-hensively that dialogue is intrinsic to it. Secondly, it gives a broad view of dialogue with its varied forms, and makes it an obligation for Christians to pursue dialogue in one form or another. Thirdly, it concludes that there is no question of choosing between dialogue and mission but that there clearly is a duty of doing both mission and dialogue.[297]

In short, in this document, the Pontifical Council, on the one hand, makes a clear distinction between the motives, methods, and expectations which belongs to "mission and conversion"; on the other hand, it points out the necessity of dialogue with people of other faiths for the building of God's reign. In our opinion, with regard to the development of the Christian-Muslim dialogue the most significant point of this document is its emphasis that "the most basic requirement for fruitful dialogue is the need truly to respect the other as 'other' and the ability to listen to him/her.[298] Although this is a positive contribution, the document as a whole does not contribute enough to the development of interreligious dialogue in general and dialogue with Muslims in particular. For, instead of clarifying the relation-ship between mission and dialogue which Vatican II left open, it makes it more confusing by regarding dialogue as the norm and necessary manner for every form

---

[292] *Dialogue and Mission* 29.

[293] *Dialogue and Mission* 37.

[294] *Dialogue and Mission* 41, 42.

[295] *Dialogue and Mission* 13.

[296] Knitter, *Jesus and Other Names*, p. 137.

[297] A. Pushparajan, "Whither Interreligious Dialogue; A Reflective Response to the Vatican Document on Dialogue and Proclamation", *Vidyajyoti, 56* (1992), p. 225.

[298] Fitzmaurice, "The Roman Catholic Church and Interreligious Dialogue", p.100.

of Christian mission. Because of this it is very difficult to conclude that this document has made a positive contribution to the development of the Christian-Muslim dialogue by going beyond the teaching of Vatican II.

2.6.2. *Dialogue and Proclamation*

As has been pointed out, this document was produced jointly by the Secretariat and the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples in 1991. By taking up the issue of the relationship between dialogue and mission, where the previous document left off, this document tries to bring solutions to the following questions concerning the relation-ship between dialogue and proclamation as Cardinal F. Arinze stated in his presentation of this document:

> If the Church is engaged in dialogue does this mean that she has given up proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ? Conversely, if the Church is to engage in preaching Jesus Christ and proposing to people faith in him and entry into the Church through baptism, does this mean that dialogue is no longer valid? Are the two mutually exclusive? Do they cancel each other out? What is the relationship between them?[299]

This document consists of three main parts namely, (1) Interreligious dialogue, (2) Proclaiming Jesus Christ, (3) the Relationship between Interreligious Dialogue and Proclama-tion. We will highlight the significant points of parts one and three concerning the relationship between dialogue, mission and proclamation in the process of dialogue and omit part two because it is not directly related to our concern here.

In its first part, "Interreligious dialogue", the document firstly deals with the issue of "A Christian approach to religious pluralism." By doing this, it indicates that the attitude of Christians towards the followers of other religions depends on their evaluation of those religions,[300] and in this connection points out that those religions "are to be approached with great sensitivity on the account of the spiritual and human values enshrined in them."[301] After making this point, the document recalls the conciliar statements of Vatican II concerning the presence of truth and holy things in non-Christian religions and concludes that Vatican II has openly acknowledged the presence of positive values through which people can reach salvation through the religions to which they belong.

Our examination of the conciliar statements in the previous chapter has already shown that to take this sort of conclusion from those statements would be to misread them. For, although the Catholic Church acknowledges the availability of positive values in non-Christian religions, she argues that the acceptability of those values depends on their compatibility with the Christian values.[302] Furthermore, the conciliar statements state that the positive values of other religions are not because of those religions, but is due to "the active presence of God through His Word" and to the "universal presence of the Spirit" in them. Also by referring to *Lumen Gentium* 16, we note

---

[299] Arinze, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Two Aspects of the Evangelising Mission of the Church, *Bulletin*, 77 (1991), pp. 201-202; for the analysis of the statements of this document see, Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation", in Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue*, pp. 131-157.

[300] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 14.

[301] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 14.

[302] See Chapter One section 1.4.1.

this document maintains that those positive values of other religions should be regarded as a preliminary preparation for the Gospel and divine economy of salvation.[303]

After the clarification of the origin of the positive values which are available in non-Christians religions, the document moves on to explain their roles for the salvation of non-Christians. In this connection, it states:

> Concretely, it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their con-science that the members of other religions respond positively to God's initiation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognise or acknowledge Him as their saviour.[304]

This statement of *Dialogue and Proclamation* explicitly implies that the Roman Catholic Church went beyond the teaching of the Second Vatican Council by acknowledging non-Christian religions as bearers of the saving and enlightening Divine Spirit. As Dupuis rightly observes, this is "a weighty statement, not found before in official documents of the central teaching authority, and whose theological import must not be underestimated."[305] For, what this statement indicates is that the people of other faiths can attain salvation through Jesus Christ, not in spite of their religious traditions but in and through them. By this statement, the Roman Catholic Church seems to follow Rahner's consideration of non-Christian religions as "lawful" religions.[306]

It seems that after this positive statement, in order to keep the balance or to decrease the possible objections of some Christians, the document maintains that there is one salvation history, starting from creation and it is not peculiar to one nation or one religion, but for the whole of mankind.[307] It argues that this universality of salvation history does not cause any trouble for the Church's mission, since it showed an open attitude towards non-Jewish people and entered into dialogue with them.[308] This document also advocates that the Holy Spirit is actively present in the life of the followers of other religions by referring to the expressions of Pope John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council. In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, as noted above the Pope explicitly affirms the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of everyone whether Christian or not. In other words, the Holy Spirit is also active outside the boundaries of the Church.[309] The Second Vatican Council, too, stated that the Spirit is at work in the hearts of every person through the seeds of the Word to be found in human initiatives and in man's efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself.[310] The interesting point here is that it is argued that the Holy Spirit is active in the lives of individual people and not in their religious traditions. In other words, the Catholic authorities seem to indicate that the Holy Spirit is active in the lives of individual Muslims, but not in their religion, Islam.

This document, further, maintains that this function of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people of other faiths can be regarded as a theological basis for the Church's positive approach to the other religions and the practice of inter religious dialogue.[311] The same document indicates that the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people of other faiths does not make any sense alone

---

[303] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 17.

[304] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 29.

[305] Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation", p. 137.

[306] See Chapter One section 1.3.1.

[307] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 19.

[308] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 21; see concerning Jesus's dialogue with non-Jews, *Mt.* 8:5-13; *Jn.*4:23.

[309] *Redemptor Hominis*. 6.

[310] For the conciliar documents see *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 3:11; *Guadium et Spes* 10-11,22,26,38,41 and 92-93.

[311] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 17.

without Jesus Christ for their salvation. It argues that all people can attain salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. The document says:

> all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. Christians know this through their faith, while others remain unaware that Jesus Christ is the source of their salvation. The mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit of Christ.[312]

According to this document, Jesus is the "new and definitive Covenant for all people"[313] and, thanks to him, "the fullness of revelation and salvation"[314] is available in the world, and for these reasons "there is one plan of salvation for humankind, with its centre in Jesus Christ."[315] It further argues that "to say that other religious traditions include elements of grace does not imply that everything in them is good and is the result of grace, although it indicates that those religions embrace God's grace and may bring their followers to salvation.[316] So, this document implies that the Christian faith is superior to other faiths because it has the full truth.

Secondly, the document examines "The place of inter religious dialogue in the evangelising mission of the Church." In doing so, it remarks that the objective of inter religious dialogue should go beyond mutual understanding and friendly relations between the participants to "reach a much deeper level, where exchange and sharing consists in a mutual witness to one's beliefs and a common exploration of one's respective religious convictions." In order to reach this level, it urges both Christians and non-Christians "to deepen their religious commitment, to respond with increasing sincerity to God's personal call and gracious self-gift which, as our faith tell us, always passes through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the work of his Spirit."[317] Here, the document makes a very positive statement concerning the aim of dialogue. It implies that while Christians increase their religiosity through the mediation of Christ and the Spirit, the others, too, can do the same thing through the mediation of their own religious figures, and it continues with the statement that the aim of interreligious dialogue should be "a deeper conversion of all toward God." Further, it correctly states that in sincere dialogue the participants should accept their differences mutually by respecting "the free decision of persons taken according to the dictates of their conscience."[318] Thirdly, the document deals with "Forms of dialogue" by recalling the four types of dialogue outlined in *Dialogue and Mission*.[319]

Fourthly, the document considers the issue of "Disposi-tions for inter religious dialogue and its fruits." In doing so, it invites participants in dialogue to be "open and receptive" to each other by recognising their differences.[320] It rightly warns the participants of dialogue not to leave their own

---

[312] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 29.

[313] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 19.

[314] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 22.

[315] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 28.

[316] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 29.

[317] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 40.

[318] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 41.

[319] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 42; These forms of dialogue are the dialogue of life; the dialogue of deeds; the dialogue of specialists; and the dialogue of religious experience (see, *Dialogue and Mission* 29-35.

[320] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 47.

religious convictions for the sake of dialogue. On the contrary, it says "the sincerity of interreligious dialogue requires that each enter into it with integrity of his or her own faith."[321]

Fifthly, the document discusses the issue of "Obstacles to dialogue." It enumerates eleven obstacles which negatively affect the process of interreligious dialogue. The most significant ones can be expressed as follows: inadequate knowledge not only of one's own faith but also of the beliefs and practices of other faiths, lack of openness, defensive and aggressive attitudes towards others, distrust of dialogue partner, and intolerance.[322] As the document rightly remarks, most of these obstacles stem from "a lack of under-standing of the true nature and goal of interreligious dialogue."[323]

In the third part "Interreligious Dialogue and Proclama-tion", the document discusses the issue of relationship between dialogue and proclamation. It argues that inter-religious dialogue and proclamation are two necessary elements of the Church's evangelising mission by pointing out their uninterchangeableness.[324] In other words, these two necessary elements, dialogue and proclamation, cannot be used in place of each other. It is claimed that the aim of true interreligious dialogue should be the proclamation of Christ to others to make him better known and recognised by all people.[325]

This document explicitly maintains that "proclamation and dialogue are both viewed, each in its own place, as component elements and authentic forms of the one evangelizing mission of the Church."[326] Then it tries to explain how these "component elements" play their role in the "single but complex reality" of the Church's mission. First of all, the document clarifies its terminology by arguing that the phrase "evangelizing mission" may be rather misleading, because it does not mean the mission of preaching. For that reason, it uses the phrase "proclama-tion" to let all humanity hear and feel the values of good news and to "transform that humanity from within, making it new."[327] After this clarification, the document maintains that dialogue and proclamation should be taken together, because "both are legitimate and necessary."[328] This implies that Christians should enter into dialogue with people of other faiths by proclaiming their own faith to them. In our opinion, if it was accepted that others might do the same, there would be no objection to it.

Nevertheless, the document in another passage urges the Church to extend her mission to all people by entering into dialogue with people of other religions and proclaiming Jesus Christ to them.[329] Thus, it would seem obvious that according to *Dialogue and Proclamation* both dialogue and proclamation are parts of the Church's missionary activities. This leads us to conclude that what the Catholic Church expects from entering into dialogue with others is to proclaim her own message to them, not to acknowledge their faiths as equal with Christianity.

This document, therefore, raises a number of points concerning the Church's objective in entering into dialogue with people of other faiths. The most important one of these points is to consider dialogue as an integral and essential part of the Church's mission policy. As has been observed, the Church authorities have produced various statements in order to encourage both

---

[321] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 48.
[322] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 52.
[323] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 53.
[324] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 77.
[325] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 77.
[326] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 2.
[327] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 8; see Knitter, *Jesus and Other Names*, p. 138.
[328] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 77.
[329] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 77.

Christians and non-Christians to develop their relationships since the Second Vatican Council. But by doing this, neither of them explicitly declared that Christians should enter into dialogue with others in order to proclaim their own faith to them.[330] Because of this, it could be argued that this document does not make a positive contribution to the developments of interreligious dialogue in general and Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular. Rather, it affects those relations negatively by increasing the anxieties of non-Christian partners.

Concerning this point the Hindu scholar Pushparajan indicates that:

> The overall impression one gets from the document is that it makes proclamation more important and makes dialogue subordinate to proclamation, though it also states that both dialogue and proclamation are absolutely necessary. Here arises a question: Can we make dialogue subsidiary to proclaim and yet carry it out really as absolutely necessary.[331]

Gittens, too, asks whether in the light of the insistence of this document on the necessity of proclaiming the finality and superiority of Jesus Christ a Christian can really listen to and learn from other religious traditions in which he/she claims that God's revelation is present.[332]

By concluding this section, we maintain that although the recognition of dialogue as an integral and essential part of the Church's mission policy seems a positive development as some theologians remark,[333] it can lead to a rather negative conclusion. For example, it could be argued that Christians must dialogue with non-Christians in order to evangelise them. In order to avoid this negative implication, it would be better to include mission in dialogue rather than dialogue in mission, as Knitter suggests.[334] For, this change implies that dialogue is not undertaken for the sake of mission, but mission is undertaken for the sake of dialogue.

2.7. Assessment of Post-Vatican II Developments

After the epoch-making statements of the conciliar documents concerning the Catholic Church's relations with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular, the Church authorities continued to produce more statements to develop interreligious dialogue and explain the main objectives of dialogue for Christians. The implications of these developments with regard to Christian-Muslim dialo-gue will be considered as follows.

1- The establishment of a special Secretariat to handle the dialogue work of the Catholic Church can be regarded as an important development in the Catholic Church's relations with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. Through the works of this Secretariat, both Christians and Muslims have had an opportunity to meet each other face to face which has led them to a better understanding of each other.

2- Through the encouragement of the Secretariat authori-ties, more and more Catholic representatives have started to be interested in studying Islam objectively. These studies have led

---

[330] See Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names*, p. 137.

[331] Pushparajan, "Whither Interreligious Dialogue?", p. 231.

[332] Anthony Gittens, "A Missionary's Misgivings: Reflections on Two Recent Documents", in Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue*, p. 220.

[333] See Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary", pp. 119-157; Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names*, pp. 131-38.

[334] Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names*, p. 142.

the Church authorities to speak about some theological issues such as Islam as a religion, the Prophet-hood of Muhammad and the Qur'an which were ignored by the Council Fathers in the Second Vatican Council.

3- Thanks to the initiatives of the Secretariat authorities and some Muslim organisations, Christian-Muslim study groups have been set up in order to discuss some significant common questions. Through the activities of these study groups both Christians and Muslims have built bridges of friendship and trust.

4- After the prolific statements of Vatican II concerning Christian-Muslim dialogue the Popes, Pope Paul VI and John Paul II, have opened the Catholic Church's door to Muslims in order to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue. In this way, both have visited a number of Muslim countries and have been visited by Muslim delegations. They have given speeches to Muslim audiences using very positive terms. For example, Pope John Paul II on almost every occasion has addressed Muslims as "brothers or sisters" in faith. This sort of address of the Pope to Muslims theologically implies that the Pope acknowledges that Muslims are on the right way in their faiths. Practically, too, it shows the sincerity of the Pope concerning the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue.

5- One of the most important sides of Post-Vatican II developments has been the acceptance of the idea of "dialogue of life" as the foundation for interreligious dialogue. In our opinion, through this the scope of dialogue can be extended not only those who are expert in it but to all people. Thus, it can become an inseparable part of living in harmony together for those who belong to different religious traditions.

6- In the course of the dialogue process, both the Secretariat and other Church authorities have attempted to produce some statements concerning the relationship between dialogue, mission and proclamation. In this respect they have also tried to accommodate a theological place to non-Christians within the context of the Church's evange-lising mission. By doing this, they have strongly considered the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the only source of salvation for both Christians and non-Christians. To make available this Christian salvation for all people, they emphasise the necessity of the proclamation of the Gospel message to non-Christians by inviting them to accept it in the process of interreligious dialogue. Even, in some of the latest documents, such as *Dialogue and Proclamation* and *Redemtoris Missio,* it is argued that Christians should enter into dialogue with non-Christians in order to proclaim the Gospel message to them.

Except for the last point, all other ones contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue. The last point, however, affects those developments negatively, since seeing dialogue as the integral part of the Church mission policy increases the anxieties of non-Christians by leading them to think that the Catholic Church wants to enter into dialogue to proclaim the Christian message to them and thus lead them to convert to Christianity. This last point also underestimates the most significant principal of a fruitful dialogue namely, mutual trust and mutual understanding.

2.8. Conclusion

As has been argued at the end of the previous chapter, the conciliar statements of Vatican II concerning Muslims should be taken as a point of departure from previous attitudes towards Muslims rather than systematic guidelines for better relations with Muslims. In the light of our above examination of the post-Vatican II developments, we will now attempt to illustrate how far dialogue issues have been developed during the post-Vatican II period.

As has been illustrated in this chapter, both the authorities of the Secretariat for non-Christians and Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have sought to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue. While doing this, they have often repeated the conciliar teaching of the Second Vatican Council, but sometimes they went beyond it. For example, in the Tripoli meeting and in *Guidelines For Dialogue between Christians and Muslims,* some theological issues which were ignored in Vatican II were considered. In doing so, the Catholic Church made positive statements about Islam, the status of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an. However, sometimes they returned to the pre-Vatican period in their teachings. For example the documents, *Dialogue and Mission*, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Dialogue and Proclamation,* clearly indicate that the Catholic Church teaching about non-Christian religions reflect the pre-conciliar period in which non-Christians were regarded as those who could attain salvation through either their "implicit faith" in Christ or "baptism of desire." They were also considered as "anony-mous Christians," as we have seen at the beginning of the previous chapter.

The most important reason for this return to the pre-conciliar teaching of the Catholic Church would seem to be the developments in the Christian theology of religions. As we will see in chapter six, after the 1960s more and more theologians, both Catholic and non-Catholic, have attempted to develop a pluralist Christian theology of religions in order to give more room to people of other faiths. As we will see in chapter six, thinkers such as John Hick, Paul Knitter, and to some extent Hans Küng have gone beyond the official teaching of both the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches by arguing that Christianity or Christ or the Church is one way, among others, through which people can attain salvation. In order to respond to these pluralistic developments, the Church authorities strongly continue to proclaim Jesus Christ as the unique saviour of all humankind, as a warning to Christians not to risk their own beliefs for the sake of dialogue. The recent teaching of the Catholic Church therefore seems to close the door to any Christian dialogue with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular except on exclusive Christian terms.

One interesting point of the post-Vatican II period is that many years after the Council the Catholic Church authorities refer very much to its teaching by using the following phrases "as Vatican II teaches", "the Council taught", and "the teaching of the Council" in their statements. This would seem that the teaching of the Council is not regarded by the Catholic authorities as a starting point but as the goal for interreligious dialogue.

Further, our examination of post-Vatican II developments have shown that although the authorities of the Pontifical Council or the Popes have not explicitly said so, their teaching of non-Christian religions reflects Karl Rahner's views which were laid out before the Second Vatican Council as noted at the beginning of the previous chapter. This can be regarded as the most significant development of this period, since it implies that the Catholic teaching went beyond the conciliar teaching by taking into account individual theologians' views. In short, we can conclude this chapter by stating that although it seems that in the post-Vatican II period the Church authorities have tried to squeeze the toothpaste into the tube which was poured out by the Second Vatican Council, this "cannot be done", as Fitzmaurice correctly maintains.[335]

Having examined the Catholic Church's official teaching concerning non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular, we will, now, move to examine non-Catholic Christian teaching in the light of the World Council of Churches' dialogue activities in the next chapter.

---

[335] See Fitzmaurice, *What will the Third Vatican Council have to say about Relations between Christians and People of Other Faiths*, pp. 1-16.

Chapter 3
Official Teaching of the World Council of Churches on People of Other Faiths in General and Muslims in Particular

3.1 Introduction

As has been observed in the previous chapters, the Roman Catholic Church officially initiated a dialogical attitude towards non-Christians by the significant state-ments of the Second Vatican Council. To further encourage this attitude, she set up a special Secretariat and promul-gated an official document called *Nostra Aetate*. After that, the Popes and the authorities of the Secretariat continued to make significant statements and to publish a number of documents in order to promote this dialogical attitude.

As is well known, the Roman Catholic Church does not represent the whole of Christianity, since the Orthodox, Protestant and Anglicans are also Christian churches. In this chapter, we will examine those churches' teaching relating to non-Christians by focusing our attention on the World Council of Churches' dialogue activities which were started by the affiliation of different non-Catholic Churches in 1948.[336]

It has been said that in the non-Catholic World interest in entering into dialogue with people of other faiths first arose, and to this day remains largely confined to those Churches involved in the Ecumenical Movement that was inspired by the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. It is argued that in that time the idea of "interreligious dialogue" came out as part of a new missionary strategy for ap-proaching followers of other faiths in the rapidly changing circumstances of the post-war world, in which the collapse of colonialism made the traditional missionary methods increasingly ineffective.[337]

The history of dialogue activities of the "Ecumenical Movement" is divided into three periods namely, (1) Christianity and non-Christian religions from the 1930's to 1950's; (2) the word of God and living faiths of men in the 1960's; (3) the dialogue with people of living faiths from the 1960's onward.[338] Although this classification clearly illustrates the developments of the non-Catholic Churches' dialogue activities, the time limitation of our study does not allow us to pursue them here. Instead, we will begin to examine the dialogue activities of this ecumenical body by starting from Kandy consultation [1967] onwards for two reasons. The first is that in this consultation, for the first time in the history of the WCC, some significant changes became visible

---

[336] The World Council of Churches was established by the affiliation of the various non-Catholic Churches at its founding Assembly held in Amsterdam in 1948. This establishment is also called "Ecumenical Movement" because of its concern for the establishment of the unity and renewal of the Church (See W.A. Visser't Hoft, The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches (Geneva: WCC, 1982); Martin VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches (Geneva: WCC, 1990). After this stage we will use WCC when we refer to this establishment.

[337] Concerning the changing missionary Christian approaches to people of other faiths and ecumenical movement's attitude toward other religions and their members, see Cracknell, Justice, Courtesy and Love; Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions (London: Epwort Press, 1995); Carl F. Hallencreutz, New Approaches to Men of Other Faiths, 1938-1968: A Theological Discussion (Geneva: WCC, 1970); Hallencreutz, Dialogue in Community: Current Issues in Ecumenical Relationships (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1977); S. Wesley Ariarajah, Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans 1991); Sheard, Interreligious Dialogue in Catholic Church since Vatican II, pp. 135-272.

[338] Eeuwout Klootwijk, Commitment and Openness: The Interreligious Dialogue and Theology of Religions in the Work of Stanley J. Samartha (Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum), 1992, p. 103.

concerning the relationship between non-Catholics and those who belong to other faiths. The second is that this consultation reflects some similarities to the statements of Vatican II which we have chosen as a starting point for our research.

It would be useful to give a brief history of the idea of dialogue in the Ecumenical Movement by starting from the Edinburgh conference [1910] up to the Kandy consultation [1967]. This will be followed by a brief summary of the main views of two theologians, namely Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer, because of their immense influences on the policy of the Ecumenical Movement during this period. Our main objective will be to illustrate how the WCC dealt with the issue of entering into dialogue with people of other faiths and to observe how its authorities handled the theological questions that arose in the dialogue process. Concerning our methodology, we will remind our reader that we will not start our examination with specific documents or state-ments, the methodology used in our research on the Roman Catholic Church's dialogue activities. Here we will consider the history of interreligious dialogue in WCC by studying its major conferences and assemblies. For, unlike the Catholic Church, the WCC's significant statements came out as a result of its discussions in these meetings.

3.2 Brief History of the Idea of Dialogue in the Ecumenical Movement

The equivalent of the Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* in the non-Catholic world was the nineteenth century Protestant missionary statement "outside Christianity, no salvation." This statement became a decisive criterion in non-Catholic Christians' relations with those who belonged to other religions up to the 1970's. The reflection of this exclusive statement found its place in the statement of the Congress on World Mission at Chicago [1960] as follows "in the days since the war, more than one billion souls have passed into eternity and more than half of these went to torment of the hell fire without hearing of the Christ, who he was, or why he died on the Cross of the Calvary."[339]

Representatives of the non-Catholic missionary bodies from all over the world came together for the first time in the twentieth century in the *Edinburgh Meeting*[1910] to consider the current position of mission and to discuss missionary issues in relation to the non-Christian world. In this meeting, although a common search was to launch a new missionary policy toward people of other faiths, there were many differences in the evaluation of other religions and the "good elements" which are found in those religions.[340] In fact, commission IV, "Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions", dealt with the attitude of Christians towards others within the context of mission. The members of this commission had prepared a question-naire and sent it to missionaries who had been working in non-Christian countries "to ascertain from the body of missionaries what were the things that were really alive in the other religions and what sort of ideas had the power of keeping men back from Christ."[341] W. Ariarajah, in his assessment of this

---

[339] John Ottley Percy, ed., Facing the Unfinished Task: Messages Delivered at the Congress on World Mission (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961, p. 9 cited in Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Absolute Claims", in L.S. Rouner, ed., Religious Pluralism (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), pp. 193-213.

[340] Hallencreutz, New Approaches, p. 18.

[341] Cracknell, Justice, Courtesy and Love, p. 191: In his analysis of the missionaries' responses to that questionnaire, Cracknell indicates that the following points of those responses have become the official policy of the WCC in its attitude toward people of other faiths in the course of time, although they had not been taken into account seriously at that time. These points are: (1) Christians should respect and esteem those who belong to other faiths. (2) Interreligious understanding should be focused upon people rather than the religious systems. (3) In face to face meetings with people of other faiths, it is much more helpful to know the dialogue partner than to read a book about

conference points out that although the challenge of religious pluralism was taken up seriously by commission IV on "The Missionary Message in Relation to Other Religions", "missionary confidence at that period was so strong that the pleas of this Commission were set aside; instead, a programme for the evangelisation of the world was emphasised."[342]

The relation between Christianity and non-Christian religions continued to be debated at the Jerusalem [1928] and the Tambaram [1938] conferences. Unlike the Edinburgh meeting, in these conferences discussions focused on proclaiming the Christian message to the non-Christian world, and the possible Christian approach to non-Christians and their religions. Also, in the Tambaram conference, Barth's "God's revelation is not found in other religions outside Christianity" and Kraemer's "There was a radical discontinuity between divine revelation and human religiosity, between Christianity and other religions" clashed with the more positive idea that "God's revealing activity existed everywhere throughout the world in some forms, even in non-Christian religions."[343] The other significant point of the Tambaram conference was that from that time onwards the debate on the question of the Christian approach to non-Christians started to be discussed in missionary conferences.[344] But none of these International Missionary Conferences succeeded in developing a common approach in the non-Catholic theology of religions. The question was rather how Christian mission should approach non-Christians, rather than how to enter into dialogue with them. Hallencreutz indicates that up to the Tambaram conference and during the third World Missionary Conference "the development of dialogue with men of living faiths and ideologies became somewhat secondary."[345]

After the Second World War, too, the debate on the relation between Christianity and non-Christian religions was set aside in non-Catholic theology of religions, since neither in Whitby [1947], nor the subsequent gathering at Willingen [1952] was this issue discussed. Even, during the first meeting of the Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam [1948], neither the relation to, nor dialogue with, other religions were taken into account by the participants.[346] With the second Assembly of the WCC in Evanston [1954], things began to change slightly, since in its session on "Evangeli-zation" there was a reference to non-Christian religions.[347] When Christians were called on to participate in the nation-building of many countries in the Third World, the WCC began to consider its attitude towards non-Christian religions. Indeed, a consultation on "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions" was held in Davos [1955], which reopened the earlier debate of the Missionary Council before World War II. One year later, the central committee of the WCC

---

his/her religious tradition. (4) Through the interaction with people of other faiths, Christians can learn their own faith better. (5) Whatever a Christian says about other religions should be acceptable to members of those religions. (6) The values and good sides of other religions should be appreciated by Christians. (7) Other religious traditions can contain some revelation, but they are not as perfect as the Christian revelation. In other words all religions can have authentic revelation but only the Christian revelation is exhaustive. (8) God is at work in other religions through the Holy Spirit. (9) The religious figures of other religions such as Muhammad, Confucius, Gotama can be regarded as "agents of the divine activity." (10) Through the Christian message the other religions can be fulfilled. Or other religions are regarded preparatio evangelica (Cracknell, Justice, Courtesy and Love, pp. 196ff; Cracknell,"The Theology of Religion in the IMC and WCC 1910-1989", CD, 19 (1991), pp. 3-17).

[342] Ariarajah, Hindus and Christians p. 116.

[343] Sheard, Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, p. 138.

[344] Sheard, Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, p. 137.

[345] Hallencreutz, "A Long-Standing Concern: Dialogue in Ecumenical History 1910-1971" in Stanley J. Samartha, ed., Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement (Geneva: WCC, 1971), p. 59.

[346] Klootwijk, Commitment and Openness, p. 104.

[347] Visser't Hooft, ed., The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the WCC (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 106.

inaugurated a study project on the "Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men." As a parallel to this, a number of Christian study centres were established to play an important role in this project.[348]

In short, from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the 1960's, although there were some debates and discussions concerning the relationship between Christians and non-Christians in the Ecumenical Movement, the word "dialogue" or "inter religious dialogue" were not used to express this relationship.[349] The nineteenth century exclusi-vist Protestant missionary statement "outside Christianity, no salvation" was still the decisive factor for Christianity's relation with people of other faiths.

However, when we compare the developments of this period with the Catholic Church's activities before Vatican II, we may conclude that among non-Catholic Churches there were official debates and discussions concerning the relationship between Christians and people of other faiths. In the Roman Catholic Church, however, these debates did not occur. Instead, the different interpretations of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* were presented by those in authority, as has been observed in Chapter One section 1.2.

3.2.1 Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer

The Swiss theologian Karl Barth's evaluation of other religions is closely connected with his understanding of the status of Jesus Christ. He saw Christ as God's sovereign act of grace for all humanity. In Jesus Christ, he argued, God revealed the truth about Himself and humanity in a unique and absolute way. So, Christ revealed God as the Lord who became servant, over and against human self-righteous striving to become Lord themselves. Human beings have to accept this offer in faith as the right response open to them through grace.[350] This kind of understanding of Jesus led Barth to advocate that there is only one revelation, Jesus Christ, and all religions, including Christianity, are evils because they are human responses to God. Thus, Barth regarded the coming of that revelation as "the abolition of religion."[351]

Later on Barth argued that Christianity was the only true and justified religion, thanks to its close connection with Jesus Christ who is the only revelation of God. For that reason Christianity is the only religion in and through which salvation can be possible. Other religions no matter how good or true they might appear, are false and useless, since there can be no salvation in them because of their lack of bearing the name of Jesus Christ.[352]

However, in the later volume of his *Church Dogmatics* Barth mentioned the inclusion of non-Christian people in God's grace in the section on the relationship of the Christian community to the world. Here, within the context of a discussion of Jesus as the "light of life", Barth raised the possibility of there being "other lights."[353] By taking this point, some theologians argue that in his theology of religions Barth "allowed for the possibility that the non-Christian religions participate in the history of God's salvation, and he seems to have been saying that adherents of other faiths

---

[348] Hallencreutz, "A Long-Standing Concern", pp. 59-60.

[349] Klootwijk, Commitment and Openness, p. 105.

[350] Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics; The Doctrine of the Word of God, v.1/2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clarck, 1978 first published in 1956), pp. 344-345.

[351] Barth, Church Dogmatics, v.1/2, p. 297.

[352] Barth, Church Dogmatics, v.1/2, pp. 349-350.

[353] Barth, Church Dogmatics; The Doctrine of Reconciliation, v. 4/3a, pp. 113-114.

differ from Christians only in that they are unaware of the objective facts of their own salvation."[354] Paul Knitter in his *Towards a Protestant Theology of Religions* [1974] examined the issue to decide whether Barth changed his view on the non-Christian religions. He concluded that his position on those religions remained fundamentally unchanged.[355] In this discussion, it seems that Knitter is right, since when we examine the related passage of Barth concerning this issue it is quite clear that according to Barth there is a possibility of availability of other lights in the world. But these lights are genuine only as long as they are compatible with the Christian light namely Christ. For he claims:

> Jesus Christ is the light of life. To underline the 'the' is to say that He is the one and only light of life. Positively, this means that He is the light of life in all its fullness, in perfect adequacy; and negatively, it means that there is no other light of life outside or alongside His, outside or alongside the light which He is.[356]

The Dutch theologian Hendrik Kraemer was strongly impressed by Barth's dialectic theology in the beginning of his career, while establishing his own theology. His theology of other religions has been very influential on the WCC's policy towards other religions because he became the first director of the WCC's Ecumenical Institute from 1948 to 1958, and his work *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* [1938][357] became the agenda of the Tambaram conference in 1938. The main thesis of his work and the Tambaram conference was the argument that there was a radical discontinuity between divine revelation and human religiosity, in other words between Christ and non-Christian religions.[358]

Kraemer's evaluation of other religions was based on his interpretation of the nature of the Christian faith and Christological understanding of other religions, as it was in the theology of Barth. Kraemer, too, accepted Jesus as the unique and absolute revelation of God, in whom God realistically reveals himself in the context of the sinfulness of the human condition.[359] Then he stressed that "God has revealed the Way and the Life and the Truth in Jesus and wills this to be known through all the world."[360] He maintained that non-Christian religions are human attempts at self-justification, since they are in error, blindness, sin and death when compared with God's only revelation in Christ. Contrary to Barth's Christ-centred understanding, Kraemer attributed to the Church a unique and effective role in God's plan of salvation.[361]

Kraemer, unlike Barth, rejected all aggressive attitudes towards non-Christian religions and urged Christians to obtain a good knowledge about their neighbours and their religions, since, according to him, those religions are found together with Christianity in the domain of God who has created them. On the other hand, on theological grounds he regarded the issue of the Christian

---

[354] Peter Harrison, "Karl Barth and The Non-Christian Religions", JES, 23/2 (1986), pp. 207-224; Donald W. Dayton, "Karl Barth and the Wider Ecumenism", in P. Phan, ed., Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism (New York: Pragon House, 1990), pp. 181-189.

[355] Knitter, Towards a Protestant Theology of Religions; A Case Study of Paul Althaus and Contemporary Attitudes (Marburg: N.G. Elbert Verlag. 1974), pp. 32-36.

[356] Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4/3a, p. 86.

[357] Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938).

[358] Hallencreutz, New Approaches to Men of Other Faiths, pp. 21-39.

[359] Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, p. 113.

[360] Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, p. 107.

[361] Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, p. 25.

attitude towards other religions as "one of the greatest and gravest which the Christian Churches all over the world and the missionary cause have to face at the present time."[362]

3.3 Christianity and Non-Christian Religions in the 1960s

The study project "The Word of God and Living Faiths of Men" which was put on the agenda of the WCC after the Davos meeting became one of the main issues discussed in the Department of Missionary Studies and Department on Studies in Evangelism in the 1960's. During this period, at the WCC meeting in New Delhi [1961], the idea of dialogue began to be seen as a way of approaching non-Christian religions for the first time in the history of the WCC. It was defined as "a form of evangelism which was often effective" by indicating that through dialogue the Christian missionary is enabled to understand the person to whom he/she is witnessing and thus be more effective in presenting the gospel in a relevant and convincing manner.[363] According to the New Delhi statement, the aim of entering into dialogue with people of other faiths is to get to know them better in order to proclaim the Gospel to them. This point was also emphasised in the report of the Mexico meeting [1963] by declaring that in the process of dialogue Christians should have the intention of moving his/her dialogue partner "to listen to what God in Christ reveals to" him/her and "to answer him."[364] Further, it was maintained that "true dialogue with a man of another faith required a concern both for the Gospel and for the other man. Without the first, dialogue becomes conversation. Without the second, it becomes irrelevant, unconvincing or arrogant.[365]

The New Delhi and Mexico meetings made entering into dialogue with people of other faiths an important issue among the personnel of the WCC. The Faith and Order Consultation on the encounter between Christians and Muslims which was held in Broumana, Lebanon, 1966 can be regarded as an example of these developments. The Broumana meeting brought together thirty Protestants, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics to discuss the issue of "Muslim-Christian Encounter." The main purpose of this meeting was to search for the possibilities of mutual cooperation with Muslims, and to urge the Division of World Mission and Evangelism to organise dialogue meetings between Christians and Muslims to promote and assist mutual cooperation with them. The participants of this meeting believed that Christians coming together with Muslims would lead to a deeper mutual understanding between them.[366] At the end of the meeting, participants, while agreeing on the necessity for breaking down barriers of prejudice, indifference, suspicion and fear, disagreed on the theological foundation of dialogue. The final statement stated that the basis of Christian-Muslim encounter "should be the Muslims', as well as the Christians', self-understanding and belief about man."[367]

By the Broumana meeting, dialogue with people of other faiths became a controversial issue in the ecumenical move-ment. In order to clarify this issue, Victor Hayward, who was at that time the Director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, organised the Kandy

---

[362] Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, pp. 101-114.

[363] Visser't Hooft, ed., The New Delhi Report: Report of the Third Assembly of the WCC (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1962), p. 84.

[364] Ronald K. Orchard, Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on the World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC Held in Mexico City, December 8-19, 1963 (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 147.

[365] World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (Geneva: WCC, 1963), pp. 116-117.

[366] Victor E. W. Hayward, "Consultation among Christians from the Muslim World", in Christians Meeting Muslims WCC Papers on Ten Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue (Geneva: the WCC, 1977), p. 13.

[367] Hayward, "Consultation among Christians from the Muslim World", pp. 13ff.

Consultation [1967] which made an epoch-making break-through in the WCC concerning interreligious dialogue.

3.3.1 The Kandy Consultation [1967]

This consultation organised by the WCC on the theme of "Christian Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths", brought Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholic theolo-gians together for a discussion of inter religious dialogue at Kandy in Sri Lanka. Although there were differences among participants, (some of them challenged both the idea that dialogue was a form of evangelism as well as, the exclusi-vistic theology of religions on which the dialogue was based)[368] at the end of the consultation, they agreed on a statement with the title, "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths."[369] Even though this statement did not gain an official status, it is regarded as an epoch-making break-through in the history of the WCC's dialogue activities, as the Catholic document *Nostra Aetate* is regarded in the history of the Catholic Church. In it, there was a suggestion to the Central Committee that dialogue should be con-sidered as a new basis for Christian relations with people of other faiths. Because of the significance of this document, its statements deserve to be examined.

The Kandy report starts by giving a theological statement similar to the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* 16 concerning the possibility of salvation for those who belong to other faiths. In this respect, it says:

> God's love and purpose of salvation extend to all mankind, of every century and creed. He saves the world in and through Jesus Christ. Salvation in Christ has often been too narrowly understood. Through the Spirit, Christ is at work in every man's heart, though as yet His Kingdom remains a hidden rule.[370]

This statement like the statements of the conciliar state-ments of Vatican II, highlights that God's plan of salvation is universal and is only available in the world in and through Jesus Christ, extending to all people through the universal activity of the Spirit. This implies that salvation is totally a Christian salvation, but it is extended to all people through the Holy Spirit.[371]

---

[368] For example the Indian theologian Nirman Minz offered an alternative dialogue understanding for non-Catholic Christians by maintaining that dialogue as a missionary strategy for converting the dialogue partner "defeats its own purpose." Such a theology is by its very nature defensive, and self-justification becomes its final aim. Thus it precludes the elemental openness and willingness necessary for understanding the other as equal partner in the dialogue. We hold that the task of theology in a changed cultural situation is to promote understanding, intelligibility and the relevance of truth, and to effect reconciliation and community between men of different faiths in general . . ." (Nirman Minz, "Theologies of Dialogue: A Critique", Religion and Society, 14/2 (1967), p. 11). The Srilankan theologian, Lynn de Silva, too, argued that there should not be room for the belief that there is no salvation outside the Christian Church in the Christian theology of religions; instead Christians can express the uniqueness of the Christ-event by advocating that there is no salvation apart from Christ. Then he explained the implication of these changes as follows. "This does not mean that only those who consciously acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ as known in history will be saved and all others will be lost eternally. The Christ-event is the classic instance of salvation, but not the exclusive event in history through which God has mediated his salvation to mankind. The other events, although they do not measure up to the classic event, are in no way insufficient means of salvation. Each event, like the Christ event, is a promise and guarantee of the salvation that is to be in the end-time" (Lynn de Silva, "Non-Christian Religions and God's Plan of Salvation", Study Encounter, 3/2 (1967), p. 64).

[369] "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths", Religion and Society, 14/2 (1967), pp. 64-69.

[370] "Christians in Dialogue", p. 64.

[371] "Christians in Dialogue", p. 65.

Contrary to the traditional non-Catholic axiom "outside Christianity, no salvation", this statement makes it quite clear that there is the possibility of salvation for people of other faiths. While acknowledging this, like the Second Vatican Council, it does not say whether non-Christian religions have any value through which their followers attain salvation. Concerning those religions, it says only that during the process of dialogue with people of other faiths Christians "may gain light regarding the place held by other religious traditions in God's purpose for them and for us."[372]

After this theological statement concerning the status of people of other faiths, the report explains the basis of entering into dialogue in a similar way as *Nostra Aetate*. Firstly, the report stresses human solidarity, since according to it all humankind is being "caught up into one universal history, and made increasingly aware of common tasks and common hopes."[373] It stresses, secondly: "the belief that all men are created in the image of God," and thirdly, the "realisation that Christ died for every man," and the "expectation of His coming Kingdom."[374]

After explaining the necessity of dialogue in this way, the report moves to describe the nature of dialogue as a way through which the participants reach the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witnessing their faith to each other. It says:

> Dialogue means a positive effort to attain a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witness. It involves an expectation of something new happening – the opening of a new dimension of which one was not aware before. Dialogue implies a readiness to be changed as well as to influence others.[375]

Finally, this report deals with the issue of dialogue and proclamation in the process of interreligious dialogue. In this respect, it maintains:

> Dialogue and proclamation are not identical but related. At any time or place within the course of our living in dialogue, moments for proclamation of the Gospel may be given. For Christians, proclamation is the sharing of the Good news about God's action in history through Jesus Christ. Proclamation is made in other ways besides dialogue, but should always be made in the spirit of dialogue. On the other hand, dialogue may include procla-mation, since it must always be undertaken in the spirit of those who have good news to share.[376]

In fact, in this passage, the Kandy report tries to find a middle ground that would mediate between the fears of conservative Christians that a dialogical approach to people of other faiths would lead to a downgrading or betrayal of the missionary mandate of the Church, and the anxieties of the dialogue partners that dialogue was nothing more than a new Christian strategy for the Christian mission. It could however be argued that while trying to remove the anxieties on the Christian side, it created more uneasiness for the other side, since it gave the impression that

---

[372] "Christians in Dialogue", p. 65.
[373] "Christians in Dialogue", pp. 65-66.
[374] "Christians in Dialogue", p. 66.
[375] "Christians in Dialogue", p. 68.
[376] "Christians in Dialogue", pp. 65-66.

Christians are willing to establish better relations with others in order to proclaim the Gospel to them.

Similar views concerning the relationship between dialogue and proclamation were expressed by the Catholic Church's document *Dialogue and Proclamation* in 1991 as noted in Chapter Two section 2.6.2. There is, however, an important difference between these two documents. While the Catholic document regards proclamation as the main purpose of dialogue, the Kandy report implies that proclamation is not the direct but the indirect aim of dialogue. But, it is clear that both of them urge their followers to use dialogue as a tool for proclamation.

After observing the content of the Kandy report in this way, its significance for the development of interreligious dialogue in the WCC can be highlighted as follows. Firstly, in this consultation the meaning of the term "dialogue" was understood much more broadly than when it was used in the New Delhi Assembly [1961], since, for first time in history of the WCC, dialogue was regarded as a new basis for Christian relationship with people of other faiths and an event to which both partners contributed, and in which both could learn. It says:

> Dialogue means a positive effort to attain a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witness. It involves an expectation of something new happening. Dialogue implies a readiness to be changed as well as to influence others. Good dialogue develops when one partner speaks in such a way that the other feels drawn to listen, and likewise when one listens so that the other is drawn to speak. The outcome of the dialogue is the work of the Spirit.[377]

Secondly, as Pranger states methodologically this con-sultation brought about a great change in the WCC's theological reflections on other religions. For the partici-pants of this meeting insisted that the Christian theological approach to other religions should be formulated within the context of a dialogical attitude towards followers of other religions. In addition, they underlined that special attention had to be given to the question of the place of those religions in God's purposes for humanity.[378]

Thirdly, for the first time in the history of Christianity in this consultation Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians came together to discuss the issue of relation between Christianity and non-Christian religions. This should, however, not be understood to mean that there was agreement on the basis of dialogue among them. In this regard, Hallencreutz points out that in spite of the together-ness of major Christian groups on the necessity of entering into dialogue with people of other faiths, there were major differences especially between Roman-Catholic and Protes-tant theologians' approaches concerning the theological foundation of inter religious dialogue. He says that concerning

> the theological basis of dialogue for Christians, the Kandy Consultation applied both the typically Roman-Catholic view of the relationship between non-Christian religions and the Church as between the 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' ways of

---

[377] "Christians in Dialogue", pp. 53-54.

[378] Hendrik Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, The World Council of Churches and The Challenge of Religious Plurality Between 1967 and 1979 (Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1994), p. 63.

salvation, and the more familiar emphasis of the World Council on 'common humanity' as both a starting point and a basis for a common hope.[379]

Fourthly, the acceptance of a "common humanity" as a basis for inter religious dialogue can be regarded as an important development when compared to the traditional WCC understanding of dialogue. For, while before this consultation "common humanity" was regarded as a basis for common human responsibility for social issues, only in the Kandy consultation it became the starting point and theological basis of interreligious dialogue.

In the evaluation of the Kandy Consultation, Pranger indicates that this meeting can be regarded as very important for the development of dialogue between Christianity and non-Christian religions because of its following significant points. The first is its changing attitude towards the relationship between mission, proclamation, and dialogue. Mission and witness were no longer regarded as a one-way communication, and dialogue was considered as the principal Christian form of relationship with people of other faiths. The second is its search for a new theological framework to determine the relation of Christians with non-Christians. The third is the acceptance of dialogue as a basis for a solution of questions concerning non-Christian religions.[380]

As observed so far, the Kandy consultation initiated a much more open and positive attitude towards people of other faiths among non-Catholics. Samartha gives the reasons for this development as the pressure of historical events, the positive development within the Catholic Church, and the need felt by Churches in Asia for a closer relationship with neighbours of other faiths and the change of the leadership of the WCC at a crucial moment.

In short, the final statement of the Kandy Consultation can be regarded as an epoch-making breakthrough in the non-Catholic Churches' relation with people of other faiths just as *Nostra Aetate* became for the Catholic Church, since it put dialogue firmly on the agenda of the WCC. There is also a similarity between the final report of this meeting and the Catholic document *Nostra Aetate* with regard to under-standing the dialogical attitude as a determinative factor for Christians' relation with people of other faiths. However, in spite of this significant similarity, we cannot say that the Kandy statement is equal to *Nostra Aetate* for the following reasons: First of all, the Kandy statement was not an official statement in the way *Nostra Aetate* was. Secondly, this state-ment spoke about the theological issues between Christians and others in a different way from *Nostra Aetate*. Thirdly, whereas the *Nostra Aetate* took into account non-Christians separately by making specific statements about them, the Kandy statement dealt with them in general by referring to them as "people of other faiths."

3.3.2. The Developments after Kandy

One year after the Kandy meeting, the Fourth General Assembly of the WCC was held at Uppsala, Sweden, 1968. At this meeting the topic of inter religious dialogue was discussed in section II on "Renewal in Mission" and not as a separate issue.[381] This meeting was the first assembly that tried to connect inter religious dialogue with the general theological outlook of the WCC. In its final report, a small passage was reserved for dialogue. According to this passage, dialogue is something which occurs inevitably wherever followers of different religions come into

---

[379] Hallencreutz, Dialogue and Community, p. 29.
[380] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 66.
[381] See Normann Goodall, The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of WCC, Uppsala, July 4-20, 1968 (Geneva: WCC, 1968).

contact. The basis of this dialogue should be the "common humanity" shared by all human beings. It was emphasised that dialogue should be carried out in a form of mutual witness. Also, in this passage, as in the Kandy statement, dialogue and proclamation were distinguished from each other by stating that there is an interrelationship between them within the total witness of the Church. A significant departure point of the Uppsala report from the Kandy statement is that it did not mention the possibility of salvation outside the boundaries of the Church or Christianity.[382]

After the Kandy consultation and the Uppsala Assembly, the desire to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths in the WCC was accelerated. In 1969, the Central Committee at Canterbury noted the necessity of dialogue with other religions and ideologies by recommending a multireligious conference. Under this recommendation the first multilat-eral inter religious dialogue meeting was held at Ajaltoun, Lebanan, 1970 under the sponsorship of the WCC to provide a basis for further theological reflection.[383]

In this meeting, Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhist came together. The aim was simply to experience bilateral dialogue between Christians and other religions and to discuss the problems as well as the successes that such dialogue would bring. At the end of this meeting the participants agreed on the following conclusion:

> A full and loyal commitment to one's own faith did not stand in the way of dialogue. On the contrary, it was our faith which was the very basis of, and driving force to intensifica-tion of dialogue and a search for common actions between members of different faiths in the various localities and situation in which they find themselves.[384]

The Ajaltoun meeting can be regarded as an event of major historical significance in the history of the Ecumenical Movement because of its being the first multilateral dialogue conference. Hallencreutz outlines the significance of this meeting by stating that the goal at Ajaltoun "was not in the first place to have an interreligious conversation about dialogue" but to attempt "an actual engagement in dialogue."[385] Samartha points out that the worship dimen-sion in religions was raised by the Ajaltoun meeting by asking whether this dimension "can be excluded from any dialogue between people of living faiths."[386] In our opinion, too, the most significant contribution of this meeting was the emphasis that in the process of dialogue a full and loyal commitment to one's own faith does not stand in the way of dialogue.[387] This principle rejects all kinds of excuses which are expressed or will be expressed by those who claim that entry into dialogue with others means underestimating one's own faith.

In the aftermath of Ajaltoun, Christian theologians – Protestant, Roman-Catholic and Orthodox – met at Zürich in 1970 to make a theological evaluation of the Ajaltoun meeting and to struggle with the question of the com-ponents of a theological basis for dialogue that could be

---

[382] Goodall, The Uppsala Report, p. 29; It says that "the meeting with men of other faiths or no faith must lead to dialogue. Christians' dialogue with another implies neither denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of his own commitment to Christ, but rather a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble . . ."

[383] "Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths; The Ajaltoun Memorandum" in Samartha, ed., Living Faith and the Ecumenical Movement, pp. 15-32.

[384] "Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths", p. 16.

[385] Hallencreutz, Dialogue in Community, p. 31.

[386] Samartha, Between Two Cultures (Geneva: WCC, 1996), p. 50.

[387] Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 57.

recommended to the member Churches of the WCC. The final report of this meeting was published under the title of "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths", but more commonly called "The Zürich Aide-Mémoire."[388]

The significant points of this document can be summarised as follows:

(1) Dialogue between different faiths is inevitable because of the pluralistic character of the world.

(2) Dialogue is urgent because of the common pressure on establishing world peace, justice, and a hopeful future.

(3) Real dialogue necessitates genuine openness and mutual witness. This means that every dialogue participant freely witnesses to his/her own beliefs to his/her dialogue partners.

(4) Dialogue carries the risk of change. This means that in the process of dialogue every dialogue participant should be prepared to be changed by his/her dialogue partner.

(5) Dialogue is clearly part of mission and should be carried out by Christians within the context of God's mission [*Missio Dei*].

In our opinion, the points 3 and 4 can contribute to the development of interreligious dialogue more than any others, since these points maintain that every dialogue participant has the right to tell his/her beliefs to others, and within this context he/she should also be ready to change his/her own beliefs. These two points are also considered among the ground rules of interreligious dialogue by individual scholars.[389]

Point 5 deserves more clarification because of its theological dimension and influence on the development of interreligious dialogue. It seems that in this "Zürich Aide Mémorie", the WCC authorities attempted to explain the relationship between mission and dialogue to reduce the objections of those who were worried about the positive developments in the WCC concerning the relationship with people of other faiths and those who regarded this development as a new mission policy of the WCC. Within this context while some Christians were suspicious that dialogue would be a betrayal of mission, people of other faiths considered dialogue as a new missionary tactic. The attempt was made to explain the relationship between mission and dialogue by understanding Jesus in a more inclusivistic way. According to this understanding, Jesus Christ was already present in other religious faiths. There-fore, dialogue had a Christological basis, and the mission of the Church was to discover Christ's presence in other faiths in and through dialogue.[390] As noted in the first and second chapters, similar views were emphasised by the Roman Catholic Church starting prior to Vatican II and continuing until today.

The "Zürich Aide-Mémoire" also stressed that Christians and non-Christians must come together and seek ways of entering into dialogue with each other. It emphasised that dialogue was an opportunity for all partners to witness to their faith and was not a betrayal of mission, nor should it be used as a new tool for mission.[391] As we have observed so far, the "Zürich Aide-Mémoire" set out some of the basic principles of interreligious dialogue. Pranger points out that the participants of the Zurich Consultation made a new beginning in the interreligious dialogue by

[388] "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths: The Zürich Aide-Memoire", in Samartha, ed., Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement, pp. 33-45.

[389] See Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules For Interreligious, Inter-ideological Dialogue", JES, Winter 1983, pp. 1-4.

[390] "The Zürich Aide-Mémoire", p. 36.

[391] Dick C. Mulder, "A History of the Subunit on Dialogue of the World Council of Churches", SID, 2 (1992), p. 137.

regarding it as "the only suitable form of communication between Christians and adherents of other faiths."[392]

As Samartha rightly remarks, we may conclude that in the new process which started with the Kandy consultation and continued with the Ajaltoun meeting and the "Zürich Aide-Mémoire" the main issue was not "how to replace other religions by Christianity" as it was at missionary conferences such as Edinburgh, Jerusalem, Tambaram, and the others "but how to relate the living faith of Christians to the living faiths of other people in a pluralistic world."[393] In spite of this positive development during this period, there was a reluctance to deal theologically with the reality of the non-Christian religions. Conservative Christians wondered how those who had been considered objects of Christian mission could be regarded as dialogue partners?

