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Jesus Christ – A Stumbling Block to Interreligious Dialogue?
Kenosis – A Christian Approach to Other Religions

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ..... **i**

Abbreviations ..... **ix**

General Introduction **1**

Part I **7**

A Historical Overview of Christian Approach to Other Religions **7**

Chapter 1 ..... **8**

Biblical Attitudes towards other Religions **8**

1.0 Introduction 8

1.1 Israel and Other Religions 8

1.1.1 God's Covenants with Humanity in the Old Testament 9

1.1.2 Violence against Pagans 13

1.1.3 Pagan Saints of the Old Testament 14

1.1.4 God of Israel and God of Nations: Particularism and Universalism 16

1.2 New Testament and Other Religions 17

1.2.1 Jesus' Approach to Gentiles 18

1.2.2 Attitude of Early Christianity to the Nations 19

1.3 Conclusion 21

Chapter 2 ..... **23**

Patristic Period: Seeds of Logos in Hellenistic Cultures and Condemnation of Unbelievers **23**

2.0 Introduction 23

2.1 Cosmic Christ Present in Creation 23

2.1.1 Justin Martyr: *Logos Spermatikos* 24

2.1.2 Irenaeus: Unity of Salvation History 27

2.1.3 Clement of Alexandria: Covenant of Philosophy 30

2.1.4 Origen: Universal Salvation– *Apokatastasis* 33

2.2 No Salvation outside the Church and other Exclusive Statements 35

2.2.1 Exclusive Statements by Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus and Origen 35

2.2.2 Cyprian of Carthage: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. 37

2.2.3 Post–Nicaean Fathers 39

2.2.4 Augustine and Followers 41

2.3 Conclusion 48

Chapter 3 50

Medieval and Modern Theologies on Religious Other: From the Axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* to the Membership in the Church through *voto et desiderio* 50

3.0 Introduction 50

3.1 Magisterium of the Church 50

3.1.1 Exclusivist Claims on Salvation 51

3.1.2 Positive Attitude to the Believers of Other Religions 52

3.2 Positive Attitude Regarding Salvation Outside the Church in Theology 53

3.3 Dialogical Encounter between Christianity and Islam 55

3.4 Thomas Aquinas on the Conditions for Salvation: Baptism by Implicit Desire 56

3.5 Discovery of New Continents and Salvation outside the Church 59

3.6 Implicit Faith and Invincible Ignorance in the Magisterium of the Church 64

3.7 Conclusion 67

Chapter 4 69

Second Vatican Council's Positive Valuation of Other Religions: An Overview 69

4.0 Introduction 69

4.1 Theological Developments in the Immediate Background of Second Vatican Council 69

4.1.1 Fulfilment Theories 70

4.1.2 Presence of Christ in Other Religious Traditions 74

4.2 Magisterium in the Immediate Past of the Second Vatican Council 77

4.2 Second Vatican Council on Other Religions 78

4.2.1 Lumen Gentium: Self–Awareness of Catholic Church 79

4.2.2 *Gaudium et Spes*: Church in its Relation to the World 81

4.2.3 *Ad Gentes*: Church's Mission in the World 83

4.2.4. *Nostra Aetate*: Religious Others 85

4.2.5 Second Vatican Council: A *New* Approach to Non–Christian Religions 87

4.2.5.1 Continuity and Discontinuity 87

4.2.5.2 Revelation and Salvation for Non–Christians 89

4.2.5.3 Church and Other Religions 91

4.2.5.4 Church's Self–Reformation 91

4.2.5.5 Church and Mission 92

4.3 Magisterium after the Council 93

4.3.1 Pope Paul VI 93

4.3.2 John Paul II 94

4.3.3 Pope Benedict XVI 95

4.3.4 Pope Francis 96

4.4 Conclusion 99

Chapter 5 101

Development of Theologies of Religious Pluralism: Its Major Trends and Conflicts 101

5.0 Introduction 101

5.1 Different Classifications 102

5.2 Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism and its Proponents 106

5.2.1 Exclusivism 106

5.2.2 Inclusivism 109

5.2.3 Pluralism 112

5.3 Conclusion 115

Chapter 6 116

Important Questions in the Theology of Religious Pluralism 116

6.0 Introduction 116

6.1 Levelling of Religions: Ontological or Functional? 116

6.2 Universal Theology or a Christian Theology? 119

6.3 Jesus Christ: A Stumbling Block to Dialogue? 121

6.4 Theological Challenges of De–Absolutization of Christology 125

6.5 Salvation of Non–Christians: through Christ or through *Other* Manifestations of God 126

6.6 Pluralism *de facto*/*de iure* 127

6.7 Relationship of Christianity to *other* Religions and Mission of the Church 128

6.8 Conclusion 129

Part II 130

Kenosis of God: Exegetical and Theological Implications 130

Chapter 7 131

Kenosis, Incarnation and Christological Dogmas 131

7.0 Introduction 131

7.1 Philippian Hymn: Some Exegetical Observations 131

7.1.1 Authorship and Originality of the Hymn 132

7.1.2 Form and Structure of the Hymn 133

7.1.3 Theological Meaning of the Hymn: Varieties of Opinions 135

7.1.3.1 Dogmatic Interpretation 135

7.1.3.2 Kenotic Theory 136

7.1.3.3 Ethical Interpretation 136

7.1.3.4 Soteriological Mythical Event 137

7.1.3.5 Christ's Divinity and Humanity in the Hymn 138

7.1.3.6 Religio–Historical Parallels to Philippians Hymn 139

7.1.3.7 Christological Relevance of the Hymn 139

7.2 Christological Dogmas of Early Church and Relevance of Kenosis 141

7.2.1 Christological Development: Hellenization of Jewish Jesus? 142

7.2.2 The Dilemma of Early Christianity 145

7.2.3 Definition of the Council of Nicaea 146

7.2.4 From Trinitarian Dispute to Christological Dispute: Post–Nicene Development 146

7.2.5 Chalcedonian Christological Definition 148

7.2.6 Definitions of Councils and Hellenization of Christianity 149

7.3 Hellenization and Theology of Religious Pluralism 151

7.4 Conclusion 154

Chapter 8 156

Kenosis in Modern Theological Discussions 156

8.0 Introduction 156

8.1 Kenotic God and God of Philosophy 156

8.1.1 Immutable God and Kenosis 157

8.1.2 Historical Jesus of Enlightenment Versus Christ of Faith 157

8.1.3 Kenosis in Modern Philosophy 158

8.2 Influence of *Kenosis* in Theology 160

8.2.1 Paradox between Impassible and Suffering God 160

8.2.2 Kenotic Theologies 161

8.2.3 *Ur–kenosis* in the Trinity 164

8.2.4 Creation as Kenosis 166

8.2.5 Kenosis and Theology of Incarnation 167

8.2.6 Kenosis in the Mission of the Church 168

8.2.7 Kenosis and Theology of Religious Pluralism 170

8.2.9 Kenosis in other Theological Disciplines 172

8.3 Conclusion 173

Chapter 9 174

Kenotic Self–Awareness in the Context of Religious Pluralism according to Bertram Stubenrauch 174

9.0 Introduction 174

9.1 Kenosis: A Key to Define Christian Relationship with other Religions 174

9.2 Kenotic Christology, not Triumphalism 175

9.3 Transcendental God and Universality and Finality of Revelation through Jesus Christ 176

9.4 Religious Other: An Indispensable Dialogue Partner 178

9.5 Dialogue and Mission 179

9.6 Identity of Christianity in its Dialogue with other Religions 181

9.7 Conclusion 183

Part III 184

Theology of Religious Pluralism, Which Recognizes, Respects and Values the Identity of other Religious Traditions based on Kenosis 184

Chapter 10 186

Defending a *Christian* Theology rather than a *World* Theology: Identity of Christianity in Interreligious Dialogue 186

10.0 Introduction 186

10.1 Christian Theology Rather than a World Theology 186

10.2 Christ's Uniqueness and Universality as Integral Part of Christian Theology 188

10.2.1 Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ: Decisive for Christ's Uniqueness and Universality in Salvation 190

10.2.2 Philippians Hymn: An Early Christian Liturgical Hymn that Depicts Early Christian Understanding about Christ. 192

10.2.3 Kenosis of God: An Impetus to Christian Relationship to Other Religions 193

10.3 Kenotic Self–Awareness of Christianity 195

10.4 Conclusion 197

Chapter 11 198

Rooted in Kenotic Self–Awareness and Open to Other Religions 198

11.0 Introduction 198

11.1 Church in Constant Need of Renewal and Purification 199

11.1.1 Other Religions Assist in the Self–Examination of Christianity 200

11.1.2 Together towards the Transformation of the World to the Kingdom of God 201

11.2 Positive Role of Other Religions in Relation to the Self–Communication of God in Jesus Christ 202

11.2.1 God is *God of all* 202

11.2.2 Universality of Christ–Event as God's Self–Communication 204

11.2.3 Religions as Dialogue Partners of God's Dialogical Self–Communication 206

11.2.3.1 Mission: Existential to Church 206

11.2.3.2 God's Self–Communication, Church, and other Religions 207

11.2.3.3 Other Religion as de iure Dialogue Partner 208

11.2.3.4 Salvific–Role of Other Religions 210

11.2.4 Name above Every Name and Universal Ecclesia 211

General Conclusion 213

Bibliography 217

Abstract (English) 244

Abstract (German) 247

Abbreviations

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	The Ante Nicene Fathers
ASCH	American Society of Church History
BAWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
CCL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CJT	Canadian Journal of Theology
CSEL	Corpus scriptorium ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
ECB	Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible
FaCh	The Fathers of the Church
FKTh	Forum Katholische Theologie
HeyJ	Heythrop Journal
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IJPR	International Journal for Philosophy of Religion
IJPS	International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society
IKaZ	Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio
JAH	Journal of Arts and Humanities
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies
JETIR	Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research
KEK	Meyers Kritisch–Exegetischer Kommentar Über Das Neue Testament

KStTh	Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie
LTK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NPNF	Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers
PG	Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graecae
PL	Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
STJ	Stellenbosch Theological Journal
ThQ	Theologische Quartalschrift
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

General Introduction

Co–existence of different religions is not a new phenomenon. However this co–existence was often conflictual and violent than peaceful and mutually respectful. The differences were not respected, nor even tolerated, but each religion was trying to dominate over other, albeit some exemptions. The long–time violent conflict between different religious confessions in Europe came to an temporary end with the introduction of legal principle *cuius regio eius religio*. This principle was an agreement to avoid violent conflict, but it presupposes that unity and peace are incompatible with plurality of confessions. Enlightenment period witnessed a strong criticism against supernatural superiority claims of religions and later a principle of separation between state and religion was established. Thus the privilege of various Christian denominations in the political structure of Europe lost. This disempowerment of religion did not confine to social and political realms. The universal truth claims of Christianity were questioned and relativized. Modern globalized world witnessed the increased coming together of different religions through economic and social migration. Coming together of religions has not only social impacts, but also theological influences. The truth claims of religions are different as well as contradictory. There were various responses to the new co–existence of religions. Some believers have steadfastly upheld the truth claims of own religion and considered other religions as inferior or even as pseudo religions. Others were fascinated by the new situation and fell into an indifferentism. Theologians have started to reflect upon the plurality of religions, to study other religions, and to engage in dialogue with other religions.

It is the duty of theology to reflect upon the reality and find answers. Comparative theology, as the name suggests engaged in the comparative study of different religions and focused on the similarities and differences between different traditions. Translation of other religious books into European languages has brought new enthusiasm in the study of these religions. Every religion has started to explain the plurality of religions in the light of own religious belief. Even though the encounter with other religions was not a new phenomenon, the response to this encounter was considerably new. While in the earlier encounters superiority claims and conflicts were at the forefront, the new encounter is characterized by the wish for a peaceful co–existence based on democratic principles.

In the first centuries, Christianity had developed their theology in dialogue with Greek philosophical schools. Christianity has adapted many concepts of Hellenistic philosophy to explain their faith. However the *false elements* of then existed religions were criticized and Christianity was presented as the only true religion. The truth of Christianity was proved not only through theological and philosophical discourses but also through the moral superiority. The development of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, coined by Cyprian of Carthage, firstly applied to the heretics and schismatics and then to the believers of other religions, was pivotal in forming the Christian attitude towards other religions. Christianity, as the only true religion and the only way of salvation, was destined to replace all other religions. This replacement motif is evident in the missionary attempts during colonial period. Missionaries have believed that "[t]he 'primitive' religions […] are all destined to perish and disappear as institutional and organized bodies of religious life" [1]. Christian faith in the universal salvific will of God and exclusive claim of Christianity as the only possible way of salvation raised theological questions and consequently some theologians tried to solve the problem by affirming the *invincible ignorance*[2] of the people about Jesus Christ and suggesting that many people belongs to the church through *implicit voto et desiderio*[3], following the concept of *baptism by desire* according to Thomas Aquinas[4]. There were also tendency, following Augustinian theology, to justify the eternal damnation of people who did not belong to the church during their life time as the result of divine predestination.[5] All theological trends that advocated for the salvation of the people outside the visible church asserted the role of the church in their salvation. Even though implicitly they are saved through the salvific efficiency of church.

While the above mentioned discussions were concentrated on the possibility of salvation beyond visible boundaries of the church, the Second Vatican Council has appreciated the positive and truth elements in other religions (NA 2). The Second Vatican Council has brought something decisively new in the attitude of church to other religions notwithstanding

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[1] Hendrik KRAEMER, A Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, New York–London 1938, 230f.

[2] Cf. PIUS IX, allocution *Singulari* Quadam (9 December 1854), in: NEUNER–DUPUIS, 1010; Bartholomé DE LAS CASAS, Traktat über die Indiosklaverei, in: M. DELGADO (ed.), Sozial–ethische und staatsrechtliche Schriften (Werkauswahl 3/1), Paderborn et. al, 1996, 59–114.

[3] Cf. DENZINGER, 3870.

[4] Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae III, q. 68, a. 2 ad 2 and 3.

[5] Cf. Antonie ARNAULD, De la nécessité de la foi en Jesus Christ pour être sauvé, in his., Œuvres 10, Paris 1777, 270.

some exceptional positive statements in the magisterium of the church. For example, in a letter to Anzir, king of Mauritania by Pope Gregory VII in 1076, it is stated that "[…] we [Christians and Muslims] believe and confess one God […] and praise and worship him daily as the creator of all ages and the ruler of this world."[6].

Even though the Second Vatican Council has expressed a positive attitude towards other religions, it did not provide a detailed theology of religions. The council has appreciated other religions mainly based on the common human dignity as the divine creature. The council recognizes *seeds of the Word* and work of Holy Spirit in the world, and thus also in other religions, before Christ's glorification.[7] Regarding the intrinsic salvific value of other religions the council did not give a positive answer. The followers of other religions can be saved, but only through the salvific role of Jesus Christ. Without providing detailed theological account, the Council expressed Church's positive attitude towards other religions. This positive attitude and the lack of detailed dogmatic explanations has initiated great enthusiasm among theologians and attempts were made to theologically establish the positive salvific value and truthfulness of other religions. This discussion is later known as *theology of religious pluralism* that started to grow as a branch of theology in 1960s[8] and it is the research area of this dissertation. For the precision of research area I would like to clarify the terminology with the help of Jacques Dupuis' work. First of all we are dealing with theology, not science or philosophy of religion. Objective detachment of the researcher or an outsiders' view (*Außenperspektive*) is not to be expected, because theology is always confession oriented. "The theology of religions […] interprets the data in the perspective of a personal commitment to a religious faith […]."[9] Therefore, this dissertation examines the plurality of religions and the salvation of their followers in the light of Christian belief. Jacques Dupuis differentiates between theology of religions and theology of religious pluralism. He prefers theology of religious pluralism, because it does not confine itself to the question of the salvation of the non–Christians. It examines the meaning of plurality of religions in God's universal salvific plan for the whole humanity.[10]

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[6] ND, 1002.

[7] Cf. NA 1-5, LG 16,17, AG 3,4,10,11,12,15,16,18, GS 12,16,22, OT 16.

[8] Cf. Jose M. VIGIL, Theology of Religious Pluralism, Wien et al. 2008, 17.

[9] Jacques DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, Maryknoll 2001, 5.

[10] Cf. ibid., 10.

Christian theologies are not unanimous in their opinion about religious pluralism. Generally, we can classify Christian theologies of religious pluralism into three, namely, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.[11] There are also many theologians who go beyond the definitions of this classification. For the precision and easiness of understanding the threefold classification is helpful. Exclusivism asserts the necessity of Christian faith and membership in the church for salvation in the line of the traditional axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* and therefore, it is also known as ecclesiocentric view. Inclusivism asserts the universal salvific will of God. Therefore, God ensures all humans possibility of salvation, even though they do not explicitly belong to Christianity due to human situations. But, still the salvation is attained through the merit of Christ, who is the unique and universal saviour, therefore inclusivist theologies of religious pluralism possess Christocentric view. Pluralist theologies of religious pluralism consider every religion as equally true and efficient salvific way for its followers. The universal salvific claim of Christianity as the only true religion is based on God's complete and definitive self–revelation in Jesus Christ. Therefore they avoid Christocentric view to place also Christianity at the same level with other religions. They holds theocentric view and considers Christ as one among many manifestations of God in the world. Other religions are to be respected as equal as own religion. However the de–absolutization of Christology in pluralist theology raises serious concerns about Christian faith. Without Christ, who is the fullness of revelation of God according to Christian belief, Christianity has no identity. Therefore, a Christian theology must be able to respect and value other religions without relativizing its belief in Jesus Christ as the fulness of revelation. This dissertation tries to understand the relevance of other religions from Christian theological perspective and thus to contribute to the Christian theology of religious pluralism. The goal is not to make an objective evaluation of different religions. It tries to find a Christian theological basis to equally respect other religions without losing one's own identity. Kenosis, which is an essential character of God's self–revelation to humans, is an impetus to Christians, to respect other religions. Bertram Stubenrauch presents the self–awareness of Christianity in the background of religious pluralism, that is the kenotic self–awareness.[12] In

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[11] Cf. Perry SCHMIDT–LEUKEL, Zur Einteilung religionstheologischer Standpunkte, in: Ulrich DEHN et al. (eds.), Handbuch Theologie der Religionen. Texte zur religiösen Vielfalt und zum interreligiösen Dialog, Freiburg et al. 2017, 252–295; Alan RACE, Christians and Religious Pluralism. Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions, London 1983; Harold COWARD, Pluralism. Challenge to World Religions, Maryknoll/NY 1985.

[12] Bertram Stubenrauch is a German dogmatic theologian who researches to provide dogmatic basis for interreligious dialogue. His most important work in this subject is *Pluralsmus statt Katholizität*. Bertram

incarnation God has become human without losing His divinity. The mystery of two natures of Jesus Christ, i.e., divine and human, that dwell together unmixed and undivided, indicate the readiness of God to empty himself to enter into the human realm to fully communicate himself to humans. In becoming human God does not cease to be God. Based on this kenotic self–awareness, Christianity understands Jesus Christ as the full and definitive revelation of God on the one side and on the other side Christianity is aware of the inevitable call to follow kenotic attitude of Jesus Christ. These two elements of kenotic self–awareness can help Christianity to appreciate and respect other religions as equals and engage in dialogue with other religions with an openness, without losing its identity.

The work is divided into three parts. The first part that presents a short historical survey of Christian attitude towards other religions comprises of 6 chapters. The first chapter discusses the biblical attitude towards religions that were existed in the cultural, social, and political milieu of Israel and early Christianity. It is followed by the second chapter that depicts patristic attempts to develop a theology that interprets other religions in relation to God's universal salvific plan. The origin and development of the traditional axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is also discussed here. In the third chapter a very short description of the documents of the church that expressed positive or negative attitude towards other religions is given. Then some theological attempts to include the people of *newly discovered* continents, who did not have a chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the salvation through Jesus Christ were presented. The fourth chapter discusses Second Vatican Council's positive appreciation of other religions along with council's intention to uphold Christian self–awareness that includes the faith in Jesus Christ as God's definitive and complete self–revelation, Church's mission to proclaim the kingdom of God as the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in this world, and follow the model of Jesus Christ in the mission. Magisterium of the church after the Second Vatican Council is also mentioned in this chapter to depict the continuity of magisterium. Influenced by Council's positive attitude towards other religions that goes beyond the traditional exclusivist attitude, many theologians attempted to develop theologies that try to find theological foundations to appreciate religious pluralism. While the inclusivists try to affirm the possibility of salvation of all humans based on the universal salvific efficiency of Jesus Christ, pluralist theologians attempt to appreciate

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STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität? Gott, das Christentum und die Religionen, Regensburg, 2017. This work is a continuation of his work *Dialogisches Dogma: Der christliche Auftrag zur interreligiösen Begegnung*. Bertram STUBENRAUCH, Dialogisches Dogma. Der christliche Auftrag zur interreligiösen Begegnung, Freiburg et al. 1995.

religious pluralism by reducing Christ to one among many manifestations of incomprehensible God. These theological trends are discussed in the fifth chapter. The following, sixth, chapter summarizes the relevant questions in the theology of religious pluralism. As the concluding chapter of first part, these questions represents the research questions of this dissertation.

The second part elucidates the concept of kenosis, it's importance in Christian theology, and it's scope in the theology of religious pluralism. Exegetical explanation of Philippians hymn along with its theological interpretations and the development of early Christian Christological dogmas are presented in the seventh chapter. It is followed by the eighth chapter that illustrates the increasing influence of the concept of kenosis in modern and contemporary philosophical and theological literature. The nineth chapter, i.e., the concluding chapter of second part, summarizes Bertram Stubenrauch's attempt to present kenosis as an essential part of Christian self–awareness in the background of religious pluralism and as an impetus for Christian relationship with other religions.

Third part, that is the concluding part of the dissertation tries to answer the questions of theology of religious pluralism in reference to the concept of kenosis. Chapter 10 depicts that only a *Christian* theology, not a *syncretic* theology can fruitfully engage in dialogue with other religions and the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ as God's definitive revelation is an integral part of this *Christian* theology. Based on kenotic incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the church possesses a kenotic self–awareness, which inspires church to proclaim Jesus Christ as God's self–revelation and to live according to the kenotic, self–emptying attitude of her master, Jesus Christ. In eleventh chapter church's self–awareness, as the continuation of Jesus Christ and sacrament of salvation on the one side and as a human reality in this world with own weakness and sinfulness, and a Christian attitude towards other religions based on kenotic self–awareness are presented. Here the questions of theology of religious pluralism are answered based on kenotic self–awareness.

Part I

A Historical Overview of Christian Approach to Other Religions

Chapter 1

Biblical Attitudes towards other Religions

1.0 Introduction

"In most religious traditions there are sources that support peace-making, and other sources that can be manipulated and interpreted to justify violence and exclusion."[13] This ambivalent nature is not foreign to Christianity. This chapter is an attempt to examine biblical attitude towards other religions. Biblical studies have always pointed out that there are different approaches in the bible towards foreign religions. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller opine that in the bible there is no comprehensive solution to the present-day discussion about Christian attitude towards other religions.[14] Because of these complexity they entitled their book "Biblical *Foundations* [not The Foundation] for Mission."[15] Nor we can conclude that there is an evolution in the bible in a sense that many diverse opinions have later merged to a definitive orthodox stand.[16] In General we can observe a negative attitude towards other religions in the bible. But there is also some particular events and passages, which positively values individuals, who belong to other religions.

1.1 Israel and Other Religions

In the Old Testament one can observe different attitudes towards other religions. Israel's interaction with other religions was characterized sometimes by mutual reverence and peaceful co-existence and other times by rival reactions. Many individual Gentiles are considered as holy people in the bible. Jean Paul Daniélou has written a book named *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament*.[17] The letter to Hebrews enlists names of such non–Jewish

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[13] Mohamad ABU-NIMER, Religion, Dialogue and Non-Violent Actions in Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, in: IJPS 17/3 (2004), 491–511, here: 491.

[14] Cf. Donald SENIOR –Caroll STUHLMUELLER, The Biblical Foundations for Mission, Maryknoll 1983, 345-47.

[15] Cf. Donald SENIOR, Correlating Images of Church and Images of Mission in the New Testament, in: Missiology: An International Review 23/1 (1995) 3–6, 4.

[16] Cf. SENIOR, Correlating Images of Church and Images of Mission, 4.

[17] Cf. Jean Paul DANIÉLOU, Holy Pagans of the Old Testament, London 1957.

saints: Abel, Enoch and Noah (Hebrews 11). Examples of atrocious activities are also there in the Old Testament. Eric A. Seibert has written an article on the divine violence in the bible.[18] One of the reasons why God commands violence is the worship of idols. "You shall devour all the peoples that Lord your God is giving to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods. For that would by a snare to you"[…] "The images of their gods you shall burn with fire" (Deuteronomy 7: 16, 25).

These different and contradicting attitudes that can be seen in the Old Testament portraits Israel's attitudes to foreign religions. Israel's self–awareness pendulates between its election as God's chosen people, on the one hand, and its historic interaction with other nations, on the other. Based on its election as God's own people, Israel understands its unique status in a more and more exclusive way. On the other side, Israel understood, in an inclusive way, that God of Israel was also the God of the nations. Therefore, it had to deal with the nations, at times protecting its identity and religious purity against its surrounding cultures, at other times interacting with the nations and even drawing on fundamental aspects of their cultural life and religious structures, and still at other times considering the nations as instruments in God's hand in purification of Israel.[19] Here we have a short survey of these different approaches found in the Old Testament.

1.1.1 God's Covenants with Humanity in the Old Testament

In modern theological discussions an important theme is the universality of divine plan of salvation. The universal salvific will of God is seen as the basis of positive elements in other religions in theology of religions.[20] The universality of salvation corresponds to the concept of one and omnipotent God. Whether the bible supports such a vision of salvation is also an important question.

In the history of salvation different covenants established by God with man play important role. Salvation history is also a history of covenants. The breaking of covenantal conditions by human partner, reestablishment or renewal of covenants and promise of a new eternal covenant are seen in the bible. If the whole bible is considered as the history of salvation, the so–called primeval history (Genesis 1–11) is to be considered as an

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[18] Cf. Eric A. SEIBERT, Recent Research on Divine Violence in the Old Testament (with Special Reference to Christian Theological Perspectives), in: Current Biblical Research 15/1 (2016) 8–40.

[19] Cf. SENIOR, Correlating Images of Church and Images of Mission, 5.

[20] For example, cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian, 211–223.

introduction to it. The creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God and commissioning them as the steward of creation is the first step from the part of God in his relationship with human. Then creation can be considered as a covenant at least allegorically.

The most frequent and important metaphor in the bible to denote the relationship between Israel, the people of God, and Yahweh is covenant. Bible uses the Hebrew noun *berît*. *Berît* has connection to the Akkadian word *birtu/bertu*.[21] Even though *berît* is generally translated as covenant, this word has different nuances of meaning in each context.[22] The deuteronomistic covenant is an asymmetrical, but reciprocal relationship between Yahweh and his people, which presupposes the commands to obedience. The covenant concept in the priestly literature is more theocentric and it diminishes the role of human in the covenant. God's action is more sovereign and He, out of His own will, establishes and renews the covenant. The first mentioning of the word *berît* in the bible is seen in the flood story, Genesis 9: 8–17.[23] In P (priestly authorship) as well as in J (Jahwistic authorship) the story of the flood ends with a promise by God that He will never destroy the world by a Flood. But only in P this promise is depicted in the form of a covenant. The covenant is established with a sign as in any ancient ritual of establishment of covenant. In the covenant with Noah the sign is a rainbow. In the covenant with Abraham the sign is circumcision.[24] For a second time the word *berît* is given in the priestly patriarchal story, Genesis 17. In the covenant with Abraham, the promise of covenant is applicable only to Isaac, not to Ishmael. It is clearly said in Genesis 17: 15–21.[25] As continuation of this covenant the covenant is established with Israel, the offspring of Jacob, son of Isaac. Covenant with David, promise of future covenant in prophetic literature are other covenants seen in Old Testament.

The attention of the reader of Genesis primarily falls on two covenants of God with humankind. They are the covenant with Abraham and with Noah. Call of Abraham by God, Unconditional obedience from the part of Abraham and the promises given by God culminate in the covenant established by the God with Abraham.

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[21] Cf. Hans–Josef KLAUK, Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception 5, Berlin et. al. 2012, 899.

[22] Cf. THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (24 May 2001). URL: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popolo-ebraico_en.html, § 37.

[23] Cf. KLAUK, Encyclopedia of the Bible, 902–904.

[24] Cf. John SKINNER, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (ICC), Edinburg [2]1969, 171–173; THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible, 37.

[25] Cf. KLAUK, Encyclopedia of the Bible, 904.

As we mentioned earlier the term covenant appears first in the bible in the flood narrative. Yahwistic author avoided the term covenant in narration. But the priestly author, who composed his prehistory later, have used this term (Gen. 6: 18; 9: 9–17). By using the particular term covenant the priestly author conveys that there was a primitive covenant by God with human prior to the covenant with Israel. Like every covenant it also contains the divine promises from God and demands from human beings. Yahweh makes His covenant with Noah (Gen. 6: 18). The obligation of the covenant is the prohibition of eating blood and of homicide (Gen. 9: 4ff). God promises in this covenant not to destroy mankind again by a deluge (Gen. 9: 11) and as a sign of the covenant places a rainbow in the clouds (Gen. 9: 12).[26] God wants to maintain the natural order of creation and the human beings are supposed to respect the new order. God blesses them with the words: "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (v. 1,7). It is a universal covenant because it covers not only one individual but also whole humanity. Noah is depicted as the father of new humanity (v. 9,12). It also includes all the living creatures in the world (v. 15,16). The words of God make clear that all human beings are equal because they are created in the image of God (v. 6). These observations make clear that this covenant goes beyond the limits of Israel as a nation.

Genesis 12 marks the second period of salvation history with the election of Abraham. Abraham was elected from many. He was asked to leave his own land and relatives. The promise given to him by God was "I will make you a great nation". By the time of writing this text Israel was already a strong nation. The promise continues: "and I will bless you and make your name great." The purpose of all these promises is "so that you will be a blessing" and "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12: 1–3). "The text now becomes very explicit, for in reality the nations are involved."[27] Beyond the narrow vision of salvation, which only involves the salvation of Israel, we can find here a hope of universal salvation. No one is outside of God's will and plan of salvation. Abraham was elected not for himself, but for the whole mankind. Keeping this picture of universal salvation in mind, we now think about the covenant of God with Moses.

Israel is presented as the specially chosen people of Yahweh. The Hebrew expression is Yahweh's *segullāh*, which means God's own possession. Here also the other peoples and nations are mentioned. "[…] you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples.

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[26] Cf. John L. MCKENZIE, Dictionary of the Bible, Milwaukee 1965, 154.

[27] Walter VOGELS, God's Universal Covenant, Ottava 1979, 42.

Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex. 19: 5–6). Priest functions as a mediator between God and his people. Likewise Israel as a priestly kingdom has an intermediary role between God and the nations.[28] "Israel was taken from among the nations to be at service of the nations."[29] According to William Johnstone, such an interpretation of *priestly kingdom* is possible, but not exact interpretation. "Is Israel termed 'a kingdom of priests' because it is destined to fulfil a priestly role on behalf of the other nations of the world? This is, no doubt, an attractive and even valid idea. But it is unlikely in this context."[30] He sees the next phrase, *a holy nation*, as a synonymous parallel, which makes it likely that the first phrase concerns, rather, the intrinsic quality of Israel's life in and for itself. Israel becomes a nation of priests, a nation of those who by their consecrated way of life are able to approach God directly by its sanctification through obedience to the terms of the covenant.[31] But our interpretation of *priestly kingdom* as a role of mediation is also possible. Israel's role as a mediator of salvation for other nations is well summarised by the Psalmist (Ps. 67: 2–4; 96: 117).

The blessing to Abraham primarily leads to the formation of Israel as God's chosen people. It is reserved only to the chosen offspring of Abraham, i.e., Israel. But it is not confined only to Israel. The words, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12: 3b) show that this blessing is the theological basis of solidarity between Abraham and the nations.[32] Because of their solidarity with Abraham, others receive God's blessing.

> Abraham is already presented as mediator for the others in v. 2d and again here in v. 3c, where it is now very clear that the others are the nations. But we must remember that this Abraham is Abraham-Israel. God wanted first to make one nation, and when this is done, this nation could then become the mediator of the salvation of the nations, which of course, like any salvation, is ultimately the work of God.[33]

Church Fathers recognize four covenants between God and humankind. Through such an interpretation, they find that the history of salvation is not limited to a chosen people but

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[28] Cf. ibid., 48–49.

[29] ibid., 49.

[30] William JOHNSTONE, Exodus 1–19 (SHBC), Sheffield 2014, 400.

[31] Cf. ibid.

[32] Cf. Mary Sylvia Chinyere NWACHUKWU, Creation-Covenant Scheme and Justification by Faith, Rome 2002, 89–91.

[33] VOGELS, God's Universal Covenant, 43.

extends to all humankind and human history. While commenting on the symbolic meaning of number four[34], Irenaeus writes:

> For this reason were four principal (καθολικαί) covenants given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man, and sums up all things in itself by means of the Gospel, raising and bearing men upon its wings into the heavenly kingdom.[35]

Even though the account of creation of man does not speak of a covenant relationship between God and the first human being, the intimate relationship between God and man is clear. As we mentioned above the Fathers of the Church understood this relationship as symbolic of a first universal covenant with human beings. In biblical tradition also we can see such interpretations. Sir. 17: 12 refers to an *eternal covenant* established by God with the first parents. Jer. 33: 20–26 and Ps. 89 also refer to a *cosmic covenant* through creation.[36] Through the *cosmic covenants* God has established His relationship with humanity and through the covenants with Abraham Israel, God has decided to continue his relationship with humanity through His chosen people.

1.1.2 Violence against Pagans

As we have seen above biblical data on the relationship with other religions are mostly negative and exclusive. Pagan gods and pagan cultures are often viewed in opposition to Yahweh and His commandments. This exclusivism is the theological basis of violence against other religions in the Old Testament. Here, we try to highlight the uncompromising judgment of all other gods besides the Yahweh of Israel. The fundamental principle of Israel's identity is *shema,* Israel's confession of faith: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6: 4). In the history of Israel, it is only in a later period the God of Israel was recognized as the God of all. In the early stages, Israel's God was considered like a tribal god. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20: 3). The existence of other gods was not principally rejected, but they were considered as inferior to Yahweh. "Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?" (Ex. 15: 11). Based on such exclusive claims there was also commandment to kill the followers of other gods. For example, "You shall annihilate them– the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites

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[34] Irenaeus points out the importance of number 4; four gospels, four faces of Cherubim, etc.

[35] Cf. IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 3, 11, 8. (ANF 1, 429; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[36] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 32.

and the Jebusites– just as the Lord your God has commanded, so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord your God" (Deut. 20: 17–18). Only after the exile Israel understood that Yahweh is the only God and no other gods exist. Appeal to other gods was viewed as a futile human attempt. Other gods were considered as idols, made up of silver and gold by human hands and having organs only materially, uncapable of speaking, seeing, hearing and sensing (cf. Ps. 115: 3–7).[37]

In the prophetic literature, there is enormous amount of derogative statements against other gods and their followers. Among the prophets, Elijah and Elisha are the prominent figures, who have performed, commanded, or prophesied violence against the people with other religious convictions. They were radical devotees of Yahweh and tried to purify Israel of the worship of idols. "And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you shall kill any of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor" (Num. 25: 5). Elijah killed the prophets of Baal. "Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." Then they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon, and killed them there" (1 Kings 18: 40). 2 Kings 10: 18–28 reports that Jehu has killed all the worshipers of Baal and depicts this act as fulfilment of Yahweh's commandment given through Elijah (2 Kings 10: 17). These are only some examples of plenty of negative judgments and rhetoric to promote violence against foreign nations and cultures.

1.1.3 Pagan Saints of the Old Testament[38]

There are many pagan personalities, who had gain great respect in biblical literature. In view of God's salvific plan, they indicate a universal character. Jacques Dupuis differentiates them into two groups: Some of them had lived before God's covenant with Abraham and Moses; others are contemporary to the Jewish dispensation, though finding themselves outside it.[39]

To the first group belongs Abel and he is the first pagan saint in the bible.[40] "[He] is the first of the elect, chosen by God, at the beginning of history, in the midst of the pagan world,

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[37] Cf. also Isaiah 43, 10–11; 44, 6–9; 45, 6–22, etc.

[38] I borrowed this tittle from DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 34; Daniélou's book *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament* is also an important contribution in this regard.

[39] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 34.

[40] Cf. DANIÉLOU, Holy Pagans, 9–54.

to be the first recipient of the liberality of love."[41] Augustine is the first theologian who explicitly states that the church begins with Abel.[42] In the Old Testament Enoch is considered to have an intimate relationship with God. "Enoch walked with God" (Gen. 5: 22). "Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken up, an example of repentance to all generations" (Sirach 44: 16). Sirach mentions the name of Enoch under the list of ancestors. Then follows the name of Noah. Bible has no doubt about the righteousness and holiness of Noah (cf. Wisdom 10: 3; Sirach 44: 17). "Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6: 8). "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God" (6: 9). Sirach 44: 18 clearly mentions that God has made everlasting covenants with him. Ezekiel also considered him as one among the elect (Ezek. 14: 14).[43]

Second group of pagan saints were lived parallelly to Israel as God's chosen people. Among them Job is a prominent figure. A single book in bible is named after him. "[Job] was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil" (Job 1: 1). Job became the model of fidelity to God amidst of all possible sufferings. Melchizedek is depicted in the Bible as "priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14: 18). He is also considered as a model of eternal priest. "You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110: 4).[44]

New Testament also mentions these names as examples of true faith (cf. Heb. 11). In the Letter to Hebrews, Abel, Enoch and Noah are presented before Christians as the model for faithful life and placed before Abraham, Moses and other heroes of Israel. There are other new testament references to these personalities (cf. Matt. 23: 34–35; 24: 37–39; Heb. 12: 24; Jude 14; etc. Heb. 9: 11 presents Melchizedek as the type of Christ. Other saintly figures, who is outside the borders of Israel, mentioned in the bile are Lot (Rom. 2: 12; Lot as the representative of just people, who achieved righteousness through the natural law) and Queen of Saba (1 Kings 10: 1–13; Matt. 12: 42).[45]

Considering God's covenant with the mankind through creation and covenant with Noah, these above–mentioned personalities can be considered as the saints of nations. It shows also

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[41] ibid., 47–48.

[42] Cf. Florian KLUG, Beyond the Visible Church. The Motif of the *ecclesia ab Abel* from Augustine to James Alison, Minnesota 2024, 1.

[43] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 35.

[44] Cf. ibid., 36.

[45] Cf. ibid., 34f, 37.

the possibility of a righteous and holy life even outside the boundaries of Israel, the chosen people. They all have followed their conscience and their knowledge of God, i.e., their then religious belief and such a life made them favourite before God.

1.1.4 God of Israel and God of Nations: Particularism and Universalism

It is widely accepted in the academic circles that Israel's monotheism was developed gradually.[46] At early stages Israel experienced that its God is the most powerful God. Even in the first commandment the existence of other gods is not denied: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20: 3). The existence of other gods is not rejected, but their inferiority to Yahweh is emphasized. "Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?" (Ex. 15: 11). Israel was demanded their fidelity to Yahweh. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6: 4). Instead of *monotheism*, "[t]he term monolatry is often used to characterize major parts of the Hebrew Bible."[47] Psalms also uphold this idea; "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Ps. 95: 3). Jan Assmann suggests monotheism of loyalty (*monotheismus der Treue*) for monolatry and monotheism of truth (*monotheismus der Wahrheit*) for monotheism. He opines that monotheism of loyalty is the peculiarity of the bible. There are many gods, but only one saviour and liberator, the loyalty of Israel shall be exclusively to him.[48] Israel has many times fallen in the sin of idolatry, worshiping other gods such as Baal. An important mission of the prophets was to warn the Israel against their infidelity to God.

From this particular idea about Yahweh Israel has changed to a more universal concept of God. Isaiah 40–45 praises Cyrus, the king of Medes, for completing his role in destroying neo-Babylonian empire. Cyrus is appeared as Messiah, the anointed of Yahweh (Isa. 45: 1), a term which is used in Old Testament to denote kings of Israel, Saul and David.[49] It was believed that Yahweh completes his plan even through foreign kings and nations. Many psalms provide examples of this universality of Yahweh. Ps. 44: 93,97,98 and 99 invite the

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[46] Cf. Arnaud SÉRANDOUR, On the Appearance of a Monotheism in the Religion of Israel (3rd Century BC or Later?), in: Diogenes 52/1 (2005) 33-45.

[47] Jens–André P. HERBENER, On the term "Monotheism", in: Numen 60 (2013) 616–648, here: 629.

[48] Cf. Jan ASSMANN, Monotheismus der Treue. Korrekturen am Konzept der "mosaischen Unterscheidung" im Hinblick auf die Beiträge von Marcia Pally und Micha Brumlik, in: Rolf SCHIEDER (ed.), Die Gewalt des einen Gottes. Die Monotheismus–Debatte zwischen Jan Assmann, Micha Brumlik, Rolf Schieder, Peter Sloterdijk und anderen, Berlin 2014, 249–266, here: 252.

[49] Cf. SÉRANDOUR, On the Appearance of a Monotheism, 40.

peoples of other nations to praise Yahweh. It is only after exile the monotheistic belief established strongly among Israelites. Then it is believed that only one God is there all other so–called gods are not gods. "That you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other beside him" (Deut. 4: 35). Based on this monotheistic belief Israel has a mission to proclaim Yahweh's exclusive dominion and non–existence of other gods to the nations (Is. 40–55).[50] The Servant of Yahweh is depicted as a *light to the nations* in Isa. 42. The most striking example of the universalism is the prophecy about the future of Egypt: "The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptian; and Egyptians will know the Lord on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them" (Isa. 19: 21). Dan. 4: 34 reports that Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, has praised and honoured the God. Darius, another pagan king, admitted that Yahweh is the living God and ordered that all his people "should tremble and fear before" this God (Dan. 6: 26–27). Prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel along with Amos and other minor prophets also deal with God's plan about all nations.[51]

The development of monotheism in Israel is also a growth from particularism to universalism. Israel understood Yahweh as the God of Israel and later as the God of nations. But the tension between particularism and universalism can be observed even in the later texts of Old Testament. A concept of God who involves in the history of the world, control all the nations and peoples and wills the salvation of whole humanity shed light to the theology of religious pluralism.

1.2 New Testament and Other Religions

New Testament does not explicitly deal with the beliefs of other religions. "There are only some passing references to some Greco–Roman religions. Overall, however, when the New Testament refers to other religions, the verdict is usually negative; other religions are regarded as futile."[52] But there are varying assessments of individual gentiles, non–Jewish people who were outside the covenant community. Here, we make a very short survey through New Testament to know its approach to other religious identities.

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[50] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 39.

[51] Cf. Veli–Matti KÄRKKÄINEN, An Introduction to the Theology of Religions. Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, Illinois 2003, 39f.

[52] ibid., 33.

1.2.1 Jesus' Approach to Gentiles

In the gospels we can see Jesus restricting his mission to his own people, i.e. people of Israel (cf. Matt. 15: 24). He also demands his disciples not to go "among the gentiles," not to enter "any town of the Samaritans," but to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (cf. Matt. 10: 5–6). However, during his public life, Jesus had great appreciation about gentile personalities. He has publicly appreciated their faith, which often surpasses the faith of chosen people. For example, Centurion (Matt 8: 10), Canaanite woman (Matt. 15: 28) Samaritan woman in John's gospel (John 4: 7–15), etc. Most of the heroic or model characters of Jesus' parables and other incidents in gospel were non–Jewish persons. For example, Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29–37), the Samaritan Leper, who is the only one who returned and thanked God after getting healed (Luke 17: 15–16), the Centurion, whose son Jesus has healed (Matt. 8: 5–10), Centurion, who proclaimed that Jesus was God's son (Mark 15: 39), etc. In most of the cases their faith was reported as greater than Israelites.

There is an apparent contradiction between these two approaches; limitation of Jesus' mission to the people Israel on the one hand, and very positive appreciation toward pagan people on the other. Joachim Jeremias proposes a solution to this contradiction. "We have to do with two successive events, first the call to Israel, and subsequently the redemptive incorporation of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God."[53] In response to the deep–rooted faith of Centurion Jesus said: I tell you, many will come from East and West and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the sons of the Kingdom will be thrown in the outer darkness" (Matt. 8: 10–12). Here, an eschatological character of the entry of the gentiles in the Kingdom of God is observable. But resurrected Jesus has already commanded his disciples to proclaim the good news to the whole creation (Mark 16: 15)[54] and to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28: 19).

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[53] Cf. Joachim JEREMIAS, Jesus' Promise to the Nations, London 1958, 71.

[54] Mark 16: 9–20 is a secondary addition to the gospel of Mark in the second century and therefore Jesus' command to his disciples to proclaim the good news to the whole creation cannot be attributed to Jesus, but it can be considered as the conviction of early Christianity. For details about the ending of the gospel according to Mark cf. John R. DONAHUE –Daniel J. HARRINGTON, The Gospel of Mark (Sacra Pagina 2), Minnesota 2002, 462f; William R. TELFORD, Writing on the Gospel of Mark (Guides to Advanced Biblical Research 1), Blandford Forum 2009, 115.

1.2.2 Attitude of Early Christianity to the Nations

Early Christianity's attitude towards pagans are complex and ambivalent.[55] In the beginning of the church we can observe a progressive awareness of universality of its mission. The first disciples of Jesus had preached at the first stage only to Palestinian Jews. Then their preaching was extended to Hellenistic Jews. Only in a later stage they had preached to Greeks. When we study this change of attitude of the early church, resulted in the spreading of gospel outside the Jewish territory, we can understand the lead role of Paul, Barnabas and the Church of Antioch in it. Peter has made a first step regarding the preaching to gentiles. At Caesarea Peter addressed the household of the Centurion Cornelius (cf. Acts 10: 1–44). Peter was sent to Cornelius' house according to God's plan and inspiration (cf. Acts 10: 3–17). "While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles" (v. 44–45). It was a sign for Peter that they too can be baptized. It is notable here that they were given Holy Spirit even before being baptized. Prior to this event Luke reports that Philip preached Christ among the Samaritans, to an Ethiopian and "in all the towns, until he reached Caesarea" (Acts 8: 40). Markus Tiwald brings into our attention that there was a tension between liberal Hellenist Jews and restorative Palestinian Hebrew Jews in early Judaism as well as in beginning Christianity. The liberal diaspora Jews and the liberal Jewish Christians from diaspora, the so called Hellenists around Stephen in Acts 6, liberally interpreted kashrut rules, Jewish marriage laws, temple cult, and circumcision. Such liberal interpretations came in conflict with the opposite restorative perceptions of Palestinian Judaism. This conflict ended up in the expulsion of the so called Hellenists from Jerusalem. To the question of circumcision of Proselytes there were different opinions not only in early Judaism but also in beginning Christianity. The early Christianity has decided for a Gentile mission without circumcision and this eventually led to the *parting of the ways* between Judaism and Christianity.[56] The salvific universalism of Jesus has encouraged the Hellenists around Stephen to go beyond the limitations of Judaism and to expand the salvific offer of Jesus beyond Judaism.[57] This

[55] For a detailed study cf. Jacques DUPONT, The Salvation of the Gentiles, New York 1979.