3.4. Dialogue with People of Living Faiths

As noted above, the dialogue policy of the WCC developed in a more positive way at the Kandy consultation and gained theological dimension at the Ajaltoun meeting. In addition, the appointment of the Indian theologian, Stanley J. Samartha[394] as Associate Secretary of the Department of Studies in Mission and Evangelism was a significant step forward for the WCC. By this appointment dialogue activities of the WCC gained a new momentum by moving away from examining the religious traditions of people of other faiths in order to spread the Gospel to encountering non-Christians in order to dialogue with them.[395]

The first thing Samartha did after his appointment was to prepare a plan for further dialogue activities and send it to the Directors of Study Research Centres. In this plan, Samartha, firstly, emphasised the necessity of the theolo-gical evaluation of the dialogue events between Christians and people of other faiths up to that time. Secondly, he stressed the importance of studying the meaning of "salvation today" in different religious traditions. Thirdly, he wanted Christians to think about how other religious traditions try to understand humanity's relation to nature and to history in the light of changing conceptions. As Klootwijk rightly remarks, by doing this Samartha wanted to widen the WCC's theological perspective concerning people of other faiths.[396] In other words, he argued for a theological openness towards followers of other faiths. M. Kinnamon suggests that behind this new dialogue policy of the WCC there was "a conviction that other faiths

---

[392] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 89.
[393] Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 64.
[394] Samartha joined the staff of the WCC during the WCC's fourth assembly in Uppsala in 1968 as an associate secretary in the Department of Studies in Mission and Evangelism. After the establishment of the DFI in 1971 he became its first director and stayed in this job until 1980. During this period he played a leading role in the Christian approach to the question of interreligious dialogue and the developing of a more positive Christian theology of religions both in the circle of the WCC and India; subsequently he has been deeply involved in bringing the WCC to a greater awareness of the necessity of inter religious dialogue, and of a positive theological response to religious pluralism which challenge to traditional understanding of the WCC. He has even been regarded as architect of interreligious dialogue in the WCC. Knitter in his commenting on Samartha's work, One Christ Many Religions, points out the similarities between K.Rahner and Samartha. He points out that what Rahner has been for Catholic theology, Samartha has been for non-Catholic theology with respect to the Christian attitude towards other religions (Knitter, "Stanley Samartha's 'One Christ-Many Religions': Pluralist and Problems", Current Dialogue 21, December 1991, p. 25; For further information about the significance of Samartha see Klootwijk, Commitment and Dialogue, pp. 37-49; Ariarajah, "Some Glimpses into the Theology of Dr. Stanley Samartha", pp. 231-233; and Samartha, Between Two Cultures, pp. 28-130).
[395] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 101; Kimball, Striving Together, p. 54.
[396] Klootwijk, Commitment and Openness, p. 37.

should not be judged in the abstract, on the basis of doctrinal principle, but should be experienced through living encounter."[397] Now, we will turn to examine the important meetings and events of this period.

3.4.1. Addis Ababa Meeting

The meeting, held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1971, represented a turning point in the WCC's dialogue outlook with people of other faiths. For the first time, the issue of dialogue which had been given a new dimension by the Kandy consultation became a principal topic in the WCC's meetings and assemblies.

There were two major presentations which became influential on subsequent developments of the WCC's dialogue activities. The first was the presentation of the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon, George Khodr, under the title of "Christianity in a Pluralist World and the Economy of the Holy Spirit."[398] The other was Samartha's presentation under the title of "Dialogue as a Continuing Christian Concern."[399]

After these presentations some conservative Christians criticised them because of their challenge to the traditional understanding of the uniqueness and transcendence of the Christian message and Christ.[400] In spite of this situation, at the end two significant decisions were taken by the participants which positively affected dialogue activities of the WCC in subsequent stages. The first was setting up an "Interim Guidelines and Policy Statement" for further dialogue activities of the WCC. The second was the establishment of an official dialogue body within the WCC's organisational structure to undertake its dialogue activities. By following this decision, "Subunit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies," [DFI] was set up immediately, as will be seen below.

3.4.2. "Interim Guidelines and Policy Statement"

This document was prepared in the light of the recommendations of the Central Committee of Canterbury meeting held in 1969. Its main objectives were to evaluate the past dialogue activities of the WCC and to prepare a basis for DFI which had been planned at the Addis Ababa meeting as noted above.

---

[397] M. Kinnamon & B.E. Cope, eds., The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices (Geneva: WCC, 1997), pp. 393-394.

[398] George Khodr, "Christianity in a Pluralistic World, The Economy of the Holy Spirit" in Samartha, ed., Living Faiths and Ecumenical Movement, pp. 131-142. In this presentation, he mainly argued that the event of Christ should be understood as ahistorical not historical; the saving activity of God is active throughout the world through the Holy Spirit; and the mystery of the Christ event is the heart of every religious encounter between God and human beings.

[399] Samartha, "Dialogue as a Continuing Christian Concern", in Samartha, ed., Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement, pp. 150-162. There are two significant points in this presentation of subsequent developments. Regarding the first point, Samartha argued that there is inter-relatedness between religions and ideologies. According to Samartha, considering religions and ideologies in relation to each other would do harm to religions, especially traditional religions, because of the challenging character of ideologies. On the second issue, he pointed out the significance of dialogue for the establishment of a human community across religious and ideological boundaries. Also see Samartha, Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Interreligious Relationship (Geneva: WCC, 1981), p. 1.

[400] World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 10th-21st, 1971 (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 18-20.

Without going into detail, we will highlight only the significant points of this "Interim Guidelines" from a theological point of view. In its introduction, it regards dialogue as a form of service and witness to the world by describing it as "a natural part of human relationship" which "is inevitable, urgent, and full of opportunity." By doing this, it emphasizes that dialogue

> is inevitable because everywhere in the world Christians are now living in pluralistic societies. It is urgent because all men are under common pressures in the search for justice, peace and a hopeful future. It is full of opportunity because Christians can now, in new ways, discover new aspects of the servanthood and lordship of Christ and new implications for the witness of the Church in the context of moving towards a common human community.[401]

As can be seen in the last part of this passage, "Interim Guidelines" finds a Christological basis for interreligious dialogue for Christians by considering the servanthood and the lordship of Jesus Christ together. In so doing, it put a greater stress on his Lordship than on his servanthood. This would imply that Christians should defend the "supremacy, uniqueness and finality of Christ" in the process of dialo-gue. Naturally, this would affect interreligious dialogue by increasing the anxieties of people of other faiths concerning the nature of Christian dialogue initiatives.[402]

After explaining the need for Christians to enter into dialogue in this way, the "Interim Guidelines" moves on to explain why Christians and non-Christians need to dialogue with each other as follows:

> Dialogue for the sake of common action in the service of men in pluralistic societies. Dialogue for the sake of better mutual understanding between people of living faiths and ideologies. Dialogue for the sake of indigenization of the Christian faith in different cultures.[403]

It adds that in this process every dialogue participant should have the freedom to express himself/herself freely. It says:

> Each partner must be understood as he understands himself, and his freedom to be committed to his faith must be fully respected. Without this freedom to be committed, to be open, to witness, to change and to be changed genuine dialogue is impossible.[404]

"Interim Guidelines" also raised a number of significant questions that needed to be studied in the dialogue meetings of the WCC under three major headings. These were, "What are the fundamental and theological impli-cations of dialogue? What is the relationship between dialogue, mission and witness? and How is dialogue to be understood and practised in the context of indigeni-zation."[405] As has been observed in the second chapter, the Secretariat of the Catholic

---

[401] "The World Council of Churches and Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, "An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines", in Samartha, ed., Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement, pp, 47-48.
[402] See Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 75.
[403] "Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines", p. 50.
[404] "Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines", p. 51.
[405] "Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines", pp. 51-52.

Church in its consultors meetings and official documents such as *Dialogue and Mission* and *Dialogue and Proclamation*, and Pope John Paul II' in his encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* and *'Redemptoris Missio* raised similar questions within the context of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. But, as has been seen in Chapter Two sections 2.6 and 2.4.1, none of them were able to produce adequate answers to these questions which would satisfy both Christians and non-Christians.

This document finishes by making a number of recommendations to the member Churches of the WCC. These recommendations aim at urging those Churches to promote a greater understanding of people of other faiths through educational programmes; to sponsor bilateral and multilateral dialogue meetings with Roman Catholic Institutions such as the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions and to eliminate everything in current materials on other religions that promotes insensitivity and lack of respect. In this connection, we can recall that the Secretariat made similar recommendations to Catholic authorities to encourage them to establish local dialogue and study groups.[406]

3.4.3. Dialogue Activities of the WCC after the Establishment of DFI

As has been noted, upon the recommendation of the Addis Ababa meeting a Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies [DFI] was instituted in order to undertake the dialogue activities of the WCC.[407] By doing this, the DFI had two primary duties. The first was to organise dialogue meetings with people of other faiths and ideologies. The second was to reflect on the theological meaning for Christians entering into dialogue.[408] In order to fulfil these tasks, the DFI urged member Churches to establish a responsible dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies; at the same time it sought to determine the theological meaning of this dialogue,[409] as the Secretariat had done after the Second Vatican Council. Its first director, Samartha, stressed that the establishment of this sub-unit "gave dialogue a separate presence and visible identity within the ecumenical movement."[410]

After the establishment of this special unit, the dialogue activities of the WCC accelerated especially with regard to Muslims. The DFI organised its first meeting with Muslims on the issue of "The Quest for Human Understanding and Cooperation – the Christian and Muslim

---

[406] See Chapter Two section 2.2.

[407] The title of this sub-unit implies the following points: "First, the dialogue is to be with people, not with religious communities and their representatives. Second, the avoidance of the word religions is significant", since it indicates that the personnel of the WCC want to enter into dialogue with others not by virtue of their religions. "Third, no distinction is made between people who think of themselves as religious believers and those who are committed to other types of movements" (See, John Cobb, "The Meaning of Pluralism for Christian Self-Understanding", in Rouner, ed., *Religious Pluralism*, pp. 161-174).

[408] See Mulder, "A History of the Sub-Unit on Dialogue of the World Council of Churches", pp. 136-151; Mulder, "Developments in Dialogue with Muslims: World Council of Churches", in Gé Speelman, et al, eds., Muslims and Christians in Europe, pp.153-161.

[409] Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting, p. 54.

[410] Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 171.

Contribution" in Broumana, Lebanon [1972].[411] Because of its significance for Christian-Muslim relations some important points of the memorandum of this meeting will be considered here.[412]

In this memorandum the main purpose of Christian-Muslim dialogue was outlined as an opportunity for people to come together in order to solve common human problems such as peace and justice in the changing contem-porary world. It described dialogue as a process through which participants determine their own differences frankly and self-critically together with people of other faiths without overlooking them. For, according to this memoran-dum, true dialogue should allow the participants to come to a clearer understanding of the real differences that separate one's own faith from the other faiths, as well as what brings them together.[413] Concerning the nature of dialogue, the memorandum asserted that genuine dialogue should be based on the freedom to witness fully to one's own faith and mutual respect. It also emphasised that dialogue should not be understood as "an attempt to suppress differences but rather to explore them frankly and self-critically."[414]

Briefly, we may conclude that what this meeting did was to apply the findings of previous meetings, such as those of Kandy, Addis Ababa, Cartigny and Ajaltoun, to the nature of Christian-Muslim dialogue. It should be noted that the memorandum of this meeting had no official status, since the participants did not have official representative status and the memorandum was not voted on.[415] However, it can be regarded as an important step for developing Christian-Muslim relations with regard to its emphasis on the need for frank witness, mutual respect and religious freedom in the process of interreligious dialogue.[416]

The next major meeting was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1974. It brought together the representatives of five major religions, namely, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, to discuss the issue "Towards World Community: Resources and Responsibilities for Living To-gether." In this meeting, the participants mainly discussed the question of how the different religious traditions could contribute to the establishment of a wider community cleansed from the narrow self-interest of each particular community.[417] By doing this, the participants tried to explore the imperative for cooperative life and whether the various religious traditions could provide enough resources for building up a more inclusive world community.

---

[411] Concerning the Broumana meeting see S.J. Samartha & J.B. Taylor, eds. Christian-Muslim Dialogue; Papers from Broumana 1972 (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1972); Samartha highlights the main objectives of this meeting in his opening speech of the conference as follows. "To initiate better relationships between Christians and Muslims on the basis of informed understanding, critical appreciation and balanced judgement of each others' beliefs.

To see how the spiritual resources of the two living faiths can contribute to the solution of some of the common problems we face in society today. To suggest practical ways of cooperation between Christians and Muslims in particular situations, and, of course, ways of extending it to our neighbours of other living faiths. To raise basic questions on human life and existence for long-range reflection and action together which can lead each of the communities of faith to a deepening and renewal of its own spirituality" (Samartha, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Perspective of Recent History", in Samartha and Taylor, Christian-Muslim Dialogue, p. 12). The Catholic Church had expressed similar objectives in its document Nostra Aetate and Christian-Muslim dialogue meetings, as we observed in chapters one and two.

[412] "Memorandum; In Search of Understanding and Cooperation", in Samartha & Taylor, eds., Muslim-Christian Dialogue, pp. 156-163.

[413] "Memorandum", pp. 156-157.

[414] "Memorandum", p. 157.

[415] See "Memorandum", p. 156.

[416] See Kimball, Striving Together, p. 93.

[417] "Towards World Community: Resources and Responsibilities for Living Together", in Samartha, ed., Towards World Community: the Colombo Papers (Geneva: WCC, 1975), pp. 115-129.

The final report of this meeting argued that the "world community" should be composed of different communities in which each person recognises the differences of the other in a spirit of mutual respect and reconciliation.[418] It notes that this idea of establishing a "world community" by the participation of followers of various religious traditions did not mean that the members of a particular faith had to give up any claims that their religion was ultimate, final and unique. On the contrary, it meant that any such claims had to be made within their own religion in respect of the similar claims of others.[419] In other words, we may say that, the finality or uniqueness of one religious tradition should not be binding for people of other faiths, but only for those who belong to that faith. In fact, by stating this, this report, we may say, represents a shift from an inclusivist Christian attitude towards a pluralist one in the ecumenical move-ment.

In order to establish this "world community", the final report says that followers of different religious traditions should give priority to entering into dialogue with others, since "dialogue involves the sharing of understanding an experience and as such is a significant method of building community. It is also a means for expanding self-knowledge and self-transcending knowledge. This is more than a process of cognition. Dialogue can be a fundamental transforming process."[420] Further, it maintains that through dialogue adherents of different faiths gain mutual tolerance and openness. This, too, leads them to live together peacefully as a single "world community." It says:

> Dialogue as a relation and interaction between people could become a means for promoting cooperation, mutual respect and tolerance for members of other communities. Dialogue offers to concerned people a method for working together to achieve practical goals.[421]

Samartha indicates that the Colombo consultation con-tributed to the development of dialogue in two ways: First, it showed that there should not be a stable definition of the nature, purpose and basis of dialogue. But it should be defined after the dialogue meeting by taking into account the results of that meeting. Second, it stated that Christians in multi-cultural societies should not only welcome the contributions of people of other faiths, but should consider them necessary.[422] As has been observed so far, the most striking point of the Colombo meeting was that participants did not deal with the theological questions but instead preferred to express the practical sides of dialogue. Instead of discussing the theological questions such as the salvific value of other religions, the delegates discussed problems between human beings. This enabled them to come to an agreement at the end of the meeting stressing the benefit of entering into dialogue with others.

These multilateral dialogue meetings, Broumana and Colombo, represent a significant step forward, since they provided the basis for the DFI to determine its policy concerning further bilateral or multilateral dialogue meetings. Here, it is necessary to note that the establishment of the DFI and its organisation of bilateral dialogue meetings did not mean that all the members of the WCC were pleased with these developments, since Conservative Christians held anti-dialogue meetings to protest against the policy of WCC concerning the relationship between Christians and

---

[418] "Towards World Community", p. 120.
[419] "Towards World Community", p. 125.
[420] "Towards World Community", pp. 123-124.
[421] "Towards World Community", p. 126.
[422] Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 90.

people of other faiths. Undoubtedly, the most important one of these meetings was held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974.[423]

After the Lausanne Covenant, the tensions between conservative evangelicals and liberals within the WCC became obvious at the Nairobi assembly of the WCC in 1975.[424] We will, therefore, turn our attention to this assembly, since it is regarded as a negative milestone for the development of interreligious dialogue in the WCC.

3.4.3.1. The Nairobi Meeting [1975]

This assembly was held in Nairobi, Kenya, 1975. In its section III, the interreligious activities of the WCC from the Kandy Consultation up to that time were evaluated under the title of "Seeking Community: The Common Search of People of Various Faiths, Cultures and Ideologies."[425] The discussion of interreligious dialogue in this assembly can be regarded as a very important development, since for the first time in the history of the WCC's assemblies the issue of interreligious dialogue was discussed at the assembly level. Representatives of five major religions – Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh – had been invited as observers. Unfortunately, when one of them, the Sikh representative, Dr. Gopal Singh, asked to speak in order to thank the authorities of the assembly, he was not permitted because a "non-Christian could not be allowed to address a Christian assembly."[426]

Although in the preparatory section attention was focused mainly on the socio-ethical and ecumenical-theological dimensions of seeking a "world community" as laid out in the Colombo meeting, our examination shows that the real intention was not to search how that community could be established, but was to outline the theological implications of entering into dialogue with others for Christians.[427]

---

[423] The results of this discussion were summed up in a document which is known as The Lausanne Covenant. In a section on "The Nature of Evangelism", it maintains that Christians can only acknowledge "that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand," not to learn from. In another section on "The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ", it completely rejects the policy of the WCC concerning dialogue with people of other faiths by declaring, "We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies." Briefly, in this meeting, conservative and evangelical Christians regarded the dialogical approach of the WCC to people of other faiths a betrayal of the Gospel, and as tending to syncretism. As a result, it was believed that interest in and support for interreligious dialogue has tended to become a mark of liberal Christians associated with the WCC (J.D. Douglas, Let Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelisation, Lausanne, Switzerland (Minneaplois: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp. 3-4.

[424] David M. Paton, ed., Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975; The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC, Nairobi, 23 Nowember-10 December 1975 (Geneva: WCC, 1976).

[425] Paton, Breaking Barriers, pp. 70-85.

[426] Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 105; when compared with the Catholic Church dialogue activities, it can be argued that non-Catholic Churches were late to deal with the issue of interreligious dialogue as a separate subject in their assemblies.

[427] The following questions which were raised in this section support this conclusion. "How is God's work as Creator and Saviour in Christ related to His work among people of all faiths, cultures, and ideologies? What is the nature of Christian witness and what are its forms in the context of dialogue? Are dialogue and mission really valid alternatives? Does openness in dialogue betray Christ-centredness? Is dialogue a tool for mission or a betrayal of it? To what extent and by what criteria could Christians recognise any validity in truth claims and even the missions of other faiths and ideologies (*Work Book of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC: Nairobi, Kenya 23 November-10 December 1975* (Geneva: WCC, 1975), pp. 37-38.

During the discussion of these questions, conservative evangelicals rejected all such views which advocated that the salvific presence of Christ is at work in other religious traditions by arguing that Christ is salvifically present only in the preaching and sacraments of the Christian Church. Further, they claimed that dialogue had already led to a decline of missionary commitment in the ecumenical movement and had also exposed the Church to the danger of syncretism in that the Christian understanding of the uniqueness of Christ was being downplayed by some advocates of dialogue in order to facilitate dialogue with people of other faiths.[428]

Pranger points out that in the Nairobi assembly there was an obvious disagreement between European and Asian participants.[429] European delegates were concerned that interreligious dialogue would lead to syncretism, by threatening the Christian message and the identity of the Church. Asian delegates objected to the preamble by maintaining that it was based on the necessity of belief in Jesus Christ for all people and on the evangelisation to make all people His disciples.[430] One of the Asian delegates, Russhell Chandran, outlines this disagreement more con-cretely by stating that the disagreement between European and Asian delegates "was essentially a controversy between 'the Kraemerian approach' and 'the dialogical approach of the Kandy consultation'."[431] As has been observed so far, the conservative evangelical Christians regarded dialogue as a part of evangelisation as was claimed in the *Lausanne Covenant.* The following comment by the Catholic Church's observer, Samuel Rayan, supports this. He says that from the objections of evangelical Christians one can draw the conclusion that "any dialogue with people of other faiths can have only one purpose: to know them in order to evangelise them."[432]

Against these conservative evangelicals' objections, the most important statement came from the Sri Lankan theologian, Lynn de Silva. By undertaking dialogue, he maintained that there should not be any dispute concerning the necessity of dialogue any more because that age is over, and the age of dialogue had already begun.[433]

The final report of this section, too, tried to reconcile the fears and objections of the conservative evangelicals and the desires of those who defended the necessity of entering into dialogue with people of other faiths by declaring that all delegates:

> agreed that the Great Commission of Jesus Christ asks [them] to go out into all the world and make disciples of all nations, and to baptise them in the Triune name, should not be abandon or betrayed, disobeyed or compromised, neither should it be misused. Dialogue is both a matter of hearing and understanding the faith of others, and also witnessing to the gospel of Christ.[434]

---

[428] Paton, Breaking Barriers, p. 71.

[429] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 137.

[430] Concerning the preamble which added to the report of "Seeking Community" of Nairobi Meeting, see Paton, Breaking Barriers, pp. 73-74.

[431] See Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 139.

[432] Samuel Rayan "The Ultimate Blasphemy: On Putting God in a Box", IRM, 65 (1976), pp. 129-132.

[433] In this respect he highlights that "dialogue does not in any way diminish full and loyal commitment to one's own faith, but rather enriches and strengthens it. Dialogue, far from being a temptation against syncretism, is a safeguard against it, because in [the process] of dialogue [participants] get to know one another's faiths in depth. Dialogue is a creative interaction which liberates a person giving him a vision a wider dimension of spiritual life, by sharing in the spirituality of others. Dialogue is essential to dispel the negative attitude which [one side] has to the other side" (Paton, Breaking Barriers, p. 73).

[434] Paton, Breaking Barriers, p. 73.

As can be seen here, one of the most important rules of dialogue, learning from others, was omitted, and dialogue was regarded as knowing others in order to witness. For that reason we may conclude that instead of developing a more positive understanding about people of other faiths, the Nairobi assembly reaffirmed the traditional under-standing which was based on an exclusive Christology.[435]

With regard to the negative effect of the Nairobi assembly on the development of dialogue with people of other faiths, we may say that there is a great similarity between its statements and Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nundiandi* as observed in section 2.3.2. That exhortation like the section III report of Nairobi, came out as a response to liberal views. Both of them emphasised the necessity of evangelisation more than dialogue and the negative implications for interreligious dialogue by pointing out the necessity of evangelisation of all people.

After the Nairobi assembly it was evident to all who were involved in that debate that dialogue had only served to polarise further the liberal and conservative elements within the WCC, and that this polarisation would continue to evoke controversy, unless an understanding could be reached in regard to some of the unresolved theological issues that surrounded the topic of dialogue with people of other faiths. The task of dealing with these unresolved issues and of producing a set of guidelines on dialogue which would end this situation within the WCC naturally was the duty of the DFI. The staff of the DFI, therefore, established a working group to evaluate the results of the Nairobi Assembly and to prepare a plan for further studies of the DFI. Samartha considered the Nairobi report as a clash of attitudes between those for whom dialogue become a matter of daily experience and others who did not live religious plurality in any significant way.[436] This working group held two small meetings at Chambesy [1976] and at Gilon [1977] to discuss and determine the position of the WCC in the process of dialogue with people of other faiths. Because of the importance for Christian-Muslim dialogue, the significant points of the Chambesy meeting will be considered.

3.4.3.2. The Chambesy Meeting [1976]

This was organised by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelisation of the WCC, and planned together with the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham and the Islamic Foundation in Leicester to discuss one of the most important theological issues of Christian Muslim dialogue, namely, "The nature of Christian Mission and Islamic *Da'wah* within the context of Christian-Muslim Dialogue."[437]

In this meeting various papers were presented by both Christian and Muslim participants. Unfortunately, both Christian and Muslim participants blamed each other for abusing the Christian mission and Islamic *da'wah,* instead of discussing the nature of the Christian mission and Islamic *da'wah* to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue in a pluralistic world. One can see that these kinds of polemical discussions would not create a positive environment for the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue, but rather increase suspicion and anxiety on both sides.

Two significant points of the final statement of this meeting should be noted. The first is the need of religious freedom for everyone. It was pointed out that "each religious community should

---

[435] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, pp. 144-145.

[436] Samartha, "Courage for Dialogue: An Interpretation of the Nairobi Debate", in Courage for Dialogue, p. 51.

[437] Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah, Proceedings of the Chambesy Dialogue Consultation (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1982), p. 99.

be entitled to live its religious life in accordance with its religion in perfect freedom."[438] The second is that Christian participants conceded that the *diakonia* was misused by some Christians in order to convert Muslims in Islamic countries:

> The conference, being painfully aware that Muslim attitudes to Christian mission have been so adversely affected by the abuse of *diakonia,* strongly urges Christian Churches and religious organisations to suspend their misused *diakonia* activities in the world of Islam. Such a radical measure is necessary to cleanse the atmosphere of Muslim-Christian relations and orientates towards mutual recog-nition and cooperation worthy of the two great religions.[439]

After the Chambesy meeting, a group of Christian and Muslim scholars not in Cartigny together with WCC staff to evaluate the previous meetings and to determine the future agenda of Christian-Muslim dialogue meetings. In this meeting each partner of dialogue was urged to observe the following principles for effective dialogue:

> Understanding of common and distinctive elements in each other's faith, history and civilisation; respect for each other's religious and cultural integrity; common commitment to strive for social justice and for responsible development of the earth's resources; a mu-tually challenging enrichment of spirituality which may also be a challenge to secular neighbours.[440]

It was also emphasized that in the dialogue process each partner should avoid "unfair comparison or caricature (of the other); any attempt to impose a syncretistic solution; defensive and hostile attitudes to secular neighbours."[441]

This meeting did not deal with the theological issues, but the practical questions such as, education, family life, worship, prayer, and ways to establish dialogue as a life style for multi-religious communities. In this respect, two significant points were developed. The first was the necessity of multi-faith education to give every student a sympathetic understanding toward other faiths. The second was to urge families to come together with families of other faiths by organising study groups and social activities.[442]

At the end of the above dialogue meetings, the personnel of the WCC realised that the crucial issues were the nature of the 'world community' which was discussed at the Colombo Meeting [1974]; the relationship between mission and dialogue; whether dialogue led to a kind of religious syncretism or not; and what was the theological significance of non-Christian religions, since that had not been sufficiently clarified. In this connection, the personnel of the DFI were urged to sponsor an intra-Christian meeting to discuss and clarify those issues in order to salvage the interreligious dialogue from the ambiguities of the previous meetings.[443] In the light of this

---

[438] "Statement of the Conference", in Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah, p. 100.

[439] "Statement of the Conference", p. 101.

[440] "Next Steps in Christian-Muslim Dialogue" in S. E. Brown, Meeting in Faith: Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches, (Geneva: WCC, 1989), p. 88.

[441] "Next Steps in Christian-Muslim Dialogue", p. 88.

[442] "Next Steps in Christian-Muslim Dialogue", p. 89.

[443] Sheard, Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, pp. 232-237.

recommendation, the DFI organised the Chiang Mai consultation in Thailand, [1977] on the theme of "Dialogue in Community.[444] Some signifi-cant points of this consultation will be highlighted.

3.4.4. The Consultation of Chiang Mai [1977]

The main issues of this meeting were to evaluate the dialogue activities of the WCC since the establishment of the DFI and to determine the meaning and relevance of interreligious dialogue with regard to the question of the theological significance of entering into dialogue with people of other faiths.[445] Samartha outlined the main objectives of this consultation as follows: to determine the basis of "world Community" for the Christians; to define the role of the Christian community within the human community in a pluralistic world; and to prepare guidelines to help Christians in the process of dialogue with people of other faiths.[446] In the light of these aims, the following questions were discussed by the participants:

> How do Christians understand and practice dialogue – its nature, its purpose, its variations in different contexts? Is dialogue part of the Christian ministry in a pluralistic world? What is the theological significance of people of other faiths and cultures in the Christian perspective? Is God at work among people of other faiths and ideologies?[447]

Contrary to the Colombo meeting's suggestion of "world community", the Chiang Mai consultation suggests "worldwide community" in order to express the interdependent and pluralistic character of the global society.[448] In doing so, different religions have been considered as elements of the cultural identity of this worldwide community.[449] Because of this, the Chiang Mai Consultation regarded cultural or religious superiority of one religion as a challenge to the creation and God's overall purpose,[450] and calls Christians to cooperate with others for world peace, justice, and liberation. It states:

> As workers for peace, liberation and justice, the way to which often makes conflict necessary and reconciliation costly, they feel themselves called to share with others in the community of humankind in the search for new experiences in the evolution of com-munities, where people may affirm their interdependence as much as respect for their distinctive identities.[451]

---

[444] For the report of this consultation, see "Dialogue in Community: Statement Adopted by the Consultation", in S.J. Samartha, ed., Faith in the Midst of Faiths; Reflections on Dialogue in Community (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1977), pp. 134-149.

[445] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 145.

[446] Samartha, "A Pause for Reflection", in Samartha, ed., Faith in the Midst of Faiths, p. 11.

[447] Samartha, "A Pause for Reflection", p. 12.

[448] Samartha, "A Pause for Reflection", p. 12.

[449] Samartha, "A Pause for Reflection", p. 13; Here, there is very close parallelism between the Chiang Mai's pluralistic understanding world communities and the Qur'anic understanding, since on this issue the Qur'an says "If God had so willed, He would have made all of you one community, but (He has not done so) that He may test you in what He has given you (Q. 4:48).

[450] "Dialogue in Community", p. 139.

[451] "Dialogue in Community", p. 140.

As has been seen so far, what this consultation implies is that the Christian community is one community among others in the worldwide community. It also indicates that the cultural and religious diversity of the world had often been abused in situations where one was "tempted to regard one's own community as the best; to attribute one's own religion and cultural reality an absolute authority."[452] Parallel to this pluralistic understanding, the Chiang Mai statement seems to limit the superiority of the Christian faith to Christians by stating:

> As Christians, we are conscious of a tension between the Christian community as we experience it to be in the world of human communities, and as we believe it in essence to be in the promise of God. In the heart of this tension we discover the character of the Christian Church as a sign at once of peoples' need for fuller and deeper community, and of God's promise a restored human community in Christ.[453]

This statement further indicates that there are two significant bases, religious and social, of Christian dialogue with people of other faiths. The former takes its inspiration from the second commandment of the Decalogue, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour", and underlines that Christians should respond to this commandment by entering into dialogue with others. The latter, too, shows how it is necessary to cooperate with others on common social, political and ecological problems in order to bring about a "fuller and deeper community."[454] Here, like the Catholic Church documents *Dialogue and Mission*, *Dialogue and Proclamation* and *Redemtoris Missio,*[455] this statement urges Christians to adopt the principle "dialogue in life" in everyday human affairs, because this type of dialogue urges dialogue partners to common action against common problems by focussing on life in community.[456]

Concerning the relationship between mission and dialogue, the Chiang Mai report tries to calm the fears of conservative Christians by arguing that witness and dialogue should not be seen as contradictory to each other, and in the process of interreligious dialogue Christians can find many opportunities for "authentic witness" to their faith in Jesus Christ.[457] The report also attempts to remove the anxieties of dialogue partners who think that dialogue is "a secret weapon in the armour of an aggressive Christian militancy" by stating that Christians want to enter into dialogue with them not "as manipulators but as genuine fellow pilgrims."[458]

In response to conservative evangelicals' objection that dialogue may lead to syncretism, the report maintains that syncretism should not be seen as a threat to interreligious dialogue in spite of the inherent danger. However, it states that the good results of dialogue, such as fostering the sense that all human beings are part of a single world community, may have such a risk. To avoid this risk, the idea of "world community" was replaced with the idea of "worldwide community." This statement, further, reminds conservative evangelicals that the gospel has already been

---

[452] "Dialogue in Community", p. 139.
[453] "Dialogue in Community", p. 142; Emphases are mine.
[454] "Dialogue in Community", p. 144.
[455] See Chapter Two sections 2.4.1.2, 2.6.1, 2.6.2.
[456] Kimball, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue", in John L. Esposito, ed., The Oxford Encylopedia of the Modern Islamic World v. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 201-205.
[457] "Dialogue in Community", p.145.
[458] "Dialogue in Community", p. 145.

syncretised in its encounter with Western ideologies, as well as through contact with other world religions.[459]

As Ariarajah points out, the issue of theological significance of other faiths in the process of dialogue can be regarded as the most significant contribution of the Chiang Mai report, since the other points have already been on the agenda of the dialogue meetings of the WCC since the Kandy consultation.[460] On this issue, the Chiang Mai report, like "Interim Guidelines", raises a number of theological questions concerning the relationship between Christianity and other religions and then recommends them to later dialogue meetings for further discussion.[461] These questions were not discussed, according to Samartha, because it was impossible to do more than raise them at that time, since the controversy of the Nairobi meeting was still fresh in the memories of the participants. Samartha further stresses that the main objective of the Chiang Mai was to avoid making "theological affirmations on people of other faiths."[462] Moreover, the Chiang Mai report asks Christians not to judge other people by using the phrases "anonymous Christian" or "unknown Christ," which have been employed by theologians and Church authorities to evaluate the theological position of people of other faith.[463]

Samartha regarded the Chiang Mai Consultation as a step forward in the process of dialogue, since by this consultation some difficulties and tensions of the previous discussions, especially the negative results of the Nairobi Assembly, were overcome and removed. He further indicated that in this meeting the meaning of dialogue in the context of the community was defined. Building up relationships, expressing mutual care and mutual under-standing were ideas contrary to those expressed in previous meetings which defined dialogue as a separate issue from the community. According to Samartha the connection between dialogue and community can lead to a dialogue between different communities for the sake of a wider community of peace and justice, and then to a worldwide community.[464]

As Pranger rightly maintains, the most significant con-tribution of the Chiang Mai statement on the development of interreligious dialogue in the WCC can easily be seen when it is compared with the negative implication of the Nairobi assembly. For only two years after this controversy, this statement made real progress in clarifying the relationship between dialogue and mission,

---

[459] "Dialogue in Community", 148; also see Mulder, "Dialogue and Syncretism: Some Concluding Observations", in J. Gort et al., eds., Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 203-211.

[460] Ariarajah, Hindus and Christians, p. 154.

[461] These theological questions are: "What is the relation between the universal creative/redemptive activity of God towards all humankind and the peculiar creative/redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus Christ?

Are Christians to speak of God's work in the lives of all men and women only in tentative terms of hope that they may experience something of Him, or more positively in terms of God's self-disclosure to people of living faiths and ideologies and in the struggle of human life?

How are Christians to find from the Bible criteria in their approach to people of other faiths and ideologies, recognising as they must, the authority accorded to the Bible by Christians of all centuries, particular questions concerning the authority of the Old Testament for the Christian church, and the fact that the partners in dialogue have other starting points and resources, both in the holy books and traditions of teachings?

What is the biblical view and Christian experience of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and is it right and helpful to understand the work of God outside the church in terms of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?("Dialogue in Community", p. 147).

[462] Samartha, Between Two Cultures, p. 127.

[463] "Dialogue in Community", p. 146.

[464] Samartha, "Dialogue in Community: A Step Forward: An Interpretation of the Chiang Mai Consultation", in Samartha, ed., Faith in the Midst of Faiths, p. 186.

syncretism, and cultural and religious diversity.[465] In our opinion, the report of this meeting "Dialogue in Community" can be regarded a significant step forward for the WCC. Contrary to the negative implications of the Nairobi Assembly, it demon-strated that Christians from various parts of the theological spectrum could agree on fundamental issues in order to establish better relations with others.

3.4.5. Guidelines on Dialogue

Following the Chiang Mai consultation, the Central Committee of the WCC at its meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, 1979 promulgated a set of guidelines taking its final statement as a base. The title was *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.*[466] It consisted of three parts. The first and second parts were taken from the final statement of the Chiang Mai consultation. These parts will not be considered here because already examined above. The third part offers a number of specific guidelines to the member Churches of the WCC and individual congrega-tions to help them in their relations with people of other faiths under the title of "Guidelines Recommended to the Churches for Study and Action." We will elucidate this part.

It consists of three main sections. In the first one, "Learning and Understanding in Dialogue", the member Churches of the WCC are urged to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths, to prepare dialogue meetings together with them, to allow the participants of those dialogue meetings to express themselves in their own terms in order to avoid prejudice, stereotyping and condescension, and to prepare educational programmes in order to restore the possible distorted image of people of other faiths in the Christian community.[467]

In the second, "Living Together in Dialogue", the *Guidelines* encourages Christians to share common cultural and religious activities such as celebrations, rituals, worship, and meditation with their dialogue partners to make dialogue a whole life activity and a style of living-in-relationship-with others, as the Catholic Church often stressed in its documents.[468]

In the third part, "Planning for Dialogue", the member Churches of the WCC are encouraged to organise interim dialogue meetings in cooperation with one another, and then to prepare worldwide dialogue meetings with people of other faiths to discuss the issues such as world peace and justice, and the various social and practical issues, as the Secretariat of the Catholic Church has done in the period of Cardinal Arinze.[469]

In the light of this overview of the WCC *Guidelines,* we can draw the following significant guidelines: (1) Dialogue becomes possible when people from different faiths meet with each other, (2) Dialogue should be established on the practical issues of living, not on belief systems. (3) Dialogue should be based on common humanity, (4) Mutual understanding is necessary between dialogue partners, (5) Dialogue partners should trust each other's sincerity, (6) In the dialogue process, equal opportunities should be given each partner to express and describe his/her faith in his/her own terms, (7) Dialogue participants should cooperate with each other to work for a better human community, (8) Dialogue partners should listen to their dialogue partners while they are speaking, (9) Dialogue partners should open themselves to others in order to learn from them.

---

[465] Pranger, Dialogue in Discussion, p. 155.
[466] World Council of Churches, Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (Geneva: WCC, 1979).
[467] Guidelines on Dialogue, pp. 17-18.
[468] Guidelines on Dialogue, pp. 18-19.
[469] Guidelines on Dialogue, pp. 21-22; See Chapter Two section 2.2.4.

Similar guidelines were also proposed by some individual thinkers such as Raimundo Panikkar, Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzez.[470]

With the promulgation of *Guidelines on Dialogue*, the DFI gained an official policy for its dialogue activities and related issues with people of other faiths, as did the Catholic Church with its document *Nostra Aetate*. Its publication brought to an end the discussions about the WCC's policy of interreligious dialogue between conservative evangelical and liberal members of the WCC, since in further dialogue meetings and discussions both sides always refer to these *Guidelines* to support their views. This has also been the case in the Catholic Church since the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*. We may say that *Guidelines on Dialogue* of the WCC and *Nostra Aetate* of the Roman Catholic Church are very similar with regard to their effect on the Christian dialogue initiatives. However, unlike *Nostra Aetate, Guidelines* is not a theological statement which provides a theology of religion, but rather a practical statement which offers "suggestions and recommendations meant to change attitudes."[471]

The WCC *Guidelines* can be regarded as a significant shift in the relation between dialogue, mission, and witness when compared with the "Interim Guidelines" of the Addis Ababa Meeting [1971], since in this *Guidelines* the intention of establishing a 'world community' within cultural and religious diversity is to be understood not as theoretical concepts, but rather in terms of living relationships. For, it states that the definition of dialogue is not enough. It has to be described, experienced and developed as a life style.[472] In our opinion, the point which will most affect interreligious dialogue positively is its urging the participants of dialogue to try to understand other faiths or religions within the terms of those beliefs, not in the terms of their own beliefs.[473] This point is very much emphasised by individual scholars such as W. Cantwell Smith who states that no statement about other faiths can be true unless their followers acknowledge it as true.[474]

Besides the positive contributions of the Chiang Mai report and *Guidelines on Dialogue*, there are, also, some weak points in these *Guidelines* which affect interreligious dialo-gue negatively. Unlike the Catholic document *Nostra Aetate*, there is no specific reference to world religions in these *Guidelines*. This gives the impression that the religious traditions of people of other faiths are not important for the personnel of the WCC. In other words, it implies that other religions apart from Christianity are not acknowledged as religious systems through which their followers can attain salvation. As has been observed, although the Chiang Mai statement and *Guidelines on Dialogue* deal with theological questions, neither of them tries to correct the traditional belief that salvation comes only through Christianity. Both the Catholic documents *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* dealt with this issue.[475] In other words, *Guidelines on Dialogue* does not answer how people of other faiths should be understood in a Christian theological perspective.

In spite of these shortcomings, as has been noted, the *Guidelines on Dialogue* should be regarded as "a historic turn", a "landmark" in the development of dialogue in WCC, since it

---

[470] See Raimundo Panikkar, "The Rules of the Game in Interreligious Encounter", in Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 25ff; Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue", pp. 1-4; Paul Mojzes, "Guidelines for Dialogue", in L. Swidler & P. Mojzes, eds., Attitudes of Religions and Ideologies towards the Outsider (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 14-15.

[471] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 139.

[472] Guidelines on Dialogue, pp. 10-11.

[473] Guidelines on Dialogue, pp. 14-15.

[474] Smith, Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 97.

[475] See Chapter One section 1.6.

strongly emphasized that dialogue is not a pleasant luxury for Christians, but a necessary means of living their faith in the service of community with people of other faiths.

3.4.6. The Significant Points of Guidelines on Dialogue

Our above examination of the *Guidelines on Dialogue* show that it has the following special characteristics and implica-tions for interreligious dialogue.

First, its promulgations break down the barriers which prevent the member Churches coming to an agreement on fundamental issues for better relations with people of other faiths, since by doing this it helped to alleviate criticism of the idea of dialogue. From this point of view, it became a milestone after the report of the Kandy consultation.

Second, as well as being a practical statement which emphasises the value of different human communities living together as a worldwide community, it gives room to theological issues concerning people of other faiths in order to determine the theological place of others for the first time in the history of the WCC. As we will see below, after these *Guidelines,* the theological issues began to be discussed increasingly in WCC meetings and assemblies.

Third, the *Guidelines* praises pluralism as a good thing by regarding it as "a gift from God." Thus, it implies that to consider one community as the best among others abuses God's intention. For that reason, this document invites all human communities to cooperate in building up mutual understanding and respect through entering into dialogue with each other. It indicates that dialogue begins when people meet each other and is made possible by the common humanity of the participants of dialogue. According to the *Guidelines*, dialogue begins with the human factor that unites different communities.

Fourth, its emphasis on the principle that in the process of dialogue one side should understand "the other as the other wishes to be understood" can lead dialogue partners to try to know other faiths more objectively.

Fifth, by regarding dialogue partners as "genuine fellow pilgrims" and not manipulators, it implies that all dialogue partners are on an equal level in the process of dialogue.

Sixth, it emphasises that in the process of dialogue the participants should be open, listen to, and learn from, their dialogue partners. Further, it indicates that dialogue should be based on sharing and living together with the dialogue partner.

Seventh, it maintains that the main objective of dialogue should be to create a better society in which all people can live peacefully, since it says that trying to establish this sort of society is the proper way to serve God.

Eighth, these *Guidelines* formed a basis and starting point for many other guidelines on the bilateral, regional and national level. For example, in 1981 the British Council of Churches [BCC], later converted to Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland [CCBI], prepared its own guidelines under the title of *Relations with People of Other Faiths: Guidelines in Dialogue in Britain*.[476]

---

[476] These guidelines consist of the following four essential principles for dialogue: "Dialogue begins when people meet each other; Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust; Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community; Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness (Relations with People of Other Faiths; Guidelines For Dialogue in Britain, BCC, 1981), the four principles of Dialogue elaborated and republished by CCBI under the title of In Good Faith [1991]. In this elaboration was emphasised on the importance of making personal and group meeting with people of other faiths; establishing mutual friendship, being together with them in the time of personal and family crises; coming together to solve common problems such as racial harassment, drug abuse; giving them freedom of expression of their own faith and ensuring facilities to observe their religious duties (In Good Faith; The Four Principles of Interfaith Dialogue, CCBI, 1991).

3.5. Developments after *Guidelines on Dialogue*

Although the promulgation of *Guidelines on Dialogue* brought a provisional end to the WCC's theological discussions concerning the place of Christianity within the context of religious plurality in the world, and its relation to people of other faiths and their religions, the discussions about the nature of interreligious dialogue has continued to take place in the assemblies of WCC and the dialogue meetings of the DFI. Now, we will turn to highlight significant points of some dialogue meetings and assemblies of this period.

After the publication of *Guidelines on Dialogue*, the first international dialogue meeting planned and sponsored by DFI and the Muslim establishment the World Muslim Congress[WMC] met jointly to discuss the ethical and practical side of the humanitarian and development aid programmes for the Third World. There was a consensus of opinion between both sides on the necessity of this kind of discussion in a world threatened by materialism, loss of faith, injustice, and violation of human rights of majorities and minorities.[477] Both sides conceded that humanitarian aid programmes had been abused by being used for conversion and proselytism, and strongly urged their followers to avoid abusing humanitarian aid programmes in this way.[478]

The report of this consultation made some recommenda-tions in three areas, namely recommendations on Christian-Muslim cooperation, recommendations on refugees, and recommendations on minorities.

In the first recommendation, the WCC and the WMC were encouraged to establish a Joint Standing Committee to determine the objectives, forms and modalities of dialogue, identify obstacles and difficulties in dialogue, promote a form of education through which "faith and knowledge give each other mutual reinforcement and seek inspiration from divine revelation", spread dialogue in a wider context through practical activities, and set up joint study groups and seminars to discuss major common issues such as " The role of the State", "Law and Life", and "Human and Religious Rights."[479]

In short, this meeting was the first international con-ference in which a Muslim organisation fully participated in the preparation and organisation together with Christians, and which did not deal with theological issues but practical ones. In this respect it can be regarded as a first step towards establishing a cooperation between Christian and Muslims in the area of humanitarian aid programmes.

After the Colombo meeting, the WCC had moved away from dialogue at the international level to dialogue at a regional level. In this connection, its authorities started to organise colloquia together with Muslims at regional levels to discuss inter-communal relations.[480]

Another shift in this period was that the theological dimension and the meaning of entering into dialogue with people of other faiths began to be discussed in the assemblies of the WCC more seriously and openly than before. The first issue, discussed very widely in the Vancouver

---

[477] Taylor, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Colombo 1982", Islamochristiana, 8 (1982), p. 209.

[478] Taylor, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue", pp. 209-210; Here we would like to point out that despite this agreement on the abusing of humanitarian programmes between Christian and Muslim participants, three days later after the close of this meeting, Christian participants came together to evaluate the meeting. In this evaluation it was pointed out that diakonia as the expression of God's love is a duty of Christians to those in need without any intention of proselytism. But, on the other hand, it was remarked that Christians should not hide that they are Christian while doing diakonia (Taylor, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue", p. 212).

[479] Taylor, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue", p. 211.

[480] For these regional meetings from 1983 to 1989, see Brown, ed., Meeting in Faith: Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversation Sponsored by the WCC, pp. 133-181.

Assembly, 1983, was the relationship between dialogue, mission and evangelisation. During this discussion the question of the status of people of other faiths came on the agenda. It was proposed that while Christians affirmed the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, they also acknowl-edged "God's creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths." Most of the participants objected to this statement by arguing that God is not creatively present in the religious experience of people of other faiths. There-upon, it was proposed to change the wording to Christians "recognize God's creative work in the seeking for religious truth among people of other faiths."[481] In fact, this revision implied that the majority members of the WCC still did not believe that God is at work in non-Christian religions. For, what the revised statement indicates is that God's creative work is not available in the religious traditions of people of other faiths, but in their seeking of religious truth. In this sense, the Vancouver assembly's attitude towards the other is similar to the Nairobi assembly's attitude, since in this assembly, too, some members had objected to dialogue by claming it undermined mission.

The other important conference was the World Mission Conference held at San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A, in 1989. In this conference dialogue became a key issue for the first time at the World Mission Conferences since Tambaram (1938). In the previous mission conferences, when the issue of dialogue with people of other faiths was sometimes discussed, the main issue was how Christians could proclaim the Christian message to others and evangelise the world.

In this conference dialogue was referred to in the context of mission and witness in Section I on "Turning to the Living God" where it declared that "dialogue had its own place and integrity and is neither opposed to nor incompatible with witness or proclamation."[482] In this conference, statements such as "God is at work among non-Christians religions, there is no limit of the saving power of God, and God who Christians know through Jesus Christ can be available in the lives of people of other faiths which can be regarded as "open windows" for more positive relations to people of other faiths.[483]

In preparation for the seventh assembly of the WCC which was held in Canberra, Australia in 1991, the DFI organised a consultation to discuss the issue of "Religious Plurality, Theological Perspective and Affirmations" in Barr, Switzerland, in 1990. Diana Eck outlines the significance of this consultation as follows: "Never before had there been a discussion on the theology of religions that involved such an equally weighted encounter of Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant thinkers."[484]

At the end of the meeting a statement was prepared in the light of the discussions. We would like to highlight the many points of this statement because for the first time in the history of the WCC the necessity of the development of an adequate non-Catholic theology of religions came out. The statement maintained that "There is a need for such a theology, for without it Christians remains ill-equipped to understand the profound religious experiences which they witness in the lives of people of other faiths or to articulate their own experience in a way that will be understood by people of other faiths."[485]

In the section on "A Theological Understanding of Religious Plurality", this statement acknowledged the plurality of religious traditions "as both the result of the manifold ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness and diversity of

[481] A.J. Van der Bent, Sixteen Ecumenical Concerns (Geneva: WCC, 1986), p. 60.
[482] F.R. Wilson, ed., The San Antonio Report (Geneva: WCC, 1990), pp. 32-33.
[483] Ariarajah, "San Antonio and Other Faiths", CD, 16, August (1989), p. 8.
[484] Diana Eck, "On Seeking and Finding in the World Religions", CC, 107 (1990), p. 454.
[485] "Baar Statement: Religious Plurality, Theological Perspectives and Affirmations", CD 19 (1991), p. 48.

humankind," and then, for the first time in the history of the WCC, openly and explicitly declared that God's saving presence is available in all religious traditions. As has been seen previously in the Vancouver statement, it was stated that God's creative work can only be available in the non-Christians' seeking of religious truth. In the Baar statement, too, is emphasised that God's creative work is also available in the religious traditions of non-Christians by indicating that "God has been present in their seeking and finding, that where there is truth and wisdom in their teaching, and love and holiness in their living . . ."[486] In our opinion, by affirming the availability of God's saving activity in non-Christian religions apart from Jesus Christ, the Baar statement represents a shift from Christ-centred understanding of other religions to God-centred under-standing in the WCC.

Concerning this pluralistic development, Paul Knitter stresses that the Baar statement can be regarded an epoch-making breakthrough in non-Catholics' relation with people of other faiths. For, according to him, it:

> states lucidly what previous WCC statements either shied away from or would only suggest: that because of God's presence within other religious ways, Christians can expect to discover in them expressions of authentic revelation and salvation. Repeatedly this section of the statement affirms the "saving presence", the "saving power", the "saving activity" of God within other religions, not just within individual religious believers. There-fore, taking up a controversial issue within past WCC deliberations, the Baar statement makes bold to declare that God has been present within other traditions, not just in their seeking but also in their finding.[487]

After acknowledging the availability of God's saving presence in other religious traditions outside Christianity, the statement moves on to relate this with Christology and the Holy Spirit. By doing this, it tries to answer the theological question of *Guidelines on Dialogue* namely, in the process of dialogue on how Christians keep the balance between "the universal creative activity of God toward all humankind and the particular redemptive activity of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ." To do so, the statement, on the one hand, repeats the traditional Christian faith that Jesus as "the incarnate Word" and mediator through whom all humankind has been united to God and makes God's saving activity available for all people. In other words, "The saving presence of God's activity in all creation and human history comes to its focal point in the event of Christ."

On the other hand, the statement tries to develop a theology which can rescue salvation from "the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ." To do this, it benefits from Pneumatology namely, the universal activity of the Holy Spirit. In this connection, it points out that Christians "affirm unequivocally that God the Holy Spirit has been at work in the life and traditions of people of living faiths." It further clarifies that the truth and goodness of other religions which come out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can differ from the Word in Jesus Christ. This point is significant in the Baar statement, for, it implies that other religions can have truth and goodness or holiness indepen-dently from the Christian truth, namely, Jesus Christ, since this statement maintains that the activity of the Holy Spirit is beyond the Christian perception of his activities.[488] In this sense, it may be argued that WCC went beyond the Roman Catholic Church in which the

[486] "Baar Statement, Religious Plurality", p. 48.
[487] Knitter, "A New Pentecost? A Pneumatological Theology of Religions", CD 19(1991), pp. 32-41.
[488] "Statement: Religious Plurality", pp. 49-50; see also, Knitter, "A New Pentecost?", p. 40.

value and religious truth of non-Christian religions were seen to be dependent on Jesus Christ.[489] However, this should not be understood that the Baar statement indicates that the Spirit does not act in conjunction with Jesus Christ. While, on the one hand, its section four stresses the real difference between the activity of the Holy Spirit in creation and that of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, in section five it emphasises the essential relatedness between the two.

At the end of the statement a proper Christian attitude toward people of other faiths in the pluralistic world is explained as follows:

> Interreligious dialogue is therefore a 'two way street'. Christians must enter into it in a spirit of openness, prepared to receive from others, while on their part, they give witness of their own faith. Authentic dialogue opens both partners to a deeper conversion to the God who speaks to each through the other. Through the witness of others, we Christians can truly discover facets of the divine mystery which we have not yet seen or responded to. The practice of dialogue will thus result in the deepening of our own life of faith. We believe that walking together with people of other living faiths will bring us to a fuller under-standing and experience of truth.[490]

After this comment we may conclude that the Baar statement seems to go beyond the Christ-centred theology of religions which limits the saving activity of God to an explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Concerning the salvific value of non-Christians religions and the availability of truth and goodness in them we may also conclude that the Baar statement moves beyond not only previous WCC statements but also the Catholic Church's statements, as we have observed in the previous chapters.

In September 1991 the WCC changed its structure. It is very curious that in the new structure the term "dialogue" was dropped. Within the new frame, the DFI was abolished by the creation of an *Office on Interreligious Relations* within the General Secretariat.[491] In this new structure, the mandate of discussing theological issues, such as the theological response to religious plurality, dialogue and mission was given to Unit II on "Mission, Education & Witness" by taking from the *Office on Interreligious Relations.*

In 1992 the WCC produced a brief and concise document, *Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations,*[492] to provide information to Christians who are interested in Christian-Muslim dialogue, similar to the Catholic Church's *Guidelines for Dialogue* as has been observed in chapter two. This brief document highlights four main issues namely, Christian-Muslim Encounter, On Understanding Islam and Muslims, Some Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, and Living and Working Together.

In the first section of the document, after pointing out that from the advent of Islam up to the modern day both Christians and Muslims have been prejudiced against each other, it calls both sides to develop "a new understanding based on a reciprocal willingness to listen and learn." This new understanding [dialogue] is defined as follows:

> Dialogue is not only conversation [dialogue of ideas] but is also an encounter between people [dialogue of life]. It depends on mutual trust, demands respect for

---

[489] See Chapters One and Two.
[490] "Baar Statement: Religious Plurality", p. 51.
[491] Ariarajah, "Observations: Dialogue Concerns in the New Structure of the WCC", CD, 19 (1991), pp. 2-5.
[492] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, Office on Interreligious Relations (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992).

the identity and integrity of the other, and requires a willingness to question one's own self-understanding as well as openness to understand the others on their own terms.[493]

Also, this section remarks that although some Muslims and Christians' objections to dialogue as "Christian neo-imperialism", "intellectual colonialism", and "naive roman-ticism" can be right for particular situations, they should not be generalised for all dialogue activities.[494]

In the second section, the document tries to highlight common points between Christian and Islamic beliefs to create convergence like the Catholic document *Nostra Aetate* and various speeches of Pope John Paul II. These common points are the doctrine of God, the centrality of worship, "common values such as the search for Justice in society, providing for people in need, love for one's neighbour and living together in peace." It seems to us that the most significant point of this section is its reminding us that in the past "both Muslims and Christians often failed to recognise these points of convergence because they tend to see themselves in terms of the ideal and the other terms of the actual."[495]

This section also underlines the "real and substantial differences" between Christian and Islamic teachings. These differences are the doctrine of Trinity, Incarnation, Crucifi-xion and resurrection. Further, it expresses the Christians' problem in understanding the Muslim belief that the Qur'an, the Holy Book of Muslims, is the divinely revealed book, since it came after the Gospel.[496]

In the third section, the document urges both Christians and Muslims to organise dialogue meetings to discuss the following issues which prevent them from living together peacefully in modern pluralistic societies. These issues are: human rights, ethnicity, citizenship, the application of Islamic Law, religion and politics, interreligious marriages, the situation of women, and the nature of Christian mission and Islamic *da'wah*.[497] In our opinion, the discussion of these issues objectively (by leaving aside all kinds of prejudices) can definitely help the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue and create a better society based on social justice, human rights, and religious freedoms.[498] In fact, after this recommendation both Christians and Muslims came together in Geneva (1992) and Nyon (1993) to discuss the issue of "Religion, Law and Society" and later on these discussions were published as a book in 1995.[499]

As has been observed, this document emphasises the social and human aspect of Christian-Muslim dialogue by arguing that the discussion of theological issues such as the doctrine of God and the understanding of revelation can lead to clashes not dialogue. In our opinion, this approach can be right for the first stage of dialogue. To start discussing theological issues before establishing a proper environment in the process of dialogue, can lead to apologetics not dialogue. However, after establishing that environment, we believe it is necessary to deal with theological questions. In this sense, we may argue that after the positive theological statement of the Baar document in 1990, the silence of the document *Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations* on theological issues concerning Christian-Muslim relations cannot be justified at all.