[56] Cf. Markus TIWALD, Frühjudentum und beginnendes Christentum. Gemeinsame Wurzeln und das Parting of the Ways (KStTh 5), Stuttgart 2022, 347–358.

[57] Cf. ibid., 264.

liberal attitude of Christianity fostered the gentile mission and the development of Christianity as an individual religion.

Paul regards even pagan religions as potential sources of a general kind of knowledge of God. In the history of theology this is called *natural religions*.[58] Paul, in his Letter to Romans, writes about the wrath of God, which will fall upon the pagans for not having recognized God's permanent revelation through the cosmos (Rom. 1: 20). He considers the revelation through cosmos or law of nature as valid to gentiles like the supernatural revelation of God to Israel. He speaks about the denial of all old practices and acceptance of new way of life (for example, 2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 4: 22; Col. 3: 9). According to Jacques Dupuis, "it is no declaration of principle, no absolute denial of any value in other religious traditions."[59] Paul's preaching to gentiles, first at Lystra (Acts 14: 8–18) and later before the Areopagus of Athens (Acts 17: 22–31), witness to an open attitude of the *apostle of the gentiles* towards their religiosity. At Lystra, the crippled (gentile) man had faith to be made well and Paul heals him. During the speech, commenting on the religions of the Greeks, he says: "In past generations [God] allowed all the nations to follow their own ways" (Acts 14: 16). This also confirms God's revelation through nature. In his speech at Athens Paul praises the religious spirit of the Greeks and announces to them the *unknown* God whom they worship without knowing. On the background of these speeches Jacques Dupuis opines: "the message surely seems to be that the religions of the nations are not bereft of value but find in Jesus Christ the fulfilment of their aspirations."[60] Clark H. Pinnock also share this opinion by saying "[e]vidently Paul thought of these people as believers in a certain sense, in a way that could be and should be fulfilled in Jesus Christ."[61] Paul's Areopagus speech inaugurates a missionary strategy based on a positive approach to the religiosity of the Greeks.[62]

Letter to Hebrews appreciates pagan saints Abel, Enoch and Noah and presents them before Christians as the model for faithful life (Heb. 11). Donald Senior notes that the first letter of Peter, while wary of its surrounding culture, does not judge it to be demonic and the

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[58] Cf. SENIOR – STUHLMUELLER, The Biblical Foundations for Mission, 345–46.

[59] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 49.

[60] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 49.

[61] Clark H. PINNOCK, A Wideness in God's Mercy. The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions, Grand Rapids 1992, 32.

[62] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 50.

non–Christians are apparently capable of being persuaded by the new way of life by the Christians. In contrast to this, the Book of Revelation, sees non–believing world as in the grip of beast. Despite of this difference both texts understand the community's relationship to the nations in terms of a prophetic witness that draws its force from the counter cultural–values of the gospel.[63]

1.3 Conclusion

Before making conclusions, it is to make clear that Bible is not directly concerned with the questions of theology of religious pluralism. The religion of Israel was developed in the background of religions and cultures surrounding Israel. Israel was conscious of its religious identity as God's chosen people and this resulted in negative judgements on other religions and their practices were considered as worthless idolatry. In the New Testament also, there is an equal negative evaluation of other religions, no validity being attributed to any religions other than Judaism and Christianity. The Bible's attitude to individual gentile ranges from hostility to admiration. Some biblical writers acknowledge a genuine religious experience in individual pagans. Some others, for example, Paul, recognized the possibility of "natural religion," "whereby the true God could be detected in the order and beauty of his creation."[64] Bible was primarily concerned about the privileged relationship between God and his chosen people, between Yahweh and Israel in the Old Testament, between God and Christians in the New Testament. Therefore, the data regarding other religions in the bible are mostly negative. But there are also some positive episodes, which we have seen in this chapter. "Obviously we have no right to exaggerate the theological implications of the account of Noah, or of the discourse in the Areopagus. But neither may we allow ourselves to underrate such declarations."[65] They provide us a basis for judging religions from a positive standpoint. After their comprehensive research, Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller conclude:

> Many of the biblical themes we have discussed, such as the expansive nature of religious experience, the revelation of God in creation, the recognition of the gentiles' capacity to respond to the Gospels, and the awed awareness that God and his Spirit range far beyond the boundaries of human expectation, are some aspects of the biblical data that suggest positive links with non–Christian religions.[66]

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[63] Cf. SENIOR, Correlating Images of Church and Images of Mission, 10–11.

[64] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 29.

[65] Heinz Robert SCHLETTE, Religions, in: H. FRIES (ed.), Encyclopédie de la foi 4, Paris 1967, 59–68, here: 64.

[66] SENIOR – STUHLMUELLER, The Biblical Foundations for Mission, 346.

The universal salvific will of God is evident from the above biblical survey. Prior to the covenant to Abraham and Israel God has established his covenant with Noah. It can be considered as the cosmic covenant. Even the creation can be taken as a covenant, the starting point of God–human relationship. There were conflicts in this divine human relationship due to the failure from human part. However, God re–establishes his relationship with human with further covenants. Many humans have even before the covenant with Abraham, such as Abel and Noah, lived according to the will of God and found favour before Him. Outside Israel there were righteous and holy personalities like Melchizedek and Job. In the New Testament also Jesus has always high appreciation about the faith of gentile personalities despite of his mission, limited to his own people. After his resurrection Jesus has commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all nations. Paul finds God's revelation also to the gentiles through nature and sees other religious experience as valid and in need of fulfilment through Jesus Christ.[67] From these factors we can at least conclude that there is a room to recognize God's salvific plan in the other religious traditions.

[67] This concept later pave path to the Fulfillment theory in Christian theology with regard to the question of other religions; cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 133–142.

Chapter 2

Patristic Period: Seeds of Logos in Hellenistic Cultures and Condemnation of Unbelievers

2.0 Introduction

The first chapter was an attempt to elucidate the biblical attitude towards other religions. Bible has an ambivalent attitude consisting of positive attitude towards some personalities of other religious groups, the view that other religions are tools in the hands of God, affirmation of uniqueness of *people of God* contrasting to other religions and condemnation of idolatry and other practices in other religions. Now, in this chapter, the next epoch of Christianity, i.e. Patristic period, is explored. Similar to biblical period, we can see also apparently contrasting approaches in patristic period too. As Christianity entered to the Hellenistic world, there were attempts mainly to present Christian doctrines with Greek philosophical terminologies. There was a very positive attitude towards Greek philosophy from the part of church fathers. Greek philosophy was considered even as a covenant by God. This prominence of Greek philosophy is accepted also in present theological discussions. For example, Joseph Ratzinger believes that the encounter between the faith of the Bible and Greek philosophy "was truly providential"[68] We can see also rejection of *unchristian* elements in Hellenistic culture and religions, for example, polytheism and idolatry. Church fathers also emphasised the uniqueness of revelation through Jesus Christ and supremacy of Christian faith. Some examples of such different attitudes can be seen in this chapter.

2.1 Cosmic Christ Present in Creation

In patristic period, the universal presence of God though his Word was a widespread thought. Johannine Christology, which identifies the Greek term Logos with the second person of

[68] Joseph RATZINGER, Truth and Tolerance [trans. by H. TAYLOR], San Francisco 2004, 95.

Trinity, was the basis for the *Logos theology* of church fathers. Justine Martyr was the pioneer in logos theology. His influence can be traced also in other church fathers. In this session we are searching for the writings of church fathers to understand their theology that presents the presence of Logos or Cosmic Christ in the universe even before revelation through incarnated Logos.

2.1.1 Justin Martyr: *Logos Spermatikos*

Justin Martyr, as a prominent Apologist of the second century, tried to develop a connection between Greek philosophy and Christian thought. He was the most important second century Greek apologist. Before his conversion to Christianity he had been a Platonist philosopher. Having recognized the truth, which he had been seeking in philosophy, in Christianity, he became a teacher and defender of his new faith. Three of his works have survived the centuries and are available to us. They are his two *Apologies,* addressed to the Roman authorities who were persecuting the Christians, and his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, in which he answered the objections which Jews were making to the Christian religion.[69] His Logos theology has influenced many other contemporaries such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Theophilus of Antioch, and Athenagoras. There were also Jewish writers who wrote about the connection between the Logos and the Old Testament Word or Wisdom of God. In the first centuries, both Hellenistic and Semitic intellectuals were engaged with the reflections on Logos or *Dabar*. To the Hellenistic thinkers Logos represents reason, thought, and intelligibility. Semitic concept *Dabar* is not completely equal to Hellenistic Logos. It referred to Yahweh's personal manifestation and it is the dynamic divine attribute by which the God of the covenant intervened in the history of the chosen people.[70]

Justin Martyr has taken John 1: 14 as the key text and argued that the same Logos that was known by pagan philosophers had appeared in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.[71] With what intention John has called Christ as Logos in fourth gospel, whether in Hellenistic or Semitic implication, is a disputed question. According to John L. McKenzie, "most Old Testament scholars […] wonder why anyone has ever thought it necessary to appeal to any source beyond the Old Testament to explain John's application of Logos to Jesus Christ.

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[69] Francis A. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response, New York – New Jersey 1992, 14.

[70] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 54.

[71] KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 56-57.

[…] Old Testament thought is a sufficient explanation for the appearance of the term."[72] But in Christian thought the concept of Logos has more significance. Christian Logos is a divine person. Concept of Logos opened a new way to Christianity to enter in dialogue with the human reason outside the Church, especially with Greek philosophy.[73]

In the writings of Justin Martyr, the Logos designates the Son precisely in his cosmological function. He is the *dynamis* of God, the creator and organizer of the cosmos. He uses the term *Christos* in a wider sense, not confined to the incarnation. *Christos* refers to the creative and organizing function of Logos. "And His Son, who alone is properly called Son, the Word, who also was with him and was begotten before the works [creation], when at first He created and arranged all things by Him, is called Christ, in reference to His being anointed and God's ordering all things through Him."[74] The cosmological function of the Logos is the foundation for Justin Martyr's theology or revelation. All the divine manifestations in the world are through him. Such divine manifestations are available not only in Christianity, even before incarnation there were such manifestations among Jews and Gentiles.[75] All the people, who lived according to the Word (*meta logou*), are worthy to be called Christians.

According to Greek philosophy, all human beings participate in the universal Logos because they possess human reason. The Prologue of Gospel of John says that the Logos became flesh in Jesus Christ. Therefore, according to Justin Martyr, whenever humans use their reason the Logos, Christ, is at work. "We have been taught that Christ is the First–born of God, and we have declared […] that he is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers, and those who lived reasonably [by reason] are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists."[76] To the question about salvation for Jews, who had lived before Jesus Christ, Justin Martyr answers in *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*:

> […] each one, that is to say, shall be saved by his own righteousness, I said also, that those who regulated their lives by the law of Moses would in like manner be saved. For what in the law of Moses is naturally good, and pious, and righteous, and has been prescribed to be done

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[72] John L. McKenzie, Myths and Realities, Milwaukee 1963, 57.

[73] Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology, 55.

[74] Justin Martyr, Second Apology 6 (ANF 1, 190; Roberts – Donaldson).

[75] Cf. Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology, 57.

[76] Justin Martyr, First Apology 46 (ANF 1, 178; Roberts – Donaldson). Some evangelical scholars have questioned the value of this and similar passages from the Apologists for the purposes of showing their positive attitude; see for example, James Sigountos, Did Early Christians Believe Pagan Religions Could Save? In: Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1991, 229–241.

> by those who obey it; and what was appointed to be performed by reason of the hardness of the people's hearts; was similarly recorded, and done also by those who were under the law. Since those who did that which is universally, naturally, and eternally good are pleasing to God, they shall be saved through this Christ in the resurrection equally with those righteous men who were before them, namely Noah, and Enoch, and Jacob, and whoever else there be, along with those who have known this Christ, Son of God […].[77]

Francis A. Sullivan notes that Justin Martyr's argument would apply not only to Jews who observed the law of Moses, but to all who did what is "universally, naturally and eternally good." For Justin Martyr, the law of Moses was salvific because its commandments corresponded to the natural law, prescribing what is "good, holy and just" by its very nature.[78] Justin Martyr also gave a positive answer to the question about the possibility of salvation for Gentiles who had kept the natural law. As a philosopher, for Justin Martyr, this meant living according to reason (*logos*). As a Christian, he knew that the *Logos* was incarnated in Christ. These basic elements explain Justin Martyr's way of answering the question about the salvation of gentiles, who had lived before the coming of Christ.

> But lest some should, without reason, and for the perversion of what we teach, maintain that we say that […] all men who were born before Him were irresponsible. – let us anticipate and solve the difficulty. We have been taught that Christ is the first-begotten of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians Abraham and Ananias [...] and many others whose actions and names we now decline to recount, because we know it would be tedious. So that even they who lived before Christ, and lived without reason were wicked and hostile to Christ, slew those who lived reasonably. But those who lived by the Logos, and those who live so now, are Christians, fearless and unperturbed.[79]

In the words "therefore, who lived according to reason (*logos*) were really Christians," we find a concept similar to Karl Rahner's anonymous Christians. While acknowledging the salvation of those who lived according the reason, Justin Martyr insists the fullness of revelation in Christianity. Christians have full access to the meaning of Logos through Jesus Christ. But pagans have only partial access to it. Justin Martyr, like other early Apologists, uses the term *logos spermatikos* (plural: *logoi spermatikoi*) to describe the presence of logos in the world. It denotes that the divine Logos sowed seeds throughout human history and therefore, Christ is known even by non–Christians at least in a limited sense. Because of this knowledge about Logos that was sown in all human cultures and religions, Salvation, at least

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[77] JUSTIN MARTYR, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew 45 (ANF 1, 217; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[78] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 15.

[79] JUSTIN MARTYR, First Apology. 46 (ANF 1, 178; ROBERTS – DONALDSON); The last sentence I have quoted from Daniélou, since ANF is not so clear with the meaning. Cf. Jean Paul DANIÉLOU, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, Philadelphia 1973, 40f.

in some form– perhaps a not–yet–perfect form– was available to all. The seminal word or reason in which all humans partake gives access to God even for those who have never heard of Christ. If knowledge about Logos is already known by non–Christians, what is the relevance of Christian mission? Veli–Matti Kärkkäinen opines that the purpose of Christian mission is to make explicit what was implicit. Jesus Christ represents the fullness and perfection of *seeds of logos*.[80] In his *Second Apology*, Justin Martyr explains the fullness of the Christian doctrine in Christ:

> Our doctrine, then, appear to be greater than all human teaching; because Christ, who appeared for our sakes, became the whole rational being, both body, and reason, and soul. For whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word. But since they did not know the whole of the Word, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves.[81]

Justin Martyr finds the *logoi spermatikoi* (seeds of Logos) in all the cultures of the world. In this sense all religions and philosophies, as a part of human culture, have at least a limited knowledge of God. At the same time Justin Martyr upholds the uniqueness of incarnation of God, as the Logos has revealed in his *fullness* in Jesus Christ.[82]

2.1.2 Irenaeus: Unity of Salvation History

Irenaeus was the Bishop of Lyons, who were martyred for his faith. According to Oscar Cullmann, Irenaeus is the first Christian theologian who developed a definite theology of history in which Christ stands at the centre of the Old Testament expectation and the New Testament hope for the coming of the kingdom.[83] He wrote enormously against the Gnostic heretics. In his work, he spoke about the providence of God with regard to those who had lived before the coming of Christ.

> For it was not merely for those who believed on Him in the time of Tiberius Caesar that Christ came, nor did the Father exercise his providence for the men only who are now alive, but for all men altogether, who from the beginning, according to their capacity, in their generation have both feared and loved God, and practiced justice and piety towards their neighbours , and have earnestly desired to see Christ and to hear his voice.[84]

The last phrase, *hear his voice*, obviously refers to the people of Israel who looked for the coming of the messiah. It can perhaps be taken also to refer to Gentiles who had come to

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[80] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 57.

[81] JUSTIN MARTYR, Second Apology 10 (ANF 1, 191; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[82] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 57.

[83] Cf. Oscar CULLMANN, Christ and Time. The Christian Conception of Time and History, London 1952, 56f.

[84] IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 4, 22, 2 (ANF 1, 494; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

believe in God as saviour, and thus could be said to have longed implicitly for the coming of Christ.[85] Besides valuing Israelite religion Irenaeus finds salvific value also in pre–biblical religions based on his idea of revealing word, the Logos.

> "Through his Word [Logos], all learn that there is one sole God and Father who contains all things, who gives being to all things." [The Son has not only made known the Father, but] "moreover, the Word was made the dispenser of his Father's grace for the benefit of the people, for whose sake he carried out such great divine plans, showing God to people. […] For if that manifestation of God which comes through the creation gives life to all who live on earth, how much more does the manifestation of the Father which is performed by the Word give life to those who see God."[86]

Jacques Dupuis rightly summarizes the meaning of this text: "This is a truly admirable text, where the whole theology of Irenaeus is contained in compact form: the divine philanthropy which creates human beings, that they may live, present to creation from the beginning, reveals the Father progressively."[87]

According to Irenaeus, creation itself is one of the divine manifestations.[88] Thus, like Justin Martyr, he also believes that the Logos exercises a cosmological function: "The knowledge of God which humans can reach through the cosmos is already on their part a response to a revelation of the Logos, for creation is itself a divine manifestation."[89] In other words, what we are used to call natural knowledge of God, i.e. the knowledge from the created cosmos, and the personal knowledge of God though the revelation of the Word are not necessarily to be distinguished but instead belong to one and the same category. "By means of the creation itself, the Word reveals God the Creator; and by means of the world the Lord, the Maker of the world. […] These things do indeed address all humans in the same manner, but all do not in the same way believe them."[90] In this background it is understandable that Jacques Dupuis appropriately titles his treatment of the early fathers' views on other religions *The Cosmic Christ in the Early Fathers*.[91]

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[85] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 16.

[86] IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 4, 20, 6–7 (ANF 1, 489; ROBERTS – DONALDSON); quoted acc. to DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 61.

[87] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 61.

[88] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 59.

[89] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 61, with reference to IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 4 ,20, 7 (ANF 1, 489f; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[90] IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 4, 6 ,6 (ANF 1, 469; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[91] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, chap. 2.

Like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus also upholds the uniqueness of revelation through Jesus Christ. He opines that the revelation of God through the Logos, which is begun in creation, was *fulfilled* in the revelation of the Father by the Son. There are both continuity and discontinuity between the coming of Christ and what was before Christ: "[…] What then did the Lord bring to us by His advent?– Know ye that He brought all [possible] novelty, by bringing himself […] For He has brought *himself* [my emphasis]."[92]

This uniqueness of revelation through incarnation of *Logos* that is emphasized by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus is also prominent in modern theological discussions. Ever since the origin of Christianity the uniqueness and universality of revelation through Jesus Christ has been the key element of Christianity. Romano Guardini, insisting on the pivotal role of incarnation in the salvation history, says: "The world, time, history had begun with creation; they reached *apotheosis* [my emphasis] in the Incarnation of the Son of God […] and all shall end with the destruction of the world and the last Judgment."[93] History was radically transformed with the incarnation marking the centre of human history. Joseph Ratzinger observes in Jesus Christ the fullness of Word. According to him, the *logos* is no mere abstraction or proposition because the *Logos* has become flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. He writes, "Man is open to the truth, but the truth is not out there somewhere; rather, it is in the concrete existence, in the figure of Jesus Christ."[94]. He, when commenting on the Johannine characterization of the Lord as *Logos*, says, "the concept of *logos* acquires a new dimension. It no longer denotes simply the permeation of all being by meaning; it characterizes this man: he who is here is 'Word.' The concept of *logos*, which to the Greeks meant 'meaning' (*ratio*), changes here into 'word' (*verbum*)."[95] "The incarnation of Christ is the uniqueness of Christianity."[96]

Summarizing Irenaeus' theology of history, it is clear that he views the whole history of humanity as salvation history. Logos has communicated the knowledge of God to humanity through creation. As the revelation of God to people of Israel was a part of God's salvific

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[92] IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 4, 34, 1 (ANF 1, 511; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[93] Romano GUARDINI, The End of the Modern World [trans. by Joseph THEMAN – Herbert BURKE], Wilmington 2001, 19.

[94] Joseph RATZINGER, Fundamental Speeches from Five Decades [ed. by Florian SCHULER, trans. by Michael J. MILLER et al.], San Francisco 2012, 254.

[95] Joseph RATZINGER, Introduction to Christianity [trans. by J.R. FOSTER–Michael J. MILLER], San Francisco 2004, 189.

[96] KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 59.

plan, the *revelation* through cosmos was also a part of it. All are manifestations of Logos and thus there is a unity in the salvation history. The complete manifestation of Logos through Christ stands unique as a pivotal point in the history of salvation.

2.1.3 Clement of Alexandria: Covenant of Philosophy

Clement of Alexandria, a member of Alexandrian school, was well–versed in Greek thought. He advocated that God is of all and for all. "He [God] does care for all, which is befitting for Him who has become Lord of all. For He is Saviour; not [the Saviour] of some, and of others not. […] He has dispensed His beneficence both to Greeks and Barbarians, even to those of them that were predestined, and in due time called, the faithful and elect."[97] Whereas his predecessors characterized Christ primarily as Son, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria Logos occupies the first place. In this regard his Christology is mainly based on Irenaeus.[98] Father manifests in the world though Logos. "We understand the Unknown by divine grace, and by the Word alone that proceeds from Him."[99] This statements indicates that all personal manifestation of the Father takes place through the Logos.[100] Clement of Alexandria distinguishes two distinct levels of knowledge of God. A common knowledge of God is available through human reason (*logos*).[101] "There was always a natural manifestation of the Almighty God, among all right–thinking people."[102] At another level, the otherwise inaccessible knowledge of God is revealed through Logos. This distinction of two levels of knowledge of God is unique contribution of Clement.[103] He explains that just as the law was given to the Jews as a tutor to lead them to Christ, so too philosophy was given to the Greeks for the same purpose.

> For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily as the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring 'the Hellenic mind,' as the law, the Hebrews, 'to Christ.' Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ.[104]

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[97] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 7, 2 (ANF 2, 524; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[98] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 66.

[99] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 5, 12 (ANF 2, 464; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[100] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 66.

[101] Cf. ibid.

[102] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 5, 13 (ANF 2, 465; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[103] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 66.

[104] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 1, 5 (ANF 2, 305; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

As a cultivated Greek–speaker, Clement of Alexandria considered anyone who did not speak Greek as a *barbarian*. But he believed that God had offered the grace of salvation to them as well.[105] "So the Lord of all, of Greeks and of Barbarians, persuades those who are willing. For He does not compel him who (through choosing and fulfilling, from Him, what pertains to laying hold of it the hope) is able to receive salvation from Him."[106] He wrote further that both, commandments and philosophy, come from same source.

> "[…]also the Lord, drawing the commandments, both the first, which He gave, and the second, from one fountain, neither allowed those who were before the law to be without law, nor permitted those who were unacquainted with the principles of Barbarian philosophy to be without restraint. For, having furnished one with the commandments, and the other with philosophy, He shut up unbelief to the Advent. Whence every one who believes not is without excuse. For by a different process of advancement, both Greek and Barbarian He leads to the perfection which is by faith.[107]

Philosophy comes from God and constitutes a divine economy for the Greeks.[108] Divine Logos was active beyond the boundaries of religion. "By reflection and direct vision, those among the Greeks who have philosophized accurately see God."[109] According to Clement of Alexandria, there is no contradiction between the way of philosophy before Christ and the revelation of God in Christ. On the contrary, they are complementary. Both of them point to the final goal of God with regard to humanity.[110] Clement of Alexandria considers philosophy as a covenant made by God with people which is a stepping stone to the philosophy of Christ.[111] "All things necessary and profitable for life came to us from God, and […] philosophy more especially was given to the Greeks, as a covenant peculiar to them–being, as it is, a stepping–stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ."[112] He does not say that philosophy is the only preparation. All humans are invited, "both barbarians and Greeks," to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ. If they entrust themselves to Jesus Christ,

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[105] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 16.

[106] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 7, 2 (ANF 2, 524; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[107] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 7, 2 (ANF 2, 526; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[108] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 67.

[109] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 1, 19 (ANF 2, 322; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[110] For more similar passages cf. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 6, 6 and 6, 17 (ANF 2, 490–492 and 515–518; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[111] Cf DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 67; Cf. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 1, 5 (ANF 2, 305; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[112] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, str. 6, 8 (ANF 2, 495; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

"the Word of God will be [their] pilot, and the Holy Spirit will bring [them] to anchor in the haven of heaven".[113]

The uniqueness of Clement of Alexandria is that he includes not only Greek philosophers in his list of *teachers and leaders* of the nations, but also ancient Eastern philosophers: "The Indian gymnosophists are also in the number, and the other non–Greek philosophers. And of these there are two classes, some of them called Sarmanae, and others Brahmins. […] Some, too, of the Indians obey the precepts of Buddha; whom, on account of his extraordinary sanctity, they have raised to divine honour."[114] Jacques Dupuis opines that "[t]his amounts to affirming, together with the presence of partial Christian truth in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, a positive significance of these traditions in the history of salvation."[115]

Joseph Ratzinger is convinced of the importance of Greek culture and philosophy in the development of Christianity. "I am convinced that at bottom it was no mere accident that the Christian message, in the period it was taking shape, first entered the Greek world and there merged with the inquiry into understanding, into truth." He believes that the encounter between the faith of the bible and Greek philosophy "was truly providential"[116] But he does not accept other philosophies as a true source of knowledge about God. He often observes that eastern religions promote impersonalism, which he finds contradictory to monotheism.[117]

According to Clement of Alexandria, action of Logos is not confined to the Israelite religion. Logos is active in the history of whole humanity, Israel, Greeks and Barbarians. Just as the Old Testament prepared Israel for the coming of Christ, philosophy or human reason has prepared Greeks and other people for the coming of Christ. Therefore, according to him philosophy also can be called as a covenant.

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[113] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 62; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Exhortation to the Heathen 11, 116 (ANF 2, 204; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[114] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata 1, 15 (ANF 2, 316; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[115] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 68.

[116] RATZINGER, Truth and Tolerance, 95.

[117] Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, The Ratzinger Reader. Mapping a Theological Journey [Lieven BOEVE – Gerard MANNION (eds.)], London–New York 2010, 148.

2.1.4 Origen: Universal Salvation– *Apokatastasis*

Origen was a third–century church father form Alexandria, Egypt, which at that time was an important centre for Christian thought. He was very much appreciated in the Eastern Church. He has brought Logos Christology to its fullest developed form. His writings were subjected to different interpretations and hence it is very difficult to know precisely the position of Origen. He was well trained in Hellenistic Philosophy. He tried to develop connection between Greek and Christian views. Celsus, a pagan, raised questions regarding the timing of coming of Christ; if God wishes the salvation of all humans, why did he waited till the coming of Christ?. Responding to Celsus, Origen said:

> And yet, after making such a statement, he [Celsus] raises a new objection, saying: "After so long a period of time, then, did God now bethink himself of making men live righteous lives, but neglect to do so before?" To which we answer, that there never was a time when God did not wish to make men live righteous lives; but He continually evinced His care for the improvement of the rational animal, by affording him occasion for the exercise of virtue. For in every generation the wisdom of god, passing into those souls which it ascertains to be holy, converts them into friends and prophets of God.[118]

Some points are to be noted here. Origen says that even before the time of Christ, God wanted people to be *just* and He gave them reason and ability to practice virtue. For Origen, who considered any non–Greek person as *barbarian*, this idea seems to be revolutionary. He also believed that the Wisdom of God is poured out to human souls of all ages to make them friends of God. Veli–Matti Kärkkäinen opines that this emphasis is quite different from the later developments of Christian theology that narrowed salvation to the response of faith mediated by the church.[119] Jacques Dupuis notes the complexity of Origen's position. On the one hand, he holds the logos theology of Justin Martyr and on the other hand he explicitly emphasizes the necessity of church for salvation.[120]

Origen is famous for his concept of *apokatastasis*, which means the restoration of all at the end. He developed this concept in his answer to Candidus, the Valentinian, who accused Christianity of dualism. Origen answered that there is no dualism in Christianity and God is all–powerful. At the end, "[…] God, through His Christ may recall all His creatures to one end, even His enemies being conquered and subdued."[121] The basis of this idea of *apocatastasis* is that the end is always like the beginning. Because at the beginning all were

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[118] ORIGEN, Contra Celsum 4, 7 (ANF 4, 500; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[119] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 60.

[120] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 86f.

[121] ORIGEN, De principiis. 1, 6, 1 (ANF 4, 260; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

one in God, at the end also all will be one in God. Even the fallen angels, Satan, will be restored to happiness. "[…] those who have been removed from their primal state of blessedness have not been removed irrecoverably, but have been placed under the rule of those holy and blessed orders which we have described […] they may recover themselves, and be restored to their condition of happiness."[122] Origen is optimistic about the salvation of all, irrespective of their religion or convictions, at the end of the world (*eschaton*). Universal salvific will of god plays an important role in present discussions in the theology of religious pluralism.

There are certainly other evidences, in the writings of the early church fathers, of a positive answer to the question concerning the possibility of salvation for people who had lived before the coming of Christ. For example, John Chrysostom, in one of his homilies, replied to the objection which the pagans of his day were still raising about the *late coming* of Christ.

> When therefore the Greeks bring charges such as these against us, and say; "What then did Christ in former time, that He did not look upon the race of men? And for what possible reason did He come at last to assist in our salvation, after neglecting us so long?" we will reply, that before this He was in the world, and took thought for His works, and was known to all who were worthy. But if ye should say, that, because all did not then know Him, because He was only known by those noble and excellent persons, therefore He was not acknowledged; at his rate you will not allow that He is worshiped even now, since even now all do not know Him.[123]

However, we have seen sufficient data to show how common was the view that God had provided the means of salvation not only to Jews but also to Gentiles during period prior to Christ. At the same time the uniqueness of Christ and Christian revelation was also held firmly. Even though there were partial revelations of Logos in the world, the salvation had always been through Christ. There were various theologies to explain this universal salvific plan of God through Jesus Christ. Jacques Dupuis finds in the writings of fathers a suitable thread to develop his theology of religious pluralism.

> In the view of the Church Fathers, salvation history […] extends beyond the Judeo–Christian dispensation to the surrounding cultures which they encountered – indeed, in some cases, to the ancient wisdom of the East of which they had but a scanty knowledge. […] There exists in the early tradition an awareness of the universal and active presence of God through his Word, which is not without bearing on a theological evaluation of the religious traditions of the world.[124]

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[122] ORIGEN, De principiis 1, 6, 2 (ANF 4, 261; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[123] JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Homilies 8 on the Gospel of John 1 (NPNF 14, 30; SCHAFF) trans. by Charles Marriot; https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240108.htm [accessed: 24 October 2023].

[124] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 53.

2.2 No Salvation outside the Church and other Exclusive Statements

We have seen above some examples of positive attitude towards other religious traditions from patristic period. But there is also another side, which is represented by the negative attitude towards other religions. Now we are having a comprehensive and short survey of such exclusive attitudes.

2.2.1 Exclusive Statements by Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus and Origen

We have seen above the concept of universal salvation in the theology of Origen and the oneness of salvation history in the theology of Irenaeus. But in their theological writings we can see also exclusive statements. There are several exhortations from the part of church fathers, which exclude everyone outside the church from salvation. "Saint Irenaeus of Antioch seems to be the first Church Father to whom reference can be made in this connection."[125] He, in his letter to the church of Philadelphia, writes: "Do not err, my brethren. If any man follows him that makes a schism in the Church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any one walks according to a strange opinion, he agrees not with the passion."[126] The context of this text makes clear that it is not primarily dealing with other religions, but with the division within the church. Ignatius of Antioch insists the faithful and their presbyters to remain in close union with their local bishop. Not only the followers, but also the leaders and inventors of schism and heresy are outside the salvation, which is available only in the church. The schismatics and heretics are personally guilty for being outside the church.[127]

The name of Irenaeus was mentioned already in the first part of the chapter, where we deal with the positive attitudes about the salvation outside the church. He admits that the just people before the coming of Christ will have salvation. His major work is against the Gnostic heretics, "who separated themselves from the ordinary Christian communities, claiming to

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[125] ibid., 86.

[126] IGNATIUS, Letter to the Philadelphians 3 (ANF 1, 80; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[127] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 18.

have a higher knowledge of the Christian mysteries than was taught by the bishops in the churches."[128] Irenaeus writes against these separatists:

> "For in the church," it is said, "God hath set apostles, prophets, teachers," and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church and every kind of grace.[129]

The separatists are responsible for their exclusion from the church and therefore, equally responsible for the exclusion from salvation.

Origen followed the Logos theology of Justin Martyr, as we have seen above. On the other hand, he explicitly expressed the idea that salvation is only available in the Church. In his homily on chapter 2 of Joshua, Origen introduced the warning that there is no salvation outside the church. He, the pioneer of Christian allegorical exegesis of the scriptures, finds in the house of Rahab the prostitute a type of the church. Rahab's house was the one place of safety in the city that was about to be destroyed.

> Also this commandment is given to the person who was once a prostitute: "All," it says, "who will be found in your house will be saved. But concerning those who go out from the house, we ourselves are fee of them by your oath." Therefore, if anyone wants to be saved, let him come into the house of this one who was once a prostitute. Even if anyone from that people wants to be saved, let him come in order to be able to attain salvation. Let him come to this house in which the blood of Christ is the sign of redemption. […] Let no one persuade himself, let no one deceive himself. Outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved. If anyone goes outside, he is responsible for his own death.[130]

Rahab, the woman who had been a prostitute, represents the image of the Gentile church as the converted sinner. The blood of Christ is represented by the scarlet cord, which was a sign to Hebrew army for sparing Rahab's house. Origen invites Jews to come to the Christian belief. But the major warning of this passage is directed against those who go out of the house, which is the only source of salvation. In Jericho, those who went outside the house were killed by Hebrew army. Likewise, anyone, who go out from the church, will lose salvation and they are responsible for their fate.[131] The church is also compared with the ark of salvation, of which ark of Noah is a type.[132]

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[128] ibid., 19.

[129] IRENAEUS, Adversus haereses 3, 24, 1; (ANF 1, 458; ROBERTS – DONALDSON cf. PG 7:966–67).

[130] ORIGEN, Homilies on Joshua 3, 5; (FaCh 105, 49f; WHITE). Origen, Homilies on Joshua, ed. by Cynthia White (FaCh 105), Washington 2002, 23–220.

[131] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 20.

[132] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 87.

However, we can see a considerably wider notion of church in some writings of Origen. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 15,28, Origen says: "The body of Christ […] is the whole humankind, nay rather perhaps the whole of creation, and each one of us is a member and part."[133] Origen, in his theory of *apokatastasis*, says about a time when the sick members of the body will be restored and all will be saved.[134] In the light of these seemingly contrasting writings, we can say that there is an uncertainty in the attitude of Origen with regard to the salvation outside the church. But Cyprian is very clear in his statements.

2.2.2 Cyprian of Carthage: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

Cyprian was the bishop of Carthage in North Africa. He died as a martyr in 258. Even though there were exclusive trends before Cyprian as it is stated above, his name is associated with the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus.* Jacques Dupuis observes: "The axiom [there is no salvation outside the church] recurs repeatedly in his writings."[135] Now we will see some passages from Cyprian.

> Let them not think that the way of life or salvation exists for them if they have refused to obey the bishops and priests since the Lord says in Deuteronomy: 'And any man who has the insolence to refuse to listen to the priest or judge, whoever he may be in those days, that man shall die. […] And all the people, on hearing of it, shall fear, and never again be insolent. God ordered men who did not obey His priests to be killed; He appointed the time of His judgment for the disobedient. And then, indeed, they were killed with the sword when as yet carnal circumcision also remained; but now since circumcision for the faithful servants of the God has begun to be spiritual, the proud and insolent are slain with the sword of the Spirit, while they are cast out from the church. For they cannot live without since the house of God is one and there can be no salvation for anyone except in the church.[136]

Cyprian's warning is directed to "Christians who were either in danger of being separated from the church by excommunication or were already separated by heresy or schism."[137] His concern is the unity of the church, not the encounter between Christianity and other religions.[138] Heretics and schismatics are responsible for their exclusion from salvation, which is available only within the church.[139] He in his letter to Jubaian states that not even

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[133] ORIGEN, Homilies on Psalms 36–38, Homily 2 on Psalm *36* (FaCh 146, 0000; HEINTZ); quoted acc. to Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 87.

[134] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 87.

[135] Cf. ibid., 88.

[136] CYPRIAN, Letters 4,4 (FaCh 51:13; DONNA).

[137] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 20.

[138] Cf. Kärikkäinen, 64.

[139] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 88.

martyrdom avail the heretics salvation, because "there is no salvation outside the Church."[140] Cyprian, in a letter referring to schismatic Christians, uses a Pauline imagery of the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5: 32) and asks[141], "[H]ow can he who is not with the spouse of Christ and in His church be with Christ?"[142]

For Cyprian, the unity of the church was essentially the unity of love. He bases his argument on 1 Cor. 13: 3, "And if I deliver my body to be burned and have not love, I gain nothing." Therefore, "Neither baptism of public confession [of the faith under torture], nor of blood [shed for the faith], can avail the heretic anything toward salvation, because there is no salvation outside the church."[143] Cyprian affirms this idea in his work *On the Unity of the Church.*

> Even if such men were slain in confession of the Name that stain is not even washed away by blood: the inexpiable and grave fault of discord is not even purged by suffering. He cannot be a martyr who is not in the church; he cannot attain unto the kingdom who forsakes that which shall reign there. Christ gave us peace; He bade us be in agreement, and of one mind. He charged the bonds of love and charity to be kept uncorrupted and inviolate; he cannot show himself a martyr who has not maintained brotherly love. Paul the apostle teaches this, and testifies, saying, "And though I have faith, so that I can remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing […]."[144]

Cyprian rebukes the schismatic Christians by using the images of the church as bride, mother, and ark:

> The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. […] Whoever is separated from the church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the church; nor can he who forsakes the church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother. If anyone could who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the church. […] He who breaks the peace and concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ; he who gather[s] elsewhere than in the church, scatters the church of Christ. […] He who does not hold this unity does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.[145]

The idea that there is no salvation outside the church cannot be expressed better than the statement by Cyprian. If the statement *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is taken out of its context, it surely excludes everyone who is outside the church from salvation. However, Cyprian, though his statement, intended only the Christian heretics and schismatics, whom he judged

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[140] CYPRIAN, Letters 73, 21 (FaCh 51, 282; DONNA).

[141] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 21.

[142] CYPRIAN, Letters 52, 1 (FaCh 51, 128; DONNA).

[143] CYPRIAN, Letters 73, 21; (FaCh 51, 282; DONNA).

[144] CYPRIAN, On the Unity of the Church, 14 (ANF 5, 425; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[145] CYPRIAN, On the Unity of the Church 6 (ANF 5, 423; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

culpable of persisting in sins against faith and charity by their allegiance to heretical or schismatic sects. Francis A. Sullivan opines that "[t]here is no instance in his writings in which Cyprian explicitly applied his saying 'No salvation outside the church' to the majority of people who were still pagans in his day."[146] We have no direct statements by Cyprian on his attitude towards the people belong to other religions. However, his letter to Demetrianus, who had been involved in Christian persecution, in his deathbed is noteworthy.

> We repay kindness for your hatred; and for the torments and penalties which are inflicted on us, we point out to you the ways of salvation. Believe and live, and do ye who persecute us in time rejoice with us for eternity. When you have once departed thither, there is no longer any place for repentance, and no possibility of making satisfaction. Here life is either lost or saved; here eternal safety is provided for by the worship of God and the fruits of faith. Nor let anyone be restrained either by his sins or by his years from coming to obtain salvation. To him who still remains in this world no repentance is too late. The approach to God's mercy is open, and the access is easy to those who seek and apprehend the truth. Do you entreat for your sins, although it be in the very end of life, and at the setting of the son of time; and implore God, who is the one and true God, in confession and faith of acknowledgement of Him, and pardon is granted to the man who confesses, and saving mercy is given from the divine goodness to the believer, and a passage is opened to the immortality even in death itself. This grace Christ bestows;[147]

This shows that Cyprian would not have excluded Demetrianus from salvation, even though he was outside the church. Even at deathbed there is a chance for Demetrianus to repent and to accept faith in God. The membership in the church is not mentioned as the necessary condition to attain salvation.

Even though Cyprian had used the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* in reference to heretics and schismatics, in the later period, after Christianity became the official religion of Roman empire, this axiom was used in relation to Jews and Gentiles, who rejected the Christian faith.[148] This is also true about the similar statements by Ignatius, Irenaeus and Origen.

2.2.3 Post–Nicaean Fathers

Fourth century has witnessed drastic changes in the Roman empire and in the history of Christianity. First decades of fourth century was marked by the cruellest persecutions against Christianity in Roman empire. But by the edicts of emperor Galerius (311) and Constantine (313), the persecution came to an end. By the time of Constantine the Emperor of Roman

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[146] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 22-23.

[147] CYPRIAN, An Address to Demetrianus 5, 25; (ANF 5, 457; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[148] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 23f.

Empire became Christian and Christianity was favoured by the emperors and enjoyed many privileges. To be a member of church has offered a privileged life than a persecuted life. Therefore, the fourth century witnessed a big number of conversions to Christianity. Slowly, by the time of Theodosius I it became the official religion of the Roman empire. Theodosius I, who ruled from 379 to 395, even forbade the celebration of pagan religious activities. But still the official roman policy of toleration towards the Jewish religion continued. In this changed situation the attitude of the Christian writers towards the minority, which does not accept Christianity, has also undergone a change. Now the axiom *outside the church no salvation* was applied directly to the pagans and Jews. The reason was the same as in the case of heretics and schismatics: they are guilty of not accepting Christian faith. The basic presumption behind this was that the message of the gospel had been proclaimed everywhere and everyone has ample opportunity to accept it. Those who did not yet accept were considered as guilty for their refusal of God's message.[149] St. Ambrose, the most influential bishop of that time, says about those who rejected the Christian faith: "If someone does not believe in Christ he defrauds himself of this universal benefit, just as if someone were to shut out the rays of the sun by closing his window. For the mercy of the Lord has been spread by the church to all nations; the faith has been spread to all peoples."[150]

St. Gregory of Nyssa, a contemporary of Ambrose, expressed similar idea in his *Catechetical Oration*. He asserts that by that time the gospel was proclaimed to all and those who are not yet accepted Christian faith are culpable for their refusal.[151]

> If, then, faith is a good thing, they say, why has this gift not come to all? Now if what we are saying were taken to mean that faith was distributed to men by the divine will in such a way that some were called, but others receive no call to faith, then with reason one could accuse this mystery of injustice. But if in fact the call has gone out to all, with no difference on account of rank, age or nation […] how could it be right to blame God for the fact that his word has not achieved its dominion over all? For he who has full power over the universe, for the supreme honour of mankind, left something in our power, of which each one is alone the master, and this is the will, a thing that cannot be enslaved, and has self-determining power, since it is seated in the liberty of thought and mind. Therefore such blame would more justly be attributed to those who have not been drawn to the faith, rather than to him who has called them to believe.[152]

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[149] Cf. ibid., 24.

[150] AMBROSE, In Psalm. 118 Sermo 8, 57; (PL 15, 1318; MIGNE) quoted according to Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church,* 25.

[151] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 26.

[152] JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Oratio catechetica 30 (PG 45, 76f; MIGNE) quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 25.

John Chrysostom also addressed the question if God has neglected honest and sincere pagans, who could not accept the Christian faith. He writes:

> Do not say: "How is it that God has neglected that sincere and honest pagan?" You will find that he was not really been diligent in seeking the truth, since what concerns the truth is now clearer than the sun. How shall they obtain pardon who, when they see the doctrine of truth spread before them, make no effort to come to know it? For now the name of God is proclaimed to all, what the prophets predicted has come true, and the religion of the pagans has been proven false […]. It is impossible that anyone who is vigilant in seeking the truth should be condemned by God.[153]

Asking his people to pray for the conversion of pagans, Chrysostom says: "'Did Christ gives himself up for pagans?' you ask. Yes, Christ died for pagans as well; how then can you be unwilling to pray for them? 'But how is it,' you ask, 'that they have not believed?' It is because they did not wish to. And yet Christ did his part on their behalf; his passion bears witness to that."[154] For Chrysostom it was clear that there is no salvation for pagans outside the church because it is their fault being outside the church. His statements about Jews are more offensive. Jews have rejected Christ and they have no salvation unless they revoke their rejection.[155] By presenting example of Jews, he calls his followers for conversion. "You have grounds for shame if you do not change for the better, but persist in your untimely contentiousness. That is what destroyed the Jews."[156]

2.2.4 Augustine and Followers

Augustine expresses his opinion on the issue that we are dealing with in a letter to a priest called Deogratias. He was answering to some questions from some pagans.[157] One question was why Christ did, who is called Saviour by Christians, come so late after so many ages. The other question is about the state of souls of the Romans or Latins who were deprived of the grace of Christ until the his coming.[158] Augustine answers:

> When we say that Christ is the Word of God, through whom all things were made, we say also that he is the Son of God […] co–eternal with the Father, the unchangeable Wisdom by whom the whole universe was created, and who becomes the happiness of every rational soul.

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[153] JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Epist. ad Rom. hom. 26, 3f (PG 60, 641f; MIGNE) quoted according to DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 89.

[154] John CHRYSOSTOM, 1 Tim. 2 Hom. 7, 2 (PG 62, 537; MIGNE) quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 26.

[155] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 26.

[156] JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Discourses Against Judaizing Christians, 3,6; (FaCh 68, 66; DONNA) trans. by Paul W. Harkins, Washington 1988.

[157] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 65.

[158] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 29.

> Therefore, from the beginning of the human race, all those who believed in him and knew him and lived a good and devout life according to his commands, whenever and wherever they lived, undoubtedly were saved by him. […] From the beginning of the human race, sometimes obscurely, sometimes openly, as it seemed to his providence to suit the times, he did not cease to prophesy[sic], and before he appeared in the flesh there were not lacking men to believe in him, from Adam to Moses, among the people of Israel, which by divine ordinance was the prophetic race, and among other people. In the sacred books of the Hebrews there is mention of many from the time of Abraham, who were not of his stock, nor of the people of Israel, nor were they joined by any chance alliance to the people of Israel, yet were partakers in his worship; so why should we not believe that sometimes there were other men, here and there among other races, who were worshipers of him, although we do not find mention of them in the same sacred books? The saving grace of this religion, the only true one, through which alone true salvation is truly promised, has never been refused to anyone who was worthy of it, and whoever lacked it was unworthy of it. From the beginning of human history to the end, this is made known for the reward of some and the punishment of others. And that is why it is not make known at all to some, because it was foreknown that they would not believe, yet it is also make known to some who will not believe, as a warning to the former.[159]

In his sermon on the three ways of understanding Christ in scripture, Augustine writes:

> All together we are members of Christ and are his body; and not we who are in this place only, but throughout the world; and not at this time only, but – what shall I say – from Abel the just man until the end of time, as long as men beget and are begotten, whoever among the just made his passage through this life, whether now, that is, not in this place, but in the present life, or in generations to come, all the just are this one body of Christ, and individually his members.[160]

These responses of Augustine reveals his convictions about the divine economy of salvation, which can be summarized by following sentences: Christ is always at the central place in divine plan of salvation[161]; the faith in Christ was present from the very beginning of humanity; not only Israelites but also gentiles, who lived before Christ, have received some partial revelation about Christ; but not all of them were provided the knowledge about Christ and it is because God foreknew that they would not believe in it;[162] therefore, they are responsible for their ignorance; all those who have lived justly have been members of body of Christ, beginning with Abel.[163]

Origen has already before Augustine proposed the idea of church, existed even before the coming of Christ. But Augustine was the first one, who described all the just, from the

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[159] AUGUSTINE, *Epist.* 102:8; (CSEL 34,2:551-52); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 29.

[160] AUGUSTINE, *Sermo* 341:9,11; (PL 39:1499-1500); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 30.

[161] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 66.

[162] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 37.

[163] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 66.

beginning to the end of the world, as constituting the church beginning with Abel.[164] This idea was taken by the Second Vatican Council. "At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam, and 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect', will be gathered together with the Father in the universal church" (LG 2). Here, it is remarkable that Augustine does not confine the body of Christ only to Israel. Gentiles are also part of it.[165] His *City of God* also starts with Abel and he includes in it everyone, who "lived in the world with careful concern not to offend God, and had avoided sin."[166] For Augustine the faith in Christ is essential for the salvation. But how the gentiles achieved such a faith before Christ? This question was not answered by him satisfactorily. For him, one thing was sure. That is, after the preaching of gospel and establishment of church there is no possibility of salvation without the membership in the true church. In this respect, his view is similar to that of Cyprian. He also, along with Cyprian, excludes Christian heretics and schismatics from the salvation, because they are guilty for the breaking of communion with the church.[167] "Whoever is separated from this Catholic Church, by this single sin of being severed from the unity of Christ, no matter how estimable a life he may imagine he is living, shall not have life, but the wrath of God rests upon him."[168] In his *On Baptism* he repeats the same thought.

> The love of which the Apostle says: "The love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us" (Rom. 5: 5), is a love which those do not have who are cut off from the communion of the Catholic Church. […] For that person does not have the love of God who does not love the unity of the church, and from this one rightly understands that the Holy Spirit is not received anywhere but in the Catholic Church.[169]

In one of his sermons he expresses his view more vigorously: "Outside the church he can have everything except salvation. He can have honor[sic], he can have sacraments, he can sing alleluia, […] but nowhere else than in the Catholic Church can he find salvation."[170] Even the martyrdom does not help a heretic to achieve salvation. "[N]either does this baptism

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[164] Cf. Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 30; cf. also KLUG, Beyond the Visible Church, 1.

[165] Cf. ibid.

[166] AUGUSTINE, *enarrationes in psalmos* 61:6; (CCL 39:777; DEKKERS– FRAIPONT); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 30.

[167] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 66.

[168] AUGUSTINE, *Epist.* 141:5; (CSEL 44:238; GOLDBACHER); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 31.

[169] AUGUSTINE, *De Baptismo* 3:16,2; (CSEL 51:212; PETSCHENIG); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 31.

[170] AUGUSTINE, *Sermo ad Caesariensis ecclesiae plebem*, 6; (CSEL 53:174-75; PETSCHENIG); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 32.

profit the heretic, even though for confessing Christ he be put to death outside the Church. This is most true; for, by being put to death outside the Church, he is proved not to have had charity."[171] But on the validity of baptism Augustine differs himself from Cyprian. In his controversy against Donatists, Augustine upholds the validity of baptism conferred by heretics and schismatics, whereas Cyprian considered such baptism as invalid. For Augustine such baptism is valid, but inoperative with regard to salvation.[172]

Still Augustine finds a difference between the persons who caused the division from the communion of the church and those who, without their personal fault, belonged to the separated group in the later generations. But the latter group was not completely innocent according to him. They sinned less grievously than those who caused the division.[173] "And those who are baptized there [in a schismatic group] through ignorance, thinking that it is the true church of Christ, are guilty of less sin in comparison than these [guilty of initiating the schism], though even they are wounded by the impiety of schism; nor do they escape a grievous hurt, because others suffer even more."[174] Even though he speaks about some people, who are apparently *inside* but really *outside* the church and others, who are apparently *outside* but really *inside* the church, it is not in the sense that there is a possibility of salvation for the people who are outside the church. Such things are part of God's foreknowledge.[175] For Augustine, it is clear that if anyone, who is now *outside* because of schism or heresy and is *inside* by the reason of God's foreknowledge, that person would inevitably be joined to the Catholic Church before he or she died.[176] There is no hope for the salvation of a person who died in a state of separation from the Catholic Church. Even if a heretic suffered martyrdom, he would not be saved.[177]

We have seen the attitude of Augustine to heretics and schismatics. He also argues that there is no salvation for Jews and Pagans.[178] He believes that even in the pre–Christian era salvation was through the mediation of Christ. Now, by his time, the gospel was preached

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[171] AUGUSTINE, *De Baptismo* 4:17.-25; (NPNF 4:458; SCHAFF).

[172] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 90.

[173] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 31.

[174] AUGUSTINE, *De Baptismo* 1: 5, 6; (NPNF 4:415; SCHAFF).

[175] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 90.

[176] Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De Baptismo* 5:27.-38; (NPNF 4:477 ; SCHAFF).

[177] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 32.

[178] Cf. ibid., 35-36.

and the church was established. Therefore, based on Mark 16: 15–16, he opines that those who had heard the message of the gospel and had not accepted Christianity are guilty for their rejection of the faith and the membership in the church.[179] God wants all human to be saved. But he does not take away the free will of human. If some have rejected the gospel, they have acted against the will of God and hence they have misused their free will.[180]

Even though in general Augustine held the position that gospel was proclaimed to every human and therefore those who have not yet accepted the gospel are culpable of their rejection and condemned due to their rejection, at a later point he realized that there are many people, who had still no opportunity to come to Christian faith, for example, many tribes in Africa.[181] According to Augustine such people are responsible for not getting chance to hear the gospel. He "insisted that no one lacked this opportunity who was worthy of it, and that if God refused it to anyone, it was because he foresaw that if it were offered the person would refuse it."[182] In his later, anti–Pelagian period, Augustine identifies original sin as the justification for the condemnation of the people who dies without receiving baptism.[183] Along with the adults dying in ignorance of the Christian faith even the infants, who died without baptism, are destined to the condemnation.

> Now this grace of Christ, without which neither infants nor adults can be saved, is not given in return for merits but is a free gift; for this reason it is called "grace." Wherefore, all those who are not set free by that grace, whether because they could not hear, or because they refused to obey it, or, being unable to hear it because of their infancy, they did not receive the baptismal bath by which they could have been saved-all these, I say, are justly damned because they are not without sin […].[184]

Then how can we explain the universal salvific will of God, if many people are destined to be damned? According to Augustine, the will of God must always be efficacious. Whatever God wills must necessarily happen. Then, if so many people are devoid of salvation, how can we say that God will the salvation of all? Augustine answers to this question by interpreting 1 Timothy 2: 4.

> [I]n the words: 'Who wishes all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,' the 'all' means the many whom He wishes to come to grace. It is much more fitting to say this, because

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[179] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 90f.

[180] Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De Spiritu et littera* 58, 33 (NPNF 5:109 ; SCHAFF).

[181] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 91.

[182] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 37.

[183] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 91.

[184] AUGUSTINE, *De natura et gratia* 4–5; (PL 44 :249–250; MIGNE); quoted according to SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 38.

> no one comes but him whom He wishes to come. 'No one can come to me,' the Son says, 'unless the Father who sent me draw him,' and 'No one can come to me unless it be given by him by my Father.' Therefore, all are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth at His willing it, and all come at His willing it. […] Nevertheless, we hold it to be certain and everlastingly firm that there is no injustice with God, so that He should condemn anyone who had done no wrong, and that there is goodness with God by which He delivers many without personal merit. In those He condemns we see what is due all, so that those He delivers may thence learn what due penalty was relaxed in their regard and what undue grace was given.[185]

This explanation does not clearly explain the contradiction between the universal salvific will of God and the fact that (according to Augustine) some will be devoid of the chances to accept Christian faith. His is simply an affirmation that God does not do injustice because He is just and good.

In response to Augustine's extreme anti–Pelagian theology some theologians have developed their own theology, which is called *semi–Pelagianism*. They have emphasised that God's salvific will was truly universal, but rejected Augustine's idea that God predestines some people to eternal damnation. They accepted absolute necessity of grace for salvation. But divine distribution of grace is not only depended on God's choice, but also on the prior dispositions of the persons. This doctrine was later rejected by the Council of Orange in 529.[186] Prosper of Aquitaine in France, a follower of Augustine, has responded to semi–Pelagianism. He, while sticking upon the essential doctrine of Augustine, has added his own views. Augustine always wanted to stress the absolute primacy of grace, without which no human being can attain salvation. Grace is completely gratuitous and it means God is free to deny the grace to anyone he chooses irrespective of his or her personal merits. His action of omitting some persons from the grace, necessary for salvation, is justified by the original sin that all humans have inherited from Adam. At this point Prosper of Aquitaine deviates from Augustine. He says that God made a universal offer of *general* grace, that is given to all, while reserving *special* graces only to those whom he chooses. By the concept of *general* grace, Prosper of Aquitaine defends the universal salvific will of God. For him, the fate of infants dying without baptism remains an insoluble mystery, which is known only to the divine wisdom.[187] With regard to the people, who die as unbelievers because they never had a chance to hear the gospel, he says that Christ is died for all, not only for believers.

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[185] AUGUSTINE, *Contra Julianum* 4:8,44-45; trans. Matthew A. SCHUHMACHER, Washington 1974, 206f.

[186] Cf. SECOND SYNOD OF ORANGE, Canon 7 (3 July 529), in: Heinrich DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals, revised, enlarged, and in collaboration with Helmut HOPING, ed. by Peter HÜNERMANN, and Robert FASTIGGI and Anne Englund NASH for the English edition, San Francisco [43]2012, 377.

[187] Cf. PROSPER, *De vocatione omnium gentium* 2:21; (ACW 14, 127; QUASTEN–PLUMPE).

There are people who have died before Christ, even after Christ, without getting a chance to hear the gospel. The reason is that, according to him, in God's hidden judgment a proper time for them has been appointed to hear the gospel. But even before the calling to believe in gospel, the heaven has bestowed a general help on all humans. In order to have the full knowledge of God human beings need the true light from God, which dispels all darkness from human heart. The good and just God did not shed this light as abundantly in the past ages as he does after the incarnation of God.[188] According to Prosper of Aquitaine the *true light* that provides the full knowledge of God is an instance of the *special grace*, which God freely bestows when and on whom he chooses. Only from the time of Jesus Christ this special grace has been granted to gentiles. The question why this special grace was not given in earlier times is incomprehensible to human knowledge. The general grace, which was given to the gentiles before the special grace was sufficient for their salvation. If anyone was condemned by God, it was due to his or her own malice, not due to original sin as Augustine said.[189]

Fulgentius of Ruspe, another follower of Augustine, has literally stuck on Augustine's anti–Pelagian teachings. The evolution of his thoughts is to be noted here. There are some passages in his literary corpus that assert the universal saving will of God. Scholars are divided on the question whether Fulgentius of Ruspe had advocated for or against the universal salvific will of God. An acceptable conclusion is that there is an evolution in his thoughts regarding this theme.[190] His teachings are very significant with regard to our theme of discussion. In his work *De veritate praedestinationis et gratiae Dei*[191], he clearly advocates for the divine predestination, in which God wills some people not to achieve salvation. He rejects the universal salvific will of God:

> If it were true that God universally willed that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, how is it that Truth itself has hidden from some men the mystery of his knowledge? Surely, to those whom he denied such knowledge, he also denies salvation […]. Therefore, he willed to save those to whom he gave knowledge of the mystery of salvation, and he did not

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[188] Cf. PROSPER, *De vocatione* 2:16,17; (ACW 14, 118–121; QUASTEN–PLUMPE).

[189] Cf. PROSPER, *De vocatione* 2 :18-19; (ACW 14, 122–125; QUASTEN–PLUMPE).

[190] For a detailed view cf. Francis X. GUMERLOCK, Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God [unpublished dissertation Saint Louis University, Missouri], 2004.

[191] Weaver opines "Fulgentius wrote the *De veritate praedestinationis et gratiae Dei* to reassert divine sovereignty and human impotence in the process of salvation against those who insisted upon the efficacy of the human will and the possibility of human virtue apart from grace." Rebecca Harden WEAVER, Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of Semi-Pelagian Controversy, Macon, Ga.1998, 185.

> wish to save those to whom he denied the knowledge of the saving mystery. If he had intended the salvation of both, he would have given the knowledge of the truth to both.[192]

One of the important statements by Fulgentius of Ruspe was taken into the magisterium of the church, into a decree of the Council of Florence in 1442. "[The Holy Roman Church] […] firmly believes, professes and teaches that 'no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans', but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but they will go to the 'eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels', unless before the end of their life they are joined to it."[193]

Despite his great influence in the Christian theology, many of Augustine's views did not become prevalent in the mainstream Christian tradition. Some examples are his idea that God would condemn unbaptized infants to eternal damnation because of original sin, God would condemn adults who had no chance to hear the gospel and God simply excludes some people from the salvation. His views were mainly centred on God's foreknowledge and predestination of humans.

2.3 Conclusion

We have seen in the previous chapter that the attitude of Bible towards other religions is ambivalent. As a natural consequence of this ambiguity, in the early church we can observe a variety of opinions among the church fathers about the relevance of other religions. But in the writings of early church fathers one can observe a general positive attitude towards other religions, for example the logos theology, which asserts the work of Logos in the world even prior to revelation through incarnation, and unity of salvation history, which holds that even outside the Christian revelation the people can have knowledge of God through cosmos. Such theories acknowledged the possibility of salvation of Jews and Gentiles, who lived before Christ. "This is not to say that all the early fathers looked at other religions positively nor that they were always consistent; there are theologians and shepherds of the church such as Origen whose opinions about other religions have both negative and positive leanings."[194] In the beliefs and practices of other religions, there were many things that were totally unacceptable to early Christian theologians. For example, the church fathers could never

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[192] FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE, *De veritate praedestinationis* 3 :16–18 ; (PL 65 :660f; MIGNE).

[193] Cf. COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, Bull *Cantate Domino*: Decree for the Jacobites (4 February 1442), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds 1351; cf. FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE, *De fide liber ad Petrum* 38 and 39 (PL 65, 690f; MIGNE).

[194] KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 56.

accept polytheism and idolatry, since it was antithetical to Old Testament teaching. In general, they were hostile to mystery religions, pagan mythologies and many pagan rituals. They also opposed those Easters cults, such as Manichaeism, that found gateways to the West in the early centuries.[195]

Despite the general positive attitude of early church fathers, we can see a uniformly negative attitude towards the heretics and schismatics. They cannot achieve salvation, because of their own guilty of separating themselves from the unity of the church. Cyprian formed the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* in connection with heretics and schismatics. A positive attitude towards other religions among the earliest fathers may be based on the thought that the people belonging to these religions were deprived of the chance to hear the gospel. The heretics and schismatics were condemned because they heard and accepted the gospel and rejected the true faith and charity, which is available only in the church.

The negative statements about the possibility of salvation of those who outside the church, for example, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, were primarily oriented towards Christian heretics and schismatics rather than towards people belonging to other religions. Only in later period, after Christianity became the official religion of the roman empire, such negative statements were pointed against people of other religions. It was based on the assumption that the gospel was already proclaimed to all and those who did not accepted in are guilty for their rejection.

One thing we can conclusively say about the theologies of early church fathers is that they unanimously uphold the universal salvific will of God. It is the rejection from the part of human, not the will of God that is responsible for the lack of salvation. Only by the time of Augustine, the exclusive attitude towards other religions gained the momentum. He is the one who firstly opined that God wilfully avoids some people from salvation. Fulgentius of Ruspe has repeated this idea of Augustine. Even though the Council of Florence has accepted the opinion of Fulgentius that everyone outside the church will be condemned, it kept silence about Fulgentius' and Augustine's claim that God wills some people not to be saved. In other words, the council did not reject the universal salvific will of God. The evolution of the statement by Cyprian *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* in a complete exclusive manner in the later medieval period and the positive attitude towards other religions among prevalent exclusive and negative attitude will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[195] Cf. ibid., 55-56.

Chapter 3

Medieval and Modern Theologies on Religious Other: From the Axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* to the Membership in the Church through *voto et desiderio*

3.0 Introduction

We discussed in the last chapter the exclusive attitude of Augustine and his followers that God wills not all to save and some humans are pre–destined to the eternal damnation. In this chapter we try to trace out the attitude of medieval theologians and church on the salvation of those who are outside the church. There are some theologians who had kept the heritage of Augustine, by asserting predestination theory. But, interestingly, we can see in the magisterium of the church attempts to correct such extreme teachings. At the same time, magisterial teachings that reject religious indifference are also found. The so–called *discovery* of new continents, which marked the modern era according to some historians,[196] has also raised serious questions with regard to the salvation of the people outside the church. Theological school of Salamanca has tried to answer such questions based on the Thomistic concept of *voto et desiderio*.

3.1 Magisterium of the Church

Magisterium of the church in this era has maintained the exclusive claims on the salvation. On one papal letter we can see a positive attitude towards Islam based on common monotheistic belief. But church has continuously solemnly professed the necessity of the church for salvation.

[196] Cf. Kenneth MILLS – William B. TAYLOR (ed.), Colonial Spanish America. A Documentary History, New York et al. 2006, 36.

3.1.1 Exclusivist Claims on Salvation

Cyprian's axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* was several times appeared in the magisterium. In 1208 Pope Innocent III, in his letter to the Archbishop of Tarragona, wrote: "We believe with our heart and confess with our tongue the one church, not of heretics, but the holy Roman catholic and apostolic <Church> outside which we believe that no one is saved."[197] Even though this statement was not directed to non–Christian religions, but to Waldensians, it clearly shows the exclusivist attitude of church regarding salvation outside the church.[198] Jacques Dupuis notices in this statement the explicit reference to the *Roman Catholic* church as the one true church, which was something new in the history of the interpretation of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[199] The fourth Lateran Council, in its decree, stated, "There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful outside which no one at all is saved[…]."[200] Pope Boniface VIII in his bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) declared: "That there is only one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church we are compelled by faith's urging to believe and hold, and we firmly believe in her and sincerely confess her outside of whom there is neither salvation nor remission of sins."[201] Affirming the supremacy of spiritual power over the temporal power, the bull said: "Furthermore we declare, state, and define that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of all human creatures that they submit to the Roman Pontiff."[202] The accumulation of verbs *we declare, state, and define* (*declaramus, dicimus, et diffinimus*) shows the weightage of this declaration. It says that the submission to Roman Pontiff is necessary for the salvation. Whether this sentence has dogmatic character is a debatable theme.[203] Francis A. Sullivan opines that Pope Boniface's theory about the supremacy of spiritual power over temporal power is not regarded as a catholic dogma now. What the bull wanted to say is the traditional doctrine that there is no salvation outside the church.[204] Council of Florence (1442) in its decree for the Copts declares:

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[197] INNOCENT III, Letter to the Archbishop of Tarragona *Eius exemplo* (18 December 1208), in: DENZINGER 792.

[198] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 69.

[199] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 93.

[200] DEZINGER 802.

[201] DEZINGER 870.

[202] DEZINGER 875.

[203] Cf. M. Mildred CURLEY, An Episode in the Conflict between Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair, in: The Catholic Historical Review 13/2 (1927) 194–226, here: 205-207.

[204] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 66.

> She firmly believes, professes, and preaches that "none of those who are outside of the Catholic Church, not only pagans," but also Jews, heretics, and schismatics, can become sharers of eternal life, but they will go into the eternal fire "that was prepared for the devil and his angels" [*Matt. 25:41*] unless, before the end of their life, they are joined to her. And the unity of the Church's body is of such great importance that the Church's sacraments are beneficial toward salvation only for those who remain with her, and <only for them> do fasts, almsgiving, and other acts of piety and exercises of Christian discipline bring forth eternal rewards. "No one can be saved, no matter how many alms he has given, and even if he sheds his blood for the name of Christ, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church."[205]

Here it is remarkable that the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is applied also to Jews and pagans. Hitherto it was applied only to heretics and schismatics, who were guilty of rejecting the true catholic church. Francis A. Sullivan opines that this harsh statement of the council of Florence is to be understood in the background of then common understanding that Jews, pagans, heretics and schismatics are culpable either for rejection of the true faith (Jews and pagans) or for not remaining in the true faith (heretics and schismatics). Salvation of those who remain outside the church without knowing about the truth, of which they are not culpable, was not a subject of discussion in the council of Florence.[206] These documents of the church show primarily a negative answer regarding the question of salvation outside the church. But, at the same time, there are also several positive answers in the history of the church regarding this question.

3.1.2 Positive Attitude to the Believers of Other Religions

The evidence of positive attitude of the church towards other religions can be seen papal documents. First one is the letter of Pope Gregory VII in 1076 to the Muslim King Anzir of Mauritania.

> God, the Creator of all, without whom we cannot do or even thing anything that is good, has inspired to your heart this act of kindness. He who enlightens all people coming into this world *[Jn 1:9]* has enlightened your mind for this purpose. Almighty God, who desires all people to be saved *[1 Tim 2:4]* and none to perish, is well pleased to approve in us most of all that besides loving God human beings love others, and do not do to others anything they do not want to be done unto themselves *[cf. Mt 7:14]*. We and you must show in a special way to the other nations an example of this charity, for we believe and confess one God, although in different ways, and praise and worship him daily as the creator of all ages and the ruler of this world.[207]

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[205] DEZINGER, 1351.

[206] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 67f.

[207] GREGORY VII, Letter to Anzir, King of Mauritania (1076), in: Josef NEUNER–Jacques DUPUIS, The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church, Bangalore ^{7}2004, 1002.

The Pope affirms the universal salvific will of God. The. Most worth noting point is that the Pope opines that we (Christians and Muslims) believe, confess and worship one God, although in different ways.

3.2 Positive Attitude Regarding Salvation Outside the Church in Theology

Peter Abelard, a great twelfth century theologian, has produced an interesting work in dialogue form. It is called *collationes* or *Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Jew and a Christian*. This book differs from traditional Christian works. While Christian authors traditionally criticized Jewish views, in this work Christian and Jew argue together against Philosopher.[208] It recognizes some common elements between Judaism and Christianity. Peter Abelard believed, writes John Sanders, that "the Trinity was revealed not only in the Old Testament, but also to pagan poets and philosophers – though indeed not in precise […]. This was necessary since medieval theologians held that belief in the Trinity is necessary for salvation."[209] He was of the conviction that the noble pagans, poets and philosophers, who never heard the gospel can attain salvation. "Notable as they were in faith and life we cannot doubt that they obtained indulgence of God, or that their conduct and worship of the One God which they both held and made known by writing acquired for them the divine favor in the present existence and in the world to come, along with the things necessary for their salvation."[210]

Ramon Llull, in his work *The Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men,* tries to address the questions of a gentile atheist in the form a dialogue of three wise men, one Jew, one Christian and one Muslim (Saracen).[211] They three together present arguments to prove the existence of God. At the end, after the departure of the gentile, the three wise men discuss about the possibility of a common religion. "Would you like to meet once a day […] and have our discussions last until all three of us have only one faith, one religion, and until we can find some way to honor and serve one another, so that we can be in agreement?"[212] Here

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[208] Cf. Rik Van NIEUWENHOVE, An Introduction to Medieval Theology, Cambridge 2012, 101.

[209] John SANDERS, No Other Name. An Investigation into the Destiny of Unevangelized, Michigan 1992, 269.

[210] Peter ABELARD, Christian Theology [trans. by J. Ramsey MCCALLUM], Oxford 1948, 66.

[211] Cf. Anthony BONNER (ed. tr.), Doctor Illuminatus. A Ramon Llull Reader, Princeton 1994, 85–88.

[212] ibid., 170.

we can observe the reminiscence of modern pluralist theology, which is considered as a meta–theology.[213] According to Ramon Llull, since God is one, the different peoples of the world is to be united to one people and there shall be one religion and one form of worship to God.[214]

Nicholas of Cusa wrote *De pace fidei* as a response to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Riccoldo da Montecroce, a Florentine Dominican wrote *Epistolae ad ecclesiam triumphantem* as a reaction to the fall of Acre in 1291. Both were affected by a similar catastrophe, i.e., the fall of a Christian city to Muslim rulers. While Riccoldo raised questions to the church triumphant, Nicholas of Cusa dreamt of an interreligious dialogue of seventeen different religious leaders, including a Jew, several Muslims, an Indian, a Tartar, and a variety of Christians. All the participants of dialogue declare that the only way to interreligious harmony is the creation of "a single religion in a diversity of rites".[215] *Una religio in rituum varietate* resembles *religio duplex* suggested by Jan Assmann.[216] In *De pace fidei*, Scott F. Aikin and Jason Aleksander find similarity with pluralism: "Nicholas attempts, on the one hand, to advocate and promote peace through interreligious dialogue but, on the other hand, also shows that the very possibility of such seemingly pluralist practices presupposes the fact that all diverse rights are mere signs of the fundamental truth of a single, universal religion."[217] Walter Andreas Euler, on the contrary, opines that *Una religio in rituum varietate* of Nicholas of Cusa does not tend towards religions theological pluralism or relativism.[218]

The above–mentioned examples show the multiplicity of medieval responses to religious diversity. The dialogical nature of these works does not presuppose an actual dialogue between religions as we think in modern times. The three *quasi*–Dialogues that we have seen are not real dialogues. All three, *Collationes* of Peter Abelard, *The book of the gentile and*

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[213] Cf. John HICK, The Possibility of Religious Pluralism. A Reply to Gavin D'Costa, in: Religious Studies 33/2 (1997), 161–166, here: 163.

[214] Cf. Walter Andreas EULER, Mittelalterliche Religionsgespräche: Abelard, Lullus, Cusanus, in: Jan–Heiner TÜCK – Rudolf LANGTHALER (eds.), „Es strebe von euch jeder um die Wette". Lessings Ringparabel – ein Paradigma für die Verständigung der Religionen heute?, Freiburg et al. 2016, 95–110, here: 106.

[215] Rita GEORGE–TVRTKOVIC, After the Fall. Riccoldo da Montecroce and Nicholas of Cusa on Religious Diversity, in: Theological Studies 73/3 (2012), 641–662, here: 641f.

[216] Cf. Jan ASSMANN, Religio duplex. Ägyptische Mysterien und europäische Aufklärung, Berlin 2010, 23.

[217] Scott F. AIKIN – Jason ALEKSANDER, Nicholas of Cusa's "De pace fidei" and the Meta-Exclusivism of Religious Pluralism, in: IJPR 74/2 (2013), 219–235, here: 220.

[218] Cf. EULER, Mittelalterliche Religionsgespräche, 109.

the three wise men of Ramon Llull and *De pace fidei* of Nicholas of Cusa, are imaginary conversations. The words from the partners of other religious traditions does not authentically reflect their respective religions, but they were put into their mouth by the Christian authors.[219] What we can certainly say is that many medieval theologians have positively considered the fact of religious pluralism and increasing conflicts among religions were seen as the result of religious–political problems.

3.3 Dialogical Encounter between Christianity and Islam

While all the above examples were theoretical responses, Francis Assisi has shown a practical example of interreligious dialogue amidst growing rivalry between Christians and Muslims. He is considered as a pioneer of Christian Muslim dialogue, at least in the western world. In the eastern Christianity, already in the eighth century a dialogue was taken place with Islam, between Timothy I, the first Nestorian Patriarch and al–Mahdi, the third Abbasid Caliph.[220] Against his contemporary exclusive attitude of Christianity, which identified itself with the kingdom of God, considered geographical enlargement as a missionary activity and viewed other religions as demoniac,[221] Francis Assisi engaged in dialogue with Islam (with Sultan al–Malik al–Kamil) with gospel spirit. While then Christianity was predominated by *conquistador* approach, Francis Assisi has shown a dialogical approach. Readiness to see God in all was the basic attitude of Francis Assisi and the same he has shown in his encounter with Islamic world. Francis Assisi emphasized the common faith of both Christians and Muslims in *God–all–powerful* and in the *Creator of all* whereas as his contemporary Christianity concentrated more on differences. His followers were asked to live among others (in this context Muslims) with a humble serving attitude as God has shown them. In his dialogue with Islam Francis Assisi did not relinquish anything of Christianity. He hoped that his dialogue partner will be converted and will believe "that almighty God [in which they already believe] *is* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that the creator of all [in which they also already believe] *is* the Son [i.e., God's creating Word], who is redeemer and savior."[222] The selection of Assisi as the location for the first meeting of leaders of world religions was

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[219] Cf. GEORGE–TVRTKOVIC, After the Fall, 650.

[220] Cf. Samir Khalil SAMIR (ed.), The Patriarch and the Caliph. An Eighth–Century Dialogue between Timothy I and al–Mahdi, [trans. By Wafik NASRY], Chicago 2016.

[221] Cf. Laurent GALLANT, Francis of Assisi Forerunner of Interreligious Dialogue. Chapter 16 of the earlier Rule Revisited, in: Franciscan Studies 64 (2006), 53–82, here: 54–56.

[222] GALLANT, Francis of Assisi Forerunner of Interreligious Dialogue, 61.

not by chance, but due its association with Francis Assisi as a pioneer in Christian dialogue with other religions.[223] The open and humble disposition of Francis Assisi shows real Christian attitude towards all brethren of humanity. Despite differences, the love towards the other can not only open ways of peaceful life but also foster meaningful dialogue.

3.4 Thomas Aquinas on the Conditions for Salvation: Baptism by Implicit Desire

Catechism of the Catholic Church opines that "Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The church does not know any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude."[224] Here it is clear that those who had no chance of hearing gospel and asking for baptism are exempted from the necessity of baptism for salvation. Catechism states further that "[e]very man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have *desired Baptism explicitly* if they had known its necessity."[225] This Baptism of desire has long tradition in the history of the church.[226] A systematic presentation of this can be seen in *Summa theologiae*.

Thomas Aquinas affirms the necessity of both the church and sacraments.[227] At the same time he maintains that all people are called to salvation and therefore they are at least potential members of the church.[228] Regarding the question about the salvation of people who had lived before the incarnation, Thomas Aquinas opines that "belief of some kind in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation was necessary at all times and for all persons, but this belief differed according to differences of times and persons".[229] Belief in *some kind* in the

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[223] Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, Absage an religiöse Eiferer. Die religionstheologischen Grundlagen für das Gebetstreffen in Assisi, in: Roman A. SIEBENROCK – Jan-Heiner TÜCK (eds.), Selig, die Frieden Stiften. Assisi—Zeichen gegen Gewalt, Freiburg et al. 2012, 13–52, here: 40.

[224] Catechism of the Catholic Church, New Delhi [8]2006, no. 1257.

[225] CCC 1260.

[226] For a detailed survey on the Baptism by desire cf. Marcia L. COLISH, Faith, Force and Fiction in Medieval Baptismal Debates, Washington 2014, 11–90.

[227] Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, III, q. 6, a. 1.

[228] Cf. Charles MOREROD, "No Salvation outside the Church". Understanding the Doctrine with St. Thomas Aquinas and Charles Journet, in: The Thomist 75/4 (2011), 517–536, here: 522f; THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, III, q. 8, a. 3.

[229] THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, II–II, q. 2, a. 7.

mystery of Christ is necessary for salvation. But *what kind of belief* can be varied according to times and persons. For example, some people, who lived before Jesus Christ, were saved without an explicit faith in Jesus Christ. "If, however, some were saved without receiving any revelation, they were not saved without faith in a Mediator, for, though they did not believe in Him explicitly, they did, nevertheless, have implicit faith through believing in Divine providence, since they believed that God would deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to Him […]."[230] Thomas Aquinas did not apply this implicit faith that is sufficient for salvation to the time after the incarnation of God. "After grace had been revealed, both learned and simple folk are bound to explicit faith in the mysteries of Christ."[231]

Responding to the question whether a man can be saved without baptism, Thomas Aquinas opines that "a man can obtain salvation without the sacrament of Baptism, by means of the invisible sanctification." He says that "Baptism may be wanting to someone in two ways. First, both in reality and in desire; as is the case with those who neither are baptized, nor wished to be baptized." They cannot obtain salvation, because "neither sacramentally nor mentally are they incorporated in Christ, through Whom alone can salvation be obtained". "Secondly, the sacrament of Baptism may be wanting to anyone in reality but not in desire: for instance, when a man wishes to be baptized, but by some ill–chance he is forestalled by death before receiving Baptism." They can obtain salvation by the merit of their *desire for Baptism*.[232] Marcia L. Colish summarizes Thomas Aquinas' position on baptism in fact or desire as follows: "One can lack baptism *re et voto,* either in fact or desire. But while one can lack it in fact, that is, without the rite, one cannot lack it in desire. […] This desire, Aquinas affirms 'is accepted as fact before God.'"[233] Thomas Aquinas differentiates between forgiveness of sins through baptism of desire and fuller remission of sins that can be achieved only through baptism. "[M]an receives the forgiveness of sins before baptism in so far as he has Baptism of desire, explicitly or implicitly; and yet when he actually receives Baptism, he receives a fuller remission."[234]

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[230] THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, II–II, q. 2, a. 7 c. 3.

[231] THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, II–II, q. 2, a. 7.

[232] THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, III, q. 68, a. 2.

[233] COLISH, Medieval Baptismal Debates, 84f.

[234] THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, III, q. 69, a. 4, c. 2.

Commenting on the *Sentences* Thomas Aquinas distinguished between *sacramentum* and *res sacramenti*. The *sacramentum tantum*, the water of the rite alone, is the material cause and *res sacramenti* is the spiritual ablution. Baptismal liturgy has both these elements, *res sacramenti* and *sacramentum*. Passion of Christ is the efficient cause of grace in baptism. Thomas Aquinas maintains that some forms of baptism are not valid as ritual baptism. Baptism by blood can take the place of ritual baptism, because in it the martyr conforms himself to the passion of Christ. The martyrs were prevented by persecutors to receive baptism. Likewise, non–martyrs who desire baptism can be prevented from baptism by human enemies or by natural impediments. They can be saved even without ritual baptism by virtue of their faith and contrition.[235]

Aquinas maintained that Baptism is necessary for salvation. At the same time he hold that baptism is not a sufficient condition for salvation. According to him, an interior conversion to Christianity and a desire to be baptized are the necessary preconditions for baptism.[236] Aquinas does not consider the baptism of desire as a sacrament. Baptism of desire resembles the sacrament of baptism in several aspects. For example, both require an interior conversion and both involve the desire for the sacrament of baptism, and both bestow on the believer a gift of grace and virtues. But the fullness of remittance of sin and fullness of grace are present only in the sacrament of baptism. Baptism of desire is sufficient for salvation to only a catechumen, who dies before receiving baptism in spite of desire for baptism. To those who have no access or connection to the church and are unable to receive baptism the baptism of desire is a solution.[237] Aquinas' baptism of desire has influenced the theological developments in the following centuries and it found its place in the magisterium of the church.

Thomas Aquinas, answering the objection that Christ is not the head of all men, presents a multi–tiered model of belongingness to Christ.

> […] Christ is the head of all men, but diversely. For, first and principally, He is the Head of such as are united to Him by glory; secondly, of those who are actually united to Him by charity; thirdly, of those who are actually united to Him by faith; fourthly, of those are united to Him merely in potentiality, which is not yet reduced to act, yet will be reduced to act

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[235] Cf. COLISH, Medieval Baptismal Debates, 82f.

[236] Cf. Jennifer Hart WEED, Thomas Aquinas and the Baptism of Desire, in: Res Philosophica 96/1 (2019) 77–89, here: 79.

[237] Cf. WEED, Thomas Aquinas and the Baptism of Desire, 88f.

> according to Divine predestination; fifthly, of those who are united to Him merely in potentiality, which will never be reduced to act […].[238]

In his commentary to Sentences Thomas Aquinas has given a positive answer to the question whether Christ is the head of all humans.[239] Here, in *Summa Theologiae* III q. 8, a. 3, Thomas Aquinas expressively calls Christ as the head of all humans, also of those who do not believe in him.[240] Max Seckler emphasizes here the significant priority of *caritas* to the *fides* in the multi–tiered belongingness model.[241] Thomas Aquinas was of the opinion that the church is greater than its institutional boundaries and the people, who are apparently outside the church, can implicitly be the members of the church.

3.5 Discovery of New Continents and Salvation outside the Church

The discovery of the New World (1492 onwards) brought serious question regarding the salvation of the people outside the church. The discovery of the *new world* made clear that there is a vast majority of people who had no chance to hear the gospel and to be members of the church. If these people, who are outside the church, do not be saved, then how can we justify the universal salvific will of God.[242] Other religions were not the issue here. "The novelty of the 'discovery' of the peoples of the Americas was not their religious otherness. […] The novelty was the discovery of peoples who appeared not to have been reached by the Gospel, a contradiction to the claim of the *Acts of Apostles* that the Revelation was taught across the whole world."[243] The exclusive statement *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* was extensively criticized in enlightenment period, as a part of rational criticism against revealed religion. Rousseau indicates that vast majority of world population does not belong to monotheistic religions. Even Jesus was rejected by many people of his time, then how can the people who heard only from others about Jesus can come to faith in him?

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[238] THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, III, q. 8, a. 3.

[239] Max SECKLER, Das Haupt aller Menschen. Zur Auslegung eines Thomastextes, in: Rivista di Filosofia Neo–Scolastica 66, no. 2/4 (1974), 636–652, here: 640. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43069888 [accessed: 28 May 2024].

[240] Cf. ibid., 640f.

[241] Cf. ibid., 650f; Jan–Heiner Tück, Extra ecclesiam nulla salus. Das Modell der gestuften Kirchenzugehörigkeit und seine dialogischen Potentiale, in: Jan–Heiner Tück (ed.), Erinnerung an die Zukunft. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Freiburg et al. ^{2}2013, 262–290, here: 275.

[242] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 69.

[243] Christophe GRELLARD, Theology, in: Harald E. BRAUN et al. (eds.), A Companion to the Spanish Scholastics, Leiden–Boston 2022, 31–56, here: 41.

Anthropocentrism of this period challenged the religious convictions and narrow boundaries of church.[244]

It was the theologians of the University of Salamanca, who pioneered in dealing theologically with this new situation, because they had a concrete experience with the situation due to the colonial expansion by Spain.[245] John Mair was one of the first theologians, who reacted to this situation. He argued that an invincibly ignorant pagan could be saved without the sacrament of baptism and without explicit faith in Christ.[246]

Francis A. Sullivan points out the biographical influence on the theologians of Salamanca School and observes their courtesy to Thomas Aquinas. They have to deal with the teaching of Thomas Aquinas that there is no salvation without explicit faith in Christ, at least a desire to be baptized. At the same time there was a positive opening based on the universal salvific will of God that was asserted by Aquinas.[247] To the problem of children, who died without receiving baptism, medieval theologians responded by elaborating the concept of faith of the church. They have developed the notion of implicit faith with regard to the people, who are unable to understand the doctrine of salvation, as we have seen in Aquinas. After the *discovery*, the issue was the people who are outside the church and have never heard the revealed word. Theologians of Salamanca school have responded to this issue. Francisco de Vitoria affirms that there is no salvation without faith, but he does not reduce faith to revelation. Pagans will receive grace, i.e., a special knowledge of God by means of illumination, if they do their best (*facere quod est in se*).[248] Francisco de Vitoria does not elaborately deal with the salvation of the people of newly discovered world, but his concern was the guilty of such people in not believing in the gospel. He asserts that they are not culpable of not believing even after the gospel is proclaimed by the Spanish conquerors. The reason is that the message of the Gospel had to be presented in a convincing way for the hearers to be put under an obligation to accept it and the hindrance to their belief is the scandalous behaviour of the Spanish colonizers.[249]

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[244] Cf. MOREROD, No Salvation outside the Church, 517f.

[245] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 69.

[246] Cf. GRELLARD, Theology, 42; Johannes Mair, JOHANNES MAIR, tertium Sententiarum, dist. 25, q. 1, 42.

[247] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 70.

[248] Cf. GRELLARD, Theology, 47f.

[249] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 72.

Domingo de Soto, another theologian of Salamanca school, opines that in some extreme situation of invincible ignorance, the grace will be given even without the knowledge of Christ. In the first edition of his work *De natura et gratia*, he advocates for the theory of salvation without baptism, but later he corrected it in order to avoid the risk of Pelagianism.[250] He believes that God would provide the light necessary for the implicit faith in Christ (*fides confusa*) and this implicit faith is sufficient for the people who lived before the coming of Christ.[251] Melchor Cano rejects the idea of salvation by implicit faith without church. Before the coming of Christ an implicit faith in Christ was sufficient for the salvation, but after the Christ–event there is no salvation without explicit Christian faith.[252] However, Domingo de las Cuevas defends the possibility of salvation without the explicit faith in Christ. He goes to the extent that salvation is possible even without the baptism *in voto*.[253] Andrés de Vega and Antonio Córdoba also claim that implicit faith is enough for salvation.[254] Melchor Cano and his followers accepted a kind of salvation outside the Church in some cases of invincible ignorance – not only for Amerindians, but also for the children of Jews or Muslims living in Africa.[255] But this cannot be seen as a general attitude of Salamanca school. There was also strong criticism against these approaches. It was considered as a nominalist reading of Thomas Aquinas.[256] However, Salamanca school tried to address the question of salvation of the people, who are outside the church, with an open attitude interpreting Thomas Aquinas. As summarized by Christophe Grellard, "Despite the theoretical differences between these theologians, there is a general trend towards supporting the possibility of the salvation of men of good will, especially through a *liberal* use of the principle *facere quod est in se*."[257] Two important advances that were brought by the School of Salamanca, observes Francis A. Sullivan, are: "de Vitoria's recognition of the fact that people who had heard about Christ could still be guiltless of their unbelief if the gospel had been presented to them in an unconvincing way and Soto's admission that implicit faith in Christ would have sufficed for the salvation of people whose lack of explicit Christian faith

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[250] Cf. GRELLARD, Theology, 48; SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 75.

[251] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 76.

[252] Cf. ibid., 74.

[253] Cf. GRELLARD, Theology, 49.

[254] Cf. ibid., 50f.

[255] Cf. ibid., 52.

[256] Cf. ibid., 50.

[257] ibid., 52.

was inculpable."[258] Here we can observe a very broad liberal interpretation regarding the salvation of the people who do not belong to Christianity.

Almost completely against the positive attitude of Dominicans in Salamanca, John Calvin asserted predestination theory that "if some people have not been given the opportunity to hear the gospel message, this is rightly seen as a sign that God has predestined them to eternal damnation."[259] Catholic theologians negated this predestination theory. For example, Albert Pigge emphasized universal salvific will of God against the predestination theory. Such a predestination theory, as it is advocated by John Calvin, contradicts universal salvific will of God. According to Albert Pigge, the faith described in Hebrews 11: 6, i.e., belief in the existence of God and that God reward those who seek him, is necessary for the salvation for the people, who were inculpably ignorant of the gospel.[260]

Robert Bellarmine, a Jesuit theologian, was more engaged in theologizing the controversies between Catholics and Protestants in Europe than in the discussions regarding the discovery of the new world. Reformers argued that the true church consists only of the elect, or of the predestined, or of those justified by faith. Robert Bellarmine, against this, argued that such a church would be *invisible*, because only God knows who belonged to this church and there is only one *visible* church, the members of which is known to everyone. He insisted on the *visible* church, that is the only one church. He opines that there is only one church and identifies this church with the catholic church under legitimate pastors, above all under Roman Pontiff.[261]

Robert Bellarmine's concept of church is interpreted as a minimalistic view that minimize church to the visible elements.[262] Francis A. Sullivan observes that this is a common mistake in interpreting Robert Bellarmine's definition.[263] He explains the position of Robert Bellarmine. The church has a visible body and an invisible soul. Only the visible elements that constitute its body are required for membership in it. Anyone can be physically a member of the church even without any participation in its soul and such a physical membership in the church is not sufficient for salvation. Naturally, there is also a possibility

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[258] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 76.

[259] ibid.

[260] Cf. ibid., 79.

[261] Cf. Quoted according to MOREROD, No Salvation outside the Church, 524.

[262] Cf. ibid.

[263] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 88.

of being a member in the soul of the church without being a member of the church visibly. Commenting on the situation of an excommunicated person, who has regained the state of grace before he officially reconciled with the church, Robert Bellarmine opines that he is in the church with his mind or by desire (*animo sive desiderio*) and this desire is sufficient for his salvation.[264] Francis A. Sullivan emphasizes that in Robert Bellarmine's explanation we can see for the first time an interpretation of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* that "explicitly recognizes that a person who is not actually a member of the church can be saved by the desire of belonging to it."[265] Robert Bellarmine explains that universal salvific will of God provides sufficient help for salvation to everyone, at least at some time and place, either immediately or mediately. People to whom the gospel has not yet been preached, can know through creatures that God exists, and then they can be moved by God's prevenient grace to believe that God exists and rewards those who seek him.[266] People to whom the gospel has not yet been preached can know through creatures that God exists and moved by this faith they can obtain a greater light of faith through prayer.[267]

Francisco Suarez, another Jesuit, regarding the necessity of membership in the church, differentiates between necessity *in re* and *in voto*. No one can be saved who is not the member of the church either in reality or in wish and desire.[268] Juan De Lugo asserts that those who never had a chance to hear the gospel can receive the grace through observing the natural law. If they keep this natural law, they would be enlightened so that they could believe in God and that is, in a way, an implicit desire for Christian faith, baptism and membership in the church that would suffice for their salvation. Juan De Lugo applies this principle also to those who knew about gospel, but in spite of that did not believe in Christ.[269]

Francis A. Sullivan summarizes that the newly acquired knowledge of the existence of vast continents, the people of which had lived without the knowledge of Christianity, led the theologians to the conclusion that salvation is possible even in the Christian era, through the faith in God without explicit faith in Christ. We have already seen that some theologians

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[264] Cf. *De Ecclesia militante*, cap. 6; ed. Giuliano, vol. 2, p. 80.

[265] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 89f.

[266] Cf. ibid., 90f.

[267] Cf. *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, lib. 2, cap. 8, ed. Giuliano, vol. 4, p. 308.

[268] Cf. *De fide theologica*, disp. 12, sect. 4, n. 22; ed. Vives, vol. 12, p. 359; SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 93.

[269] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 94f.

opined that the people those who already have heard of Christian gospel and did not believe in Christ can be saved, because the gospel was not proclaimed to them in a convincing way. Here we can see the influence of new psychological theories. An openness to truth from whatever source it came to them and a readiness to re–examine traditional believes in the light of new believes can be seen here.[270] But this open attitude has also faced criticism within the catholic church. Michael de Bay, claimed himself as a faithful follower of Augustine, negated this positive attitude towards those who do not belong to the church. He taught that all the works of infidels are sins, and the virtues of the pagan philosophers are vices and the purely negative infidelity in those among whom Christ has been preached, is a sin.[271] Cornelius Jansen rejected that Christ died for *all* humans.[272]

3.6 Implicit Faith and Invincible Ignorance in the Magisterium of the Church

Council of Trent was engaged with the questions and issues arose due to protestant reformation. In the decrees of the Council the traditional axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* did not find a direct reference. But one can observe the attitude of the council with regard to the salvation of people, who do not belong to the church in its decrees about the necessity of faith and baptism for justification. It sees sacrament of baptism as the instrumental cause of the justification.[273] Council affirms the necessity of faith in salvation. "Faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification."[274] It underlines also the desire for baptism. After the promulgation of the Gospel, the transition from son of Adam to son of God cannot take place without the bath of regeneration or the desire for it (*eius voto*).[275] The decree on the necessity of baptism is as follows: "Unless one is reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God [*Jn 3:5*]."[276]

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[270] Cf. ibid., 98.