---

[493] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, p. 5.

[494] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, pp. 5-6.

[495] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, p. 8.

[496] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, p. 8.

[497] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, pp. 9-13.

[498] Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, pp. 14-15.

[499] Tarek Mitri ed., Religion, Law and Society; A Christian-Muslim Discussion, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995); also see Siddiqui, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Problems and Challenges", Encounters, 2/2 (1996), pp. 129-133.

3.7. Conclusion

Our examination of the WCC's dialogue activities concerning people of other faiths indicates that the WCC authorities have not usually been able to produce unified and authoritative statements in the manner of the Roman Catholic Church. As has been pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the WCC did not begin its programme for dialogue with people of other faiths after producing a highly official document. Rather, its personnel experimented with and then inau-gurated a dialogue programme as an attempt to deal creatively with a range of practical and theological issues posed by the increasing interdependent world of the twentieth century. Within this context, we can speak about three main stages.

The first starts before the establishment of the WCC [1948] and continues up to the establishment of DFI [1971]. In this period the exclusivist approach of Barth and Kraemer played an important role concerning the relationship between non-Catholic Christians and people of other faiths. The non-Catholic authorities emphasised the exclusiveness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ; the unique historical character of the Christian faith; and the unique character of the Christian community.

The second stage, started by the establishment of DFI and appointment of Stanley Samartha as its first director [1971], continued up to the promulgation of *Guidelines on Dialogue* [1979]. During this period Samartha's openness towards others affected the WCC's dialogue policy by shifting it from sponsoring intra-Christian meetings concerning the relationship between Christians and others to stimulating and supporting bilateral and multilateral dialogue meetings with people of other faiths in order to promote its relationship with them, as Ariarajah pointed out.[500] Also in this period, there was a controversy between Christian exclusivists who maintained that only the Christian faith was salvific [Nairobi Assembly] and inclusivists who stressed that other religions had some salvific value for their followers while maintaining that Jesus Christ was the only unique way for salvation [Chiang Mai consultation and *Guidelines on Dialogue*]. In fact, both groups agree that Jesus Christ was essential for the salvation of all, but they disagreed on how this can happen.

In our opinion, the most positive development in the second stage was that the theological questions such as the relationship between the Christian faith and other faiths, salvation, mission and evangelisation were left aside and an attempt was made to establish dialogue on common practical and social issues. In doing so, the theological names which were emphasised in the first period became secondary to the practical and social reasons for entering into dialogue. Indeed, the "common humanity" of the Colombo meeting; the "socio-ethical" approaches of the Nairobi assembly; the "worldwide community" of the Chiang Mai consultation; and the promulgation of *Guide-lines on Dialogue* support this conclusion. However, this conclusion does not mean that the theological issues such as the relation between dialogue, mission, and witness, syncretism, the position of non-Christian religions, and the question of salvation apart from Jesus Christ were not discussed. They were discussed very widely, but they were not as beneficial as the discussions of practical and social issues for the development of interreligious dialogue. Sometimes the discussion of theological issues even affected the process of dialogue negatively, as it was seen in the Nairobi Assembly. However, although during this period, there was a new and more open understanding of the Ecumenical Movement in relation to religious pluralism embodied in the WCC's dialogue programme, this develop-ment was not accepted by the mainstream of the WCC.

---

[500] Ariarajah, Hindus and Christians, p. 157.

The third period began by the promulgation of the *Guidelines on Dialogue*. During this period the WCC's dialogue policy moved away from the traditional Christ-centred understanding of people of other faiths and their religious traditions to God-centred understanding. In the light of the Baar statement, as has been observed above, we can argue that the inclusivistic theology of religions of the second period has gradually changed its emphasis to a pluralistic one which considers different world religions as ways of salvation.

With regard to Christian-Muslim dialogue, as a result of the policy that in the dialogue process people are more important than theological systems, DFI personnel focused attention on Muslims as people and not on their faith, "Islam." Although the theological dimension of Christian-Muslim dialogue remains on the agenda of the WCC's dialogue activities, its personnel now concentrate their efforts on practical issues such as human rights, ethnicity, citizenship, religion and politics in order to prepare a better environment in which Christian-Muslim can live together peacefully.

In short, in the light of our examination of the WCC's dialogue activities with people of other faiths in general and Muslims in particular, we may conclude this chapter by arguing that in those activities the WCC's policy, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, was to build a human community among people who belong to different religious traditions and not to exchange ideas about the meaning of life, ultimate reality and salvation. In other words, in those dialogue activities the main objective of the WCC was to establish a practical dialogue [dialogue in life] more than a theological dialogue. But from its recent statements, we understand that the personnel of the WCC is very interested now in establishing a proper theological dialogue with people of other faiths.

Part Two:
The Responses of Contemporary Christian Scholars to Major
Theological Issues in the Process of Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Chapter 4
Contemporary Christian Evaluations of the Status of the Qur'an

4.1. Introduction

As is well known, the Qur'an stands at the centre of Muslim faith and religious experience. It embraces their life, thought, and culture and has shaped Muslim civilisation from its advent to our modern day. For a committed Muslim it represents the Word of God as revealed or "sent down" to the Prophet Muhammad. It is a revelation, a divine disclosure to which special, even unique, treatment must be accorded. With regard to its function for the Muslims, the Qur'an is regarded as equal to the function of the Christ event for Christians. It is argued that whereas Christianity would not be Christianity without Jesus Christ, Islam would not be Islam without the Qur'an.[501]

This, the most important element of Muslim faith, had been perceived by Christians until recently as the product of the events of the life of the Prophet Muhammad in response to particular needs of his own community and not as God's revelation to him.[502] After the second half of this century, this negative and prejudiced attitude towards the Qur'an started to change to a more positive and scholarly under-standing. There were a number of reasons for this, such as the increasing number of scholarly and comprehensive studies on Islam, and specifically on the Qur'an in the light of new scientific developments and the increasing Muslim presence among Christians. It seems that this more positive attitude is the result of developments which have occurred in Christian-Muslim relations on the official level since the 1960's. For, as observed in the first part, both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC officially declared the necessity of establishing fraternal dialogue with Muslims inviting both Christians and Muslims to abandon the past hostilities and prejudices.

As a result of these official invitations, both Christian authorities and individual thinkers started to meet Muslims to know them better and to understand their religious beliefs in order to create a more positive and fraternal dialogue environment. However, while creating an atmos-phere based on mutual understanding and respect, these activities caused a number of theological problems in the minds of the dialogue partners. As an example of this fraternal dialogue, while some Christians come to realise the richness of the Qur'an and its meaning in the life of Muslims by discovering the presence of God within the context of the notion of oneness, transcendence, and mercy, the signifi-cance of its ethical requirements for human life, and its highly respected place for Jesus

---

[501] See Alfred T. Welch, "Qur'anic Studies, Problem and Prospects", JAAR, 48 (1979), p. 620; Stefan Wild, "'We Have Sent Down To Thee The Book With The Truth . . . ' Spatial and temporal implications of the Qur'anic concepts of nuzul, tanzil, and inzal", S. Wild, ed., The Qur'an As Text (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 137; Wilfred C. Smith, "Some Similarities and Differences between Christianity and Islam: An Essay in Comparative Religion", in J. Kritzeck & R.R. Winder, eds., The World of Islam (New York: A Division of Arno Press, 1980), pp. 47-59; William A. Graham, "Qur'an as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture", in R.C. Martin, ed., Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 23-41; Coward, Sacred word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. 81-104; Jane D. McAuliffe, Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[502] Daniel, The Arabs and Medieval Europe (London: Longman, 1979), p. 234; Daniel, Islam and the West; The Making of an Image (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993 first published in 1960), pp. 53-66; Hourani, Islam in European Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 12ff; Hartmut Bobzin, "'A Treasury of Heresies': Christian Polemics against the Koran", in S. Wild., ed., Qur'an As Text, pp. 157-175.

and his mother Mary, others find challenging and threatening the Qur'anic rejection of such Christian doctrines as the Trinity, Incarnation, Crucifixion and Redemption. Due to these developments a number of questions have been discussed among Christian scholars concerning the nature and status of the Qur'an, namely: Is there revelation after the New Testament? If there is, does this mean a kind of requestioning the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ? Or Can Christians accept the Qur'an as "the word of God" which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad?[503]

As has been observed in the previous chapters, neither the Roman Catholic Church nor the WCC delt explicitly with these questions in their statements concerning Muslims and their faith. For that reason, we will consider the accounts of contemporary Christian thinkers in this chapter. While doing this, we will limit ourselves to those whose views contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. Firstly, we will observe the views of the distinguished Islamicist, W. Montgomery Watt, because of the great effect of his understanding of Islamic revelation on both Christian and Muslim students of the Qur'an. Secondly, we shall examine the views of two missionary Christian Islamicists, W. Cantwell Smith and Kenneth Cragg, because of their different starting points and conclusions. Thirdly, we will consider two leading Christian theologians, Hans Küng and Keith Ward, in order to highlight how religious pluralism and current Christian-Muslim dialogue influenced their views on the Islamic revelation. Although Ward is less known than the others on this topic, we include his views here because as a leading Christian theologian he began to be interested in the Qur'an very recently under the influence of pluralistic thought. While studying the accounts of these thinkers our primary objective is to expose the contemporary Christian perception of the status of the Qur'an, and then to discuss to what extent this perception can contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim relations.

4.2. W. Montgomery Watt

Montgomery Watt, as an historian of Islamic history and prolific modern biographer of the Prophet Muhammad, has been regarded as one of the most accredited Islamicists of the twentieth century by both Christians and Muslims. By his works on Islam, as Khurshid Ahmad remarks, he has changed the prejudiced attitude of Christians to Islam to a more objective and sympathetic one.[504] In doing so, Watt has contributed to the understanding of the Islamic revelation not only among Christians but also among Muslims, although his views differ from the traditional Muslim understanding of revelation, as we will see shortly. Watt produced two significant works directly related to the Qur'an. The first was *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* [1969];[505] the second was the revised edition of his teacher, Richard Bell's, *Introduction to the Qur'an*[506] [1970]). He has also dealt with the issue of Islamic revelation in a number of places in his other publications.[507] In our analysis of his views on the Islamic revelation, we will focus our attention mainly on his

---

[503] The Challenge of the Scriptures, The Bible and the Qur'an, pp. 48-49.

[504] Khurshid Ahmed, Islam and the West (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1979), p. 18; For further information about Watt's significance for the understanding of Islam in the West see Jabal Muhammad Buaben, Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt (Leciester: Islamic Foundation, 1996), 154-159.

[505] W. Montgomery Watt, Islamic Revelation in the Modern World (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969).

[506] Watt, Introduction to the Qur'an (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971).

[507] Watt, What is Islam? (London: Longmans, 1968); Watt, Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 55-76; Watt, Muhammad's Mecca (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 60-68; Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 82-84.

Islamic Revelation in the Modern World, since our examination of the related passages of his other works has shown that there are no major changes in his views on this issue in the course of time. We will also consult his other works when it is necessary.

Watt begins to state his views on the status of the Qur'an by maintaining that as a result of new positive develop-ments in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue, in our day Christians should avoid thinking and speaking about the Qur'anic revelation as the product of the Prophet Muhammad's experience,[508] as "a mere hotch-potch of biblical material brought together by Muhammad him-self,"[509] or discarding its originality. He stresses that most Western scholars have agreed that "in the Qur'an there is no conscious borrowing from other scriptures."[510] Watt supported his argument that there is an originality in the Qur'an by arguing that when one looks at the first Meccan *suras*, one can draw from them the following five points:

(1) God is all-powerful and good;
(2) Man will appear before God on the Last Day to be judged and assigned to heaven or hell according to their deeds;
(3) Man ought to be grateful to God and worship Him;
(4) Man should be generous with his wealth and upright;
(5) Muhammad has been sent as a Warner to bring this message from God to his fellows.[511]

Then, he maintains that although the first four of these points may have been taken from the Bible, the last point definitely proves that there is originality in the Qur'an. Thus, Watt concludes that the Qur'an has an originality apart from the Judeo-Christian revelation.

After proving that there is an originality in the Islamic revelation, Watt turns to describe revelation as "divine activity by which God, the Creator, communicates himself to man, and in so doing, evokes man's response and cooperation." Then, in the light of this definition, he regards the Qur'an, "as a product of divine initiative and therefore revelation."[512] Further, in his *Islam and Christianity Today* [1983], he develops this point by taking into account the positive contribution of the Qur'anic message to its followers' life. Finally, he reaches the conclusion that the Qur'an is true and from God, since on the basis of the Qur'anic message:

> A religious community developed, claiming to serve God, numbering some thousands in Muhammad's lifetime, and now having several hundred million members. The quality of life in this community has been on the whole satisfactory for the members. Many men and women in this community have attained to saintliness of life, and countless ordinary people have been enabled to live decent and moderately happy lives in difficult circumstances. These points lead to the conclusion that the view of reality presented in the Qur'an is true and from God.[513]

In *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity* [1988], he under-lines that he has no objection to the Muslim belief that the Qur'an came to the Prophet Muhammad from God. In his recent essay,

---

[508] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 17.
[509] Watt, Companion to the Qur'an (Oxford: Oneworld, 1994 first published in 1967), p. 3.
[510] Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, p. 10.
[511] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 45.
[512] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 8.
[513] Watt, Islam and Christianity Today, pp. 60-61.

"Ultimate Vision and Ultimate Reality" [1995], he clarifies his position by indicating that "I always took the view, contrary to most previous scholars of Islam that the Qur'an was not something Muhammad had consciously produced."[514] What he objects to is the belief that there is no human element in the Qur'an.[515] By arguing this, it seems that Watt implies that while the Qur'an was not produced consciously by the Prophet but came to him from God, it contains both divine and human elements together.

Watt strongly claims that there are human elements in the Qur'an since it contains errors and mistakes.[516] For that reason he argues that it cannot be the *verbatim* speech of God which was revealed to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. To support this view, he develops the following arguments. The first is that being in the Arabic language naturally proves that the Qur'an has a human element, since "a language does not just happen to exist, but has been made by a human community in a forgotten past." Secondly, by comparing the Qur'anic presentation of events with the Bible, Watt concludes that there are errors and mistakes in the Qur'an. According to Watt, these errors are: the confusion of the mother of Jesus Mary with the sister of Aaron, the rejection of the historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus, and the assertion that Christians worship three gods.[517] Thirdly, he argues that the Prophet Muhammad deliberately revised the Qur'an. For example, in Medina when Muhammad encountered the Jewish opposition, he took some verses which condemn only the Jews, but later when the Christian opposition arose he might have revised those verses again by addition of words "and Christians." On this point, Watt claims that Muhammad himself or those who collected the Qur'an after him put the later verses in the Qur'an and omitted the former ones.[518] Watt argues that in the light of the modern Western historical critical method it becomes clear that the traditional Muslim belief that the Qur'an as the *verbatim* speech of God revealed to the Prophet through an angel can no longer be defended. Instead of this understanding, he suggests that Muslims advocate that "God had adapted the wording of the Qur'an to the outlook of the people of Mecca, among whom these erroneous opinions were current, and that it was not part of the purpose of the revealed message to correct such errors."[519]

For Watt the main problem for non-Muslims is not whether the Qur'an came to the Prophet from God, but how it came to him. In other words, how the Prophet received God's words, how he was involved in the revelation. Concerning this point, Watt, first of all, argues that when the Qur'an and the Muslim tradition are examined the following points can be identified as four essential features of the revelation which came to the Prophet Muhammad:

(1) Muhammad is aware that certain words are present in his 'heart' or conscious mind;
(2) They are not the result of any conscious thinking process on his part;
(3) He believes them to be placed in his mind by an external agency which he speaks of an angel;
(4) He believes that the message is ultimately from God.[520]

---

[514] Watt, "Ultimate Vision and Ultimate Truth", in M. Forward, ed., Ultimate Visions: Reflections on the Religions We Choose (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), p. 283.
[515] Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, p. 82.
[516] Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, p. 83.
[517] Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, p.83; Qur'an 19:28; 4:157; 4:171; 5:73, 116.
[518] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 18.
[519] Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, p. 83.
[520] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p, 15.

Further, with regard to the possibility that the words might sometimes have emerged in the Prophet Muham-mad's heart as a result of his hearing them; and that the external agent might sometimes have been other than an angel, Watt argues that these four points can be reduced to three namely, the words were available in the Prophet Muhammad's mind, there was an absence of his own thinking, and he believed that those words came to him from God. Then, he maintains that the main question for the discussion is not whether or not, he was sincere in believing this but where and how these words came to Muhammad's consciousness?

In the discussion of this question, Watt argues that the words of the Qur'an came from Muhammad's unconscious and thus they were, in one sense, related to him before he became consciously aware of them. As he says, this explanation can be reconciled with the traditional Muslim belief by indicating that the angel put those words into Muhammad's unconscious, from there they came into his consciousness,[521] and then he transmitted them to his society using his own language, *Arabic.*

He explains what he means by this argument by using the data of the modern natural or empirical sciences i.e. the Jungian theory of "collective and personal unconscious."[522] In doing so, Watt advocates that the messages of the Qur'an came to the Prophet Muhammad from both his personal and cumulative unconscious. This means that Muhammad found the contents of the Qur'an in the cumulative unconscious, and then he experienced them by responding positively.[523] For, according to Watt, "most religious ideas emerge from the collective unconscious into consciousness, and most religious practice is the conscious response to these ideas."[524] By generalising this understanding of the nature of revelation, he concludes that "the revelations on which Judaism, Christianity and Islam are based are 'contents' which have emerged from the collective unconscious." Then he clarifies what he means by this conclusion as follows: While in Judaism and Christianity the development of these collective unconscious ideas and images emerged in continuity with each other because of their familiarity to people, in Islam, too, since the region where they emerged was "only slightly influenced by Judeo-Christian ideas, there was a sudden and largely unprepared for emergence of contents from the collective unconscious."[525]

To support this modern psychological explanation of the nature of revelation against a possible Muslim objection, Watt upholds that to claim that the content of the Qur'an came to the Prophet

---

[521] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 109.

[522] According to this theory in every human being there is a personal as well as a collective unconscious. While the former one owes its existence to one's personal experience, the latter one could not have been individually acquired but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents. This collective unconscious is also called "life energy" through which things are brought from unconscious to conscious. See C. G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (London: Routledge, second edition, 1968), pp. 42-53.

[523] Watt, Islamic Revelation, pp. 109-110; Watt, Muhammad's Mecca, pp. 67-68; Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, pp. 83-84.

[524] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 109.

[525] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 110; He depicts this sort of understanding of the nature of revelation in his What is Islam? as follows: "A modern view of revelation would regard it as, in the first place, the work of the collective unconscious. It is not the product of the prophet's consciousness, nor even of his personal unconscious. The fact that the revelation has an appeal for vast numbers of people shows that it must come from an area of life which is common to large numbers of people. The words 'in the first place' are to be emphasised, since according to views outlined above, what comes from the collective unconscious comes from Life that has been postulated and then ultimately from the transcendent Being in which that Life is grounded (Watt, What is Islam?, p. 222). It seems that what Watt implies here is that the producer and inspirer of the Qur'an is not the God of the Muslims nor the God of Judae-Christian tradition nor the Prophet himself but the collective unconscious which comes from the transcendent Being in which Life is grounded.

Muhammad from his cumulative and personal unconscious has nothing to do with its ultimate source. On the contrary, it helps to illustrate how the Qur'an was adapted by the Prophet and his community.[526] He further clarifies this by stating that "In suggesting that the Qur'an came to Muhammad from his unconscious, I am not denying its divine origin, but placing it on the level of the Old Testament prophecies. All that is being denied is one simplistic way of understanding what it means by saying that the Qur'an is the word of God."[527] By following this, he points out that this explanation does not reject the view that God is the ultimate source of the Qur'an, "since God can work through created beings and can so presumably work through the personal or collective unconscious of a created human beings." Moreover, he argues that it also does not contradict the Muslim belief that the Qur'an was trans-mitted to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel, "since that is the picture language for a reality known mainly through its effects."[528]

In short, as has been seen, Watt establishes his own understanding of the Qur'anic revelation on two matters: that the verbal content of the Qur'an came into the Prophet Muhammad's consciousness from the unconsciousness and that the Prophet was able to distinguish these materials from his own conscious thinking. This understanding leads Watt to admit that the Qur'an is not the product of the prophet Muhammad's own thinking but came from beyond him. In a recent interview with him, he clarifies what he means by this as follows: "I believe that Muhammad had genuine religious experiences, that he did really receive something directly from God. I believe that the Qur'an came from God, that it is Divinely inspired."[529] For that reason, he says, it is wrong to speak of a Qur'anic verse as "Muhammad said such and such a thing."[530]

Evaluation: When we think of Watt's thoughts on the status of the Qur'an as a whole, we may argue that Watt arrives at the following conclusion that the Qur'an is not the Prophet Muhammad's own product, but came to him from God, by following a scholarly approach to the Qur'an. He explains this conclusion by citing the findings of modern social sciences such as the Jungian theory of "cumulative and personal unconscious." Although the explanation of the nature of the Qur'anic revelation by this theory seems to contradict the traditional Muslim understanding of the nature of revelation, in our opinion it may help us to understand how God's revelation was transmitted through the Prophet Muhammad. In other word, Muslims need to be open to restate their beliefs in the light of modern scientific developments.

However, it seems that by using this theory Watt not only wanted to explain the nature of revelation, but also wanted to illustrate the relationship of the Qur'an to the socio-economic and religious circumstances of seventh century Arabia. This naturally implies that the Qur'an came out through the creative imagination of the Prophet Muhammad which "worked at deep levels and produced ideas relevant to the needs of a society torn by economic, social and religious changes." This implication seems to contradict his definition of revelation as a "mode of divine activity by which the Creator communicates himself to man and, by so doing, evokes man's response and cooperation." For that reason, as D'Souza rightly remarks, we may conclude that Watt's above

[526] Watt, Muhammad's Mecca, p. 68; Watt, "Muhammad's Contribution in the Field of Ultimate Reality and Meaning", Ultimate Reality and Meaning: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding, 5/1 (1982), pp. 26-38.

[527] Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism, p. 84.

[528] Watt, Muhammad's Mecca, p. 68; Watt, "The Nature of Muhammad's Prophethood", SJRS, 8/2 (1987), pp. 79-84.

[529] Watt, "Interview", Trends, 7/5, 1997, pp. 10-11.

[530] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 17.

explanation of the nature of Islamic revelation "is more in agreement with what he calls the Western secularist view."[531]

Further, as has been seen, Watt does not only reject the orthodox Muslims' understanding of the Qur'an that it is the *verbatim* speech of God, but also wants to illustrate that in several points there are errors and mistakes in the Qur'an by taking the Biblical accounts as criteria. This argument seems to contradict his own understanding of revelation. For, as has been observed, according to him, revelation in the Bible and the Qur'an is the positive response of the prophets to what they found in their heart. In this sense, a Muslim quite rightly asks would it be fair to claim that there are mistakes and errors in the Qur'an in the light of the Biblical accounts? Watt also claims that there are deliberate revisions in the Qur'an. It seems that here Watt contradicts himself. Concerning the source of content of the revelation, on the one hand, he says that the content of revelation was totally from beyond Muhammad's consciousness; on the other hand, he argues that the Prophet or those who collected the Qur'an revised its verses deliberately.

Although these are negative implications of Watt's views on the Qur'an, we believe that his views deserve to be taken seriously into account by Muslims in their studies of the Qur'an. For, in developing all the above views, we believe that, what he wants is not to reduce deliberately the value of the Qur'an but to display the active role of the Prophet Muhammad in it. However, while doing this, it seems he has lost balance by regarding the Prophet as the source of some verses.

While exposing his view on the status of the Qur'an, Watt does not imply that Christians must acknowledge the Qur'an as the Word of God. But, he encourages them to think of God's revelation in a broader sense than has generally been considered. For, according to him the Qur'an is the avenue of the divine grace for the Muslim society.

4.3. W.Cantwell Smith

As an ordained Presbyterian minister Cantwell Smith began his academic life as an Islamicist and Oriental linguist, then became one of the most influential historians of religion of our century. In his academic life and still now, he has contributed greatly to understanding world faiths in general and Islam in particular. In doing this he has always stuck to his famous principle that no statement about other faiths can be true unless their followers acknowledge it as true.[532] Although he has not published any specific book on the status of the Qur'an, he has dealt with it in various places in his various publications. On this issue, his major essays are "Is the Qur'an the Word of God" [1967][533] and "The True Meaning of the Scripture: An Empirical Historian's Nonreductionist Interpretation of the Qur'an" [1980].[534] In our examination of his views on the status of the Qur'an, we will mainly follow these essays, but, while doing this, we will also refer to his other works.

Smith develops his understanding of the Qur'an by taking into consideration the historical effect of the Qur'anic message on its followers, since, according to him what the Qur'an means in itself

---

[531] See Andreas D'Souza, "Christian Approaches to the Study of Islam, An Analysis of Watt and Cragg", BHMISS, Jan-Jun, 1992, pp. 55-87.

[532] Smith, Towards a World Theology, p. 97.

[533] Smith, "Is the Qur'an the Word of God?", in Questions of Religious Truth (London: Victor Gollancz 1967); This essay also appeared in his On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), pp. 282-300.

[534] Smith, "The True Meaning of the Scripture: An Empirical Historian's Nonreductionist Interpretation of the Qur'an", IJMES, II (1980). This essay has been published by Smith as the fourth chapter of his book Smith, What is Scripture?, A Comparative Approach (London: SCM Press, 1993).

by reference to the circumstances of its origin is hardly a relevant question today. More im-portant is what the Qur'an has meant to millions of Muslims over each succeeding century and today.

Within this phenomenological approach, in his first essay, "Is the Qur'an the Word of God?" [1967] Smith, first of all, tries to explain the status of the Qur'an by asking the following delicate question "Is the Qur'an the word of God?" and points out both Muslims and non-Muslims answered this question as ' Yes' or 'No' in the past and also in our modern day without asking and studying it.[535] He stresses that these two different answers can be regarded as prejudgements, since Muslims have insisted that the Qur'an is the *verbatim* speech of God without reading and studying it but by believing it is so. In the same way Christians have declared that it is not the Word of God without studying it, but assessing it according to their own understanding of revelation.[536] Smith maintains that these two different answers would be regarded normal for past circumstances in which both sides, Muslims and Christians, were living in isolation and ignorance of each other. But, in our global world, Muslim and Christian intellectuals should look for new types of answers to come to a common understanding on the Qur'an. That would not mean that Muslims and Christians would cease to be different by taking into consideration contemporary historical circumstances.[537]

Smith strongly emphasises that resolution of this kind of question can only be found by ceasing to ask questions about the Qur'an itself and looking at the attitudes of those on either side who answer positively or negatively to the above question. For, according to Smith, the Qur'an is the word of God for those whose faith is expressed through it, and it is not the word of God for those whose faith is expressed through another medium.[538]

As can be seen here, Smith avoids answering the above question 'yes' or 'no' directly. Instead, in his *Towards a World Theology* [1981] he replaces it with the question "Has God spoken to Muslims through the Qur'an across the centuries?"[539] More recently, too, in his essay "Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as the Word of God?" [1992],[540] he has clarified this question by putting it, "Has the Qur'an been the Word of God for Muslims?" or more concretely, "Has it served God as a channel for His Word among them?" Then he answers this modified question, after all his study of Islam and his observations of Muslims among whom he lived for many years, as follows: "In some cases yes, to varying degrees, in some cases no."[541] Then he adds only the following types of people can disagree with him in this answer:

(a) those who are not familiar with Islamic history, and who do not have Muslim friends;

(b) those whose prejudices dogmatically rule out any willingness or ability to consider transcendent dimensions of human life and history;

(c) those who, although recognizing transcendence and our involvement in it, are not themselves theist but operate with some other conceptual framework to think and speak of it and yet are unwilling or unable into that framework.[542]

---

[535] Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, pp. 45-48.
[536] Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, p. 49.
[537] Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, pp. 57-58.
[538] Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, pp. 60-62.
[539] Smith, Towards a World Theology, 164.
[540] Smith, "Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as Word of God", in J. D. Gort et al, eds., On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 55-63.
[541] Smith, "Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as Word of God?", p. 59.
[542] Smith, "Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as Word of God?", p. 60.

While giving this answer, Smith unfortunately does not clarify in which circumstances he observed that the Qur'an has served as the Word of God among Muslims and in which circumstances it has not. This point naturally leads us to argue that, in this issue, Smith's answer is ambiguous and needs more clarification.

Although there are ambiguities in Smith's answer to the question of "Is the Qur'an the word of God?" or "Has the Qur'an served God as His Word among Muslims?", one cannot conclude that he does not acknowledge the Qur'an as the word of God. For, in another essay, "The True Meaning of the Scripture", he makes two suggestions for a better understanding of the Qur'an by non-Muslims. Firstly, he maintains that the Qur'an should be regarded as a separate scripture not any other book before studying it.[543] According to him, one cannot appreciate its status and its role in human affairs without taking into consideration scripture as a major matter in those affairs; and it is very difficult to develop a scholarly notion of scripture unless the Qur'an can be so acknowledged.[544] For this reason Smith urges non-Muslim students of Islam to accept the Qur'an as a religious document by asking what would its verses convey to them if they acknowledged them as God's words. Smith puts his argument on this issue as follows:

> If an outsider picks up the book and goes through it even asking himself, What is there that has led Muslims to suppose this from God? He will miss the reverberating impact. If, on the other hand, he picks up the book and asks himself, what would these sentences convey to me if I believed them to be God's word? Then he can much more effectively understand what has been many centuries in the Muslim world.[545]

Secondly, Smith argues that if non-Muslims want to understand the status of the Qur'an, they should take into consideration its function in the lives of those whose faith is expressed through it, and then they should acknowledge the Qur'an as Muslims do. He states:

> The Qur'an has meant whatever it has meant, to those who have used or heard it or appro-priated it to themselves; that the Qur'an as scripture has meant whatever is has meant to those Muslims for whom it has been scripture. Every passage has meant this or that to so-and-so in such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time. We leave out nothing that Muslims have seen in it.[546]

As can be seen from this passage, Smith offers a mediated understanding that enables both non-Muslim and Muslim students of the Qur'an to appreciate the fact that whether the Qur'an is the word of God in an absolute sense or not is not the most important issue. The important thing is that it has functioned as if it were in the lives of Muslims over centuries.

Lastly, Smith criticises Western academic intellectuals who are trying to use the same approaches to studying the Qur'an as are used by New Testament scholars. In this context, he raises three points.

Firstly, Smith opposes those Western scholars who try to apply a Western literary approach to the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad by setting up the following analogy between Christianity

---

[543] Smith, "The True Meaning of the Scripture", p. 489.
[544] Smith, "The True Meaning of the Scripture", p. 490.
[545] Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, p. 50.
[546] Smith, "True Meaning of Scripture", pp. 503-504.

and Islam. In this analogy, Smith points out that for Muslims the Qur'an is not simply a record of God's revelation, it is that revelation itself. He argues:

> If one is drawing parallels in terms of the structure of the two religions, what corresponds in the Christian scheme of the Qur'an is not the Bible but the person of Christ – it is Christ who is for Christians the revelation of (from) God. And what corresponds in the Islamic scheme to the Bible (the record of the revelation) is the Tradition (*hadith*), the counterpart of the Biblical criticism, which has begun. To look for historical criticism of the Qur'an is rather like looking for a psychoanalysis of Jesus.[547]

Secondly, Smith argues that those who try to understand the Qur'an by examining the psychology of the Prophet Muhammad, the environment in which he lived, the historical tradition that he inherited and the socio-economic cultural milieu of his followers never appreciated the true meaning of the Qur'an. For, according to Smith, those scholars have never taken into consideration the religious life of the Muslim *umma* that has been shaped by the Qur'anic message for centuries, and how a great number of Christians and Jews considered the Qur'anic message as a norm for the life style of the *umma*. Smith maintains:

> The significance of the Qur'an lies in part, no doubt, in the background and its mundane sources; but so far as actual history is concerned, that significance lies in much greater part in its prodigious and continuing force in the lives of men and women since, as over a large sector of the globe and over the long course of centuries, they have in its light dealt with their changing problems and have confronted creatively a fluctuating a series of varied contexts.[548]

Thirdly, Smith outlines that those scholars who regarded the Qur'an as a seventh century Arabian document have failed to discern that the Qur'an is not only a seventh century Arabian document but "it is equally a ninth, and a tenth, and a fourteenth, and an eighteenth, and a twentieth century document", since it has been very effective in the lives of its followers, not only in Arabia but almost all over the world, such as Central Asia, Middle East, Africa, Northern India and Western China. In this sense, Smith maintains that the real meaning of the Qur'an lies in its history that is dynamic, rich, creative, deeply intertwined with the lives of its adherents over many centuries, and many lands. For him, "the meaning of the Qur'an as scripture lies not in the text, but in the minds and hearts of Muslims."[549]

---

[547] Smith, Islam in Modern History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 18; also see Smith, "Some Similarities and Differences between Christianity and Islam", pp. 47-59; Against Smith's analogy that historical criticism of the Qur'an is similar to the psychoanalysis of Jesus, Räisänen argues that "neither psychoanalysis of Jesus nor a thorough demythologisation of Christology are unheard-of enterprises among Christians (Heikki Räisänen, Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths (London: SCM Press, 1996). p. 135).

[548] Smith, "The True Meaning of Scripture", p. 498.

[549] Smith, "The True Meaning of Scripture", pp. 504-505; He says that "The Qur'an has played a role – formative, dominating, liberating, spectacular – in the lives of the millions of people, philosophers and peasants, politicians and merchants and housewives, saints, sinners, in Bagdad and Cordoba and Agra, in the Soviet Union since the Communist Revolution, and so on. That role is worth discerning and pondering. The attempt to understand the Qur'an is to understand how it has fired the imagination, and inspired the poetry, and formulated the inhibitions, and guided the ecstasies, and teased the intellect, and ordered family relations and legal chicaneries, and nurtured the piety, of

Furthermore, Smith develops his argument concerning the significance of the Qur'anic message for those whose life has been shaped and is being shaped through it by saying:

> The Qur'an is significant not primarily because of what historically went into it but because of what historically has come out of it; what it has done to human lives, and what people have done to it and with it and through it. The Qur'an is significant because it has shown itself capable of serving a community as a form through which its members have been able (have been enabled) to deal with the problems of theirs lives, to confront creatively a series of varied context. To understand the Qur'an is to understand both that, and how, this has been happening.[550]

From our observation of Smith's understanding of the Qur'an, we can conclude that Smith is not interested in searching for the authenticity of the Qur'an by applying modern scientific methods. Instead, in the light of the phenomenological approach, he gives priority to what Muslims say about the Qur'an and how the Qur'an serves them as the Word of God. In his recent essay "Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as Word of God?" [1992], he articulates his methodology more clearly as follows: "The significant question about the Qur'an and all scriptures is not whether they are inspired, but whether they are inspiring."[551] By doing this, unlike many other Christian scholars of Islam, he regards the the Qur'an as the Word of God for Muslims. But with this acknowledgement he does not intend simply a descriptive statement in the sense of "Muslims hold the Qur'an to be the Word of God." Rather he makes a theological judgement in which he acknowl-edges that the Qur'an is actually the Word of God for Muslims, since God speaks to Muslims through it. By doing this, he considers the message of the Qur'an as a call to faith "in a God who commands it", and thus he prefers the way that leads to doing "justice to the faith in men's hearts."[552]

Evaluation: When we take into consideration Smith's view on the status of the Qur'an, we can draw three significant points which help Christians understand and appreciate the function of the Qur'an in the lives of Muslims more positively than before, and thus can contribute to the developments of Christian-Muslim relations.

Firstly, Smith strongly urges Christians to study the Qur'an in the light of the phenomenological approach. In doing so, he implies that to search whether the Qur'an is inspired by God or not by applying various modern scientific approaches to it does not help Christian-Muslim understanding, since those approaches can reduce the value of the Qur'an by leading Christians to regard the Qur'an as an ordinary book, not as scripture. The phenomenological approach, observing the effect of the Qur'an on the lives of Muslims according to Smith, can lead Christians to understand the meaning and the function of the Qur'an as do Muslims.

The benefit of this sort of approach for Christian-Muslim understanding can be seen in his positive answer to the question "Is the Qur'an the word of God"? or "Has the Qur'an served God as His Word among Muslims?." By doing this, as Neal Robinson rightly argues, Smith both saves himself from Christian polemics and urges the non-Muslim student of the Qur'an to study the

---

hundreds of millions of people in widely diverse climes and over a series of radically divergent centuries (Smith, "The True Meaning of Scripture", p. 498; Smith, "The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible", in M. Levering, ed., Rethinking Scripture (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 20-21).

[550] Smith, "The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible", p. 21.

[551] Smith, "Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as Word of God?", p. 62.

[552] Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 112.

Qur'an more sympathetically. Also, this positive answer of Smith can lead both Muslims and non-Muslims to approach the Qur'an by studying it, not something in their baggage.[553]

Secondly, Smith's stress on the meaning of the Qur'an in the heart of its followers, rather than on the literary significance of its text, can lead both Christians and Muslims to understand its value more positively. For, in our religiously pluralistic age, if we take into account the message conveyed by each other's scripture, the Qur'an and the Bible, rather than its text, we can study that scripture more positively in the light of our own circumstances and observe its contribution to its followers' lives. If one scripture's message can lead its followers closer to God, there is something valuable in that message for others. It would seem that if both Muslims and Christian adopted this suggestion of Smith in their approach to one another's' scripture, it would lead to the establishment of better relationships between them.

Because of these positive implications of Smith's views on the understanding of the Qur'an or, more correctly, of all sacred scripture, he is appreciated by both Muslims and Christians. For example, while the renowned Muslim scholar, S.H. Nasr, regards him as one of the few Christian scholars who have tried to understand the meaning of the Qur'an as it is understood by Muslims,[554] the Christian scholar, W. Bijlefeld, too, praises him because of his phenomenological approach to the Qur'an.[555]

4.4. Kenneth Cragg

Cragg, as an Anglican Bishop and missionary to Islam, is regarded as one of the key figures in twentieth century Christian thinking about Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. His books and essays cover many areas in the broad fields of Islamic Studies, Christian-Muslim Relations, and Inter-faith Dialogue. Among these works, we have chosen as a primary source material from only those works which deal with the issue of Islamic revelation, the Qur'an, to observe how Cragg perceives and interprets it from a Christian perspective. Cragg published a number of books on the Qur'an in order to interpret it to Christian readers.

In his major work, *The Event of the Qur'an* [1971],[556] Cragg develops his own understanding of the status of the Qur'an by investigating its content and the historical circumstances in which the Qur'an came to the Prophet Muhammad. One year later, Cragg wrote *The Mind of the Qur'an* [1972][557] in order to test his theories concerning the status of the Qur'an, which he had laid out in *The Event of the Qur'an* by giving examples from Qur'anic themes. Later on, he wrote *Muhammad and The Christian* [1986][558] as a response to the Muslim question why Christians do not acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad, while Muslims show great respect to Jesus by recognising him as a prophet. We will analyze this book more deeply in the next chapter; here, we will deal only with its sixth chapter, "The Prophetic Experience." In his *Readings in the Qur'an* [1988],[559] Cragg translated about two-thirds of the total Qur'an. Cragg made his selection in accordance with his own understanding of the Qur'an by omitting passages which are not

---

[553] Neal Robinson, "The Qur'an as the Word of God", A. Linzey & P.J. Wexler, eds., Heaven and Earth; Essex Essays in Theology and Ethics (West Sussex: Churchman Publishing Limited, 1986), pp. 38-54.

[554] Nasr, "Comments on a Few Theological Issues in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue", pp. 457-467.

[555] See Willem A. Bijlefeld, "Islamic Studies Within the Perspective of the History of Religions", MW, 62 (1972), pp. 1-11.

[556] Kenneth Cragg, The Event of The Qur'an; Islam in its Scripture (London: George Allen, 1971).

[557] Cragg, The Mind of the Qur'an, Chapters in Reflection (London: George Allan & Unwin), 1973.

[558] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian: A Question of Response (London: Longman and Todd, 1984).

[559] Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an (London: Collins, 1988).

compatible with the content of the Bible, such as social laws, man's duty in society, nature and eschatology. Recently, Cragg published *Returning to Mount Hira* [1994][560] where he tries to explain the Islamic revelation by returning to its beginning, the event of Mount Hira. The main argument of this book is that to solve their contemporary problems, contemporary Muslims need to return to the beginning of revelation instead of taking *Hijrah* as a starting point.

After this brief introduction of Cragg's works on the Qur'an, we will focus on his main arguments concerning the status of the Qur'an, concentrating mainly on his *The Event of the Qur'an* [1971]. Our reading of his works has shown that he spelled out his main arguments first of all in this work and more or less repeated them in his other works. Cragg regards this work as an "attempt to see the Qur'an, as it were, in its own mirror."[561] Its primary objective is to "to reflect on the book within itself and assemble its own implications about the nature of what happened in its genesis as a religious experience"[562] by taking it in its own terms. Cragg starts his arguments on the status of the Qur'an by defining it as a collection of recorded religious experiences of the Prophet Muhammad:

> The event of the Qur'an lives in an intense personal prophetic vocation. As such it moves with eloquence and poetry in the mystery of speech. It speaks a corporate solidarity, awakening a stirring sense of ethnic identity. These, in their progress, and their climax, are none other than the claim and the vehicle of a total religious demand and surrender.[563]

As can be seen, Cragg, unlike Smith, regards the Qur'an as a religious experience, not as a scripture which came at a particular time and in particular circumstances during the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, he insists that the Qur'an is a document which came from God and His messenger, and its living context was the circumstances in which the prophet lived.[564]

Further, he sees the main purpose of the Qur'an as a struggle with idolatry in order to lead pagan Arabs from polytheism to monotheism by claiming that "the main theme of the Qur'an is to struggle with idolatry; the others are only contributory."[565] In this sense, he regards the Qur'an "as a mission to retrieve idolaters to a true worship."[566]

After expressing the main purpose of the Qur'an in this way, Cragg moves to explain the relationship between it and the Prophet Muhammad. He rejects the traditional Muslim view which considers Muhammad as a mere instrument through which the Qur'an as the *verbatim* speech of God was transmitted. Instead, he argues that to do justice to him as a prophet it is necessary to accept "a parallel quality of active mind and spirit in both directions of his medial position between the eternal and the temporal, between the word given and the word declared."[567] In other words, according to Cragg, the phenomenon of the Qur'an cannot be separated from the phenomenon of the Prophet Muhammad, since both are "a supreme expression of humanness instrumental to God."[568]

---

[560] Cragg, Returning to Mount Hira': Islam in Contemporary Themes (London: Bellew Publishing, 1994).
[561] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, pp. 17-18.
[562] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 18.
[563] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 13.
[564] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 16.
[565] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 15.
[566] Cargg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 15.
[567] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 19.
[568] Cragg, The House of Islam, 2nd edition. (Berkeley: Dickenson, 1969), p. 19.

Cragg sees a close connection between the words of the Qur'an and the words of the Arabic poetry and soothsayers, despite the strong Qur'anic rejection of this kind of argument.[569] He claims that the mystery of the origin of the Qur'an cannot be understood without "sounding the depths of language." He states:

> The Qur'an, in its power and quality, is a thing of surpassing poetical worth, and that its genesis must be understood in terms of literary inspiration. The mystery of its origins cannot be fathomed without sounding the depths of language.[570]

As can be drawn from this quotation, Cragg considers Arabic poetry as a very effective tool for the expression of the Qur'anic words by the prophet Muhammad. It seems that Cragg, with this argument, implies that the Prophet Muhammad was a poet, and the Qur'an was a kind of poetic expression which, mixed with divine inspiration, came to the Prophet Muhammad as "a sort of dictation from beyond without straining, or study, or conscious effort."[571] In another place, too, he exposes this last point by highlighting that "the Qur'an constitutes a massive document of religious meaning whose deepest source lies beyond personal human factors." He clarifies this by stating that this should not be understood that "Muhammad was the recipient of a heavenly dictation which bypassed all his yearnings of heart or process of mind and virtually ignored both the stress of his environment and the travail of his personality."[572] In this point, we may say that there is a similarity between Cragg and Watt concerning the issue that the Qur'an was not the product of the conscious thinking of Prophet Muhammad, but came to him from beyond himself, though they produce different explanations for it.

To support the above argument about the origin of the Qur'an, Cragg compares its 'matchlessness' with the inimitable magic of Shakespeare. He says, "It may be doubted whether, in the last analysis, prophecy has ever been other than poetic and poetry, at its truest, ever other than prophetic."[573] Moreover, he cites William Blake's definition of his poetry as "dictation from beyond, without straining, or study, or conscious effort" and then gives this experience as an example of the "same inwrought mystery of content and form, of meaning and word" which underlines the Muslim concept of "verbal inspiration." The above arguments lead Cragg to advocate that "the Qur'an is understood to say what it says in an inseparable identity with how it says it."[574] Furthermore, he argues that in the course of time, after the *hijrah*, the poetic character of the Qur'an has changed towards political prophecy. In other words, the poetic prophecy of the Mekkan years is transformed in Madina to an argumentative and political prophecy of a more "prosaic" form. In this connection, he states:

> The poetic prophecy passed into phases of argumentative and political 'prophecy', where prose was the more accordant form. Deliver-ances turned into directives, ordinances and documents of law and community. The bio-graphy of the prophet continues to comprise them all within one phenomenon of *tanzil*. Muslim faith sees an undifferentiated status of authority throughout. But the feel and fervour of the

---

[569] See Qur'an. 36:69; 52: 29-30; 69:40.
[570] Cragg The Event of the Qur'an, p. 41.
[571] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 46.
[572] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 87.
[573] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 45.
[574] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 45ff.

Qur'an, by the literary criteria, are evidence enough that there is a transition, a change of key. It is clearly in the poetry, where it lives in its strength, that we must locate the essential meaning of 'an Arabic Qur'an'.[575]

In the light of the above arguments, we may say that Cragg is trying to prove that the 'matchlessness' and the literary excellence of the Qur'an is very much dependent on the power of poetic language and an active human factor, not on its divinity. For, according to him, the Prophet Muhammad expressed the words of the Qur'an in his own mother tongue by using the daily words of the Arabs. Indeed, in chapters "The Landscape of the Hijaz" and "Markets of the City" of his *The Event of the Qur'an*, he tries to illustrate that the language of the Qur'an is metaphor which reflects the living situation of the Arabs at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. For example, in the chapter, "Markets of the City," this metaphoric language, he argues, was expressed in commercial terms.[576]

By citing the metaphorical language and allusive style of the Qur'anic verses, Cragg seems to imply that the Prophet Muhammad picked the words of the Qur'an from Arabic poetry by using his poetic ability. But, as Watt rightly remarks most of the Western scholars, including Cragg, have misunderstood the allusive style of the some Qur'anic expressions by assuming those expressions as words of Muhammad. Concerning this point, Watt maintains that by using this kind of language the Qur'an gave its message to Arabs not only in their language, but also in terms of the ideas familiar to them.[577]

Further, in order to support his arguments against the Muslim view of the status of the Qur'an, Cragg argues that the traditional Muslim understanding mostly depends on the dogma of the Prophet's total illiteracy which is taken from the verse "the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet."[578] He proposes, like all other Western scholars, that the term *ummi* in this verse should be understood as "not yet scriptured" not "unlettered", since it is unfair to ascribe that a prosperous merchant did not read and write anything.[579] To justify this reading of the term *ummi*, Cragg argues that "if this reading is accepted it in no way detracts from the Qur'an's quality as given, not composed, but it does return us squarely to study Muhammad's role."[580] It seems that although this sort of understanding of the term *ummi* challenges the Muslim understanding, it would not con-tribute to understanding the Qur'anic message, since being illiterate at the time of the Prophet Muhammad was not an obstacle to being a good merchant. Even today, it may not be absolutely necessary to be an educated person in order to be a good trader.[581] In his *Readings in the Qur'an* [1988], Cragg

---

[575] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, pp. 49-50.

[576] In this connection he maintains that in the Qur'an "the religious and the human, in their priority, fit all too readily into the commercial criteria. The robust assurance of the metaphors is never in doubt, nor their fitness for the issues. It is this, perhaps, more than any other consideration, which measures how deeply the ethos of Mecca penetrated the Islamic word. Trade remains a worthy parable of the eternal gains of faith. Men may 'send on before them', as the frequent phrase runs, their good deeds and know that they will not fail of reward. Morality itself may be seen as a transaction in profit. To serve God is to make a sure loan. Unbelief is the bad bargain (Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 107).

[577] Watt, Islamic Revelation, p. 42; Watt, "Muhammad's Contribution in the Field of Ultimate Reality and Meaning", pp. 26-38.

[578] Qur'an, 7:157.

[579] Cragg, The Event of the Qur'an, p. 56ff; Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 86; Cragg, The Christ and the Faiths, p. 60; Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, p. 19; Cragg, Returning to Mount Hira, p. 19.

[580] Cragg, The Christ and the Faiths, p. 60.

[581] To defend the Muslim view that the Prophet was unlettered, the renowned Muslim thinker S.H. Nasr maintains that "The Prophet must be unlettered for the same reason that the Virgin Mary must be virgin. The human vehicle of

remarks that if the Qur'an is read carefully, one can find in it the *ecumene* of religions, Islamic spirituality and the image of a strong religious community.[582] But, on the other hand, he expresses that the Qur'anic message in four points causes trouble to those who belong to other religions especially in the process of inter-faith dialogue. He argues that these four points are very important in determining the Qur'anic attitude towards those who do not follow its message. The first point is the finality and absoluteness of the Qur'anic revelation. Cragg reveals that Muslims draw this conclusion from the verse, "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith. God's handiwork according to the pattern on which he has made mankind."[583] He argues that in this verse the word *fitra* comes from the verb *fatara* which can be translated into English as both 'nature' and 'religion'. And, according to these two meanings Islam can be defined as "the religion of God in accord with which He made man religious." From this definition, Cragg concludes, "Where revelations diverge from this norm and religions diversify in essential particulars, then they are misled or com-promised."[584] He points out that contrary to this finality and absoluteness of the Qur'an, some other Qur'anic verses anticipate and celebrate the diversity of races, revelations, and religions.[585]

Within these two different contexts, Cragg asks how the finality of the Qur'anic message and Muhammad's seal of the Prophets are to be understood. He suggests looking at them from the perspective of timing which means the Qur'an postdates the other scriptures and the Prophet Muhammad postdates the other Prophets.[586] It seems that Cragg is saying that the Qur'anic verses about the finality of the Qur'anic message and Prophet Muhammad's seal of the Prophets are metaphorical, since those Qur'anic verses do not express that the Qur'an is the last and final message or that the Prophet Muhammad is the seal of the Prophets.[587]

The second point is whether it is enough to educate humanity by word and exhortation or is it necessary to do more than that? Cragg states that the Qur'an, on the one hand, advocates that all mankind is born "naturally Muslim", which means with the inclination of submitting themselves to the hand of God. On the other hand, it mentions human perversity, the incorrigible character of mankind's capacity for unbelief. Cragg argues that, within these two contradictory positions, the Qur'anic exhortation cannot be enough to liberate humankind from sinfulness, and he employs the Christian understanding of the Cross to explain it.[588]

The third point is the meaning of God's supreme judiciary role. And the last point is the role of the force factor in the life of the Prophet Muhammad and in later periods for the spreading of

---

a Divine Message must be pure and untainted. One could not with any logic reject the unlettered nature of the Prophet and in the same breath defend the virginity of Mary. Both symbolize a profound aspect of this mystery of revelation and once understood one cannot be accepted and the other rejected" (Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1993), pp. 43-44).

[582] Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, p. 62.

[583] Qur'an, 30:30.

[584] Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, p. 75.

[585] Qur'an, 22:67; 3:64; 5:48.

[586] Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, p. 76.

[587] On this issue the distinguished Muslim scholar Fazlur Rahman points out that "the proposition of the finality of the mission of Muhammad does appear to be corroborated by the fact that no global religious movement has arisen since Islam – not that there have been no claimants, but that there have been no successful claimants. However, Muhammad's being the last Messenger of God and the Qur'an's being the last Revelation obviously place a heavy responsibility upon those who claim to be Muslims. Such a claim is not so much a privilege but an obligation; yet it has been taken by Muslims to be a privilege." Rahman, Major Themes of the Qur'an (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), p. 81.

[588] Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, pp. 77-78.

Islam.[589] Cragg argues that Muhammad opted for the path of power in order to spread his message by using force rather than suffering, as Jesus did for the sake of God's will. Actually, these four points never seem to create any trouble for non-Muslims, if they are taken into consideration within the context of the general teaching of the Qur'an. But, here, Cragg tries to explain them in the light of Christian teaching, such as the meaning of crucifixion of Jesus on the cross and his redemptive role of human sin.

Before finishing our examination of Cragg's views on the status of the Qur'an, we would like to point out that he tries to justify his interpretation of the nature of the Qur'an by arguing that the orthodox Muslim view of revelation, "the celestial dictation," has led to "a less than lively approach to the sense of the text and to an excessive preoccupation with grammar, parsing, syntax." By doing this, he implies that Muslims have underestimated the actual meaning and the content of the Qur'anic message. We would respond that his view that there is a human element and a positive relation between the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's own thinking and feelings, too, does not reduce the value of the Qur'an, but can contribute to its exegesis.[590] Finally, Cragg maintains that Christians can acknowledge the status of the Qur'an as "the Word of God," in the sense that it is "the Word *from* God" not in the New Testament sense that "God was the Word."[591]

Evaluation: As has been observed, Cragg's under-standing of the status of the Qur'an is based on the following arguments. Firstly, the primary objective of the Qur'an is to call the Pagan Arabs to transform them from paganism to monotheism. That argument implies that the Qur'anic message has nothing to do with those who already believe in God, namely Christians and Jews. It seems that by arguing thus Cragg underestimates the Qur'anic verses which invite Christians and Jews to re-examine their own original message by leaving aside their extreme views about their own beliefs.[592] Secondly, in the transmission of the Qur'an the Prophet Muhammad was not only a mechanical, but also an organic instrument. In other words, there is an inseparable relationship between the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophet Muhammad's own thinking, feelings and environment. Thirdly, the Prophet Muhammad had a great poetic power through which he combined together those thoughts and inspirations which came to him beyond himself and his own thinking. Lastly, Cragg takes all these points together and concludes that "prophetic inspiration does not differ greatly from literary inspiration, nor the prophet from a genuine poet."[593]

While arguing these points, Cragg, as a loyal churchman, tries to develop a sympathetic Christian understanding of the Qur'an. And in so doing, he has found the orthodox Muslim understanding of revelation incomplete. Then he has tried to establish a truer and more complete inter-pretation of revelation by using Christian terms, categories and connotations. Further, in his evaluation of the value of the Qur'anic teaching, by using "a Christian key" he has maintained that the primary objective of the Qur'anic message was "to retrieve idolaters for a true worship." In this sense, he has claimed its teaching is not enough to liberate human beings from their sinfulness without support by the Christian teaching. In his Ph.D. thesis on Cragg, namely *The Call to Retrieval; Kenneth Cragg's Christian Vocation to Islam* [1987], Christopher Lamb regards Cragg

---

[589] Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, pp. 78-79.
[590] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 95; also see, Zebiri, Muslims and Christians Face to Face, p. 209.
[591] Cragg, The Christ and The Faiths, p. 53.
[592] See Qur'an. 2:1-5, 111-113; 3:71, 78; 4:171; 5:15-16, 19.