[271] Cf. PIUS V, Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*: Theses of Michael Baius, 25 and 68 (1 October 1567), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 1925 and 1968.

[272] Cf. INNOCENT X, Constitution *Cum occasione*: Errors of Cornelius Jansen, 5 (31 May 1653), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 2005.

[273] Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session 6: Decree on Justification, 7 (13 January 1547), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 1529.

[274] COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session 6: Decree on Justification, 8 (DENZINGER 1532).

[275] Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session 6: Decree on Justification, (DENZINGER 1524).

[276] ibid.; cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 83.

The council gives clear directions to the discussion on the salvation of the people outside the church. Francis A. Sullivan underlines two points that were suggested by the council, which can be helpful in solving the issue of salvation outside the church. First one is that while speaking of the necessity of faith the council bases its doctrine on Hebrews 11: 6. The necessary faith includes the faith that God exists and that he is the rewarder of those who seek him. The council did not say that explicit faith in Christ is always necessary for salvation. The second point is that the council recognizes baptism of desire (*voto*) as sufficient for justification.[277]

Pius V has promulgated the bull *Ex omnibus Afflictionibus* in 1567 against the extreme positions of Baianism. In this bull the Pope condemns the excessive reaction of *traditionalist* Michael de Bay (Baius). Among the seventy–nine condemned theses of Baius, I mention only two which are relevant to our subject. "All the works of infidels are sins, and the virtues of philosophers are vices. The purely negative infidelity of those to whom Christ has not been preached, is a sin."[278] Francis A. Sullivan opines that the general characteristic of seventy–nine propositions of Michael de Bay that were censured by Rome shows that he was propagating a rigorous form of Augustinianism.[279]

Cornelius Jansen has strongly criticized the positive attitude that taught the possibility of salvation without explicit Christian faith. He has also taught a rigid Augustinianism against the theologies what he thought as Pelagian and Semipelagian errors. His rigid attitude was found in his work entitled *Augustinus*. In 1653 Pope Innocent X condemned five propositions in this book. These propositions, except first one, were not taken literally from the book, but are derived from its principles. According to the declaration by Innocent X, Cornelius Jansen opines that it is Semipelagian to say that Christ died or shed his blood for all men without exception.[280] This position of Cornelius Jansen is against God's universal salvific will, which was an important foundation in the optimistic attitude regarding the salvation of the people, who had no chance to hear the gospel or who could not receive Christian faith. Regardless of this papal condemnation the theories of Cornelius Jansen found many followers. For example, Antonie Arnauld argued that the explicit faith in Jesus Christ

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[277] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 83.

[278] PIUS V, Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*: Theses of Michael Baius, 25 and 68 (1 October 1567), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 1925 and 1968.

[279] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 99.

[280] Cf. INNOCENT X, Constitution *Cum occasione*: Errors of Cornelius Jansen, 5 (31 May 1653), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 2005.

is necessary for salvation and anyone lacking this explicit faith would be damned. Another Jansenist, Paschasius Quesnel, claimed that no grace can be achieved outside the church.[281] Pope Alexander VIII authorized the publication of a decree of the Holy Office in 1690 condemning thirty–one propositions found in the writings of Jansenist theologians. Some relevant propositions are cited here:

- Christ gave himself for us as an oblation to God, not only for the elect, but for all the faithful and only for them.[282]
- Pagans, Jews, heretics, and others of this kind do not receive in any way any influence from Jesus Christ, and so you will rightly infer from this that in them there is a bare and weak will without any sufficient grace.[283]
- The infidel sins necessarily in every action.[284]
- Everything that is not accordance with supernatural Christian faith, which works through charity, is a sin.[285]

Jansenist, Pasquier Quesnel was also condemned by Pope Clement XI through the constitution *Unigenitus Dei Filius*. Among the errors of Quesnel, which was listed in the constitution, include: "The grace of Jesus Christ, which is the efficacious principle of every kind of good, is necessary for every good work; without it, not only is nothing done, but nothing can be done,"[286] "Outside of the Church, no grace is granted"[287] and "Without grace we cannot love anything except to our own condemnation."[288] The condemnation of Baianism and Jansenism shows that catholic church's official attitude was not in line with the rigorists, who advocated that everyone without the explicit Christian faith is damned.

Nineteenth century Europe was characterized by rationalism. Religious indifferentism, on the one side fuelled by atheist movement and on the other side influenced by other religious traditions, was evident. Exclusive claims based on divine revelation were

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[281] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 101.

[282] Cf. ALEXANDER VIII, Decree of the Holy Office: Errors of the Jansenists, 4 (7 December 1690), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 2304.

[283] Cf. ibid., 5 (DENZINGER 2305).

[284] Cf. ibid., 8 (DENZINGER 2308).

[285] Cf. ibid., 11 (DENZINGER 2311).

[286] CLEMENT XI, Constitution *Unigenitus Dei Filius*: Errors of P. Quesnel, 2 (8 September 1713), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 2402.

[287] ibid., 29 (DENZINGER 2429).

[288] ibid., 40 (DENZINGER 2440).

questioned and rejected. Only human experience and empirical criteria were considered as valid. This tendency was rejected by the official teaching of the church. Pope Leo XII published an encyclical *Ubi Primum* (1824) in which he condemned indifferentism.[289] Pope Gregory XVI in his encyclical letter *Mirari Nos Arbitramur* (1832) also condemned the liberal doctrines. Pope Pius IX published many documents against rationalist indifferentism; his encyclical *Qui Pluribus* (1846), *Singulari Quadam* (1854), encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* (1863), and the Syllabus of Condemned Errors (1864). The general content of these papal documents is the condemnation of religious indifferentism and affirmation of the necessity of the church for the salvation. Noteworthy is *Singulari Quadam* and *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore,* because it speaks of the *invincible ignorance* even though it warns against the opinion that the way of salvation can be found in any other religion.[290] Yet […] it must likewise be held as certain that those who are in ignorance of the true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.[291]

> It is known to Us and to you that those who labor[sic] in invincible ignorance concerning our most holy religion and who, assiduously observing the natural law and its precepts which God has inscribed in the hearts of all, and being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life can, through the working of the divine light and grace, attain eternal life […].[292]

According to Francis A. Sullivan, it is "for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, we have papal authority for explaining that this axiom [*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*] means: 'No salvation for those who are *culpably* outside the church'" [293].

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter makes clear that the necessity of the church for the salvation was held firm by theologians and the magisterium. At the same time the question about the salvation of the people who had or have not any chance to hear the message of Christ was discussed seriously. While some concluded that they are predestined not to achieve salvation, and others, influenced by the inculpability of that people, concluded that they will be saved

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[289] Cf. LEO XII, Encyclical *Ubi primum* (5 May 1824), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 2720.

[290] Cf. PIUS IX, Allocution *Singulari Quadam* (9 December 1854), in: NEUNER–DUPUIS, Christian Faith, 1009 and 1010.

[291] Acta Pii IX, I/1, 626; ND 1010.

[292] Acta Pii IX, I/3, 613.

[293] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 114.

because of God’s grace and universal salvific will. The former attitude was rejected by the church and the latter was found its place in magisterium. Nevertheless the role of the church in the salvation was always emphasized.

Chapter 4

Second Vatican Council's Positive Valuation of Other Religions: An Overview

4.0 Introduction

After examining the interpretation of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* in Middle Ages and application of Thomistic concept of implicit desire in the membership of the church, the theological developments surrounding the Second Vatican Council and the council's positive attitude towards other religions are discussed here. Already in the modern theological discussions after the discovery of new continents we can observe the attempts to include all people on the earth, also who had not heard gospel, in the universal salvific will of God. Some theologians have solved the tension between universal salvific will of God and the fact that only a minority, compared with the whole humanity, has become the members of the church through the concept of implicit membership in the church. Theologians of late nineteenth and twentieth century have tried to expand this attitude to other religions too. Thus, non–Christian religions were considered as preparations for Christianity akin to the concept *preparatio evangelica* of Eusebius. The Second Vatican Council has acknowledged the positive elements of other religions. However, it has asserted the importance and uniqueness of church as the sacrament of kingdom of God in the world. In the theology of religions, the Second Vatican Council has initiated a new enthusiasm.

4.1 Theological Developments in the Immediate Background of Second Vatican Council

Late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were characterized by the globalizing tendencies. In religious realm it was characterized by the coming together of different religions, not only physically but also intellectually. Christian theologians have acquired better knowledge

about other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism etc. They attempted to explain the peculiar traditions or beliefs of these religions in connection with Christian revelation. This was not the first encounter of Christianity with other religions. Already the early church had a fruitful encounter with other religions and the church Fathers had, as we seen in the second chapter, engaged in fruitful dialogue with these ancient religions and gradually Christianity has prevailed over them. During patristic period other religions were considered for example as *praeparatio evangelica* (Eusebius), *anima naturaliter christiana* (Tertullian). These approaches have seen other religions as ways that leads to Christianity. Other religions have prepared the humanity for the revelation in Jesus Christ and they shows the natural orientation of the humanity to Christian revelation. Some modern theologians have adapted this patristic approach in their new experience with other religions and explained Christianity as the fulfilment of these religions.

4.1.1 Fulfilment Theories

Fulfilment theories generally hold that non–Christian religions had or have a preparatory role in the salvific plan of God and Christianity is the fulfilment of these religions. Actually it comes from the Israel theology of New Testament period. Commenting on Letter to Romans 10: 4 Jesper Svartvik writes that "Judaism is depicted as a prologue to Christianity" and "we could easily understand Rom. 10: 4 as a description of Christ being the 'aim,' 'realization,' or 'fulfilment' of the Law."[294] For Christians God's redemptive activity before Christ was evident in Old Testament Israel. This was analogically applied to other religions in the modern theological discussions. As Christ fulfils Old Testament he fulfils also expectations of other religions. Christ is presented as the only answer to the spiritual quest of whole humanity.[295] Two works (*The Crown of Hinduism* by J. N. Farquhar and *Vers le Christ par le Vedanta* by P. Johanns) which applies fulfilment theory in Hinduism show unambiguously the trend of fulfilment theories. They show a positive attitude towards other religions and at the same time Christ is the fullness of these religions. For example, Farquhar opines that " […] Christ provides the fulfilment of each of the highest aspirations and aims of Hinduism. […] In Him focuses every ray of light that shines in Hinduism."[296] Otto Karrer

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[294] Jesper SVARTIVIK, "I Have Come Not to Abolish but to Fulfil". Reflections on Understanding Christianity as Fulfilment without Presupposing Supersessionism, in: Religions 13/2 (2022), 1–10, here: 5.

[295] Cf. Adam SPARKS, The Fulfilment Theology of Jean Daniélou, Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis, in: New Blackfriars 89/1024 (2008), 635–656, here: 633.

[296] John N. FARQUHAR, The Crown of Hinduism, London [2]1913 [reprinted: New Delhi 1971], 457f.

has phenomenologically compared basic truths of Christianity and of other religions and concluded that the seeds of truth are found in other religions, but the fulness of revelation is only in Christianity.[297] According to Thomas Ohm, religions express the natural human inclination to love God. After the Fall man is not able to love God in the supernatural way and Christianity is the perfection of the quest for a loving God. Joseph Ratzinger opines that non–Christian religions contain elements *preparatory* for Christianity.[298] There was also counter literature against these positive development from the part of traditionalists.

Jean Daniélou explains all religions in the framework of divine plan of salvation. God reveals himself to the humanity in the course of time. Jean Daniélou finds out three stages in the history of salvation. The first one is creation and the religion of this period, calls Jean Daniélou, cosmic religion or pagan religion that comprises of all religions prior to or outside of covenant of Abraham.[299] The second stage is after the covenant of Abraham represented by the Jewish religion and the final phase is Christianity and it is the real one.[300] Jean Daniélou, Jacques Dupuis comments, differentiates between natural religion and supernatural revelation and correspondingly between two God–given covenants, i.e., the cosmic and historical. Non–Christian religions belong to *natural* religion and Judeo–Christian revelation is *supernatural* and the former oriented towards the latter. The covenant of Noah, the cosmic covenant, symbolizes the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature. It represents the pre–history of salvation. Historical covenant starts from Abraham and reaches its fulness in Christ event.[301] Jean Daniélou could bring all religions of humanity under the great salvific plan of God and each of them has, even though variably, a role in the divine plan of salvation.

Henri de Lubac, also taught history of religion, had the knowledge about many religions. He was impressed by the Zoroastrian concept of time and he was of the opinion that Zoroastrianism offers a broadly optimistic view of history. The view of history in the Old Testament is also more or less similar to it. God acts primarily in the history.[302] Based on

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[297] Cf. Miikka RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions. According to the Second Vatican Council (Studies in Christian Mission 7), Leiden et al. 1992, 22.

[298] Cf. ibid., 22–24.

[299] Cf. DANIÉLOU, Holy Pagans of the Old Testament, 2f.

[300] Cf. Jean DANIÉLOU, The Salvation of the Nations, London 1949, 26.

[301] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 134f.

[302] Cf. David GRUMETT, On Religion, in: Jordan Hillebert (ed.), T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac, London 2017, 247–268, here: 252.

the theology of history and uniqueness of Christianity he believes that *religion* is a useful constructive category to understand the genesis of Christianity. In his *Catholicism* he discusses about the adoption of Jewish historical tropes of sin, captivity, release, and redemption by Christianity.[303] The Old and New Testaments represent a twofold event or covenant. The New Testament is not only chronologically but also eternally new.[304] It is also the final Testament and it lacks nothing for its completion.[305]

Comparing Christianity with Buddhism, Henri de Lubac states, "Dans ce concert universel, seul le christianisme affirme à la fois, indissolublement, pour l'homme une destinée transcendante et pour l'humanité une destinée commune"[306]. Christianity, according to him, has brought something absolutely new to the world. There are a natural and a supernatural realm of revelation. Supernatural is completely gratuitous from God and therefore it fulfils the natural desire of human for the union with God. These both are united in Jesus Christ and Christianity is the supernatural religion. Without competing with non–Christian religions, Christianity unveils, purifies, and transforms their positive values. The mystery of Christ reaches to the members of other religions, but the other religions have no role in the mystery of salvation. There are no different plans of salvation, but there is only a single axis which culminates in Jesus Christ and fulfilled in Christianity.[307] Henri de Lubac sees in the creation of humanity in *imago Dei* the uniting point of whole humanity with Christ. God has created human beings in the *imago Dei.* Therefore, all human beings have an inherent desire for the vision of God, which Henri de Lubac sees as a free gift. This desire for God is present at the root of every soul. It is this *imago Dei* that unites human beings at a fundamental level with God in Christ.[308]

Regarding the axiom *extra eccleisam nulla salus* Henri de Lubac rejects the Jansenist presumption that divine grace is restricted to a small selected group of Christians. He emphasizes the universality of Christ's action and yet the universality of salvation is not a

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[303] Cf. ibid., 254; DE LUBAC, Catholicisme, 149–157.

[304] Such interpretations are criticized by the Jewish thinkers as supersessionism. Cf. SVARTIVIK, I Have Come Not to Abolish but to Fulfil, especially 3f.

[305] Cf. GRUMETT, On Religion, 254f.

[306] Henri DE LUBAC, Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme (Unam Sanctam 3), Paris [5]1952, 110. In this universal symphony [of religions] Christianity alone affirms, at once and indissolubly, a transcendent destiny of the human person and for the whole of humankind a common destiny.

[307] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 138.

[308] Cf. Gemma SIMMONDS, The Mystical Body. Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology, in: Jordan HILLEBERT (ed.), T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac, London 2017, 159–180, here: 174.

result of any human effort but of God's sovereign action. At the same time he holds fast the importance of church. Unlike other religions Christian faith posits a purpose to human life. Non–Christian religions cannot attains their end outside Christianity. That end is the embrace of God in Christ, towards which all human desires tend to. Non–Christians are not in the normal way of salvation. However, they can obtain salvation by virtue of some mysterious bonds which unite them to the faithful of Christianity. Henri de Lubac accepts Cyprian's axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* with and exemption to the good pagans on the basis of their invincible ignorance.[309]

Jacques Dupuis includes Hans Urs von Balthasar too under fulfilment theories. A distinction between religions of revelation and eastern religions can be made. This distinction represents two contrasting approaches: one from God to human person and other from the human person to the Divine Absolute. Nevertheless there is a common foundation in all religions, i.e., the human search for self–transcendence and liberation. This fundamental human longing towards transcendence is assumed and fulfilled by Christianity.[310] Trinitarian Christ is the peculiarity of Christianity and he gives Christianity absolute character. For Hans Urs von Balthasar, "[Jesus Christ] is the Idea made concrete, personal, historical: *universale concretum et personale*."[311] Jesus Christ's life is the totality of the fulfilment of the whole Law and all the Prophets. He opines that *natural law* as it is mentioned in Romans 2 can be seen as a valid substitute for the written law of Jews. Therefore, like salvation history, natural law and the whole history, even though in a narrower sense, is related to the life of Christ as promise to fulfilment. The salvation history is summed up and given its ultimate meaning by Christ.[312] These theological thoughts have deeply influenced the Second Vatican Council in its positive appreciation of other religions while holding upon the importance of the church in salvation of humanity. The common characteristic of fulfilment theories is the distinction between human quest for God and the divine self–revelation. Christianity is viewed as the culmination of fulfilment of all human religious traditions based on the supernatural complete self–revelation of God in Christ.

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[309] Cf. GRUMETT, On Religion, 258–261.

[310] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 141f.

[311] Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, A Theology of History, New York 1963, 61f.

[312] Cf. ibid., 35–42.

4.1.2 Presence of Christ in Other Religious Traditions

Another theological trend in the vicinity of the Second Vatican Council is the search for Christ's presence in other religious traditions of the world. Whereas fulfilment theories, anchoring themselves in the unique role of Christianity as fulfilment of all religions, tried to appreciate the positive elements of non–Christian religions based on human inner quest towards God, these theologies try to emphasize the central role of Christ, not of church, in the salvation.

In Indian context not only from the Christian theologians but also from Hindu writers there were attempts to find *Christ* in Hindu *vedas* and *puranas. Kristopanishad* (Christ–Upanishad)[313], *The Oriental Christ*[314], *The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta*[315], etc are some titles of the works published at the end of nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Jacques Dupuis presents six models of *Hindu* Christologies; Mahatma Gandhi's Jesus of the Beatitudes, Keshub Chunder Sen's Christ of Bhakti, The Christ of Neo–Vedantine Philosophy, The Christ Avatara of Swami Akhilananda, The Yogi Christ of Manilas C. Parekh, and Christ in Advaita Mysticism: Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya.[316]

Some Christian theologians, different from fulfilment theories, have appreciated other religious traditions as representations of various divine interventions in salvation history. These various divine interventions are the part of God's plan of salvation and ordered to the decisive salvific event in Jesus Christ. These religions have a positive value in the salvation of their followers by virtue of Christ. Christ's saving mystery is operative also in these religions.[317] A striking difference between these theologies and fulfilment theories is that while the fulfilment theories considered church as the effective source of salvation, the new attempt placed Christ at the centre of salvation.

Raimon Panikkar's monologue *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* is paradigmatic of this approach. From the tittle his intention to search for the hidden Christ present in Hinduism is evident. Based on *Advaita Vedānta* school's exegesis of *Brahma Sūtra* 1.i.ii he identifies

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[313] Cf. Dhanjibhai FAKIRBHAI, Kristopanishad. Christ–Upanishad, Banglore 1965.

[314] Cf. Protap Chunder MOZOOMDAR, The Oriental Christ, California 1883.

[315] Cf. Swami PRABHAVANANDA, The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta, California 1964.

[316] Cf. Jacques DUPUIS, Jesus at the Encounter of World Religions [trans. by Robert R. BARR], New Delhi 1996, 18–42.

[317] Cf. ibid., 128.

Īśvara with Christ.[318] The concept of *Īśvara*[319] finds its fulfilment in Christ. Gavin D'Costa opines that Raimon Panikkar has attempted "by means of scriptural exegis [sic] in the traditional Hindu bhyāṣya [sic] style, to show that its dynamism […] points to its fulfilment in Christ"[320]. Raimon Panikkar distinguishes between Christ and historical Jesus and opines that Christ can have other names like *Rama, Krishna, Ishvara*, etc.[321] This caused strong criticism against his theology and he deviates considerably from the Christological awareness of the church.

Karl Rahner's concept of anonymous Christian is another example of finding Christ in the other religious traditions. He explains the concept of *anonymous Christian* basing on two propositions. First one is the transcendental reflection on human openness to the absolute. Human being has capacity to hear the word from the hidden God because he is a being of unlimited openness for the limitless being of God.[322] The second one is that this self–communication of the mystery of God is primarily located in human and specifically in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christology is the end and beginning of anthropology.[323] The logical structure of Karl Rahner's argument is:

> If grace, which is freely offered to all, is freely accepted, it is oriented towards, and originates from, the one God; if God's definitive self–revelation is expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then all grace freely accepted originates from, and is oriented towards, Christ. Consequently, a person who accepts this grace implicitly and subjectively in the radical love of his neighbour, for instance, is understood to be an anonymous Christian for he has, in his basic orientation and fundamental decision, accepted the salvific grace of God, through Christ, although he may never have heard of the Christian revelation. It is clear that the anonymous Christian does not explicitly confess that 'Jesus is the Christ' in propositional terms, but makes and implicit 'confession', so to speak, in existential terms.[324]

Karl Rahner sees in the religiosity of humans, irrespective of their religion, an implicit confession on Jesus Christ. The notion of implicit faith can be seen in the discussions of

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[318] Cf. Raimondo PANIKKAR, the Unknown Christ of Hinduism, London 1968, 126.

[319] *Īśvara* is *Saguna Brahman*. In an attempt to defend absoluteness and immutability of God against his relationship with creation *Advaita Vedānta* school speaks about *Saguna Brahman* (literally means God with attributes). "He is the concrete universal. He is the object of worship and devotion, inspirer of moral life and is the final heaven of everything," whereas Nirguna Brahman (God beyond attributes) is immutable and transcendent. Cf. Nida FATMA, Sankara's Concept of Brahman, in: JETIR 8/12 (2021), 552–558, here: 556.

[320] Gavin D'COSTA, Karl Rahner's Anonymous Christian. A Reappraisal, in: Modern Theology 1/2 (1985), 131–148, here: 142.

[321] Cf. PANIKKAR, Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 23, 26–27

[322] Cf. Morwenna LUDLOW, Universal Salvation. Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner (Oxford Theological Monographs), New York 2000, 177.

[323] Cf. D'COSTA, Karl Rahner's Anonymous Christian, 131f.

[324] D'COSTA, Karl Rahner's Anonymous Christian, 132.

Salamanca School.[325] Karl Rahner speaks about anonymous Christians based on this implicit faith in Jesus Christ.

Hans Küng affirms the uniqueness of Church as an *extraordinary* way of salvation. However he considers other religions as the *ordinary* ways of salvation. The foundation of his recognition of salvation in other religions is God's universal salvific will. Follower of a religion seeks God within his own religion. Hans Küng emphasizes that this search for God within his own religion is valid until a personal existential encounter with the revelation of Jesus Christ.[326]

Gustave Thils affirms the universal salvation of God to humankind. He distinguishes between *natural* and *supernatural* knowledge of God. The former does not contain a personal self–revelation while the latter contains it. Human being responds to the natural or cosmic revelation with an *authentic religion of awaiting*. Thus, divine plan for whole humanity implies religion through which God does his saving work. Gustave Thils recognizes an *analogical* salvific value in religions. However, Christianity is the *extraordinary* way of salvation by the merit of *special economy of salvation* realized in Jesus Christ.[327]

Proponents of this model, who search for at least some inferior or partial salvific value in other religions, seem to explain revelation through the close connection between nature and grace. God operates not solely in an individualistic manner. Grace takes a sacramental form and manifests in the concrete world, even in other religious traditions.[328] While fulfilment theories has emphasized Christianity's uniqueness as the fulfilment of religions, this model concentrated on the presence of Christ in other religious traditions. The operative presence of the mystery of Jesus Christ in other religions is the common point of this attitude.[329] This tendency is clearly evident in Raimon Panikkar's statement: "Christ does not belong to Christianity, he only belongs to God. It is Christianity and Hinduism as well that belong to Christ, though in two different levels."[330] This separation or non–identification between

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[325] Cf. Chapter 3, especially 3.5.

[326] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 153f.

[327] Cf. ibid., 156.

[328] Cf. Glenn B. SINISCALCHI, Thomas Aquinas, Natural Evil, and 'Outside the Church, no Salvation', in: HeyJ 56 (2015), 76–86, here:79.

[329] Cf. Jacques DUPUIS, Christianity and the Religions. From Confrontation to Dialogue, Maryknoll 2002, 53.

[330] PANIKKAR, Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 20f.

church and Christ was criticized by some theologians and later in *Dominus Jesus* we see official magisterium pronounces against this tendency: "Just as there is one Christ, so there is a single body of Christ […];"[331] "[…] it must be *firmly believed* that 'the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly […] affirmed […] the necessity of the Church […]."[332]

4.2 Magisterium in the Immediate Past of the Second Vatican Council

Mystici Corporis (1943), encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII makes a clear identification between mystical body of Christ and the roman catholic church.

> If we would define and describe this true Church of Jesus Christ –which is the holy, catholic, apostolic, Roman Church –we shall find no expression more noble, more sublime or more divine than the phrase which calls it "the mystical Body of Jesus Christ." This title is derived from and is, as it were, the fair flower of the repeated teaching of Sacred Scripture and the holy Fathers.[333]

Following the tendency of magisterium which we have seen on the last part of previous chapter Pope Pius XII expresses his concern about those who do not belong to the visible structure of the catholic church. "For even though by an unconscious desire and longing they have a certain relationship with the mystical Body of the Redeemer, they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps that can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church."[334] Also the non–Catholics become a part of the mystical body by a certain unconscious desire and longing.

The holy office issued a letter to the archbishop of Boston in 1949 condemning the rigorous interpretation of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* of Leonard Feeny. This letter states, clarifying *Mystici Corporis*, that the teaching that there is no salvation outside the church belongs to the indispensable part of magisterium. Yet this teaching is to be understood as the self–understanding of the church. It states, "[…] no one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to

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[331] CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration on the Unity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church *Dominus Jesus* (6 August 2000), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 5088 (art. 16).

[332] CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Dominus Jesus* 20 (DENZINGER 5089).

[333] PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Coroporis* (29 June 1943), in: Neuner–Dupuis, Christian Faith, 847.

[334] PIUS XII, *Mystici Coroporis*, in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 3821.

submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of the Christ on earth."[335] Here it is to be noted that only those who reject the church knowing that it has been divinely established by Christ will not be saved. Those who do not belong to the church because of their ignorance are exempted from this statement. The implicit desire to be a member of the church is also mentioned in this document.

> […] in order that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually as a member, but it is necessary that at least he be united to her by desire and longing. However, this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but when a person suffers from invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire, so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul whereby a person whishes his will to be conformed to the will of God.[336]

Explaining the words of Pope Pius XII, in encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, the letter says that "he [the Pope] by no means excludes these persons [those who do not belong to the church, but are ordained to the church by some kind of unconscious desire and longing] from eternal salvation."[337] It clarifies the intention of the Pope and states that those who reject the salvation of all the people who belong to the church with an implicit desire are censured. At the same time those who maintain that people can be saved equally well in any religion were also censured. The implicit desire is to be informed with perfect charity and the person with implicit desire must have supernatural faith to be saved.[338]

4.2 Second Vatican Council on Other Religions

Second Vatican Council's teaching on non–Christian religions is based on *Lumen Gentium* that is the dogmatic constitution on the church and *Gaudium et Spes*, the pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world. Its concrete application we find in the decree on the missionary task of the church *Ad Gentes* and its concrete form we find in the declaration on the relation of the church to non–Christian religions *Nostra Aetate*.

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[335] PIUS XII, Letter of the Holy Office: "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" (8 August 1949), in: DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 3867.

[336] ibid. (DENZINGER 3870).

[337] ibid. (NEUNER–DUPUIS 856).

[338] ibid. (NEUNER–DUPUIS 854–857).

4.2.1 Lumen Gentium: Self–Awareness of Catholic Church

Lumen Gentium asserts that the church of Christ subsists in the roman catholic church.[339] This is, according to Francis A. Sullivan, the first tremendous change. The council has dropped the claim of exclusive identity between the church of Christ and the roman catholic church through the usage of *subsists in*.[340] That means the church of Christ continues to exist fully in the roman catholic church but is not simply identical with the roman catholic church.[341] Church is the means of salvation for all those who visibly united with her through profession of faith, sacraments, and ecclesiastical communion.[342] The Council affirms the unique role of church for salvation. At the same time she recognizes that all men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God and they are related to the people of God in various ways.[343] How they are related to the church in various ways is explained in *Lumen Gentium* 16. On the first place is the Jews, the people to whom the covenants and the promises were given. Here, there is a criticism that Judaism is placed among other religions despite the emphasis on its primacy among other religions. According to *Nostra Aetate* 4 Judaism has a special status, i.e., the *root* of the church.[344] Following Jews *Lumen Gentium* 16 mentions all who acknowledge the creator. Muslims, who profess the faith of Abraham and adore the one and merciful God, are the first among them. It is followed by those who seek the unknown God in *shadows and images*.[345] Then are the people who sincerely seek God, followed by the people those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God.[346] The only factor which is common to all other groups except Judaism is that they are included in God's plan of salvation.[347] Lumen Gentium mentions Muslims in the first place here, just after Jews, because they hold the faith of Abraham and

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[339] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), in: Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Collegeville MN 2014, 357 (art. 8).

[340] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 146.

[341] Cf. Gerald O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, Oxford 2013, 71.

[342] Cf. LG 14 (FLANNERY 366).

[343] Cf. LG 13 (FLANNERY 365).

[344] Cf. Jan–Heiner TÜCK, Gottes Augapfel. Bruchstücke zu einer Theologie nach Auschwitz, Freiburg et al. 2016, 329.

[345] This refers to other non–Christian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, although no religions are mentioned by name. cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 154.

[346] LG 16 (FLANNERY 367).

[347] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 153–155.

they adore with Christians one and merciful God.[348] Gerald O'Collins opines that it was for the first time an ecumenical council of the catholic church offered dome explicit teaching on Muslims.[349]

Regarding the possibility of an extra–ecclesiastical way of salvation, *Lumen Gentium* stresses three conditions: first, the non–Christians do not know the gospel of Christ or church through no their own fault (*sine culpa*); second, they seek God with a sincere heart and open mind; third, they try to do God's will through following their conscience. Many people are trying to do these through or without their religions. They are moved by grace (*sub gratiae influxu*) and God do not deny the helps necessary for salvation to them. They are saved through grace, not through law.[350]

Nevertheless, church is called to proclaim the gospel and through her work whatever good is found sown in the minds of humans, or in the *rites and customs of peoples*, is not only preserved from destruction, but are purified, raised up, and perfected (*sanetur, elevetur et consummetur*) for the glory of God.[351] Gerald O'Collins points that *Lumen Gentium* avoids *religions* and instead uses *rites and cultures*. Here we can see also a fulfilment character of church's work. Divine revelation was communicated even before the people heard the gospel and this revelation has some elements of salvation and revelation. In the process of healing, elevating, and consummating we can clearly see a continuity also in fulfilment.[352] Jacques Dupuis notes that the council passes from the affirmation of rightful dispositions in people to that of positive values enshrined in their religious tradition.[353]

Gerald O'Collins concludes that *Lumen Gentium* and other related documents of the Second Vatican Council suggests two lessons: First, revelation and salvation must be considered together; second, the council's terminology shows that Christ is both universal Revealer and Saviour and as both he is the light and life for all people. This presence of Christ in all human beings need not be explicitly known. But Christ and Spirit operate not

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[348] LG 16 (FLANNERY 367).

[349] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 71.

[350] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 98f.

[351] LG 17 (FLANNERY 368f).

[352] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 80f.

[353] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology 162.

only for Christian but also for the religious others, even though their work need not be necessarily experienced.[354]

4.2.2 *Gaudium et Spes*: Church in its Relation to the World

Equality of all humans is the leitmotif of *Gaudium et Spes* and this equality is based on the common origin of humanity based on the creation of every human in the image of God and on the common destiny with God.[355] Therefore, everyone has the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard his privacy, and rightful freedom even in matters of religion.[356] Voice of conscience and natural law, a law written in their heart by God, should guide the actions of everyone.[357] It is through the voice of conscience that all human beings, irrespective of their religions, can hear and follow the universal law of God.[358] The conscience of mankind emphatically proclaims the principles of natural moral law, which was granted by the Creator of all peoples.[359]

Gaudium et Spes provides a fuller treatment of the fundamental questions that trouble all human beings and the answer is given in the revelation through Jesus Christ. It is only the mystery of the Word incarnate that makes the mystery of human beings truly clear. Christ, in his revelation of the mystery of Father and his love, fully reveals human beings to themselves and brings to light their noblest calling.[360] Moreover, there is *an element of divine in* human beings[361] or *the seed of eternity*[362]. Every part of humanity carries in itself some part of the spiritual treasure.[363] The constitution recognizes *the spiritual qualities and*

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[354] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 81.

[355] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), in: Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Collegeville MN 2014, 913 (art. 12); GS 22 (FLANNERY 922); GS 24 (FLANNERY 925); GS 29 (FLANNERY 929); GS 34 (FLANNERY 933); GS 41 (FLANNERY 940).

[356] Cf. GS 26 (FLANNERY 927).

[357] Cf. GS 16 (FLANNERY 916).

[358] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 129–131.

[359] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 47; GS 79 (FLANNERY 988).

[360] Cf. GS 22 (FLANNERY 922).

[361] Cf. GS 3 (FLANNERY 904f).

[362] Cf. GS 18 (FLANNERY 917).

[363] Cf. GS 86 (FLANNERY 996).

endowments of every age and nation.[364] The council see in different forms of human life the hidden presence of the creator.[365]

Another point that connects the whole humanity is the presence of Holy Spirit in whole of humanity. He helps human to respond to their supreme calling.[366] Revelation presupposes a response from human and holy spirit draws people through visible things to the invisible God. Those who know nothing of Christ and his church, can be drawn by the spirit to faith in God.[367] Originality of GS, comparing with LG, is that it states that grace is invisibly working in the hearts of the people of good will. The reason behind it is "the universal working of the Holy Spirit in making the paschal mystery of Christ available to all people"[368]. Christ is died for all men. Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being united, in a way known only to God, to the paschal mystery.[369] The phrase in a way known *only* to God shows that the council does not or cannot explain or answer in detail the question how non–Christians are saved.

Religions are considered as an integral part of human culture and human cultural phenomena. They do not contain special revelation. Non–Christian religions do not possess a more intense hidden presence of God than in other cultural traditions and nations and vice versa, religions are not worse media than other cultural forms of life.[370] They are treated as a part of human culture and institutions. Pastoral constitution on the church endorses the call to unreserved cooperation with the whole humanity,[371] also with those who differ from us in social, political, and *also religious matters*[372]. It welcomes collaboration on common causes between Christians and non–Christians.[373] It appreciates every true, good, and just elements

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[364] Cf. GS 58 (FLANNERY 963).

[365] Cf RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 69.

[366] Cf. GS 10 (FLANNERY 911); GS 11 (FLANNERY 912).

[367] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 138–140.

[368] Veli–Matti KÄRKKÄINEN, An Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 114.

[369] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 140; GS 22 (FLANNERY 924).

[370] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 70.

[371] Cf. GS 3 (FLANNERY 905).

[372] Cf. GS 28 (FLANNERY 928f).

[373] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 137; GS 84 (FLANNERY 994).

present in the human institutions.[374] The signs of the times and the voices of our age can convey God's intentions about such issues as interreligious dialogue.[375]

We can summarize that *Gaudium et Spes* emphasizes the equality of every human, universality of works of Christ and Spirit, appreciation of true, good, and just elements found in human institutions, and dialogue and collaboration between Christians and non–Christians. Non–Christian religions are considered also as a part of non–Christians.

4.2.3 *Ad Gentes*: Church's Mission in the World

Missionary motive of the council is evident in the use of *non–christianus* in council documents. This compound word is mostly connected with a clear motivation for mission and evangelization to convert non–Christians. Conversion is implied in evangelization. But the church strictly forbids forced and ill motived conversion.[376] Church has to proclaim Christ through word and deed to non–Christians[377] and thus spread gospel among non–Christians[378]. AG 30 and 39 use the construction *evangelization non–christianorum*.[379] Doctrinal foundation of church's missionary activity is found in the Trinitarian missionary activity for the salvation of human beings. Love and goodness of God the Father give rise to the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit. Through these missions, God has created us and calls us to share in his life and glory.[380] Goal of missionary activity consists of three goals, i.e., the whole humanity shall become one people of God, form one body of Christ, and are built up into the temple of Holy Spirit.[381] "The Church possesses *plenitudo mediorum salutis*; consequently, it is her mission to contribute to drawing all humanity towards *plenitudo catholica* which is a sojourn on its way towards *plenitudo escahtologica*."[382]

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[374] Cf. GS 42 (FLANNERY 943).

[375] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 142; GS 4 (FLANNERY 905); GS 11 (FLANNERY 912); GS 44 (FLANNERY 946).

[376] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (7 December 1965), in: Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Collegeville MN 2014, 828 (art. 13).

[377] Cf. AG 15 (FLANNERY 829–831).

[378] Cf. AG 39 (FLANNERY 853).

[379] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 91.

[380] Cf. AG 2 (FLANNERY 814).

[381] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 110; AG 7 (FLANNERY 821).

[382] RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 96; cf. AG 6 (FLANNERY 818f); GS 9 (FLANNERY 823f).

Ad Gentes asserts universal salvific will of God by quoting 1 Tim. 2: 4 "all human beings to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth".[383] Following LG 17 it also emphasizes whatever good is found sown in the heart of human beings or in the rites and cultures[384] and sees God as the cause of these riches[385]. Here, as in Gaudium et Spes religious traditions are considered equal to other cultural traditions.[386] Christians must try to illuminate these riches with the light of the gospel.[387] Holy Spirit invites all humans to Christ through the seeds of the Word and preaching of the gospel.[388] Christ, the author of salvation, is also the author of these elements of truth and grace and he is present among the nations prior to their hearing of the gospel.[389] In the second footnote of first chapter that refers to Irenaeus, *Ad Gentes*, based on the Christological character of creation, states that right from creation the Son has been revealing Father to the humanity. Gerald O'Collins opines that only here council uses the verb *reveal* to the knowledge of God through creation. God can lead those who do not hear the gospel not because of their fault to the faith in ways known only to him (cf. Heb. 11: 6).[390] It affirms that God's self–revelation reaches all people and every human can and should respond to it with faith.[391]

It calls for sincere and patient dialogue and collaboration with the religious others. Christians, deeply imbued by the Spirit of Jesus, should be able to learn what riches God has distributed to nations and to illuminate these riches with the light of the gospel.[392] The phrase *dialogus fraternus cum non–christianis* in AG 16 and *dialogus cum religionibus et culturis non–christianis* in AG 34 shows that the council understands dialogue as a preparation for missionary activity.[393]

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[383] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 111; AG 7 (FLANNERY 821).

[384] Cf. AG 9 (FLANNERY 823).

[385] Cf. AG 11 (FLANNERY 825).

[386] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 69.

[387] Cf. AG 11 (FLANNERY 825).

[388] Cf. AG 15 (FLANNERY 829).

[389] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 113–115; AG 9 (FLANNERY 823).

[390] Cf. AG 7 (FLANNERY 821).

[391] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 118.

[392] Cf. AG 11 (FLANNERY 825).

[393] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 91f.

4.2.4. *Nostra Aetate*: Religious Others

Even after the attempts to attach this declaration on other documents[394] it came out as a separate document which declares the attitude of the church to other religions.[395] Its doctrinal base is *Lumen Gentium* 16.[396] It emphasizes church's duty to foster unity and charity between individuals and nations and considers this duty as a part of its mission to serve the whole humanity. It stresses, akin to *Gaudium et Spes*, the unity of human race based on her origin and destiny in God and on the divine providence that extends to all people.[397] A common feature of religions is that they are trying to answer the ultimate questions of humans. The declaration mentions seven questions here.[398]

After establishing the unity of humanity, the declaration turns its attention to the manifold answers to the questions of humanity offered by different religions of the world. It reflects some aspects of Hinduism and Buddhism positively. Other religions also try to answer the restlessness of the human heart by proposing ways, comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. Then the declaration says,

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the percepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.[399]

Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions and respects their way of life. But it does not go into details, because doing a theology of religions was not its intention. It mentions some key spiritual values of other religions to lay the ground for dialogue and collaboration.[400] We do not find any mention about the possible errors in other religions as it is presupposed in fulfilment theories.[401] At the same time the declaration mentions the

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[394] Cf. Michael BARNES, Nostra Aetate. The Moral Heart of the Second Vatican Council, in: Thinking Faith (27 October 2015), p. 3. URL: https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/nostra-aetate-–-moral-heart-second-vatican-council [accessed: 14 November 2023].

[395] Not all religions of humanity are considered in Nostra Aetate. Although it speaks about the common origin of humanity and common traits of religions it mentions concretely Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

[396] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 84.

[397] Cf. ibid., 88; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non–Christian Religions *Nostra aetate* (28 October 1965), in: Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Collegeville MN 2014, 738 (art. 1).

[398] Cf. NA 2 (FLANNERY 738).

[399] NA 2 (FLANNERY 739).

[400] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 96.

[401] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 65.

uniqueness of catholic belief quoting John 14: 6 and referring to 2 Corinthians 5: 18–19: "Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). In him, in whom God has reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:18–19), men find the fulness of their religious life."[402] Gerald O'Collins commends that "[w]hile fullness of revelation and salvation is to be found in the Christian Church, those who live beyond that community are not left in a state of total emptiness"[403]. Beliefs and practices of other religious traditions reflects a ray of truth that illuminates all human beings. What are true and holy in these religions are not mentioned in this declaration. Christian faithful has to *acknowledge*, *preserve* and *promote* the spiritual and moral good, as well as sociocultural values found among other religions *through dialogue* and collaboration with the believers of other religions, *in witness* to the Christian faith and life.[404]

The declaration, referring to Pope Gregory's letter 21 to Anzir that we have mentioned in the last chapter, further deals with Islam mentioning the Islamic doctrine of God: "They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men."[405] Islam's relation with Abraham, its view on Jesus as a prophet, and honour to virgin mother Mary are mentioned. Finally, the moral life of Muslims is positively mentioned. The following article deals with Judaism. After asserting the Jewish roots of church, it invites for mutual understanding and respect between Jews and Christians on the basis of biblical and theological studies and of fraternal dialogues. Consequently, the church rejects all kinds of persecution and hatred against any man.[406] The declaration ends with mentioning God as Father of all. Christians cannot call on God unless we do not love our fellow beings. Human relationship with God and with brothers are linked together.[407]

Religion, in *Nostra Aetate*, is understood on the basis of Christian preconception. Some religions have some knowledge about the *prima causa* that can be found in nature. Other more developed religions have knowledge about a supreme being or personal God. If the conception of God in other religions closer to that of Christianity, these religions are

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[402] NA 2 (FLANNERY 739).

[403] O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 99.

[404] Cf. NEUNER–DUPUIS, Christian Faith, 1022.

[405] NA 3 (FLANNERY 739f).

[406] Cf. NA 4 (FLANNERY 741).

[407] Cf. NA 5 (FLANNERY 742).

considered as more developed religions.[408] Michael Barnes opines that "*Nostra Aetate* did not say the last word, nor even the only word, on religious pluralism"[409]. It is clear that the declaration, as in the other documents, understands other religions from a Christian point of view.

4.2.5 Second Vatican Council: A *New* Approach to Non–Christian Religions

Most of the theologians have welcomed the Second Vatican Council as a new positive attempt in the church to view other religions positively. But there are differences of opinion about the question how far the council has brought a change to catholic attitude towards other religions. Directly about *Nostra Aetate* there are different opinions. The modernist critics opine that it has changed nothing and it is mere rhetoric. Theologically conservative critics are of the opinion that the document has made a compromise in the truth of Christian faith. Some holds that the council did not actually recognize any supernatural salvific function in other religions. Some others opines that the council acknowledges some revelation in other religions but denies their salvific value.[410]

4.2.5.1 Continuity and Discontinuity

These conflicting claims on the impact of the Second Vatican Council reflect different approaches in the interpretation of its documents. Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI have explicitly declared ecclesial renewal (*epoca di rinnovamento* and *Ecclesiae renovatio* – ressourcement– respectively) as the central idea of the council.[411] How to interpret this *renewal* wished by council is the pivotal question here. Joseph Ratzinger identifies two different hermeneutics in the interpretation of council documents. First one is the tendency to renounce completely or partially the significance of the council. The second tendency is to stress the spirit over the letter. They discussed more about the process (spirit) in which the documents are formed in the council. The documents in its final form (letter) is less relevant. Joseph Ratzinger suggests that the final texts, without rejecting the spirit, must be

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[408] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 65.

[409] BARNES, Nostra Aetate, 4.

[410] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 8.

[411] Cf. JOHN XXIII, *Solemnis Allocutio* (25 January 1959), in: AAS 51 (1959), 65–69, here: 68; PAUL VI, *Summi Pontificis Allocuto* (29 September 1963), in: AAS 55 (1963), 841–859, here: 850.

the starting point of interpreting the council.[412] Later he, then Pope Benedict XVI, says about the lack of correct interpretation and application of the council.[413] He distinguishes between a hermeneutic of discontinuity/rupture and a hermeneutic of reform. Hermeneutic of reform is characterized by the idea of renewal in the continuity (*rinnovamento nella continuità*).[414] On the occasion of fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the council, he returns to this discussion. He opines that the council was not at all a break with the past but a prolongation of the life of the church from its apostolic period to the present day.[415] Hermeneutic of reform implies a combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels.[416] The ideal of discontinuity is realized in the principle of continuity. It can be called as a process of innovation in continuity (*Novità nella continuità*).[417] Etymologically *reformatio* indicates a re–forming or a restructuring of something already existed. Although change is at its core, reform presupposes a continuity.[418] John W. O'Malley commends that Pope Benedict XVI, proposing a hermeneutic of reform for interpreting the council, steps away from the sharp dichotomy of rupture/continuity. Reform is a process that within continuity produces something new.[419] In his Christmas address to Curia on 22 December 2005, Pope Benedict XVI affirms that the very nature of reform consists in the combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels.[420] CDF's answer to the questions about council's teaching about the church tries to address this issue and asserts continuity.[421]

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[412] Cf. Edward MUSHI, Benedict XVI's Hermeneutics of Reform and its Implications for the Renewal of the Church, in: Pacifica 26/3 (2013), 279–294, here: 279–281.

[413] Cf. ibid., 281.

[414] Cf. ibid., 282.

[415] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Homily at the Holy Mass for the Opening of the Year of Faith (11 October 2012). URL: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20121011_anno-fede.html [accessed: 28 May 2024].