[593] Andreas D'Souza, "Christian Approaches to the Study of Islam; An Analysis of the Writings of Watt and Cragg", BHMISS, July-Dec. 1992, p. 52.

as guilty because of using "a Christian key."[594] Then Lamb tries to lessen his guilt by comparing him with Basetti-Sani who reads Christian meanings into the Qur'an in his work *The Koran in the Light of Christ*.[595] In our opinion, Cragg may not be thought of as guilty, but he can be considered by Muslims as a subjective scholar who tries to fit Islam within Judeo-Christian tradition. Or, as Charles Adams and some others have said, he can be accused of Christianising the Qur'an. For example, Charles Adams, in his essay "Islamic Religious Traditions," accuses Cragg of indicating that in understanding the nature of the Qur'an Christians are in a better position than Muslims. According to Adams, Cragg implies that "the Islamic religious traditions means not what Muslims have always thought it to mean, but something else that Christians are in a better position to understand."[596]

Despite the above Muslim and Christian criticism of Cragg's Christianising approach to the Qur'an, he should be appreciated because of his sincere intention to study the Qur'an to see if it can be acknowledged by Christians in the light of their own faith. Further, his stress on the living environment of the Qur'an in seventh century Arabia in his *Event of the Qur'an* is worth being taken into account by Muslims for modern Qur'anic hermeneutics. As Farid Esack rightly observes, the accounts of that work demonstrate "the most profound and moving account of the Qur'an's engagement with a living and dynamic context."[597]

4.5. Hans Küng

Hans Küng, as an ecumenical Catholic theologian, began his scholarly life by dealing with problematic issues within Christianity. But in the course of time he became interested in contemporary common issues not only for Christians, but also for people of other faiths. According to W.G. Jeanrond's classification of Küng's theological development, his reflection on theological method and the dialogue between Christianity and world religions began in the early 1980's in order to promote interreligious dialogue.[598] In this context, he published his major work *Christianity and World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism* [1984].[599] In each part of this book, first of all, he paid attention to scholarly accounts of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and then provided a detailed critical response to each one as a Christian theologian. Apart from this, Küng has also published a number of essays in various places.[600] But, here in our examination of his views on the status of the Qur'an we shall focus mainly on his

[594] Christopher Lamb, Call to Retrieval: Kenneth Cragg's Christian Vocation to Islam (London: Grey Seal, 1997), p. 138-143.

[595] Basetti-Sani, The Koran in the Light of Christ, A Christian Interpretation of the Sacred Book of Islam (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), p. 120ff.

[596] Adams, "Islamic Religious Traditions", pp. 29-95; Jamil Qureysi. "Alongsidedness-In Good Faith? An Essay on Kenneth Cragg", in A. Hussain, R. Olson & J. Qureysi, eds., Orientalism, Islam and Islamists (Brattleboro, Vermont: Amana Books, 1984), 203-248.

[597] Farid Esack, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Problems and Prospects", MW, 83/2 (1993), pp. 118-141.

[598] See Werner G. Jeanrond, "The Rationality of Faith: On Theological Methodology", Karl-Josef Kuschel & Hermann Haring, eds., Hans Küng: New Horizons for Faith and Thought (London: SCM Press, 1993), p. 105.

[599] This work was translated into English in 1986.

[600] Küng, "Christianity and World Religions: the Dialogue with Islam as One Model", MW, 77/2 (1984), pp. 80-95; Küng, "Christianity and World Religions: Dialogue with Islam", L. Swidler, ed., Towards a Universal Theology of Religion (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), pp. 192-209.

critical response to Josef van Ess's presentation of Islam.[601] For, in all other essays he roughly summarises what he has already said in this critical response.

Küng prepares the background of his understanding of the status of the Qur'an by pointing out new developments in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue. In all his essays concerning dialogue with Islam, he stresses that after the establishment of Christian-Muslim dialogue, it is no longer possible to return to early Christian polemics about Islam and Muslims. Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the Qur'an, thanks to the increasing number of publications of the Qur'anic translation into Western languages and to the millions of Muslims who live in Western Europe. For those reasons, Küng maintains that in these circumstances study should take the place of ignorance; and interreligious dialogue should take the place of missionary activities.[602]

After highlighting the influence of interreligious dialogue by studying each other's religious tradition, Küng moves to develop his arguments about the status of the Qur'an. First of all, he articulates the importance of the Qur'an for Islam and Muslims by stating that the Qur'an

> has provided Islam with its notion of moral obligation, its external dynamic, its religious depth, . . . it has also supplied quite specific, lasting doctrines and moral principles: human responsibility before God, social justice, and Muslim solidarity. Thus the Qur'an is the holy book of Islam, and it is such precisely because Muslims understand it as the word that has been written down, the word not of man but of *God*.[603]

Then he asks "Is this book really God's word?" as W.C. Smith did in the 1960's as we observed in section 4.3. In his answer to this question, Küng agrees with Smith by indicating that the conflicting past answers, which have been given by Muslims and Christians as 'Yes' and 'No', were ultimately based on an unexamined, dogmatic "pre-convictions."[604]

To expose this answer, Küng first of all, discusses the possibility of revelation outside the Bible. In doing so, he maintains that "the better Christians and Muslims get to know each other and give up trying simply to 'convert' each other the more Christians will come to doubt whether their negative attitude toward the Qur'an was right." Then, he suggests that Christians understand the negative statements of the Bible concerning "the errors, darkness, and guilt of the non-Jewish or non-Christian world" in their own context without generalising them. Also, he urges them to look at the positive statements of the Bible which indicate that God wants to save all humankind and "originally manifest himself to all humanity; Non-Christians can come to know the true God; outside the Church [Christianity] there is grace." After these points, Küng says, "If we [Christians] acknowledge Muhammad as a post-Christian prophet, then to be consistent we shall also have to admit that Muhammad didn't simply get his message from himself, that his message is not simply Muhammad's word, but *God's word*."[605]

After acknowledging that the Qur'an is not only the Prophet Muhammad but also God's word in this way, Küng moves to answer the following questions: "What does 'God's word' mean? What does revelation mean? Are we to take revelation as something that has fallen straight down

---

[601] See Josef van Ess, "Muhammad and the Qur'an: Prophecy and Revelation", in Christianity and World Religions, pp. 5-18.

[602] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 22.

[603] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 28-29.

[604] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 28.

[605] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 29-31.

from heaven, *inspired or dictated verbatim by God*?" Before answering these questions, he points out the significance of the Qur'an for the Muslim community from the advent of Islam to our modern day, (as W.C. Smith did, as seen in section 4.3) by stating that the Qur'an

> is not simply a piece of evidence from seventh century, to be analysed by scholars of religion, but for countless men and women, a twentieth century document; it is no dead letter, but the most vital text, a source both literary and religious – a book not for study and analysis, but for life and action, and that not only in matters of faith, but of law and morals as well.[606]

Further, Küng expresses the common Muslim under-standing on the question of how the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad which is that the prophet received the Qur'an word by word directly from God. In this sense the Qur'an is definitely God's *verbatim* speech, and there is no influence on it from Jewish and Christian environments, since Muhammad could not read the Bible, because he was illiterate and also there was no Arabic translation of the Bible at his time. Küng points out that this Muslim argument, whether the Qur'an is the *ipsissima verba* of God or whether there is any influence on it from Jewish and Christian side, has been studied by Western intellectuals for a long time. But their theories diverge so widely that, it is very difficult to get a conclusion from them.[607] For that reason, he argues that instead of discussing the origin of the Qur'an and the Judeo-Christian influences on it, it would be better, in the light of modern exegesis and the challenge of historico-critical method, to examine whether the Prophet Muhammad received the Qur'an word-by-word directly from God or received it as an inspiration and expressed it with his own language.[608] For, according to Küng, whatever result one gets from one's search of the origin of the Qur'an, "the important thing is that nowadays the *divine word of the Qur'an* must be understood at the same time as the *human word of the Prophet*."[609] Also, he argues that Christians cannot deny that Muhammad had received revelation, nor can Muslims deny the influence of the oral Judeo-Christian tradition on the Qur'an.[610]

Hence, he maintains that for this objective and the benefit of Christian-Muslim dialogue, it is necessary for both Christians and Muslims to try to understand the revelation in the light of historico-critical debates about the provenance of the Bible and the Qur'an, since, according to him, it is very difficult to make any progress in the process of dialogue between Christians and Muslims unless they come to terms with "the notion of truth required for the use of historico-critical instruments."[611]

After expressing his views on the Qur'an, Küng invites Muslim intellectuals to study the Qur'an by using the historico-critical method through which the Qur'an is seen neither as a "collection of cut and dried formulae", nor as a "flux of constantly varying interpretations", but "as a living message, continually heard anew in liturgical recitation, as the great prophetic testimony to the One and only Mighty and Merciful God, the Creator and Completer of His Judgement and His promises."[612] In a similar vein, Hugh Goddard encourages Muslims to study the Qur'an in the light

---

[606] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 32.
[607] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 33-34.
[608] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 34, 30.
[609] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 35.
[610] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 34.
[611] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 35.
[612] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 35-36.

of the historical-critical method to facilitate Christian-Muslim understanding.[613] Küng adds that it is a very positive development for Qur'anic studies to see an increasing number of Muslim intellectuals who have started to study the provenance of the Qur'an in the light of modern historico-critical methods, and he points to the distingui-shed Muslim scholar, Fazlur Rahman, as an example of these intellectuals. And he adds that in our modern world, as so many bright Muslim students all over the world have started to discuss the necessity of a more historical approach to the Qur'an, it will be impossible in the long run for Muslims to avoid discussing certain questions concerning their own beliefs.[614] Further, in a response to the Muslim objection[615] to the application of historico-critical methods to the Qur'an, Küng argues that "to take a more historical approach to the Qur'an would not damage Muslim faith in the one God and in Muhammad his Prophet, but could strengthen this faith."[616]

Lastly, as a strong defender of the application of historico-critical method to both Bible and the Qur'an, Küng answers the following question, "To what degree can the Qur'an or the Bible still be revelation and the word of God after a 'critical reading'? by indicating that, in the case of the Qur'an or the Bible, "*God's word* can be heard only in *human words*; divine revelation is imparted only through human experience and interpretation."[617] He further clarifies this point in the Qur'anic case by arguing that the Qur'an was revealed as an ideal to the Prophet's mind, and the Prophet, too, expressed it with his own language, Arabic, to the Arabs. In other words, the Qur'an is both the word of God and the word of Prophet Muhammad. He says, "It is important that the Koran as the word of God be regarded at the same time as the word of a human prophet."[618]

Evaluation: When we think of Küng's views on the status of the Qur'an as a whole, we can see that, as a leading Christian theologian not an Islamicist, he has made great efforts towards a positive Christian assessment of the status of the Qur'an. It seems that while doing this he tried to be symphatetic to the Muslim understanding of the Qur'an without compromising his own beliefs. Within this context, like W.C. Smith, he explicitly acknowledges the Qur'an as an inspired and inspiring book for Muslims from the phenomenological point of view.

The most interesting point of his views is his comparison of the Qur'an and the Bible, because it is well known that what Muslims attribute to the Qur'an is very similar to what Christians attribute to Jesus Christ and not to the Bible.[619] Further, by depending on this comparison, Küng urges both Muslims and Christians to come together to develop a common view of revelation in the light of modern exegesis and scientific methods. This would be very difficult for Muslims who believe that comparison can only be made between the Qur'an and Jesus. As F.P. Ford rightly observes, this common view of revelation which Küng implies "is unmistakably more Christian

---

[613] Concerning this point, H. Goddard maintains that application of the historical critical methods to the Bible changed Christian views about the status of the Bible by bringing them to consider it "as a developing phenomenon". He argues that because of the changing views, Christians began to look at other scripture more positively. By making this point, Goddard stresses that "the task of mutual understanding between Christian and Muslims may be greatly facilitated if Muslims were to follow a path similar to that followed by Christians in their studies of the biblical texts in their own study of the Qur'an" (H. Goddard, "Each Other's Scripture", Newsletter, CSIC, 5 (1981), pp. 16-24).

[614] Küng, "Christianity and World Religions: Discussion", p. 121.

[615] See S. H. Nasr, "Response To Hans Küng's Paper on Christian-Muslim Dialogue", MW, 77/2 (1987), pp. 96-105.

[616] Küng, "Christianity and World Religions: Discussion", p. 121.

[617] Küng, Christianity and the World Religions, pp. 67-68.

[618] Nasr, "Christianity and World Religions: Discussion", p. 87.

[619] See Smith, "Some Similarities and Differences between Christianity and Islam", pp. 47-59.

than Muslim."[620] Also, Küng, interestingly, invites Muslims to apply the historico-critical method to the Qur'an as Christians have done for the benefit of their faith. But, while doing this, he forgets that among Western scholars discussions are still going on as to whether this method is really useful for Christian faith, and whether, in the light of its results, Christians can re-interpret their own doctrines. Concerning this point, Muslims can rightly ask that if the historical-critical method is so good, why are Christians so uncertain in accepting its results for their own faith. In this respect S.H. Nasr rightly makes the following remarks:

> Non-Islamic Western analysis based on the separation between the Qur'an and its traditional commentaries over the centuries is not going to help dialogue with Muslims, for in the Islamic perspective the growth of all different aspects of the traditions throughout the centuries is based upon the Qur'an.[621]

After these negative implications, we agree with Küng that Muslims should re-read the Qur'an in the light of modern scientific developments by applying the historical-critical method not only because Christians have applied it and benefited from it, but in order to make the Qur'an more understandable and intelligible in our modern age. Also, it is obvious that without trying something, we cannot know as an *a priori* whether it is useful or harmful to us.

In short, we may conclude that Küng, as a prolific Christian theologian of our century and not an expert on Islam, contributed greatly in helping Christians to evaluate positively the status of the Qur'an in our dialogical age. If Christians followed his footsteps, they would come to understand the status and function of the Qur'an for Muslims.

4.6. Keith Ward

Ward is neither an Islamicist, like Watt, Smith and Cragg, nor a pioneer of interreligious dialogue, like Küng. He began his academic life as a dogmatic Christian theolo-gian and became a senior professor in Oxford University. Recently, like some other Christian theologians such as Hick, Knitter and others, he has subscribed to a pluralistic Christian theology of religions. Within this context, he published *Religion and Revelation* [1994][622] to explain comparatively the meaning of revelation in the major world religions according to modern scientific developments. Ward takes the following principle that "God reveals truth to whomsoever He wills, since there need be no expectation that there will be universal agreement on it"[623] as a base for his assessment of different revelations, including the Qur'an. We will consider now what Ward thinks about the status of the Qur'an.

First of all, he points out the crucial theological differ-ences between Islamic and Christian revelation, namely the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, atonement for human sin by the death of Jesus on the cross, and the concept of God as Trinity. Then he argues that if God had really wanted a single revelation, this kind of conflict between different religious traditions would not

[620] Peter Ford, "The Qur'an as Sacred Scripture: An Assessment of Contemporary Christian Perspectives", MW, 82/2 (1993), pp. 142-164.

[621] Nasr, "Response to Hans Küng's Paper on Christian-Muslim Dialogue", p. 98.

[622] Keith Ward, Religion and Revelation, A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Two years later he also published his Religion & Creation in which he explores the idea of a creator God in the work of twentieth century writers from Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity (Ward, Religion & Creation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[623] Ward, Religion and Revelation, p. 6.

exist.[624] He states that from the advent of Islam up to our modern day both Christian and Muslim scholars were on the side of mutual condemna-tion instead of tolerance and mutual understanding of each other because of those major theological differences.[625] In order to help create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and tolerance, he offers to consider the theological differences between Islamic and Christian revelation as follows. He says that if one thinks these differences

> in a common concern to honour God without reserve, to insist on human obedience to moral law, and to assert the possibility of Divine forgiveness for all, then it is plausible to see these two religious traditions as different ways of response to authentic Divine revelation.[626]

By suggesting this, Ward seems to subscribe to a pluralistic understanding of revelation, meaning there is more than one revelation and all of them are different answers to the Transcendent Reality. Within the context of this pluralistic understanding, Ward asks what the Christian response to the Qur'anic revelation is and then offers that revelation is

> witnessing to Divine unity, power, and transcendence; and affirming that these truly are attributes of God which have been communicated through an active influence of God upon a particular human mind, raising it to heights of insight and aesthetic perfection.[627]

In this sense, he stresses that Christians can regard the Qur'an as the word of God, as they regard the Old Testament, by indicating that this should not be taken to mean the Qur'an is totally the word of God which directly came from God without any human contribution, but should be taken to mean that the Qur'an is more than a human construction, since it represents "a profound spiritual response to Divine revelation and a genuine medium of Divine presence and power."[628]

In the last stage, Ward urges us as Christians and Muslims, without eliminating our theological differences, to acknowledge Divine revelation "as a Divine luring of the mind," which can lead us to assume that such luring should be universal in order to cover all great religious traditions, since, as he states, there is not any final perfect expression of the Divine revelation. Within this context, he argues that if one adopts this kind of attitude as a basis for oneself, one can look at and assess other religious traditions very positively, and thus can "see each religious tradition, including one's own, as one among many continually changing, fallible, culturally influenced forms of life."[629]

Evaluation: As has been observed, Ward, as a leading British theologian not as an Islamicist or pioneer for interfaith dialogue, stresses the necessity of Christian acknowledgement of the Qur'an as the word of God in our religious pluralistic age. Although his perception of the Qur'an differs from orthodox, even modernist, Muslim understanding, in our opinion this should be regarded as a significant step forward towards a more positive appre-ciation of the Qur'an by Christians. It is interesting to note that Ward neither studied the Qur'an like Watt and Cragg, nor observed Muslims

---

[624] Ward, Religion and Revelation, p. 174.
[625] Ward, Religion and Revelation, p. 178.
[626] Ward, Religion and Revelation, p. 186.
[627] Ward, Religion and Revelation, p. 190.
[628] Ward, Religion and Revelation, pp. 190-191.
[629] Ward, Religion and Revelation, p. 191.

by living or entering into dialogue with them, but arrived at this conclusion in the light of his pluralistic theology of religions. This implies that those who adopt this sort of theology would be more open to people of other faiths and their religious figures.

4.7. Conclusion

In the light of our examination of contemporary Christian accounts on the status of the Qur'an, we must admit that all the Christian thinkers whose views were considered above stressed the necessity of developing a sympathetic and positive Christian attitude towards the Qur'an by leaving behind the polemical past. In the light of this significant shift, we would like to highlight first of all those points which, in our opinion, have negative implica-tions on the development of Christian-Muslims relations, and then discuss what kind of Christian approach can contribute more to the development of Christians-Muslims understanding.

Firstly, apart from Smith, all others whose views are outlined here studied the status of the Qur'an within the context of their understanding of the nature of the Biblical revelation. According to this understanding, revelation in Christian scripture consists of two elements, namely divine and human. This understanding naturally led them to reject the orthodox Muslims' understanding that the Qur'an is the verbatim speech of God. According to them, there are both divine and human elements in the Qur'an. In other words, the Qur'an is not only God's word as the majority of Muslims believe, but it is also the word of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, when the Qur'anic accounts con-tradict the Gospel accounts, they argue that there are errors and mistakes in the Qur'an. This clearly opens to discussion the sacred nature of the Qur'an. From the dialogical point of view, this cannot lead to Christian-Muslim understanding but to controversy between them.

Secondly, all the scholars whose views we have outlined, with the exception of W.C. Smith, argued for the application of modern-scientific methods developed as a result of the new approaches in scholarly research and applied to the sources of the Judeo-Christian tradition. They urge that these methods initiated in European academies in the nineteenth century[630] be applied to the Qur'an in order to facilitate Christian-Muslim understanding. Although this can be considered a reasonable demand, it may not facilitate Christian-Muslim understanding. For example, the views of the exponents of the "Literary approach" to the Qur'an definitely do lead not to mutual understanding but to controversy. Contrary to the Muslim understanding, they claim that the Qur'an was not finally fixed until the early ninth century and was produced in an atmosphere of intense Judeo-Christian sectarian debate.[631]

---

[630] David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 268.

[631] See John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); By following Wansbrough, his students P. Crone and M. Cook conclude that using non-Islamic sources there is no hard evidence for the existence of the Qur'an before the end of the seventh century (Crone & Cook, Hagarism, The Making of the Islamic World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 18; also see Andrew Rippin, "Literary Analysis of Qur'an, Tafsir, and Sira: The Methodology of John Wansbrough", in Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, pp.151-163; N. Robinson criticises Crone and Cook for neglecting Islamic sources such as surah-magazi literature. He says that to use non-Islamic sources by rejecting the Islamic sources is indefensible, because by doing this they do not do justice to the Qur'anic data (*Robinson, Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* [London: SCM Press, 1996], pp. 47-59); F.E. Peters indicates that if Wansbrough, Crone and Cook's thesis is taken as a base to explain the origin of the Qur'an, then it can be argued that "evangelical materials of Islam were assembled out of standard Jewish and Christian topoi long after the death of Muhammad, and reflect not so much historical data as the political and poetical concerns of the 'sectarian milieu' that shaped them. The Islamic 'Gospel' was as a New Testament critic might put it, the product of the Muslim

It seems that if this and similar views are brought to the dialogue table by Christians, the dialogue process will be affected negatively. As Rahman maintains, they can be defended only to make nonsense of the Qur'an[632] not to make a positive contribution to Christian-Muslim understanding. They all mean that from the advent of Islam to our day Muslims do not understand the real status of the Qur'an, and in order to do this they need to apply the methods Christians use to understand their scriptures. As Nasr indicates, these Christian scholars have proceeded to apply their own findings, experiences, and methods to Islam, all defined by a particular cultural context, and to teach Muslims what their own sacred scripture really means and what the status and reality of the Qur'an are.[633] It would seem better to leave it to Muslim scholars to apply modern scientific methods to the Qur'an within the context of their tradition, as the Christian scholars applied the modern scientific methods to their own scriptures within the context of their tradition.[634] On this issue, John Hick rightly points out:

> The official belief-system of each tradition is capable of desirable developments and modi-fications at many points; but this can only properly be done from within those traditions and by their own thinkers change has come from within a religious tradition.[635]

Nevertheless, contemporary Muslim scholars are very eager to apply modern scientific methods to the Qur'an. For example, Arkoun is strongly in favour of the philosophical critique of Qur'anic text by saying that the application of this method "would serve to strengthen the scientific foundations of the history *mushaf* and of the theology of revelation."[636]

Thirdly, while most of these scholars such as Watt, Cragg and Küng are arguing for the validity of their view on the status of the Qur'an, they refer to the Muslim modernist, Fazlur Rahman, by pointing out the similarities between his views and theirs. In doing so, it seems that they overlook the fact that while Rahman sees the Qur'an as the Word of God and the Word of Muhammad, he wants to emphasise both the external and internal character of revelation and not the human elements in it. Unlike the Christian scholars, according to Rahman there is no doubt that "the Qur'an is entirely the Word of God." He says:

> the Qur'an is the Word of God (Kalam allah). Muhammad, too, was unshakeably convinced that he was recipient of the Message from God, the totally other. This

community, and in its final form, of the 9th century Muslim community in Iraq, and far removed in time and space from the primary Sitz im Leben" (F.E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad", *IJMES*, 23(1991), p. 305). Contrary to Wansbrough, Crone and Cook, another British scholar, John Burton, in the light of the same method argues that the Qur'an as we have it today was collected and prepared by the Prophet Muhammad himself, not Abu Bakr or Uthman, arguing that "what we have today in our hands is the mushaf of the Muhammad" (Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977], pp. 239-240).

[632] See Rahman, "Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies", in Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, pp.189-202.

[633] Nasr, "Comments on a Few Theological Issues", p.461.

[634] Räisänen , *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma*, p. 123.

[635] John Hick, Rainbow of Faiths (London: SCM Press, 1995), p.121.

[636] Muhammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions Uncommon Answers* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994), p. 35; also see Rahman, *Islam* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), pp. 31ff; Hassan Hanafi, "Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an", in Wild, ed., *The Qur'an as Text*, pp. 195-211; Esack, *Qur'an Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), pp. 49-81; Räisänen, Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma, pp. 118-136.

'Other' through some channel 'dictated' the Qur'an with an absolute authority. Not only does the word Qur'an, meaning 'recitation', clearly indicate this, but the text of the Qur'an itself states in several places that the Qur'an is verbally revealed and not merely in its 'meaning' and ideas.[637]

In the light of these points the following question arises, 'If the views of the scholars mentioned have failed to do justice to the Qur'an and thus affect Christian-Muslim relations negatively, what sort of approach is necessary to do justice to Islamic scripture and affect these relations positively?' In our opinion, Bijlefeld answers this questioning in his essay "Islamic Studies within the Perspective of the History of Religions" as follows: "In my opinion we ought to reject the proposition that we have either to accept the Qur'an 'as the work of God or as that of man'. There is a third way: to see the Qur'an not just as 'scripture' but as Sacred Scripture, as the Scripture of Muslims and the Muslim community." Further, he points out that seeing the Qur'an in this way "is not a 'com-promise' between accepting the principles of critical historical scholarship and attempting to avoid giving offence to Muslim sensibilities. It means recognising and taking seriously the fact that the Qur'an was not 'discovered' by Western scholarship, but that it reached us [Western world] through the Muslim community which did not simply 'preserve' it, but for which it remained reality."[638]

As can be seen here, Bijlefeld, like Cantwell Smith, tries to understand the nature of the Qur'an, subscribing to the phenomenological approach. In doing so, as Smith maintains, he calls those who want to study the Qur'an to acknowledge it as the Word of God for Muslims. Then he argues that to do justice to the nature of the Qur'an it would be better to avoid using modern scientific methods which have been applied to the Bible. Our research shows us that although all of the above approaches of the Christian thinkers can contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding, the phenomenological approach presented by Smith and Bijlefeld can contribute most. This leads Christians and Muslims into dialogue on facts that can be empirically and critically stated, analysed and recons-tructed. To defend the necessity of this approach, leading Muslim scholar, Hasan Askari, stresses that unlike the other approaches "the phenomenological approach starts with the conviction that there are phenomena, strictly religious, which cannot be reduced or turned into merely social, economic and psychological paradigms."[639]

Our examination of the above accounts of contemporary Christian thinkers has shown that the Qur'an is no longer considered by them as a product of the Prophet Muhammad's own thinking, as was thought in the past. Instead, they acknowledge that it has a sacred status. While doing this some of them regard the Qur'an as the Word of God for those who follow its message; the others argue that it is a Word of God for all people. If this is the case, what is the status of the Prophet Muhammad who brought the Qur'an to humanity? We will examine this question in the next chapter.

---

[637] Rahman, *Islam* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), p. 31.
[638] Bijlefeld, "Islamic Studies within the Perspective of History of Religion", p. 5.
[639] See Hasan Askari, "Limits to Comparison: New Testament and Qur'an", Newsletter, CSIC, 5 (1981), pp. 24-28.

Chapter 5
Contemporary Christian Evaluations of the Prophethood of Muhammad

5.1. Introduction

The question of the status and prophethood of Muhammad has been one of the most crucial and controversial issues of Christian-Muslim relations since the advent of Islam. So, in almost every Christian-Muslim encounter, Christian acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad has been and still is raised. Muslims ask, "Since we [Muslims] accept Jesus as a genuine prophet and messenger of God, can you [Christians] not reciprocate by accepting the genuinness of Muhammad's prophet-hood?".[640] For example, in the eigth and ninth century, the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi asked this question of the Assyrian patriarch, Timothy, in his meeting with him, and Timothy answered by saying "He [Muhammad] walked in the path of the prophets."[641] Some Muslims strongly affirm that on almost every occasion the Christian response to this Muslim demand has been one of the most unsatisfactory encounters for Muslims because of "the reluctance of Christians to recognize the prophethood of Muhammad."[642]

Starting from the earliest periods, Christian scholars who were in contact with Islam and Muslims almost totally directed their efforts to rejecting the prophethood of Muhammad. They sought to prove that Muhammad was not a prophet but a heretic who was instructed by Christian monks and was the author of the Qur'an. They aimed to discredit his revelation by showing it to have arisen out of the social and political circumstances of a particular place and age, thinking that the whole of Islam would then fail and collapse. To achieve this objective, in the medieval period, many Western scholars claimed that Muhammad was a cardinal who failed to get elected pope and, in revenge, seceded from the Church.[643] They depicted and described him by using the worst terms such as heretic, impostor or sensualist to disgrace him in the eyes of Christians and, in a sense, Muslims.[644] This kind of distorted image of the Prophet Muhammad spread to such an extent that it was preserved and perpetuated in literature, such as *the Divine Comedy,* where Dante consigned him to one of the lowest levels of Hell.[645] A. Schimmel comments that this consignation

---

[640] David Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective", in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), p. 119; Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward A Christian Assessment", Newsletter, CSIC, No.17/18 (1987), pp. 24-36.

[641] Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*, v.1 (Rome: P.I.S.A.I., 1984), p. 34-36.

[642] Abraham H. Khan, "Metatheological Reflections on Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad as Prophet: Inter-faith Dialogue and the Academic Study of Religion", TJT, 2/2 1986, p. 188.

[643] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 88.

[644] See Daniel, Islam and the West, p. 88 ff; Hourani, *Islam in European Though*, p. 12ff; Michel, "Christianity and Islam: Reflection on Recent Teachings of the Church", p. 3; also see R.H. Drummond, "Toward Theological Understanding of Islam", *JES*, 9/4 (1972), pp. 777-801; Muhammad Benaboud, "Orientalism on the Revelation of the Prophet: the Case of W. Montgomery Watt, Maxime Rodinson, and Duncan Black MacDonald", *AJISS*, 3/2 (1986), pp. 309-326.

[645] See Miguel Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy (*London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltt, 1968). p. 103.

of Muhammad to Hell reflected the view of the majority of Christians who "could not understand how after the rise of Christianity another religion could appear in the world."[646]

In short, during the medieval period in which Islam was regarded as the work of the devil and Muhammad was inspired by him, almost every polemical work repeatedly expressed that Muhammad was a wicked man who founded Islam with force and spread it with the sword. He was also regarded as an erotic man who was very fond of women. On every level this image was expounded, and it helped to prove to Europeans that this man [Muhammad] could not be a real prophet, but a false one. The following observation of W. Montgomery Watt clearly shows how the image of Muhammad was distorted by Western writers. He notes, "None of the great figures of history is so poorly appre-ciated in the West as Muhammad. Western writers have mostly been prone to believe the worst of Muhammad, and wherever an objectionable interpretation of an act seemed plausible, have tended to accept it as fact."[647] N. Daniel stresses that the hidden agenda behind these polemical works on Muhammad was to prove that Muhammad was a mere human with no divine intervention in his life and, hence, could not be a prophet. Since the recipient of a divine message was to be totally different, aspects of his life which showed him as ordinary were further proofs of his falsity.[648]

After the second half of the nineteenth century, these kinds of distorted images began to change to more objective and positive ones, since during this period more and more Western Christian scholars started to think about Muhammad more positively than before by appreciating his prophethood and teaching.[649] For example, towards the middle of the nineteenth century for the first time in the history of Western Christian accounts about Muhammad, Thomas Carlyle, in his famous lecture "The Hero as Prophet" [1840], expressed openly the sincerity of Muham-mad and the truthfulness of Islam.[650] Despite this welcome development, N. Daniel criticised Carlyle for not establi-shing his appreciation of the sincerity of Muhammad "on any sound theoretical basis."[651] Montgomery Watt, in his assessment of Carlyle's essay on Muhammad, highlighted the significance of his appreciation of the sincerity of Muhammad by indicating that Carlyle's statement on Muhammad was:

> The first strong affirmation in the whole of European literature, medieval and modern, of a belief in the sincerity of Muhammad. It is an important step forward in the process of reversing the medieval world-picture of Islam as the great enemy, and rehabilitating its founder, Muhammad.[652]

Just before the opening session of the Second Vatican Council, Robin Zaehner in his *At Sundry Times* [1958] did not hesitate to acknowledge the prophethood of Muham-mad by maintaining:

---

[646] Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger, The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 3-4; Schimmel, "The Prophet Muhammad as a Centre of Muslim Life and Thought", in A. Schimmel & A. Falaturi, eds., *We Believe in One God* (London: Burns & Oates, 1979), pp. 35-61.

[647] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 52.

[648] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 245.

[649] Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective", p. 124; for further information concerning positive Christian assessment of the Prophet Muhammad, see Clinton Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam* (London: Grey Seal Books, 1992).

[650] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes. Hero Worship and Heroic History* (New York: John Wiley, 1849), p. 53.

[651] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 314.

[652] Watt, "Carlyle on Muhammad", *HJ*, 52 (1954-1955), pp. 247-255.

> There is no criterion by which the gift of prophecy can be withheld from him unless it is withheld from the Hebrew prophets also. The Qur'an is in fact the quintessence of prophecy. In it you have, as in no other book, the sense of an absolutely overwhelming Being proclaim-ing Himself to a people that had not known him.[653]

However, Carlyle's acceptance of Muhammad's sincerity and Zaehner's acknowledgement of his prophethood should not be understood to mean that Western Christian scholar-ship was ready to acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad. The influence of those orientalist scholars[654] who tried to prove that Muhammad could not be a prophet was still very effective in the first half of the twentieth century and even in time.[655]

In the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue that was officially started by the Second Vatican Council, it has been observed in the previous chapters that both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC preferred to be silent about the status of the Prophet Muhammad in their official statements.[656] Some theologians urge these official bodies to break down this silence for the sake of better and more fruitful relationships with Muslims. In this respect, the prolific Catholic theologian, Küng, in his comment on the Catholic document *Nostra Aetate,* stresses that if the Catholic Church and all other Churches wish to establish a real and fruitful dialogue with Muslims, they need to acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad officially.[657] Daniel, too, maintains that the way by which Christians can understand Islam correctly passes through the acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad. He says "it is essential for Christians to see Muhammad as a holy figure; to see him, that is, as Muslims see him. If they do not do so, they must cut themselves off from Muslims."[658]

Many Christian scholars and theologians have started to raise their voices to highlight the importance of the positive appreciation of the Prophet Muhammad for an efficient dialogue with Muslims in Christian – Muslim dialogue meetings. At the opening speech of the International Muslim-Christian Congress of Cordoba in 1977, the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid first of all urged Christians "to forget the past and show respect for the Prophet of Islam", since, according to him, "To insult Muhammad is an offence not only against historical and religious truth, but also against the respect and charity due to "Muslims. Then he asks:

---

[653] Robin C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times: An Essay in the Comparison of Religions* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p. 27.

[654] See William Muir, *The Muhammedan Controversy; Biographies of Muhammed; Sprenger on Tradition; the Indian Liturgy and the Psalter* (Edinburgh: T & T Clack, 1897); Edward Sell, *The Life of Muhammad* (London: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1913).

[655] See Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam*; Peter, Ipema, The Islam Interpretations of Duncan B. Macdonald, Samuel M. Zwemer, A. Kenneth Cragg and Wilfred C. Smith: An Analytical Comparison and Evaluation, unpublished PhD thesis (Hartford: The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1971), pp. 63ff; Buaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West*, pp. 131-167; Buaben, "The Prophet Muhammad in Twentieth Century European Scholarship", *Encounter*, 1/2 (1995), pp. 30-52.

[656] See Part One.

[657] Küng maintains that "in my view that Church – and all the Christian Churches – must also 'look with great respect' upon the man whose name is omitted from the declaration out of embarrassment, although he alone led the Muslims to the worship of the one God, who spoke through him: Muhammad, the Prophet" (Küng, *Christianity and World Religions*, p. 27); In fact, the Catholic Church authorities broke their silence in the Tripoli meeting [1977] and *Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims* [1981], as has been observed in Chapter Two.

[658] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 336.

> How it is possible to appreciate Islam and Muslims without showing appreciation for the Prophet of Islam and the values he has promoted? Not to do this would not only be a lack of respect, to which the Council exhorts Christians, but also neglect of a religious factor of which account must be taken in theological reflection and religious awareness.[659]

In another Christian-Muslim consultation, convened by the Conference of European Churches in Salzburg in 1984, it was emphasised that "Christians respect the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. It calls people to repentance in the service of the One God. It is unjust to dismiss Muhammad out of hand as a false prophet. Christians may recognize Muhammad as part of the same prophetic tradition, and in the past some have done so."[660]

Apart from these positive statements in Christian-Muslim dialogue meetings, there is also an increasing number of Christian thinkers who argue for a positive Christian evaluation of the status of Muhammad. Karen Armstrong, Lamin Sanneh and Martin Forward urge non-Muslims to see Muhammad positively by taking into account how God used him "as a mercy for humankind" to bring peace and civilisation to his people, rather than to see him as the antithesis of the religious spirit and as the enemy of decent civilisation.[661] The renowned theologian John Macquarrie in his *Mediators* [1995] includes him among the nine great mediators of "a new or renewed sense of holy being."[662] William E. Phipps too in his recent work *Muhammad and Jesus* [1996] attempts to compare the teaching of Jesus and Muhammad by regarding them as the prophets of the same family.[663]

It is an undeniable fact for Christians that the Prophet Muhammad "for his own part thought himself sincere, and was regarded as sincere" by his followers, both in his own day and still now.[664] And we have seen that this kind of positive assessment of the Prophet Muhammad put the following theological questions on the agenda of Christian-Muslim dialogue, namely, Can Christians acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad? Are they ready to regard Muhammad as the prophet of God? Or in other words, could it be possible for Christians to consider Muhammad as a prophet in the light of their own religious traditions?

In this chapter, we will mainly concentrate on the answers to these questions, using contemporary Christian accounts. We will limit ourselves to those scholars whose views contribute to the developments of Christian-Muslim dialogue. In so doing, we have chosen Montgomery Watt, Kenneth Cragg, Hans Küng and David Kerr as our major thinkers. At this point, we reiterate our emphasis that those whose views will be examined in this chapter cannot be taken as a basis for generalisation, but as concrete illustra-tions of the main points.

---

[659] Emilio G. Aguilar, "The Second International Muslim-Christian Congress of Cordoba (March 21-27, 1977", in Richard W. Rousseau, ed., *Christianity and Islam: The Struggling Dialogue* (Scranton: Ridge Row Press, 1985), p. 165.

[660] Conference of European Churches, Witness to God in Secular Europe, (Geneva: 1984), p. 56.

[661] See Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1992), p. 44; Lamin Sanneh, *Piety & Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1996), p. 48; "Muhammad's Significance for Christians", *SID*, 1(1991). pp. 25-29, 36-38; Forward, *Muhammad: A Short Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), p. 5.

[662] John Macquarrie, *Mediators* (London: Collins, 1995), p. 130.

[663] William E. Phipps, *Muhammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teaching* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

[664] See Thomas, "A Christian Theology of Islam", p. 4.

5.2. W. Montgomery Watt

As we have noted earlier, Watt, a distinguished Islamicist, is regarded by both Christians and Muslims as the most prolific scholar of this century in the field of *Sirah* scholarship because of his acceptance of the Qur'an and the early Islamic works as reliable sources for determining the status of the prophet Muhammad.[665] Concerning Watt's significance for *Sirah* scholarship, Daniel indicates that Watt's views on Muhammad, although they "do not revolutionise the Christian assessment of the Prophet, do change the emphasis, so that the reader, through the historico-anthropological approach, is drawn into and allowed to some extent to share the Muslim awareness of the Prophet."[666] F.E. Peters in his recent biography of the Prophet notes:

> Undoubtedly Montgomery Watt's two-volume life of Muhammad written at the mid-century has become the standard for students and scholars alike. Works of such magnitude and conviction usually signal a pause, the reshaping of a new *communis opinio,* and such seems to have occurred here: no one has since attempted a like enterprise in English.[667]

As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, Watt has written a great number of books and articles about Islam and its phenomena, namely the Islamic revelation, the prophet Muhammad, and, recently, Christian-Muslim relations. But his main views about the status and the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad can be found in his later writings, such as *Islam and Christianity Today* (1983); "Muhammad as the Founder of Islam" (1984); "The Nature of Prophethood of Muhammad [1987]; *Muhammad's Mecca* (1988); *Muslim-Christian Encounter* [1991]; "Islamic Attitude to Other Religions" [1993]. For that reason, we will mainly concentrate on the accounts of these works by highlighting their passages relating to our questions. We will follow the historical order to see how he has developed his views in the course of time.

In doing so, we would like first to give his criticism of Christians' distorted images of the Prophet Muhammad in order to highlight the starting point of his own arguments concerning our investigation. In his *Muhammad at Medina,* he invites Christians to develop an objective view about Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, because of the close contacts between Christians and Muslims. He totally rejects the past allegations made against Muhammad and says that the advocate of those allegations regarded Muhammad as an impostor without thinking about "how God could have allowed a great religion like Islam to develop from a basis of lies and deceit."[668] In another place, he criticises early Christian scholars' views on the issue of Muhammad's prophetic vocation by remarking that

> In Medieval Europe there was elaborated the conception of Muhammad as a false prophet who merely pretended to receive messages from God; and this and other falsifications of the medieval war propaganda are only slowly being expunged from the mind of Europe and Christendom.[669]

---

[665] The distinguished Islamicist Alford T. Welch adopts the same approach in his assessment of the Prophet Muhammad (see Welch, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data", in R.G. Hovannisian & S. Vryonis, eds., *Islam's Understanding of Itself* [Malibu: Undena Publications, 1983], pp. 15-52).

[666] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 330-331.

[667] E.F. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (New York: State University of New York, 1994), p. xi.

[668] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 232.

[669] Watt, *Introduction to the Qur'an*, p. 17.

Watt points out that, in the understanding of Muham-mad's prophetic experience, "Western writers have mostly been prone to believe the worst of Muhammad, and, where an objectionable interpretation of an act seemed plausible, have tended it as fact." He argues that this plausibility in itself is not enough criterion to judge a particular case and hence it is important that solid, sound evidence needs to be presented as the basis for assessing the prophethood of Muhammad. And he adds:

> Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of pur-pose, if we are to understand him at all; if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from past, we must in every particular case hold firmly to the belief in his sincerity until the opposite is conclusively proved.[670]

Watt urges Christians to try to understand some events of the Prophet Muhammad within the context of his own circumstances without judging them according to their own circumstances. In this connection, he states that Christians accused Muhammad of being treacherous and lustful because of events such as the violation of the sacred month and his marriage to the divorced wife of his adopted son, without thinking about the circumstances of his time. He argues that if those Christians carefully scrutinise early Islamic sources, they can easily find out that they judge Muhammad's actions without taking into consideration the moral criticism of his contemporaries.[671]

He also criticises the theory that Muhammad was a "pathological case"[672] by stressing that none of the medical symptoms associated with this condition were present in Muhammad. Further, he argues that even if it were the case "the argument would be completely unsound and based on mere ignorance and prejudice; such physical concomitants neither validate or invalidate religious experience."[673]

We may conclude Watt's criticism by pointing out the fact that those past negative views of Western Christians depend very much on certain traditions which might not have any certainty at all instead of on the Qur'an and the early Islamic sources. On this issue, Watt declares:

> It is incredible that a person subject to epilepsy, or hysteria, or even ungovernable fits of emotion, could have been the active leader of military expeditions, or the cool far-seeing guide of city-state and a growing religious community; but all this we know Muhammad to have been. In such questions the principle of the historian should be to depend mainly on the Qur'an and accept Tradition only in so far as it is in harmony with the results of Qur'anic study.[674]

After this criticism, Watt begins his own assessment of the status and the prophethood of Muhammad by pointing out the necessity of making a theological evaluation of his prophetic vocation. He insists that "So far Muhammad has been described from the point of view of the

---

[670] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 52.

[671] Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, p. 233.

[672] See John C. Archer, *Mystical Elements in Muhammed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), p. 9ff.

[673] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 57.

[674] Watt, *Introduction to the Qur'an*, p. 18.

historian. Yet as the founder of a world religion he also demands a theological judgement."[675] Then he starts his theological appreciation by defining prophethood as follows:

> Prophets share in (what may be called) 'creative imagination'. They proclaim ideas connected with what is deepest and most central in human experience, with special reference to the particular needs of their day and generation. The mark of the great prophet is the profound attraction of his ideas for those to whom they are addressed.[676]

In another work, *Truth in Religions* [1963], Watt depicts a prophet "as a religious leader who brings truth in a form suited to the needs of his society and age."[677] As we will see, his evaluation of the prophethood of Muhammad appears to conform to this definition.

Furthermore, in his essay "Thoughts on Muslim-Christian Dialogue" [1978], he notes the differences between Christian and Muslim understanding of the term "prophet." Here, Watt indicates that the main specialities of the Old Testament prophets were to be involved in their contem-porary public events and to foretell the future. According to the modern historically-minded Christians he argues, the main duty of the prophet is not to foretell the future, but to transmit and proclaim God's message to his people.[678]

Within the context of these understandings of the term "prophet", Watt, towards the end of his *Muhammad; Prophet and Statesman*, asks "Was Muhammad a prophet?", and answers it by pointing out that

> he was a man in whom creative imagination worked at deep levels and produced ideas relevant to the central questions of human existence, so that his religion has had a wide-spread appeal, not only in his own age but in succeeding centuries. Not all the ideas he proclaimed are true and sound but God's grace has been enabled to provide millions of men with a better religion than they had before they testified that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is his messenger.[679]

In his essay "Thoughts On Muslim-Christian Dialogue" [1978], Watt argues that it would be very difficult for Christians to regard Muhammad as a prophet. For, according to him, if Christians did, perhaps Muslims would draw the conclusion that Christians considered Muhammad as a prophet in the Islamic sense in which Muhammad is understood as "a mere instrument for transmitting to his fellow-men the actual speech of god without his personality entering into the transaction in any way."[680] In his *Islam and Christianity Today* [1983], he develops his views about the status of the Prophet Muhammad in the light of observable fruits of Muhammad's teaching on his followers. In this connection, he argues that Christians should accept the facts that on the basis of the revelation which came to Muhammad

---

[675] Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, pp. 237-238.

[676] Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, p. 238.

[677] Watt, *Truth in the Religions: A Sociological and Psychological Approach* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), p. 149.

[678] Watt, "Thoughts on Muslim-Christian Dialogue", *HI*, 1/1 (1978), pp. 34-35.

[679] Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, p. 240.

[680] Watt, "Thoughts on Muslim-Christian Dialogue", p. 36.

A religious community developed, claiming to serve God, numbering some thousands in Muhammad's lifetime, and now having several hundred million members. The quality of life in this community has been on the whole satisfactory for the saintliness of life, and countless ordinary people have been enabled to live decent and moderately happy lives in difficult circumstances. These points lead to the conclusion that the view of reality presented in the Qur'an is true and from God, and that therefore Muhammad is a genuine prophet.[681]

In his essay "Muhammad as the Founder of Islam" [1984], Watt explains what he means by the phase "genuine prophet" as follows:

Muhammad was a genuine prophet in the sense that God used him to communicate truth about himself to human beings; but this assertion has to be qualified by holding also that prophets can make mistakes of a sort, as the Old Testament prophets Haggai and Zechariah did when they thought that prince Zerubbabel was the Messiah.[682]

He, also describes the prophet Muhammad as one used by God to found a religion, and part of his duty "is to challenge Christians to more profound reflection on some of their basic beliefs.[683]

After the above positive statements about the prophet-hood of Muhammad, Watt announces his own under-standing of the status and the prophethood at the beginning of his *Muhammad's Mecca* [1988] as follows:

Personally I am convinced that Muhammad was sincere in believing that what came to him as revelation (*wahy*) was not the product of conscious thought on his part. I consider that Muhammad was truly a Prophet, and think that we Christians should admit this on the basis of the Christian principle that 'by their fruits you will know them', since through the centuries Islam has produced many upright and saintly people. If he is a prophet, too, then in accordance with the Christian doctrine that the Holy Spirit spoke by the prophets, the Qur'an may be accepted as of divine origin.[684]

In his essay "Islamic Attitude to Other Religions" [1993], he attempts to make this personal statement as a general Christian account not to offend Muslims in the process of interreligious dialogue. He says Christians "must accept Muhammad as a prophet who was similar to the Old Testament prophets."[685]

In one *Christian-Muslim Encounters* [1991], Watt emphasises that in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue it is very important that "Christians should reject the distortions of the medieval image of Islam and should develop a positive appreciation of its values. This involves accepting Muhammad as a religious leader through whom God has worked, and that is tantamount to holding that he is in some sense a prophet." And he adds, "Such a view does not contradict any central

---

[681] Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today*, pp. 60-61.
[682] Watt, "Muhammad as the Founder of Islam", *SM*, 33 (1984), p. 249.
[683] Watt, "Muhammad as the Founder of Islam", p. 249.
[684] Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca*, p. 1.
[685] Watt, "Islamic Attitude to Other Religions", *SM*, 42 (1993), p. 245.

Christian belief", since "Christians do not believe that all Muhammad's revelations from God were infallible, even though they allow that much of divine truth was revealed to him."[686]

In one of his recent essays "Ultimate Vision and Ultimate Reality" [1995], Watt concedes that although in his academic life he always defends the view that the Qur'an was not the prophet Muhammad's own product, but something that came to him beyond himself, he hesitated to speak of Muhammad as a prophet because of his fear that "Muslims would have taken this to mean that everything in the Qur'an was finally and absolutely true" which he did not acknowledge to be so. But only recently as we have observed above, he says he admitted Muhammad as a prophet like the Old Testament prophets who came to "bring the knowledge of God to people without such knowledge."[687] Further he clarifies as follows what he means when he recognises Muhammad as a prophet like the Old Testament prophets in his *Religious Truth for Our Time* [1995]:

> Muhammad was a prophet comparable to the Old Testament prophets, though his function was somewhat different. The latter were primarily critics of deviations from an existing religion, whereas he had to bring knowledge of God and of his commands to a people without any such knowledge. In this respect Muhammad's role and station more closely resembled that of Moses in that through each of them a form of the divine law was com-municated to their people.[688]

Evaluation: As has been observed so far, Watt made a number of bold statements towards the acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad in his more recent writings. Within this context when we think of his views as a whole, we can draw the following two ambiguous and two significant points. We will begin by highlighting the ambiguous points.

Firstly, while he is making one of his bold statements about the prophethood of Muhammad, Watt underlines that he is "convinced that Muhammad was sincere in believing that what came to him was revelation." In our opinion, this statement should be understood in the light of Watt's understanding of the status of the Qur'an. For, as we have observed in our previous chapter, although Watt conceded that the Prophet Muhammad did not produce the Qur'an consciously, he argued that something of him entered into the process of revelation.[689] So, from this understanding, we could argue that what Watt is convinced of is not that Muhammad actually received revelation from God, but that he sincerely believed that he received revelation. This naturally leads us to draw the conclusion that although Muhammad believed that he received revelation from God, in reality he might not have. In our opinion, this point needs more clarification from Watt himself for the sake of better Christian-Muslim understanding.

Secondly, related to this negative implication, Watt, by taking the Christian doctrine that the Holy Spirit spoke by the prophets, implies that the Prophet Muhammad was inspired in the same way, and also by the Trinitarian God. By doing this, it seems that Watt downgrades the value of the Prophet Muhammad not only in the eyes of non-Muslims but also Muslims. For it may reduce the status of Muhammad to those people who are guided by the Holy Spirit such as Gospel writers, Christian saints or holy people of other religious traditions.

Apart from these two ambiguous points, there are also two very significant points in Watt's thoughts on the Prophet Muhammad. The first one is that Watt urges Christians to test the lives of

---

[686] Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounter*, p. 148.
[687] Watt, "Ultimate Vision and Ultimate Truth", pp. 280-288.
[688] Watt, *Religious Truth for Our Time* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), p. 80.
[689] For Watt's understanding of the status of the Qur'an see Chapter Four section 4.2.

those who follow the Prophet Muhammad in the light of the Christian criterion that "by their fruits you will know them," before deciding whether Muhammad could be a prophet or not. Broadly speaking, although this criterion of Watt can contribute to the positive Christian appreciation of the prophethood of Muhammad, it might also be used as a negative evaluation by Christians, for Watt does not explain what those fruits are.

The second one is that by comparing the prophet Muhammad to the Old Testament prophets Watt, like Küng as we will see below, arrives at the conclusion that he was a prophet similar to the Old Testament prophets. Although this is a good starting point for the positive Christian assessment of the prophethood of Muhammad, it seems that it reduces his value in the eyes of his followers. In our opinion, Watt makes the connection between Muhammad and Moses in order to avoid this implication.

However, even after considering these ambiguous and significant points, as Muslims we must concede that, in Western Christian scholarship Watt's position represents a great shift from the distorted medieval images of the Prophet Muhammad to the positive evaluation of his status. In doing so, Watt has already paved the way through which Christians can obtain a complimentary different view about the Prophet Muhammad than previously and be able to evaluate the status of the prophet "in a more positive light than hitherto."[690]

5.3. Kenneth Cragg

As has been stated earlier, Cragg, as an Islamicist, an Anglican Bishop and a missionary to Muslims, has published a great number of books and essays on the Christian understanding of Islam and its basic phenomenon such as the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad. Although his first major treatment of the phenomenon of Muhammad is his *The Call of the Minaret* [1956], his *Muhammad and the Christian* [1984] has a particular significance for our concerns, because it was published for a specific purpose, namely, as a Christian response to the Muslim question 'why Christians do not acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad when Muslims show great respect to Jesus, regarding him as a prophet. Due to this specific purpose of this work, we will concentrate mainly on examining Cragg's views on the status of the Prophet Muhammad.

Significance for our study is that as a committed Christian and an Islamicist he takes the Muslim demand seriously and tries to answer it sincerely within the context of his own religious tradition. In this connection, his *Muhammad and the Christian* can be regarded by Muslims as "judicious, gentle, and positive in its use of information. Its criticism of Islam is honest, and ostensibly caring in tone."[691]

Before analysing the accounts of his *Muhammad and the Christian*, we would like to observe briefly how he treated the phenomenon of Muhammad in *The Call of the Minaret* [1956]. Here, Cragg portrayed the personality of Muham-mad as being a man of "a sure monotheism and a prophetic mission in which a divine relationship of revelation, through a scripture, created a community of faith."[692] Then, after asking according to which criteria the prophethood of Muhammad is to be evaluated by Christians, Cragg enumerated the following criteria:

---

[690] Forward, *Muhammad*, p. 107.

[691] Abraham H. Khan, "Methatheological Reflections on Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad as Prophet", p. 189.

[692] Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, p. 75.