[416] Cf. Jan–Heiner TÜCK, Die Verbindlichkeit des Konzils. Die Hermeneutik der Reform als Interpretationsschlüssel, in: Jan–Heiner TÜCK (ed.), Erinnerung an die Zukunft. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Freiburg et al. ^{2}2013, 94–113, here: 108.

[417] Cf. MUSHI, Benedict XVI's Hermeneutics of Reform, 282.

[418] Cf. John W. O'MALLEY, "The Hermeneutic of Reform". A Historical Analysis, in: Theological Studies 73 (2012), 517–546, here: 517.

[419] Cf. ibid., 542f.

[420] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Roman Curia Offering them his Christmas Greetings (22 December 2005). URL: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia. html [accessed: 28 May 2024].

[421] Cf. Jan–Heiner TÜCK (ed.), Römisches Monopol? Der Streit um die Einheit der Kirche, Freiburg et al. 2008, 136.

The continuity in the teachings of the church is seen also in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. An interpretation of council's attitude towards other religions without considering this continuity will not do justice to council's documents. The council "reaffirmed the official catholic doctrine since the time of Pius IX that it is only those who are culpably outside the Catholic Church who are thereby excluded from salvation".[422] At the same time a new approach is also noticeable in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. "The profound difference between the medieval view and the doctrine of Vatican II on the salvation of non–Catholics is that instead of a presumption of guilt, the attitude expressed by the council involves a presumption of innocence."[423] In the declaration *Nostra Aetate* we can see a positive tone regarding other religions. Possible criticism is avoided and, according to Miikka Ruokanen, is being expressed by silence. It avoids terminologies such as pagan, idolatry, error, or fallacy.[424] The Second Vatican Council held that salvation was possible for the non–Christian, while at the same time affirming the central and definitive place of Jesus Christ as the irrevocable, authoritative, self–revelation of God.[425]

4.2.5.2 Revelation and Salvation for Non–Christians

According to *Lumen Gentium* 17 Christ is the source of salvation for the whole world. The seeds of the Word, in other words invisible Christ himself, are hidden in the national and religious traditions.[426] Gerald O'Collins opines that the acceptance of the universal presence of Christ and Spirit was beginning to replace earlier, less personal expressions.[427] Mentioning the acknowledgment of *Lumen Gentium* that Muslims acknowledge the creator and adore the one, merciful God and the acknowledgement of *Nostra Aetate* that in Hinduism and in other religions a ray of that truth reflects, he asks that how can these religions have some elements of truth without God's revelation. To support his thesis about the divine revelation he notes that *Ad Gentes* 3 explicitly states that the Son, being present in creation to the whole human race, reveals the Father universally. He concludes that the council taught that God's revelation and salvation are, in some sense, universally available.[428]

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[422] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 150f.

[423] SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 151.

[424] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 8.

[425] Cf. Gavin D'Costa, Karl Rahner's anonymous Christian. A Reappraisal, 131.

[426] Cf. AG 11 (FLANNERY 825).

[427] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 158f.

[428] Cf. ibid., 158–162.

Francis A. Sullivan also sees in the positive elements in other religions the universal work of Christ and Spirit. He limits this presence till the time before the missionaries arrive to preach the gospel. Referring *Ad Gentes* 3 on the universal design of God for the salvation, he assumes that there will be some kind of visible, tangible mediations involved in other religions. But council sees the good elements in other religions as *preparation* for the gospel and affirms the necessity of the proclamation of the gospel. Church is both sign and instrument of salvation. However Francis A. Sullivan states that the *universal* mediation of church does not necessarily mean ascribing to it an *exclusive* role of mediation.[429]

Miikki Ruokanen affirms that the official documents of the council contain a doctrine of non–Christian religions and it is not merely pastoral but deeply dogmatic. He rejects the common interpretation of the council documents, recognizing non–Christian religions to be capable of specific mediation of God's saving grace, as invalid. Council has actually reaffirmed the classical catholic position and thus representing continuity in the catholic doctrine. He, following Joseph Ratzinger, opines that non–Christian religions are a part of human culture, according to the council. The *gratia communis* of the Trinity is also in continuity with the Patristic and Scholastic teachings. The council texts do not differentiate between creative, christological, or sanctifying grace. The opera ad extra of the Triune God are indivisible. Miikki Ruokanen opines that council's concept of the salvific meaning of religions is obscure and he says, this obscurity is because there is no specific salvific meaning for religions. The council when speaks about the salvation *extra ecclesiam* refers only to individual non–Christians, not to religion as a collective group. [430]

The above mentioned interpretation of the council documents show contrasting differences. But even the liberal interpretations of the council affirm that the council does not expressly speak of *ways* of revelation and salvation. Along with the traditional theological themes such as centrality of church in God's salvific plan, emphasis of church's mission, etc., the council also accepted that non–Christians also can be saved based on their inculpability in not hearing the gospel, upright life and sincere desire for God. Just after the council the interpretation of the council documents were a theme of dispute. For example, whereas Karl Rahner favoured post–Vatican theology as an attempt to seek ways of conveying Christianity as meaningful to those who grew up in a world dominated by

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[429] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 164–169.

[430] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 115–118.

empirical knowledge, Joseph Ratzinger was discomfortable about the misinterpretation of council's intentions.[431] The second Vatican Council clearly teaches about the possibility of salvation of those who are in other religions. They are saved in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Some questions were raised in theology based on these teachings, for example, are non–Christians saved by their own religion or despite them, does the invisible saving grace in the hearts of humans ever become visible and find its place in the practices of other religions. The council maintains a studied ambiguity on these questions. Regarding these questions there is a real danger of overinterpreting the council.[432]

4.2.5.3 Church and Other Religions

The council affirms church's self–awareness as the community founded by Christ and thus it offers decisively fuller knowledge of God and richer means for salvation. Gerald O'Collins speaks about a *decisive shift*: from *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* to *sine ecclesia nulla salus*. Without the church there is no salvation.[433] As mentioned just above the council did not recognize other religions as salvific ways, but it acknowledges the general salvific presence of the Triune God's grace in the whole creation. The council's understanding about the possibility of salvation outside the church is in line with the traditional theology. *Ad Gentes* reflects the view that other religions represent purely human desire to reach God.

4.2.5.4 Church's Self–Reformation

Unitatis Redintegratio, the decree on ecumenism, states that every renewal of the church is essentially grounded in an increased fidelity towards her calling. Her master, Christ summons the church to continual reformation and she is always in need of reformation because she is an institution of men here on earth.[434] There can be no ecumenism without a change of heart. Because it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, from *self–denial* and an unstinted love that desires unity develop a mature way.[435] Gerald O'Collins applies

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[431] Cf. Oliver PUTZ, "I Did not Change; They Did!" Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Rahner and the Second Vatican Council, in: New Wineskins A Journal of Jesuit School of Theology Berkeley 2/1 (2007), 11–30, here: 13.

[432] Cf. James FREDERICKS, The Catholic Church and the Other Religious Paths. Rejecting Nothing That is True and Holy, in: Theological Studies 64 (2003), 225–254, here: 226f.

[433] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 164.

[434] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* (21 November 1964), in: Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Collegeville MN 2014, 459 (art. 6).

[435] Cf. UR 7 (FLANNERY 460).

this attitude of self–renewal also to church's relationship with non–Christians. *Nostra Aetate*, when it calls to dialogue with the others, implies the need to examine seriously what they believes and practise. He adds, sharing with others and learning to know them better will lead to a deeper self–knowledge and appreciation of Christian faith.[436] Church's self–renewal or reformation is needed to be faithful to her vocation and Jesus Christ, his life, and preaching are to be the criterion of this renewal.

4.2.5.5 Church and Mission

There is an generally held observation, even though it does not do justice to the real nature of the Second Vatican Council, that the positive attitude of the council towards other religions caused an indifference to the mission of the church. But the documents of the council unambiguously asserts the importance of mission. Mission is not one among many apostolates of the church, but it is the very essence of the church. "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary, since it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from 'fountain–like love,' the love of God the Father."[437] Together with its positive attitude toward the possibility of salvation for non–Christians, the council emphasizes on the necessity of preaching the gospel to those who have not yet heart it. Francis A. Sullivan opines that there is no evidence in the documents of council for the idea that, admitting the positive elements in the non–Christian religions, there is no further urgence about Christian missionary endeavour.[438] "Lumen Gentium uses Trinitarian language to describe the mission of the community of the baptized: 'the Church *prays* and labours so that into the People of God, the Body of the Lord, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit may pass the fullness of the entire world'."[439]

Miikki Ruokanen notes that the council suggests three strategies for encounter of Christianity with other religions: dialogue, collaboration, and Christian witnessing to their own faith and way of life.[440] Dialogue with an openness will help church to better understand religious other. Therefore, missionaries are exhorted to get acquainted with the national and religious traditions of those to whom they are sent and to respectfully discover the *seeds of*

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[436] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 149–151.

[437] AG 2 (FLANNERY 814).

[438] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 167.

[439] O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 164; LG 17 (FLANNERY 368f).

[440] Cf. RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 86f.

the Word.[441] Dialogue is a matter of learning about what motivates people of faith, even to the extent of working and learning with them.[442] Dialogue is not an attempt to find the truth, but the communication of one's own experience. Mission is not only dialogue. Christian witnessing is also an important strategy for Christianity's encounter with other religions as mentioned above.

4.3 Magisterium after the Council

The main themes discussed in the council and presented in the council documents are addressed by the magisterium in the following years. We limit ourselves to the question of the attitude of the church towards other religions.

4.3.1 Pope Paul VI

His first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) repeats the need of engaging in dialogue with the other religions. To promote such dialogue the Pope has started a Secretariat for Non–Christians, which later renamed as Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In his encyclical Pope Paul VI described the partners of dialogue as consisting of a series of concentric circles. At the first place comes Jews, then Muslims based on monotheistic belief, followed by Afro–Asiatic religions. Irrespective of affection and respect to the moral and spiritual values of religious others church cannot remain indifferent to its conviction that there is only one true religion, that is Christianity. At the same time the Pope expresses the desire to join with other religions to defend and promote common ideals such as religious freedom, human brotherhood, social welfare, etc. Later, during his visit to India and his letter to all the peoples of Africa, he again expressed his admiration for the spiritual values in the non–Christian religions. In his exhortation to the faithful in Rome on fourth Sunday of Lent, 1966 he emphasizes the contrast between other religions and the one true religion that is Christianity. "It is religion that determines our relationship with God, and the Catholic religion is the one that fully establishes that relationship: one that genuine, true, unique; this is the religion that makes God our communion and our salvation." These two aspects are also evident in his Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975). It affirms that "[t]he church respects and esteems highly these non–Christian religions, the living expression of

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[441] Cf. AG 11 (FLANNERY 825).

[442] Cf. Michael BARNES, Interreligious Learning. Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination, Cambridge 2012, 16; NA 2 (FLANNERY 739).

the soul of vast groups of people" and "[t]hey carry within them […] a quest incomplete indeed but often made with great sincerity and righteousness of heart".[443] Other religions are impregnated with numerous *Seeds of the Word* and therefore constitute an authentic *preparation for the gospel*.[444] Here the apostolic exhortation refers Second Vatican Council and to Eusebius of Caesarea. At the same time, it holds these people who belong to other religions have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ. The whole humanity finds fulness of its search for God in this mystery of Christ. Through Christianity an authentic and living relationship with God is established, whereas other religions cannot bring about their aims stretched out towards heaven.[445] Francis A. Sullivan notes that the ambiguity between these two positions is not solved by Pope Paul VI.[446] On the one side acknowledging the positive value of religions and on the other hand emphasizing Christianity's uniqueness *Evangelii Nuntiandi* maintains the character of the Second Vatican Council.

4.3.2 John Paul II

Redemptor Hominis (1979), Pope John Paul II's first encyclical, promotes interreligious dialogue and holds the fullness of divine truth in the church.

> True ecumenical activity means openness, drawing closer, availability for dialogue, and a shared investigation of the truth in the full gospel and Christian sense; but in no way does it or can it mean giving up or in anyway underestimating the treasures of divine truth that the Church has constantly confessed and taught […].[447]

It further affirms the position of the Second Vatican Council on other religions. The positive values of non–Christian religions are to be respected and can be considered as *seeds of the Word*. The mission of the church towards members of other religions is also held up.[448] In his message to the people of Asia[449] the Pope expressed the profound need of dialogue with other religions and every Christian is called for this dialogue and for the mutual collaboration with all humans for the dignity of each human person. During his pontificate the Secretariat

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[443] PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), in: NEUNER–DUPUIS, Christian Faith, 1036, (§ 53).

[444] Cf. ibid.

[445] Cf. ibid.

[446] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 189.

[447] JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), in: NEUNER–DUPUIS, Christian Faith, 1037, (§ 6).

[448] Cf. ibid., 11 and 12 (NEUNER–DUPUIS 1038 and 1039).

[449] It was held in Manila, on twentieth February 1981.

for Non–Christians has published a document *Dialogue and Mission* (1984). It emphasizes the important role of dialogue *within* the mission of the church. Trinitarian God is the foundation of dialogue. When the Pope addressed the leaders of other religions in Assisi on fifth February 1986, he has spoken about the fruits of dialogue. Dialogue can foster mutual respect, promote union, help to overcome prejudices and misunderstandings, lead to the union with God and union between people, etc. These emphasis on interreligious dialogue can be seen also further during his papacy. In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), the Pope has presented, as in *Dialogue and Mission*, interreligious dialogue as a part of the evangelizing mission of the church. "Dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes.* […] There is no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue."[450] In 1991 Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples together published a document called *Dialogue and Proclamation*, in which the relationship between interreligious dialogue and proclamation of the gospel is presented. A positive evaluation on other religions is present also in this document. A deeper conversion of all towards the God is presented as the goal of dialogue. Sincere dialogue implies mutual acceptance of differences and respect for the free decision according to conscience.[451]

4.3.3 Pope Benedict XVI

Some criticize Pope Benedict XVI for not following the warm approach towards other religions as Pope John Paul II did. Although Pope Benedict XVI seemed to be less apt to share in public gestures of interreligious practice than his predecessor, his vision for dialogue corresponds to that of his predecessors.[452] His Regensburg speech caused strong criticism and is viewed as a narrow attitude towards others. He has always tried to emphasize the uniqueness of catholic church. He, different from John Paul II, was of the opinion that Assisi could not be the model for interreligious dialogue because it gave the false impression that all religions are equally valid.[453] Pope Benedict XVI is continuing the attitude of John Paul II

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[450] JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), in: NEUNER–DUPUIS, Christian Faith, 1054 and 1055, (§ 55).

[451] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE– CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, Dialogue and Proclamation (19 May 1991), in: NEUNER–DUPUIS, Christian Faith, 1063, (art. 40).

[452] Cf. Christopher GROSS, Beyond Tolerance. Pope Benedict XVI's Fresh Approach to Interreligious Dialogue, Boston 2007, 1–22, here: 10f. URL: https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir%253A102754/datastream/PDF/view [accessed: 18 November 2023].

[453] Cf. David GIBSON, The Rule of Benedict. Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle with the Modern World, San Francisco 2006, 332.

with his own different style. Cardinal Paul Poupard, the head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, states that it is a work of continuation, not imitation.[454] Both of their approaches are based on *Nostra Aetate*. The two essential components of interreligious dialogue according to Nostra Aetate, writes Christopher Gross, are openness and proclamation. These elements are evident both in the approaches of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Whereas John Paul II focused mainly on the common traditions of different people, Benedict XVI focused on differences. At the same time, we must admit that John Paul II has never overlooked differences in creeds and Benedict XVI has also emphasized the importance of both open dialogue and proclamation.[455] Being aware of doctrinal differences, Benedict XVI has refused to reinterpret Christianity for the sake of dialogue. Such a dialogue cannot be authentic dialogue because it lacks honesty. As the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he is responsible for the document Dominus Jesus (2000) that states: "*Equality*, which is a presupposition of interreligious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content […]."[456] Benedict XVI's shift of focus from commonality to distinctiveness is rooted in his concern about the *pervasive* relativism in the present culture.[457] He has found the basis of dialogue in reason, not in doctrine of religion. Human reason participates in divine reason. Thus, also the natural law represents the foundation for an interreligious dialogue.[458] It is clear that Pope Benedict XVI continues the positive attitude of church towards other religions without relativizing Christian belief.

4.3.4 Pope Francis

Universal human fraternity is an important theme for Pope Francis. In the last chapter of his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), he deals with interreligious encounter. The chapter is titled as *Religion at the Service of Fraternity in our World*. The uniqueness of Pope Francis is that he sees interreligious dialogue as encounter. Continuing the positive attitude of *Nostra Aetate* Pope Francis states that all religions respect human dignity as the children of God and

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[454] Cf. GROSS, Beyond Tolerance, 2.

[455] Cf. ibid., 4–6.

[456] CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Dominus Jesus* 22 (DENZINGER, Compendium of Creeds, 5089).

[457] Cf. ibid., 7f.

[458] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, World Day of Peace Message 2007, No. 3. URL: https://www. vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20061208_xl-world-day-peace.html [accessed: 18 November 2023].

thus, interreligious dialogue can contribute to foster fraternity and defend social justice. Quoting Catholic Bishops Conference of India, he finds "establishing friendship, peace, and fraternity, and sharing spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love as the goal of dialogue".[459] The basis of fraternity is the openness of the Father to all and the equality of all humans as children of God.[460] In the document signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al–Azhar, Ahmad Al–Tayyeb, the human fraternity based on divine creation is emphasized. "In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace."[461] Klaus von Stosch observes here, in the mentioning of *rights* as well as *duties*, an integration of western and Islamic thought.[462] Ernst Fürlinger sees the principle of universal fraternity of all humans as Pope Francis' guiding principle for interreligious relationships.[463] A fruitful dialogue between religions is possible only with the acknowledgement of the transcendental dignity of humans. Dialogue is generally regarded as a conversation or also as disputation between theological experts over the complex religious doctrines. For Pope Francis dialogue is not an exchange among religious systems but an encounter between concrete believers, who are committed to the search for the truth and to the transformation of the world. Interreligious dialogue is one among many dialogues which help human beings to work together for a better world.[464]

For Pope Francis social dimension of dialogue is more important. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) he writes about a healthy religious pluralism that genuinely respects differences and

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[459] FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), New York–Mahwah NJ 2020, 61 (§ 271).

[460] Cf. FRANCIS, Fratelli Tutti, 61 (272).

[461] FRANCIS – AHMAD AL–TAYYEB, A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together (4 February 2019). URL: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html [accessed: 29 May 2024].

[462] Cf. Klaus VON STOSCH, Vor fünf Jahren wurde die Erklärung von Abu Dhabi unterschreiben. Vier Impulse für den christlich–islamischen Dialog vor Ort, in: Communio Online. Politik, Gesellschaft und Ethik (3.2.2024). URL: https://www.herder.de/communio/gesellschaft/vier-impulse-fuer-den-christlich-islamischen-dialog-vor-ort-vor-fuenf-jahren-wurde-die-erklaerung-von-abu-dhabi-unterschrieben/ [accessed: 29 May 2024].

[463] Cf. Ernst FÜRLINGER, Handwerder der Hoffnung. Papst Franziskus und der interreligiöse Dialog, Innsbruck–Wien 2023, 16.

[464] Cf. Peter C. PHAN, Pope Francis and Interreligious Encounter. To Build Universal Fraternity and Social Friendship, Series: The Culture of Encounter and the Catholic Church, Project: The Culture of Encounter (4 April 2022), in: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. URL: https://cultureofencounter.georgetown.edu/responses/pope-francis-and-interreligious-encounter-to-build-universal-fraternity-and-social-friendship [accessed: 18 November 2023].

values as such. Such a dialogue does not demand privatizing religions and reducing them mere to the individual's conscience.[465] The doctrinal differences do not function as borders that separate believers of different faiths when religions engage in fostering universal fraternity and social friendship. Interpreting parable of good Samaritan he says that what matters is not doctrinal differences, but the attitude towards the victim.[466] Religious leaders are called to be true people of dialogue to cooperate in building peace.[467]

The culture of encounter demands that all religions renounce competition and practice collaboration. Pope Francis' attitude towards other religions and his opinion about interreligious dialogue can be clearly understood from the session on interreligious dialogue in *Evangelii Gaudium*. The dialogue with non–Christians must be characterized by an attitude of openness in truth in love. Interreligious dialogue is necessary for the world peace. Dialogue at first place must be a conversation about human existence or simply a matter of being open to them, sharing human joys and sorrows.[468] Pope Francis emphasizes the essential relationship between dialogue and proclamation in interreligious dialogue like his predecessors.[469]

> A facile syncretism would ultimately be a totalitarian gesture on the part of those who would ignore greater values of which they are not the masters. True openness involves remaining steadfast in one's deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one's own identity, while at the same time being "open to understanding those of the other party" and "knowing that dialogue can enrich each side".[470]

Regarding the salvation of non–Christians Pope Francis writes:

> Non–Christians, by God's gracious initiative, when they are faithful to their own conscience, can live "justified by the grace of God", and thus be "associated to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ". But due to the sacramental dimension of sanctifying grace, God's working in them tends to produce signs and rites, sacred expressions which in turn bring others to a communitarian experience of journeying towards God. While these lack the meaning and efficacy of the sacraments instituted by Christ, they can be channels which the Holy Spirit raises up in order to liberate non–Christians from atheistic immanentism or from purely individual religious experiences. […] As Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries, which can help us better to live our own beliefs.[471]

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[465] Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), Vatican 2013, 190 (§ 255). URL: https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf [accessed: 13 December 2023].

[466] Cf. FRANCIS, Fratelli Tutti, 21f (§ 70).

[467] Cf. FRANCIS, Fratelli Tutti, 63 (§ 284); Peter Phan, Pope Francis and Interreligious Encounter.

[468] FRANCIS, Evangelii Gaudium, 186 (§ 250).

[469] Cf. ibid., 187 (§ 251).

[470] ibid.

[471] ibid., 189 (§ 254).

From these citations it is clear that Pope Francis follows his predecessors and the Second Vatican Council. He concerns about the syncretism, emphasizes the identity of religions, asserts that in living faithful to own conscience non–Christians partakes in the mystery of Jesus Christ, underlines the lack of efficacy of non–Christian religious practices, and admits that the positive elements in other religions can help Christians to live better their own beliefs.

Answering the question why God allows many religions he answered, "God wanted to allow this: Scolastica [*sic*] theologians used to refer to God's *voluntas permissiva*. He wanted to allow this reality: there are many religions. Some are born from culture, but they always look to heaven; they look to God."[472]

4.4 Conclusion

Fulfillment theories and the theology that emphasizes the presence of Christ in other religions have tried to consider the positive role of non–Christian religions. But their positive role was contained in their role as steppingstones or preparations for the ultimate revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Some of the theologies which emphasized the unique role of Christ have placed other religions also at the level of Christianity; Raimon Panikkar's theology is a good example. The Second Vatican Council, also influenced by these theological developments, has acknowledged and appreciated the positive elements of truth in other religions. In council documents we can see a positive attitude regarding the salvation of people outside the church based on their inculpability in not knowing the revelation in Jesus Christ. But the council does not consider other religions as equal ways of salvation. Here, it is to make clear that Judaism is not considered as one among other religions and Judaism possesses a special status as the root of Christianity.[473] There are many elements of natural revelation in other religions as well as in various cultures. These are the expressions of God's universal salvific will. But the council unequivocally affirms the unique universal role of

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[472] FRANCIS, General Audience St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 3 April 2019. URL: https://www. vatican. va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190403_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 18 November 2023].

[473] COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS, "The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic–Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of "Nostra aetate" (No. 4) (10 December 2015) § 20. URL: http://www. christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crre/documenti-della-commissione/en.html [accessed: 29 May 2024].

Christ in the salvation of every human and the role of Church as the sacrament of salvation in the world. The post–conciliar magisterium of the church also affirms these two elements: on the one side the church wishes to respect the positive values of other religions; on the other side the church is aware of its unique role in the salvation and fulness of revelation in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5

Development of Theologies of Religious Pluralism: Its Major Trends and Conflicts

5.0 Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapters the question about the attitude of Christianity towards other religions has always been with the Christian church from its early days. But the modern age made this question more relevant. After the enlightenment, more sacred books of other religions were translated into the western languages. Because of globalization and migration, almost all the religions are present in various regions of the world. Reinhold Bernhardt points out eight historical developments that caused the revision of theological judgement about the non–Christian religions. They are 1) the end of the political, cultural and religious eurocentrism, 2) guilt feeling about the colonialism and connected activities, 3) globalization, 4) regionalization, 5) collapse of expectations regarding western world, 6) growing irrelevance of Christian churches in the western world, 7) historization, contextualization and pluralization of the intellectual world and 8) plurality of religions in the concrete social life.[474] Effects of these changes are evident in Christian theology even before Second Vatican Council. The theologians of pre–Vatican period have tried to interpret Christian revelation in the background of religious pluralism. Their influence can be seen in the attitude of the council towards other religions, that we have discussed in the previous chapter. The positive attitude of the council towards other religions has widely initiated an interest in theologizing in the background of religious pluralism. This leads to the development of new branch in theology, which is the theology of religious pluralism. Due to the multiplicity of theological opinions in the theology of religions a classification of the theologies of religious pluralism became necessary.

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[474] Cf. Reinhold BERNHARDT, Die Herausforderung. Motive für die Ausbildung der „pluralistischen Religionstheologe," in: Hans–Gerd SCHWANDT (ed.), Pluralistische Theologie der Religionen. Eine kritische Sichtung, Frankfurt am Main 1998, 19–38, here: 21–24.

5.1 Different Classifications

A three–fold classification; exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, suggested by Alan Race, is used widely in the theological discussions. He includes the theologies of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Kraemer and Lesslie Newbigin in the exclusivism. Under the classification *inclusivism* comes mainly the roman catholic theologians. Pluralist theologians are Ernst Troeltsch, John Hick, Paul Tillich and Cantwell Smith. [475] Paul Hedges summarizes this three–fold classification as follows: "exclusivists believe only their religion is true; inclusivists that only their religion is ultimately true, others are but stepping stones to it; pluralists that there are, at least potentially, many true religions."[476] Despite of the wide acceptance that this classification enjoys in the discussions in the theology of religious pluralism, it was also subjected to criticism.

Jacques Dupuis, while analysing the theologies of religions in the context of Second Vatican Council, differentiates between two mainline theological perspectives: fulfilment theory and theory of presence of Christ in the religions.[477] He is not satisfied with any type of *categories* that forms clear cut differentiation. He is not ready to be included in any one of these categories and placed himself in an intermediate position between inclusivism and pluralism, viz. *inclusivist pluralism*.[478] Other examples are, *reflexive inclusivism*, suggested by Jan–Heiner Tück,[479] and *reflected inclusivism* (*reflektierte inklusivismus*), by Helmut Hoping.[480] Paul F. Knitter suggests a *four point model*, i.e. the replacement model, the fulfilment model, the mutuality model and the acceptance model, in his book *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.[481] In his earlier book, Paul F. Knitter suggested another model,

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[475] Cf. Alan RACE, Christians and Religious Pluralism; Paul F. KNITTER, One Earth Many Religions. Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility, Maryknoll/NY 1995, 25.

[476] Paul HEDGES, The Theology of Religions Typology Redefined. Openness and Tendencies, in: Paul HEDGES (ed.), Twenty–First Theologies of Religions. Retrospection and Future Prospects, Leiden 2016, 76–92, here: 78.

[477] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 132.

[478] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 198–201; Jacques DUPUIS, Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism, in: Terrence MERRIGAN– Jacques HAERS (eds.), The Myriad Christ. Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology, Leuven et al. 2000, 83–97, here: 97.

[479] Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, Glauben im Modus des ´als ob´? Jan Assmanns Votum für eine performativ gewendete Theologie– eine Replik, in: Jan-Heiner TÜCK –Rudolf LANGTHALER (eds.), „Es strebe von euch jeder um die Wette" Lessings Ringparabel– ein Paradigma für die Verständigung der Religionen heute? Freiburg et al. 2016, 56–62.

[480] Cf. Helmut HOPING, Jesus aus Galiläa. Messias und Gottes Sohn, Freiburg i. Br. et al. 2019, 303–330.

[481] Cf. Paul F. KNITTER, Introducing Theologies of Religions, Maryknoll/NY [10]2010.

which is titled according to confessions; the conservative evangelical model that argues for Christianity as the one true religion, the mainline protestant model that emphasizes the salvation in Christ, but not exclusively, the catholic model, which says that there are various paths to salvation, but based on a single norm, that is Jesus Christ, and the theocentric model that considers God as the pivotal point, not Christ and shows openness to all religions. [482] J. Peter Schineller tries to categorize the theologies of religions into four: 1) ecclesiocentric universe, exclusive Christology; 2) Christocentric universe, inclusive Christology; 3) theocentric universe, normative Christology; 4) theocentric universe, non–normative Christology.[483] Hans Küng also presents four categories: no religion is true; only one religion is true; every religion is true; one religion is the true one in whose truth all religions participate.[484] Perry Schmidt–Leukel supports the three–fold division by Alan Race. According to him, this three–fold classification is a logically precise and comprehensive classification.[485] He argues that *prima facie* the fact of plurality of religions seems to support an atheist or naturalist interpretation of religion, that is, no religion is true. It is due to the fact that the message of salvation in different religions contradicts with each other because each religion claims that other religions are false.[486] The other three possibilities are theistic. First of them is exclusivist position, according to which the salvation–giving knowledge is limited to one's own religion. By denying possibility of salvation in other religions, it contradicts its own possibility of salvation. Inclusivism does almost similar thing. It admits that there is salvific knowledge of God in other religions also, but only own religion does have the fullness of this transcendental knowledge. The last possibility, i.e., pluralism says that salvific knowledge is available in all religions equally. According to Perry Schmidt–

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[482] Cf. Paul F. KNITTER, No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions, Maryknoll/NY 1985.

[483] J. Peter SCHINELLER, Christ and Church. A Spectrum of Views, in: Theological Studies 37 (1976), 545–566.

[484] Hans KÜNG, What is True Religion? Toward an Ecumenical Criteriology, in: Leonard SWIDLER (ed.), Toward a Universal Theology of Religion, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1987, 231–250.

[485] Perry SCHMIDT–LEUKEL, Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism. The Tripolar Typology–Clarified and Reaffirmed, in: Paul F. KNITTER (ed.), The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration, Maryknoll, N.Y. 2005, 18.

[486] Cf. Perry SCHMIDT–LEUKEL, Religious Pluralism in Thirteen Theses, in: Modern Believing 57/1 (2016), 5–18, here: 10.

Leukel this is the only possible logical theistic position in the context of plurality of religions.[487]

Paul Hedges opines that Perry Schmidt–Leukel's classification fails to account for those often termed universalist exclusivists. Universalist exclusivists, according Paul Hedges, although seeing no valid religiosity outside of Christianity, like exclusivism, believe that God will ultimately save all people (universal salvation) due to His omnibenevolence and omnipotence. Perry Schmidt–Leukel categorizes such people as inclusivists. But Paul Hedges does not find this satisfactory, because it makes the distinction between those who value other religions and those who do not value other religions obscure.[488]

Gavin D'Costa has also given a detailed classification, which contains subdivisions to the classical three–fold classification. He mentions two kinds of exclusivism; universal access, and restrictive access to salvation; two kinds of inclusivism; structural inclusivism and restrictivist inclusivism; and three types of pluralism; unitary, pluriform and ethical pluralism.[489] But in this classification also there is a problem of obscurity. Universal access–exclusivism is not different from the traditionally understood inclusivism. There are also some classifications which are identical with the three–fold classification of Alan Race, but with different terminologies. For example, Veli–Matti Kärkkäinen's three–fold classification, viz. ecclesiocentrism, christocentrism and theocentrism, which is parallel to exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.[490]

The above–mentioned various classifications of theologies of religious pluralism itself shows the diversity and multiplicity of theological works in this field. However, I take the classification of Alan Race, though it is rigid, for better clarity. It is not by undermining the presence of some theologies of religious pluralism, which go beyond this three–fold classification and interweave with each other; For example, inclusivist pluralism of Jacques Dupuis. If I take such theologies also as a model and go beyond the classical three–fold categorization, it will be an unending classification process. Such an attempt is done by

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[487] Cf. Perry SCHMIDT–LEUKEL, Das Problem divergierender Wahrheitsansprüche im Rahmen einer pluralistischen Religionstheologie. Voraussetzungen zu seiner Lösung, in: Hans–Gerd SCHWANDT (ed.), Pluralistische Theologie der Religionen. Eine kritische Sichtung, Frankfurt am Main 1998, 39–58, here: 41.

[488] Cf. HEDGES, Theology of Religions Typology Redefined, 78.

[489] Cf. Gavin D'COSTA, Christianity and World Religions. Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions, Hoboken 2009, 6-7, 9-33.

[490] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 165–173.

Veléz de Cea. He does it by taking *openness* as an important criterion. According to him, Jacques Dupuis shows an openness towards other religions without compromising the dogmatic constraints and therefore, his theology is an example for pluralist–inclusivism. [491] Paul Hedges rightly asks that if pluralist–inclusivism can be included in the classification, why an exclusivist–inclusivism, which shows openness to other religions while keeping exclusivist claims, is not included in the classification.[492] It is undeniable that Veléz de Cea has rightly understood Jacques Dupuis' theology of religious pluralism. I exclude such minor deviations from the classification only for the sake of precision and clarity. Like Jacques Dupuis, I also prefer the term *model* to *paradigm*[493], because a theology of religious pluralism can go beyond this classification and have hybrid forms like inclusivist–pluralism, exclusivist–inclusivism, etc. Thus, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism are three models, under which different theologies of religious pluralism can be grouped. However, they are not watertight compartments and do not deny theologies, which interwoven with one another model. In other words, there can be different kinds of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

In this context of multiplicity of classifications and categorizations, I am proceeding with simple and clear explanation based on the classic three–fold classification. The three typologies, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism are based mainly on the question of salvation. Exclusivism claims that only those who are the members of the church will be saved. Inclusivism says that the people belongs to other religions also can be saved, but they are saved because of the salvific work of Jesus Christ. Pluralism holds that all religions are equally valid ways of salvation. When we go beyond the soteriological concerns to the dogmatic level, we have to find what is the theological basis of these models, upon which the salvific power is based. Exclusivism, as a dominant trend in the history of Christianity, upholds an ecclesiocentric attitude. It asserts the traditional catholic dogma *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* in its rigid sense.[494] Inclusivism is based on Christocentric view. Christ is above all religion and through him all people, in spite of their religion, will be saved. Karl Rahner's famous concept of *anonymous Christianity* is a good example. Pluralism is basically

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[491] Cf. Abraham VELÉZ DE CEA, A Cross–Cultural and Buddhist–friendly Interpretation of the Typology Exclusivism–Inclusivism–Pluralism, in: Sophia 50/3 (2011) 453–480, here: 471.

[492] Cf. HEDGES, Theology of Religions Typology Redefined, 83.

[493] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 181.

[494] Cf. John Hick, The Rainbow of Faiths. Critical Dialogues on Religious Pluralism, London 1995, 19.

theocentric and its main proponent is John Hick. It emphasises that all religions seek one and the only God and having salvific power. Differences, found in various religions, are varying cultural reflections of the same common essence.[495] Pluralist theologians are blamed that they are promoting relativism. Some of them have cleared that they are not relativists and explained that they do not uphold the position that all religions are equal, which leads to a relativism.[496]

5.2 Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism and its Proponents

As we have adapted a classification, now we have a detailed discussion about each model of theology of religious pluralism, starting with exclusivism.

5.2.1 Exclusivism

The exclusivism is deeply associated with the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, which means outside the church there is no salvation. In the history of the church, the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is repeated and emphasized many times. This was the mainstream attitude of the church at least until the dawn of modernism. Pope Boniface VIII in his bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) declared "that there is only one, holy catholic and apostolic Church we are compelled by faith to believe and hold, and we firmly believe in her and sincerely confess her, outside of whom there is neither salvation nor remission of sins."[497]. Actually, the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* was taken as an ever valid statement and interpreted literally without examining the origin, addressee and historical intention behind it.[498] Harold Netland summarizes this attitude as follows: "Other religions were regarded by Western Christians largely in negative terms as idolatrous 'domains of darkness,' and adherents of other religions were thought of as 'the heathen' who were 'spiritually lost' and in desperate need of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ."[499]

In the modern theology Karl Barth is considered as the champion of exclusivism. His dialectical theology is widely used by exclusivist theologians as a tool to evaluate other

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[495] Cf. KNITTER, One Earth Many Religions, 31.

[496] For a detailed discussion on this point cf. KNITTER, Theologies of Religions, 117–119.

[497] ND, 504; Denzinger, 468f.

[498] Cf. TÜCK, Absage an religiöse Eiferer, 17.

[499] Harold NETLAND, Encountering Religious Pluralism. The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission, Illinois 2001, 24.

religions. For Karl Barth religion is not something from below, initiated by human. It is mere the obedience and openness to God's revelation through Jesus Christ. "God is completely inconceivable, concealed, and absent for those whom he does not address and who are not addressed by him."[500] Only God's grace gives humans access to His revelation. "God Himself in unimpaired unity yet also in unimpaired distinction is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness."[501] God is simultaneously the subject and object of revelation. "Revelation as *Aufhebung* (abolition) of religions"[502] is the statement, which is mostly quoted in the exclusivist theologies of religious pluralism. His followers have applied his *dialectical theology* to the non–Christian religions. Thus, all the non–Christian religions were viewed as polytheism, idolatry and immoral practices –in the language of Karl Barth *human person's demonic attempt at self–justification*– in contrast to God's self–revelation in Jesus Christ. According to Karl Barth, the statement revelation as *Aufhebung* of religion is only possible because of the revelation in Jesus Christ. "It is because we remember and apply the Christological doctrine of the *assumptio carnis* that we speak of revelation as the *Aufhebung* of religion.[503] Even though Karl Barth's criticism against religions was directed towards all religions, without exception to Christianity, it was later applied only to non–Christian religions. Christianity, as the continuation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, is considered as the only valid religion. Karl Barth himself has clarified his position regarding this and softened his position in his later writings.[504] There is also numerous literature that enquires the evolution of Karl Barth's theological standpoints.[505] His theology was a direct criticism against the liberal thinkers of his time such as Ernst Troeltsch and Arnold Toynbee. It was not primarily intended for the theology of religious pluralism. A reinterpretation of Karl Barth's dialectical theology against the traditional interpretation as an exclusivist theology can be seen in the work of Sven Ensminger.[506] Paul Hedges writes, "I would suggest Barth,

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[500] Karl BARTH, The Göttingen Dogmatics. Instruction in the Christian Religion Vol. I, Hannelotte REIFFEN (ed.) [trans. by Geoffrey W. BROMILEY], Grand Rapids, MI 1991, 58.

[501] Karl BARTH, Church Dogmatics vol. I/1, Edinburgh 1970, 295.

[502] This famous part in Barth's criticism of religion is generally knows as 'paragraph 17.' It is in the volume 1 of part 2 of his Church Dogmatics.

[503] Cf. Karl BARTH, Church Dogmatics vol. I/2, Edinburgh 1970, 297.

[504] Cf. Karl BARTH, Church Dogmatics vol. IV/3, Edinburgh 1970, 86–104.

[505] For example, cf. Carl E. BRAATEN, No Other Gospels! Christianity Among the World's Religions, Minneapolis 1992,, 53–59.

[506] Cf. Sven ENSMINGER, Karl Barth's Theology as a Resource for a Christian Theology of Religions, London 2014.

in his later works at least, is a universalist exclusivist."[507] Still some statements of Karl Barth clearly emphasizes the supremacy of Christianity. For example, he writes, "[…] Christ's light falls on the world of religions; it makes one religion, Christianity, to shine its light into the world, and the other to remain in darkness."[508]

Hendrik Kraemer's theology echoes the dialectical theology of Karl Barth. Christian religions is the highest religion in the world despite of its weaknesses. In his influential work *The Christian Message in a Non–Christian World*, he says that the goal of mission is to "persuade the non–Christian world to surrender to Christ as the sole Lord of Life."[509] Even though Hendrik Kraemer, like Karl Barth, upholds the supremacy of Christianity as a *religion of revelation* and uniqueness of Jesus Christ, he criticised Karl Barth for his over intellectualism and for not seeing God's works everywhere in the world, including other religions.[510]

The exclusivist stand of protestant neoorthodoxy has continued through the works of H.A. Netland,[511] A.D. Clark and B.M. Winter.[512] It gained an institutionalized form through Lausanne Covenant and Manila Manifesto.[513] The latter declares that there is "We affirm that other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality, if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way."[514] Contrasting to Paul F. Knitter's earlier classification based on confessions, in which he attributes conservative model to evangelical confession, the conservative model does not confine to evangelical or protestant churches. For example, Henry van Straelen, a catholic theologian, writes, "The Church has always taught that, in order to be saved, one must accept the gospel message, reject the false gods, and turn towards the living God of Abraham, Isaac,

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[507] HEDGES, Theology of Religions Typology Redefined, 86.

[508] Karl BARTH, Church Dogmatics vol. 1/2, 388.

[509] Hendrik KRAEMER, The Christian Message in a Non–Christian World, New York 1938, 444.

[510] Cf. ibid., 120–127.

[511] Cf. Harold NETLAND, Dissonant Voices. Religious Pluralism and Questions of Truth, Michigan 1991.

[512] Cf. Andrew D. CLARKE – Bruce W. WINTER (eds.), One God, One Lord. Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism, Michigan 1992.

[513] Lausanne Covenant and Manila Manifesto were issued by the International Congress on World Evangelism in 1974 and 1989 respectively.

[514] MANILA MANIFESTO, Twentyone Affirmations of the Manila Manifesto, 7. URL: https://www.lausanne.org/content/manifesto/the-manila-manifesto [accessed: 05 October 2020].

and Jacob as he revealed himself in Jesus Christ."[515] Such exclusive statements can be often observed in the *magisterium* of the catholic church at least until the 1949 Letter of the Holy Office, which condemned the position of Leonard Feeney on the interpretation of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. A classic example is quoted above from the bull *Unam Sanctam*.

The common attitude of exclusivism, despite of certain differences, can be summarized as follows: God has revealed himself through scriptures, Jesus Christ is the fullness of this revelation, it is only through him, who is unique in his fullness of divinity and humanity, humans can be saved, God's saving grace is operative only in the Church, which is the continuation of Jesus Christ in this world. Ecclesiocentrism is considered as the peculiarity of exclusivists. As I was started my reading in the theology of religions, I had a very negative impression on exclusivists. It may be because of the negativity of the term itself. Such a prejudiced attitude in theological works is already noted by H. A. Netland.[516] But interestingly the term *exclusivism* was attributed to them by their critics. I do not intend now to pass a judgement upon exclusivism. Still Veli–Matti Kärkkäinen's question that "Logically speaking, if a religion did not regard itself as either the only or at least the most fulfilled religion, why would anybody bother to align oneself with that particular religion?"[517] is relevant. But, at the same time, this claim of truth contradicts at least with some foundations of other religions. John Hick, proponent of pluralism, finds such attitudes and truth claims of Christianity as an *obvious problem* comparing to other *open–minded* religions.[518] John Hick's criticism against the exclusivism is also supported by the inclusivist Wolfhart Pannenberg: "More important, however, Hick offers a convincing argument against such a narrow exclusivism."[519]

5.2.2 Inclusivism

Unsatisfied with the exclusive, ecclesiocentric attitude, some theologians wanted a shift. They advocated that Christ, not the church, is the center of Christian mystery. Therefore, a

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[515] Henry VAN STRAELEN, Ouverture à l'autre, laquelle ? L'apostolat missionnaire et le monde non chrétien, Paris 1982, 281; quoted acc. to DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 185.

[516] Cf. NETLAND, Encountering Religious Pluralism, 46.

[517] KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 167.

[518] Cf. John HICK, An Interpretation of Religion, New Haven 1989, 362.

[519] Wolfhart PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims. The Problem of a Theology of the World Religions, in: Gavin D'COSTA (ed.), Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions, Maryknoll N.Y. 1990, 96–106, here: 98.

decentering from the church is needed and the church has to be re–centered on Christ, which is its *raison d'être*. This *paradigm shift* has its consequences not only in the theology of religious pluralism, but also in theology in general. This change of focus, from narrow ecclesiocentrism to more open Christocentrism, in the theology of religious pluralism is called shift from exclusivism to inclusivism. Christ as the center of salvation history gave more space to acknowledge the possibility of salvation for the members of non–Christian religions. The members of non–Christian religions can be saved, but only through Jesus Christ, who is the fulness of revelation. Thus, the inclusivist theologians emphasizes the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ and the salvation is open to all, inclusive members of non–Christian religions.

Karl Rahner's *anonymous Christians*[520] is considered as the typical example of inclusivist theology. The *transcendental experience*, i.e., humans are naturally oriented toward the Holy Mystery, called God, is the basis of Karl Rahner's universal orientation. According to Karl Rahner, the salvific will of God encompasses every human being. This universal salvific will of God makes the revelation available to all humans because God's self–revelation is the necessary condition for the human response to it. Humans are always by nature open to God (*potential oboedientalis*). Human person is "the event of a free, unmerited and forgiving, and absolute self–communication of God."[521] He also emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the whole world: "God […] has already communicated himself in his Holy Spirit always and everywhere and to every person as the innermost center of his existence."[522] But, according to Karl Rahner, a *categorical* revelation, that is the revelation through events, words and symbols in history[523], is necessary to fulfill the *transcendental*, implicit revelation of God. These two revelations are distinct, but interdependent. Jesus Christ is "the full and unsurpassable event of the historical self–objectification of God's self–communication to the world."[524] The universality of Spirit is behind the experience of existential transcendence. This transcendental experience of the Spirit is oriented towards a final

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[520] Cf. Karl RAHNER, Anonymous Christians, in: Theological Investigations vol. 6, Baltimore 1969, 390–398; Karl RAHNER, Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christians,' in: Theological Investigations vol. 10, Baltimore: 1969, 280–294.

[521] Karl RAHNER, Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, New York 1982, 116.

[522] ibid., 139.

[523] Cf. ibid., 171.

[524] ibid., 157.

revelation, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Other religions also have such moments of transcendence, which makes their followers *anonymous Christians*. Karl Rahner uses the concept of Vyes Congar *mystical body of Christ* to clarify his theory and underlines the possibility of positive response to the grace of God even before hearing the gospel.[525] His concept of anonymous Christian is applicable not only to believers of non–Christian religions but also to atheists. Karl Rahner's theology of religions can be so summarized in the words of Joseph Wong:

> Wherever persons surrender themselves to God or the ultimate reality, under whatever name, and dedicate themselves to the cause of justice, peace, fraternity, and solidarity with other people, they have implicitly accepted Christ and, to some degree, entered into this Christic existence. Just as it was through the Spirit that Christ established this new sphere of existence, in the same way, anyone who enters into this Christic existence of love and freedom is acting under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ.[526]

Hans Küng opines that the exclusivist axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* contradicts the teaching of the New Testament and Christian tradition. It contradicts God's all–encompassing grace (*umfassende Gnade*) that works beyond the boundaries of religion.[527] He looks at the role of non–Christian religions not with the eyes of church, but with the eyes of God. With the help of a concept called *Christian universalism*, he includes not only theistic religions but also non–theistic and even quasi–religions in the concept of religion.[528] God wills the salvation of all. Hans Küng distinguishes between *extraordinary* way of salvation, that is the church and *ordinary* ways of salvation, that are non–Christian religions. God is the Lord not only of special salvation history of the church, but also of other salvation history; i.e. the universal salvation history.[529] He clears his stand away from exclusivism and pluralism: "Und deshalb ist der *christliche* Universalismus ebenso weit weg von einem bornierten, eingebildeten, exklusiven Partikularismus wie von einem lähmenden, zersetzenden, agnostizistisch–relativistischen Indifferentismus."[530]

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[525] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 195.

[526] Joseph H. WONG, Anonymous Christians. Karl Rahner's Pneuma–Christocentrism and an East–West Dialogue, in: Theological Studies 55/4 (1994) 609–637, here: 630.

[527] Cf. Hans KÜNG, Christentum und Weltreligionen, in: Hans KÜNG, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 12, ed. By Hans KÜNG – Stephan SCHLENSOG, Freiburg et al. 2017, 30–42.

[528] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 200.

[529] Cf. Hans KÜNG, Freedom of Religions, in: Owen C. THOMAS (ed.), Attitude Toward Other Religions. Some Christian Interpretations, New York 1969, 211.

[530] KÜNG, Christentum und Weltreligionen, 51. "And therefore, the Christian universalism is equally far away from a narrow–minded, imaginary, exclusive particularism like a crippling, subversive, agnostic–relativistic indifferentism."

There are many inclusivist theologies of religious pluralism. They are unsatisfied with the exclusivist attitude of Christianity on the one hand and on the other hand cautious against the pluralist theologies, which compromises the Christian belief. At least from the Second Vatican Council the official attitude of Catholic Church is inclusivism, not exclusivism. Jacques Dupuis places his theology in between inclusivism and pluralism. But his theology is considered by pluralists as inclusivist theology. His attempt was to value other religions without falling into relativism. Therefore, he attributes the word *constitutive* instead of *absolute* to the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ. The Christ–event is not relative, in contrast to pluralists, but relational.[531] Gavin D'Costa is an inclusivist theologian, who engages in active dialogue with pluralists to safeguard the Christian identity. We will come to his theology when we deal with the tension between pluralists and inclusivists.

From protestant side also there are proponents of inclusive theology of religious pluralism. Paul Tillich distinguishes between the *Kairos* of Christ and *Kairoi* of other religious manifestations. He gives Christianity a special status, because of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.[532] The list of inclusivist theologians go further; Wolfhart Pannenberg[533], Lesslie Newbigin and so on.[534] The main characteristic of inclusivist theology is Christocentrism. The emphasis is changed from the church to Christ, from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism.

5.2.3 Pluralism

Pluralist theologies of religious pluralism changed the focus from Christ to God, *theos*. Thus, pluralism is theocentric. This change in focus is very much appreciated by pluralist theologians. For example, John Hick, the main proponent of pluralist theology, calls this change *Copernican revolution* in theology in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths*.[535] The religions of the world do not revolve around Christianity, but they revolve around God. According to John Hick, even though the inclusivist model brought improvement to

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[531] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 283.

[532] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 224–234.

[533] Cf. PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 96–106.

[534] For more details cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 190–281; Gavin D'COSTA (ed.), Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions, Maryknoll N.Y. 1990.

[535] Cf. John HICK, God and the Universe of Faiths. Essays in the Philosophy of Religion, New York 1973, 120–132.

ecclesiocentric exclusivist view, they maintain still a particularistic, Christocentric view.[536] Paul F. Knitter, another pluralist theologian, describes this paradigm shift from superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity towards the recognition of other religions as equal paths as the *crossing of a theological Rubicon*.[537]

Pluralist theologians' first concern was the reality of multiplicity of religions. Title of John Hick's works clearly demonstrate the main emphasis of pluralist theology: *God and the Universe of Faiths*, *Truth and Dialogue in World Religions: Conflicting Truth Claims*, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, the book that he co–edited with Paul F. Knitter. From the titles some points become clear, which clarifies the standpoint of pluralist theologians: all the different religions are equal path towards God, the ultimate reality; the truth claims of different religions conflicts each other; in order to solve these conflicts pluralist theologians want to demythologize truth claims; in the case of Christianity incarnation is the first thing to be demythologized and this demythologization leads to the abolition of uniqueness of Christianity.

John Hick, not only as a theologian but also as a philosopher, bases his pluralistic theology on philosophy by reconstructing the concept of *transcendent* in the religions. He applies Kantian differentiation of *phenomenon* and *noumenon* in the concept of transcendental or ultimate reality. The ultimately Real is the *noumenon* and it remains ungraspable forever. The differences in the various religions are the *phenomena* and they correspond to the different human perceptions of the real due to cultural differences.[538] At theological level John Hick, along with Paul F. Knitter, edited a book, which is mentioned earlier; *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions.* It was a result of a conference held in 1986. The authors of the book have tried to reinterpret the definiteness, absoluteness, normativity and superiority of Christianity in relation to other religions. They used the term *myth* to denote the uniqueness of Christianity. The pivotal truth–claim of Christianity that it is the continuation of Jesus Christ, who is the incarnation of God was questioned. The accent is to be changed from Christ to God. John Hick has gone to the extent

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[536] Cf. Kenneth ROSE, Knowing the Real. John Hick on the Cognitivity of Religions and Religious Pluralism, New York, 1996, 68.

[537] Cf. Paul F. KNITTER, Preface, in: John HICK–Paul F. KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, vii–xii, here: viii.

[538] Cf. Olusegun Noah OLAWOYIN, Varieties of Religious Pluralism, in: JAH 4/12 (2015) 50–58, here: 52f.

of *demythologizing* of Christ. Using the historic–critical method of exegesis he says that Christ as the one and only Saviour was a *poetic* and *metaphorical* expression of early Christian experience and therefore it is to be *metaphorically*, not *literally*, understood.[539] He says,

> "[…] Christian Orthodoxy has in the end only been able to say that the idea of the God–Man is a divine mystery which we cannot understand but must nevertheless revere. However, it's a mystery created by human beings through a process that we can trance historically, and in fact it's only a mystery in the sense of a form of words which has no clear literal meaning! It has a powerful metaphorical meaning, but has never yet been shown to have a viable literal meaning."[540]

Christian beliefs have to be re–interpreted based on historic–critical analysis of New Testament writings, *kerygma* of early Christianity and creed formulations of Nicaea and Chalcedon councils.[541] Deconstruction of Christology, which is seen in the famous work edited by John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate,* can be well summarized in his own words:

> The three themes running through the book are (1) the historical thesis that Jesus did not teach that he was in any sense God incarnate and had no conception of himself as the Second Person of a divine Trinity; (2) that it is possible to trace a development during the decades after Jesus's [sic] death from the view of him as a prophet appointed by God in the last days to usher in the Kingdom to the properly incarnational doctrine which was finally established at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon in the fourth and fifth centuries; and (3) my own special concern, that to see the language of divine incarnation as metaphorical, or mythic, makes it possible for Christians to come to a genuine acceptance of religious pluralism.[542]

Paul F. Knitter also advocates for a reinterpretation of the traditional Christology. According to him this task is as same as the Christological development of early Christians and since the uniqueness of Jesus is still open to new understandings, Christology must go further.[543] He wants to start the theology of religions not from the standpoint of Jesus Christ as the

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[539] Cf. John HICK, A Christian Theology of Religions. The Rainbow of Faiths, Kentucky 1995, 83–103; John HICK (ed.), The Myth of God Incarnate, London 1977, ix–xi.

[540] HICK, A Christian Theology of Religions, 98–99; for more details, John Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, London 1993, chapters 5–7.

[541] Cf. Gordon D. KAUFMAN, Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology, in: HICK–KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religion, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, 5–12.

[542] John HICK, Problems of Religious Pluralism, New York 1985, 11f.

[543] Cf. KNITTER, One Earth Many Religions, 34.

normative standard. His focus is the theocentric consciousness of Jesus Christ and the centrality of Kingdom of God in the proclamation by Jesus Christ.[544] Once the Christological claims of Christianity are demythologized, Christ become one among the many manifestations of the Ultimate Reality, God, in the world. Stanley J. Samartha recognizes the right of Christians to hold upon Christ as the universal saviour. Christocentrism is applicable only to Christians. Christ can never be considered as the only way to the mystery of God.[545] Pluralists theologians think that a concept of Jesus Christ, liberated from mythological, metaphorical language, can bring Christianity to the level of all other religions and thus, a fruitful interreligious dialogue is possible.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the complexity in the contemporary theology of religious pluralism. This complexity starts from the typologies and classifications used by each theologian. It goes deeper by the varieties of theologies that surpass and interweave various categorizations. These are the questions regarding methodology. By the deconstruction and reconstruction of Christology from the part of pluralist theologians, the dogmatic dilemmas are become complex. How a Christianity, or even other religions, devoid of its truth–claims and belief–system remain as a valid religion with its own identity. Is the demythologized Christ the same Christ of Christianity? How is a fruitful dialogue possible between religions stripped out of their identity, as suggested by pluralists? Such questions and the consequence of the deconstructed Christology will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[544] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 311.

[545] Cf. Stanley J. SAMARTHA, The Cross and the Rainbow. Christ in a Multireligious Culture, in: John HICK–PAUL F. KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, 69–88, here: 76.

Chapter 6

Important Questions in the Theology of Religious Pluralism

6.0 Introduction

From the previous chapter it is evident that the shift from inclusivism to pluralism, or from Christocentrism to theocentrism is the central discussion in the field of theology of religious pluralism. Pluralists' call for a theocentrism through the demythologization of Christology is based on the premise that in order to engage in fruitful dialogue with other religions, all religions are to be at an equal level. Whether this *equal level* is a functional one or an ontological one is a question to be addressed. If this *levelling* of all religions for the sake of dialogue is ontological, it is to be considered as a construction of a *universal theology* of religions. Is this theology compatible with Christian theology? Another major concern is regarding the reinterpretation or demythologization of Christology. Is the outcome of pluralists' Christological reinterpretation compatible with Christian theology? Is a fruitful dialogue possible without this demythologization of Christology? These questions which are relevant in the theology of religious pluralism is discussed in detail here in this chapter.

6.1 Levelling of Religions: Ontological or Functional?

Pluralists' arguments have different foundations depending upon the methodology of its proponents. John Hick, for example, depends more upon philosophical conceptions. Based on Kantian differentiation between Noumenon and Phenomenon, he says the differences in the religions "are the phenomenal manifestations of noumenal Real–in–itself."[546] His concrete experience with different religions also plays a role in reaching his hypothesis.

[546] HICK, A Christian Theology of Religions, 46.

> But I now have on my hands the problem of several conflicting sets of truth–claims which are equally well based in religious experience and confirmed by their fruits. In order to understand this situation, I form the hypothesis of an ultimate divine reality which is being differently conceived, and therefore differently experienced from within the different religio-cultural ways of being human.[547]

Paul F. Knitter advocates for a levelling of all religions as a prerequisite for a fruitful dialogue. "Ein wirkliches Gespräch zwischen zwei oder mehreren Partnern erfordert ein *geebnetes Spielfeld*. Es ist von Anfang an gelähmt, wenn einer der Partner mit der Überzeugung […] in den Austausch eintritt, er besitze den einzigen, den besten, den endgültigen Zugang zur Wahrheit."[548] If this *levelling* of religions is meant only for interreligious dialogue at a functional level, in the sense of mutual respect and openness in dialogue, it is understandable. But most pluralist theologians stand for an ontological levelling of all religions.

A prominent proponent of pluralist theology in German–speaking world, Perry Schmidt–Leukel, opines that the mutually exclusive and contradictory claims of truth by different religions makes themselves unreal and support atheistic theories.[549] Pluralist theologians, in general, see Christian claim of superiority as a hindrance to the fruitful dialogue between religions. They find that Christological doctrines of Christianity as the basis of superiority claims of Christianity and they are to be understood metaphorically, not literally. John Hick, for example, opines that the biblical verses, which depicts the self–consciousness of Jesus Christ, are poetical and metaphorical; but the incarnational doctrines of the early councils are rigid and literal dogma.[550] Paul F. Knitter, in the preface of the book *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, says:

> In much Christian discourse, 'the uniqueness of Christianity' has taken on a larger mythological meaning. It has come to signify the unique definitiveness, absoluteness, normativity, superiority of Christianity in comparison with other religions of the world. It is

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[547] ibid., 50.

[548] Paul F. KNITTER, Apologie einer pluralistischen Theologie und Christologie, in: Hans-Gerd SCHWANDT (ed.), Pluralistische Theologie der Religionen. Eine kritische Sichtung, Frankfurt am Main 1998, 75–95, here: 76. "A real dialogue between two or more partners demands a levelled pitch. It is from the beginning onwards lamed, if one of the partners enters into dialogue with a conviction that he possesses the only, best, final access to the truth."

[549] Cf. SCHMIDT–LEUKEL, Das Problem divergierender Wahrheitsansprüche, 45.

[550] Cf. John HICK, The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity, in: John HICK– PAUL F. KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, 16–36, here: 31.

> this mythological sense of the phrase, with all that goes with it, that we are criticizing in this book.[551]

Can the pluralistic theologies, which observe Christian doctrines as subjectively valid metaphorical expressions, be Christian theologies? If the Christian doctrines are reinterpreted as suggested by pluralists, then what is the identity of Christianity? How can Christianity, which lacks objectivity and uniqueness, fruitfully take part in a dialogue? A Christian dialogue partner in interreligious dialogue has to remain as Christian. He does not take part in dialogue as a neutral observer.

At the same time, the criticism that the Christological developments in the early councils have generated a superiority claim and resultant violence in the history of Christianity, is to be considered seriously.[552] Arrival of Bishops in the banquet hall of emperor Constantine was observed as the realization of kingdom of Christ by Eusebius.[553] Pluralists' intention to avoid triumphalism and superiority claims in Christian approach to other religions is to be considered seriously. Whether a positive and respectful approach to other religions without compromising Christian identity and uniqueness is possible is the question addressed by us. Levelling of religions at ontological level means stripping of the identity of religions. It contributes nothing to interreligious dialogue. Without ontological levelling religions can or should respect each other and consider each other as equal dialogue–partner. What is needed is a dialogical openness and mutual enrichment, not a levelling of religious identities.[554] In this context a Christian theology cannot be a universal theology that surpasses Christian identity or belief. Christian world view and view on religions is or is to be *Christian*. So is the case of any other religions.

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[551] KNITTER, Preface, in: HICK– KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness, vii; Cf. also HICK, The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity, 16–17; Langdon GILKEY, Plurality and Its Theological Implications, in: John HICK– PAUL F. KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, 37–50, here: 37; Wilfred Cantwell SMITH, Theology and the World's Religious History, in: Leonard SWIDLER (ed.), Toward a Universal Theology of Religion, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, 51–72, here: 53f.

[552] Cf. José Maria Vigil asks, "Was the Roman Empire converted to Christianity, or was it Christianity that adapted itself and was converted to the empire?" José Maria VIGIL, Theology of Religious Pluralism (Interreligious Studies 2), Zürich–Berlin 2008, 134.

[553] Cf. EUSEBIUS, *Vita Constantini* 3,14 (921f; ZIMMERMANN). Ernst Zimmermann, Eusebii Pamphili Ecclesiasticae Historiae Libri Decem, Ejusdem De Vita Constantini Libir IV, Frankfurt am Main 1822.

[554] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 7.

6.2 Universal Theology or a Christian Theology?

An ontological levelling of Christianity for the sake of dialogue is, therefore, an invitation to be a part of *universally* valid theology of pluralism, which claims its superiority over *particular* theologies. It is not at all a new phenomenon. Philosophers, from the Hellenistic period onwards, regarded the various religious languages as mythical and metaphorical ways of describing divine reality. The only one divine reality, the true nature of which is known to philosophers, is described by different religious traditions with the help of mythical and metaphorical language. A well–known Egyptologist Jan Assmann observes a *religio duplex* (one religion at two levels) in ancient Egypt and sees a potential solution for the peaceful coexistence between different religions.[555] In the eighteenth century the tendency to relativize differences of religious beliefs was extended to include other religious traditions besides Christianity. Works of Voltaire in France or of Lessing in Germany are examples. According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, there are some striking similarities in pluralists' position to this tradition of natural theology and to its claim to superiority over the diverse forms of positive religion.[556] Pluralist theology is new only in the sense that such an attitude is taken seriously within the discussions of Christian theology and many theologians are ready to challenge the foundations of Christian doctrine.

Presbyterian theologian Wilfred Cantwell Smith's work *Towards a World Theology* is a clear attempt to develop a universal theology.[557] *Towards a Universal Theology of Religions* was the title of a conference held at Temple University in 1984 with eminent participants such as Raimon Panikkar, Hans Küng, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, etc. The report of the conference says that "the conference did not produce a universal theology of religion" and "a universal theology cannot and should not be formulated, yet it must be attempted."[558] Even though the report advocates for the need a *universal theology* it affirms the impossibility and impracticability of it.

Raimon Panikkar, disagreeing with Wilfred Cantwell Smith's universal theology, writes that, as religious faiths differ substantially, so will theologies. What required is not a

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[555] Cf. ASSMANN, Religio duplex, 23; TÜCK, Absage an religiöse Eiferer, 14.

[556] Cf. PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 97.

[557] Cf. Wilfred Cantwell SMITH, Towards a World Theology, Philadelphia 1981; Andreas GRÜNSCHLOß, Religionswissenschaft als Welt–Theologie. Wilfred Cantwell Smiths interreligiöse Hermeneutik, Göttingen 1994, 262–319.

[558] Ann Marie BAHR, Toward a Universal Theology of Religion, in: JES 22/1 (1985) 194–198, here: 197f.

common theological enterprise which levels differences in a search for a common denominator, but the frank admission of the plurality and diversity of beliefs and the mutual acceptance of the others in their very otherness.[559] Jacques Dupuis underlines this opinion. "The model that needs to be developed then is not that of mutual assimilation through a reduction of faith content but that of interpretation and cross–fertilization of the various traditions in their diversities; not a leveling of religious identities but a dialogical openness and mutual enrichment through conversation."[560] Universalism, proposed by pluralists, can be seen as an exclusivist claim that undermines the uniqueness of religions and firmly holds a new exclusive theology. Gavin D'Costa notes that "It is curious that those wishing better relationships between religions and who are anxious to dispose of exclusivist claims, end up inadvertently not respecting the integrity of the different traditions and the seriousness and absoluteness of their claims and thereby erect a new exclusivism."[561] John Hick acknowledges this criticism against pluralist theology and asserts it as a virtue.[562]

Through the universal theology pluralists wanted to overcome the Christian superiority and the consequent western imperialism. But contradictorily, according to William M. Pickard, their universal theology also expresses Western imperialism. *Theos* is a Greek terminology, which is the characteristic to the Western traditions. The eastern traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism do not know a concept of personal God, *theos*. Not only from the perspective of Christianity, but also from the perspective of other religions, a universal theology is incompatible.[563]

Now it is clear that a universal theology, which undermines the differences and truth claims between various religious traditions, contribute nothing to the theology of religious pluralism other than creating another truth claim, or religion. Thus, Wolfhart Pannenberg rightly says: "A theology of the world religions that wants to be true to the empirical situation in the way the religious traditions confront each other must not evade or play down the

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[559] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 7; Raimon PANIKKAR, The Intrareligious Dialogue, New York 1978, 149–153; Raimon PANIKKAR, The Invisible Harmony. A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality, in: Leonard SWIDLER (ed.), Toward a Universal Theology of Religion, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987, 118–153.

[560] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 7.

[561] Gavin D'COSTA, Whose Objectivity? Which Neutrality? The Doomed Quest for a Neutral Vantage Point from which to Judge Religions, in: Religious Studies 29/1 (1993) 79–95, here: 94.

[562] HICK, A Christian Theology of Religions, 45.

[563] William M. PICKARD JR., A Universal Theology of Religion? 1–9, here: 2f. URL: https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/sage/a-universal-theology-of-religion-vyCekUURGj?print=true [accessed: 05 November 2021]

conflict of truth claims."[564] No religion can give up its own specific truth claims, which would mean the end of that religious tradition. Christianity without claiming Jesus Christ as the salvation of humanity is no more Christianity. Christianity can engage in dialogue with other religions and handle the situation of religious pluralism only from a Christian perspective. The religious other remains as an *other* and in true dialogue one engages in dialogue with the other without losing one's own identity and without neglecting the identity and uniqueness of the other. Christianity must be open to whatever good and elements of truth in other religions. This openness and positive attitude do not require relativizing the claims of the Christian faith.[565] "Personal commitment to one's own faith and openness to the faith of others need not be mutually exclusive; rather they ought to grow in direct proportion."[566] Therefore, theology of religious pluralism cannot be done in a universal manner. Christians, from a Christian awareness and faith perspective, have to develop a theology of religious pluralism, that means, it will be a Christian theology of religious pluralism. Bertram Stubenrauch, in the introduction of his book *Pluralismus statt Katholizität? Gott, das Christentum und die Religionen*, says that his central concern is the "self–understanding of Christianity in the face of [other] religions" (das Selbstberständnis des Christentums *angesichts* der Religionen).[567] This Christian theology of religious pluralism has to search for answers to relevant questions in reference to plurality of religions.

6.3 Jesus Christ: A Stumbling Block to Dialogue?

To develop a universal theology which considers all religions ontologically at an equal level it is necessary to relativize the truth claims of each religion. Christianity's truth claim is based on the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. This Christ–centeredness (*Christocentrism*) is to be avoided and God should be at the center (*theocentrism*). Pluralists theologians opine that Jesus Christ is one among the many figures of salvation. John Hick distinguishes between *totus deus* and *totum dei* to explain this. "We want to say of Jesus that he was *totus deus*, 'wholly God,' in the sense that his Agape was genuinely the Agape of God at work on earth, but not that he was *totum dei*, 'the whole of God,' in the sense that the

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[564] PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 102.

[565] Cf. ibid., 103.

[566] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 7.

[567] Cf. Bertram STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 7.

divine Agape was expressed without remainder in each or even in the some of his actions."[568] John Hick, here, hints at a Calvinistic thought in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*[569], but in a perverted opposite manner. Calvin expresses here the universality of *logos asarkos* in the sense of a cosmic Christology, which leads to the universalization of the second person of trinity. John Hick uses this differentiation between *totus deus* and *totum dei* for the relativization and de–absolutization of Christology. The *totum dei*, for him, is not the triune God, but the *Real*. Jesus Christ is only one among many incarnations of this *Real*.[570] The differentiation between *totus deus* and *totum dei* can be traced back to Peter Lombard. Peter Lombard says: "[…] He [Christ] is whole man or God, yet not wholly."[571] "[…] Christ is whole God, Christ is whole man, but not wholly, because he is not only God or man, but both God and man."[572]

John Hick suggests a *Copernican revolution* in theology to avoid the Christ–centeredness in Christianity.[573] According to him, the traditional Christian position that salvation is only through Christ alone is Ptolemaic.[574] The "needed Copernican revolution in theology […] involves a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realization that it is *God* who is at the centre, and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him."[575] Stanley Samartha regrets the hesitation on the part of Christians "to examine the basis of their exclusive claims on behalf of Christ."[576] Reconstruction in Christology can be also seen in the comparison, made by Aloysius Pieris, between Gautama as the Buddha and Jesus as the Christ. In his essay he does not favour the formulations from

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[568] John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 159.

[569] Cf. John CALVIN, Institutes of the Christian Religion [trans. by Henry BEVERIDGE], 4,17,30. URL: https://web-p-ebscohost-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzk0Mjg1Ml9fQU41?sid=8da01b5b-66fe-4208-a834-8d5fa8fdd95f@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1 [accessed: 13 December 2023]. Calvin describes here a special presence of Christ by the Eucharist Celebration: "[…] he is always present with his people, and in the Supper exhibits his presence in a special manner; yet so, that while he is wholly [*totus*] present, not everything [*totum*] which is in him is present […]."

[570] Cf. Ekkehard WOHLLEBEN, Die Kirchen und die Religionen. Perspektiver einer ökumenischen Religionstheologie (Kirche–Konfession–Religion 48), Göttingen 2004, 363

[571] Peter LOMBARD, The Sentences, 3,22,3,1 trans. by Giulio SILANO, Peter Lombard. The Sentences. Book 3 On the Incarnation of the Word (Mediaeval Sources in Translation 45), Toronto 2010, 95.

[572] LOMBARD, The Sentences, 3,22,3,2 (SILANO 96).

[573] Cf. John HICK, Copernican Revolution of Theology, in: John HICK (ed.), God and the Universe of Faiths. Essays in the Philosophy of Religion, New York 1973, 120–132.

[574] Cf. ibid., 121, 124f.

[575] ibid., 131.

[576] SAMARTHA, The Cross and the Rainbow, 69.

the past as a dogmatic foundation. According to him it is necessary to show in ways that appeal to contemporary experience in what ways Jesus saves and liberates human beings from misery and suffering as compared with the liberating and saving effect for instance, of Buddha.[577] While Aloysius Pieris' opinion is based on the comparative theology, John Hick also expresses akin opinion based on the emergence of historical consciousness and the awareness of the cultural relativity of all our human thinking, knowing and expression.[578]

The Christian theological approaches (inclusivism), which try to find an open attitude towards other religions without compromising Christological doctrines, according to John Hick, "only amount to epicycles added to a fundamentally absolutist structure of theory in order to obscure its incompatibility with the observed facts."[579] The important question is that how far a Christian theology can reinterpret Christology. Is the *de–absolutized* Christ of pluralist theologians the Christ, believed and proclaimed by Christians? Obviously, many statements in the New Testament contradicts the Christological views of pluralist theologians. Karl–Josef Kuschel commends „Wenn es die Bibel nicht gäbe, wäre ich Pluralist."[580] Wolfhart Pannenberg opines that John Hick has to be very selective in his references to Christological references in the bible to produce evidence for his statement. Therefore, John Hick's proposal of religious pluralism as an authentical Christian theology is based on the condition of a prior demolition of the traditional doctrine of the incarnation.[581]

Pluralists respond to this criticism based on the metaphorical language of the bible. The statements that underlines the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ are to be taken not in the literal sense, but in an allegorical sense. John Hick opines that Jesus had not a self–awareness as the second person of Trinity and the language of divine incarnation is to be understood as metaphorical, mythic language. Such an understanding leads to a genuine acceptance of religious pluralism.[582] Wolfhart Pannenberg observes that John Hick has

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[577] Cf. Aloysius PIERIS, The Buddha and the Christ. Mediations of Liberation, in: John HICK– PAUL F. KNITTER (eds.), The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions, Maryknoll N.Y. 1987,162–177.

[578] cf. HICK, The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity, 16–36.

[579] HICK, Problems of Religious Pluralism, 52.

[580] "If there was no Bible, I would be pluralist"; Quoted according to Reinhold Bernhardt, "Die Herausforderung" 35.

[581] PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 100.

[582] Cf. Hick, Problems of Religious Pluralism, 11f.

brought the *cat of historical criticism* into the British discussions on Christology[583] that was happened in Germany much earlier. The tendency to differentiate incarnational language as mythical language from the language of historical Jesus can be also traced back to the old liberal theology of Adolf von Harnack and others. They have presented Paul in contrast to Jesus; whereas Jesus' ultimate orientation war only towards the Father, Paul's faith was in the Son. Wolfhart Pannenberg opines that the thread of continuity between Jesus and the apostolic proclamation of Christ was undermined by the proponents of the *Christ–without–Myth*–conception. The presence of God in Jesus was not mere an experience of early Christians, but a claim of Jesus himself and this claim is the basis of incarnational Christology that is developed in the church.[584] According to Christian faith God is known to human definitively through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's self–communication to human. Pluralist theologians find Christ as a hindrance to fruitful dialogue. How can God's complete self–communication be a hindrance for dialogue?

According to Christian tradition, Wolfhart Pannenberg opines, "it is precisely through the biblical witness and definitively through Jesus Christ" is God known to us. There may be "some dim and provisional knowledge of God in all humankind, but even the fact that it is *this one* God who is also otherwise known in provisional ways can be stated only on the basis of his revelation in Christ."[585] Karl–Josef Kuschel also emphasizes the definitiveness, finality, and normativity of Christ–event. To justify the faith that God has fully revealed himself and decided for human existence in Jesus Christ, not in other ways, the definitiveness, finality, and normativity of Christ–event are indispensable.[586] Therefore, a Christian theology of religious pluralism cannot avoid the uniqueness of Christ–event. It has to respect and value other religions based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

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[583] Cf. PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 100; HICK, Problems of Religious Pluralism, 13.

[584] PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 100f.

[585] ibid., 97.

[586] Karl–Josef KUSCHEL, Christologie – unfähig zum interreligiösen Dialog? Zum Problem der Einzigartigkeit Christi im Gespräch mit den Weltreligionen, in: Karl–Josef KUSCHEL (ed.), Christentum und Nichtchristliche Religionen. Theologische Modelle im 20. Jahrhundert, Darmstadt 1994, 135–154, here: 148f.

6.4 Theological Challenges of De–Absolutization of Christology

The pluralist de–absolutization of Christology challenges not only the dual nature in Jesus Christ, i.e. divine and human that is defined in Nicene and Chalcedonian councils, but also the Trinitarian concept of God. John Hick sees in the Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ is God himself or the second person of the Trinity in human form the basis of Christian belief that their religion is the one and only true religion.[587] He is completely right in this observation. Then he compares this uniqueness of Christianity psychologically with the national or racial superiority claims.[588] He sees the intellectual efforts to defend dogma against the facts (here the fact is religious pluralism) as unprofitable. He opines further, a Christian acceptance of religious pluralism *must* involve the kind of rethinking of the doctrine of the incarnation.[589] The doctrine of incarnation is the expression of Christian experience with Jesus in a metaphorical or poetic language that was later dogmatized in Nicene and Chalcedonian councils.[590] If the incarnation of God in Jesus is to be understood as an experiential metaphorical expression rather than an absolute truth, then Jesus is not fully God (this challenges the dual–nature–Christology) and thus there is no Second Person in Trinitarian God. Therefore, pluralist Christology is lenient towards nontrinitarian views such as Adoptionism, Monarchianism, etc. The pluralist theologians, however, do not specify clearly the status of Jesus. We can read between lines and consider Jesus as a *God inspired man* or a liberator of humanity with a special status among other such liberators. Most important for the pluralists is that Christ is to be considered as one among the salvific figures, not as the only one. After all the deconstruction and reinterpretations pluralists, for example Paul F. Knitter, say even that Christians can still claim the uniqueness, universality and divinity of Jesus Christ.[591] John Hick, answering to the criticism that his theology of religious pluralism is not compatible with Christology, writes, "[…] it is an explanatory theory; and I suggest that critics who don't like it should occupy themselves in trying to

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[587] Cf. HICK, The Problems of Religious Pluralism, 49.

[588] Cf. ibid.

[589] Cf. ibid., 53.

[590] Cf. John Hick, Jesus and the World Religions, in: John Hick (ed.), The Myth of God Incarnate, London 1977, 167–185, here: 177.

[591] Cf. P. F. KNITTER, One Earth Many Religions, 34f.

produce a better one"[592]. Despite its ambiguous nature in Christology pluralist theology emphasises God as the only ultimate reality and sees all religions as paths to this reality. The reinterpretation of Christology can be viewed as a tool to level the ground for dialogue, even though the pluralists do not accept it. If the uniqueness of Christ can be relativised, Christianity has no uniqueness and special privileges and therefore a dialogue between equals will be possible. This naturally goes beyond Christian theology because the basic elements of Christian faith such as Trinity and Christology are not compatible with this theology.

6.5 Salvation of Non–Christians: through Christ or through *Other* Manifestations of God

One of the important questions that prevail in the theology of religious pluralism is the salvation of the believers of non–Christian religions. Christian theology generally asserts the universal salvific will of God and the soteriological particularity of Jesus. That means God desires the salvation of all humans, but this salvation can be achieved only through Jesus Christ. But what about the salvation of people, who died before knowing Christ without their culpability? This was a question that was discussed from the beginning of Christian theology. Regarding this question there are different responses from the part of theologians.

Some theologians accept that God wants to save everyone, and that Jesus Christ is the only savior but hold that they simply do not have enough information to arrive at a conclusion on how all humans will be saved through Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council has clearly affirmed that the people belong to other religions can be saved. The post–conciliar discussion is on the question that *how* salvation is mediated to the non–Christians.[593] Pluralists such as John Hick and Paul F. Knitter want to go beyond a distinctively *Christian* perspective and proposes a *theocentric pluralism*. According to this theory all religions are salvific and no particular religion including Christianity, has superiority over others regarding salvation.[594] John Hick provides another understanding of salvation distinct from Christian perspective. According to him, salvation can be understood as "the actual transformation of human life from self–centeredness to Reality–

[592] HICK, A Christian Theology of Religions, 50.

[593] Cf. SULLIVAN, Salvation outside the Church, 162.

[594] Cf. ibid., 170.

centeredness"[595]. But this is completely different from the New Testament concept of salvation.[596] Exclusivists emphasize that there is no salvation outside of Jesus and church as it is expressed literally in the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Some exclusivists reject the possibility of salvation of all humans. Inclusivism affirms universal salvific will of God and the soteriological particularity of Jesus. However, it rejects the exclusivist condition that people must know about and expressively live the faith in Jesus, i.e., membership in the Church, in order to be saved. For inclusivists Christ is necessary for the salvation, but people can be saved by Jesus Christ even though they never had a chance to hear about Jesus Christ.[597] For a Christian theology the constitutive role of Christ in the salvation of whole humanity is undeniable. However, in a theology about religious pluralism the question about the salvific role of other religions in the salvation of their followers is important.

6.6 Pluralism *de facto/de iure*

Another theme in the theology of religious pluralism is the perception on religious pluralism. Whereas pluralism *de facto* considers religious pluralism as a matter of course and a fact of history, pluralism *de iure* sees religious pluralism in itself good and has a *raison d'être* in its own right. The pluralism *de iure* makes the question what role Christianity can assign to the other religious traditions is not of much importance. Rather it searches for the root–cause of religious pluralism.[598] Pluralist theologians advocates for religious pluralism *de iure*, because according to them all religions are equal ways of salvation. Pluralism is the view that the different religions are the different responses to the Real.[599] Some inclusivist theologians try to appreciate religious pluralism *de iure* and consider the plurality of religions within the *one manifold* plan of God for humanity.[600] *Dominus Jesus*, a document published by CDF, rejects the views that held religious pluralism of principle (*de iure*) as relativist theories. Such theories relativize certain truths such as the definitive character of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, the unity between eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the

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[595] HICK, Problems of Religious Pluralism, 32.

[596] Cf. PANNENBERG, Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims, 101.

[597] This trend can be observed from the theory of *implicit* faith in Christ; cf. Chapter 3, especially 3.5 and 3.6.

[598] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 11.

[599] Cf. HICK, Problems of Religious Pluralism, 36.

[600] Cf. DUPUIS, Trinitarian Christology, 97.

unity of the economy of salvation, etc.[601] The question whether from a Christian perspective the religious pluralism in itself has a positive value is also to be addressed in a Christian theology of religious pluralism.

6.7 Relationship of Christianity to *other* Religions and Mission of the Church

Christian attitude towards other religions is surely based on its own belief. The exclusivist approach sees other religions as false and need to be corrected and purified by Christianity. Other religions are considered as idolatrous *domains of darkness*, and their followers are seen as heathens.[602] Inclusivists advocate that God's saving actions also include other religions or at least adherents of other religions. Even though the salvation is only come through Christ, it is not limited to the church.[603] Based on this understanding inclusivists appreciate other religions better than exclusivism. In the language of Second Vatican Council, other religions reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.[604] Pluralists are not satisfied with both these approaches. Both reflect the same absolutist character.[605] Pluralists propose a *theocentrism* in which Christ is not the one and only incarnation of God, but one among the many incarnations of God or one phenomenon of noumenon. Then Christianity can view other religions as equally positive as itself. If other religions are also equally valid then what is the scope of mission in the life of church? Pluralists understand mission in terms of dialogue.[606] But the exclusivists emphasize the urgency of mission since Christianity is the only way of salvation.[607] Church documents, while appreciating the true and good elements in other religions, do not undermine mission. The church has to learn from the history and development of humanity, from the riches hidden in various traditions through which greater light is thrown on the nature of man and truth (GS 44). Mutual learning and growth between religions are possible in the process of dialogue and mission.[608]

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[601] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Dominus Jesus* 4 (DENZINGER 5085).

[602] Cf. NETLAND, Encountering Religious Pluralism, 24.

[603] Cf. KÄRKKÄINEN, Introduction to the Theology of Religions, 169.

[604] Cf. NA 2 (FLANNERY 738).

[605] Cf. HICK, Problems of Religious Pluralism, 52.

[606] Cf. D'COSTA, Christianity and World Religions, 7.

[607] Cf. ibid., 26.

[608] Cf. ibid., 134f.

Inclusivists understand mission in a broader sense against a narrow sense that understand conversion as the primary goal of mission. They understand mission as a working together with other religions for the kingdom of God.[609] A Christian theology of religious pluralism has to address this question about the relevance of mission. Naturally, this question can be answered only based on Christian view on other religions.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed the major themes in the theology of religious pluralism. These questions are to be addressed in a Christian theology of religious pluralism. With this chapter we conclude the first part of this work. In this part we discussed historical development of Christian relationship with other religions. In this chapter, that is the last chapter of the first part, we have seen the important questions in the theology of religious pluralism. Now it is the time to search for solutions to these questions. In the coming part the concept of kenosis will be discussed as a potential source of answers to the questions of religious pluralism.

[609] Cf. FREDERICKS, The Catholic Church and the Other Religious Paths, 245.

Part II

Kenosis of God: Exegetical and Theological Implications

Chapter 7

Kenosis, Incarnation and Christological Dogmas

7.0 Introduction

The most important doctrine of Christianity is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Early Christians have struggled to understand the special status of Jesus Christ. On the one side they knew about the humanity of Jesus Christ, who lived among them and is crucified by Pontius Pilatus. On the other side they were convinced of the divinity of Jesus Christ, which was confirmed not only by the miracle narrations but also by theological affirmations by the early Christians. For example, the fourth gospel presents Jesus Christ as the *Word* who was God and with God from the beginning (cf. John 1: 1–2). Philippians hymn is one of the important Christological confessions of early Christianity though in a poetical and liturgical form. Can this hymn be taken as a presentation of humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ is a debatable question and this debate continues still. Nicaea and Chalcedonian councils have tried to clarify the ambiguities in the early Christianity regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ.[610] Before discussing about the dogmatic developments in the early Christianity through councils, we examine Philippians hymn and its exegetic and theological implications.

7.1 Philippian Hymn: Some Exegetical Observations

Philippians hymn (Phil. 2: 5–11) has initiated great enthusiasm in theological discussions especially during the past century. Extrabiblical, philosophical and sociological developments have also contributed to the renewed interest in Philippians hymn. Pre–existence of Christ and kenotic theology are the two widely discussed theological themes in reference to the Philippians hymn. A very short exegetical examination of the hymn helps us to understand its meaning.

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[610] Cf. Alois GRILLMEIER, Jesus Christus im Glauben der Kirche vol. 1, Freiburg et al. [3]1990, 9–11.

7.1.1 Authorship and Originality of the Hymn

The authorship of the hymn that is written down by Paul in the letter to Philippians is still debatable. Regarding the origins and *pre–history* of the text the earlier biblical scholarship almost unanimously believed that the Philippians hymn was a pre–Pauline composition, but nowadays it is questioned and refuted by many.[611] Ernst Lohmeyer has pioneered the opinion that Paul has cited an already existed Christian hymn in Letter to Philippians[612] and this opinion gained wide acceptance. The most common suggestion of pre–Pauline origin of the Philippians hymn is a Semitic or even Aramaic background. Beginning from Ernst Lohmeyer many scholars advocated for this Aramaic background.[613] Christianity has grown up as a part of Judaism. Ralph P. Martin opines that Christianity has borrowed some patterns of worship from the worshipping forms of the temple and synagogue of Judaism.[614] Against this Ernst Käsemann suggested a Hellenistic background. Francis Wright Beare opines that the hymn is composed by someone in the Pauline circle and certainly a Hellenist. Some other scholars argued for an origin from Jewish Christianity despite the rejection of Aramaic background.[615] Thomas H. Tobin suggests an influence of Hellenistic Jewish speculation on the Philippians hymn.[616]

Two primary reasons against Pauline authorship of the hymn are firstly, Paul uses the hymn for parenetic purpose that go beyond the scope of the hymn and secondly, the hymn contains crucial vocabulary that is not common in Paul's genuine letters.[617] Arguments for Pauline authorship are the verbal similarities of Philippians hymn with the adjacent verses of the letter to Philippians.[618] David Alan Black argues that other undisputed Pauline discourses, for example, in 1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 8:15–39, contain as many *hapax*

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[611] Cf. Michael F. BIRD–Nijay K. GUPTA, Philippians (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge 2020, 72.

[612] Cf. Ernst LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus. Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2,5-11, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse (1927/28: 4), Heidelberg 1928, 8–10.

[613] Cf. Gregory P. FEWSTER, The Philippians 'Christ Hymn'. Trends in Critical Scholarship, in: Currents in Biblical Research 13/2 (2015) 192–206, here: 192.

[614] Cf. Ralph P. MARTIN, Carmen Christi. Philippians ii. 5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship, Cambridge 1967, 17.

[615] Cf. FEWSTER, The Philippians 'Christ Hymn', 193.

[616] Cf. Thomas H. TOBIN, The World of Thought in the Philippians Hymn (Philippians 2:6–11), in: John FOTOPOULOS (ed.), The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco–Roman Context [Studies in Honor of David E. AUNE], Leiden–Boston 2006, 91–104.

[617] Cf. ibid., 91.

[618] Cf. Lucien. CERFAUX, Christ in the Theology of St. Paul, New York 1959, 283f.

legomena as in the Philippians hymn and therefore the Philippians hymn cannot be singled out as non–Pauline.[619] Pre–Pauline authorship is widely accepted in exegetical circles. At the same time Pauline edition or interpretation of the hymn is equivocally accepted. "Whether or not the Christ–hymn is Pauline or pre–Pauline, it is still appropriate to appreciate the hymn within the context of the letter to the Philippian church."[620] Through citing and editing this hymn Paul wanted to communicate something important to his readers. In the words of Morna D. Hooker, "For even if the material is non–Pauline, we may expect Paul himself to have interpreted it and used it in a Pauline manner."[621] The hymn provides us a valuable insight into the development of Christian devotional practices and Christology in the middle of the first century.[622]

7.1.2 Form and Structure of the Hymn

Johannes Weiss has recognized the poetic structure of the hymn and proposed a two–strophes structure, each of which is comprised of four lines.[623] Despite of some criticism that advocates for *exalted prose*[624] the hymnic nature of Philippians 2: 5–11 is widely accepted in biblical scholarship. Apparent differences are there among biblical scholars in the division of hymn into strophes and in its structure. Whereas Johannes Weiss proposes a two–strophes structure with four lines in each strophe (vv. 6–8 and 9–11), Ernsts Lohmeyer divides the hymn into six strophes, each with three lines[625] and Joachim Jeremias proposes that the entire hymn consists of couplets, in a device known as *parallelismus membrorum*[626]. I do not enter into an elaborate discussion about the structure of the hymn.[627] Rather I take simple two–strophe structure as a working model which helps us to understand the meaning of the hymn.

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[619] Cf. FEWSTER, The Philippians 'Christ Hymn', 193f.

[620] Ibid., 194.

[621] Cf. Morna D. HOOKER, Philippians 2:6–11, in: E. Earle ELLIS–Erich GRASSER (eds.), Jesus and Paulus. Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag, Göttingen 1975, 151–164, here: 152.

[622] Cf. David Alan BLACK, The Authorship of Philippians 2:6–11. Some Literary-Critical Observations, in: Criswell Theological Review 2 (1988), 269–289, here: 289.

[623] Cf. Johannes WEISS, Review of: Marvin R. VINCENT, A Critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians and to Philemon (The International Critical Commentary), Edinburgh 1897, in: Theologische Literaturzeitung 24/9 (1999) 262–264.

[624] Cf. Gordon D. FEE, Philippians 2:5–11. Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose, in: Bulletin for Biblical Research 2 (1992) 29–46, here: 31f.

[625] Cf. LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus, 7.

[626] Cf. Joachim JEREMIAS, Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen, in: Studia Paulina in honorerum johannis de Zwaan septuagentarii, Haarlem 1953, 152–154.

[627] For a detailed survey on the structure and form of the hymn cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 24–41.

Hans–Ulrich Weidemann opines that the two–strophe structure is undisputable and v.9 makes a clear separation between two strophes.[628] The second part of the hymn starts with διό καὶ and shows clear shift in themes and emphasis. While Christ is the subject of first strophe, in the second strophe the subject is changed to God, the Father. Διὸ καὶ, a combination of the emphatic inferential conjunction διό and the conjunction καὶ, provides also clear connection with the previous verses and signals the transition from the theme of Christ's humiliation to an exaltation motif.[629] The two–strophe structure is confirmed also by two anadiplosis[630] in v. 8c and in 11c which end each strophe. There is a general consensus on the subdivision of the first strophe.[631] I am following the structuring by Hans–Ulrich Weidemann (given in brackets) for better clarity and conciseness. To compare with Weiss' structure roman numbers are given; each strophe with four sentences.

Strophe 1

I. (6a) ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, (6b) οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,
II. (7a) ἀλλ᾽ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, (7b) μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,
III. (7c) ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· (7d) καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος,
IV. (8) ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

Strophe 2

I. (9a) Διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν,
II. (9b) καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα·
III. (10a) ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (10b) πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων,
IV. (11a) καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι (11b) κύριος Ἰησοῦς χριστός, (11c) εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

The first strophe, according to Hans–Ulrich Weidemann, consists of two complex sentences: The first sentence is composed of four lines 6ab and 7ab, which is characterized by two

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[628] Cf. Hans–Ulrich WEIDEMANN, „Der in Gottesgestalt war". zur Theologie des Christuspsalms (Phil 2,6–11), in: IKaZ 44 (2015) 224–234, here: 225.

[629] Cf. Rachael THAN, Revisiting the Carmen Christi. Paul's Perspective on Humiliation and Exaltation in Philippians 3:7–11, in: William LOADER et al. (eds.), Matthew, Paul, and Others. Asian Perspectives on New Testament Themes, Innsbruck 2019, 153–177, here: 170f.

[630] Cf. Otfried HOFIUS, Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11, Tübingen 1976, 10.

[631] Cf. WEIDEMANN, Der in Gottesgestalt war, 225.

conditions, μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου; the second sentence starts with 7c and its main sentence is 8a, "he humbled himself". The inner relationship between these two complex sentences (6a–7b and 7c–8c) in the first strophe is disputed. Some biblical scholars observe here Jesus' way in two phases, from divine being to human being and from human being to death. Others sees in 6ab and 7ab the facts regarding kenosis and in 7c–8c manner of kenosis.[632]

7.1.3 Theological Meaning of the Hymn: Varieties of Opinions

Christological debates about this hymn are mainly based on pre–existence, incarnation, etc. Another question is regarding the nature of the hymn, whether it is an ethical, dogmatical, soteriological, or liturgical hymn. Recent reflections raise political and ethical questions regarding functions and theology of the hymn. During the course of time the Philippians hymn has been interpreted with different theological accentuations.