Is it by those of Arabian paganism which would show Muhammad to be a great reformer? Or by those of early Islamic development which would show Muhammad to be one of the rarest potentialities in human history? Or by those of the classical Hebrew prophets which would show in Muhammad a strange and yet unmistakable shift in the whole concept and expression of prophet-hood? Or by those of the hills of the Galilee and Judea where there are criteria of almost insupportable contrast.[693]

He himself subscribed to the last criterion in answering the question "How should prophethood proceed?", and made the following contrast: "The Muhammadan decision here is formative of all else in Islam. It was a decision for community, for resistance, for external victory, for pacification and rule. The decision of the Cross – no less conscious, no less formative, no less inclusive – was the contrary decision."[694] Here, Cragg's main criterion for the assessment of the phenomenon of Muhammad is the Christian one, and is the direct comparison with Christ as is portrayed in the Gospels.

One of the most interesting points of Cragg's treatment of the phenomenon of Muhammad in *The Call of Minaret* [1956] is that he used the title "prophet" almost synonymously with the name of Muhammad. Our examination of related passages show us that he did not use this title to give an official status to Muhammad as a prophet. But, he might have used it because he was accustomed to call him prophet while he was living among Muslims in the Middle East.[695]

When we turn to his *Muhammad and the Christian*, we realise Cragg changed the approach which we observed above. At the outset of this work, he explains his new approach for his elaboration of the significance of the prophethood of Muhammad for Christians, by indicating that the elements of other religions should be evaluated within their own historical context not one's own religious tradition. He says:

> Religions, they will say, are specifics best left to their differing histories and their segregated faith systems, hopefully practising tolerance but never venturing to translate their own ethos into the idiom of another. On this view, it will be either naive or hopeless to think that Muhammad is assessable in terms proper to the Buddha or that the Prophet of the Qur'an can rightly be aligned with Jesus of the Gospels. Therefore it is wisdom to leave the several faiths to their own worldviews, their historical matrix and their charasterictic mood and mind. One should not look to their con-temporary societies for any common reaction to the present world. Their futures must be conceded to be as separate as their pasts.[696]

By stating this, Cragg seems to move away from assessing the phenomenon of Muhammad in the light of Christian teaching rather than in the light of the Qur'an's own teaching. One of the reasons for this moving away could possibly be that some of his Christian colleagues charged him with Christianising Islam, as we have noted in Chapter Four, section 4.4.

After this methodological statement, Cragg begins to respond to the above Muslim question by considering Western historical studies relating to Muhammad. He gives an analysis of him and his role as a prophet as it is presented in the Qur'an. He also considers Muslim thought on Muhammad

---

[693] Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, p. 91.
[694] Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, p. 93.
[695] See Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, pp. 69ff.
[696] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 2.

and his prophethood in the Muslim tradition from the time of the prophet to our day. It is not possible to discuss the significant points of this long survey here, but we will limit our focus to the status and the prophethood of Muhammad.

Concerning the Muslims' demand for acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad by Christians in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue, Cragg states that a vital part of the Christian's response to this demand concerns Muhammad's inner experience. He points out:

> The ultimate area of Christian response, given an honest reckoning with all the foregoing, will be the content of the Qur'an itself. Indeed, the question of a Christian acknowledgement of Muhammad resolves itself into that of a Christian response to the Islamic Scripture. It is safe to say that Muhammad himself would not have it otherwise. Nor could any faithful Muslim.[697]

Then he maintains that within this context a Christian can consider Muhammad as "the Prophet of the Qur'an."[698] As Abrahim H. Khan remarks, Cragg's strategy of assessment of the prophethood of Muhammad within the context of the Qur'an can imply that his study of the significance of Muhammad for Christians is "intellectually respectable", because by doing so he may mean that "Muhammad's role in the Qur'an is authentic and genuine."[699] In this connection, he points out:

> The Christian conscience must develop a faithful appreciation of the Qur'an and thereby participate with Muslims in Muhammad within that community of truth as to God and man, creation and nature, law and mercy, which they afford.[700]

Further, it seems that considering Muhammad as "the Prophet of the Qur'an" allows Cragg and other like-minded Christians to affirm that in his role as the human channel through whom the Qur'an was revealed Muhammad was a genuine prophet of God.

After acknowledging Muhammad as "the Prophet of the Qur'an", Cragg tries to tie this recognition with the Christian tradition by arguing that this "must entail a Christian concern for a larger, more loving, comprehension of divine transcendence and, as its sphere, a deeper estimate of human nature and its answer in that which is 'more than prophecy'. He adds that this acknowledgement should not mean that:

> The Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the meaning of the Cross, the mystery of the Eucharist, the integrity of the four Gospels, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and many con-tingent matters, are not vital. But it means that they are better left latent here, within the positive and often common themes of Islamic faith and devotion.[701]

As has been observed so far, Cragg insists that a Christian acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad must hang on biblical grounds. And within this, he evaluates the teaching of the prophet Muhammad as follows:

---

[697] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 6.
[698] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 91.
[699] Khan, "On Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad as Prophet", p. 190.
[700] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, pp. 140-141.
[701] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 139.

In the broadest terms it means the rule of God, the reality of divine power, wisdom, mercy and justice. It means the strong permeation of the human scene with a consciousness of God, his claim, his creating, his sustaining, his ordaining. That awareness by which Islam lives is surely enough to contain all those issues which the Christian must be minded to join when he studies the predicates of his New Testament theology.[702]

From this passage, we may conclude that Cragg is extremely careful and cautious in his assessment of the prophethood of Muhammad, within the context of the Qur'anic teaching, not to underestimate theologically his own dogmatic position. For example, while he acknowl-edges Muhammad as "the Prophet of the Qur'an", he interprets the finality of Muhammad not in time, but with respect to place and locale so as not to compromise the Christian belief of the finality of Christ.[703]

He reflects this position in a number of places throughout his book. The following passages can be given as examples:

For the Christian the pattern of Muhammad's Sirah will always be in conflict with the power and perspective of the Cross.[704]

One cannot assess the latter only in terms of the preferability of monotheist faith to pagan idolatry, without regard to questions about Jesus and the Cross.[705]

The Gospel presents what we must call a divine 'indicative', an initiative of self-disclosure on God's part by which His relation to our human situation is not only in law and education, but in grace and suffering. Christians therefore believe that they have to 'let God be God' in just those initiatives which Islam excludes.[706]

By these statements, Cragg explicitly argues that God's sovereignty is fully vindicated not in terms of Islamic understanding of prophecy, but in the sonship of Christ which is designated by "those measures of grace and love, of sin and redemption, which are distinctive to the Gospel."[707] He also makes the connection between the Qur'anic statement about the blessing of the prophet[708] with the New Testament statements about the Divine sonship of Jesus Christ.[709] It seems that he uses this connection to demonstrate that the Prophet Muhammad in one sense "incarnated" the reality of God's message to humankind by asking, "Are we not then warranted in saying that the Prophet of Islam's very stature argues the sort of divine commitment to the human situation and its righting which the Christian sees implemented in Jesus as the Christ."[710] In our opinion, this attempt of Cragg is repugnant to Islam, since "it runs against the grain of basic Qur'anic teaching,

---

[702] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 145.
[703] See Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 92.
[704] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 52.
[705] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 93.
[706] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 158.
[707] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 141.
[708] See Qur'an 3:31.
[709] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, pp. 54, 65.
[710] Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, p. 127.

which is that only a being who is completely human can provide effective guidance to humankind."[711] Further, Khan maintains that the understanding of the position of the Prophet Muhammad "from the perspective of a theology that implies that incarnation, atonement and redemption, and that endorses Jesus Christ as the standard of faith" distorts his image in the eyes of Muslims. Also, to see Muhammad as a witness "to the human situation imple-mented in Jesus Christ" is to underestimate Muhammad's being as *Rasul Allah* or messenger of God.[712] Jane I. Smith, stresses that by trying "to balance Christology with the Muslim sense of prophecy," Cragg "moves onto potentially dangerous ground."[713]

In his investigation of the status and the prophethood of Muhammad, Cragg used Jesus Christ as a decisive criterion by indicating that the human condition needs more than prophethood to meet its deepest needs. He concludes his investigation by arguing that "if, restoring Jesus' principle, we question or regret the Caesar in Muhammad, it will only be for the sake, in their Qur'anic form, of those same 'things of God', which move us to acknowledge him.[714] This conclusion leads him to argue that "The whole logic of Muhammad's career is that the verbal deliverance of prophetic truth fails of satisfaction and must therefore pass to the post-Hijrah invocation of power."[715] By doing so, Cragg acknowledges that Muhammad might have been a prophet, but Jesus Christ was more than a prophet. For, according to Cragg, Muhammad is a prophet testifying to "the sort of divine commitment to the human situation and its righting which the Christian sees implemented in Jesus as the Christ."[716]

Evaluation: As has been observed, Cragg developed his views as a response to a consistent Muslim call for Christian acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad in the process of Christian-Muslim encounter. He expressed this point in the preface of his *Muhammad and the Christian*:

> It is the aim of this study to offer at least one Christian's view of a resolution of the problem, a resolution which, no more than tentative, remains loyal to Christian criteria while outlining a positive response to Muham-mad.[717]

Within this context, it seems that all his thoughts on this issue can be regarded as guiding principles which show Christians how they might respond to the above Muslim demand while holding Christ as a decisive and normative criterion for the salvation of humankind.

In the light of our examination of Cragg's views on the status and the prophethood of Muhammad, we may draw the following conclusions.

First of all, Cragg regards Muhammad as a prophet of God and the human channel through whom the Qur'an was transmitted for those who had no scripture. However, while doing this, Cragg places the significance of Muhammad into the pattern of an Old Testament prophet whose ultimate significance points beyond himself to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

---

[711] Khan, "On Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad", p. 196; The Qur'an says "Say, 'if there were settled, on earth, angels walking about in peace and quiet, we should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for an apostle" (Qur'an 17:95).

[712] Khan, "On Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad", p. 196.

[713] Jane I. Smith, "Some Contemporary Protestant Theological Reflections on Pluralism: Implications for Christian-Muslim Under-standing", *ICMR*, 8/1 (1997), p. 75.

[714] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 159.

[715] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 155.

[716] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 127.

[717] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. ix.

Chronologically speaking, we may ask how this is possible when Muhammad came six centuries later than Jesus. This question is answered by Cragg with an appeal to geography. Thus the Arabian peninsula at the time of Muhammad is considered by Cragg to have been in an Old Testament state of affairs. He says "For places can be 'contemporary' in time and in no way 'contemporary' in character."[718]

Secondly, from the Muslim point of view Cragg's generous suggestion that Christians should regard Muhammad as "the prophet of the Qur'an" is not as generous as he suggests. For Muslims do not recognise Muhammad only as "the prophet of the Qur'an" but as *Rasul Allah*, the messenger of God. According to this belief, Muhammad is not just a prophet for the Arabs but a prophet with a universal message for all human beings. For that reason, Cragg's recognition of Muhammad as "the prophet of the Qur'an" would be for Muslims nothing less than a betrayal of their faith.

Thirdly, although Cragg examined the question of the prophethood of Muhammad in a scholarly way in the light of the Qur'anic accounts, it seems that his final verdict was "no longer from a scholarly position but a theological-apolo-getic one, intended to safeguard the kerygmatic core of the Christian faith, and simultaneously to appease Muslims."[719]

In short, we may conclude that it is, indeed, a positive development towards Christian-Muslim dialogue for a committed Christian scholar to respond so positively to the Muslim demand that in the dialogue process the Christian partner should respect Muhammad as a prophet within the context of his own religious tradition. By doing so, Cragg has shown that the Christian partner can acknowledge Muhammad as "a prophet of the Qur'an" while safe-guarding his/her own Christian beliefs. Cragg's views can also be regarded as extremely helpful for those who fear that to adopt a positive attitude toward the Prophet Muhammad can cause problems for their own beliefs.

5.4. Hans Küng

As has been stated in the previous chapter, Küng as an ecumenical Catholic theologian began to focus on world religions and the establishment of better relations with their followers since the early 1980's. He has tried to understand world religions anew as a Christian theologian and to create a positive environment for Christians to relate to adherents of those religions. In so doing, Küng highlighted the status of the prophet Muhammad from the Christian perspective in a number of places in his writings such as *Christianity and the World Religions* [1986] "Christianity and World Religions: the Dialogue with Islam" [1987] and under the title of "Muhammad: a Prophet?" We will examine Küng's views on the status and the prophethood of Muhammad in the light of the accounts of these two works.

As a leading Catholic theologian, Küng with special reference to *Nostra Aetate,* openly and boldly invited the members of the Catholic Church to acknowledge officially the prophethood of Muhammad if they wanted to establish better relations with Muslims. In this connection, Küng underlines:

> The same Church must, in my opinion, also respect the one whose name is absent from the same declaration out of embarrassment, although he and he alone led Muslims to pray to this one God, so that once again through him, Muhammad, the Prophet, this God ' has spoken to mankind'.[720]

---

[718] Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian, p. 92.
[719] Khan, "On Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad", p. 192.
[720] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 129.

Later, too, he notes the necessity of acknowledging the prophethood of Muhammad by all Christians in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue by maintaining:

> The Christian who wishes to engage in dialogue with the Muslims acknowledges from the outset his or her own conviction of faith that for him or her Jesus is the Christ and so is normative and definitive, but he or she also takes very seriously the function of Muhammad as an authentic prophet.[721]

In our opinion, because of these two bold statements Küng's views deserve to be taken seriously into account seriously.

First of all, Küng remarks that in our pluralistic age in which more and more people from different religious traditions are living and working together, it is no longer possible for Christians to accept the distorted medieval images of the prophet Muhammad, such as false, lying, pseudo prophet, a fortune teller, and a magician. On the contrary, he stresses the necessity of developing a new and positive Christian understanding of Muhammad. To do this, he says it is necessary first of all to take into consideration the historical context of the prophethood of Muhammad and his message within the stream of the religious history of all humanity. From this methodological perspective, he remarks:

> Muhammad is discontinuity in person, an ultimately irreducible figure, who cannot be simply derived from what preceded him, but stands radically apart from it as he, with the Qur'an, established permanent new stands.[722]

From this passage, David Kerr rightly concludes that Küng takes the discontinuity as an essential element for his evaluation of originality of the prophethood of Muhammad.[723] By using this exposition, Küng advocates that "Muhammad and the Qur'an represent a decisive break, a departure from the past, a shift toward a new future."[724] Also, Küng argues that there is no one who is more worthy of being called a prophet than Muhammad in the whole of religious history because of his claim that he was no more than a prophet, come to warn people. He says, "When the history of religions speaks of '*the* Prophet' *tout court*, of a man who claimed to be *that* but absolutely nothing more, then there can be no doubt that this is Muhammad."[725]

Küng, draws attention to the similarities between the prophethood of Muhammad and the prophets of Israel in order to expose the significance of Muhammad for Christians. He says that like the Old Testament prophets:

> Muhammad based his work not on any office given to him by the community (or its authorities) but on a special, personal relation-ship with God. Muhammad was a strong-willed character, who saw himself as wholly penetrated by his divine

---

[721] Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions: Some Theses for Clarification", in H. Küng & J. Moltmann, eds., Christianity among World Religions, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1986), p. 124.

[722] Küng, Christianity and the World Religions, p. 25.

[723] Kerr, "'He Walked in the Path of the Prophets': Toward Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad", in Haddad & Haddad, eds., Christian-Muslim Encounters, p. 437.

[724] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 25.

[725] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 25; the Qur'anic verses concerning the claiming of Muhammad as just a prophet and Warner (see Qur'an 49:9; 3:144).

vocation, totally taken up by God's claim on him, exclusively absorbed by his mission. Muhammad spoke out amid a religious and social crisis. With his passionate piety and his revolutionary preaching, he stood up against the wealthy ruling class and the tradition of which it was the guardian. Muhammad, who usually calls himself a 'Warner', wished to be nothing but God's mouthpiece and to proclaim God's word, not his own. Muhammad tirelessly glorified the one God, who tolerates no other gods before him and who is, at the same time, the kindly Creator and merciful Judge. Muhammad insisted upon uncon-ditional obedience, devotion, and 'submission' to this one God. He called for every kind of gratitude toward God and of generosity toward human beings. Muhammad linked his monotheism to a humanism, connecting faith in the one God and his judgement to the demand for social justice; judgement and redemption, threats against the unjust, who go to hell, and promises to the just, who are gathered into God's Paradise.[726]

Here, Küng explains the status of the prophet Muham-mad to Christians by presenting three important steps for them to determine the status of the prophet Muhammad. Firstly, it is necessary for them to take into account the specialities of his teaching: secondly, to compare them with the teachings of previous prophets [Old Testament Prophets] in order to observe their similarities: and lastly to make their decisions about his status by considering those similarities.

Küng continues to draw attention to the similarities of the teachings of the Biblical prophets and Muhammad by urging Christians to read the Qur'an and the Bible, especially the Old Testament together to find answers to the following questions:

> Do not these three Semitic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – have the same origin? Does not One and the same God speak loudly and clearly in these religions? Does not the Old Testament's ' Thus says the Lord' correspond to the Qur'an's 'say', as the Old Testament's 'go and tell' matches the Qur'an's 'take your stand and warn'.[727]

He says that if Christians do this, it is impossible for them to answer these questions negatively. Thus, he concludes that "it is only dogmatic prejudice when we [Christians] recognize Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, as prophets, but not Muhammad."[728]

Like Watt, Küng urges Christians to take into account the effect of Muhammad's teaching on his followers in seventh century Arabia. He says by following that message those people

> were lifted to the heights of monotheism from the very this worldly polytheism of the old Arabian tribal religion. Taken as a whole, they received from Muhammad, or rather from the Qur'an, a boundless supply of inspiration, courage, and strength to make a new departure in religion, toward greater truth and deeper knowledge, a breakthrough that vitalised and renewed their traditional religion. Islam, in short, was a great help in their life.[729]

---

[726] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 25-26.
[727] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 26.
[728] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 26.
[729] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 27.

Küng also reminds Christians of the following facts when dealing with the question of the Prophet Muhammad. He says it is well known today that one fifth of the world population "are all marked by the exacting power of a faith that, more than practically any other, has shaped its followers into a uniform type"; and those people [Muslims] share a "feeling for the fundamental equality of all human beings before God, an international brotherhood that has managed to overcome barriers between the races."[730]

These quotations from Küng imply that the right way for Christian appreciation of the prophet Muhammad is to take into account the observable benefits of his message on his followers. In other words, according to Küng, it is necessary to move away from theology to the practical effects of one's message on the life of its followers in order to reach a right conclusion about that faith. By implying this, it seems that Küng adopted a similar approach to both Smith and Montgomery Watt whose views have been studied above.[731]

Finally, Küng moves to outline the theological meaning of this recognition of the Prophet Muhammad for Christians. He begins by showing that in the New Testa-ment there are statements which indicate that after Jesus there is the possibility of authentic future prophets. But, Küng restricts their mission to witness to Jesus and his message by making it comprehensible for every age and every situation.[732] Within this context, in the last stage of his examination of the status and the prophethood of Muhammad, Küng regards Muhammad "as a witness for Jesus – a Jesus who could have been understood not by Hellenistic Gentile Christians, but by Jesus' first disciples, who were Jews, because, with this Jesus tradition, Muhammad reminds the Jews that Jesus fits into the continuity of Jewish salvation history."[733] And he emphasises that this Muhammad can be a "prophetic corrective" and "prophetic Warner" for Christians in order to inform them that

> the one incomparable God has to stand in the absolute centre of faith; That associating with him any other gods or goddesses is out of the question; That faith and life, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, belong together everywhere, including politics.[734]

In one of his papers which was delivered at Edinburgh Theological Club, Küng maintains that "I can as a Christian be convinced that if I have chosen Jesus as the Christ for my life and death, then along with him I have chosen his follower Muhammad, insofar as he appeals to one and the same God and to Jesus."[735]

Evaluation: As we have observed above, as an ecumenical Catholic theologian and leading defender of interreligious dialogue, Küng tries to reassess the status and the prophethood of Muhammad in the light of the developments of Christian-Muslim relations in our modern day. By doing this, he examines the issue from both practical and theological perspectives. In the light of our examination of his views within the context of these two perspectives, we may draw the following conclusions.

---

[730] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 26-27.
[731] See for Smith Chapter Four section 4.3 and for Watt, Chapter Four section 4.2 and 5.2.
[732] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. 27-28.
[733] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 126.
[734] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 129.
[735] This is a text from a paper read to the Edinburgh Theological Club on 11 March 1987; cited in Watt, "The Nature of Muhammad's Prophethood", p. 84.

Firstly, according to Küng, all Christians, both officially and individually, need to make some correction in their approaches to the status of the prophet Muhammad in the process of Christian-Muslim dialogue so that their views will not offend Muslims.

Secondly, while doing this, it is necessary to take into account the similarities between the prophet Muhammad and the Old Testament Prophets, and the observable fruits of his teaching on Muslims. In this issue, Küng argues that like the Old Testament prophets, Muhammad, too, deserves to be called "prophet" by Christians. From the Muslim understanding of prophethood, there would not be a problem in this argument of Küng, since, according to Islamic teaching there is no difference between prophets.[736] However, from the Christian point of view his argument needs further clarification to avoid ambiguity. For, what Muslim understand by this term differs from what Christians understand.

Thirdly, from the theological perspective, according to Küng, the New Testament allows the continuation of prophecy after Jesus Christ, as long as they witness to him in every age and in every situation. Therefore, Küng acknowledges the prophethood of Muhammad by seeing him "as a witness for Jesus," not as understood by Hellenistic Gentile Christians, but by his first disciples and also a "prophetic corrective" for Christians. In our opinion, there are two significant implications of these arguments. The first is that Christians may have an opportunity to revise their own understanding of Jesus by taking into account Jewish Christians, since according to Küng there is a great similarity between the Qur'anic and Jewish Christian understanding of Jesus.[737] The second is that being a "prophetic corrective" for Christians seems to be compatible with the prophet's teaching, as long as this is understood as just one of his duties, among others. For example, in the Qur'an, Christians are invited to give up their extreme views about Jesus, not his teaching.[738] Although these are positive implications, when Muhammad and Jesus are compared, Küng always seem to make Muhammad inferior to Jesus. We will highlight this point in chapter six while we are dealing with the issue of the status of Jesus.

There is another negative implication here for the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. If the mission of the prophet Muhammad is restricted to witnessing to Jesus in order to make him intelligible for every age and every situation, then there is no difference between the Prophet Muhammad and the Gospel authors and even Church authorities and missionaries. This certainly reduces the value of the Prophet Muhammad, not only in the eyes of non-Muslims but also Muslims.

5.5. David Kerr

David Kerr, as a former director of two highly significant Christian-Muslim study centres, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relation in Birmingham, England and the D.B. Macdonald Center in Hartford, USA, and a pioneer of Christian-Muslim dialogue, has produced three significant essays on the assessment of the status of the Prophet Muhammad from the Christian perspective. In his first essay "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward a Christian Assessment" [1987], Kerr examines the prophethood of Muhammad in the light of the Qur'anic accounts by putting aside the question whether Christians can acknowledge the Qur'an as the word of God or not. For, according to him the answer to this question does not change the following facts. Firstly, he says the Prophet Muhammad sincerely believed that the Qur'an came to him from

---

[736] See Qur'an 2:286.
[737] See Küng, Christianity: The Religious Situation of Our Time (London: SCM Press, 1995), pp. 105ff.
[738] See Qur'an 4: 171.

God. Secondly, The Qur'an provides "us an accurate guide to his understanding of his ministry."[739] In the light of this clarification about his source, Kerr explains his approach as follows: "Ethically the paper starts from the premise that Muhammad was a man of utter spiritual and moral seriousness and sincerity, as Muslims themselves believe."[740]

After this methodological explanation, Kerr tries to outline the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad in the light of the Qur'anic accounts and the *sirah* literature. After drawing the similarities between the Biblical and the Qur'anic teaching on ethical issues and peace, he argues that they offer Christians "a firm basis for Christian interest in Muhammad's ministry as part of" their dialogue with Muslems.[741] In the end of the essay, he strongly maintains that in this essay he did not want to be involved in making a theological evaluation of the prophethood of Muhammad in the light of the Christian, criterion, namely Jesus Christ. In doing so, it seems that he wanted to stay outside "the long tradition of Christian polemical writings which have portrayed Muhammad as a 'false prophet'."[742] Instead, as he has pointed out earlier, he wanted to understand Muhammad as he had understood himself in the Qur'an.

In his second essay "The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective" [1991], Kerr attempts to make a theological evaluation of the prophethood of Muhammad. First of all, he repeats the Qur'anic accounts concerning the ministry of Muhammad, as he did in his previous essay, and highlights the Qur'anic approach to interreligious dialogue. He then summarises the past and present main Christian approaches, as represented by Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox scholars to the prophet-hood of Muhammad. Since we have already discussed most of these above, we will turn to the conclusion where Kerr makes his own evaluation in the light of these approaches.

Here, Kerr argues that, in the light of recent developments in Christians' relations with people of other faiths in general and Christian-Muslim dialogue in parti-cular, the following points become obvious for Christians.

(1) God has universally revealed His Will to all humankind in order to establish His Own Kingdom in the world. (2) This divine revelation has been universally witnessed by various communities and individuals. (3) In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Bible provides the interpretation of this revelation through the Old Testament Prophets in the history of Israel, and through Jesus and the apostolic Church in the New Testament. (4) In the Gospel of Christ, the divine revelation is universally available for humankind. (5) But, in the light of the Biblical account that "God has left no people without witness to His divine revelation", Christians, through the universal activity of the Holy Spirit, can witness the availability of signs of divine revelation. Within the context of these points, Kerr arrives at the following conclusion concerning a modern theological evaluation of the status of the Prophet Muhammad:

> Muhammad is manifestly such a sign 'in the way of the prophets', the Qur'an witnessing the universality of divine revelation, reitera-ting many of the fundamental perceptions of the Bible, and providing as it were a critical

---

[739] Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward a Christian Assessment", p. 25.
[740] Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward a Christian Assessment", p. 24.
[741] Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward a Christian Assessment", p. 28.
[742] Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward a Christian Assessment", p. 34.

commentary on the more dogmatic aspects of particularly New Testament belief, and Muhammad exemplifying the application of the Qur'anic vision in society.[743]

What Kerr indicates by this evaluation is that Christians can regard Muhammad as a witness to God's universal revelation which was revealed in Jesus Christ for all humankind and not more than that. Within this context, it can be argued that, according to Kerr, Muhammad could be a prophet who was inspired by the Trinitarian God, and he is a "prophetic corrective" for Christians as Küng stressed.[744]

In his last essay "'He walked in the Path of the Prophets': toward Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophet-hood of Muhammad" [1995], Kerr observes some renowned twentieth century Christian scholars whose views "create theological space for Muhammad as a "post-Christian" prophet within their theological understanding of the Christian tradition." By following in the footsteps of his first essay, he says that while doing this his intention was not to develop a proper Christian answer to the question of the prophethood of Muhammad, as did Cragg who "confused Christian confessional and ecumenical statements about the theological importance" of this prophethood.[745]

After highlighting some important points of their views, Kerr rightly points out that those who use theological Christian criteria in their evaluations of the prophethood of Muhammad "largely fail to address Islamic understanding of prophecy and prophethood." But as has been stated above, he assessed the Prophet Muhammad in the light of the Christian revelation which was revealed in Christ. Lastly, he argues that the solution of the question of the prophethood of Muhammad very much depends on understanding the Islamic revelation anew in the light of modern scientific developments.[746] By this argument, Kerr indicates that if Muslims re-read the Qur'an in the light of the modern scientific methods as some Muslim scholars did [such as Fazlur Rahman], then Christians and Muslims will be able to reach a mutual understanding about the status of the Prophet Muhammad.

Evaluation: As has been observed so far, Kerr outlines his main ideas concerning whether Christians can accept Muhammad as a prophet or not at the end of his second essay. Here, he follows the main principles of inclusivist Christian theology of religions. In doing so, firstly, he took the universality of God's revelation of His Word as his starting point. Secondly, he emphasised the particularity of this divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, he argued that this should not be understood that there will be no sign of this divine revelation after Jesus Christ. Lastly, he maintained that if Christians look for the signs of God's revelation through the power of the Holy Spirit, they can conclude that "Muhammad is manifestly such a sign 'in the way of the prophets." This theological explanation explicitly indicates that, according to Kerr, Muhammad was not a prophet but just a sign to the prophets. This clearly contradicts his intention that he wants to understand Muhammad as he understood himself.

5.6. Conclusion

First of all, we should admit that all those whose views were considered above have tried to deal sincerely and honestly with the question of the status of Muhammad as a prophet. All of them

---

[743] Kerr, "The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective", pp. 129-130.
[744] Also see Kerr, "A Personal Pilgrimage to Islam", pp. 6-21.
[745] Kerr, "Towards Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad", p. 428.
[746] Kerr, "Towards Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad", p. 441.

have tried to give theological room to him within the Christian theology of religion. Thus they included him within the rank of the Old Testament prophets by using the title "prophet" for him. In our opinion, this is, indeed, a very positive development towards the Christian acknowledgement of the prophethood of Muhammad.

But it also raises an interesting and important question about the understanding of the term "prophet." For, as is well known Christians and Muslims understand different things from it. The French Catholic scholar, J. Jomier, states that according to Christians, a prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God by divine authority. For that reason, he says, when a Christian considers someone a prophet, he/she should obey what he said. In this sense, he argues that Christians cannot use the title "prophet" for Muhammad, because "they cannot obey him without reserve." Further, Jomier clarifies that when Christians use the title "prophet" for someone, they do not mean that they accept all that he says, but admit some of it while rejecting some.[747] The Dutch Protestant theologian, Hendrik Vroom, too, says that when the title "prophet" is used, it means someone who devotes himself to God as a "man of God" or is understood to be "someone who bears witness to others of the one God, Creator and Ruler", Christians can use that title for Muhammad. But, when it is used and understood within the context of the Biblical tradition, then they cannot use it for Muhammad.[748]

On this point, we remind our reader that today although there are those who are in favour of a new and positive Christian assessment of the Prophet Muhammad, they do not want to use the title "prophet" for Muhammad because of these differences. For example, the Catholic scholar J. Jomier, R. Arnaldez, and the British Methodist M. Forward maintain the necessity of a more positive Christian assessment of the Prophet Muhammad. In doing so, Jomier argues that unless Christians re-examine the question of the status of the Prophet Muhammad positively it is very difficult "to take a new step" in Christian-Muslim dialogue.[749] Forward stresses that "those who seek to cast lustre upon their own religion by darkening another do themselves and their faith little honour and less justice."[750] But, on the other hand, both of them state that because of the differences between Christians and Muslims on the understanding of the term "prophet," it is better not to use this title for him.[751] For, as Forward says, "Muslims and Christians deceive themselves when they think that by calling Muhammad a prophet they mean the same, even a comparable thing."[752] Because of these reasons, both of them, unlike Watt, Küng, Cragg, and Kerr regard the Prophet Muhammad as a political and religious genius without using the term "prophet" for him. Although this attempt of Jomier and Forward seems an honest Christian response to the question of the status of Muhammad, it does not contribute to understanding Muhammad's religious and spiritual vision.[753]

In his work *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, J. Lindblom elaborates the features of the prophet as follows: A prophet is a person who experiences the divine in an original way to himself. He entirely belongs to God and receives revelation from Him. His primary duty, first of all, is to listen to God and obey Him and then proclaim His message to others. He develops his personal communion

---

[747] J. Jomier, How to Understand Islam (London: SCM, 1989), pp. 146-147.

[748] Hendrik Vroom, No Other Gods: Christian Belief in Dialogue with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 116.

[749] Jomier, How to Understand Islam, p. 140.

[750] Forward, Muhammad, p. 119.

[751] See Jomier, How to Understand Islam, pp.146-147; Forward, Muhammad, pp. 119-120; also see, R. Arnaldez, "Dialogue islam-chrétien et sensibilitiés religieuses", Islamochristiana, 1(19750, p. 15.

[752] Forward, Muhammad, p. 120.

[753] See Amstrong, Muhammad, p. 14.

with God by prayer, devotion, and moral submission to His will. In this sense, he differs from a politician, a social reformer, a thinker or even a poet, although he often puts his words in a poetical form.[754]

Apart from these specialities of a prophet, the Bible itself makes a distinction between true and false prophecy in Deuteronomy 13:1-2; 18:22. In these passages after expressing that those false prophets urge people to follow gods other than Yahweh, and that those whose prophecy is not fulfilled are false prophets,[755] it follows that a true prophet is someone who proclaims all God reveals to him. In other words, a true prophet is someone through whose mouth God transmits His message to humanity.[756]

In the light of the above explanation, we can argue that it is very difficult for a sensible Christian not to use the title "prophet" for the Prophet Muhammad. For, when the features of false prophets are compared with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, it will be seen that he had nothing to do with false prophecy. By depending on these explanations of a prophet, we can conclude that Watt's, Cragg's, Küng's and Kerr's acceptance of the title "prophet" for Muhammad can contribute more to Christian-Muslim understanding than the rejection of it. Christians who refuse to use the title "prophet" for Muhammad offend Muslims and make it difficult to establish better relations with them.

In the case of those whose views were expressed above, it is obvious that contemporary Christian scholarship has generally attempted to go beyond the polemical tradition by accepting Muhammad as a man of religious genius and the messenger of God who affected the course of human history under the sovereign role of God. Also, when these accounts of contemporary Christian thinkers are compared with the accounts of those who maintained that any theological Christian recognition of the prophethood of Muhammad would be impossible, it becomes obvious that more and more leading Christian scholars regard this issue as a challenging question which deserves to be discussed seriously.[757] But as Antonie Wessels rightly remarks, all Christians are not totally ready to shake of the remnants of the ill-informed Medieval distorted images of Muhammad. In this connection, he maintains that "the task of under-standing anew what it means in modern times to say that God spoke to or through Muhammad, as we find reflected in the Qur'an, lies in my opinion, still ahead."[758]

In short, our examination shows us that the phenome-nological approach to the question of the status of Muhammad can lead Christians to understand the function of Muhammad for Muslims by observing the practical influence of his teaching on his followers [Muslims]. Through this approach, Christians can find the opportunity to compare Muhammad with the Old Testament prophets in order to observe their similarities before arriving at a decision concerning the status of the prophet Muhammad, as seen in the case of Watt and Küng.

Further, taking into account the similarities between Muhammad and the Old Testament prophets gives Christians the opportunity to acknowledge Muhammad as a prophet without downgrading their own religious beliefs, since they are not comparing him with Jesus Christ. By recognising the prophethood of Muhammad in this way naturally can lead to the following conclusion: Christians concede that Muhammad is not a false prophet as has been claimed by the

---

[754] J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwel, 1962), pp. 1-2.

[755] See J.A. Moyer, "Prophecy, Prophets ", in J.D. Douglas et al, eds., New Bible Dictionary (London: Inter Varsity Fellowship, 1962), pp. 1041-1042.

[756] See Vroom, No Other Gods, p. 117.

[757] See Bijlefeld, "Christian-Muslim Studies, Islamic Studies, and the Future of Christian-Muslim Encounter", in Hadadd & Haddad, eds., Christian-Muslim Encounters, p. 20.

[758] Antonie Wessels, "Modern Biographies of Muhammad in Arabic", IC, 49 (1975), p. 105.

majority of non-Muslims from the advent of Islam to our modern age, but he was a genuine prophet who brought God's message to humanity.

Although there are shortcomings in the contemporary Christian evaluations of the status of the Prophet Muhammad, we may easily conclude that whatever Watt, Cragg, Küng and Kerr mean by the title "prophet", their acknowledgement of Muhammad as a prophet will contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim *rapprochement* in this age of dialogue.

Chapter 6
The Status of Jesus Christ in Contemporary Christian Accounts

6.1 Introduction

The person of Jesus Christ not only plays a key role in Christian dialogue with non-Christians, but is also the central issue in the current debate within the Christian theology of religions. As has been observed in previous chapters, both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC in their official pronouncements, and individual scholars in their views on the status of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an have implied that this question should be reconsi-dered within the context of Christianity's relationship with other faiths. This is necessary in order to answer the following questions: How is the status of Jesus to be understood by Christians in their relationship with people of other faiths? Can Christians continue to affirm that Jesus is normative not only for themselves but also for those who belong to other faiths? Can Christians acknowledge that there are other saviours besides Jesus Christ?[759]

As has been seen in the first part of this thesis, although both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC authorities have moved their Churches from Church-centred or Christianity-centred views to Christ-centred approaches to people of other faiths, they have stressed that the value of other faiths must be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Contrary to this official position, some individual theologians and thinkers have attempted to study the status of Jesus by questioning seriously the traditional Christian beliefs and doctrines. A number of works have been published which discuss the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the possibility of reinter-preting traditional doctrines in the light of new develop-ments and the practical implications of dialogue with people of other faiths.

In 1977 John Hick, whose views will be elaborated below, edited *The Myth of God Incarnate*[760] in order to illustrate that "Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts 2.21) 'a man approved by God' for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, was a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us. This recognition is called for in the interests of truth; but it also has increasingly practical implications for our relationship to other great world religions."[761] In 1986, a number of Catholic and Protestant theologians gathered at Claremont University in the United States to discuss the issue of understanding Jesus Christ within the context of world religions. The major papers of this gathering were edited by Paul Knitter and John Hick under the title: *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*.[762] The contributors to this work agreed that the myth of Christian uniqueness must be reconsidered, since it implies "the uniqueness, definitiveness, absoluteness, nor-mativeness, superiority of Christianity

---

[759] Concerning similar questions, see Gregory H. Carruthers, The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Theocentric Model of the Christian Theology of World Religions: An Elaboration and Evaluation of the Position of John Hick (New York: University Press of America, 1990), p. 1; Peter C. Phan, "Are There Other 'Saviors' for Other Peoples; A Discussion of the Problem of the Universal Significance and Uniqueness of Jesus the Christ", in P.C. Phan, ed., Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 163-179; Roger Haight, "Jesus and World Religions", MT, 12/3 (1996), pp. 321-344; Lucien Richard, What are they saying about Christ and world religions (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 1-7.

[760] John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

[761] Hick, "Preface", in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, p. ix.

[762] Paul Knitter & John Hick, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987).

in comparison with other religions of the world."[763] They all rejected this dogmatism and argued for crossing over the shores of exclusivism and inclusivism to pluralism.

In 1991 the first director of the WCC's Sub-unit for Dialogue with People of Other Faiths, Stanley J. Samartha, published his *One Christ-Many Religions* in order to urge Christians to develop a revised Christology within the context of their relationship with people of other faiths. For according to him, such a Christology "is biblically sound, spiritually satisfying, theologically credible, and pastorally helpful and both necessary and possible – without making exclusive claims for Christianity or passing negative judgements on the faiths of our neighbours."[764] In 1993 Hick published another work *The Metaphor of God Incarnate,*[765] in order to show that

- Jesus himself did not teach what was to become the orthodox Christian understanding of him;
- the dogma of Jesus's two natures, one human and the other divine, has proved to be incapable of being explicated in any satisfactory way;
- historically the traditional dogma has been used to justify great human evils;
- the idea of divine incarnation is better understood as metaphorical than as literal;
- we can rightly take Jesus . . . as our Lord, the one who has made God real to us and whose life and teachings challenge us to live in God's presence;
- a non-traditional Christianity based upon this understanding of Jesus can see itself as one among a number of different human responses to the ultimate Reality that we call God.[766]

In addition to these works, Paul Knitter, whose views will also be considered below, developed five theses concerning the uniqueness of Jesus in order to argue that the Christian affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus need not be abandoned, but can be reinterpreted in such a way that it has greater relevance to the contemporary world while deepening Christian devotion to Christ and strengthening the followers of Jesus in discipleship. In doing so, he concentrates mainly on the uniqueness and the significance of Christ without underestimating the uniqueness and significance of other religious figures in the process of interreligious dialogue.[767] Recently too, J.S. O'Leary in his *Religious Pluralism and Christian Truth Claims*[768] [1996] stresses that the more Christians listen to people of other faiths on their own terms, "the more the claim that God is fully and definitively revealed only in Christ seems in need of revision."[769]

As a critical response to these bold attempts, other theologians have produced works, which argue for the universality of Jesus, contending that Jesus Christ is the unique, normative and definitive revelation of God for all people.[770] In this respect, the Catholic theologian, J. Dupuis,

---

[763] Paul Knitter, "Preface", in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, p. vii.

[764] Samartha, One Christ-Many Religions, p. ix; Samartha "In Search of a Revised Christology: A Response to Knitter", CD, 21 (1991), pp. 30-37; for similar views see Swidler, *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), pp. 73-113.

[765] Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

[766] Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, p.ix.

[767] These are published together with the responses of nineteen theologians in L. Swidler & P. Mojzes, eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

[768] J. Stephen O'Leary, Religious Pluralism and Christian Truth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

[769] O'Leary, Religious Pluralism and Christian Truth, p. 205.

[770] See Gavin D'Costa, ed., Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered; The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990); Harold Netland, Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Joseph DiNoia, The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1992); John Sanders, No Other Name; Can Only Christians Be Saved? (London: SPCK, 1992); S. Mark Heim, Salvations; Truth and Difference in Religion (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995); Daniel B.

insists on the necessity of defending Christ in the process of interreligious dialogue by stressing that

> the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation represents the cardinal, key question of every Christian theology of religions. As old as Christology itself, and reappearing in recent times, it is becoming more urgent and more radical in the current context of religious pluralism and the blending of the various traditions. The current literature testifies to the renewed importance of this question.[771]

Within the context of these developments, three eminent Christian thinkers' views will be examined here in order to observe how those who are interested in interreligious dialogue actively consider the position of Jesus with regard to the religious figures of other religions. We will also want to discuss to what extent their views can contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. In order to achieve these objectives, we have chosen three theologians whose views are developed in parallel to their dialogue with people of other faiths. These are the Protestant, John Hick, and the Catholics, Paul Knitter and Hans Küng.

6.2 John Hick

John Hick, a renowned British philosopher of religion began to be interested in the world religions and dialogue with their followers after moving to Birmingham in 1967 to take up the H.G. Wood Chair in Theology at Birmingham University. In this city, he became deeply involved in community relations organisations. He frequently visited the places of worship of Muslims, Jewish, Sikhs and Hindus and realised that

> although the language, concepts, liturgical actions, and cultural ethos differ widely from one another, yet from a religious point of view basically the same thing is going on in all of them, namely, human beings coming together within the framework of an ancient and highly developed tradition to open their hearts and minds to God, whom they believe makes a total claim on their lives.[772]

This realisation and his further face-to-face relations with people of other faiths forced him to deal with a range of theological problems, which emerged during that process. Within this context, he called first for a "Copernican Revolution" in the Christian theology of religions. Then he reinterpreted the doctrine of Incarnation in the light of this "Copernican Revolution" and the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement. In so doing, he published the following significant books and essays: *God and the Universe of Faiths* [1973]; "Jesus and the World Religions" [1977]; *God Has Many Names* [1982];[773] "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity" [1987];[774] *Problems of*

Clendenin, Many Gods-Many Religions; Christianity Encounters World Religions (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

[771] Dupuis, Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions, p. 191.

[772] Hick, "A Pluralistic View", in D. L. Okholm & T. R. Philips, eds., More Than One Way: Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World (Michigan: Zondervant Publishing House, 1995), p. 38.

[773] Hick, God Has Many Names: Britain's New Religious Pluralism (London: Macmillan, 1982).

[774] Hick, "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity", in The Myth of Christian Uniqueness, pp. 16-36.

Religious Pluralism [1989];[775] *An Interpretation of Religion* [1989];[776] *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* [1993]; and *The Rainbow of Faiths* [995].

We turn now to explore Hick's understanding of the status of Jesus with special reference to Christianity's relationship with other religions. While doing this, we will not reflect all his views on Christology, since others have already done so.[777] Nor do we need to follow his writings according to their chronological order, since, as Chester Gillis has shown in his *A Question of Final Belief* [1989],[778] there has been no essential change in Hick's views on the question of the status of Jesus after his move to Birmingham and the beginning of his interest in dialogue with people of other faiths.

In his *God and the Universe of Faiths* [1973], Hick stressed that it is time to take a shift from a "Ptolemaic [i.e. one's own religion-centred] to a Copernican [i.e. a God-centred] view of the religious life of mankind."[779] He maintains that just as the Copernican revolution represented a shift from the ancient, long standing Ptolemaic dogma that the earth is the centre of the revolving universe to the realisation that the sun is the centre, with all the planets, including the earth, revolving around it, modern Christian theology of religions needs a Copernican revolution which "involves a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is God who is at the centre, and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him."[780] He states that the Christian version of Ptolemaic theology puts Christianity at the centre of the universe of faiths, and regards all other religions as epicycles, revolving, to one degree or another, around it. Hick argues that this kind of centrality of Christianity is due to the claimed uniqueness of Jesus which depends on the doctrine of divine incarnation. He says

> If God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus, all other revelations are thereby margi-nalised as inferior and secondary. Indeed, their effect can only be to draw people in a different direction, away from God's direct self-disclosure in Christ. For if the Creator has personally come down to earth and founded his own religion, embodied in the Christian Church, he must surely want all human beings to become part of that Church. Indeed it would seem to follow that sooner or later they must become part of it if they are to participate in the eternal life of the redeemed. Thus the doctrine that Jesus was none other than God himself – or, more precisely, that he was the Second Person of the divine Trinity living a human life – leads, by an inevitable logic, to Christian absolutism, a logic that was manifested historically in the development of the dogma *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*.[781]

---

[775] Hick, Problems of Religious Pluralism (London: Macmillan, 1989).

[776] Hick, Interpretation of Religion (London: Macmillan, 1989).

[777] Carruthers, The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Theocentric Model of the Christian Theology of World Religions; D'Costa, John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation (New York: University of America Press, 1987); Chester Gillis, A Question of Final Belief: John Hick's Pluralistic Theory of Salvation (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989).

[778] See Gillis, A Question of Final Belief, pp. 71-96. The only significant change in Hick's views is his shift from using the phrase "God" to the terms "Real" or "the Transcendent Reality" in his later writings. He did this because as some of his critics pointed out to use the term "God" means to employ a judgement about the truth of other religions which do not use this term. (See, Schubert M. Ogden, Is There One True Religion or Are There Many? (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1992), pp.72-74).

[779] Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, pp. viii-ix.

[780] Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, p. 131.

[781] Hick, "Trinity and Incarnation in the Light of Religious Pluralism", in J. Hick & E.S. Meltzer, eds., Three Faiths -One God (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 204.

As can be seen from this passage, Hick asserts that the results of a "Ptolemaic theology of religions" are unaccep-table for our present day circumstances, since it entails that Christianity was founded by God in person. Also, he says that the belief that the second Person of the Trinity has revealed himself as a human inevitably leads to Christian exclusivism and absolutism.[782] For that reason, Hick argues for the necessity of a reconsideration and reinterpretation of the traditional Christian doctrine of Incarnation to determine the status of Jesus anew.

As has been observed so far, Hick's call for a "Copernican Revolution" in the Christian theology of religions challenges the uniqueness and normativeness of Jesus, since it requires a readjustment in the Christian's appropriation of his own tradition, forcing him to reconsider the Christological doctrine regarding the identity of Jesus. This is, Hick states, "the most difficult of all issues for a Christian theology of religions." He adds, "but before adopting the new picture [God centred model] a Christian must be satisfied that his devotion to Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour is not thereby brought into question or its validity denied."[783]

Hick takes the consciousness of Jesus as a starting point and interprets the doctrine of Incarnation and the Trinity according to this consciousness. In his essay "Jesus and the World Religions" [1977], Hick deals with the issue of the status of Jesus by considering him as a human being who was open to God's presence and upheld by an extraordinary intense God-consciousness that made God real to others and revolutionised the lives of those who followed in his footsteps. So, what makes Jesus significant for Hick is his consciousness of God. It is this heightened consciousness of God that accounts for Jesus' use of the word *abba* for God; his openness of spirit and response to God; his power to heal and bring new life; and the impact he had on those who met him. He further maintains that to come into Jesus' presence was in some sense to come into God's presence. Just as Jesus encountered the totality of God's claim, so too, those who encountered Jesus experienced "the absolute claim of God." Hick clarifies the issue of how one encounters God when one comes into Jesus' presence as follows: ". . . in Jesus' presence, we should have felt that we are in the presence of God – not in the sense that the man Jesus literally is God, but in the sense that he was so totally conscious of God that we could catch something of that consciousness by spiritual contagion."[784]

---

[782] As we have already seen in part one, after the second half of the twentieth century, both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC began to move from exclusivism to an inclusivism by acknowledging the spiritual values of non-Christian religion, and the fact that salvation is taking place within those religions, while still insisting on the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus as universal savior of humankind. In so doing, a number of theories were developed such as "the invisible ignorance", "implicit faith", "baptism of desire", "anonymous Christianity" and "extra ordinary and extra-ordinary ways of salvation". However, Hick argues that all these developments fail to rescue Christian Ptolemaic theology from the inherent inadequacy of its theory. It is true, says Hick, that these theories have served the useful purpose of both acknowledging the traditional axiom Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus, while simultaneously accepting the fact that outside the Church there is salvation. Because of this reason, according to Hick, these theories like those in Ptolemaic astronomy, can only operate as an interim measure (Hick, God Has Many Names, pp. 49-51).

[783] Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, p. 148.

[784] Hick states that personally "I see the Nazarene, then, as intensely overwhelmingly conscious of the reality of God. He was a man of God, living in the unseen presence of God and addressing God as abba, father. His spirit was open to God, and his life a continuous response to the divine love as both utterly gracious and utterly demanding. He was so powerfully God-conscious that his life vibrated, as it were, to the divine life; and as a result his hands could heal the sick, and the "poor in spirit" were kindled to new life in his presence. If you or I had met him in the first century Palestine we would . . . have felt deeply disturbed and challenged by his presence. We would have felt the

After all these points, Hick concludes that Jesus was "a Spirit-filled prophet and healer" who considered "his own role as that of the final prophet, proclaiming the imminent coming of the kingdom on earth."[785] In short, the foundation of Hick's Christology totally depends on the consciousness of the historical Jesus. What made Jesus significant, what constituted him as mediator, and what accounted for his impact was his heightened consciousness of God's presence.

This understanding of Jesus led Hick to rethink the Christian doctrine of Incarnation and the Divinity of Jesus. In his recent work *The Rainbow of Faiths* [1995], Hick mentions three main problems with the traditional doctrine of Incarnation: (1) Jesus himself did not teach that "he was God, or God the Son, the second person of a Holy Trinity, incarnate"; (2) Christian authorities and theologians have never explained the meaning of the traditional dogma that Jesus was truly God and truly man in an intelligible way, since the following questions are still awaiting their answers from Christian authorities: "How could Jesus be at the same time divinely omnipotent and humanly weak and vulnerable; divinely omniscient and humanly ignorant; the eternal, infinite, self-existent creator of the universe and a temporal, finite and dependent creature?" (3) The literal meaning of the doctrine of incarnation does irreparable damage to Christians' relations with people of other faiths.[786]

After pointing out the problems of the traditional understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation in this way, he moves to examine the historical development of this doctrine. He argues that it was the early community that attributed deity to Jesus, not Jesus himself or his immediate disciples. The deification of Jesus occurred when the language of divine sonship was transferred from a Jewish context to a Roman culture. He states that before Jesus, the Jews already were familiar with "Son of God" language from the Old Testament's psalms.[787] When this language was used referring to someone, it was understood meta-phorically that that person "was close to God, served God, and acted in the spirit of God." In this sense, Hick maintains that "Jesus as a great charismatic preacher and healer, should be thought of as a son of God."[788] When this sort of understanding of Jesus moved to the Gentile world, its metaphorical meaning started to change, and thus Jesus gradually was deified in the minds of Christians. Finally, Jesus became "the literal God the Son, the Second Person of a divine Trinity."[789] Thus, says Hick, the eschatological human prophet was gradually elevated to a divine status.

As has been observed so far, according to Hick the traditional Christian doctrine of Incarnation neither was thought of by Jesus himself nor developed by his first disciples, but emerged in the mind of the early Church in the course of time. By arguing thus, Hick makes a distinction between the self-understanding of the historical Jesus and "the understanding of Jesus which eventually became orthodox Christian dogma acknowledging him as God the Son incarnate, the Second Person of the Trinity living a human life."[790] Thus, he means that if the historical Jesus did not consider himself to be God Incarnate, then he cannot be regarded as such, and statements of this kind are to be understood metaphorically not literally.

---

absolute claim of God confronting us, summoning us to give ourselves wholly to him and to be born again as his children and as agents of his purposes on earth. (Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions", p. 172).

[785] Hick, "A Pluralist View", p. 35.

[786] Hick, The Rainbow of Faiths, pp. 95-99; Hick, "Rethinking Christian Doctrine in the Light of Religious Pluralism," in Phan, ed., Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism, pp. 89-101.

[787] "In the Hebrew scripture Israel as a whole is called God's son (Hos. 11.1). Angels are called sons of God (Job 38.7). And the ancient Israelite kings were enthroned as sons of God" (Hick, The Rainbow of Faiths, p. 93).

[788] Hick, "A Pluralist View", pp. 35-36;

[789] Hick, "A Pluralist View", p. 36; for more information see Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, pp. 28ff.

[790] Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions", p. 171.

To uphold this argument, Hick points out that there is some agreement among both conservative and liberal New Testament scholars that the exclusive statements of the Gospels which are used to support the traditional doctrine did not belong to the historical Jesus but, on the contrary, were "put into his mouth some sixty or seventy years later by a Christian writer expressing the theology that had developed in his part of the expanding Church."[791]

In the light of these explanations, it can be concluded that the incarnation of Jesus should be understood not as a theological hypothesis, but as a myth.[792] For it represents the "application to Jesus of a mythical concept whose function is analogous to that of the notion of divine sonship ascribed in the ancient world to a king."[793] It is also myth, because it has no literal meaning; it is a mystery with no explanatory power. Hick also adds that the mythological character of the doctrine of incarnation can also be found in non-theological language. He explains that the very concept of a "divine incarnation" is itself "metaphorical." Even in secular usage, he writes, the notion of "incarnation" functions as a "basic metaphor." In this secular sense, "incarnation" is under-stood to be "the embodiment of ideas, values, insights in human living."[794] Briefly, he concludes that the Christian doctrine of Incarnation should not be regarded as a divinely formulated and guaranteed proposition, but rather as human attempts to grasp the religious meaning of the Christ event.

Hick stresses that this kind of understanding of the traditional doctrine of Incarnation can lead to a fruitful dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths, since it eliminates one of the major obstacles in the dialogue between Christianity and other religions which is the assumption that Christianity has a unique position among religions because of its foundational claim about the uniqueness of Jesus. This doctrine of a unique divine incarnation in Jesus "has long poisoned the relationship both between Christians and Jews and between Christians and Muslims, as well as affecting the history of Christian imperialism in the far East, India, Africa, and elsewhere."[795] Hick also points out that the metaphysical deification of Jesus is not only self-contradictory, but is also dangerous from the point of view of the theology of religions. A metaphysically understood doctrine of the Incarnation "implies that God can be adequately known and responded to *only* through Jesus" and that "the whole religious life of mankind, beyond the stream of Judaic-Christian faith is thus by implication excluded as lying outside the sphere of salvation."[796]

After expressing the negative effect of the traditional doctrine of Incarnation in this way, Hick suggests that his metaphorical understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation can overcome all exclusive approaches to the world religions by leading Christians to consider Jesus as a Saviour among many. He states that if Christians

---

[791] Hick, "A Pluralistic Perspective", p. 53; In doing this, Hick refers to the following scholars' works: C.F.D. Moule, The Origin of Christology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 136; Michael Ramsey, Jesus and the Living Past (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 39, 43; James Dunn, Christology in the Making (London: SCM Press, 1980), p. 60; Brian Hebblethwaite, The Incarnation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 74; David Brown, The Divine Trinity (London: Duckworth, 1985), p. 108.