7.1.3.1 Dogmatic Interpretation

According to dogmatic interpretation, the subject of the hymn is the historical Jesus, not the pre–existed one. Paul is not presenting some celestial being, but the historical Jesus. As it is narrated in the temptation pericopes in Matthean, and Lukan gospels Jesus has rejected the choice to be equal with His Father. According to this interpretation the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων refers to the incarnate state of Jesus, not to the pre–existent state and thus, Jesus is simultaneously in the form of God and in the form of servant. The key to the dogmatic interpretation is based on the meaning of the participle in v. 6 ὑπάρχων. The critics of dogmatic interpretation opine that ὑπάρχων refers to the pre–existence of Christ and the following words ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, μορφὴν δούλου λαβών point to the way in which he emptied himself. Jesus has emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. Therefore, "being in the form of God" refers only to the pre–incarnate state of the Lord, not to the incarnated Jesus Christ. Others say that ὑπάρχων does not indicate a time–reference. Whether the Lord continued to be in the form of God after the incarnation or he left behind the form of God while accepting the form of slave is an open question.[633]

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[632] Cf. ibid., 225f.

[633] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 63–66.

7.1.3.2 Kenotic Theory

Based on the Greek verb in v. 7 ἐκένωσεν, it was argued that in his incarnation the divine Logos has left his divine attributes behind. This theory is known as kenotic theory[634], which is named after kenosis, substantive form derived from the verb ἐκένωσεν. Whether v. 7 can be exclusively used to support or reject a kenotic theory of the person of Christ was a debatable question and later reached to a consensus that v. 7 cannot be isolated from the whole text and answering the dogmatic questions cannot be done relying solely on a single word.[635] Pope Pius XII condemned the kenotic doctrine based on "a rashly and falsely understood sentence of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (ii, 7)"[636].

7.1.3.3 Ethical Interpretation

Another reading of the hymn is ethical[637] that states that Paul is addressing a community, which loses its unity through pride and quarrelling (Phil 1: 27, 2: 2–4) and he is presenting the example of Jesus as an ethical standard. As Jesus was obedient to the Father unto the death, Christians of Philippi have to be obedient to the apostolic authority. The ethical interpretation of Philippian Hymn assumes that the Hymn is a popular theology rather than a Christological discussion. The *crux interpretum* of the passage, according to this view, is v. 5 and the same verse makes the interpretation complex, because of the difficulty in its translation.[638] Words in v. 5 τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ are elliptical and it is not clear that which verb or verbal equivalent is to be supplied.[639] The interpretation of this introductory verse is decisive in the interpretation of the following hymn vv. 6–11. According to ethical understanding of the hymn, Paul exhorts the members of Philippian community to have the same attitude of Christ. Φρονέω occurs ten times in the letter to

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[634] Classical form of theory of kenosis can be seen in Gottfried THOMASIUS, Christi Person und Werk. Darstellung der evangelisch-lutherischen Dogmatik vom Mittelpunkte der Christologie aus Part II: Das Werk des Mittlers. URL: https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb11601394?page=4,5 [accessed: 12 December 2022].

[635] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 66f.

[636] PIUS XII, Encyclical on the Council of Chalcedon *Sempiternus Rex Christus* (8 September 1951), in: AAS 43 (1951) 29.

[637] Lohmeyer is the most prominent and influential proponent of the ethical interpretation of the Hymn, cf. LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus and his Philipper.

[638] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 68–70.

[639] Cf. Peter Thomas O'BRIEN, The Epistle to the Philippians. A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC) Michigen 1991, 205.

Philippians out of the total twenty–six occurrences in the whole New Testament. Paul wants the Philippians to adopt the right attitude of mind that is seen in Jesus Christ.[640]

There is a serious objection against the ethical interpretation of Philippians Hymn. It is that Paul very rarely uses *imitatio Christi* as a ground for his ethical appeal. Even if Paul makes a reference to the ethical example of Jesus it shall refer to the earthily life of Jesus rather to the theological significance (cf. Rom. 15: 3). According to Paul, Christian life is, more than mere imitation of model of Jesus, a participation in the risen life of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.[641] Charles A. Wanamaker writes that whatever the origins of 2: 6–11, in its current context the Christ hymn provides a great example of the attitude which the Philippians must adopt. Paul uses the story of Jesus' refusal to exploit his unique relation and status with God (v. 6), his self–abnegation from his exalted position to a position of slavery (v. 7), and finally his self–degradation in his own death on the cross (v. 8) as the prototype of Christian self–abnegation.[642]

7.1.3.4 Soteriological Mythical Event

Ernst Lohmeyer opines that the hymn speaks about the portrayal of a divine–human event, not about the exemplary status of an ethical disposition. The parenetic character of the hymn derives from the totality of the hymn, not from a single word. Through the interpolation of the *death on the Cross* Paul underlines the example of Christ in Martyrium. A principle, according to which humbleness and majesty are related to each other, is evident in Christ's martyrium. To be obedient to this principle in one's own suffering and witness is the ethical sense of the cosmic event, which is presented in the hymn. In this event between heaven and earth, which is presented in the hymn, a principle is evident: that is, humbleness and majesty are indissolubly related to each other. To be obedient to this principle is the ethical sense of this cosmic event.[643] Ernst Käsemann opines that Ernst Lohmeyer has rejected the categories, with which the early church dogmatic approached Philippians hymn, as useless for the interpretation of the hymn, but at the same time he has held on to the divinity of the

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[640] For a short discussion on the meaning and relevance of φρονέω cf. THAN, Revisiting the Carmen Christi, 155–160.

[641] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 72f.

[642] Cf. Charles A. WANAMAKER, Philippians, in: James D. G. DUNN et al. (eds.) (ECB), Michigan–Cambridge 2003, 1394–1403, here: 1398.

[643] Cf. LOHMEYER, Der Brief an die Philipper, 98.

Christ on the earth.[644] Ernst Käsemann criticises Ernst Lohmeyer that he ended up in ethical idealism.[645] He says Philippians hymn tells us what Christ *did*, not what he *was* and therefore the hymn is a salvation story.[646] His central thesis about the hymn is that the Christ–hymn is not to be understood in ethical terms but in kerygmatic terms as a drama of salvation.[647]

In opposition to ethical interpretation Karl Barth advocates that not with reference to the example of Christ Paul substantiates the verses 1–4. The Pauline formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ denotes a state of being, to which the faithful of Philippi also belong. They are part of the communion of Jesus Christ and the limps of his body and therefore, they have to identify themselves within this union with Jesus Christ.[648]

7.1.3.5 Christ's Divinity and Humanity in the Hymn

Karl Barth sees v. 5 as another dimension of ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε (v. 3). He fills the absent verb at the end of v. 5 so: ὃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ φρονεῖν δεῖ and translate v. 5 "let among you have the mind that one has to ponder in Jesus Christ"[649]. τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in v. 6 indicates the equality of Jesus Christ with God and it is both the beginning and the end of his way. Jesus Christ, Karl Barth opines, could have held his Glory as it is depicted by the myth of angels who wanted to be equal with God. Paul places the model of Jesus Christ, who does not consider his equality with God as something *Noli me tangere*. Karl Barth differentiates between *equality with God* (*Gottgleichsein*) and *form of God* (*Gottesgestalt*). Jesus had not at all doubt about his *equality with God* and therefore, he could renounce the *form of God*. He had renounced his form of God without losing his equality with God. Karl Barth uses the anomaly of two lovers. The more two loving people belong together the more they can give oneself to one another without fear of losing oneself. Christ is henceforth equal to God in the hiddenness of the form of a servant. ἑαυτὸν indicates that this act of renouncing oneself is not a fate, but an act of self–determination.[650] According to Karl Barth, Christ is at the

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[644] Cf. Ernst KÄSEMANN, Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2, 5–11, in: ZThK 47 (1950) 313–359, here: 318.

[645] Cf. ibid., 319.

[646] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 83.

[647] Cf. Robert MORGAN, Incarnation, Myth, and Theology. Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Philippians 2:5–11, in: Ralph P. MARTIN–Brian J. DODD (eds.) Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2, Kentucky 1998, 43–73, here: 43.

[648] Cf. Karl BARTH, Erklärung des Philipperbriefes, Zollikon [6]1947, 57–58.

[649] My own transaltion of „Sinnet unter euch auf das, auf was man im Christus Jesus sinnen muss" BARTH, Erklärung des Philipperbriefes, 57.

[650] Cf. Karl Barth, Erklärung des Philipperbriefes, 60f.

same time God and man, even in His humiliation.[651] Karl Barth questions the concept that from v. 9 starts a new phase through the exaltation of kenotic Christ, because the kenotic Christ is at the same time exalted Christ.[652] Robert Morgan observes correctly that Karl Barth understands the hymn in terms of the two–natures doctrine.[653] But Ernst Käsemann rejects Karl Barth's view here and he sees *form of God* and *equality with God* synonymous and parallel, or at least coordinated, they should not be considered separately and their Greek background must be recognized.[654]

7.1.3.6 Religio–Historical Parallels to Philippians Hymn

The twentieth century scholarship is mainly concerned about the religio–historical, historical and biblical sources and parallels to the Philippians hymn.[655] The religio–historical parallels to the Philippians hymn shows a wide variety of influences; Adam theology (Adam was in the form of God. He wished to be like God, and it leads him to sin. Christ is a counter example to Adam. He did not consider the equality of God something to make use of and therefore God has elevated him), a heavenly being like Philo's Logos, slave of God in Isa. 52: 13–53: 12, Gnostic salvific figure of a primordial man (Iranian *Urmenschmythos*), heavenly wisdom and wisdom theology, incarnated gods, merited human beings who entered to heaven, enthroning in the imperial cult, heavenly servant of Yahweh of Qumran hymns, self–exaltation myths of angels, and the early Jewish (Danielic) concept of Son of man. This plurality of influences shows that the ancient Judaism was a part of Hellenistic roman world and was positively engaged with their religious and philosophical traditions. The Philippians hymn shows a wide range of influences from its Jewish and Hellenistic roman surroundings and offers linking points to all these traditions for its easy receptivity.[656]

7.1.3.7 Christological Relevance of the Hymn

There are varieties of opinion among New Testament scholars about the Christological relevance of the Philippians hymn. Not only in the early discussions, but also in the modern times it is evident. Ernst Lohmeyer, even though he is the champion of ethical interpretation,

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[651] Ralph P. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 74.

[652] Cf. BARTH, Erklärung des Philipperbriefes, 64.

[653] Cf. MORGAN, Incarnation, Myth, and Theology, 56.

[654] Cf. ibid., 59.

[655] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 74–77.

[656] Cf. Angela STANDHARTINGER, Der Philipperbrief (HNT 11/1) Tübingen 2021, 156–167.

does not exclude Christological relevance. Robert Morgan comments that "Lohmeyer interprets this myth of the incarnation of a divine being in a way that maintains the doctrine of the divinity of Christ in his incarnation […] but without using the dated categories of Chalcedon's two–natures doctrine."[657] Ernst Käsemann sees in Karl Barth's interpretation that kenotic Christ is at the same time exalted Christ good space for the motif of incarnation, favour to church dogmatics and there is no space of ethical idealism.[658] Martin Dibelius does not deny the ethical application. However he labelled the hymn as *Christushymnus*, but it has no doctrinal significance. He opines that Paul has given his Christology a mythical clothing (*mythische Einkleidung*) and moralized the myth.[659] Ernst Käsemann intensified the position of Martin Dibelius. According to him, the hymn narrates an event of mythic proportions (descend and ascend) in the background of cosmic drama of redemption by *Urmensch* and explains what Jesus did for the salvation (soteriological), not who Jesus was (Christological). Even if the glory of the pre–existent Christ is discussed in the hymn, it is to describe the miracle of the act of salvation. What Christ did is the primary concern of the hymn, not who he was.[660] Oscar Cullmann says that the hymn teaches nothing about Christ's natures. Christology is functional, not speculative.[661] Charles A. Wanamaker advocates that vv. 9–11 is Christologically relevant because they predicate *Lordship* (κύριος) which the Jewish tradition reserves for God alone (cf. Isa. 45: 23) to Christ. This suggest that from the very beginning of Christianity Christians proclaimed Christ as the unique heir to God's sovereignty.[662] James D. G. Dunn says that the Philippians hymn expresses the early Christianity's Adam theology. Only when the original Adam theology faded, the pre–existence–incarnation interpretation came into the foreground. According to him, the pre–existence–incarnation interpretation owes more to the later Gnostic redeemer myth rather than to the Philippians hymn.[663] Gerald F. Hawthorne rejects this Adam Christ comparison

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[657] MORGAN, Incarnation, Myth, and Theology, 53.

[658] Cf. KÄSEMANN, Kritische Analyse, 320.

[659] Cf. Martin DIBELIUS, An die Thessalonicher I, II, an die Philipper (HNT 11) Tübingen [2]1925, 63.

[660] Cf. KÄSEMANN, Kritische Analyse, 334f.

[661] Cf. Oscar CULLMANN, Christus und die Zeit. Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung, Zollikon 1946, 94f.

[662] Cf. WANAMAKER, Philippians, 1398.

[663] James D. G. DUNN, Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation, London 1980, 128.

in this hymn, because the μορφῇ θεοῦ and εἰκών θεοῦ are not equivalent.[664] From these opinions it is clear that Christological debate is on the foreground in the discussions regarding the interpretation of Philippians hymn, even though the conclusions are not unanimous. Robert Morgan writes:

> […]since the divinity of the Christ is the central doctrine of Christianity, hammered out at length in the patristic period, this passage has been a central scriptural witness to Christian belief about Jesus. It seems to speak of his preexistence and incarnation and that fits the church's classical doctrinal structure, drawn largely from John's gospel and in need of a wider biblical base or support. This Christ hymn seems to fit, and so support, orthodox Christian belief in the divinity and humanity of Christ, in addition to its aim of encouraging Christians to find an ethical example […].[665]

Otfried Hofius opines that the hymn speaks the figurative language of praise, not the precise language of dogmatic.[666] It shows the liturgical and kerygmatic character of the hymn. However, the liturgical nature of the hymn does not eliminate Christological ideas or ethical implications. Hymn and creed are not rigidly separated in the New Testament. When the church sings this hymn, she proclaims her faith in her Lord as pre–existent, incarnate and exalted one. It is this expression of the *states of Christ* which gives an added importance to the passage. Phil. 2: 6–11 is the oldest Christian expression about the three states of Christ's existence and it underlies and delimits the whole Christology of later times.[667]

7.2 Christological Dogmas of Early Church and Relevance of Kenosis

Early Christians have attempted to explain the divinity of Christ without conflicting with monotheistic belief. It was not an easy task and produced more ambiguities. These ambiguities became more complex when the Christians had to respond to the questions from their cultural and religious neighbours. Jewish Christians had to explain the divinity of Jesus in the background of strict monotheism of Jewish religion. Greek Christians had to explain Jesus' divinity in terms of Greek thought. Even though these two contexts, Jewish and Hellenistic, had played pivotal role in the development of early Christian theology, the criticism against this early Christological development was and is prevalently in terms of

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[664] Cf. Gerald F. HAWTHORNE, In the Form of God and Equal to God, in: Ralph P. MARTIN–Brian J. DODD (eds.) Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2, Kentucky 1998, 96–110, here: 100.

[665] Cf. MORGAN, Incarnation, Myth, and Theology, 52.

[666] Cf. HOFIUS, Der Christushymnus, 58.

[667] Cf. MARTIN, Carmen Christi, 22f.

Hellenization. In the interpretation of Philippians hymn also this criticism of Hellenization is evident.

7.2.1 Christological Development: Hellenization of Jewish Jesus?

One of the often–raised criticisms against the development of Christology is that the historical Jesus is suppressed through the pre–existent Christ of dogmatic theology. Paul with his theological contributions is considered as the founder of this westernization of Christian culture.[668] The modern Jewish studies also try to rediscover Jesus of Galilea and to bring back Jesus to his Jewish *home*.[669] Although the criticism against the Hellenization of Christianity can be traced back to the critical attitude of Reformers towards the medieval theological tradition, later also the roman catholic theologians have joined in this criticism. Isaac Casaubonus, a seventeenth century reformed theologian, sees the root of the Hellenization of Christianity in the missionary methods of Paul.[670] Dionysius Petavius, a roman catholic scholar of the same century, observes that many Christians had been before their conversion disciples of Platonic philosophical sects.[671] In Christology this criticism is pointed clearly by Hans–Joachim Schoeps. He says that in the faith in υἱός θεοῦ we can see the decisive pagan premise of Pauline thought and everything connected to this premise is non–Jewish and closer to pagan temporal images. He opines that this non–Jewish faith in the Son of God combined with the Pauline Christology and soteriology formed the dogma of the Church and here is the acute Hellenization of Christianity.[672] Adolf von Harnack has intensified this criticism and since then his lectures on the interpretive category *Hellenization* of Christology or *de–Hellenization* had been a heated subject of discussion.[673]

Martin Hengel rejects a direct Hellenistic influence on the title *Son of God* and states that the cognitively active and theological decisive element behind this title was Jewish

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[668] Cf. Adolf VON HARNACK, History of Dogma vol.1 [trans. By Neil Buchanan], Eugene 2020, 217f.

[669] Cf. Walter HOMOLKA, Der Jude Jesus. Eine Heimholung, Freiburg et al. 2020; Martin HENGEL, Der Sohn Gottes. Die Entstehung der Christologie und die jüdisch–hellenistische Religionsgeschichte, Tübingen 1975, 12–14.

[670] Cf. Robert D. CROUSE, The Hellenization of Christianity. A Historiographical Study, in: CJT 8/1 (1962) 22–33, here: 22f.

[671] Cf. CROUSE, The Hellenization of Christianity, 24.

[672] Hans-Joachim SCHOEPS, Paulus, Die Theologie des Apostels im Lichte der jüdischen Religionsgeschichte, Tübingen, 1959, 163, 173.

[673] Cf. Bernard MALLMANN, Enthellenisierung des Christentums? Harnacks Vorstoß in der Kritik, IkaZ 50 (2021), 393–407, here: 393.

Christians.[674] It is typically Jewish that the pre–existence, mediatorship in creation, and the presentation of mission were developed prior to the legends of miraculous birth in the development of Christology. The Johannine prologue is, seen from its tradition, older than the prehistories of Matthew and Luke in their existing form. The problem of pre–existence is inevitably grown from the connection between Jewish concepts of history, time and creation and the Christian certainty of the complete self–disclosure of God in his messiah Jesus of Nazareth.[675] Adolf von Harnack also points out that the dependency of Pauline theology on Judaism is overlooked and Pauline theology is often labelled as Gentile Christian theology in contrast to Jewish Christian theology. Pauline theology was generally intelligible to any Jew, because its doctrinal presuppositions were strictly Pharisaic.[676] The early Christian confession to the exalted Christ as Son of God and Son of man had immediately evoked the question about Jesus' relationship with other divine mediators. The exodus and the revelation of law on the Sinai, which are the decisive salvific events for Judaism, were replaced with the person and work of Jesus Christ by the early Jewish Christians. Later the pre–existence of eschatological saviour that can be traced in Micah 5: 1, Ps. 110: 3, etc., and the pre–existence of the name of messiah in Rabbinic sources were also attributed to Jesus Christ.[677] Paul's Christology has its starting point in the early Christian confession that Christ is the Lord and with the Father. Pauline theology springs over the historical Christ and starts from pre–existent Christ, who assumed the flesh, lived the self–denying love to break the powers of nature and death.[678] Jean Paul Daniélou underlines the *semitic structure* of early Christianity and opines that in spite of Hellenistic influence the basic structure is fundamentally Jewish.[679] We can conclude, as Martin Hengel opines, that the introduction of pre–existence in the Christology happened through the inner necessity of early Christianity,[680] not exported from a totally alien world.

Coming back to our hymn, Nicholas Thomas Wright opposes the thesis that the incarnation theology and pre–existence do not belong to this hymn and they are the result of

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[674] Cf. HENGEL, Der Sohn Gottes, 105.

[675] Cf. ibid., 112f.

[676] Cf. VON HARNACK, History of Dogma vol.1, 90.

[677] Cf. HENGEL, Der Sohn Gottes, 106–110.

[678] Cf. VON HARNACK, History of Dogma vol.1, 94.

[679] Cf. CROUSE, The Hellenization of Christianity, 32.

[680] Cf. HENGEL, Der Sohn Gottes, 112.

Hellenistic influences. Against James D. G. Dunn's theory that the development of Christology moved from a non–incarnational Philippians 2 to a gnostic view of the passage, Nicholas Thomas Wright writes that pre–existence is not a Hellenistic idea, pulling early Christology away from its Jewish roots and it has no necessary connection with any gnostic, or Philonic, speculations about an *Urmensch* or primordial man.[681] He continues, this position is not to be conceived as a departure from Jewish monotheism and the nearest antecedents to this Christology are apparently personifications in the relevant Jewish literature, for example, personification of Wisdom or of Torah.[682] Jesus' exaltation was understood from an early stage onwards as including him in the unique identity of the one God of Jewish monotheism. This is confirmed by many passages including Phil. 2: 9–11, which depict exalted Jesus receiving the worship of the whole creation.[683] Giving of *the name that is above every name* to exalted Jesus also denotes Jesus' participation in the divine sovereignty, because for any Jew *the name that is above every name* is YHWH, the tetragram. The worship of Jesus by the whole creation in the hymn expresses the Jewish monotheism, which is characteristic to the Second Temple Judaism and is most powerfully depicted in the prophecies of Deutero–Isaiah.[684] According to Hans–Ulrich Weidemann, Kyrios acclamation of Jesus in Philippians hymn does not challenge the strict monotheism of Judaism as it is cited in Isaiah 45 and it leads to the proclamation of the glory of God, the Father.[685] Colin Brown, commending on Ernst Lohmeyer's interpretation of the hymn, expresses the same opinion: "Thus the Christological features of the psalm […] are not products of "acute 'Hellenization,' but direct Jewish heritage.""[686]

Here it is clear that not only in Hellenistic background but also in Jewish background there is place for incarnation and pre–existence Christology. In both Jewish and Hellenistic background what is noteworthy is that the intention of the hymn was to depict exalted Jesus as the Kyrios and His equality with God. At the same time the exalted Jesus is the one who took human form and was obedient till his death on Cross. These two elements, the humanity

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[681] Cf. Nicholas Thomas WRIGHT, The Climax of the Covenant. Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology London–New York 1991, 95.

[682] Cf. WRIGHT, The Climax of the Covenant, 96f.

[683] Cf. Richard J. BAUCKHAM, The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2,9–11, in: Ralph P. MARTIN–Brian J. DODD (eds.) Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2, Kentucky 1998, 128–139, here: 130.

[684] Cf. BAUCKHAM, The Worship of Jesus in Philippians, 131–133.

[685] Cf. WEIDEMANN, Der in Gottesgestalt war, 227.

[686] Colin BROWN, Ernst Lohmeyer's Kyrios Jesus, in: Ralph P. MARTIN–Brian J. DODD (eds.) Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2, Kentucky 1998, 6–42, here: 18.

and the divinity of Jesus, were pivotal in the following eras of Christological development and reached a definitive form in the Nicaea–Chalcedon Creed.

7.2.2 The Dilemma of Early Christianity

The New Testament writings, also the Philippians hymn, give Jesus honour and rank that is appropriate only to the God of Israel. This has naturally raised some concerns regarding monotheistic belief of Israel. Nicholas Thomas Wright, pondering on the thoughts of Paul when composing this part of the Letter to Philippians, lists out three possibilities that arise if God who will not share his glory with another has now shared it with Jesus: First one is that there are now two Gods (Ditheism which is contrary to Paul's strong belief, Jewish monotheism); Second, Jesus might now have been totally absorbed into one God (then the identity of Jesus is not safeguarded); Or thirdly, there might be a special status, which requires fuller investigation, exploration, and clarification, in which Jesus in being exalted receives something which was his own.[687] This dilemma in explaining the divinity of Jesus without compromising monotheism continued also in later Christianity in second and third centuries.

The dilemma between Jewish monotheism and divinity of Jesus has already caused a division among Jewish Christians. *Ebionites* considered Jesus as a prophet and venerated him as God's chosen one. They rejected the pre–existence and divine sonship of Jesus. A typological presentation will help to comprehensively understand various early Christian attempts to explain the divinity of Jesus without compromising monotheistic belief. Monarchianism strongly upholds the oneness of God and explained that God come close to humans firstly as creator and Father, then as saviour and Son, and finally as Holy Spirit. Christ is seen as an appearance of God. Adoptionism advocates that human Jesus was accepted as Son by God. Gnostic Docetism, as the root form *dokein* means, claims that Christ only *seemed to* be human. It cannot explain God's self–revelation in the space and history through Jesus Christ. Subordinationism, following Middle Platonism, subordinates Son to Father to protect the oneness and transcendence of God. Jan–Heiner Tück observes in these attempts to explain God two principial problems of Christology, i.e., how man can explain

[687] Cf. WRIGHT, The Climax of the Covenant, 94.

the relationship between Father and Son without damaging Israel's monotheism if both are equally God and how can eternal God reveal himself in the life and death of a human.[688]

7.2.3 Definition of the Council of Nicaea

The first council of Nicaea (325), which was called by Emperor Constantine to settle the Christological conflict caused by the subordinationism of Arius, has accepted a creed in which four anti–Arian insertions are found. "We believe […] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only–Begotten generated from the Father, that is, from the being of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father, through whom all things were made, those in heaven and those on earth, […]" (DH 125). Besides four anti–Arian phrases, (1) from the being of the Father, (2) God from God, light from light, true God from true God, (3) begotten, not made, (4) one in being with the Father (ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί), there was also a condemnation against Arianism: "However, those who say: "There was a time when he was not" and "Before he was born he was not" and that he was made from nothing or who say that the Son of God may be of a different hypostasis or essence, or may be *created or* [-!] subject to change and alteration, <such persons> the Catholic Church anathematizes." (DH 126). The council used *homo–ousios* to define the fact that Jesus is *one being* or *of the same substance* as his Father.[689]

7.2.4 From Trinitarian Dispute to Christological Dispute: Post–Nicene Development

Post Nicene Christological debate was centred around the relationship between Father and Son. Some have weakened the Nicene consubstantiality (*homoousios*[690]) with a *substance resemblance homoiousios*[691], "in the sense of the Son 'being of like substance' with the Faher"[692]. Some wanted to avoid ontological statements and expressed their thought simply by *similarity* between God the Father and Logos. They were sceptical about *homoousios*

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[688] Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, Jesus Christ –Gottes Heil für uns. Eine dogmatische Skizze, in: Gerhard HOTZE et al. (eds.), Jesus Begegnen. Zugänge zur Christologie (Theologische Module 3), Freiburg et al. 2009, 119–176, here: 122f.

[689] Cf. Christopher M. BELLITTO, The General Councils. A History of the Twenty-One Church Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II, New York 2002, 19.

[690] For a short description about the terminological ambiguity of *homoousios* cf. Gerald O'COLLINS, Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus, Oxford [2]2009, 182–186.

[691] Cf. TÜCK, Jesus Christ –Gottes Heil, 130.

[692] O'COLLINS, Christology, 184.

because it was not biblical. It was condemned in the controversy over Paul of Samosata in 268, it has Sabellian tendency, and it was ambiguous.[693] These two concepts are called Semi–Arianism, against which radical–Arianism emphasized the *dissimilarity* between Father and Son.

As a response to these tendencies, Semi–Arianism and Arianism, Athanasius of Alexandria has stressed the consubstantiality of Father and Son: If the Son was not of same substance as of Father, then Father could not reveal himself completely through Jesus Christ and if God did not really become human, then the humans could not find God.[694] The Nicene *homoousios* and its right interpretation supported by Athanasius, St Hilary and Basil was widely accepted. Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil have differentiated between *ousia* and *hypostasis* and they wrote about Trinity as one *ousia* and three *hypostaseis*. This trinitarian concept was officially accepted in the First Council of Constantinople (381). The terms *hypostasesin* and *prosopois* were used as synonyms.[695] Tertullian has already applied trinitarian vocabulary in Christology[696] and Eastern Greek theology also has done the same. Later, after the council of Ephesus (431) the fourth century trinitarian vocabulary was completely applied to Christology, to the question of the union in Christ.[697] Athanasius had emphasised the divinity of Logos against Arianism. It resembled *Logos–Sarx–Christology* of Alexandrian school which claims that Logos became human (σὰρξ) and did not come into human body (σῶμα) and resulted in the relativisation of humanity of Jesus. His student Apollinaris intensified this position, which is called after his name Apollinarianism, and thus, trinitarian debate is turned to a Christological dispute over the relationship between the human and divine nature in Jesus Christ. Apollinaris understood the incarnation of Logos analogous to body–soul unity of human: in incarnation Logos has become the principle of life instead of human soul. The underlying logic was to protect unity of Christ's mind. Two competent souls, a human soul along with Logos, could be a challenge to the unity of Christ's mind. Therefore, he affirms the single nature of incarnated Logos. This Christological position of Alexandrian school has thus relativized the humanity of Christ to emphasize His divinity. Christ is not a God inspired man, but a human body related to God.

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[693] Cf. ibid.

[694] Cf. TÜCK, Jesus Christ –Gottes Heil, 131.

[695] Cf. O'COLLINS, Christology, 185.

[696] Cf. ibid., 178f.

[697] Cf. ibid., 186.

Antiochian school, against Alexandrian school's *Logos–Sarx–Christology* put forward their *Logos–Anthropos–Christology* which emphasizes autonomy and fullness of humanity of Christ. They attempted to keep both divine and human natures in Christ without being mixed and curtailed.[698] Nestorius, as an Antiochian[699], defended Christ's integral humanity and taught the *synapheia* (conjunction) of Christ's two complete natures in one *prosopon*. His opponents have criticized Nestorius that he proposes a mere conjunction of two separate subjects (Jesus and Logos) and this leads to a separation between Christ's two natures. Nestorius himself has rejected this criticism. He refused to attribute the experience of Jesus' human life to Word of God and thus, called Mary *Christotokos*, not *Theotokos*.[700] Contradicting and criticizing Nestorius that he advocates for a two–Sons–Christology, Cyril of Alexandria emphasized the ontological unity in Christ and took up Apollinarian formula of a one *physis* of the incarnated Logos. For the Antiochians it sounded like a heretical fusion of Christ's two natures.[701] The Council of Ephesus (431) has failed to solve this dispute. It is in this background of Christological debate The Council of Chalcedon (451) defined its Christological doctrine.

7.2.5 Chalcedonian Christological Definition

The affirmation of Jesus as both human and divine achieved its classical formulation at the Council of Chalcedon. "Chalcedon tried to summarize all the confusions, explanations, and counter–explanations of the 125 years since Nicaea I. Even with the statements made by Nicaea I, Constantinople I, and Ephesus in hand, some theologians still had difficulty striking a balance of Christological language and ideas."[702] Council of Chalcedon affirmed that Christ is 'truly God and truly man'(Θεόν αληθῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς), because he possesses both a divine nature and a human nature. The two natures are distinct and not confused, but nevertheless the Christ who possesses those two natures is only *one person and subsistence* (πρόσωπον and ὑπόστασις).[703] To explain the existence of two natures in Jesus Christ without damaging their full characteristics the council uses four negations:

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[698] Cf. TÜCK, Jesus Christ –Gottes Heil, 133.

[699] He later became the patriarch of Constantinople in 428.

[700] Cf. O'COLLINS, Christology, 190f.

[701] Cf. TÜCK, Jesus Christ –Gottes Heil, 135 and Gerald O'Collins, Christology, 191.

[702] BELLITTO, The General Councils, 25.

[703] Henry BETTENSON (ed.), Documents of the Christian Church, New York 1960, 72f.

ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως (without confusion or change, without division or separation).[704]

The major doctrinal statement by Chalcedon reasserted a fundamental Christian mystery: Jesus is one person with two natures joined together in a hypostatic union. These two natures were separate and equal: the divine nature did not overwhelm the human. After repeating the creeds of Nicaea I and Constantinople I, which they professed to follow, the council fathers at Chalcedon reviewed, reiterated, and delineated nearly four centuries of theology about Jesus.[705]

7.2.6 Definitions of Councils and Hellenization of Christianity

We have discussed above in this chapter about the Hellenization of Christianity in Apostolic period. The same allegation is also raised against Christological dogmas of early councils. Hellenization can be understood as any process of mixing of *original* Christian revelation and message (*Uroffenbarung und Urbotschaft*) with Hellenistic concepts and lifestyle that later conquered Christianity, which originated from Palestine.[706] Imagination of a classic Christianity which was corrupted through Hellenization is the crux of this discussion.[707] Council of Nicaea is often criticized for the intrusion of *homoousios* which is a Greek, non–biblical[708] term into the creed. Eusebius mentioned that this terminology was introduced in creed solely because of the personal interest of Constantine, [709] even though this term was firstly used by gnostic theologians.[710] David Kelsey writes that Chalcedon also has committed the sin of applying metaphysical terms on Jesus.[711] Pope Benedict XVI in his speech at the university of Regensburg observes that Adolf von Harnack's *Hellenization* thesis regarding the doctrinal development and the *fall* of the pure gospel into the corrupting

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[704] Cf. Denzinger, 302.

[705] BELLITTO, The General Councils, 26.

[706] Cf. Aloys GRILLMEIER, Hellenisierung–Judaisierung des Christentums als Deuteprinzipien der Geschichte des kirchlichen Dogmas Part I, in: Scholastik 33 (1958) 321–355, here: 321.

[707] Cf. GRILLMEIER, Hellenisierung–Judaisierung des Christentums Part I, 324.

[708] All theologians of forth century knew that *homoousios* is not to be found in the bible. Cf. Pier Franco BEATRICE, The Word "Homoousios" from Hellenism to Christianity, in: ASCH 71/2 (2002) 243–272, here: 244, especially fn 1.

[709] Cf. BEATRICE, The Word Homoousios, 243.

[710] Cf. BEATRICE, The Word Homoousios, 248.

[711] Cf. Jonathan LETT, Narrative and Metaphysical Ambition. On Being "in Christ", in: Modern Theology 33/4 (2017), 618–639, here: 622.

philosophy has widely influenced modern discussions.[712] The Pope names three distinct but interconnected stages in the programme of de–Hellenization: the first stage is the reformers' attempt to rediscover the pure, primordial form of faith that is found in the biblical Word (*sola scriptura*); the second one is the liberal theology of nineteenth and twentieth centuries that distinguished between God of philosophers and God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the third stage is the contemporary attempt to rediscover the simple message of New Testament separating it from the initial Hellenistic inculturation and to inculturate anew in the new milieux.[713]

Against the *de–Hellenization* tendencies some theologians argue that philosophical categories were essential to preserve the Gospel. Christianity had to differentiate its concept of God from that of other religions. Joseph Ratzinger writes, "[…] Christianity boldly and resolutely makes its choice and carried out its purification by deciding *for* the God of the philosophers and *against* the gods of the various religions."[714] Commenting on the introduction of *homoousios* in Nicene creed he opines that for the council fathers this word was just a translation of the concept *Son*. It simply says that the *Son* is not mere comparison, but a literal reality. It is not a philosophy besides bible, but it protects bible from the grasp of philosophy.[715] Jan–Heiner Tück notes that the adoption of Greek terminology of substance *homoousia* by the Council of Nicaea makes conceivable something that was previously unthinkable. "God's unity is a unity–in–relation; this is the essential point in what can be called the revolution in the concept of God."[716]

Alois Grillmeier writes, summarizing Petavius' view, that all trinitarian heresies like Subordinationism and Arianism are based upon Platonism and Sabellianism represents *pure Judaism* and false interpretation of Aristotelianism. Many Apologists like Justin, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch have given room for Platonism despite their fidelity to Christian essence. Some of them like Irenaeus, Gregory Thaumaturgus and Methodius have only used Hellenistic language to communicate Christian message. Origen was a pure

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[712] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Faith, Reason, and the University. Memories and Reflections, (12 September 2006). URL: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html [accessed: 3 November 2023].

[713] Cf. ibid.

[714] RATZINGER, Introduction to Christianity, 137.

[715] Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, Der Gott Jesu Christi. Betrachtungen über den Dreieinigen Gott, München 1976, 74.

[716] Jan–Heiner TÜCK, "The Father Without the Son Would not Be the Father". The Concept of God at the Council of Nicaea, in: Communio: International Catholic Review 42/1 (2015), 7–25, here: 19.

Platonist and forerunner of Arianism. These Hellenization was counterbalanced by the acceptance of church tradition and magisterium in the councils; Nicene creed is a classic example.[717]

Walter Kasper recognizes that *homoousios* of Nicaea caused the influence of metaphysical ontological thinking in theology and it sidelined the eschatological and salvific plan–oriented thinking based on scripture. Christianity has lost its future perspective and historical dynamism. De–eschatologization (*Enteschatologisierung*) of Christianity can be seen as the prerequisite and consequence of its Hellenization. Even though opposite to the intention of Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople the traditional concept of God is sidelined through the Hellenistic concepts of immutability and apatheia. Thus, the incarnation of God, especially God's suffering and death became a big problem.[718] Hellenization of Christianity is considered by some scholars like G. Arnolds, H. Grotius, etc. as a decline (*Abfall*) and by others like J. S. Semler as a progress (*Fortschritt*). While the former group wanted a de–Hellenization to have the real essence of Christianity, the latter opines that the Christian self–consciousness (*das christliche Selbstbewusstsein*) is intact, so that it can also be expressed through Hellenistic concepts.[719]

7.3 Hellenization and Theology of Religious Pluralism

John Hick, one of the most famous proponents of pluralist theology of religions, uses the same arguments as the *Hellenization* theory. Mentioning Nicene creed John Hick opines that through the adoption of a non–biblical concept of *ousia* a *metaphorical* son of God had become the *metaphysical* God the Son, second Person in Trinity. In the Council of Chalcedon the Nicene formula was expanded with other philosophical concepts.[720] Even after the high philosophical definition of Chalcedonian the question how the one person, Jesus, could have two natures, remains. John Hick describes some examples of modern attempts to explain Jesus' personhood with two natures and finds them futile. One among them is the two–minds theory. He opines that this theory fits only to the divine Christ of the Fourth Gospel, but does not fit the more historically believable Jesus of the Synoptics.[721]

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[717] Cf. GRILLMEIER, Hellenisierung–Judaisierung des Christentums Part I, 326.

[718] Walter KASPER, Jesus der Christus, Mainz [11]1992, 212f.

[719] Cf. GRILLMEIER, Hellenisierung–Judaisierung des Christentums Part I, 332–343

[720] Cf. John HICK, The Metaphor of God Incarnate. Christology in a Pluralistic Age, Louisville 1993, 44f.

[721] Cf. ibid., 53.

Hellenization theory also expresses similar idea about the Fourth Gospel and Pauline Christology. Adolf von Harnack identifies three groups in the New Testament, that is, Synoptic Gospels, Pauline Epistles, and Johannine writings. The Old Testament stage of religion, according to him, is transcended and overcome in Johannine Christianity as well as in Paulinism.[722] The ontological shortcoming of Chalcedon, David Kelsey opines, can be traced back to the hermeneutical decision to prioritize the Gospel of John over the Synoptics. Modern biblical scholarship also catalogues John as a later, *higher* doctrinal reflection on Jesus in contradistinction to the earlier, *lower* historical presentations of the Synoptics.[723] John Hick, discussing the kenotic theories, says that they also have a contradiction as in the case of Chalcedonian two–natures Christology. It is the contradiction of "a being who is God and yet lacks the attributes of God"[724].

John Hick affirms that the "Philippians hymn was not intended by Paul, or by its original unknown composer, as a solution to the problem of a two–nature Christology."[725] He understands kenosis as a metaphor and kenotic theories, he opines, are the good examples "of a good metaphor being turned into bad metaphysics."[726] Narrating the recent history of antisemitism and women oppression, he finds a direct connection between Christian superiority complex and the traditional doctrine of the incarnation.[727] His way of thinking is clear when he states, "if the dogma of Jesus' deity were to become understood, not as a literal claim with universal implications, but as internal Christian metaphorical discourse, a barrier would be removed from the relationship between the Christian and other sections of humankind"[728]. John Hick tries to find a foundation for his pluralism in the *pure* Christianity before its *Hellenization*. His *Copernican revolution* that decentralize Christ to recentralize God has its reason in this pure Christianity devoid of pre–existence and incarnation of Jesus.

But the question to what extent we can *rediscover* the so–called pure Christianity is relevant. What we have is a long history of gradual development of Christian belief, from Gospels and other New Testament writings, Dogmas of early Christian councils to the

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[722] Cf. VON HARNACK, History of Dogma vol. 1, 97.

[723] Cf. LETT, Narrative and Metaphysical Ambition, 622f.

[724] Cf. HICK, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, 62.

[725] HICK, The Metaphor of God Incarnate 79.

[726] ibid., 78.

[727] Cf. ibid., 87.

[728] ibid., 88.

explanations of Councils in modern times. At what time we can separate the *pure* form of Christianity from the *aberrations* can be a question of personal or academic interest. Stefan Alker suggests that the German prefix '*Ur*' of *Ur–Christentum* (the so–called *pure* Christianity) indicates an uncritical glorification of the church origins in contradiction to the present church structures. The basic question whether history can be reconstructed is relevant here.[729]

In this context there are many theologians who observes early Christological developments as a natural gradual process of maturing of Christianity. Alois Grillmeier advocates that philosophical categories were essential for preserving the Gospel. There are some recent studies that advocates that Chalcedon employ a *hermeneutic of continuity*.[730] Georg Essen opines that the interpretation of Hellenization as a *fall* from a *pure* biblical message is, by close observation, like a fiction.[731] According to Jan–Heiner Tück, it is not the Council of Nicaea that caused the Hellenization of Christianity, but Arius through his acceptance of cosmological schema of Greek thought. Nicaea used a non–biblical term to clarify a genuine biblical statement.[732] Neither Subordinationism nor Monarchianism could explain the scriptural revelation of a God who is Three–in–one. The Fathers of the Church had to make sense of both the unity and plurality in God. As Pope Benedict XVI points out, for the Greeks only unity (oneness) is divine. Plurality, on the other hand was the disintegration of unity.[733] "This led the Fathers to realize that God lies beyond our categories of unity and plurality and encompasses both. Thus, it would be necessary to come up with a way of describing what is three in God […]. The Greek Fathers, led by the Cappadocians, were therefore pressed to find some terminology to describe this threefold relation in God."[734] Christoph Markschies newly interprets the Hellenization of Christianity as the

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[729] Cf. Markus TIWALD, The Investment of Roman Catholics in the 2DH and Q, in: Markus TIWALD (ed.), The Q Hypothesis Unveiled. Theological, Sociological, and Hermeneutical Issues behind the Sayings Source (BAWANT 225), Stuttgart 2020, 129–145, here: 136.

[730] Cf. Brian DUNKLE, Reconsiderations of Chalcedon in God Visible, in: Pro Ecclesia 28/4 (2019) 362–369, here: 368.

[731] Cf. Georg ESSEN, Hellenisierung des Christentums? Zur Problematik und Überwindung einer polarisierenden Denkfigur, in: Theologie und Philosphie 87 (2012), 1–17, here: 8.

[732] Cf. TÜCK, Jesus Christ –Gottes Heil, 129.

[733] Cf. BENEDIKT XVI, Introduction to Christianity, San Francisco 2004, 178.

[734] ibid., 180.

specific *transformation* of Alexandrian educational institutions and their academic culture in the theological reflection of ancient Christianity.[735]

7.4 Conclusion

As we have seen above the Philippians hymn and its theological interpretation cannot be isolated from the early Christian milieu. It expresses the theological concerns of the early church. Nicene creed also tried to bring a conclusion to the ambiguities regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Chalcedonian dogma was not a new invention, but it was an attempt to clarify the ambiguities evolved from many interpretations, which explains the unity of human and divine natures in Jesus Christ. The council affirms that Christ is *truly God and truly man* and the distinction between two natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one Person and one hypostasis. In the background of theology of religious pluralism Christology plays a pivotal role. The deciding mater is the uniqueness and universality of Christ which is to be held fast in interreligious dialogue.[736] Thus, a balanced Christological standpoint is necessary in discussing about a theology of religious pluralism. "[C]hristology should not be narrowly confines to one particular assessment of Christ, nor should it play one off against another." [737] Robert Morgan comprehends the Christological development and underlines the totality of Christology:

> […] what the fourth evangelist expressed in the confession of Jesus as "my Lord and my God," what Christians have narrated in mythical terms ("he came down from the heaven"), defined doctrinally ("true God, true man"), learned through legends (some of the miracle stories of the Gospels, and the birth narratives), and from discourses placed on Jesus' lips (he who has seen me has seen Father"), what they have confessed in Christological hymns and enacted in rituals —the point of all this remains the heart and centre of Christian belief: that in having to do with Jesus we have to do with God. This Christological belief is constitutive and definitive for orthodox Christianity, and in a sense its only "dogma." To replace it with a historical statement about Jesus, however true in its own terms, is no mere modification but a radical break with historical Christianity.[738]

In Christian theology it is important to keep the balance of this special co–existence of divine and human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. A Christian theology that undermines or

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[735] Cf. Christoph MARKSCHIES, Hellenisierung des Christentums. Sinn und Unsinn einer historischen Deutungskategorie (Forum Theologische Literaturzeitung 25), Leipzig 2012, 121.

[736] Cf. HOPING, Jesus aus Galiläa, 330.

[737] DUNN, Christology in the Making, 266f.

[738] Robert MORGAN, The Historical Jesus and the Theology of the New Testament, in: James D.G. DUNN–Scot MCKNIHGT (eds.), The historical Jesus in recent Research, Winona Lake 2005, 567–584, here: 573.

overemphasizes any one of these natures cannot be a Christian theology. This statement may be seen as an exclusive statement in the background of theology of religious pluralism. But is not an exclusive statement, which undermines other religions, but it is a statement, which corresponds to the identity of Christianity. If theology undermines the humanity of Jesus Christ to emphasize his divinity, it can be fall into Docetism and cannot explain the divine incarnation, which is God's complete identification with humanity. If theology emphasizes only the humanity of Jesus Christ at the cost of divinity, it cannot explain the soteriological relevance of Jesus Christ and he will be considered as a moral exemplar and ethical teacher and this theology will equalize itself with ancient heresies such as Arianism, Adoptionism, etc.

Chapter 8

Kenosis in Modern Theological Discussions

8.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have seen that the term *kenosis* is derived from Paul's use of the term *ekenōsen* in Philippians hymn (Phil. 2: 6–11), and its exegetical and theological implications. How the early Christian consciousness about historical Jesus as Son of God was developed and expressed through the later theological advancement and defined in Nicene and Chalcedonian councils is also discussed in last chapter. Now we are going further to a short review of the influence of kenosis in later theological discussions.

> Kenosis is a theme expressed through Christian literature in every age. From an early Christian hymn in Philippians to a sermon by Origen, from a treatise of Tertullian to the hymns of Wesley, from the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus to the meditations of Zinzendorf, from the mystical writings of Bernard to the ontology of Hegel, from the sermons of Luther to the theology of Barth, the kenosis motif is found.[739]

From the early time of Christianity onwards Christian theology has been in dialogue with Greek philosophy and its philosophical developments, partly rejecting and confronting its conceptions, and moderately taking philosophical terms to explain Christian belief. The theological developments of early Christianity were responses to the philosophical arguments against Christian belief and it continues to a certain extent so. In the modern theological and philosophical discussions also the idea of kenosis plays an important role. It is discussed in this chapter.