[792] Hick defines myth as "a story which is told but which is not literally true, or an idea or image which is applied to something or someone but which does not literally apply, but which invites a particular attitude in its hearers. Thus the truth of a myth is a kind of practical truth consisting in the appropriateness of the attitude which it evokes – the appropriateness of the attitude to its object, which may be an event, a person, a situation, or a set of ideas." (Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, pp. 166-167).

[793] Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions", p. 178.

[794] Hick, God Has Many Names, p. 58.

[795] Hick, God Has Many Names, (USA edition) p. 8 cited in Carruthers, The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Theocentric Model of the Christian Theology of World Religions, p. 133.

[796] Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions", p. 179.

see the incarnation as a mythological idea applied to Jesus to express the experienced fact that he is our sufficient, effective, and saving point of contact with God, we no longer have to draw the negative conclusion that he is man's one and only one effective point of contact with God. We can revere Christ as the one through whom we have found salvation, without having to deny other points of reported saving contact between God and man. We can recommend the way of Christian faith without having to discommend other ways of faith. We can say that there is salvation in Christ without having to say that there is no salvation other than in Christ.[797]

This new interpretation of the doctrine of Incarnation and the status of Jesus naturally leads Hick to advocate that there are other saviours and tools for salvation apart from Jesus and the Christian faith. This means that people of other faiths can attain salvation by following their own religious traditions. Hick clarifies this point by maintaining that there is a contradiction in the traditional Christian understanding of salvation, since, according to him, Christians, on the one hand, believe that God's love and God's plan of salvation are universal, but, on the other hand, they argue that there is only one way to salvation and it is the Christian way.[798] Hick stresses that there is a loving Creator who ultimately wants all of humankind to share in the fullness of their created nature, and that salvation itself is universal.[799]

Hick argues that Christians cannot claim that Christianity or Jesus Christ is the tool for salvation because there are other faiths and religious figures through whom their followers gain salvation. By moving away from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness he makes the following three points concerning this transformation. Firstly, each religious tradition achieves this human transformation in its own way.[800] Secondly, this transformation is essentially the same in all traditions.[801] Thirdly, this human transformation occurs to the same extent within each of the religious traditions, since the religious life and thought of none "constitutes a manifestly more efficacious context of salvation than the others." In other words "none of them, taken as a totality, has been markedly more successful or markedly less successful than the others in bringing about the redemption of human life in self-giving to God."[802] Thus, Hick shifts from a theology based on a special revelation to a theology based on plurality of revelations in the sense that "there is a plurality of divine revelations, making possible a plurality of forms of saving human response" to the Transcendent Reality.[803]

In the light of this pluralistic understanding, Hick concludes that the Christian doctrine of Jesus being God incarnate has no literal meaning, but is metaphorical in the sense that He "was so open to divine inspiration, so responsive to the divine spirit, so obedient to God's will, that God was

---

[797] Hick, God Has Many Names, (USA edition) p. 75 cited in Carruthers, The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Theocentric Model of the Christian Theology of World Religions, p. 133.

[798] He clarifies this paradox as follows: "For does the divine love for all mankind, and the divine lordship over all life, exclude the idea that salvation occurs only in one strand of human history, which is limited in time to the last nineteen centuries and in space virtually to the Western hemisphere? If God's love is universal in scope, He cannot thus have restricted His saving encounter with humanity. If God is the God of the whole world, we must presume that the whole religious life of mankind is part of continuous and universal human relationship to Him (Hick, "The Reconstruction of Christian Belief for Today and Tomorrow", Theology 73, 603(1970), p. 400).

[799] Hick, Death and Eternal Life (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 259.

[800] Hick, Problems of Religious Pluralism, p. 106.

[801] Hick, Problems of Religious Pluralism, p. 104.

[802] Hick, "Trinity and Incarnation in the Light of Religious Pluralism", p. 197.

[803] Hick, Problems of Religious Pluralism, p. 34.

able to act on earth in and through Him." Within this context, he suggests that Christians consider Jesus as a man who has made God real to them, who has shown them how to live as citizens of God's kingdom, who is their revered spiritual leader, inspiration and model without denying that the spiritual and religious figures of other religious traditions act in the same way and to the same extent for their followers.[804]

Evaluation: As has been observed, Hick is a philosopher of religion whose critical standpoint takes into account the plurality of religions. He has seen the traditional Christian perception of the status of Jesus as problematic for a fruitful dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths and has attempted to redetermine the status of Jesus by reinterpreting the doctrine of Incarnation in the light of modern scholarship and current interreligious dialogue. The majority of Christians today have not shared his views on this issue. On the contrary, they have been criticised and objected to by a number of Christian theologians.[805] He has been accused of underestimating the New Testament accounts and the Christian tradition, since, according to those theologians, Hick urges Christians to abandon the uniqueness of Christ for the sake of dialogue. We will not go into detail about this intra-Christian debate here because of our specific purpose. We will rather discuss Hick's interpretations from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue in order to see whether they contribute to its development.

Firstly, coming to know people of other faiths in the process of dialogue can lead one to rethink one's own beliefs where these imply that one's own faith is superior. Hick realised during his meeting with people of other faiths that just like Christians, they also try to open their hearts and minds to God, and there are good and ethical people among them. Then, he questioned the traditional Christian under-standing that Jesus Christ is in the centre, and all other faiths revolve around him by calling for his "Copernican Revolution", in which he put God in the centre instead of Jesus and argued that all religions including Christianity revolve around God. Although this theory challenges all religious traditions, in our opinion, its employment in the process of dialogue can lead one to accept one's dialogue partner on an equal status. It indicates that the ultimate objective of dialogue is not to manipulate others to a particular religious tradition but to God, or in Hick's case to the Transcendent Reality. For example, if Muslims put the meaning of *Islam* namely, submission to God at the centre instead of the institutionalised religion of the Prophet Muhammad, they could rescue themselves from absolute-sing their own religion by excluding others.

Secondly, Hick reinterpreted the traditional Christian belief about Jesus as God the Son incarnate, the Second Person of the Trinity, living a human life. He concluded that Jesus was a human being who made God real to those who follow Him through His God consciousness, His openness to God's presence and divine inspiration. With this interpretation of the incarnation, it seems that Hick puts Christian claims on the status of Jesus on the same level with claims of people of other faiths about their own religious figures such as Buddha and the Prophet Muhammad. He

---

[804] Hick, "A Pluralist View", pp. 58-59.

[805] For criticism of Hick's views from the perspective of Christian tradition see, D'Costa, John Hick's Theology of Religions; D'Costa, "The Pluralist Paradigm in the Christian Theology of Religions", SJT, 39 (1986), pp. 211-224; D'Costa, "Christian Theology and Other Religions; An Evaluation of John Hick and Paul Knitter", pp. 161-178; Mark Heim, "Thinking about Theocentric Christology", JES, 24(1987), pp.1-16; Heim, Salvations pp. 13-43; Ogden, Is There One True Religion or Are There Many? Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims", in Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered, pp. 96-106; Paul J. Griffiths, "The Uniqueness of Christian Doctrine Defended", in Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered, pp. 157-173; Carruthers, The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Theocentric Model of the Christian Theology of World Religions.

emphasises that it is possible to see "God's activity in Jesus as being of the same kind as God's activity in other great human mediators of the divine."[806] It would seem that Hick wants to replace Christocentric Christian understanding of other religions with God-centred or reality-centred understanding without giving up the central significance of Christ for Christians. He emphasises that what he has in his mind is a clarification of Christian language about the status of Jesus, rather than a change of actual Christian belief in Jesus.

From the Muslim point of view this conclusion seems to remove one of the greatest obstacles of Christian-Muslim dialogue, since the Qur'an rejects the divinity of Jesus which is upheld by the central Christian doctrines of Incarnation, Trinity and Atonement, not Christians and their faith.[807] So, this conclusion implies that there is an affinity between Hick's metaphorical understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation and the Qur'anic understanding of Jesus, since both of them consider Jesus to be no more than a human prophet. However, there is also a difference between them. For while Hick rejects the virgin birth of Jesus by claiming that it is contradictory to the natural way of birth, the Qur'an strongly defends it. The logic of the Qur'an here is that Jesus was the Word of God, a divine message like the Qur'an, and for that reason the human vehicle of this divine message must be pure and untainted.[808]

Although this affinity seems to contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue, it raises some problems. For, when we consider how Hick arrived at some of his conclusions, it becomes obvious that he expects followers of other faiths to do the same thing for their own ontological claims. We may suggest that he wants Muslims to understand metaphorically the uncreatedness of the Qur'an and the finality of the Prophet Muhammad. In this sense, as D'Costa rightly observes, by mythologising the traditional Christian perception of the status of Jesus, Hick "equally mythologizes all other ontological claims about the nature of ultimate reality, rendering them disfigured and often portraying them in a fashion contrary to their own truth."[809] Because of this implication, Hick's and other like-minded theologians' views have been considered by some other theologians as a "new kind of Western imperia-lism."[810]

Further, this demand of Hick could increase the anxieties of the dialogue partners. Committed and sincere Christians and Muslims may think that if they enter into dialogue with each other, they may lose their own beliefs. By taking this point into account, we may conclude that we need not abandon or even question our own traditional beliefs for the sake of better relations with people of other faiths. Or as D'Costa correctly states, we cannot abandon our own traditional beliefs to please those who disagree with them.[811] Because of this danger of Hick's views for dialogue, it would be better to consider him not a practising dialogue partner, but an academic theologian.

Thirdly, it is obvious that by considering the idea of Divine incarnation as a metaphor Hick went beyond the official views of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC which acknowledged Jesus as unique, definitive, absolute, and the normative revelation not only for Christians but also all humankind. Because of this point, Pope John Paul II implicitly condemned Hick's

---

[806] Hick, "Religious Pluralism", in F. Whaling, ed., The World Religious Traditions (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 19840, pp. 154-155.

[807] See Qur'an 4:171-174.

[808] See Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam, pp. 43-44; If we adopt Hick's understanding, then we need to understand the Qur'anic acknowledgement of Jesus not literally but metaphorically. This means that in reality Jesus had a human father but we do not know him.

[809] D'Costa, "The New Missionary: John Hick and Religious Plurality", IBMR, 1991, p. 68.

[810] Paul J. Griffiths, "The Uniqueness of Christian Doctrine Defended", in D'Costa, ed., Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered, p. 158.

[811] D'Costa, Theology and Religious Pluralism, p. 90.

understanding of the status of Jesus in his encyclical *Redemdoris Missio,* as has been observed in chapter two.

However, Hick's understanding of the status of Jesus seems to go a long way in contributing to the development of interreligious dialogue in general and dialogue with Muslims in particular. With a very good intention, he has boldly tried to solve some significant theological problems which Christians face both because of modern scientific developments and interreligious dialogue.[812]

6.3 Paul Knitter

Paul Knitter was a member of the American World Missionary Society. During his preparation as a missionary, questions relating to world religions and their followers began to arise in his mind. His main focus was on the kind of approach Christians needed to develop towards the followers of other religions in order to convert them. Thus, we may say that Knitter commenced his theological pilgrim-mage by adopting an exclusivist attitude to people of other faiths.

He states that during his service in this Society the religious other affected his theology. When he came across Rahner's theory of "anonymous Christians" and the positive statements of the Second Vatican Council about non-Christians during his study at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, the question of the religious other became a very important issue for his theology.[813] Rahner's theory especially influenced him to move from exclusivism to inclusivism. During his doctoral studies in Germany, his meeting with a devout Muslim student led him to think about the theological and ethical meaning of Rahner's theory and in the end brought him to regard it not "as a new paradigm, but a bridge" for his later development. While he was teaching at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, he continued his interest in studying other religions and entering into dialogue with their followers. As a result, the focus of his theological journey shifted from inclusivism to pluralism with the publication of his *No Other Name*? [1985][814] in which he made a critical survey of Christian attitudes towards those who belong to other religions.

His theological odyssey continued. During his work with refugee families in Cincinnati, the suffering other affected his theology as well. Liberation theology now became for him a new interest area and brought him to connect his pluralistic theology of religions with a theology of libera-tion, and he published his essay "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions" [1987].[815]

---

[812] He himself explains his good intention in this issue as follows: "In order to continue to be Christians in a religiously plural world, we do not have to reject any of the great traditional themes of Christian thought; but we do need to use them in ways that are appropriate to our own situation in a world which has become consciously one. We do not need to reject the 'son of God' language in its application to Jesus, but rather need to understand it in its original Hebraic sense as designating a special servant of God. We do not need to reject the idea of the Trinity, but to understand it in its modalistic rather than in its ontological sense. We do not need to reject the identification of Jesus as our savior, but need to see him as saving us by making real to us God's gracious presence and love and claim and acceptance (Hick, "Rethinking Christian Doctrine", p. 101).

[813] Concerning Rahner's theory of "anonymous Christian" and the Second Vatican Council's teaching about non-Christian religions, see chapter one section 1.3.1 and 1.4.

[814] Concerning the theological development of Knitter see Knitter, One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995, pp. 2-8; Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, pp. 3-9; also see Paul R. Eddy, "Paul Knitter's Theology of Religions: A Survey and Evangelical Response", EQ, 63/3, 1993, pp. 225-245.

[815] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", in Hick & Knitter, eds., The Myth of Christian Uniqueness, pp. 178-200; Also see Knitter "Dialogue and Liberation: Foundation for a Pluralist Theology of Religions", DG, 58/1 (1988), pp. 53.

Thus, he moved from theocentrism to soteriocentrism, and by continuing to progress in his theology of religions within this perspective, Knitter developed his Correlational Globally Responsible Model in *One Earth Many Religions* [1995]. He explained the theological meaning of this new model in his *Jesus and the other Names* [1996] in order to show Christians how "to live out traditional beliefs in the *uniqueness* of Jesus and the *mission* of his Church and at the same time affirm the validity of other religious paths."[816]

So, within the context of a pluralist theology of religions there are three significant stages, namely the theocentric, soteriocentric and the correlational globally responsible model. We will examine Knitter's views on the status of Jesus by following these three stages, since in all of them he explained the status of Jesus in slightly different ways. In doing so, we will focus on his understanding of the traditional Christian doctrines which announce Jesus as the Son of God and the universally normative and constitutive revelation of God.

Theocentric Model: Knitter's starting point in his theology of religions is that the new consciousness of religious pluralism is an ongoing fact of life, since there never has been, and probably never will be a time when there will be just one religion in the world. There will always be many religions because reality itself is pluriform. Knitter maintains that followers of different religions must come together "not in order to obliterate or absorb each other but to learn from and help each other",[817] and then suggested a new concept called "unitive pluralism"[818] to facilitate this coming together and to encompass the ongoing situation of religious pluralism. However, he stresses that many Christians still have a serious hesitation and an unwillingness to enter into dialogue with others because of "the central Christian belief in the uniqueness of Christ" which holds Jesus as a normative and constitutive of any true encounter with God, not only for Christians but also for all people.[819]

Knitter considers this sort of understanding of Jesus as an obstacle and unnecessary barrier that stands in the way of authentic dialogue. Thus he proposes to abandon traditional conceptions about the uniqueness of Christ and develops a theology of religions which puts not Christ or the Church, but God at the centre, as Hick did in his "Copernican Revolution."[820] Then, he proposes a relational uniqueness for Jesus which

> affirms that Jesus is unique, but with a unique-ness defined by its ability to relate – that is, to include and be included by – other unique religious figures. Such an understanding of Jesus views him not as exclusive or even as normative, but as theocentric, as a universally relevant manifestation (sacrament, incarna-tion) of divine revelation and salvation.[821]

He maintains that contrary to what many Christians claim, his theocentric and non-normative understanding of Jesus does not stand in opposition to New Testament teaching about Jesus, since it stresses that Jesus himself made no claim to divinity and that the language of incarnation is only

---

[816] Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, p. xvii.

[817] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 6.

[818] This concept defined by Knitter as follows" unitive pluralism is a unity in which each religion, although losing some of its individualism (its separate age), will intensify its personality (its self-awareness through relationship). Each religion will retain its own uniqueness, but this uniqueness will develop and take on new depths by relating to other religions in mutual dependence. (Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 9).

[819] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 17.

[820] For the Copernican Revolution see section 6.2.

[821] Knitter, No Other Name?, pp. 171-172.

one of a number of models by which Christians could have conceptualised their experience and understanding of him. He argues that if the direction of Christian expansion had been eastward into India instead of Westward into the Graeco-Roman world, it is very unlikely that Jesus would have been interpreted in categories which would have led to the kind of claims to uniqueness and finality that have so long been predominant in Christian theology. He further underlines that the time has come to recognise that although such beliefs may have served a useful purpose in the past, they have now become a hindrance to the very faith. Therefore, they ought to be abandoned.

Knitter continues to maintain that what is basic to the Christian experience and understanding of Jesus is not the culturally conditioned doctrine that affirms his finality and his uniqueness, but what he terms the fact that through Jesus men and women have encountered God. It does not necessarily follow from this, however, that a total personal commitment of a Christian to Jesus depends on the assertion that God can only be encountered through Jesus. Of course, he says, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is unique, but also there are the revelations of God through Krishna and through the Buddha or through the Prophet Muhammad.[822] In this sense, what Knitter indicates is that in terms of transforming people to God not only Jesus, but also all other religious figures are unique.

Knitter concludes that Jesus most likely experienced himself as *the eschatological prophet* who was anointed specially by God's Spirit, who was to complete the mission of the earlier prophets by announcing and enacting the good news of God's final rule. Knitter stresses that whenever Christians forget this role of Jesus and open their conscious-ness to a "myopic christocentrism", to a "jesusology", to a reductionism that absorbs God into Jesus, their under-standing of Jesus easily becomes an idolatry that violates not only Christian but the revelation found in other faiths.[823] By arguing this, it seems that Knitter puts Jesus on an equal level with other prophets and religious figures.

Finally, in the light of this conclusion Knitter proposes the following guidelines to understand the status of Jesus anew within the context of interreligious dialogue: (1) The titles of Jesus are not absolute expressions, but only interpretations of who he was for his early followers. For that reason they should be understood by taking into account their "historical context and concerns, each makes use of mythic or symbolic images drawn from the Jewish and Hellenistic environment."[824] (2) All the different New Testament descriptions of Jesus should be preserved without absolutising one or rejecting the other, since there would be a time for every description in the course of time.[825] (3) The plurality of the New Testament depiction of Jesus does not allow today's Christians to argue that everything about the person of Jesus – who he was and what he means for Christians and for the world – was said and set up by the first community. For that reason, Christians continue to develop new images "in continuity with what went before, preserving the past without embalming it, faithful to the past without being limited by it."[826] (4) This continuous and evolutionary character of the description of Jesus in the Christian tradition can lead today's

---

[822] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 172.

[823] Knitter, No Other Name?, pp. 174-175.

[824] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 180.

[825] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 181.

[826] On the contrary, Knitter maintains that "the evolutionary process of interpretation that makes up the New Testament must continue today in the same manner in which it took place then: in continuity with what went before, preserving the past without embalming it, faithful to the past without being limited by it. Christians will be faithful to the New Testament images of Jesus, they will truly believe in these images, by allowing them to give birth to new symbols and models of who this Jesus is and how he saves.(Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 181).

theologians to develop "new images of Jesus that will make him more meaningful to them, as well as to persons of other faiths" in the process of dialogue.[827]

As has been seen so far, in his theocentric model, unlike the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus as an absolute and normative revelation of God for all people, Knitter considers him as a God-conscious figure through whom men and women have encountered God and as an eschotological prophet who came to fulfil the mission of earlier prophets.

Soteriocentric Model: After shifting to this model, Knitter addressed the issue of the status of Jesus in a new way by indicating:

> The primary concern of a soteriocentric libera-tion theology of religions is not "right belief" about the uniqueness of Christ, but the "right practice", with other religions, of furthering the Kingdom and its Soteria. Clarity about whether and how Christ is one lord and savior, as well as clarity about any other doctrine, may be important, but it is subor-dinate to carrying out the preferential option for the poor and nonpersons.[828]

Within this context, firstly Knitter calls Christians to evaluate the status of Jesus in the light not of their *a priori* knowledge, but of the centrality of praxis. He states:

> the Christian conviction and proclamation that Jesus is God's final and normative word for all religions cannot rest only on traditional doctrine or on personal, individual experience. We cannot know that Jesus is God's last or normative statement only on the basis of being told so or on the basis of having experienced him to be such in our own lives. Rather, the uniqueness of Jesus can be known and then affirmed only 'in its concrete embodiment', only in the praxis of historical, social involve-ment.[829]

Knitter continues that unless Christians enter into dialogue with people of other faiths by following Jesus and applying his message to their life, they cannot understand and experience what the uniqueness and normativity of Jesus means to them.

Secondly, he offers the preferential option for the poor and oppressed as a criterion through which one can evaluate and revise the traditional understanding of the uniqueness of Christ, as well as to "grade" other salvific figures in the world's religions. In this approach, all religious paths and their saviours are judged on the basis of how much or how little they contribute to promoting global justice. Within the context of this criterion, Knitter concludes "Jesus would . . . be unique – together with other unique liberators. He would be a universal savior – with other universal saviors. His universality and uniqueness would be not exclusive nor inclusive, but complementary."[830] By developing this argument, Knitter indicates that the claim to uniqueness of any religious figure or religious tradition can be settled only by asking how much they bring liberation to the poor and how much they contribute to God's kingdom of justice.

Thirdly, Knitter maintains, "right practice" in furthering the salvific message and deeds of Jesus takes precedence over "right belief" in light of the urgent needs of the world's poor and oppressed.

---

[827] Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 181.
[828] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", p. 192.
[829] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", pp. 191-192.
[830] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", p. 194.

He insists that by challenging the faithful to affirm the primacy of orthopraxis, this new view of Jesus' "complementary uniqueness" can enable Christians to deepen their Christian commitment. This is possible, he argues, because most Christians recognise that the essence of being a Christian is doing God's will, rather than simply believing in Jesus as the definitive revelation of God.[831] He further argues that recognising the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy will also enable Christians to better comprehend the language of titles of Jesus such as "the only-begotten Son of God" and "one Mediator" as "action language." For they call Christians to embrace Jesus' message and vision of the kingdom, rather than merely to adhere to a set of doctrinal beliefs about him. According to Knitter, these titles were not given to Jesus to announce his ontological status by which he could rule out all other religious figures. Knitter proposes that "if recognising the possibility of other saviors or mediators does not impede this praxis, then it is compatible with Christian identity and tradition."[832]

The Correlational Globally Responsible Model: As has been pointed out above, in his *One Earth Many Religions* [1995] and *Jesus and the Other Names* [1996], Knitter proposes this model to explain the meaning of Jesus and his message for today's world, not just for Christians but for everyone. He indicates that the main purpose of this model is to avoid the "absolute" language and absolute claims that put Christians in a superior position over others, by rejecting adjectives such as "one and only", "definitive", "superior", "final", "unsurpassable", and "total" to describe the truth they have found in the New Testament.[833] Knitter argues that this new model gives a chance to Christians to affirm and announce Jesus as really divine and savior to the world, without insisting that he is the only divine savior: "Verily, but not only." He explains that this sort of understanding

> *Theologically,* means that while Christians can and must continue to announce Jesus of Nazareth as one in whom the reality and saving power of God is incarnate and avail-able, they will also be open to the possibility that there are others whom Christians can recognize as sons and daughters of God. *Personally*, such a pluralistic christology allows and requires Christians to be committed fully to Christ, but at the same time genuinely open to others who may be carrying out similar and equally important roles. *Ecclesially*, this means that the Churches will go forth into the whole world with a message that is universally relevant and urgent, but at the same time will be ready to hear other messages from very different sources that may be also be univer-sally meaningful and important.[834]

This quotation shows that Knitter does not reject the traditional Christian understanding of the status of Jesus as an incarnated word of God which provides God's saving power to all humanity. However, he urges Christians to understand this status of Jesus relatively; in the sense that the saving power of God is universally available in other religious figures. This sort of understanding of Jesus benefits individual Christians as well as Churches in the process of dialogue. For example, it enables individuals to be committed totally to Jesus while being open to the religious figures of

---

[831] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", pp. 195-196.

[832] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", p. 196; Also see Knitter, "Interreligious Dialogue; What? Why? How?", in L. Swidler et al, eds., Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue (London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 40.

[833] Knitter, One Earth Many Religions, pp. 29-30.

[834] Knitter, One Earth Many Religions, p. 35.

other religious traditions. And it means that the Churches have a universally meaningful message to proclaim to the whole world, but are ready to hear other universally meaningful messages.

After explaining the nature of the Correlational Globally Responsible model in this way, Knitter attempts to explain how Christians should understand the exclusive statements of the New Testament concerning the status of Jesus. Firstly, he maintains the titles, "Son of God", "Savior", "Word of God," were not used by Jesus himself, but were given to him by the early Christian community and used to make him superior to all other religious founders and leaders. Secondly, he argues that the language which is used in the following exclusive statements of the New Testament: Mt. 11:27; 1Cor. 8:6; Jn. 1:14, 18; 1Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:12; Acts. 4:12,[835] can be described as "love language." By using this language, he maintains, the followers of Jesus wanted to share the message of Jesus with others. For that reason it must be understood metaphorically not literally.

He stresses that if these expressions are transformed by Christians into purely doctrinal or theological assertions, and if they are used to exclude others rather than to proclaim the saving power of Jesus, then they will be definitely abused. For, "When the early Christians gave Jesus such lofty titles . . . they were not out primarily to present the world with a philosophical or dogmatic defini-tion; rather they were declaring themselves, and inviting all others, to be disciples of this Jesus, to follow him in loving God and neighbour and working for what Jesus called the Reign of God."[836]

Thirdly, he applies the above guidelines to a specific text, Acts.4:12, which is used by conservative Christians to support their argument that there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. Knitter argues that in this verse the question was "'not one of comparative religions but of faith-healing'; that is, in whose power had Peter and John just healed the crippled man." It expresses a clear answer to this question by saying that Peter and John healed that man not by their own power, but the power contained in the name and reality of Jesus. Therefore, the intent of this title is not philosophically or theologically to define Jesus in relation to other religious figures, but to call others to recognise and acknowledge the power that is available to them in Jesus. It is performative and action language which expresses the belief that all people must listen to this Jesus without indicating that no one else should be listened to. So, Knitter stresses that in this verse "the stress is on the saving power mediated by the name of Jesus, not on the exclusivity of the name".[837]

Finally, in the light of the above explanations Knitter develops the following argument, that although Christians cannot regard Jesus as *full, definitive* and *unsurpassable,* they do acknowledge that he brought a *universal, decisive*, and *indispensable* message. Now, we will turn to explain what Knitter means by this argument.

God's revelation in Jesus is not "*full, definitive* and *unsurpassable*." By arguing this, Knitter indicates three things. Firstly, Christians cannot claim that they possess the fullness or the totality of divine revelation in Jesus as if he exhausted all the truth that God has to reveal, since theologically no finite medium can exhaust the fullness of the Infinite. In this sense, Knitter argues that to identify the Infinite God with the finite Jesus becomes idolatry. In order to avoid this, he proposes to understand the doctrine of incarnation to mean "that Divinity has assumed the fullness of humanity, not humanity has taken on the fullness of Divinity." This means that the Divine was

---

[835] This verse number is referred in Jesus and the Other Name mistakenly as Acts. 12:4.

[836] Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, p. 68; in a similar vein, Cracknell and Ariarajah maintain that these kinds of exclusive verses can be understood within the development of Christian thought and historical context (see, Cracknell, Towards a New Relationship, pp. 69-109 and Ariarajah, The Bible and People of Other Faiths (Geneva: WCC, 1985), pp. 19-28).

[837] Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, pp. 69-70.

truly incarnated in Jesus not fully, and there is the possibility that the Divine can be incarnated in other religious figures.

Secondly, Christians cannot consider Jesus as the "*definitive* Word of God as if there could not be other norms for divine truth outside of him." This means that Jesus is a Word of God, not the Word of God in the sense that there are no other Words of God which hold essentially new and different things. On this point, in a response to objections that this kind of explanation of the definitiveness of Jesus can be a threat to the central Christian belief in the Trinity,[838] Knitter points out that on the contrary, it expands it by continuing to affirm the authenticity and reliability of the Divine Word's powerful presence in Jesus.

Thirdly, Christians cannot consider God's saving word in Jesus as *unsurpassable* in the sense that God could not reveal more of his fullness in other ways apart from Jesus at other times. On this point Knitter stresses that if Christians believe that God's revelation to them in Jesus contains the whole truth of God without allowing other revelations, this would contradict the Christian belief that God is an unsurpassable Mystery, "one which can never totally be comprehended or contained in human thought." It would dismiss the role of the Holy Spirit which is testified to by Jesus himself in Jn. 16:12-13.[839]

Jesus' message is *universal, decisive*, and *indispensable*. By maintaining this Knitter proposes to do three things to proclaim Jesus as God's saving presence in history. Firstly, Christians should announce Jesus as a universal revelation and experience him as a call, not just for them but for all people of all time. For, according to Knitter, if Jesus represents the saving presence of God for Christians by showing them how to live their lives, this knowledge cannot be limited to Christians, but should be made available for all people. This thesis of Knitter indicates that God's work through Jesus is relevant to everyone without restriction, and this is also true for other religious figures and divine revelations.

Secondly, Christians should regard the revelation granted in Jesus as decisive because when people follow this revelation, it makes a difference in their lives by trans-forming them from self-centredness to God-centredness or Kingdom-centredness. Knitter further holds that if Jesus' message is universal and decisive, it should also be normative not only for Christians but also others. On this point, in order not to contradict his pluralistic view, Knitter clarifies that "if the norm I have embraced is decisive and calls me . . . to a clear decision and way of acting, it does not at all rule out the possibility that I can also come to other insights and other decisions which, although they do not contradict my original decision, are very different from it. A decisive norm, in other words, may rule out *some* other norms, but it need not exclude all other norms. It is decisive, but not final or unsurpassable."[840]

Thirdly, Christians need to continue to announce the revelation in Jesus as *indispensable,* in the sense that just as the truth represented by Jesus has enriched and transformed the lives of Christians, it should also do the same for others. It seems that by arguing this last point, Knitter appears to tend towards the inclusivism which holds Jesus Christ as a necessary element not only for Christians, but also people of other faiths. For, he claims that "to know Jesus Christ is to feel that Buddhists and Hindus and Muslims need to know him too; this means they need to recognize and accept the truth he reveals (even through this does not necessarily mean that they will become members of the Christian community)."[841]

---

[838] See Karl Braaten, "Interreligious Dialogue in the Pluralistic Situation", Dialogue, 33(1994), pp. 294-298.
[839] Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, pp. 73-75; Knitter, "Five Theses on the Uniqueness of Jesus", pp. 7-8.
[840] Knitter, Jesus and Other Names, pp. 76-77; "Five Theses on the Uniqueness of Jesus", pp. 10-11.
[841] Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, p. 78.

Hick objected to this argument by asking in what way is Jesus indispensable? Is it the way pencillin is necessary for the dying person or the way vitamins are necessary for better health?[842] Knitter answers this question by stressing that the indispensability of Jesus lies somewhere in between. "Maybe it is something like the illiterate person who is living a happy, satisfying life; when he learns to read, something is added to his life that was not there."[843] Further, he adds that this is also the same for other religious figures. By making this point, it seems that Knitter points to a very significant principle, that in the process of dialogue participants can benefit from each other's faith in order to enrich their own spirituality.

As has been observed so far, in his reinterpretation of the status of Jesus Knitter encourages Christians to see Jesus as a universally relevant, decisive and indispensable revelation of God, not only for themselves but for all people. This is without insisting that it is full, definitive and unsurpassable, for there are also other universally relevant, decisive and indispensable revelations of God. Parallel to his views on the status of Jesus, Knitter, like Hick, adopts a pluralistic view of salvation. In this respect, he points out that God's plan of salvation is available in all religions through the particularities of those religions. For instance, in Christianity God saves people not through general principles, but through Jesus Christ.[844] This argument implies that, according to Knitter, people of other faiths attain salvation through their own religious traditions. For example, Muslims can be saved through the Qur'an or Buddhists can be saved through Buddha. Knitter develops this argument by arguing that the particularity of Christianity [Jesus Christ] teaches Christians the universality of God's love and presence. But he says this does not mean that God's love and presence are limited to Jesus, since other particularities, too, can teach the same thing. He states this as follows: "While Christians must insist that God has acted in Jesus and that this action is universally meaningful for all people, they must do this in such a way that the universality of God's saving power for all people is not jeopardised."[845] It seems that in this way Knitter implies that in the dialogue process Christians should accept the possibility that there may be other saviours apart from Christ, and that these are as important as Christ or the Christian faith in God's plan of salvation.

In short, according to Knitter Jesus is a unique revelation of God, but not in a sense that it is absolute and final but in a sense that God's Word in Jesus is universal and indispensable for all peoples. This means that "the Christian Word is vitally meaningful for all peoples of all times, and not to have heard this Word is to have missed a 'saving' vision of truth; but it does not mean that this Word is the normative fulfilment of all other Words."[846]

Evaluation: As has been observed, as a result of his dialogue with people of other faiths, Knitter, like Hick, saw the traditional Christian beliefs which hold Jesus as uniquely divine, the absolute and final Word of God in history as roadblocks to genuine dialogue. For that reason, he attempted to remove these roadblocks by reconstructing the status of Jesus in the light of current developments in Christian theology and his own interreligious dialogue. In the end, he concluded that in our religiously pluralistic age Christians cannot consider the status of Jesus as the "*full, definitive and unsurpassable*" revelation of God but as a *universal, decisive and indispensable* message of God. We will discuss whether Knitter's reconstruction of the status of Jesus can

---

[842] Hick, "Five Misgivings", in Swidler & Mojzez, eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter, pp. 79-84.

[843] Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names, p. 79.

[844] Knitter, "Christian Salvation: Its Nature and Uniqueness-Interreligious Proposal", NTR, 7/4 (1994), p. 40.

[845] Knitter, "Christian Salvation", p. 41.

[846] Knitter, "Response II", in Swidler, et al., eds., Death or Dialogue, pp. 124-133.

contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. While doing this, we need to take into account the fact that although Knitter as a theologian who seems to observe the New Testament accounts concerning the status of Jesus even more closely than Hick, his views too are not accepted by the majority of Christians today. A number of theologians have objected to Knitter's views by saying they are not Christian and have criticised him for selling out the Christian faith.[847]

As has been pointed out above, Knitter's starting point is that coming to know the religious other and observing his religious life can affect one's own beliefs. This point led him to rethink his own beliefs and doctrines which put Jesus in a superior position to other religious figures by announcing his as the absolute and final revelation of God. According to him, this sort of understanding prevents Christians from establishing a genuine and fruitful dialogue with people of other faiths. For that reason, by reinterpreting these beliefs and doctrines, Knitter, like Hick, develops a theology of religions which puts not Jesus, but God at the centre. Through this understanding of Jesus, the Christian partner in dialogue can rescue himself/herself from exclusivism by putting himself/herself on an equal position with others. In other words, to put God, not one's own religion or religious figure, at the centre in the dialogue process can create an equal opportunity for all dialogue partners.

Secondly, Knitter urges Christian participants of dialogue not to enter into dialogue by holding Jesus as "the final word", "definitive revelation", "absolute truth" and "absolute savior", arguing that there is no place at the dialo-gue table for these sort of beliefs. He further generalises this demand by saying that "It would seem . . . that the revision of traditional understandings of 'the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity' (together with similar understandings of the uniqueness of the Qur'an or of Krishna or of Buddha) is a condition for the possibility of fruitful dialogue."[848] Although this demand would contribute to the develop-ment of Christian-Muslim dialogue, it seems that it is rather problematic, since Knitter considers it as a necessary condi-tion, not a possible outcome of a genuine dialogue. When we take this demand as a necessary condition of dialogue, we mean that we do not want to enter into dialogue with those who believe the uniqueness of the Qur'an or the uniqueness of Jesus. In today's world in which the majority of Muslims and Christians are holding the Qur'an and Jesus as the unique revelation of God this means that dialogue is confined to those who have already abandoned these beliefs. For that reason, it would seem to be better to consider this demand not as a necessary condition but a possible outcome of dialogue.[849] Because of this demand, Knitter can not escape being accused of being, in D'Costa's word, 'imperialistic'.[850]

---

[847] For these critics see Heim, Is Christ the Only Way? Christian Faith in a Pluralistic World, (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1985); Heim, "Thinking about Theocentric Christology", pp. 1-16; Heim, Salvations, pp, 71-98; Moltmann, "Is 'Pluralistic Theology' Useful for the Dialogue of World Religions", pp. 149-156; Griffiths, "The Uniqueness of Christian Doctrine Defended" pp. 157-173; Pannenberg, "Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims", pp. 96-106; D'Costa, "Christian Theology and Other Religions: An Evaluation of John Hick and Paul Knitter", pp. 168ff; for further criticism of Knitter views, Michael Amaladoss, "A Simple Solution", in Swidler & Mojzez, ed., The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter, pp.25-28; Denise and John Carmody, "Do Knitter's Theses Take Christ's Divinity Seriously?", in Swidler & Mojzez, eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus, pp. 44-49; Karl-Josef Kuschel, "'Faithful' to the New Testament", in Swidler & Mojzez., eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus, pp. 85-93; Clark H. Pinnock, "An Evangelical Response to Knitter's Five Theses", in Swidler & Mojzez., eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus, pp. 116-120; J. Sanders, "Idolater Indeed!", in Swidler & Mojzez, eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus, pp. 121-125.
[848] Knitter, "Interreligious Dialogue", p. 32.
[849] See Cobb, "Response I" in Swidler, et al., eds., Death or Dialogue, pp. 79-84.
[850] D'Costa, "Christian Theology and Other Religions", pp. 168-178.

Thirdly, Knitter like Hick also emphasises that the significant point of the Christ event is not his finality or uniqueness, but his consciousness of God. For, according to him, those who follow his message encounter God through not his finality or uniqueness, but his consciousness of God. It seems that the application of this point to religious figures can contribute to the understanding of those religious figures by others much more positively than before. For example in this case, if Christians witness to their dialogue partners how they encountered God through Jesus, rather than emphasising his finality and uniqueness, their partners will understand the significance of Jesus more readily, since they may have had the same encounter with God through the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad.[851]

Fourthly, Knitter emphasises that whether Jesus is unique and absolute, the normative revelation of God cannot be known without living his message while engaging in dialogue with other believers. By following this argument, Knitter concluded that the uniqueness of Jesus depends on how much or how little his message contributes to promoting global justice. This argument could seem to contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim under-standing. This conclusion of Knitter has correctly been criticised by Küng who states that "practice should not be made the norm of theory undialectically and social questions be expounded as the basis and centre of the theology of religions."[852] However, positively it means that both Christians and Muslims need to put aside the claim that Jesus or the Qur'an is the unique revelation of God as an *a priori* principle. Instead, according to Knitter, they need to show the uniqueness of Jesus and the Qur'an by applying their message to their lives and then sharing them with people of other faiths in the dialogue process. This further means that what is important is not Jesus as a person or the Qur'an as a text, but their message. Briefly, what this argument of Knitter stresses is that in the dialogue process we need to practise what our religious figures have brought us, rather than to absolutise that religious figure.

Fifthly, Knitter, unlike Hick, reconstructed the status of Jesus without underestimating the New Testament accounts. As has been seen above, he considered those accounts seriously without sharing their tight or literal interpretation. Instead, by using *a hermeneutic of discipleship,* he considered those accounts as religious confessions of the disciples of Jesus. Although this sort of understanding seems to reduce the value of the Bible in the eyes not only of non-Christians but also of Christians, in reality it may encourage them to reread the Bible in order to understand the significance of Jesus. Also the non-absolutist inter-pretation of sacred scriptures can urge people of other faiths to evaluate those scriptures more positively.

In short, although Knitter's views do not represent the mainstream Christian perception of the person of Jesus, and for that reason seem less beneficial for Christian-Muslim dialogue at this stage, they deserve to be taken into account seriously by the Christian dialogue partner. For in develop-ing those views, Knitter, both as a committed Christian and dialogue activist, tries to seek a way through which Christians can establish a genuine dialogue with people of other faiths.

6.4 Hans Küng

As has been pointed out in Chapter Four, Küng began to evolve his dialogical approach towards other religions from 1983 onwards. For this reason, when dealing with his views on the person of Jesus, we will focus on his writings published during that period. But before doing so, it is

---

[851] As has been see in chapter four and five by taking this point into account some leading Christian thinkers evaluated the status of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad more positively than before.

[852] Küng, "Towards Ecumenical Theology of Religions", p. 123.

necessary to recall his earlier understanding in order to observe the effect of his dialogical approach on his views about the person of Jesus.

Küng dealt with the issue of the status of Jesus with regard to the world religions for the first time in his *On Being Christian* [1977], under the title of "The Challenge of World Religions." Here, he emphasised the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth as the "distinctive" component of the Christian faith. He maintained that the question of the distinctiveness of Christianity, when viewed in the horizon of the world religions, can be answered only by reference to Jesus Christ, since he is the specific element of the Christian faith. He further stated that "the special feature, the most fundamental characteristic of Christianity is that it considers this Jesus as ultimately decisive, definitive, *archetypal*, for man's relations with God, with his fellow man, with society . . ."[853] Küng stressed that Jesus is unique in the sense that his uniqueness surpasses all other religious figures by being absolutely and universally normative for others as well.[854]

In his essay "Belief in the Son of God" [1981],[855] Küng continued to defend the absoluteness and normativeness of Jesus against the religious figures of other faiths. He examined the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth as the "Son of God" in the light of the biblical infancy narratives and argued that the virgin birth, angelic visitations, and temptations from the devil were not exclusive to Jesus. What Küng found unique and distinctively Christian with regard to Jesus was the cross. Hence, Küng highlighted the crucifixion event as the decisive aspect differentiating Jesus from Buddha, Confucius, Zarathustra, and Muhammad, and claimed that the cross event was required in order to understand the infancy narratives and how Jesus came to be designated with the title "the Son of God." He stressed the fact that this and other similar titles only served to express the unique relationship that Jesus had with God and God with Jesus and not his divinity. He claimed that no other religious figure or teacher had this unique relationship, before or after Jesus.[856]

In almost his every work, Küng ventured to compare Jesus with the other religious figures such as Moses, Buddha, Confucius, and Muhammad in order to show his uniqueness. In this comparison, he argued that Jesus was unique with regard to his Jewish social context, his message, his personality, his relationship to God, and his death.[857]

In short, in these earlier writings Küng held Jesus as the unique and normative revelation of God, not only for Christians but also for all humanity. He further declared that with regard to the relationship with God, Jesus had a position superior to other religious figures. In this sense, Küng implied that in one way or another all people should acknowledge Jesus as the unique and archetypal revelation of God. This would mean that there is no salvation apart from him.

After starting his dialogical journey towards the world religions, he published his *Christianity and World Religions* [1984] which is regarded as his *magnum opus* in his dialogue with world religions.[858] Here, he exposes his position in his relation with people of other faiths between the

---

[853] Küng, On Being a Christian, p. 123.

[854] Knitter stressed that this sort of understanding of the status of Jesus is not helpful for a genuine dialogue with people of other faiths (Knitter, "World Religions and the Finality of Christ: A Critique of Hans Küng's 'On Being a Christian'", pp. 202-221.

[855] Küng, "Belief in a Son of God?", in Paul Burns & John Cumming, eds., The Bible Now: Its Nature, Meaning and Use Today (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1981).

[856] Küng, "Belief in a Son of God?", pp. 143-151.

[857] See Küng, On Being A Christian; Küng, Credo: The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today; Christianity: The Religious Situation of Our Time (London: SCM Press, 1993).

[858] See Cobb, "Interreligious Dialogue, World Ethics and the Problem of the Humanum", in K.J. Kuschel & H. Haring, eds., Hans Küng, New Horizons for Faith and Thought, pp. 283-293.

extremes of absolutism and relativism and prefers a model which depends on mutual understanding, respect, objective study and genuine conversation with the other.[859]

Küng criticises those who reject the finality and normati-vity of Christ in their theology of religions by arguing that those theologians have lost the Christian criterion by saying that "a religion is true and good when and to the extent that it allows traces of Christ to be detached in its teaching and practice" by putting him on an equal level with other religious figures such as Muhammad, Buddha and the others. In order to support his objection, he further stresses that a "theologian who is not prepared to give up the normativity and finality of Christ does so not because it is only through Christ as a critical catalyst that the other religions can 'adapt themselves to our modern technology', but because otherwise he or she would be abandoning the central declaration of the Scriptures that go to make up the New Testament." Moreover, he upholds this view by arguing that it is in no way "identical with some theological 'imperialism' and 'neo-colonialism', which denies other religions their truth and rejects other prophets and seers." From these two arguments, Küng draws the conclusion that "there are different ways of salvation . . . to the one goal, and these in part overlap and can in any case enrich each other. Yet dialogue between these religions by no means demands the giving up of the standpoint of faith."[860]

After clarifying his position in this way, Küng attempts to do two things in his theology of religions. The first is to apply "Christian self-criticism in the light of other religions." The second is to apply "Christian criticism of the other religions in the light of the Gospel." Since we studied this second one previously with regard to the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad,[861] we will turn to observe the first one with regard to the person of Jesus. We will consider his views on the traditional Christian beliefs which were considered by Hick and Knitter as obstacles and barriers for better relations and genuine dialogue with people of other faiths. In doing so, we will consider Küng's observation of those beliefs in the light of Islam and Judaism.

Küng first of all applies the self-criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity in the light of Qur'anic accounts. He states that this doctrine has been a great obstacle for Christian-Muslim understanding from the advent of Islam. In order to rescue it from being a barrier, Küng concedes that Jesus never proclaimed that God is one nature in three persons, or one person in two natures. He did not put his own person, role, and dignity at the centre of his teaching, but rather God's Kingdom, God's name, and God's will which man is to fulfil through service to his fellow men and women. On this point, Küng asks how Christians look upon Jesus' relationship to God. In answer to this question, he refers to the origin of Jesus. He notes that Jesus himself was a Jew and much closer to present day Palestinian Arabs than to all Western images of Jesus, and he tried to establish the belief in one God during his life time, just as Muslims do in our present day.[862] Küng, also, admits that modern historico-critical studies on the New Testament have shown that Jesus did not use the title, "Son of God," for himself, but after his death his followers began to use this title, basing it on their Easter experience. However, he puts forwards the idea that Jesus was more than a prophet, since he assumed God's authority especially with respect to the Law and the forgive-ness of sins.

---

[859] Küng maintains that while as a "narrow-minded" and "conceited" position the absolutist regards his own truth as correct and all other claims to truth as simply wrong and leads to contempt and proselytising of other religions; the relativist considers all religions and their truth as relative or equally true, and "leads only to cheap tolerance, to 'anything goes', to a falsely understood liberalism in which one trivialises the question of truth or no longer even dares to ask it" (Küng, Christianity and World Religions, pp. xviii-xix; Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions", pp. 120-121).

[860] Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions", p. 122.

[861] See Chapter Four section 4.4 and Chapter Five section 5.4.

[862] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 117.

In the light of these points, Küng concludes that the title, "Son," was given to Jesus not in a sense of "a physical divine sonship, as Islam always assumed and rightly rejected (because it awakened associations of intercourse between a god and a mortal woman), but God's *choosing Jesus and granting him full authority.*"[863] To support this conclusion, he points out that from the perspective of Jewish monotheism there would not be a problem in this kind of belief concerning the status of Jesus, and "the primitive Christian community, made up entirely of Jews, would have no difficulty holding this view. Nor would Islam."[864]

Küng suggests three ways of understanding the doctrine of the Trinity from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Firstly, he notes that believing in God the Father in the New Testament means believing in the one God whom Judaism, Christianity and Islam all share. Küng indicates that the "Father" in this expression should be understood not literally, but symbolically. Secondly, the term, "Son of God," should be understood in the revelation of the one God in the man Jesus of Nazareth. And, also, Jesus Christ should be recognised not as an eternal and intrusive hypostasis, but as a human and historical person concretely related to God. Thirdly, believing in the Holy Spirit should be understood as God's power and might which is working among human beings in this world. Further, Küng points out that the doctrine of the Trinity is not the criterion for being a Christian, but belief in One God, the practical imitation of Christ and trust in the power of God's Spirit all work together in the life of a Christian.[865]

Küng maintains that this redefining of the doctrine of the Trinity will really help in promoting dialogue between Muslims and Christians. He believes that if Christians try to understand the doctrine of the Trinity by going back to the New Testament, they may understand Muslims better. He advises both Muslims and Christians if they want to understand each other better, to go back to their Holy Books and try to understand their doctrines in the light of these holy books. For instance, according to Küng, if Christians go back to the New Testament, they will discover what great differences there are between original expressions concerning the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the subsequent dogmatic teachings of the Church on the doctrine of the Trinity.[866]

In one of his recent essays, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism" [1993],[867] Küng criticises the title "Son of God", and the doctrine of the Incarnation in order to make them intelligible for better dialogue with people of other faiths. He states that in the dialogue process Christians do not any longer underestimate the objection of Jews and Muslims to the doctrine of the Trinity which is unintelligible to them because, according to them, that doctrine destroys the belief in one God. Also, Küng notes that after the Enlightenment period more and more Christian intellectuals have raised similar objections to the doctrine as a conse-quence of historical-critical exegesis and the subsequent development of critical analysis of Christian dogma.[868] In the light of these objections, Küng tries to make "central Christian dogmas" intelligible to avoid false

---

[863] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 118.

[864] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 118.

[865] Küng, Christianity and World Religions, p. 121; Küng, Christianity, pp. 28ff.

[866] In this point, Küng refers to the Finnish New Testament scholar H. Räisänen's view concerning the significance of going back to the New Testament to re-express the doctrine of Trinity to promote Christian-Muslim understanding. Räisänen, argues, "Today, it is clear for the New Testament scholarship that there is hardly anything in the New Testament that resembles even remotely the doctrine of the Trinity. This insight might in itself provide a fresh starting point for dialogue. But perhaps even more interesting is the fact that some layers of the New Testament bear a striking resemblance to the Qur'anic portrait of Jesus" (Räisänen, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an: Reflection of a Biblical Scholar", MW, 70 (1980), pp. 122-133).

[867] Küng, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", in R.F. Berkey & S.A. Edwards, eds., Christology in Dialogue, (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), pp. 229-247.

[868] Küng, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", p. 230.

confrontations in the process of interreligious dialogue. To fulfil this objective he scrutinises the meaning of being a "Son of God" for Jesus.

After pointing out the fact that before Jesus, the term "Son of God" had been used in the Old Testament for human beings in general and for the people of Israel specifically,[869] Küng underlines that Jesus himself did not use the term "Son of God" for himself, since his message was not to present his own person, his role, or status, but was to proclaim God and His Kingdom to people in a simple way by using short stories and parables from daily life.[870] Then, he moves on to explain the relation of Jesus to God within the context of the New Testament as follows: Firstly, according the Küng, it is a well known fact that "Jesus himself spoke, prayed, and struggled out of an ultimately inexplicable experience of God, a sense of God's presence, yes, even a sense of unity with God as his father." Secondly, he maintains that the historical-critical scholar-ship has proved/shown that Jesus himself did not describe himself as "Son of God." Thirdly, he draws a conclusion from Jesus' authority against the teaching and practice of the religious establishment of his time that he was "more than Moses", and "more than the prophets."

Thus, it is obvious that only after the event of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, was the title of "Son of God" used to describe him. Küng argues that this attempt to designate Jesus as "Son of God" did not cause any problem among Jews until the Council of Nicea and Chalcedon in which Jesus was described as "the same nature as the father," and the classical Trinitarian doctrine was developed as "one God in three persons." Up to that time this title was not formulated or understood as a dogmatic doctrine but as an exaltation of his status.[871] In his *Credo* [1993], Küng maintains that if the sonship of Jesus is not understood as a physical divine Sonship but as an expression of election and empowerment of Jesus, "there would be few objections to it . . . from Jewish and Islamic monotheism."[872]

In short, according to Küng, Christians should take into account the Jewishness and Jewish environment of Jesus together with the New Testament, leaving aside the dogmatic developments which came out from the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon to make comprehensible the meaning of the title "son of God" both for themselves and others. As has been pointed out in Chapter Five, section 5.4, Küng recognised the prophet Muhammad as a "prophetic corrective" for Christians in this same sense.

Küng further points out that after the dogmatic formula-tion of the classical Trinitarian dogma in the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon, the more theologians have attempted to explain the relation between God, Son and the Holy Spirit by using Hellenistic arguments, the more problems have come out in "harmonising faith in the one God with belief in the divine sonship, and the more problems they have had in distinguishing the Son of God from God, while at the same time affirming the oneness of God." Therefore, argues Küng, it is very difficult for Christians to explain the relation between God and Jesus to the Jews and Muslims who believe in the same God. For that reason, Küng maintains that in the process of interreligious dialogue for Christians the question should be to explain "the unity of God and Jesus, of Father and Son (and then also of the Spirit) . . . in such a way that the unity and uniqueness of God are preserved, as well as the identity of the person Jesus Christ," instead of elucidating the question of "How are three persons in the

---

[869] See, Exod. 4:22f; Hos. 11:1; Jer. 31:9; Deut. 14:1; Hos. 1:10.
[870] Küng, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", pp. 232-233.
[871] Küng, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", pp. 234-235.
[872] Küng, Credo, p. 59.

Godhead related in the one divine nature? Or, how do the two natures in Christ function in one person?".[873]

After this explanation, Küng urges Christians to under-stand the meaning of the incarnation by taking into account the life of Jesus, since he argues that if this is done correctly, then the concept of incarnation "refers to the total earthly life and death and new life of Jesus," not to the dogmatic statements of the Councils, such as that he has the same hypostasis or the same nature with the Father. Further, the above explanation of the meaning of the title "Son of God" and the doctrine of incarnation led Küng to re-articulate the Christian faith in Father, Son, and Spirit by taking into account other prophetic religions, such as Judaism and Islam in the process of interreligious dialogue.[874]

As has been observed so far, although Küng's views on the status of Jesus have slightly changed in the process of his dialogical approach towards other religions, he has not moved in the direction of a non-absolutist Christology by leaving aside the uniqueness and normativeness of Jesus. For, according to him, the move from the uniqueness and normativeness of Jesus to the non-uniqueness and non-normativeness of Jesus "would alienate him from his faith community and it would tend to diminish the depth and firmness of his personal commitment to Jesus Christ."[875]

However, in doing so, he limits the uniqueness and normativeness of Jesus to Christians by stressing that Jesus "is for us [Christians] the way, the truth, and the life! . . . Jesus Christ is for Christians the decisive and regulative norm" as the Torah is for Jews and the Qur'an is for Muslims.[876] He repeats his firm and steadfast conviction about the uniqueness and normativity of Jesus in his "Foreword" to Knitter's work *One Earth Many Religions* [1995] as follows:

> a Christian theologian, even in dialogue with followers of other religions, must defend the normativity and finality of Jesus Christ as God's revelatory event for Christians – with-out, however, making any arrogant claims of superiority over other religions. Christians can accept the truth claims of other religions only 'conditionally' (that is, conditioned by the norm of Jesus Christ), just as followers of other religions can accept the truth claims of Christianity only conditionally.[877]

Here, although Küng still considers Jesus as the unique and normative revelation of God, he limits it to Christians by asking them not to use it as a tool to announce his superiority over other religious figures. In this sense, he gives the impression that he moves away from his previous view that Jesus is superior to other religious figures in terms of his birth, life, message and death. Also,

---

[873] Küng, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", p. 238.

[874] He states, "To believe in God the father means, according to the New Testament, to believe in the one God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have this belief in common.

To believe in the Holy Spirit means to believe in God's effective power and strength in humankind and in the world. Again, Jews, Christians, and Muslims have this belief in common.

To believe in the Son of God means to believe in God's revelation in the man, Jesus of Nazareth. This is the area of decisive difference among the three prophetic religions (Küng, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", p. 238).

[875] Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", pp. 194-195. These comments were made by Küng personally to Knitter.

[876] Küng, "What Is True Religion? Toward an Ecumenical Christology", in L. Swidler, ed., Towards the Universal Theology of Religions (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987), p. 247; Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions", 119-125; Küng, Global Responsibility, pp. 98-99. In these works, Küng always qualifies his defending the uniqueness and normativity of Jesus with the phrase "for us" or "for Christians".

[877] Küng, "Foreword", in Knitter, One Earth Many Religions, p. ix.

Küng's employ-ment of three different criteria to evaluate truth in religions seems to support this conclusion. For he considers Jesus Christ as the specifically Christian criterion directly for Christians, not for people of other faiths to determine "whether and to what extent the Christian religion is Christian at all."[878]

Parallel to this relativistic understanding of the status of Jesus, Küng developed his views on the possibility of the salvific value of non-Christian religions in general and Islam in particular during this period. For instance in his *Christianity and World Religions* [1985] and *Global Responsibility* [1991], Küng considers world religions in general and Islam in particular as ways of salvation by arguing that just as the different rivers of the earth have similar profiles and patterns of flow, the world religions, too, have different systems, but in many respects have "similar profiles, regularities and effects." Küng states:

> Confusingly different though all the religions are, they all respond to similar basic human questions. Where does the world and its order come from? Why are we born and why must we die? What determines the destiny of individual and humankind? What is the foundation for moral awareness and the presence of ethical form? And they all offer similar ways of salvation over and above their interpretation of the world: ways out of the distress, suffering and guilt of existence – through meaningful and responsible action in this life to a permanent, abiding, eternal salvation.[879]

Here, Küng seems to take a further step towards acknowledging the world religions as independent ways of salvation apart from Jesus Christ. He explicitly states that all religions including Christianity offer their followers similar ways of salvation. He also acknowledges Islam as a way of salvation for Muslims in the same way that Christianity is for Christians by stressing that "Muslims need no longer 'be subject to the everlasting fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels'; they 'can win eternal salvation." This means that Islam, too, can be a way of salvation; perhaps not the normal, the 'ordinary' way, so to speak, but perhaps a historically 'extraordinary' one."[880]

In our opinion, by this conclusion Küng implies Jesus Christ as the unique and normative revelation of God is directly the saviour of Christians not Muslims or others, since they attain salvation through their own religious figures, independently from him.

Evaluation: As has been considered so far, Küng, as one of the distinguished theologians of the twentieth century and a pioneer of interreligious dialogue, has developed his theology of religions as a parallel to his dialogue with world religions. In so doing, unlike Hick and Knitter, he has avoided making such claims which would alienate him from his faith community and diminish his

---

[878] Küng, Global Responsibility, pp. 97-98; Küng spells out three different criteria to evaluate truth in religions. His first criterion is the *humanum*. According to this criterion "a religion is true and good if and insofar as it is human, does not suppress and destroy humanity, but protects and furthers it. His second criterion is the general religious criterion. According to this criterion, "a religion is true and good if and insofar as it remains true to its own origin or canon, to its authentic 'nature', its normative scripture or figure, and constantly refers to it". His third criterion is specifically Christian. According to this criterion, "a religion is true and good if and insofar as it shows the spirit of Jesus Christ in its theory and praxis". Then he clarifies that this last criterion can only be applied directly to Christianity, not other religions: "on the basis of the self-critical question whether and to what extent the Christian religion is Christian at all" (Küng, Global Responsibility, pp. 97-98; Küng, "What Is True Religion", pp. 244-245).

[879] Küng, Global Responsibility, pp. 128-129.

[880] Küng, Christianity and the World Religions, pp. 23-24.

personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Now, we will turn to discuss Küng's views on the status of Jesus from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Küng reconsiders the traditional doctrines such as the Trinity and Incarnation in the light of current Christian-Muslim dialogue and new scientific developments in order to make those doctrines acceptable to Muslims and compre-hensible for Christians in our present day. This attempt of Küng seems to be helpful for the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue, since it urges dialogue partners to consider critically their own beliefs and doctrines which imply the superiority of one religious figure to another. As has been observed above, by following this approach Küng himself moved from holding Jesus as the normative and final Word of God not only for Christians but also others, to recognising him as God's normative and final revelation only for Christians.[881] By this shift, Küng seems to do justice to his own faith while recognising the normativeness of other religious figures for their followers. This approach of Küng certainly contributes more to promoting Christian-Muslim dialogue than either Hick's or Knitter's approach.

Firstly, this approach allows the Christian dialogue partner to keep the particular element of his/her faith which separates it from others without rejecting the particularities of others. As is well known, one becomes a Christian by one's belief in Jesus Christ through whom Christians know God. So, from the perspective of a committed Christian, this approach is more beneficial than other approaches.

Secondly, through this approach dialogue will be rescued from being restricted to those who seem ready to abandon the particularity of their faith, and open to everyone. In terms of Christian-Muslim dialogue, this means that a genuine dialogue does not occur only between liberal-minded Christians and Muslims but between those Christians who hold Jesus as the normative and final element for their beliefs and those Muslims who consider the Qur'an as the Word of God and the Prophet Muhammad as the seal of prophets.

Thirdly, to adopt an approach which, while retaining one's own particularity, is also open to the particularities of other faiths rescues one from being accused of being imperialistic. This approach "sees various traditions, their origins and their bearers of salvation in their context and according to the standing they enjoin." With regard to Christian-Muslim dialogue, while this approach provides Christians the opportunity to evaluate the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad in the light of Islamic context, it provides Muslims with the opportunity to understand the person of Jesus in the light of the Christian faith.

As has been shown so far, although Küng's under-standing of the status of Jesus seems to contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue by doing justice to both the Christian and the Islamic faith, he could not rescue himself from the criticism of some theologians. For example, while some of them are charging him not to cross the theological Rubicon,[882] others

---

[881] This shift occurred in three stages. Firstly, he moves away from his consideration of Jesus as the norma normans for not only Christians but also for those who belong to other religions to the assertion that although he is directly the norma normans for Christians, he is only indirectly so for non-Christians. Secondly, in a later essay, too, Küng seems to give up the indirect normativity of Christ for non-Christians by arguing that Christians must regard Jesus as God's normative and final revelation for themselves without "making any arrogant claims of superiority over other religions" (See Scott Cowdell, "Hans Küng and World Religions: Emergence of a Pluralist Theology", Theology 92 (1989), pp. 85-92; Kenneth W. Brewer, "The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of the Pluralist Theology of Religions", in Kuschel & Haring, eds., Hans Küng: New Horizons for Faith and Thought, pp. 198-215).

[882] Knitter asserts that although there are significant changes in Küng's thoughts concerning the normativity and uniqueness of Jesus Christ, he has not crossed the theological Rubicon yet. For according to Knitter, "To cross it means to recognize clearly, unambiguously, the possibility that other religions exercise a role in salvation history that

criticise him for not taking the traditional Christian perception of Jesus seriously enough.[883] It seems that Küng does not deserve these criticisms. As a committed Christian who wants to create a suitable environment for better dialogue between people of different faiths in general and Christians and Muslims in particular, he has tried very sincerely to be faithful to his own faith and open to the faiths of others.

We may conclude that Küng cannot be put in the same category as Hick and Knitter, since he does not ask Christians to give up the normativeness and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Also, he cannot be regarded on the same level as those who acknowledge Jesus as the normative and unique revelation of God not only for Christians but for those who belong to other religions. But he can be considered "mid-way between the full pluralist theology and the inclusivism of the post-Vatican II Catholic approach exemplified by Rahner," as Alan Race correctly located him.[884]

6.5 Conclusion

Our examination of the views of three renowned Christian scholars on the status of Jesus has shown that the influence of current interreligious dialogue is encouraging Christians to develop a new Christian theology of religions by reconsidering the status of Jesus. Generally speaking we may say that all our thinkers agreed on abandoning the exclusivistic understanding of the status of Jesus which holds him as the absolute saviour apart from whom there is simply no salvation. But they disagreed on how his new status should be understood. Concerning this point, while Küng prefers to do self-criticism of the traditional Christian beliefs about the person of Jesus by holding him unique and normative for Christians, Hick and Knitter argue for the reconsideration and revision of the traditional Christian perception of Jesus for the sake of better relations with people of other faiths.

As we pointed out, Hick and Knitter encourage Christians to revise and reinterpret their traditional beliefs and doctrines concerning the status of Jesus. In doing so, they attempted to understand Jesus as an eschatological and spirit-filled prophet with a unique God-consciousness through whom Christians could experience God. They felt that this idea of Jesus might facilitate dialogue between Christians and non-Christians. It seems that by doing this they underestimate the faith of those who observe their prayers and worship of God through the uniqueness and normativity of the Christ-event for them. In the same way, they also influence Muslims to underestimate their own distinctive beliefs, such as the finality of the Prophet Muhammad and the uniqueness of the Qur'an for a genuine dialogue with non-Muslims. As D'Costa rightly remarks, Hick and Knitter's position logically is a form of exclusi-vism[885] in the sense that for the sake of better dialogue both Christian and Muslim partner should put aside the particularities of their faiths. This sort of demand can rule out one of the most important rules of interreligious dialogue, that no one partner can or should step outside of his or her religion and suspend his or her own religious experience and beliefs.[886]

---

is not only valuable and salvific but perhaps equal to that of Christianity; it is to affirm that there may be other saviors and revealers besides Jesus Christ and equal to Jesus Christ. It is to admit that if other religions must be fulfilled in Christianity, Christianity must, just as well, find fulfilment in them" (Knitter, Hans Küng's Theological Rubicon", in Swidler, ed., Towards a Universal Theology of Religions, pp. 224-230).

[883] Brewer, "The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of the Pluralist Theology of Religions", p. 198.

[884] Race, Christians and Religious Pluralism, p. 67; Brewer, "The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of Pluralistic Theology of Religions", p. 206.

[885] D'Costa, "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions", RS, 32 (1996), pp. 223-232.

[886] See Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules of Dialogue", pp. 1-4.

Küng's self-criticism of the Christian faith in the light of other faiths by holding Jesus as the unique and normative revelation of God seems to represent the mediating position. It neither absolutises nor abandons the uniqueness of the Christ event, but it relativises it by restricting it to Christians. It seems that this position would help dialogue more than others, since it urges Christians to consider Jesus as God's normative revelation and saviour for them, and also to be open to acknowledge other religions and their religious figures as real mediations of God's grace. By doing this, it stimulates Christians to approach non-Christian religions with "openness and eagerness to learn more of God's ways in the world."[887]

As has been seen so far, Küng's views on the status of Jesus seem to contribute to promoting Christians' relations with people of other faiths in general and Muslims in particular. This approach certainly retains the balance which is necessary between a positive Christian appreciation of non-Christian religions and the Christian commitment which comes to a focus in Jesus.

From the Christian-Muslim dialogue point of view, this approach can be regarded as a very significant develop-ment, since it provides a great opportunity for a theological dialogue. As has been observed in Chapters Four and Five, a more positive Christian theological evaluation of the status of the Qur'an and the prophethood of Muhammad is closely related to the status of Jesus and the question of salvation. In this respect, in the process of dialogue as long as Christians consider Jesus as decisive and normative for those who have chosen to follow him, and not in any universal sense for others, Christians can acknowledge that Muslims can obtain salvation by following the Qur'an and their own prophet. It seems that such an understanding does not underestimate the centrality of Jesus for Christians, but it relativises it in relation to religious figures of other religions. This means that Christians can still retain the absoluteness of Christ for themselves, but they do not assert it in relation to people of other faiths.[888] Or, as A. Race remarks, "Jesus is 'decisive' not because he is the focus for the light everywhere in the world, but for the vision he has brought in one cultural setting . . . Jesus would still remain central for the Christian faith."[889] Also, as Swidler emphasises if this line of thought continues to develop "then many of the disagreements between Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others in this area will disappear. Jews and Muslims, and others religious persons will not thereby become Christians, of course, for Yeshua [Jesus] for them is not the door to the divine that he is for Christians, but perhaps their charges of blasphemy and idolatry against Christians will thereby be dissipated. But most important, the Christian tradition will thereby much more likely make sense to many contemporary Christians."[890]

In the light of the findings of this chapter, we may conclude that in the dialogue process what we need is a full commitment to our own faith and its mediator, and yet at the same time an openness toward other faiths and their mediators, in the sense of acknowledging that God has made himself known and has made salvation available through those mediators also.[891] In this sense, we may conclude that openness to dialogue cannot be used as a reason for abandoning the normativity of Jesus for Christians, since to demand this is against the nature of dialogue.

---

[887] Haight, "Jesus and World Religions", p. 337.

[888] See Mary A. Stenger, "The Understanding of Christ as Final Revelation", in Phan, ed., Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism, pp. 191-205.

[889] Race, Christians and Religious Pluralism, pp. 135-136.

[890] Swidler, After the Absolute, p. 113.

[891] See Macquarrie, "Revisiting the Christological Dimensions of Uniqueness", in Swidler & Mojzes, eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter, pp. 94-99.

Conclusion

In accordance with our primary aim expressed in the introduction, in this study we have pursued Christian dialogue concerns from the Second Vatican Council [1962-1965] to the present day. We have studied both the official views of the main Christian Churches – the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches – and the views of individual thinkers on such particular issues as the question of the status of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad, and the person of Jesus. Generally speaking, throughout our study we have witnessed that the Christian attitude towards people of other faiths in general and Muslims in particular, both officially and individually, has undergone fundamental shifts in the last three decades. The former one-way street has become open to two-way traffic, and the one-sided monologues have been supplemented with a readiness to listen and understand.

In this conclusion, we will reflect upon the following matters from the point of view of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Firstly, we will elaborate the positive develop-ments in the Christian dialogue initiatives. Secondly, we will consider the shortcomings of these developments. Thirdly, we will discuss the new opportunities which these developments have created. And finally, we will conclude our study by giving a Muslim response to these develop-ments.

Positive Developments

Our first chapter has revealed that the promulgation of the epoch-making document *Nostra Aetate* [196-] of the Second Vatican Council opened a new period in the Roman Catholic Church's relationship with Muslims. After fourteen hundred years of condemnation and rejection, Islam began to be seen as a religious entity which Christians should respect and with which Christians should enter into dialogue. Also, this Council stimulated Church authorities to concentrate upon the common points between Christians and Muslims more than their differences, that both worship the same God, both belong to the same family of Abraham in terms of their faith, both share the same common humanity. The other significant side of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council is that it brought to an end the age-old Catholic axiom of *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* by explicitly acknowledging the possibility of salvation for non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular.

As our second chapter shows, through its special dialogue agency which was set up during the Council, the Roman Catholic Church authorities tried to promote this new positive and dialogical relationship with Muslims. In doing so, the authorities of this agency first of all deter-mined its policy and prepared its members for dialogue with Muslims. They organised regional and international dialogue meetings with Muslims and published some significant documents to create a suitable environment for better relations. Also, both Pope Paul VI and John Paul II have tried to urge Christians to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue by citing the Second Vatican Council's statements in their encyclicals and visiting Muslim countries and hosting Muslim delegations in the Vatican, regarding Muslims as brothers and sisters of Christians.

Our examination of all these events has demonstrated that the most significant side is their encouragement of Christians to continue to have a dialogical attitude towards Muslims in every circumstance. The great advantage of this is that even when difficulties and tensions arise, Christians are encouraged to look for positive solutions rather than retreating into the old ways of condemnation and hatred.

As has been observed in the third chapter, following in the footsteps of the conciliar teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the WCC in turn at its Kandy consultation [1967] adopted the dialogical attitude as a new basis for Christian relationship with people of other faiths. After the Kandy meeting, the personnel of the WCC began to organise multilateral dialogue meetings with people of other faiths in order to experience dialogue and discuss the problems as well as the successes that such dialogue would bring. Like the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, they established a dialogue subunit [DFI] to promote the WCC's relationship with people of other faiths. In this way, the personnel of DFI organised bilateral and multilateral dialogue meetings in order to seek how both Christians and people of other faiths can live together peacefully in religiously pluralistic societies.

After twenty years of dialogue experiences, the personnel of the DFI published a land mark document called *Guidelines on Dialogue* [1979] in order to help the member Churches of the WCC in their relationship with people of other faiths. The most significant contribution of this document was that by its promulgation as an official statement of the WCC, non-Catholic Christians obtained an official document to guide their relationship with people of other faiths.

The most significant point of the WCC's dialogue activities is their stress that dialogue should be established on common practical and social issues, not theological questions. In the light of this, the personnel of the WCC have considered dialogue with people of other faiths as a tool to solve common problems and to promote peace, justice, and good will regionally and worldwide.

In short, our examination of the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC demonstrate that the traditional narrow exclusivism has largely disappeared from the agenda of these mainstream Churches and has left in its place a more open attitude towards people of other faiths in order to establish a better world in which both Christians and non-Christians can live peacefully.

The second part of our study demonstrates how, differ-ently from the institutional dialogue events of the major Christian Churches, individual scholars and theologians have dealt with crucial theological questions. In doing so, their face-to-face relations with Muslims have stimulated them to reconsider the status of the Qur'an, the prophet-hood of Muhammad and the person of Jesus Christ for a genuine dialogue. Our examination of contemporary Christian evaluations of the status of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad in Chapters Four and Five has shown that entering into dialogue with Muslims has led Christians to move away from former polemical approaches to the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad to a more sympathetic and positive understanding. In doing so, all the scholars whose views have been considered in these chapters have tried to make theological room for the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad within the Christian theology of religion. In so doing, they emphasized that the Qur'an is no longer considered as a product of Muhammad's own thinking but as God's word which came to him from beyond; Muhammad is regarded no longer as only a religious and political genius, but as a prophet along the lines of the great Old Testament prophets. Also, except Cragg and Kerr, all our thinkers implied that if Christians want to understand the nature of the Qur'an and the phenomenon of Muhammad for a genuine dialogue with Muslims, they need to observe the contribution of the Qur'anic teaching to the lives of Muslims. In other words, what these thinkers suggest is that instead of discussing whether the Qur'an was an inspiration from God or whether the Prophet Muhammad was inspired by God, it is necessary to observe whether the Qur'an or the Prophet Muhammad has an inspiring influence upon Muslims. This seems to be a very positive development, since it calls non-Muslims not to try to evaluate Islam *a priori* in the light of their own religious traditions.

Some of our thinkers – Küng and Kerr – consider the Prophet Muhammad and his teaching a "prophetic corrective" and "as a witness for Jesus" for Christians in the sense that the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad can help Christians to reconsider their understanding of Jesus. The positive side of this argument is that it leads Christians not to fear the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad, but to consider them seriously in order to benefit from them.

As has been observed in Chapter Six, what Christians experience in the dialogical relationship may affect the way in which they understand their faith. Parallel to the above developments, Christian thinkers have attempted to reconsi-der their traditional beliefs about the person of Jesus. They have frequently argued for abandoning the exclusivist understanding of the status of Jesus which holds him as the absolute saviour apart from whom there is simply no salvation. The most significant implication of this chapter is if Christians consider Jesus as the decisive and normative revelation of God for those who have chosen to follow and not in any universal sense, they can acknowledge that Muslims may obtain salvation by following the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad.

In the light of all the above points, we may say that the second part of our thesis clearly demonstrates that indivi-dual thinkers have gone beyond the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC. Instead of focusing their attention on Muslims as people and not on their faith, Islam, and its phenomenon, they have attempted to accord Islam as a religion a divine origin. In doing so, they imply that Muslims can attain salvation by following the Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad, just as Christians can attain it through Jesus Christ. In fact, this conclusion is supported in Chapter Six where it is shown that Küng, among others, considers the Qur'an as the decisive and regulative norm for Muslims, just as Jesus is for Christians.

In short, all the above positive developments indicate that Christian-Muslim dialogue is no longer a luxury but a theological necessity for a better world in which both Christian and Muslims can live together peacefully. For that reason, what Christians and Muslims need to do is to show a full commitment to their own faith and mediators, and yet at the same time an openness towards the other faiths and mediators, in the sense of acknowledging that God has made himself known and has made salvation available through that faith and mediator as well.

Shortcomings

Our research has demonstrated that besides the above positive developments there are also a number of short-comings in the contemporary Western Christian interest in dialogue with Islam. Broadly speaking, as the first part of our study has revealed, the dialogical attitude of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC towards non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular was frequently presented as a means of evangelism in situations where direct procla-mation of the Gospel message was no longer possible. So, both the Catholic Church and the WCC in their official pronouncements have continued to espouse the view that dialogue is and should remain a tool for proclamation, or at least of preparing the way for evangelism. By doing this, it has been implied that interreligious dialogue is valued only for its potential usefulness in fulfilling evangelisation. It was also emphasised that non-Christian religions are fulfilled or perfected in Jesus and Christianity, because what they have is the partial reflection of the exhaustive Christian revela-tion. This means that without the Christian faith, non-Christian religions are incapable of leading their followers to salvation.

Within this general context, the most significant short-coming of the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC is that in their official pronounce-ments both of them have spoken about Muslims, rather than their faith Islam. This implies that Christians want to dialogue with Muslim men and women without acknowl-edging their faith. In other words, they want to dialogue with Muslims as individuals, not as followers of a particular faith. Because of this point, neither of them have tried to make theological room for the most significant elements of the Islamic faith, namely, the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad. In connection with this shortcoming, neither the Catholic Church nor the WCC has considered Islam as a means of salvation. For, according to them, what Islam has as truth and holiness is the partial reflection of the exhaustive Christian truth which was revealed in Jesus Christ.

Our examination of post-Vatican II developments in Chapter Two has demonstrated that although the authori-ties of the Catholic Church have struggled to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue as we have indicated above, in recent statements of Pope Paul II and the documents of the Pontifical Council there are implications that some of the Catholic authorities want to go back to the pre-Vatican II period in which good Muslims were regarded as anony-mous Christians or as those who had an implicit faith in the Church.

As the second part of our study demonstrated, the most significant shortcoming of the individual thinkers' views on the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad and the Person of Jesus is that none of them has taken into account seriously the faith of sincere believers while dealing with these pheno-menan. Chapters Four and Five have shown that some of the thinkers gave the impression that Muslims have misunderstood the status of the Qur'an and the nature of the prophethood of Muhammad. In so doing, these scholars have subjected the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad to their own understanding of the revelation and prophethood and tried to teach Muslims how they need to understand the nature of the Qur'anic revelation and the prophethood of Muhammad. In the same vein, as our Chapter Six indicates, Hick and Knitter implied that for two thousand years millions of Christians were misguided in holding the traditional Christian perception of the person of Jesus. This sort of approach explicitly underestimates the faith of those who observe their prayer and worship through their traditional beliefs about the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad and the Person of Jesus.

In short, all these shortcomings have demonstrated that although Christian-Muslim dialogue has come a long way in the last thirty-five years, there is still a double standard in Christians' evaluation of Muslims and their faith. For, as our research implies, both official bodies and individual thinkers have subjected Muslims and their faith to a completely different set of standards and criteria than they subjected their faith. Also, as we have observed in Chapter Two, there is a double standard in Pope Paul VI and John Paul II's views about Muslims. For example, on the one hand, when they have spoken to Muslims, they seem to go beyond the teaching of Vatican II by calling Muslims as brothers and sisters of Christians and praising their worship on every occasion. On the other hand, when they addressed Christian audiences, they insisted on the necessity of evangelisation of Muslims and proclamation of the Gospel message to them, because according to them there is only one way to salvation and that it is the Christian way, namely, Jesus Christ.

New Chances for Future Dialogue

Our study of contemporary Christian concerns on dialogue presents new opportunities to both Muslims and Christians for a genuine and fruitful dialogue. Firstly, after the epoch-making

teaching of the Second Vatican Council, although there were some roadblocks for a genuine Christian-Muslim dialogue, it seems that there will be no giving up of dialogue. For, as the prolific Catholic theolo-gian Küng rightly maintains, world peace depends on peace between religions, and peace between religions can only be possible through dialogue.

Secondly, dialogue is not only used to find reasons for respecting others but also tries to know and appreciate them as they are, not as we want to see them. This means that what we need for a genuine dialogue is to understand our dialogue partners from within as they understand them-selves, and to acquire their horizons, perspective's and sensibilities so as to be able to see and experience the world from that perspective. For instance, if Christians want to understand the faith of Muslims or Muslims want to understand the faith of Christians, they must not look at what they might call Islam or Christianity, but they must look at the world, so far as possible, through Muslim or Christian eyes.

Thirdly, dialogue can be used not only as a tool to get to know others, but as an opportunity to learn from them so as to transform and expand ourselves. As our research demonstrates, while, on the one hand, Christians use the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad as a "prophetic corrective" to revise their understanding of the person of Jesus anew, on the other hand, Muslims can benefit from Christians to understand and explain the nature of the Qur'an in accordance with the needs of our present circum-stances. This means that both Christians and Muslims should be open to new developments and to each other's interpretation of their religious figures in order to fulfil the need for mutual learning.

Fourthly, our research indicates that for a genuine and fruitful dialogue we need to abandon all kinds of tools which seem to impose our own religious particularity on others or try to convert others to our faith. Instead we should assume mutual witnessing. This means that in the dialogue process we should share our own good news with others, as well as being ready to share their good news. So, it seems that what the official dialogue agencies should do is to encourage their members to share their own good news, their own particularities and their own distinctive elements with others, as well as being ready to share the other's ones with full respect. By doing this, it will be possible to correct the limited perceptions of each sides, and so arrive eventually at a truer knowledge and experience of divine transcendence than each side's religious tradition could achieve on its own.

Fifthly, the second part of our study reveals that there is a tendency that what we need as Muslims and Christians in the dialogue process is not to make dogmatic and absolute claims about our own particularities, but to try to live and show their contribution to our lives. For example, in the dialogue process between Christians and Muslims what Christians should do is not to make absolute and exclusive claims about the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ, but try to follow his way; and what Muslims should do is not prove the finality, uniqueness and superiority of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad to others, but to apply the Qur'anic message to their lives and follow the Prophet Muhammad. Briefly, what we need to do in the dialogue process is not to announce the superiority of our religious figures, but to live and apply their messages to our lives. This means that instead of making dogmatic claims about our faiths, we need to prove their quality in practice. In Knitter's words, we should give priority to orthopraxy more than orthodoxy in the dialogue process.

Connected with this point, our research has demon-strated that a relativistic approach to one's own beliefs seems to contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding more than the other approaches. For this approach keeps the balance between positive appreciation of each other's faiths and our commitment which comes to us in our own particular beliefs. With regard

to Christian-Muslim dialogue, the benefit of this approach is that it leads the Christian dialogue partner to see the Qur'an as the Word of God for Muslims, while holding Jesus as God's normative and regulative Word for Christians.

Sixthly, as our research has shown us, there is a tendency in the contemporary Christian interest in interfaith dialogue for the mission policy of the Church to change from trying to convert non-Christian dialogue partners to the Christian faith to the more profound conversion of each dialogue partner to God. With regard to the Christian-Muslim dialogue, this point seems to be a natural result of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, since, as has been observed in Chapter One, the Roman Catholics explicitly acknowledge that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. If this is the case, then it seems that the traditional Christian understanding of mission and the Islamic understanding of *da'wah* would move away from trying to convert the other to their own faith to mutual transforma-tion towards the Transcendent Reality.

A Muslim Response to Christian Dialogue Concerns

As has been pointed out, our study of contemporary Christian dialogue initiatives demonstrates that there have occurred epoch-making changes in Christian thinking about Muslims and their faith, Islam, on both official and individual levels. In concluding our study, we would like to hint at how Muslims need to respond to these changes to keep them going for a genuine and fruitful dialogue between Christians and Muslims which depends on mutual understanding and respect. For the future of Christian-Muslim dialogue depends on Muslims' response to the Christian concerns.

First of all, as Muslims, we need to establish an official agency, like the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Church and the Office on Interreligious Relations of the WCC, to carry out dialogue with Christians on behalf of the whole Muslim world.

Secondly, this dialogue agency should do more and more research on Christian faith and Christian-Muslim dialogue to produce experts and to get to know Christian dialogue partners closely.

Thirdly, this official dialogue agency also needs to publish a set of guidelines for dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims in general and Christians in particular, as did the Catholic Church and the WCC, to help Muslims in their relationship to people of other faiths.

Fourthly, individual Muslim thinkers should develop a theology of interfaith relations that regards religious pluralism as a divinely ordained system of human co-existence. In order to do this, experts on interfaith dialogue should re-read the related Qur'anic materials in the light of multi-faith context by investigating them with new meanings and nuances.

Lastly, it is a future hope that Christians and Muslims will see their common interests and help one another in order to further them; it is the hope of this research to increase understanding and respect between these related faiths.

Bibliography

I- Official Documents

ABBOT, Walter M., *The Documents of Vatican II: All Sixteen Official Texts Promulgated by the Ecumenical Council, 1963-1965* (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

ARIARAJAH, Wesley, "Observations: Dialogue Concern in the New Structure of the WCC", *Current Dialogue*, 19 (1991), pp. 2-5.

ARIARAJAH, Wesley, "San Antonio and Other Faiths", Current Dialogue, 16 (1989), pp. 3-8.

ARINZE, Francis, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Two Aspects of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church", *Bulletin*, 77 (1991), pp. 201-202.

ARINZE, Francis, "The Engagement of the Catholic Church in Interreligious Dialogue since Assisi 1986, *Pro Dialogo*, 95 (1997), pp. 204-212.

"Baar Statement: Religious Plurality, Theological Pers-pective and Affirmations", *Current Dialogue*, 19 (1991), pp. 47-51.

BORRMANS, Maurice, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

BROWN, Stuart E., ed., *Meeting in Faith: Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversation Sponsored by the WCC* (Geneva: WCC, 1989).

"Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths: The Kandy Report", *Religion and Society,* 14/2 (1967), pp. 64-69.

"Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths: The Zürich Àide-Mémoire", in S. Samartha, ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 33-45.

Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah: Proceeding of the Chambesy Dialogue Consultation (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1982).

Co-existence between Religions: Reality and Horizons, A Consultation Between Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and World Islamic Call Society (Rome: Vatican Polygot Press, 1990).

"Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975), pp 738-742.

"Degree on the Church's Missionary Activity, in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975), pp. 813-862.

"Dialogue Between Men of Living Faiths: The Ajaltoun Memorandum", in S.J. Samartha, ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 15-32.

"Dialogue in Community: statement adopted by the consultation", in Samartha, ed*., Faith in the midst of Faiths: Reflection on Dialogue in Community* (Geneva: WCC, 1977), pp. 134-149.

"Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation", in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975), pp. 750-765.

"Dogmatic Constitution on the Church", in A. Flannery, ed., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975), pp. 350-426.

FLANNERY, Austin, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publica-tion, 1975).

GIOIA, Francesco, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997).

GOODALL, Norman, *The Uppsala 68's Report; Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the WCC, Uppsala, 1968* (Geneva: WCC, 1968).

In Good Faith: The Four Principles of Interfaith Dialogue (London: CCBI, 1991).

Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations: Office on Interreligious Relations (Geneva: WCC, 1992).

NEUNER, Joseph, & DUPUIS, Jacques, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church,* (Bangalore: Theological Publication In India, 1996, Sixth Revised and Enlarged Edition).

ORCHARD, Richard K., *Witness in Six Continents; Records of the Meeting of the Commission on the World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964).

«Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World», in A. Flennary, ed*., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975), pp. 903-1001.

PATON, David M., ed., *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi, 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December 1975* (Geneva: WCC, 1976).

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER RELIGIOUS DIALO-GUE, «Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ», *Bulletin*, 77 (1991), pp. 201-250.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER RELIGIOUS DIALO-GUE, *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds Which Unite Us, 16 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Rome: 1994).

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Address to the Leaders of Other Faiths», in Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1996), pp. 409-410.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Address of the Pope at the Con-clusion of the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat», *Bulletin*, 56 (1985), pp. 122-123.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Address to the Roman Curia», in Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church,* (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1996), pp. 411-414.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Letter to the Bishops of Asia», in Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1996), p. 415.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Message to All Muslims in Favour of Lebanon (Rome, September 7, 1989)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 416-417.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Message to the Faithful of Islam at the End of the Month of Ramadan (Rome, April 3, 1991)», in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 451-543.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «Redemptoris Missio: An Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate», in W.R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 3-55.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «The Speech of Holy Father John Paul II to Young Muslims during His Meeting with them at Casablanca, Morocco», *Encounter*, 1985, pp. 1-10.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Islamic Leaders of Senegal (Dakar, February 22, 1992)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 475-479.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Leaders of Ghanaian Muslims (Accra, May 8, 1980)» in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 229.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Muslim Leaders of Kenya (Nairobi, May 7, 1980)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 226-227;

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Participants in a 'Colloquium between Christians and Muslims' (Rome, December 7, 1989)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 424-425.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Professors from Turkey in Rome (Rome, May 12, 1989), in F.Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 403-404.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Representative of Muslims of the Philippines (Davao, February 20, 1981)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 235-237.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Representatives of the European Islamic Community (Assisi, January 10, 1993)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 504-505.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Representatives of the Muslim Community in France (Paris, May 31, 1980)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 233-234.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Representatives of the Muslims of Belgium (Brussels, May 19, 1985)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 284-285.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the Representatives of the Muslims of Benin (Parakou, February 4, 1993)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* pp. 506-507.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, "To the Catholic Community of Ankara (11.29.1979)", in F. Gioia, ed. *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 219-222.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II* (Ottowa: Canadian Con-ference of Catholic Bishops, 1980).

POPE JOHN PAUL II, «To the People of Pakistan (Karachi, February 16, 1981)», in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 234-235.

POPE PAUL VI, *Paths of the Church, Ecclesiam Suam, Ency-clical Letter of Paul VI* (Boston: St. Paul Books& Media), n.d.

POPE PAUL VI, "To the Faithful of Indonesia", in F.Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 176-177.

POPE PAUL VI, "To the Islamic Community of Uganda", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 164-165.

POPE PAUL VI, "To the New Ambassador of Pakistan", in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue,* p. 168.

POPE PAUL VI, "To the Representatives of Muslims in Turkey", in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 149-150.

POPE PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in M. Walsh & B. Davies, eds., *Proclaiming Justice and Peace* (London: Collins), pp. 204-242, n.d.

"Recommendation of the Four Section addressed to the Secretariat", *Bulletin*, 18 (1971), pp. 124-125.

Relations with People of Other Faiths: Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain (London: BCC, 1981).

"Report on the 'Seminar on Christian-Muslim dialogue' held in Tripoli (1st-5th February 1976", *Bulletin*, 31 (1976), pp. 5-13.

SAMARTHA, Stanley J., ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1971).

SAMARTHA, S.J. & TAYLOR J.B., eds*., Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Papers from Broumana 1972* (Geneva: WCC, 1972).

SAMARTHA, Stanley J., ed., *Towards World Community: The Colombo Papers* (Geneva: WCC, 1975).

SAMARTHA, Stanley J., ed*., Faith in the midst of Faiths: Reflections on Dialogue in Community* (Geneva: WCC, 1977).

SECRETARIAT FOR NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS, "The Attitude of the Church towards Other Religions: Reflec-tions and Orientations on Dialogue and, Mission", *Bulletin,* 56 (1984), pp. 126-141.

SECRETARIAT FOR NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS*, Guidelines A Dialogue Between Muslims and Christians* (Rome: 1969).

SECRETARIAT FOR NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS, *Meeting the African Religions* (Rome: 1969).

SECRETARIAT FOR NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS, *Towards the Meeting of Religions: Suggestions for Dialogue, General Section* (Vatican City: Polyglot, 1967).

TAYLOR, John B., "Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Colombo 1982", *Islamochristiana,* 8 (1982), pp. 201-215.

"Text of the final declaration of the Tripoli Seminar", *Bulletin*, 31 (1976), pp. 14-18.

VAN DER BENT, A.J., *Sixteen Ecumenical Councils* (Geneva: WCC, 1986).

VISSER'T HOOFT, William A. ed*., The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the WCC* (London: SCM Press, 1954).

VISSER'T HOOFT, William A., ed., *The New Delhi Report; Report of the meeting of the Third Assembly of the WCC* (London: SCM Press, 1962).

WILSON, F.R., ed., *The San Antonio Report* (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

"World Council of Churches and Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies; 'An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines'", in Samartha, ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movements* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 47-54.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CENTRAL COM-MITTEE, *Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 10th-21st, 1971* (Geneva: WCC, 1971).

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies* (Geneva: WCC, 1979).

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Work Book for the Fifth Assembly of the WCC, Nairobi, Kenya 23 November-10 December, 1975* (Geneva: WCC).

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangeli-zation* (Geneva: WCC, 1977).

II- Other Materials

ANDERSON, G.H. & STRANSKY, T.F., *Christ's Lordship & Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981).

ARCHER, John C*., Mystical Elements in Muhammad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924).

ARIARAJAH, S. Wesley. *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

ARIARAJAH, Wesley, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: WCC, 1985).

ARKOUN, Muhammad, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions and Uncommon Answers* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994).

ARMSTRONG, Karen, *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1992).

BARNES, Michael, *Religions in Conversation: Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism* (London: SPCK, 1989).

BARTH, Karl, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, v.4/3a (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978).

BARTH, Karl, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, v.1/2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978 first published in 1958).

BASETTI-SANI, Giulio, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist: Prophet of Interreligious Reconciliation* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974).

BASETTI-SANI, Giulio, *The Koran in the Light of Christ: A Christian Interpretation of the Sacred Book of Islam* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977).

BENNET, Clinton, *Victorian Images of Islam* (London: Grey Seal Books, 1992).

BERKEY, B.F. & EDWARDS, S.A., eds., *Christology in Dialogue* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993).

BERNHARDT, Reinhold, *Christianity without Absolutes* (London: SCM Press, 1994).

BOWDEN, John, *Jesus: The Unanswered Questions* (London: SCM Press, 1988).

BROWN, David, *The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985).

BUABEN, Jabal M., *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1996).

BURTON, John, *The Collection of the Qur'an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

BURROWS, William R., ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993).

CAMPS, Arnulf, *Patterns in Dialogue: Christianity and Other Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983).

CARLYLE, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and Heroic in History* (New York: John Wiley, 1849).

CARRUTHERS, Gregory H., *The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Theocentric Model of the Christian Theology of World Religions: An Elaboration and Evaluation of the Position of John Hick* (New York: University Press of America, 1990).

CASPAR, Robert, *Traite De Theologie Musulmane: Historie De La Pensée ReligieuseMusulmane*, Tome I (Rome: Pontificio Instituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamictica, 1987).

CLENDENIN, Daniel B., *Many Gods-Many Religions: Christianity Encounters World Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1995).

COBB, John B., *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transforma-tion of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES, *Witness to God in Secular Europe* (Geneva: 1984).

COOK, Michael, *Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

COWARD, Harold, *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

COWARD, Harold, *Sacred word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988).

COWDELL, Scott, *Is Jesus Unique? A Study of Recent Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

COX, Harvey, *Many Mansions: A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths* (London: Collins, 1988).

CRACKNELL, Kenneth, *Justice, Courtesy and Love; Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions* (London: Epworth Press, 1995).

CRACKNELL, Kenneth, *Towards a New Relationship: Christians and People of Other Faiths* (London: Epworth Press, 1987).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *Call of Minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *Mind of the Qur'an: Chapters in Reflections* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *Muhammad and the Christian: A Question of Response* (London: Longman and Todd, 1984).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *Readings in the Qur'an* (London: Collins, 1988).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *Returning to Mount Hira': Islam in Contemporary Themes* (London: Bellew Publishing, 1994).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference* (London: SPCK, 1986).

CRAGG, Kenneth, *The Event of the Qur'an: Islam in its Scripture* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971).

CRONE, P. & COOK, M., *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

DANIEL, *Islam and the West; The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993, first published in 1960).

DANIEL, Norman, *The Arabs and the Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1979).

D'COSTA, Gavin, ed., *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990).

D'COSTA, Gavin, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation* (New York: University of America Press, 1987).

D'COSTA, Gavin, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

DINOIA, Joseph, *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1992).

DOUGLAS, J.D., ed., *Let The Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelisation, Lausanne Switzerland* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publication, 1975).

DUNN, James, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1980).

DUPUIS, Jacques, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

DYCH, William A., *Karl Rahner, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992).

ESACK, Ferid, *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

FARRUGIA, Joseph, *Vatican II and the Muslims: The Church's Consideration of Islam in Vatican II and its Resonance in Subsequent Christian-Muslim Relations* (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1987).

FITZGERALD, M. L. & CASPAR, R., *Signs of Dialogue: Christian Encounter with Muslims* (Philippines: Silsilah Publications, 1992).

FITZMAURICE, Redmond, *What will the Third Vatican Council have to say about Relations between Christians and People of other Faiths?*, Occasional Paper No. 14, (Birming-ham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1997).

FORWARD, Martin, *Muhammad: A Short Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

GAUDEAL, Jean-Marie, *Encounter and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*, (Roma: Pontificio Instuto di Studi Arabi&Islamici, 1984).

GIACOMELLI, Renzo, *Men of God: Men of Others* (New York: St. Paul Publication, 1994).

GILLIS, Chester, *A Question of Final Belief: John Hick's Pluralistic Theory of Salvation* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

GODDARD, Hugh, *Christians and Muslims: From double standards to mutual understanding* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995).

GOULDER, Michael, ed., *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued* (London: SCM Press, 1979).

HADDAD, Y.Y. & HADDAD, W.Z., eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995).

HAIGHT, Roger, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

HALLENCREUTZ, Carl F. *New Approaches to the Men of Other Faiths, 1938-1968; A Theological Discussion* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1970).

HALLENCREUTZ, Carl F. *Dialogue in Community: Current Issues in Ecumenical Relationship* (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1977).

HEBBLETHWAITE, Brian, *The Incarnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

HEIM, Mark S., *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995).

HICK, John & KNITTER Paul, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987).

HICK, John, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

HICK, John, *God and Universe of Faiths* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993, first published in 1973).

HICK, John, *God Has Many Names; Britain's New Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

HICK, John, *Interpretation of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

HICK, John, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: Mac-millan, 1989).

HICK, John, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

HICK, John, *The Rainbow of Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 1995).

HOURANI, Albert, *Europe and Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

HOURANI, Albert, *Western Attitudes towards Islam*, The Montefiore Memorial Lecture, The University of Southampton, 1974.

HOURANI, Albert, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

IPEMA, Peter, *The Islam Interpretations of Duncan B. Macdonald, Samuel M. Zwemer, A. Kenneth Cragg and Wilfred C. Smith: An Analytical Comparison and Evaluation*, unpublished PhD thesis (Hartford: The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1971).

JOMIER, Jacques, *How to Understand Islam* (London: SCM Press, 1989).

JUNG, C.G., *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, second edition, 1968).

KHURSID, Ahmad, *Islam and the West* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1979).

KIMBALL, Charles, *Striving Together: A Way Forward in Christian-Muslim Relations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

KINNAMON, Michael & BRIAN E. Cope, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Geneva: WCC, 1997).

KLOOTWIJK, Eeuwout, *Commitment and Openness: The Interreligious Dialogue and Theology of Religions in the Work of Stanley S. Samartha* (Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boeken-centrum, 1992).

KNITTER, Paul, *Towards A Protestant Theology of Religions; A Case Study of Paul Althaus and Contemporary Attitudes* (Marburg: N.G. Elbert Verlag, 1974).

KNITTER, Paul, J*esus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996).

KNITTER, Paul, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes towards the World Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1985).

KNITTER, Paul, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995).

KRAEMER, Hendrik, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House, 1938).

KUNNUMPURAM, Kurien, *Ways of Salvation: The Salvific Meaning of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Poona: Pontifical Athenaeum, 1971).

KUSCHEL, K.J. & HÄRING, H., eds., *Hans Küng: New Horizons for Faith and Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

KUSCHEL, Karl-Josef, *Abraham: A Symbol of Hope for Jews, Christians and Muslims* (London: SCM Press, 1995).

KÜNG, Hans, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (London: SCM Press, 1991).

KÜNG, Hans & MOLTMANN, Jurgen, eds., *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity*, Concilium (London: SCM Press, 1994).

KÜNG, Hans *et al., Christianity and World Religions; Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993, first published in 1986).

KÜNG, Hans, *Christianity: The Religious Situation of Our Time* (London: SCM Press, 1995).

KÜNG, Hans, *Credo: The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today* (London, SCM Press, 1993).

KÜNG, Hans, *On Being Christian* (London: Collins, 1977).

KÜNG, Hans, *The Church* (Garden City: Image Books, 1976).

LATOURELLE, R., ed., *Vatican II: Assesment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987)*, v. 3 (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

LINDBLOM, J., *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

LOCHHEAD, David, *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988).

MACQUARRIE, John, *The Mediators* (London: Collins, 1995).

MARTIN, Richard C., ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985).

MARSHALL, Molly Truman, *No Salvation outside the Church: A Critical Inquiry* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993).

MASON, Herbert, *Testimonies and Reflections; Essays of Louis Massignon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

MCAULIFFE, Jane Dammen*, Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

MITRI, Tarek, ed., *Religion, Law and Society: A Christian-Muslim Discussion* (Geneva: WCC, 1995).

MOJZES, P. & SWIDLER, L., eds., *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

MOULE, C.F.D., *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

MUIR, William, *The Muhammedan Controversy: Biographies of Muhammed, Sprenger on Tradition, the Indian Liturgy and the Psalter* (Edinburgh: T&T Clack, 1897).

, *The Challenge of the Scriptures: The Bible and the Qur'an,* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989).

NASR, Seyyed Hossein, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1993).

NETLAND, Harold, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

OGDEN, Schubert M., *Is There One True Religion or Are There Many* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1992).

O'LEARY, J. Stephen, *Religious Pluralism and Christian Truth* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

ÖZAL, Turgut, *Turkey in Europe and Europe in Turkey* (Lefkose: Rustem and Brother, 1991).

PALACIOS, Miguel A., *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (London: Frank Cass, 1968).

PANIKKAR, Raimondo, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

PERCY, J. Ottley, ed., *Facing the Unfinished Task; Messages Delivered at the Congress on World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961).

PETERS, E.F., *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

PHAN, Peter C., ed., *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990),

PHIPPS, William E., *Muhammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teaching* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

PRANGER, Jan Hendrik, *Dialogue in Discussion; The World Council of Churches and the Challenge of Religious Plurality Between 1967-1979* (Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1994).

RACE, Alan, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

RAHMAN, Fazlur, *Islam* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicol-son, 1966).

RAHMAN, Fazlur, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

RAHMAN, Fazlur, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980).

RÄISÄNEN, Heikki, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 1997).

RAMSEY, Michael, *Jesus and the Living Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

RICHARD, Lucien, *What are they saying about Christ and world religions* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981).

RICHARDS, Glyn, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London: Routledge, 1989).

RIPPIN, Andrew, Muslims, *Their Religious Beliefs and Practices: The Formative Period,* v.1, (London: Routledge, 1990).

ROBINSON, Neal, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

ROCALVE, Pierre, *Louis Massignon et L'Islam*, (Damas: Institut Francais De Damas, 1993).

RUOKANEN, Mikka, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

RUBIN, Uri, *The Eye of Beholder: The Life of Muhammad As Viewed by the Early Muslims, A Textual Anaysis (*Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995).

SAMARTHA, J. Stanley, *Between Two Cultures* (Geneva: WCC, 1996).

SAMARTHA, J. Stanley, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter religious Relationship,* (Geneva: WCC, 1981).

SAMARTHA, J. Stanley, *One Christ Many Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

SANDERS, John, *No Other Name: Can Only Christians Be Saved?* (London: SPCK Press, 1992).

SANNEH, Lamin, *Piety & Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996).

SCHIMMEL, Annemarie, *And Muhammad is His Messenger; The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

SELL, Edward, *The Life of Muhammad* (London: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1913).

SHEARD, Robert B., *Interreligious Dialogue in Catholic Church since Vatican II: An Historical and Theological Study* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987).

SIDDIQUI, Ataullah, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996).

SMITH, Wilfred C., *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

SMITH, Wilfred C., *Questions of Religious Truth* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1967).

SMITH, Wilfred C., *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972).

SMITH, Wilfred C., *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, first published in 1962).

SMITH, Wilfred C., *Towards a World Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

SMITH, Wilfred, C., *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981).

SMITH, Wilfred, C., *What is Scripture: A Comparative Approach* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

SOUTHERN, R.W., *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

SPELLMAN, Gé *et al*., eds., *Muslims and Christians in Europe: Breaking New Ground* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1993).

SULLIVAN, Francis A., *Salvation outside the Church, Tracing History of the Catholic Church Response* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

SULLIVAN, Francis A., *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic Church and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

SWIDLER, L. & MOJZEZ, P., eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

SWIDLER, Leonard, *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future and Religious Reflection* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

SWIDLER, Leonard, ed., *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).

TRACY, David, *Dialogue with the Other: The Interreligious Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

VANELDEREN, Martin, *Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1990).

VROOM, Hendrik, *No Other Gods: Christian Belief in Dialogue with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996).

WAINES, David, *An Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

WALLACE, Ronald, *Inter-faith Dialogue as a Method for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Unpublished PhD thesis (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1994).

WANSBROUGH, John*, Qur'anic Studies, Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

WANSBROUGH, John, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

WARD, Keith, *Religion & Creation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

WARD, Keith, *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revela-tion in the World's Religions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Christian-Muslim Encounter: Percep-tions and Misconceptions* (London: Routledge and Kegan Press, 1991).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Companion to the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1994, first published in 1967).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Muhammad -Prophet and Stateman* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Muhammad's Mecca* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *Truth in Religions; A Sociological and Psychological Approach* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963).

WATT, W. Montgomery, *What is Islam?* (London: Long-mans, 1968).

WHALING, Frank, *Christian Theology & World Religions: A Global Approach* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1986).

WILD, Stefan, ed., *The Qur'an as Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

WILES, Maurice, *Christian Theology and Interreligious Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

YATES, Timothy, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

ZAEHNER, Robin C., *At Sundry Times: An Essay in the Comparison of Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958).

ZEBIRI, Kate, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

ZIRKER, Hans, *Islam: Theologische und Gesellschaftliche* (Dusseldorf Patlos Verlag, 1993).

III- Articles and Parts of Books

ADAMS, Charles, "Islamic Religious Traditions", in L. Binder, ed., *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (New York: John Willey & Sons, 1976), pp. 29-95.

AGUILAR, Emilio G., "The Second International Christian-Muslim Congress of Cordoba (March 21-27, 1977)", in R.W. Rousseau, ed., *Christianity and Islam: The Struggling Dialogue* (Scranton: Ridge Row Press, 1985), pp. 161-183.

AHLSTRAND, Kajsa, "What's So Special about Jesus?", in Swidler & Mojzez, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books,1997), pp. 19-24.

AMALADOSS, Michael, "A Simple Solution", in Swidler & Mojzez, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 25-28.

ANAWATI, George, "An Assessment of the Christian-Muslim Dialogue", in K.C. Ellis, ed., *The Vatican, Islam and the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp. 51-68.

ANAWATI, George, "Excursus on Islam", in Herbert Vorgimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,* v. 3 (London: 1969), pp. 151-155.

ARIARAJAH, Wesley, "Some Glimpses into the Theology of Dr. Stanley Samartha", in Constantine D. Jathanna, ed., *Dialogue in Community; Essays in Honour of Stanley J. Samartha,* (Mangalore: Kathri, 1982), pp. 225-246.

ARINZE, Francis, "The Way Ahead for Muslims and Christians", *Pro Dialogo*, 91 (1996), pp. 26-32.

ARNALDEZ, R., "Dialogue islam-chrétien et sensibilitiés religieuses", *Islamochristiana*, 1(1975), pp. 11-23.

ASKARI, Hasan, «Limits to Comparison: New Testament and Qur'an», *Newsletter,* CSIC, 5 (1981), pp. 24-28.

AYLWARD, Shorter, «The Secretariat for Non-Christians», in A. Hastings, ed., *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 185-187

AYOUB, Muhammad, "Towards an Islamic Christology II; The Death of Jesus, Reality or Delusion", *The Muslim World*, 70 (1980), pp. 91-121.

AYOUB, Muhammad, «Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms *Ibn* and *Walad* in the Qur'an and Tafsir Tradition», in Y.Y. Haddad & W.Z. Haddad, eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp. 65-81.

AYOUB, Muhammad, «The Miracle of Jesus: Muslim Reflection on the Divine Word», in B. F. Berkey & S.A. Edwards, eds., *Christology in Dialogue* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), pp. 221-227.

BENABOUND, Muhammad, «Orientalism on the Revelation of the Prophet: the Case of W. Montgomery Watt, Maxime Rodinson, and Duncan Black MacDonald», *American Journal of Islamic Social Science*, 3/2 (1986), pp. 309-326.

BIJLEFELD, Willem A., «Islamic Studies within the Pers-pective of the History of Religions», *The Muslim World*, 62 (1972), pp. 1-11.

BIJLEFELD, Willem A., «The Danger of 'Christianizing' our Partners in Dialogue», *The Muslim World*, 57 (1967), pp. 171-177.

BIJLEFELD, Willem A., «Christian-Muslim Studies, Islamic Studies, and the Future of Christian-Muslim Encounter», in Y.Y. Haddad & W.Z. Haddad, eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1995), pp. 1-26.

BOBZIN, Hartmut, «'A Treasury of Heresies': Christians polemics against the Qur'an», in S. Wild, ed., *The Qur'an as Text*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 157-175.

BORRMANS, Maurice, «The Doctrinal Basis Common to Christians and Muslims and Different Areas of Con-vergence in Action», *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 14/1 (1977), 132-150.

BORRMANS, Maurice, «The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years», *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin*, 74 (1978), pp. 1-52.

BOUTIN, Maurice, «Anonymous Christianity: A Paradigm for Interreligious Encounter», *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20 (1983), pp. 602-629.

BÖWERING, Gerhard, «Christianity-Challenged by Islam», in Küng & Moltmann, eds., *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity,* Concilium (London: SCM Press, 1994), pp. 101-115.

BRAATEN, Karl, «Interreligious Dialogue in the Pluralistic Situation», *Dialogue*, 33(1994), pp. 294-298.

BREINER, Bert, «Louis Massignon-An Interpretative Essay», *Newsletter*, CSIC, 14 1985), pp. 19-26.

BREWER, Kenneth W., «The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of the Pluralist Theology of Religions», in Karl-Josef Kuschel & Hermann Haring, eds., *Hans Küng; New Horizons for Faith and Thought*, (London: SCM Press, 1993), pp. 198-215.

BUABEN, Jabal M., «The Prophet Muhammad in Twentieth Century European Scholarship», *Encounters*, 1/2 (1995), pp. 30-52.

CAMPS, Arnulf, «The Prayers for Peace at Assisi October 27, 1986: What was Shared?» in Jerald D. Gort *et al*., eds*., On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 255-266.

CARMODY, Denise and John, «Do Knitter's Theses Take Christ's Divinity Seriously», in Swidler & Mojzes, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 44-49.

CASPAR, Robert, «Islam according to Vatican II», *Encounter*, 21 (1976), pp. 1-7.

COBB, John B., «The Meaning of Pluralism for Christian Self-Understanding», in Leroy S. Rouner, ed., *Religious Pluralism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 161-174.

COBB, John B., «Interreligious Dialogue, World Ethics and the Problem of *Humanum*», in Karl-Josef Kuschel & Hermann Haring, eds*., Hans Küng; New Horizons for Faith and Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1993), pp. 283-293.

COBB, John B., "Response I" in L. Swidler, *et al*., eds., Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 79-84.

COWDELL, Scott, «Hans Küng and World Religions: Emergence of a Pluralist Theology», *Theology*, 92 (1989), pp. 82-92.

CRACKNELL, Kenneth, «The Theology of Religion in the IMC and WCC 1910-1989», *Current Dialogue* 19 (1991), pp. 3-17.

CROLLIUS, Ary A., «The Church Looks at Muslims», in R. Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987),* v. 3 (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 324-334.

DAYTON, Donald W., «Karl Barth and the Wider Ecu-menism», in Peter P. Khan, ed., *Christianity and Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House), pp. 181-189.

D'COSTA, «The New Missionary: John Hick and Religious Plurality», *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1991, pp. 66-69.

D'COSTA, Gavin, «Christian Theology and Other Religions: An Evaluation of John Hick and Paul Knitter», *Studia Missionalia*, 42 (1993), pp. 161-178.

D'COSTA, Gavin, «The Impossibility of A Pluralist View of Religions», *Religious Studies,* 32 (1996), pp. 223-232.

D'COSTA, Gavin, «The Pluralist Paradigm in the Christian Theology of Religions», *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 39 (1986), pp. 211-224.

DE SILVA, Lynn, «Non-Christian Religions and God's Plan of Salvation», *Study Encounter*, 3/2 (1967), pp. 61-67.

DHAVAMONY, Mariasusai, «Evangelisation and Dialogue in Vatican II and in the 1974 Synod», in R. Latourelle, ed*., Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years (1962-1987*), v.3 (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 264-281.

D'SOUZA, Andreas, «Christian Approaches to the Study of Islam: An Anaysis of the Writings of Watt and Cragg», *Bulletin Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies*, July-Dec. 1992, pp. 33-80.

D'SOUZA, Andreas, «Christian Approaches to the Study of Islam: An Analysis Watt and Cragg», *Bulletin Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies* Jan-Jun 1992, pp. 55-87.

DRUMMOND, R.H., «Toward Theological Understanding of Islam», *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 9/4 (1972), pp. 777-801.

DUPUIS, James, "The Salvific Value of Non-Christian Religions", in M. Dhavamony, ed., *Evangelisation, Dialo-gue and Development,* Documenta Missionalia 5 (Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972), pp. 169-194.

DUPUIS, Jacques, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation", in W.R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 131-157.

ECK, Diana, "On Seeking and Finding in the World Religions*", The Christian Century,* 107 (1990), pp. 454-457.

ECK, Diana, "What Do We Mean by 'Dialogue'? A Survey of Types of Interreligious Dialogue", *Current Dialogue,* 11 (1986), pp. 5-15.

EDDY, Paul R., "Paul Knitter's Theology of Religions: A Survey and Evangelical Response", *Evangelical Quarterly,* 63 (1993), pp. 225-245.

ESACK, Ferid, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Problems and Prospects", *The Muslim World,* 83/2 (1993), pp. 118-141.

FALATURI, Abdoljavad, "Christian Theology and the Western Understanding of Islam", in K.J. Kuschel & H. Häring, eds., *Hans Küng: New Horizons for Faith and Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1993), pp. 326-334.

FITZGERALD, Michael, "25 Years of Dialogue: The Ponti-fical Council for Interreligious Dialogue", *Islamochristiana,* 15 (1989), pp. 109-120.

FITZGERALD, Michael, "Plenary Assembly 1995: An Overview", *Pro Dialogo,* 2 (1996), pp. 150-152.

FITZGERALD, Michael, "The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions is 10 Years Old", *Islamochristiana,* 1(1975), pp. 87-96.

FITZMAURICE, Redmond, "The Roman Catholic Church and Interreligious Dialogue: Implications for Christian-Muslim Relations", *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, 3(1992), pp. 83-107.

FORD, F. Peter, "The Qur'an as Sacred Scripture: An Assesment of Contemporary Christian Perspectives", *The Muslim World*, 82/2 (1993), pp. 142-164.

GITTENS, Anthony, "A Missionary's Misgivings: Reflec-tions on Two Recent Documents", in W.R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 216-222.

GODDARD, Hugh, "Each Other's Scripture", *Newsletter*, CSIC, 5 (1981), pp. 16-24.

GRAHAM, William A., "Qur'an as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture", in R.C. Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 23-40.

HACKER, Paul, "The Christian Attitude toward Non-Christian Religions: Some critical and positive reflections", *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 2 (1971), pp. 81-97.

HAIGHT, Roger, "Jesus and World Religions", *Modern Theology*, 12/3 (1996), pp. 321-344.

HAIGHT, Roger, "Towards an Understanding of Christ in the Context of Other World Religions" *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 27 (1989), pp. 248-265.

HALLENCREUTZ, Carl F. "A Long-Standing Concern: Dialogue in Ecumenical History 1910-1971", in S. J. Samartha, ed*., Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 57-71.

HANAFI, Hassan, "Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an", in S. Wild, ed., *The Qur'an As Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 195-212.

HARRISON, Peter, "Karl Barth and the Non-Christian Religions", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 23 (1986), pp. 207-224.

HAYWARD, Victor E., "Consultation among Christians from the Muslim World", in Samartha & Taylor, eds., *Christians Meeting Muslims: WCC Papers on Ten Years of Dialogue* (Geneva: WCC, 1977), pp. 11-14.

HEIM, Mark S., "Thinking about Theocentric Christology", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 24 (1987), pp. 1-16.

HICK, John, "A Pluralist View", in Dennis L. Okholm & Timothy R. Philips, eds., *More Than One Way: Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), pp. 29-59.

HICK, John, "Christianity among the Religions of the World", *Discernment*, 1/3 (1994), pp. 11-23.

HICK, John, "Five Misgivings", in L. Swidler & P. Mojzes, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 79-84.

HICK, John, "Foreword", in Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, first published in 1962), pp. v-xii.

HICK, John, "Jesus and the World Religions", in Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate*, pp. 167-185.

HICK, John, "Religious Pluralism", in F. Whaling, ed., *The World Religious Traditions* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), pp. 147-164.

HICK, John, "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity", in Hick & Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness,* pp. 16-36.

HICK, John, "Trinity and Incarnation in the Light of Religious Pluralism", in J. Hick & E.S. Meltzer, eds., *Three Faiths-One God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 197-210.

HICK, John. "Religious Pluralism and Absolute Claims", in Leroy S. Rouner, ed., *Religious Pluralism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), pp. 193-213.

HUNTINGTON, Samuel P., "A Clash of Civilisation?", *Foreign Affairs*, 72/3 (1993), pp. 48-69.

JADOT, Jean L., "The Growth in the Roman Catholic Commitment to Interreligious Dialogue since Vatican II", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20 (1983), pp. 365-378.

JEANROND, Werner G., "The Rationality of faith: On Theological Methodology", in Karl-Josef Kuschel & Hermann Haring, eds., *Hans Küng: New Horizons for Faith and Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1993), p. 106-121.

KERR, David A., "Christology in Christian-Muslim Dialogue", in B. F. Berkey & S. A. Edwards, eds., *Christology in Dialogue* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), pp. 201-220.

KERR, David, "A Personal Pilgrimage with Islam", *Newsletter*, 19 (1988), pp. 6-21.

KERR, David, "The Prophet Muhammad: Toward A Christian Assesment", *Newsletter*, CSIC, 17/18 (1987), pp. 24-36.

KERR, David, "'He Walked in the Path of the Prophets': Toward Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad", in Y.Y. Haddad & W. Z. Haddad, eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp. 426-446.

KERR, David, "The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective", in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), pp. 119-133.

KHAN, Abraham H., "Metatheological Reflections on Recent Christian Acknowledgement of Muhammad as Prophet: Inter-faith Dialogue and the Academic Study of Religion", *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 2/2 (1986), pp. 88-203.

KHODR, George, "Christianity in a Pluralistic World; The Economy of the Holy Spirit", in Stanley Samartha, ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movements* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 131-142.

KIMBALL, Charles, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue", in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, v.3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 201-205.

KNITTER, Paul, "A New Pentecost? A Pneumatological Theology of Religions", *Current Dialogue,* 19 (1991), pp. 32-41.

KNITTER, Paul, "Christian Salvation: Its Nature and Uniqueness-Interreligious Proposal", *New Theology Review*, 7/4 (1994), pp. 33-45.

KNITTER, Paul, "Dialogue and Liberation: Foundation for a Pluralist Theology of Religions", *The Drew Gateway*, 58/1 91988), pp. 1-53.

KNITTER, Paul, "Hans Küng's Theological Rubicon", in L. Swidler *et al*., ed., *Towards the Universal Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), pp. 224-230.

KNITTER, Paul, "Interpreting Silence: A Response to Mikka Ruokanen", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 14 (1990), pp. 62-63.

KNITTER, Paul, "Interreligious Dialogue: What? Why? How?", in L. Swidler *et al*., eds., *Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 19-44.

KNITTER, Paul, "Preface", in Hick & Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp. vii-xii.

KNITTER, Paul, "Response II", in L. Swidler, *et al*., eds., *Death and Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp.124-133.

KNITTER, Paul, "Roman Catholic Approaches to Other Religions: Developments and Tensions", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 8(1984), pp. 50-54.

KNITTER, Paul, "Stanley Samartha's 'One Christ Many Religions': Pluralist and Problems", *Current Dialogue*, 21(1991), pp. 25-30.

KNITTER, Paul, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", in Hick & Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp. 178-200.

KNITTER, Paul, "World Religions and the Finality of Christ: A Critique of Hans Küng's 'On Being A Christian'", in R.W. Rousseau, ed*., Christianity and Islam: The Struggling Dialogue* (Scranton: Ridge Row Press, 1985), pp. 202-221.

KROEGER, James H., "Milestones in Interreligious Dialogue", *World Mission,* August 1977, pp. 22-26.

KUSCHEL, Karl-Josef, "Christology and Interfaith Dialogue: The Problem of Uniqueness", in B. F. Berkey & S.A. Edwards, eds., *Christology in Dialogue* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), pp. 368-386.

KUSCHEL, Karl-Josef, "'Faithful' to the New Testament?: Questions in Response to Paul Knitter, in Swidler & Mojzes, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 85-93.

KÜNG, Hans, "Belief in a Son of God", in P.Burns & J. Cumming, eds., *The Bible Now: Its Nature, Meaning and Use Today* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan), pp. 143-151.

KÜNG, Hans, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism", in B. F. Berkey & S.A. Edwards, eds., *Christology in Dialogue* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), pp. 229-247.

KÜNG, Hans, "Christianity and World Religions: The Dialogue with Islam as One Model", *The Muslim World,* 77/2 (1984), pp. 80-95.

KÜNG, Hans, "Foreword" in Paul Knitter's *One Earth Many Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), pp. ix-xii.

KÜNG, Hans, "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation", in J. Neuner, ed., *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), pp. 25-66).

KÜNG, Hans, "What is True Religion? Toward an Ecumenical Criteriology", in L Swidler, ed., *Towards the Universal Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), pp. 231-250.

KÜNG, Hans, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions; Some Theses for Clarification", in H. Küng & J. Moltmann, eds., *Christianity among World Religions*, Councilium (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), pp. 119-125.

LIN, J. van, "Mission and dialogue: God and Jesus Christ", in G. Speelman *et al.,* eds., *Muslims and Christians in Europe: Breaking New Ground* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1993), pp. 162-178.

MACQUARRIE, John, "Revisiting the Christological Dimen-sion of Uniqueness", in L. Swidler & P. Mojzes, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 94-99.

MARELLA, Paulo, "Nature, Presuppositions and Limits of Dialogue with Non-Christian Religions", *Bulletin*, 10 (1969), pp. 3-19.

MICHEL, Thomas, "Christianity and Islam; Reflections on Recent Teachings of the Church", *Encounter*, 112 (1985), pp. 1-22.

MICHEL, Thomas, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching About Islam in His Addresses to Muslims", *Islam and the Modern Age,* 18 (1987), pp. 67-76.

MINZ, Nirman, "Theologies of Dialogue; A Critique", *Religion and Society,* 14/2 (1967), pp. 7-20.

MOJZES, Paul, "Guidelines for Dialogue", in L. Swidler & P. Mojzes, eds., *Attitudes of Religions and Ideologies Towards the Outsider* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 14-15.

MOYER, J.A., "Prophecy, Prophets", in J.D. Douglas, *et al*., *New Bible Dictionary* (London: Inter Varsity Fellowship, 1962), pp. 1041-1042.

MULDER, D.C., "Developments in dialogue with Muslims: World Council of Churches", in G. Speelman, *et al.,* eds., *Muslims and Christians in Europe: Breaking New Ground* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1993), pp. 153-161.

MULDER, Dick C., "A History of the Subunit on Dialogue of the World Council of Churches", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 2(1992), p. 136-151.

MULDER, Dirk C., "Dialogue and Syncretism: Some Concluding Observations", in J. Gort *et al*., eds., *Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 203-211.

NASR, Seyyed Hossein, "In Commence of Louis Massignon: Catholic Scholar, Islamicist and Mystic", in *Presence de Louis Massignon: Hommages et temoignanes*, (Paris: Editions Maisonneuve Et Larose, 1987), pp. 50-61.

NASR, Seyyed Hossein, "Response to Hans Küng", *The Muslim World*, 77 (1987), pp. 96-102.

NASR, Seyyed Hossein, "Comments on a Few Theological Issues in Islamic-Cristian Dialogue", in Y.Y. Haddad & W.Z. Haddad, eds*., Christian-Muslim Encounter* (Gaines-ville: University of Florida Press, 1995), pp. 457-467.

NEUDECKER, Reinhard, "The Catholic Church and the Jewish People", in R. Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II: Assesment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987)*, v. 3 (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 283-323.

OESTERREICHER, John, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Introduction and Commentary", in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, v. 3 (London: 1969), 1-133.

PANNENBERG, Wolfhart, "Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims", in G.D'Costa, ed., *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 157-173.

PETERS, F.E., "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 23 (1991), pp. 291-315.

PHAN, Peter C., "Are There Other 'Saviors' For Other Peoples: Discussion of the Problem of the Universal Significance and Uniqueness of Jesus Christ", in Peter C. Phan, ed., *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 163-179.

PINNOCK, Clark H., "An Evangelical Response to Knitter's Five Theses", in Swidler & Mojzes, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 116-120.

PUSHPARAJAN, A., "Whither Interreligious Dialogue: A Reflective Response to the Vatican Document on Dialo-gue and Proclamation", *Vidyajyoti*, 56 (1992), pp. 224-232.

QUREYSI, Jamil, "Alongsideness-In Good Faith? An Essay on Kenneth Cragg", in A. Hussain, *et al*., *Orientalism, Islam and Islamists*, (Brattleboro: Amana Books, 1984), pp.203-148.

RAHMAN, Fazlur, "Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies", in R.C. Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 189-202.

RAHNER, Karl, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", in *Theological Investigations*, v.5 (London: Longman Todd, 1966), pp. 115-134.

RAHNER, Karl, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation", in *Theological Investigations*, v. 18 (London: Longman & Todd, 1984), pp. 288-295.

RAHNER, Karl, "Anonymous Christianity and Explicit Faith" *in Theological Investigations,* v. 16 (London: Long-man & Todd, 1979), pp. 52-59.

RAHNER, Karl, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church", in *Theological Investiga-tions*, v. 12 (London: Longman & Todd, 1974), pp.161-178.

RAHNER, Karl, "Anonymous Christians" in *Theological Investigations*, v.6 (London: Longman & Todd, 1969), pp. 390-398.

RAHNER, Karl, "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions", in *Theological Investigations*, v. 17 (London: Longman & Todd, 1981), pp. 39-50.

RAHNER, Karl, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian'" in *Theological Investigations*, v.14 (London: Longman & Todd, 1976), pp. 280-298.

RÄISÄNEN, Heikki, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an: Reflection of A Biblical Scholar", *The Muslim World*, 70 (1980), pp. 122-133.

RAYAN, Samuel, "The Ultimate Blasphemy: On Putting God in a Box", *International Review of Mission*, 65 (1976), pp. 129-133.

REES, Philip, "World Apart", *New Statesman*, August (1997), pp. 32-34.

Religions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

RENARD, John, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Review of Six Post-Vatican II, Church Related Documents", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 23 (1986), pp. 69-89.

RIPPIN, Andrew, "Literary Analysis of Qur'an, Tafsir and Sira: The Methodologies of John Wansbrough", in R.C. Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 151-163.

ROBINSON, Neal, "Massignon, Vatican II and Islam as an Abrahamic Religion", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 2 (1991), pp. 182-205.

ROBINSON, Neal, "The Qur'an as the Word of God", in A. Linzey & P.J. Wexler, eds., *Heaven and Earth: Essex Essays in Theology and Ethics*, (West Sussex: Churchman Publishing, 1986), pp. 38-54, 88-109.

ROUKANEN, Mikka, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions at the Second Vatican Council", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 14 (1990), pp. 56-61.

ROYSTER, James E., "The Study of Muhammad: A Survey of the Approaches from the Perspective of the History and Phenomenology of Religion", *The Muslim World*, 62 (1972), pp. 49-70.

SAMARTHA, Stanley, "A Pause for Reflection", in Samartha, ed., *Faith in the midst of Faiths: Reflection on Dialogue in Community*, (Geneva: WCC, 1977), pp. 8-15.

SAMARTHA, Stanley, "Dialogue as a Continuing Concern", in Samartha, ed*., Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Move-ment,* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), pp. 150-162.

SAMARTHA, Stanley, "Dialogue in Community: A Step Forward, An Interpretation of the Chiang Mai Consulta-tion", in Samartha, ed., *Faith in the midst of Faiths: Reflection on Dialogue in Community* (Geneva: WCC, 1977), pp. 183-190.

SAMARTHA, Stanley, "Opening Address: Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Perspective of Recent History", in Samartha &Taylor, eds., *Christian-Muslim Dialogue; Papers from Broumana 1972*, (Geneva: WCC, 1972), pp.10-15.

SAMARTHA, Stanley, "In Search of a Revised Christology: A Response to Knitter, *Current Dialogue*, 21 (1991), pp. 30-37.

SANDERS, John, «Idolater Indeed!», in Swidler & Mojzez, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 121-125.

SANNEH, Lamin, «Muhammad's Significance for Christians», *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 1 (1991), pp. 25-29, 36-38.

SCHIMMEL, Annemarie, «The Prophet Muhammad as a Centre of Muslim Life and Thought», in A. Schimmel & A. Falaturi, eds., *We Believe in One God* (London: Burns & Oates, 1979), pp. 35-61.

SHARPE, Eric J., «Mission between Dialogue and Proclamation», in W.R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 161-172.

SHARPE, Eric J., «The Goals of Interreligious Dialogue», in J. Hick, ed., *Truth and Dialogue: The relationship between world religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), pp. 77-95.

SIDDIQUI, Ataullah, «Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Problems and Challenges», *Encounters,* 2/2 (1996), pp. 123-136.

SMITH, Jane I., «Some Contemporary Protestant Theolo-gical Reflections on Pluralism: Implications for Christian-Muslim Understanding», *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 8/1 (1997), pp. 63-83.

SMITH, Wilfred C., «Can Believers Share the Qur'an and the Bible as Word of God», in J. D. Gort, *et al., On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 55-63.

SMITH, Wilfred C., «Some Similarities and Differences between Christianity and Islam: An Essay in Com-parative Religion», in J. Kritzeck & Winder R.R., eds., *The World of Islam* (New York: A Division of Arno Press, 1980), pp. 47-59.

SMITH, Wilfred C., «The True Meaning of the Scripture: An Empirical Historian's Nonreductionist Interpretation of the Qur'an», *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 11(1980), pp. 487-505.

SMITH, Wilfred C., "The Study of Religion and the Study of Bible", in M. Levering, ed., *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 18-28.

SONN, Tamara, «The Dialogue between Islam and the Judeo Christian Tradition», in C. Wei-hsun & G.E. Spiegler, eds., *An Analysis and Sourcebook of Developments Since 1945: Religious Issues and Interreligious Dialogues*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 437-473.

STENGER, Mary A., «The Understanding of Christ as Final Revelation», in P.C. Phan, ed., *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism*, (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 191-205.

STRANSKY, Thomas F., «The Church and Other Religions», *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 9 (1985), pp. 154-158.

SWIDLER, Leonard, «The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue», *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20/1 1983, pp. 1-4.

TROLL, Christian, «Islam and Christianity Interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Christian Scholar of Islam», *Islam and the Modern Age*, 15 (1984), pp.157-166.

TROLL, W. Christian, «Christianity and Islam: Mutual Challenges, Hans Zirker's recent work on Islam», *Orientale Christiana Periodica*, 61 (1995), pp. 571-580.

TROLL, W. Christian, «Changing Catholic Views of Islam», to be published in J. Waardenburg, ed., *Christianity and Islam: Mutual Perceptions since the Mid-20th Century* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1997), pp. 1-55.

VAN ESS, Josef, «Muhammad and the Qur'an: Prophecy and Revelation», in H. Küng *et al.*, eds., *Christianity and World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 5-18.

WATT, W. Montgomery, «Interview», *Trends*, 7/5, (1997), pp. 10-11.

WATT, W. Montgomery, «Carlyle on Muhammad», *The Hibbert Journal*, 52 (1954-55), pp. 247-255.

WATT, W. Montgomery, «Islamic Attitude to Other Religions», *Studia Missionalia*, 42 (1993), pp. 245-255.

WATT, W. Montgomery, «The Nature of Muhammad's Prophethood*, Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, 8/2 (1987), pp. 79-84.

WATT, W. Montgomery, «Thoughts on Muslim-Christian Dialogue», *Hamdard Islamicus,* 1/1 (1978), pp. 1-51.

WATT, W. Montgomery, «Ultimate Vision and Ultimate Truth», in M. Forward, ed., *Ultimate Visions: Reflections on the Religions We Choose* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), pp. 280-288.

WATT, W. Montgomery, "Muhammad as the Founder of Islam", *Studia Missionalia*, 33 (1984), pp. 227-249.

WATT, W. Montgomery, "Muhammad's Contribution in the Field of Ultimate Reality and Meaning", in *Ultimate Reality and Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy and Understanding*, 5/1 (1982), pp. 26-38.

WELCH, Alford T, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself; The Qur'anic Data", in *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, eds. R.G. Hovannisian & S. Vryonis, (Malibu,: Undena Publications, 1983), pp. 15-52.

WELCH, Alford, «Qur'anic Studies, Problems and Pros-pects*», *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 48 (1979), pp. 620-633.

WESSELS, Antonie, «Modern Biographies of Muhammad in Arabic», *Islamic Culture,* 49 (1975), pp. 99-105.

WILD, Stefan, «'We Have Sent Down to Thee the Book with the Truth . . .' Spatial and Temporal Implications of the Qur'anic Concepts *nuzul*, *tanzil*, and *inzal*», in S. Wild, ed., *The Qur'an as Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 137-153.

WRIGHT, David, «The Watershed of Vatican II: Catholic Attitudes Towards Other Religions», in A.D. Clarke & B.W. Winter, eds*., One God One Lord in a World of Religious Pluralism* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991), pp.153-171.

Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions

Nostra Aetate
Proclaimed by His Holiness
POPE PAUL VI
on October 28, 1965

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely he relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth.(1) One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,(2) until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.(3)

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims,

and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.(4)

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Muslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith (6)-are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.(7) Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles making both one in Himself.(8)

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation,(9) nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.(10) Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle.(11) In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).(12)

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, dis-plays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men,(14) so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.(15)

Notes

1. Cf. Acts 17:26
2. Cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4
3. Cf. Apoc. 21:23f.
4. Cf 2 Cor. 5:18-19
5. Cf St. Gregory VII, letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania (Pl. 148, col. 450f.)
6. Cf. Gal. 3:7
7. Cf. Rom. 11:17-24
8. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16
9. Cf. Lk. 19:44
10. Cf. Rom. 11:28
11. Cf. Rom. 11:28-29; cf. dogmatic Constitution, Lumen Gentium (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) pag. 20
12. Cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32
13. Cf. John. 19:6
14. Cf. Rom. 12:18

15. Cf. Matt. 5:45

Appendix 2
World Council of Churches
Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies

Introduction: Dialogue in Community

Why the theme "Dialogue in Community"? As Christians live together with their neighbours of other faiths and ideological persuasions the emphasis has come to be placed not so much on dialogue itself as on dialogue in community. The Christian community within the human community has a common heritage and a distinctive message to share; it needs therefore to reflect upon the nature of the community Christians seek together with others and upon the relation of dialogue to the life of the Churches, as they ask themselves how they can be communities of service and witness without diluting their faith or compromising their commitment to the Triune God. Such an enquiry needs to be informed both by a knowledge of different religions and ideologies and by insights gained through actual dialogues with their neighbours. The enquiry needs also to take into account the concerns, questions and experiences of the member Churches of the WCC.

The Central Committee which met at Addis Ababa (1971) recognized that "the engagement of the World Council in dialogue is to be understood as a common adventure of the Churches." The World Council of Churches comprises various confessional heritages and a wide variety of convictions. The plurality of cultural situations as well as the varieties of religions, cultures, ideologies, political structures and social backgrounds which Christians bring to their common life together play a significant role in the discussions. Political attitudes and economic forces influence the power relationships between communities. In an age of worldwide struggle of humankind for survival and liberation, religions and ideologies have their important contributions to make, which can only be worked out in mutual dialogue.

It is a responsibility of Christians to foster such dialogue in a spirit of reconciliation and hope granted to us by Jesus Christ.

It is easy to discuss religions and even ideologies as though they existed in some realm of calm quite separate from the sharp divisions, conflicts and sufferings of human-kind. Religions and ideologies often contribute to the disruption of communities and the suffering of those whose community life is broken. Therefore the statements made here on the relationship between Christian communities and communities of their neighbours should be read with a recognition that they have a place in the total WCC programme which includes major Christian involvement in political and economic stresses and social problems as well as in issues raised by science and technology for the future of humankind. Further, they should also be evaluated in relation to other WCC concerns and in their bearing in such discussions as the unity of the Church and the unity (community) of humankind.

It will be noted that the statement and the guidelines touch religions more than ideologies. This is a conscious self-limitation because so far the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) has more experience of actual dialogues with people of living faiths than of ideologies. However, this does not mean that the dialogue programme is not concerned with ideologies. It is part of its mandate, recognizing that religions and ideologies interact and influence each other in the life of the community. The manner in which ideological factors affect religious

structures and attitudes has been considered in some of the consultations. Ideological questions touch many parts of the World Council's work. Christian-Marxist meetings were part of the programme of Church and Society for several years. In many countries Christians live and work together with neighbours who hold very definite ideological convictions. In its various programmes on science and technology, the search for a just, participatory and sustainable society, international affairs, development etc., the issues raised by ideologies play an important role. Therefore where reference to ideologies is made in the statement and guidelines, it is recognized that continuing work in this area cannot be done by the DFI alone but has to be done in cooperation with other sub-units, and drawing on the previous experiences of the World Council as a whole in this matter.

The words "mission" and "evangelism" are not often used in this statement. This is not because of any desire to escape the Christian responsibility, re-emphasized in the Nairobi Assembly, to confess Christ today, but in order to explore other ways of making plain the intentions of Christian witness and service. Christian integrity includes an integrity of response to the call of the risen Christ to be witnesses to Him in all the world.

Part I: On Community

A. Communities and the Community of Humankind

1. Christians begin their reflection on community from the acknowledgement that God as they believe Him to have come in Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things and of all humankind; that from the beginning He willed relationship with Himself and between all that He has brought to life; that to that end He has enabled the formation of com-munities, judges them and renews them. When Christians confess Him as one Holy Trinity, when they rejoice in His new creation in the resurrection of Christ, they perceive and experience new dimensions of the given humanity which God has given. Yet, the very nature and content of our Christian confession draws Christians to pay the closest attention to the realities of the world as it has developed under God's creative, disciplinary and redemptive rule. So they are led to attempt a description of communities and the community of humankind in the light of a basic Christian confession but in terms which may also find understanding and even agreement among many of other faiths and ideologies.

2. Men and women are all born into relationships with other people. Most immediately there are the members of their families, but quickly they have to explore wider relationships as they go to school or begin work. This may take place in the complexity of relationships within a village society, or within the modern urban centres of town and city which attract ever larger populations. They experience still wider associations within nation, race, religion, and at the same time they may belong to different social classes or castes which condition their ideological outlooks. Then the newspapers they read, the radio and T.V. programmes they hear and see give them an awareness of the multitude of ways in which the lives they live are dependent on people in other parts of the world, where ways of life are amazingly varied. From these, and many related contexts, they derive their sense of being part of some communities and apart from others. The sense of identity with some communities and of alienation from others is something never completely understood but it remains reality for us all at the many levels of our existence.

3. Within each particular community to which people may belong they are held together with others by the values they share in common. At the deepest level these have to do with their identity, which gives them a sense of being "at home" in the groups to which they belong. Identity may be

formed with a long historical experience, or in the face of problems newly encountered; it may express itself in communal traditions and rituals shaped through centuries, or in newer forms sometimes less coherent and sometimes more rigid. Religions and ideologies have formative influence on communities; but religions and ideologies have themselves been shaped by other elements of the culture of which they are part-language, ethnic loyalty, social strata, caste. Some communities may tend to uniformity in this regard, while others have long traditions of pluralism, and it is not infrequent that individual families may share more than one set of beliefs.

4. Human communities are many and varied. They are involved in a constant process of change which evokes their comparison with flowing rivers rather than stable monuments. But if change is always present, there can be no doubt that it has been accelerated in the present times, especially by scientific technology, economic forces and the mass media. Some changes are so rapid and dramatic as to give the experience of the loss of community and of the human isolation which follows. In other instances communi-ties are structured and reshaped: once closed communities being thrown into relationship with others with which they find themselves engaged in the task of nation building; communities formerly of a single cultural identity being opened to a cultural pluralism and plurality of religious systems; communities in which traditional religious systems may undergo far-reaching change, and, revitalized, provide renewed identity and continuity with the past. Amidst these changes many people are alienated from all community and have either given up the quest for community or are seeking it from many sources.

5. An important aspect of this accelerated change has been brought about by the complex network of relationships which has been created between human communities in recent times. More urgently today than ever in the past, the traditions of our individual communities are being drawn towards one another, sometimes into a new harmony, sometimes into a destructive whirlpool in the flowing rivers. The inter-relatedness of human communities brings with it many new challenges to mutual concern and pastoral care, the response to which, both individually and collectively as communities, will determine the character of the reality of "the community of humankind."

6. The response is often given in the form of ideologies. In fact the accelerated change has made people more sensitively aware of the need for conscious social and political action, because they find themselves in the midst of many ideological projects which attempt in various ways to shape or reshape society. Traditional communities do not escape the impact of ideological thinking and action and their varied responses may bring conflict as well as renewal.

7. There are dangers inherent in this situation, but experience of human inter-relatedness in different local situations deepens awareness of the richness of the diversity of the community of humankind which Christians believe to be created and sustained by God in His love for all people. They marvel and give thanks for this richness, acknowl-edging that to have experienced it has given many of them an enriched appreciation of the deeper values in their own traditions and in some cases has enabled them to rediscover them. But at the same time they feel sharply conscious of the way in which diversity can be, and too often has been, abused: the temptation to regard one's own community as the best; to attribute to one's own religious and cultural identity an absolute authority; the temptation to exclude from it, and to isolate it from others. In such temptations Christians recognize that they are liable to spurn and despoil the riches which God has, with such generosity, invested in His human creation . . . that they are liable to impoverish, divide and despoil.

8. Because of the divisive role to which all religions and ideologies are so easily prone, they are each called to look upon themselves anew, so as to contribute from their resources to the good of

the community of humankind in its wholeness. Thinking of the challenge to the Christian faith Christians are reminded both of the danger of saying "peace, peace" where there is no peace and of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Happy are those who work for peace: God will call them His children." (Matt. 5. 9). As workers for peace, liberation, and justice, the way to which often makes conflict necessary and reconciliation costly, they feel themselves called to share with others in the community of humankind in search for new experiences in the evolution of communities, where people may affirm their interdependence as much as respect for their distinctive identities. At the Colombo consultation of 1974 the vision of a worldwide "community of communities" was discussed. Such a vision may be helpful in the search for community in a pluralistic world; it is not one of homogeneous unity or totalitarian uniformity, nor does it envisage self-contained communities, simply co-existing. Rather it emphasizes the positive part which existing communities may play in developing the community of humankind (cf. para 6). For Christians the thought of a community of communities is further related to the kingly rule of God over all human communities.

B. The Christian Community: The Churches and the Church

9. Scattered within the world of human communities, we as Christians look for signs of God's kingly rule and truly believe in our community with Christians everywhere in the Church, the Body of Christ. Being fully in the world, the Christian community shares in the many distinctions and divisions within and between the communities of human-kind. It manifests immense cultural variety within itself, which we are bound to acknowledge as affecting not only the practice but also the interpretation of the faith by different groups of Christians. This is exemplified in South Asia by Christians who speak of their struggle, within cultures moulded by Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, to express their Christian faith in a spirit at once obedient to the Gospel and related to the cultural context. In Europe and North America the understanding and practice of the Christian faith has been deeply influenced by western culture.

10. Our experience as Christians in this widely scattered community is very varied. There are Churches who live in situations of social, cultural and national suppression, where their identity is threatened and their freedom restricted. There are times and places where Christians may have to stand apart from others in loyalty to Christ but this does not absolve Christians who have indulged in the temptations of cultural arrogance and communal exclusive-ness, both consciously and unconsciously. Thus they have contributed to the divisions within the community of humankind, and have created antagonisms between different groups within the Christian community itself. Christians, therefore, must stand under the judgement of God. We believe that there is a real sense in which our unity with all peoples lies in our common participation in- all that has so tragically created divisions within the world. It is in this way that we relate to our theme the experience of the empirical Churches that they constantly need God's forgiveness.

11. But amidst this complex, confusing and humbling situation we believe that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ retains its divine given-ness. The Gospel cannot be limited to any particular culture, but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit sheds its light in them all and upon them all. Nor is the truth of the Gospel distorted by the sinfulness of its Christian adherents. Rather, the Gospel calls them indivi-dually and in community to repentance and confession, and invites them into newness of life in the risen Christ. This reality of renewed Christian community pertains to our very deepest experience as Christians. There are many ways of speaking of this experience. For example:

· our communion in the Church as sacrament of the reconciliation and unity of humankind recreated through the saving activity of God in Jesus Christ;

· our communion with God who, in the fullness of His Trinity calls humankind into unity with Him in His eternal communion with His entire creation;

· our communion in fellowship with all members of the Body of Christ through history, across distinction of race, sex, caste and culture;

· a conviction that God in Christ has set us free for communion with all peoples and everything which is made holy by the work of God.

Though we may express our conviction of the reality of this community in different ways, we hold fast to God in Christ who nourishes His Church by Word and Sacraments.

12. We must acknowledge the close relation between our concern for dialogue and our work for visible Church unity. It is not only that the different confessional traditions have been an influence on the different approaches to dialogue and that questions concerning dialogue are seriously discussed within and between Churches, but also the con-tribution of Christians to dialogue is distorted by division among them.

13. In the WCC we experience both the possibility for common confession of faith and worship together and also the obstacles to Christian unity. We are agreed in giving a vital place in our thinking to Bible study and worship; we are able to worship our one Lord in the very different ways of the Churches represented among us. Yet we are also aware of problems concerning the authority of the Bible remaining unsolved among us and of the fact that we are not yet part of one eucharistic fellowship. It is not surprising therefore that there is controversy among Christians about the meditative use (rather than simply the intellectual study) of the holy books of other faiths and about the question of common worship between those of different faiths. There is need for further careful and sensitive study of these issues, and we request the DFI to encourage such study among the member Churches of the WCC and with our partners in dialogue.

14. As Christians we are conscious of a tension between the Christian community as we experience it to be in the world of human communities, and as we believe it in essence to be in the promise of God. The tension is fundamental to our Christian identity. We cannot resolve it, nor should we seek to avoid it. In the heart of this tension we discover the character of the Christian Church as a sign at once of people's need for fuller and deeper community, and of God's promise of a restored human community in Christ. Our consciousness of the tension must preclude any trace of triumphalism in the life of the Christian Church in the communities of humankind. It must also preclude any trace of condescension towards our fellow human beings. Rather it should evoke in us an attitude of real humility towards all peoples since we know that we together with all our brothers and sisters have fallen short of the community which God intends.

15. We understand our calling as Christians to be that of participating fully in the mission of God (missio Dei) with the courage of conviction to enable us to be adventurous and take risks. To this end we could humbly share with all our fellow human beings in a compelling pilgrimage. We are specifically disciples of Christ, but we refuse to limit Him to the dimensions of our human understanding. In our relationships within the many human communities we believe that we come to know Christ more fully through faith as Son of God and Saviour of the world; we grow in His service within the world; and we rejoice in the hope which He gives.

Part II: On dialogue

C. Reasons for Dialogue

16. The term "dialogue in community', is useful in that it gives concreteness to Christian reflection on dialogue. Moreover it focuses attention on the reasons for being in dialogue, which can be identified in two related categories.

Most Christians today live out their lives in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than their own. They live in families sometimes of mixed faiths and ideologies; they live as neighbours in the same towns and villages; they need to build up their relationships expressing mutual human care and searching for mutual understanding. This sort of dialogue is very practical, concerned with the problems of modern life – the social, political, ecological, and, above all, the ordinary and familiar.

But there are concerns beyond the local which require Christians to engage in dialogue towards the realization of a wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized. This leads in turn to a dialogue between communities, in which issues of national and international concern are tackled.

17. No more than "community" can "dialogue" be precisely defined. Rather it has to be described, experienced and developed as a life-style. As human beings we have learned to speak; we talk, chatter, give and receive information, have discussions all this is not yet dialogue. Now and then it happens that out of our talking and our relationships arises a deeper encounter, an opening up, in more than intellectual terms, of each to the concerns of the other. This is experienced by families and friends, and by those who share the same faiths, or ideology; but we are particularly concerned with the dialogue which reaches across differences of faith, ideology and culture, even where the partners in dialogue do not agree on important central aspects of human life. Dialogue can be recognized as a welcome way of obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour." Dialogue helps us not to disfigure the image of our neighbours of different faiths and ideologies. It has been the experience of many Christians that this dialogue is indeed possible on the basis of a mutual trust and a respect for the integrity of each participant's identity.

18. Dialogue, therefore, is a fundamental part of Christian service within community. In dialogue Christians actively respond to the command to "love God and your neighbour as yourself." As an expression of love engagement in dialogue testifies to the love experienced in Christ. It is a joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and a participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus "dialogue in community" is not a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. Rather it is a means of living our faith in Christ in service of community with one's neighbours.

19. In this sense dialogue has a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service. But "distinctive" does not mean totally different or separate. In dialogue Christians seek "to speak the truth in a spirit of love", not naively "to be tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine." (Eph. 4.14-15). In giving their witness they recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as Christians enter dialogue with their commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member Churches of the WCC we feel able with integrity to commend the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims,

to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue.

D. The Theological Significance of People of Other Faiths and Ideologies

20. Christians engaged in faithful "dialogue in community" with people of other faiths and ideologies cannot avoid asking themselves penetrating questions about the place of these people in the activity of God in history. They ask these questions not in theory, but in terms of what God may be doing in the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women who live in and seek community together with Christians, but along different ways. So dialogue should proceed in terms of people of other faiths and ideologies rather than of theoretical, impersonal systems. This is not to deny the importance of religious traditions and their inter-relationships but it is vital to examine how faiths and ideologies have given direction to the daily living of individuals and groups and actually affect dialogue on both sides.

21. Approaching the theological questions in this spirit Christians should proceed:

· with repentance, because they know how easily they misconstrue God's revelation in Jesus Christ, betraying it in their actions and posturing as the owners of God's truth rather than, as in fact they are, the undeserving recipients of grace;

· with humility, because they so often perceive in people of other faiths and ideologies a spirituality, dedication, compassion and a wisdom which should forbid them making judgements about others as though from a position of superiority; in particular they should avoid using ideas such as "anonymous Christians", "the Christian presence", "the unknown Christ", in ways not intended by those who proposed them for theological purposes or in ways prejudicial to the self-understanding of Christians and others;

· with joy, because it is not themselves they preach; it is Jesus Christ, perceived by many people of living faiths and ideologies as prophet, holy one, teacher, example; but confessed by Christians as Lord and Saviour, Himself the faithful witness and the coming one (Rev. 1.5-7);

· with integrity, because they do not enter into dialogue with others except in this penitent and humble joyfulness in the Lord Jesus Christ, making clear to others their own experience and witness, even as they seek to hear from others their expressions of deepest conviction and insight. All these would mean an openness and exposure, the capacity to be wounded which we see in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and which we sum up in the word vulnerability.

22. Only in this spirit can Christians hope to address themselves creatively to the theological questions posed by other faiths and by ideologies. Christians from different backgrounds are growing in understanding in the following areas in particular:

· that renewed attention must be given to the doctrine of creation, particularly as they may see it illuminated by the Christian understanding of God as one Holy Trinity and by the resurrection and glorification of Christ;

· that fundamental questions about the nature and activity of God and the doctrine of the Spirit arise in dialogue, and the christological discussion must take place with this comprehensive reference; that the Bible, with all the aids to its understanding and appropriation from the Churches' tradition and scholarship, is to be used creatively as the basis for Christian reflection on the issues that arise, giving both encouragement and warming, though it cannot be assumed as a reference point for partners in dialogue;

· that the theological problems of Church unity also need to be viewed in relation to the concern for dialogue;

· that the aim of dialogue is not reduction of living faiths and ideologies to a lowest common denominator, not only a comparison and discussion of symbols and concepts, but the enabling of a true encounter between those spiritual insights and experiences which are only found at the deepest levels of human life.

23. We look forward to further fruitful discussions of these issues (among many others) within our Christian circles but also in situations of dialogue. There are other questions, where agreement is more difficult and sometimes impossible, but these also we commend for further theological attention:

· What is the relation between the universal creative/ redemptive activity of God towards all humankind and the particular creative/redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus Christ?

· Are Christians to speak of God's work in the lives of all men and women only in tentative terms of hope that they may experience something of Him, or more positively in terms of God's self-disclosure to people of living faiths and ideologies and in the struggle of human life?

· How are Christians to find from the Bible criteria in their approach to people of other faiths and ideologies, recognizing, as they must, the authority accorded to the Bible by Christians of all centuries, particular questions concerning the authority of the Old Testament for the Christian Church, and the fact that the partners in dialogue have other starting points and resources, both in holy books and traditions of teaching?

· What is the biblical view and Christian experience of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and is it right and helpful to understand the work of God outside the Church in terms of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?

E. Syncretism

24. In dialogue Christians are called to be adventurous, and they must be ready to take risks; but also to be watchful and wide awake for God. Is syncretism a danger for which Christians must be alert?

25. There is a positive need for a genuine "translation" of the Christian message in every time and place. This need is recognized as soon as the Bible translators begin their work in a particular language and have to weigh the cultural and philosophical overtones and undertones of its words. But there is also a wider "translation" of the message by expressing it in artistic, dramatic, liturgical and above all in relational terms which are appropriate to convey the authenticity of the message in ways authentically indige-nous, often through the theologically tested use of the symbols and concepts of a particular community.

26. Despite attempts to rescue the word "syncretism" it now conveys, after its previous uses in Christian debate, a negative evaluation. This is clearly the case if it means, as the Nairobi Assembly used the word, "conscious or unconscious human attempts to create a new religion composed of elements taken from different religions." In this sense syncretism is also rejected by the dialogue partners, although there may be some who in their alienation are seeking help from many sources and do not regard syncretism negatively.

27. The word "syncretism" is, however, more widely used than at Nairobi and particularly to warn against two other dangers.

The first danger is that in attempting to "translate" the Christian message for a cultural setting or in approach to faiths and ideologies with which Christians are in dialogue partnership, they may go too far and compromise the authenticity of Christian faith and life. They have the Bible to guide

them but there is always risk in seeking to express the Gospel in a new setting: for instance, the early Christian struggle against heresy in the debate with Gnosticism; or the compromising of the Gospel in the so-called "civil religions" of the West. It is salutary to examine such examples lest it be supposed that syncretism is a risk endemic only in certain continents.

A second danger is that of interpreting a living faith not in its own terms but in terms of another faith or ideology. This is illegitimate on the principles of both scholarship and dialogue. In this way Christianity may be "syncretized" by seeing it as only a variant of some other approach to God, or another faith may be wrongly "syncretized" by seeing it only as partial understanding of what Christians believe that they know in full. There is a particular need for further study of the way in which this kind of syncretism can take place between a faith and an ideology.

28. Both these are real dangers and there will be differences of judgement among Christians and between Churches as to when these dangers are threatening, or have actually overtaken particular Christian enterprises. Despite the recognized dangers Christians should welcome and gladly engage in the venture of exploratory faith. The particular risks of syncretism in the modern world should not lead Christians to refrain from dialogue, but are an additional reason for engaging in dialogue so that the issues may be clarified.

29. Within the ecumenical movement the practice of dialogue and the giving of witness have sometimes evoked mutual suspicion. God is very patient with the Church, giving it space and time for discovery of His way and its riches (cf. II Pet. 3.9). There is need within the ecumenical fellowship to give one another space and time space and time, for instance, in India or Ghana to explore the richness of the Gospel in a setting very different from that of "Hellenized" Europe; space and time, for instance, in Korea to develop the present striking evangelistic work of the Churches; space and time, for instance, in Europe to adjust to a new situation in which secularity is now being changed by new religious interest not expressed in traditional terms. The diversity of dialogue itself must be recognized in its particular content and in its relation to specific context.

Part III: Guidelines Recommended to the Churches for Study and Action

From the experiences of Christians in dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies and from the statement of the Central Committee on "Dialogue in Community" it is evident that dialogue has become urgent for many Christians today. The Guidelines which follow are built upon the Christian convictions expressed in the first two parts of this statement; the statement and the guidelines should be read together.

It is Christian faith in the Triune God Creator of all humankind, Redeemer in Jesus Christ, revealing and renewing Spirit which calls us Christians to human relation-ship with our many neighbours. Such relationship includes dialogue: witnessing to our deepest convictions and listening to those of our neighbours. It is Christian faith which sets us free to be open to the faiths of others, to risk, to trust and to be vulnerable. In dialogue, conviction and openness are held in balance.

In a world in which Christians have many neighbours, dialogue is not only an activity of meetings and conferences, it is also a way of living out Christian faith in relationship and commitment to those neighbours with whom Christians share town, cities, nations, and the earth as a whole. Dialogue is a style of living in relationship with neighbours. This in no way replaces or limits our Christian obligation to witness, as partners enter into dialogue with their respective commitments.

These guidelines are offered to member Churches of the WCC and to individual congregations in awareness of the great diversity of situations in which they find themselves. The neighbours with whom Christians enter into relation-ship in dialogue may be partners in common social, economic and political crises and quests; companions in scholarly work or intellectual and spiritual exploration; or, literally, the people next door. In some places, Christians and the Church as an institution are in positions of power and influence, and their neighbours are without power. In other places it is the Christians who are the powerless. There are also situations of tension and conflict where dialogue may not be possible or opportunities very limited. In many places people of different living faiths interact not only with each other, but also with people of various ideologies, though sometimes it is difficult to make a clearcut distinc-tion between religions and ideologies, for there are religious dimensions of ideologies and ideological dimensions of religions, Christianity included. The emergence of new religious groups in many countries has brought new dimensions and tensions to interreligious relationships. With all this diversity in mind, the following guidelines are commended to member Churches for their consideration and discussion, testing and evaluation, and for their elaboration in each specific situation.

Learning and Understanding in Dialogue

1. Churches should seek ways in which Christian com-munities can enter into dialogue with their neighbours of different faiths and ideologies.

They should also discover ways of responding to similar initiatives by their neighbours in the community.

2. Dialogues should normally be planned together.

When planned together with partners of other living faiths or ideological convictions they may well focus on particular issues: theological or religious, political or social.

3. Partners in dialogue should take stock of the religious, cultural and ideological diversity of their local situation.

Only by being alert both to the particular areas of tension and discrimination and to the particular opportunities for conversation and cooperation in their own context will Christians and their neighbours be able to create the conditions for dialogue. They should be especially alert to infringements of the basic human rights of religious, cultural or ideological minority groups.

4. Partners in dialogue should be free to "define them-selves."

One of the functions of dialogue is to allow participants to describe and witness to their faith in their own terms. This is of primary importance since self-serving descriptions of other peoples' faith are one of the roots of prejudice, stereotyping, and condescension. Listening carefully to the neighbours' selfunderstanding enables Christians better to obey the commandment not to bear false witness against their neighbours, whether those neighbours be of long established religious, cultural or ideological traditions or members of new religious groups. It should be recognized by partners in dialogue that any religion or ideology claiming universality, apart from having an understanding of itself, will also have its own interpretations of other religions and ideologies as part of its own self-under-standing. Dialogue gives an opportunity for a mutual questioning of the understanding partners have about themselves and others. It is out of a reciprocal willingness to listen and learn that significant dialogue grows.

5. Dialogue should generate educational efforts in the community.

In many cases Christians, utilizing the experience of dialogue, must take the initiative in education in order to restore the distorted image of the neighbours that may already exist in their

communities and to advance Christian understanding of people of other living faiths and ideologies.

Even in those situations where Christians do not live in close contact with people of the various religious, cultural and ideological traditions, they should take seriously the responsibility to study and to learn about these other traditions.

Member Churches should consider what action they can take in the following educational areas:

(i) Teaching programmes in schools, colleges, and adult education systems to enhance the understanding of the cultural, religious and ideological traditions of humankind; such programmes should, wherever possible, invite adher-ents of those traditions to make their contribution.

(ii) Teaching programmes in theological seminaries and colleges to prepare Christian ministers with the training and sensitivity necessary for interreligious dialogue.

(iii) Positive relationships with programmes in university departments and other institutes of higher learning which are concerned with the academic study of religion.

(iv) The review of material used and teachings customarily given in courses of instruction at all levels in the Churches, including at theological colleges and seminaries, with a view to eliminating anything which encourages fanaticism and insensitivity to people of other faiths and ideologies.

(v) The development of Church school materials for the study of people of other faiths and ideologies.

(vi) The provision of courses for people who may be sent to serve in other cultures or who may travel as tourists in such cultures to promote their greater understanding and sensitivity.

(vii) Responsible reaction to school text books and media presentations which may prejudice the image of the neighbour.

(viii) The creative use of the media, radio, television etc., wherever possible in order to reach a wider audience in efforts to expand understanding of people of other faiths and ideologies.

Sharing and Living Together in Dialogue

6. Dialogue is most vital when its participants actually share their lives together.

It is in existing communities where families meet as neighbours and children play together that spontaneous dialogue develops. Where people of different faiths and ideologies share common activities, intellectual interests, and spiritual quests, dialogue can be related to the whole of life and can become a style of living-in-relationship. The person who asks a neighbour of another faith to explain the meaning of a custom or festival has actually taken the first step in dialogue.

Of course, dialogue between long-term neighbours may be frustrated by deeply engrained suspicions, and men and women will have to reckon not only with the communities they seek but also with the barriers between their present communities.

7. Dialogue should be pursued by sharing in common enterprises in community.

Common activities and experiences are the most fruitful setting for dialogue on issues of faith, ideology and action. It is in the search for a just community of humankind that Christians and their neighbours will be able to help each other break out of cultural, educational, political, and social isolation in order to realize a more participatory society. It may well be that in particular settings such common enterprises will generate interreligious committees or organizations to facilitate this kind of dialogue-in-action.

8. Partners in dialogue should be aware of their ideological commitments.

Dialogue should help to reveal and to understand the ideological components of religions in particular situations. When Christians find themselves in communities with neighbours of other living faiths they may have common or diverse ideological convictions.

In such situations partners need to be sensitive to both religious and ideological dimensions of the ongoing dialogue. Where Christians find themselves in communities with people of secular ideological convictions, the dialogue will at least expose shared contributions in a common search for the provisional goals of a better human community. Here dialogue may begin as a kind of "internal dialogue" seeking to bring to explicit reflection and discussion issues in the encounter of the Gospel both with ideological factors in various communities where Christians find themselves, and with the ideological assumptions of Christians themselves.

9. Partners in dialogue should be aware of cultural loyalties.

Dialogue and sensitivity to neighbours need to be developed in the area of relating Christian faith to cultures. This applies especially to those places where traditional and popular culture has been unduly despised and rejected by the Churches. A culture should not be romanticized or made into a false absolute but it may often challenge and enrich the expression of the Christian faith. After careful inter-pretation and discrimination local cultures may make meaningful contributions in symbols and liturgy, social structures, relations, patterns of healing, art, architecture and music, dance and drama, poetry and literature.

10. Dialogue will raise the question of sharing in celebrations, rituals, worship and meditation.

Human communities draw together, express, and renew themselves in ritual and worship, and dialogue presumes an attitude of respect for the ritual expressions of the neigh-bours' community. Dialogue at times includes extending and accepting invitations to visit each other as guests and observers in family and community rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. Such occasions provide excellent opportunities to enhance the mutual understanding of neighbours.

Working together in common projects and activities or visiting in homes and at festivals will eventually raise the very difficult and important question of fuller sharing in common prayer, worship or meditation. This is one of the areas of dialogue which is most controversial and most in need of further exploration.

Whether or not any such activities are undertaken, dialogue partners will want to face squarely the issues raised, sensitive to one anothers integrity and fully realizing the assumptions and implications of what is done or not done.

Planning for Dialogue

11. Dialogue should be planned and undertaken ecumenically, wherever possible.

Member Churches should move forward in planning for dialogue in cooperation with one another. This may well mean that regional and local councils of Churches will have a separate commission on dialogue.

12. Planning for dialogue will necessitate regional and local guidelines.

As the member Churches of the WCC consider, test and evaluate these guidelines they will need to work out for themselves and with their specific partners in dialogue statements and guidelines for their own use in particular situations. The WCC can best assist the member Churches in their specific dialogues by itself concentrating upon the world-wide features of the Christian dialogue with people of particular religions and ideologies. For this purpose, the WCC will arrange appropriate consultations at the world level.

13. Dialogue can be helped by selective participation in world interreligious meetings and organizations.

There are now many organizations linking world religions and seeking to enable them to cooperate for various purposes, such as the struggle for peace and justice in the community and among the nations. Christians involved in dialogue need to be selective in their participa-tion in the meetings arranged by such organizations. Christian representatives should guard the mutual recognition of and respect for the integrity of each faith. On occasion it may be necessary for Christians to make clear that their participation does not necessarily signify accep-tance of the underlying assumptions of a particular meeting or organization. Christians will normally avoid being identified with alliances against other religions or against ideologies as such. The WCC will be willing to provide consultant-observers for selected meetings of this kind but will not at present take a direct official part in the organiza-tional structure of world interreligious organizations.

To enter into dialogue requires an opening of the mind and heart to others. It is an undertaking which requires risk as well as a deep sense of vocation. It is impossible without sensitivity to the richly varied life of humankind. This opening, this risk, this vocation, this sensitivity are at the heart of the ecumenical movement and in the deepest currents of the life of the Churches. It is therefore with a commitment to the importance of dialogue for the member Churches of the WCC that the Central Committee offers this Statement and these Guidelines to the Churches.