8.1 Kenotic God and God of Philosophy

Classical Greek philosophy has understood God as the perfect being. A Christian concept of suffering God brought many ambiguities in philosophical discussions, especially to establish the divinity of Jesus Christ. We have seen this in the previous chapter as we have discussed about the trinitarian and Christological controversies. Now we are discussing how this

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[739] Donald G. DAWE, The Form of a Servant. A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif, Eugene OR 1963, 18.

conflict between God of philosophy and kenotic God reflected in the history of philosophy and consequently in Christian theology.

8.1.1 Immutable God and Kenosis

Greek philosophy has always emphasized the immutability of God against traditional Greek religious concept on gods. The Greek traditional gods are frequently envious of human success, for example, Prometheus' story. Plato's god is providential, and it cannot change[740] The God of *classical theism*, which represents the concept of God of classical Greek philosophy in Platonic, neo–Platonic, and Aristotelian writings, "is unqualifiedly perfect, where 'perfection' is conceived in ways congenial to the mind of Greek metaphysics: as requiring absolute unity, self–sufficiency, and immutability."[741] This concept of God came into conflict with the kenotic concept of God. How the early church Fathers reacted to this situation, we will see in the following part. In the scholastic period, both theological and philosophical discussions were again circulated around the metaphysical discussions about God, following neo–Platonic and Aristotelian categories.

8.1.2 Historical Jesus of Enlightenment Versus Christ of Faith

Martin Luther came with a strong criticism against the metaphysical theology of scholastic period. In his theology of the cross, he "[…] was attempting a consistent exposition not of the cross in the light of a philosophical concept of God, but of God in the light of the cross."[742] In his teaching on the *communicatio idiomatum* he tries to transfer all the sublime statements about divine nature such as omnipresence, omnipotence, etc. to the human nature of Christ and consequently also the divinity shares the human suffering and death of Jesus Christ.[743] Martin Luther's interpretation caused many ambiguities in theological circles mainly on the question that how the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ acted in his

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[740] Cf. John M. RIST, Plato's Moral Realism. The Discovery of the Presuppositions of Ethics, Washington 2012, 228. URL: https://web-s-ebscohost-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzk0MzU4Ml9fQU41?sid=08800bb-6834-43b9-a2ed-295bb75d32ee@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1 [accessed: 20 October 2023].

[741] Thomas WILLIAMS, Introduction to Classical Theism, in: Jeanine DILLER – Asa KASHER (eds.), Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities, New York 2013, 95—100, here: 95. URL: https://web-s-ebscohost-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzU5NTQ1MF9fQU41?sid=0b8cff80-23d8-462a-9f1d-eb6c6a383b4d@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1 [accessed: 20 October 2023].

[742] Walter KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, New York 2012, 191.

[743] Cf. Paul ALTHAUS, The Theology of Martin Luther, [trans. by Robert C. SCHULTZ], Philadelphia 1966, 193—199; KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 191.

passion.[744] Enlightenment period, corresponding to its rationalist ideology, brought increasing challenge to the two–natures doctrine. Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who advocated *natural religion*, tried to explain Christianity as an invention of Jesus' disciples. Following this attitude Lessing challenged the relation between historical events and theological claims. Immanuel Kant also questioned the validity of theological statements. The common trend of this period was that Jesus was seen as an exemplar human being. Every supernatural claim on Jesus, including his divinity, was questioned. This increasing interest in the *historical Jesus* can be seen in the development of historical criticism in biblical interpretation. Friedrich Schleiermacher tried to explain the divinity of Christ in terms of human Jesus' self–consciousness.[745] German idealism has given an intellectual form to the biblical concept of kenosis. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, based on his understanding of history as the process of Absolute Spirit's self–realization, explained Christ as the sensuous and concrete representation in human existence of a stage in the self–manifestation of Absolute Spirit. He did not understand Christ as the personal union of divine and human natures.[746] His idea of kenosis involves a refusal to use one's epistemic status as a basis for dominating others and it is an intellectual virtue enabling us to confront difference without domination. It is like humility without humiliation.[747] Walter Kasper opines, "[i]n Hegel's mind this theory is a philosophical exegesis of the biblical saying that God is love. For it belongs to love to find itself in the other, in self emptying."[748]

8.1.3 Kenosis in Modern Philosophy

Nikolaas Cassidy–Deketelaere observes in post–secular philosophy a trend, which he calls philosophy's *return to religion*.[749] Gregg Lambert in his book titled *Return Statements: The Return of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* writes about this new trend in contemporary philosophy and notes the *unprecedented return of St. Paul* even in the writings of atheist and

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[744] For a short idea about the criticism against Luther's *communicatio idiomatum* cf. Jean-Luc MARION, Kenose und Trinität, in: IkaZ 45 (2016) 161–174, here: 162.

[745] Cf. David R. LAW, Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology, Oxford 2013, 36.

[746] Cf. ibid., 36f.

[747] Cf. Molly FARNETH, "The Power to Empty Oneself." Hegel, Kenosis, and Intellectual Virtue, in: Political Theology 18/2 (2017) 157–171, here: 157.

[748] KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 192.

[749] Nikolaas CASSIDY-DEKETELAERE, Towards a Phenomenology of Kenosis. Thinking after the Theological Turn, in: Open Theology 8/1 (2022) 128–152, here: 130.

Marxist philosopher like Alain Badiou.[750] Cassidy–Deketelaere differentiates two ways of making philosophical use of theology or in philosophy's return to religion. First movement is known as *theological turn* and comprises of prominent French religious thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Jean–Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Jean–Louis Chrétien. These thinkers place *religious* or *theophanic* experience at the centre of phenomenological investigation into the general structure of experience. The second movement is called *post–secular turn* and is represented by some atheist thinkers like Jürgen Habermas (*Between Naturalism and Religion*), Alain Badiou (*Saint Paul*), Jean–Luc Nancy (*Expectatoin*), Slavoj Zizek (*The Puppet and the Dwarf*), etc. They tried to unearth the roots of western modernity in the theological structure of Christianity. *Post–secular turn* uses religious concepts to deconstruct religion, not for the sake of religion.

Another differentiation in *post–secular* turn by Cassidy–Deketelaere is interesting to us because of its kenotic motif: one is *theological turn* and the second one is *kenotic turn*. The authors of kenotic turn, unlike of theological turn, are not interested in theological notions for Christianity's sake. They use such theological notions for atheistic arguments, for example, *death of God* in Friedrich Nietzsche, *de–theologisation* in Martin Heidegger, or *de–Christianisation* in Jacques Derrida. These concepts are, Cassidy–Deketelaere opines, the product of Christian theology's kenotic structure.[751] "Christianity is the religion that empties itself out of its religious or theological character into secular modernity."[752] Gianni Vattimo is a prominent philosopher, who excessively dealt with kenosis. He opines that incarnation and cross has brought the traditional metaphysical ontology to an end and religion has come out of its metaphysical framework.[753] The kenosis of God challenges all institutions and structures of the world to avoid all forms of authority and to take the roll of a servant.[754]

Walter Kasper sees in the modern philosophical thoughts on kenosis a positive possibility to solve the problem of suffering of God, which is hardly impossible in the metaphysically

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[750] Cf. Gregg LAMBERT, Return Statements. The Return of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, Edinburgh 2016, specially 161—168.

[751] Cf. CASSIDY-DEKETELAERE, Towards a Phenomenology of Kenosis, 130f.

[752] ibid., 131.

[753] Cf. Gianni VATTIMO, Beyond Interpretation. The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy, Stanford 1997, 73.

[754] Cf. Jakob Helmut DEIBL, Geschichte—Offenbarung—Interpretation. Versuch einer theologischen Antwort an Gianni Vattimio (Religion—Kultur—Recht 9), Frankfurt/M 2008, 153—173.

oriented theological tradition. At the same time, he warns about some undeniable dangers in this trend, because of its temptation to empty the cross of Christ. These dangers can be observed in the kenotic theory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[755] In our theologizing in the context of religious pluralism also the idea of kenosis can positively contribute. However, non–religious interpretation of kenosis or kenotic theories which does not fit to Christian theology cannot contribute to a Christian theology of religious pluralism.

8.2 Influence of *Kenosis* in Theology

Having discussed the philosophical responses to concept of kenosis, now we make a short survey on the influence of kenosis in theology, starting from patristic and scholastic period till the modern and contemporary theological developments.

8.2.1 Paradox between Impassible and Suffering God

In the previous chapter we have seen that the early church was focused on creating a creed to prevent heretical influences of Arianism, Apollinarism, Monophysitism and so on to protect *divinity* of Jesus. Gnostic interpretation that Logos has taken only an apparent body in the incarnation was also a threat to Christian belief. Early Fathers of the church were engaged in defending the immutability of God against heretics. The form of God, and so the glory of Son cannot change even during kenosis. As opined by Walter Kasper, the fathers were compelled to differentiate the God of history according to Bible from mythological conceptions of gods who undergo changing and for that the fathers used motifs of Greek philosophy and its axiom of God's impassibility (*apatheia*) without compromising biblical testimony.[756] Greek philosophical concept of an immutable perfect God and the suffering God of Christianity were not easy to combine together. Against the early Christian heresies early Church has defended the full divinity of Christ with the help of philosophical concepts. There were protests against this tendency of using Hellenistic philosophical concepts of explain Christian God, from early time onwards. For example, Montanism, a spiritualist–rigorist tradition of second century Christianity, tried to expose the contrast between the *pure* religion of Apostolic times and the *perversions* of churchly Christianity; Tertullian,

[755] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 192.

[756] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 190.

commending on the influence of Aristotelian philosophy on the heresies, calls Aristotle as the *father of all heresies*.[757]

The bible says that God is affected by the action and suffering of human beings and Philippians hymn speaks about the suffering and death of God, who became man. This stands as a paradox to God's impassibility. Some early Fathers let this paradox continue. For example, Ignatius of Antioch writes, "the incomprehensible and impassible one became capable of suffering for our sake."[758] Tertullian speaks of a dead God (*Deus mortuus*)[759] and of a crucified God (*Deus crucifixus*)[760], which anticipates the sixth century Theopaschite controversy that advocates One of the holy Trinity suffered in the flesh.[761] According to general patristic conception suffering was something external, passive, and non–voluntary experience. Therefore, suffering could not be attributed to the Almighty God.

A paradigm shift came when the suffering of God is attributed to God's free will. God suffered not because of a must, but because of His free will. Then the suffering is not an expression of finitude, but an expression of God's power and freedom. Gregory Thaumaturgus, Hilary, and also Augustine took this attitude. "If he was also weak, this was due to his own fullness of power," says Augustine.[762] This line of argument found its pinnacle in the *apathia*–axiom of Origen.[763] He found the love of God towards humans as the reason of His incarnation, suffering, and the death on Cross. Walter Kasper opines that the scholastic tradition has failed to take advantage of these positive rudiments of a solution and followed metaphysical theology.[764]

8.2.2 Kenotic Theologies

Criticism against the Hellenistic influence on Christianity that can be traced also in early Christian times, for example Montanists, is deepened and systematized from the

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[757] CROUSE, The Hellenization of Christianity, 22.

[758] IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Ad Polycarpum* 3,2 (*Patres Apostolici* 2, 188; FUNK–DIEKAMP).

[759] TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Marcionem* II, 16 (ANF 3, 309; ROBERTS–DONALDSON).

[760] TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Marcionem* II, 27 (ANF 3, 319; ROBERTS–DONALDSON)

[761] Cf. Roland FABER, *Theopaschismus,* in: LTK^3 9, 1464–1465, here: 1465.

[762] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* XIV, 9 (CCL 48, 425—430; DEKKERS– FRAIPONT).

[763] ORIGEN, *De principiis* II, 4, 4 (ANF 4, 277f ; ROBERTS – DONALDSON).

[764] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 190f.

Reformation onwards.[765] Critics against the Hellenization of Christianity emphasized the need of de–Hellenization of Christianity, were dissatisfied about the metaphysical discussions on God, and wanted to re–discover biblical God and Jesus. Martin Luther's criticism against the metaphysical theology of scholasticism has brought a new way of theologizing beyond metaphysical discussions. Exposition of God in the light of cross was his focus. Divine and human natures reciprocally share their properties each other (*communicatio idiomatum*). Against this interpretation, there was a strong criticism from the part of Calvinists, and they tried to maintain the transcendence of the Logos in relation to Jesus Christ. In the kenotism controversy of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we can see the reminiscence of this unsettled problem. While the Giessen school advocated that the incarnate Word renounced the use of divine attributes like omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, the Tübingen school opined that He did not reveal these attributes externally even though He possessed them.[766] Both schools were of same opinion that the subject of kenosis is the *logos ensarkos*.[767]

The kenotic theory the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has tried to preserve and develop the Christological tradition of the early church. Gottfried Thomasius, F.H.R. Frank, W.F. Gess etc. are the prominent kenoticists of the nineteenth century and their theological position is named as *the complete kenosis of the mind*, which was strongly criticized by Karl Barth, because it has undermined the divinity of Jesus Christ.[768] David R. Law describes the attitude of nineteenth century kenotic theologians: "kenosis is the means by which the Logos accommodates his divine nature so that he is able to assume a form compatible with living a genuinely human existence, albeit without undermining the integrity of either the divine or the human nature."[769] Anglican kenoticists, also influenced by Hegel, focused on a realistic picture of human Jesus with his self–consciousness according to modern biblical studies.[770] The difference between kenotic theologians of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their nineteenth and twentieth centuries descendants lies on the fact that the

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[765] For more information cf. CROUSE, The Hellenization of Christianity, 22—33.

[766] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 191.

[767] Cf. LAW, Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology, 38.

[768] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 192f; We cannot generalize the position of nineteenth century kenoticists because there is also difference in their positions. For a differentiation between Thomasius and Gess, for example, cf. LAW, Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology, 39f.

[769] LAW, Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology, 38.

[770] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 193.

latter applied the notion of kenosis also to the pre–existent Logos.[771] Some Russian Orthodox theologians like Sergei Bulgakov were also influenced by Hegel and other philosophers and thinkers of western world.

Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Heribert Mühlen, Jean Galot, Hans Küng, Walter Kasper, Jürgen Moltmann, Eberhard Jüngel, Georg Koch, and others have proposed new premises in responding to the Christological problem caused through the post–idealistic critique of Hegel. Advocates of process theology also addressed this problem with different presuppositions, which are based on the Whiteheadian distinction between primordial nature and consequent nature of God.[772]

T.F. Torrance opines that Philippians hymn provides no ground for any theory of *kenosis* or *emptying* as that has been expounded in the *kenotic theories* of the incarnation, which advocate that in the incarnation the eternal Son emptied himself of some of his divine attributes. The hymn talks about the self–emptying of God. God humbles himself by taking–leave of the glorious form of divinity and taking–on the servant form of humanity, yet without ceasing to be God. Sergei Bulgakov also opines that the incarnation does not mean a change in God himself, but it involves a movement of God: God *leaves–behind* divine being and *enters–into* creaturely being, without ceasing to *be* God. He criticizes kenotic theologians because they limited the question of kenosis to Christology, and the incarnation specifically. They should have understood kenosis in the background of God's relationship to the world. Hans Urs von Balthasar has extensively discussed this and concluded that kenosis concerns the doctrine of God, not mere Christology.[773] Walter Kasper summarizes the theology of nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an attempt to newly interpret the concept of God and his immutability in the light of the cross of Jesus Christ and to give a new relevance to the biblical understanding of the God of history. He warns that such an attempt to understand God and Jesus Christ must not turn to a wisdom of this world but must hold fast to the folly of the message of the cross.[774] Hans Urs von Balthasar challenges the traditional philosophical apathy doctrine about God: "Wer Gott Veränderung, Bewegung,

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[771] Cf. LAW, Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology, 38.

[772] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 193.

[773] Cf. CASSIDY-DEKETELAERE, Towards a Phenomenology of Kenosis, 133f.

[774] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 193f.

Werden abspricht, verschließt ihn und sein Wirken in völlige Unverständlichkeit.“[775] Thomas R. Krenski tries to explain the suffering of God without endangering God’s transcendence based on Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology.[776] Thus a new tendency in theology has evolved in which kenosis is applied in almost all realms of theology, not limiting it to Christology.

8.2.3 *Ur–kenosis* in the Trinity

Ur–kenosis is to be understood as a theory of relationship within trinitarian God (immanent Trinity). Hans Urs von Balthasar considered as a champion of theory of *urkenosis* and his theology is centered on kenosis. “Le thème de la kénose est à l’évidence l’un thèmes fondamentaux de la pensée de Balthasar.”[777] According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, the ontological possibility of kenosis of God in the incarnation lies on the eternal kenosis of God, the trinitarian sharing. The self–utterance of Father in the begetting of the Son (*generatio*) is the first, all–encompassing kenosis in God and in *spiratio* of the Holy Spirit this self–giving love is again evident.[778] This initial kenosis is the source of all kenotic acts of Triune God. “[T]he ‘primal kenosis’ of the Trinity ‘makes possible all other kenotic movements of God into the world; they are simply its consequences.”[779] Hans Urs von Balthasar is tremendously influenced by Sergei Bulgakov, a Russian theologian. Sergei Bulgakov sees in the manifestation of God’s love to the world the reflection of the eternal relationship between the Trinitarian persons. The Father empties himself in begetting the Son and the Son empties himself by submitting to be begotten from the Father and by being obedient to the Father. This mutual sacrifice within the Trinity is called *supratemporal*

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[775] Cf. Hanspeter HEINZ, Der Gott des Je–mehr. Der christologische Ansatz Hans Urs von Balthasars, Bern – Fankfurt/M. 1975, 99; “Who denies God change, movement, and becoming he seals God and his works in complete unintelligibility.”

[776] Cf. Thomas R. KRENSKI, Passio Caritatis. Trinitarische Passionlogie im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars, Freiburg 1990, 21.

[777] Vincent HOLZER, Christologie de la figure (Gestalt) et christologie de la kénose chez Balthasar, in: Revue des Sciences Religieuses 79/2 (2005), 249–278, here: 258; “The theme of kenosis is evidentially one of the fundamental themes of the thought of Balthasar.”

[778] Cf. Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, Die Handlung (Theodramatik 3), Einsiedeln 1980, 308.

[779] Mark A. MCINTOSH, Christology, in: Edward T. OAKES (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Cambridge 2006, 34. URL: https://www-cambridge-org.uaccess.univie. ac.at/core/books /cambridge-companion-to-hans-urs-von-balthasar/0AAD435BD5EE3AD6DE355E25714DC17C [accessed: 28 October 2023].

suffering.[780] Such explanation of Trinity based on self–emptying out of love has gained momentum in trinitarian theology.

Commending on Hans Urs von Balthasar, Thomas R. Krenski writes that the self–gifting (*Verschenkung*) of the Father and Self–dispossession (*Selbstenteignung*) of the Son to the Father gives the Son equal status and same substance. The Holy Spirit is equal to Father and Son because He seals this Self–dispossession (*Selbstenteignung*) in which He wants to be nothing but a total devotedness and self–gifting (*reine Hingabe und Verschenkung*) of the love between Father and Son.[781] If God is understood as love, he is not only intransitive but also transitive, He loves an *other*. Thus, in God Unity (*Einheit*) and distance (*Abstand*) are not contradictory.[782] Walter Kasper opines that, if God has revealed himself as one who loves in freedom, then God must be, from eternity, self–communicating love. In this, Walter Kasper sees a starting point for the understanding of the Trinity. He traces the attempt to understand God as love till Origen. Origen teaches that the Son proceeds from the will, that is, from the love of the Father. Augustine also thinks alike. He recognizes that the Trinity reveals itself in light of the concept of love.[783]

The above–mentioned theology of Trinity has also faced strong criticism. The theory of *ur–kenosis*, according to Michael Stickelbroeck, endangers the consubstantiality of Trinitarian God through defining the essence or substance of God through a hypostatic process (kenosis within Trinity). He criticizes that Hans Urs von Balthasar gives more importance to Persons in Trinity than to consubstantiality. If the Being of God is defined as the kenotic interplay among divine persons, then we can better speak about a moral equality in Trinity rather than a substantial equality and it can lead to tritheism.[784] Jürgen Werbick criticizes Hans Urs von Balthasar that he has one–sidedly hypostatized the metaphor of selflessness to explain the substance of God.[785] Metaphor of sharing, according to Jürgen

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[780] Cf. Paul L. GAVRILYUK, The kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov, in: SJT 58/3 (2005) 251–269, here: 255f.

[781] Cf. KRENSKI, Passio Caritatis, 140.

[782] Cf. ibid., 159.

[783] Cf. AUGUSTINE *De Trinitate* VIII, 10 (CCL 50, 290f; DEKKERS– FRAIPONT); IV, 2 and 4 (CCL 50, 294f., 297—300; DEKKERS– FRAIPONT); Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 195f.

[784] Cf. Michael STICKELBROECK, Trinitaische Prozessualität und Einheit Gottes. Zur Gotteslehre H.U.v. Balthasars, in: FKTh 10/2 (1994) 124–129, here: 126.

[785] Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, Gottes Dreieinigkeit denken? Hans Urs von Balthasars Rede von der göttlichen Selbstentäußerung als Mitte des Glaubens und Zentrum der Theologie, in: ThQ 176 (1996), 225—240, here: 237.

Werbick, is enough to explain the substance of God.[786] Application of kenosis to understand immanent Trinity shall not contradict the trinitarian concept of God. If it does so it cannot do justice to Christian belief.

8.2.4 Creation as Kenosis

Hans Urs von Balthasar understands the whole divine economy, from creation to incarnation, as the self–descent of God in the world, i.e., God's kenosis.[787] While *Ur–kenosis* is an inner trinitarian kenosis, creation is the first external kenotic act of Triune God. In Christian teaching on Trinity sees Hans Urs von Balthasar an inner relationship between God and the world. Trinitarian concept can explain both unity and difference between God and the world.[788] In Creation, which is the first kenosis of Triune God *ad extra*, He has gifted freedom to humans, even though it reduced His freedom. The covenant and the incarnation are the second and third act of kenosis respectively.[789] Sergei Burgakov also states that Trinity reveals its inner life partially in creation and redemption.[790] Karl Rahner expresses similar idea: "We are entirely justified in understanding creation and Incarnation not as two disparate and juxtaposed acts of God 'outwards' which have their origins in two separate initiatives of God. Rather […] we can understand creation and Incarnation as two moments and two phases of the *one* process of God's self–giving and self–expression […]."[791] Sergei Bulgakov speaks about *self–limitation* of God in creative kenosis, in which God freely chooses to limit his omnipotence by giving humans a degree of independence.[792] God's self–emptying in creation explains Hans Urs von Balthasar also in terms of human freedom. In creation God has given a share of his freedom to human beings.[793] Walter Kasper proposes that God's inner trinitarian kenosis is the presupposition for that, God, who is infinite, can make room for the creation. God's relationship with humanity starts from kenotic act of

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[786] Cf. ibid., 231.

[787] Cf. Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, Pneuma und Institution (Skizzen zur Theologie 4), Einsiedeln 1974, 54f.

[788] Cf. Thomas KRENSKI, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Das Gottesdrama, Mainz 1995, 36f.

[789] Cf. VON BALTHASAR, Die Handlung, 305, 308; Alexander HOFFMANN, Kenosis im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars und in der japanischen Kyoto-Schule. Ein Beitrag zum Dialog der Religionen, Bonn 2008, 21f.

[790] Cf. GAVRILYUK, The kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov, 255.

[791] Karl RAHNER, Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity [trans. by William V. DYTCH], New York 1978, 197.

[792] Cf. GAVRILYUK, The kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov, 258.

[793] Cf. Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, Neuer Bund (Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik III/2), Einsiedeln ^{2}1988, 198.

creation and in creation the infinite God gives room for creation.[794] Gregory J. Semeniuk opines that "there is an implied narrative of creations' loss of glory through sin"[795] in Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology. Trinitarian God begins relationship with world through creation and this relationship develops through covenant and kenosis of Son is the climax of God's self–communication to the world.

8.2.5 Kenosis and Theology of Incarnation

Hans Urs von Balthasar finds an ontological possibility for the incarnation in the eternal kenosis in God, in God's trinitarian self–devotion.[796] "Jesus' self–offering upon the Cross for the sake of the world is possible because it springs form the ever–greater eternal self–sharing."[797] According him, the kenosis of the Son is factually inherent in the creation, i.e., the first kenosis *ad extra*. The doctrine of creation is fully Christological.[798] The logic of incarnation lies in the creation. Creation is determined to participate in the divine life. Human beings are called to a realm of infinite life with God. At the same time there is a real distinction between God and creature and this realm of difference is a reverential space, in which creatures can achieve their destiny by surrendering themselves to God in love and freedom. But sin had distanced humankind from achieving this destiny and human being could never respond to the call to relationship with God. [799] Through the incarnation, God has entered into the alienated distance between humanity and God and fulfilled human freedom.[800] Hans Urs von Balthasar explains incarnation in terms of love. To be is to love and to give. Being and love are co–existent.[801] Love fulfills though transitive and radical incidents. Divinity of God contains in the sovereignty and spontaneity of His freedom. Freedom proves itself in the self–revelation. In the self–revelation of God, i.e., descent of God in the world, trinitarian love of God is unveiled. Because the Son is the eternal icon of

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[794] Cf. Walter KASPER, Barmherzigkeit. Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüssel christlichen Lebens, Freiburg et al. 2012, 99.

[795] Gregory J. SEMENIUK, The Soteriology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, in: Bogoslovni vestnik 74/4 (2014), 639—660, here: 650.

[796] Cf. Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, Theologie der drei Tage, Einsideln-Freiburg 1990, 33.

[797] MCINTOSH, Christology, 34.

[798] Cf. MCINTOSH, Christology, 26.

[799] Cf. ibid., 35.

[800] Cf. SEMENIUK, The Soteriology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, 641.

[801] Cf. Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, Der Zugang zur Wirklichkeit Gottes, in: Johannes FEINER – Magnus LÖHRER (eds.) Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus (Mysterium Salutis: Grundriß heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik 2), Einsiedeln et al. 1967, 15—45, here: 17.

Father, he can accept, purify, and lead the created world to the *communio* of divine life without losing its identity.[802] Thus, the participation of finite freedom of humankind in the inner trinitarian Diastasis is the real presupposition for the descent of Son into the World. Sergei Burgakov opines that cross symbolizes not only human salvation but also the power of mutual kenosis of Trinitarian persons.[803] The modern theologians have attempted to explain kenosis of the Son not as a deprivation of divinity as it is done by some of kenotic theologians and modern philosophers, but they see all attributes of divinity in Son's kenosis in incarnation and death on cross.

8.2.6 Kenosis in the Mission of the Church

Paul's parenetic motif in using Philippians hymn has become relevant in theology, especially in ecclesiology and missiology. Church is called to follow kenotic Christ. Still there is a fundamental difference between the kenosis of God and kenosis of church. Church, unlike divine logos, is not a pre–existent divine reality. Kenosis in real sense (*eigentlichen Sinn*) can only be applied to Christ as divine Son, but kenosis in metaphorical sense (*uneigentlichen Sinn*) can be applied to church.[804] However, in spite of such differences Hans Urs von Balthasar finds certain analogies between kenosis–Christology and kenosis–Ecclesiology. The voluntary restraint of Son of God to the limitedness of sinful humanity is comparable with the insertion of Christian, led by the Holy Spirit, into the narrowness of institutionalized church. However, Balthasar differentiates kenotic–Christology from an ecclesiological behaviour theory. In opposition to that Ansgar Kreutzer emphasises a continuation and interconnection of Paul's kenosis–Christology and the ethics of humiliation in the church, which is indebted to the service of the people in the world.[805]

LG 8, while presenting church as the sacrament of salvation, binds the kenosis motif (Phil. 2: 5, 11; 2 Cor. 8: 9) with the mode of presence of church in the world. But here also the application of Christological basis in ecclesiology is at the level of analogy, not in real sense.

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[802] Cf. Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, Hans Urs von Balthasar. zu seinem Werk (original title 'Mein Werk'), Einsiedeln –Freiburg 2000, 101.

[803] Cf. GAVRILYUK, The kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov, 256.

[804] Cf. VON BALTHASAR, Pneuma und Institution, 121–127.

[805] Cf. Ansgar KREUTZER, Kenopraxis. Eine Handlungstheoretische Erschließung der Kenosis–Christologie, Freiburg im Breisgau et al. 2011, 400f.

> Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, "though He was by nature God […] emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave", and "being rich, became poor" for our sakes. Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, "though He was by nature God […] emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave", and "being rich, became poor" for our sakes. (LG 8)

The council suggests a Christological option for church. she, following her Lord Jesus Christ, has to renounce all forms of power politics and to become the servant of the Kingdom of God for the world. An ecclesiology based on kenosis–Christology has the potential for a contemporary theology of the Church. The kenotic being of the Church makes clear the roll of the Church in the modern society.[806] In our context of religious pluralism, the ecclesiology, based on kenosis–Christology, explains clearly the function of the church in the world.

Lumen Gentium 8 admits the weakness and error–proneness of the Church. They belong to the kenotic identity of the Church. It can be seen in two levels: firstly, the Church embraces sinners in her bosom; secondly, the Church is always in need of purification and always follows the way of penance and renewal. Interpreting these lines of *Lumen Gentium*, Peter Hünermann opines that these are to be considered as the confession of structural sins in relation to the institutional forms and manifestations of the Church.[807] Walter Kasper notes that the Second Vatican Council reserves the expression *primal sacrament* only to Christ, whereas the church is called the *universal sacrament* of salvation. He states that the eschatological context of sacramental definition of the church excludes any kind of ecclesiological triumphalism. The church is the sign of kenotic Christ who emptied himself and took the form of a servant.[808] The church is to come out of this structural and institutional triumphalism, following the example (kenosis) of her master, Jesus Christ. She has to engage in her mission, entrusted by the same kenotic God, with a humble and self–emptying attitude.

Hans Urs von Balthasar opines that every creaturely reality shares in and analogically expresses something of the being of God (*analogia entis*) and likewise, every Christian life shares in and analogically expresses something of kenotic mission of Jesus (*analogia missio*). There is both the analogy of being and analogy of mission between Christ and the

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[806] Cf. ibid., 401.

[807] Cf. Peter HÜNERMANN (ed.), Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche, Freiburg im Breisgau–Wien 2004, 369.

[808] Cf. Walter KASPER, Theology and Church, New York 1989, 116f.

Christian. Christian existence means a re–performance of the Christ–drama on the world stage.[809]

8.2.7 Kenosis and Theology of Religious Pluralism

There are many attempts to apply kenosis in the theology of religious pluralism. David Hadley Jenson sees in God's radical altruistic turn towards the world a radical altruism of Christian readiness for dialogue. Because God has revealed himself unreservedly to the creature as His other, every Christian must do the same.[810] He understands, like Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, creation and incarnation as two moments of God's self–giving.[811] Emptying Christ invites Christians to consider the wisdom of other religions. This openness to the religious other does not presuppose the dilution of Christian confession but strengthening of it.[812] Relativizing of differences between truth claims of different religions is not compatible with kenotic theology. "To empty oneself on behalf of the Other is not to recognize that s/he is the same as me, but to open one's eyes to his/her difference. The religious Other remains Other and is not absorbed into my religious worldview."[813]

Alexander Hoffmann opines that through creation God gave space to *other,* His dialogue partner. This was out of God's unlimited love. Trinitarian God, which is characterized by selflessness, mission and love, is the basis of Christian dialogue. Only when a Christian gets out of his/her selfishness and authority, s/he can be capable of dialogue.[814] Jan–Heiner Tück notes that the kenotic character of God's self–revelation in Jesus Christ can check Church's temptation to triumphalism and recognizes kenosis as one of the characteristics of his reflexive inclusivism.[815]

Peter C. Phan introduces a kenotic theology of relations among religions. To implement Nostra Aetate's exhortation to *acknowledge, preserve, and promote* the truths and values of other religions, he suggests a *kenotic theology of religion* in the mold of Christ's *kenosis*

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[809] Cf. Marthinus J. HAVENGA, Christ as performace. On Hans Urs von Balthasar's dramatic Christology from below, in: STJ 6/4 (2020), 139–158, here: 148.

[810] Cf. B. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität? 119.

[811] Cf. David Hadley JENSEN, The Emptying Christ. A Christological Approach to Interfaith Dialogue, in: Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 11/1 (2001), 5–24, here: 12.

[812] Cf. ibid., 16.

[813] ibid., 19.

[814] Cf. HOFFMANN, Kenosis im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars, 23.

[815] Cf. TÜCK, Glauben im Modus des ´als ob´, 61f.

affirmed in Philippians 2: 7.[816] He outlines his kenotic theology by pointing out three elements; rejection of supercessionism, Overcoming *teaching contempt* in earlier cultural–religious history, and adopting a Trinitarian Christology.[817] Peter C. Phan was investigated by the United States Bishops' Doctrine Committee based on some aspects of his book *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue*. The *serious concerns* that raised in this book, according to the Committee, are uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, the salvific significance of non–Christian religions, and the universal salvific role of the church. The CDF found six errors in Phan's book to be rectified; 1) non–Christian religions have a positive role in the salvation, 2) the conversion of non–Christians to Christianity is not important, 3) the terms such as *unique*, *absolute*, and *universal* in relation to the salvific role of Christ are to be avoided, 4) Holy Spirit works also in non–Christian religions independently of the *Logos*, 5) church of Christ is not to be identified with the catholic church, 6) Jesus Christ is not the culmination of God's covenant with the Jewish people.[818] In the introduction of the book *Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty–First Century* it is stated that in the contemporary context of religious pluralism, characterized by diversity and conflicting truth claims, we must break the strangling narrowness of our own particular religious home, institution, and even community. What is suggested is a deep intellectual and spiritual humility, in Christian term kenosis, that compels one to recognize that one's religion offers a true but ever partial insight into reality and that other religions can correct, complement, enhance and perfect one's own. The authors of the book write about a need to de–absolutize and relativize the doctrines in a positive sense.[819]

The Indian Theological Association considers kenotic Christ as an important element in theologizing in Indian context. Kenotic Christ transforms the cultures and transforms humanity to a new community of love in which the other is respected and accepted in his or

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[816] Cf. Peter C. PHAN, Reading Nostra Aetate in Reverse. A Different Way of Looking at the Relationship among Religions, in: Horizonte 13/40 (2015), 1826–1840, here: 1835.

[817] Cf. Mary Jo CURTSINGER, Kenotic and Trinitarian Theology in Interreligious Dialogue, in: Theophilus (The Student Journal of Catholic Theological Union) 4/1 (2017), 11–24, here: 14.

[818] Ambrose MONG, Dialogue Derailed. Joseph Ratzinger's War against Pluralist Theology, Eugene 2015, 228f.

[819] Cf. Vladmir LATINOVIC et al. (ed.), New Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue. Introduction, in: Vladmir LATINOVIC et al. (ed.), Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty–First Century, New York 2016, 3–14, here: 7.

her self–understanding.[820] Kuncheria Pathil, an Indian theologian, opines "[i]n India we need to develop *a new Christological thinking, which is Pneumatic, inclusive, cosmic, liberative, kenotic and opening to other religion.* It should be a Christology from below, less triumphant without universal and absolute claims, and at home in our land and culture."[821] He continues, "When Jesus emptied himself, the Father raised him to new life and glorified his humanity. […] The Church can fulfil this [Christ's] mission only by undergoing the process of 'kenosis' that took place in Jesus."[822] There are many works that consider kenosis as a key to interreligious dialogue based on the kenotic theology of individual theologians.[823] Some theologians advocate for a kenotic theology in interreligious dialogue in the sense of a negative or apophatic theology. They understand kenosis in the sense of kenotic theory of Thomasius. For example, Susie Paulik Babka writes about the willingness "to negate the dearly held […] beliefs about God through apophatic modes of thought, necessary not only within one's native tradition but also to the meeting of worlds at the table of interreligious dialouge"[824]. Such interpretations of kenosis were rejected by the magisterium of the catholic church.[825] Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the interpretation of kenosis before applying it in the theology of religious pluralism.

8.2.9 Kenosis in other Theological Disciplines

Application of kenosis in theologizing is not limited to the above mentioned fields of theology. Feminist theology is another area, in which kenosis has proved its great influence. Daphne Hampson and Sarah Coakley have brought the feminist kenosis discussion in the

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[820] Cf. INDIAN THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, ITA Statement 1989. Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, no. 26–27; Kuncheria PATHIL, Theological Reflections on the Church from India, in: Asian Horizons 6/4 (2012), 677–706, here: 691.

[821] PATHIL, Theological Reflections on the Church from India, 692.

[822] ibid., 693f.

[823] For example, cf. Randy J.C. ODCHIGUE, The Radical Kenoticism of Gianni Vattimo and Interreligious Dialogue, in: Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 16 (2006), 173–189; Alexander HOFFMANN, Kenosis im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars; N'Dala CONSTANT, Kenosis von Hans Urs von Balthasar als Instrument für den interreligiösen Dialog [unpublished dissertation University of Vienna], 2009.

[824] Susie Paulik BABKA, Emptiness and Otherness. Negative Theology and the Language of Compassion, in: Vladmir LATINOVIC et al. (ed.), Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty–First Century, New York 2016, 65–77, here: 75.

[825] Pius XI, Encyclical on the Council of Chalcedon *Sempiternus Rex Christus* (8 September 1951), in: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091951_sempiternus-rex-christus.html [accessed: 20 January 2024] (§ 29).

foreground.[826] Javier Monserrat applies epistemological kenosis in this theology of science.[827] Application of kenosis in Christian praxis is dealt in detail by Ansgar Kreutzer.[828] Since our study concentrates on the relevance of kenosis in the theology of religious pluralism, we are not going to the other details.

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a short overview about the influence of the concept of kenosis in modern theological discussions. As we have seen the kenosis of God in incarnation has a tremendous influence in theology. It has challenged the traditional concept of apathy of God. Kenosis has found its place also in trinitarian theology. The interpretation of kenosis has a definitive role in deciding the status of Christ: whether Christ is a pure human devoid of all divine attributes, God who only appears as a human, or true God and true human as it is declared in the early councils of Christianity. God's relationship to the world is also depicted as a kenotic relationship: creation in which God has gifted human freedom by freely limiting himself and incarnation in which God freely limited himself into the worldly time and space in taking the human form. Church that is the sacrament of Christ in the world is called to follow the kenotic example of Christ in the mission. Church's relation with other religions is also to be defined by this kenotic attitude. In the next chapter we examine deeply the relevance of kenosis in the theology of religious pluralism according to Bertram Stubenrauch.

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[826] Cf. Annie SELAK, Orthodoxy, Orthopraxis, and Orthopathy. Evaluating the Feminist Kenosis Debate, in: Modern Theology 33/4 (2017), 529–548, here: 531–541; Jennifer Newsome MARTIN, The "Whence" and the "Whither" of Balthasar's Gendered Theology. Rehabilitating Kenosis for Feminist Theology, in: Modern Theology 31/2 (2015), 211–234, here: 215–217; Marta FRASCATI–LOCHHEAD, Kenosis and Feminist Theology. The Challenge of Gianni Vattimo, New York 1998.

[827] Cf. Javier MONSERRAT, Kenosis. Towards a New Theology of Science, in: Pensamiento 63/238 (2007), 637–658.

[828] Cf. KREUTZER, Kenopraxis.

Chapter 9

Kenotic Self–Awareness in the Context of Religious Pluralism according to Bertram Stubenrauch

9.0 Introduction

Bertram Stubenrauch differentiates between two approaches in the theology of religious pluralism: engagement with concrete religions influenced by the spirit of dialogue and the basic attitude of Christianity to non–Christian religions. His study belongs to second category and aims to develop a theory of Christianity from the perspective of catholic dogmatic to define the relationship of Christian faith to the systems of other religions with the help of biblical and ecclesiastical tradition.[829] So it is very clear that Bertram Stubenrauch does not want to develop a *synthetic* theology, which is proposed by pluralist theologians, but he wants to develop a catholic theology of religious pluralism. He uses kenosis as a basic element to define the relationship of Christianity with other religions.

9.1 Kenosis: A Key to Define Christian Relationship with other Religions

Bertram Stubenrauch notes that even though the concept of kenosis has been widely discussed in the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism, in Christian missiology and also by the Post–modern philosophers like Gianni Vattimo, in the theology of religious pluralism it is just in pioneering stage. He refers to David H. Jensen and Martha Th. Frederiks. David H. Jensen opines that, as summarized by Bertram Stubenrauch, those who understands the kenotic presence of Christian message in the world, unconditionally identify himself with others and transcends the boundaries, which are hitherto considered as invincible. It does not annihilate own identity, but empower and develop it, because the uniqueness of Jesus Christ consists in the fact that he has given himself to the world, as the

[829] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 23.

other that is willed by him, without ceasing to be God and without destroying the autonomy of the creation.[830] Martha Th. Frederiks opines that interreligious dialogue, characterized by divine kenosis demands radical contextualization and the readiness to be changed by the other in order to be with the other.[831] Bertram Stubenrauch notes that the demands to perceive other religions in kenotic way lead to some suspicions: What is the final aim of radical contextualization of Christian faith? Does the dialogue lead to a dogmatic indifference or religious eclecticism? Should the Christian identity be sacrificed for the sake of dialogue?

Mentioning the controversial themes concerning kenosis model, Bertram Stubenrauch points out two undisputed theses, which are interwoven each other. Firstly, God has, without any reservation, shared the human life situation in Jesus Christ; secondly, Jesus was really human and so he was restricted in many ways, he had to undergo temptations and showed his ignorance in many matters like any other human. The notion of kenosis pendulates between ineffable God of Israel and the carpenter Jesus of Nazareth. The divine God is came into the humanity and it is the divine revelation. God willed to speak conclusively with humans through the Son, after He has spoken in many and various ways by the prophets (cf. Heb. 1: 1).[832] Infinite God has become finite human. Unfathomable and absolute reality has become conceivable and concrete. God has become human, without losing his divinity, that is Jesus Christ. A radical separation between *theos* and *christos*, between theology and Christology is not plausible. This is the key of Christian faith.

9.2 Kenotic Christology, not Triumphalism

Pluralist theologians want to demythologize Christology and to place *theos* in center instead of *christos* in order to avoid triumphalist attitude of Christianity towards other religions. But Christian proclamation of *one God of all* is not an expression of triumphalist supremacy. Jesus' obedience and self–emptying up to the crucifixion has challenged all hitherto conceptions about God. God is to be proclaimed in a way that how He has revealed himself, that means, shattered out of love, for many. This is the truth claim of Christianity.[833] Bertram Stubenrauch, here, attempts to break the accused linkage between the truth claim of

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[830] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 113; JENSEN, The Emptying Christ, 12f.

[831] Martha Th. FREDERIKS, Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue, in: Missiology: An International Review 33/2 (2005), 211–222, here: 217.

[832] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 115f.

[833] Cf. ibid., 116.

Christianity and triumphalism. The criticism that monotheistic belief, which does not tolerate other gods and religions, has an inherent tendency of violence is questioned here.[834] Pluralist theologians also consider Christological claims as the cause of superiority claims of Christianity.[835] Bertram Stubenrauch points out that Christological Dogma does not cause triumphalism, but it evokes self–giving love. Jesus Christ, self–emptied Son of God, can never be a triumphalist king.

9.3 Transcendental God and Universality and Finality of Revelation through Jesus Christ

A God of all humankind is the key point of Christian proclamation. This God is transcendental God, incomprehensible for mankind. Therefore, it is impossible to have universally valid knowledge about God without his revelation.[836] Pluralist theologians emphasize the incomprehensible transcendental God, *Deus semper maior,* and go further without recognizing the fullness of revelation of God in Jesus Christ.[837] According to John Hick, Jesus was *totus Deus*, completely God, but not *totum Dei*, whole of God.[838] Bertram Stubenrauch finds the starting point of pluralist theology in the denial of *capax Dei* to express himself both definitively and universally in a single particular individual and it also denies *capax infiniti*, human capacity to embrace divinity within the limitations of world.[839] He connects the concept of transcendental God with God's self–revelation in Jesus Christ. Christianity affirms that God is capable of giving himself and He is free, powerful and humble enough to spend Himself totally. And for human *sarx* is not an obstacle to become the self–expression of God.[840] These two are the basic elements of Christian understanding of incarnation. Jesus Christ, the concrete individual, is the *pleroma* of God (Col. 1: 19).

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[834] Cf. Rolf SCHIEDER (ed.), Die Gewalt des einen Gottes. Die Monotheismusdebatte zwischen Jan Assmann, Mischa Brumlik, Rolf Schieder, Peter Sloterdijk und anderen, Wiesbaden 2014.

[835] Cf. Perry SCHMIDT-LEUKEL, Pluralist Theologies, in: The Expository Times 122/2 (2010), 53–72, here: 66.

[836] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 117.

[837] Cf. Sigrid RETTENBACHER, One Text– different Meanings. The Notification on Jacques Dupuis in the Light of the Second Vatican Council, in: David CHEETHAM et al. (eds.), Interreligious Hermeneutic in Pluralist Europe. Between Text and People, New York–Amsterdam 2011, 3–25, here: 11f.

[838] Cf. John HICK, God and the Universe of Faiths. Essays in the Philosophy of Religion, London: 1975, 159.

[839] Cf. Bertram STUBENRAUCH, Controversy about Incarnation. What is Specific to Christianity? in*:* The Irish Theological Quarterly 64/4 (1999), 349–360, here: 351.

[840] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Controversy about Incarnation, 352.

Therefore, a de–absolutization of Christology is unthinkable.[841] In Him and through Him God has revealed and communicated everything that He wanted to communicate with humanity. God has revealed everything through Jesus Christ– i.e., he is the fullness of revelation– not mere something, not fragments, as advocated by pluralists.[842] Bertram Stubenrauch enriches Chalcedonian dogma, divinity and humanity are one –unmixed and undivided–, with pneumatological aspects and asserts that Jesus Christ is not only *totus Deus*, but also *totum Dei*. "The Spirit of God joined the Divine Logos together with a human nature to form one single human being, which precisely because of Pneumatological (rather than charismatic) personality structure acts as *totus Deus* and at the same time as *totum Dei*."[843]

Emphasizing Gerhard Gäde's thesis that God's relationship to world can only be expressed as an incorporation of world into an inner relationship of God, i.e., the trinitarian relationship among the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Bertram Stubenrauch criticizes pluralist theologies, which undermining the differences hold that the Absolute–in–itself (in John Hick's terminology *the Real*, Kantian *Noumenon*) never and nowhere reveals himself.[844] According to pluralists, this ultimate transcendent reality is variously conceived, experienced (*the real* / *phenomenon*) and therefore, variously responded.[845] Various religions are the subjective manifestations of *the Real* corresponding to the cultural and historical conditions. Bertram Stubenrauch notices that John Hick's concept of God is *one among others* (*einer unter anderen*).[846] Kenotic Christ, in an opposite way, shows that the revelation of the Absolute Reality is concentrated on the concrete individual, i.e., Jesus Christ, under the conditions of finitude and historical limitedness. Therefore, Christian concept of incarnation of God does not refer just to a principle, which accomplishes differently at different contexts as pluralists opine, but to a specific historical person, Jesus Christ. Pluralist theologians are not ready to accept the name Jesus Christ as *a name for all*. They are ready to accept the name of Jesus Christ as *a name for many*, for the Christians. Bertram Stubenrauch, quoting Acts 4: 12b, asserts that Christianity cannot compromise the

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[841] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 146.

[842] Cf. ibid., 140.

[843] STUBENRAUCH, Controversy about Incarnation, 352f.

[844] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 117.

[845] For example, John HICK, A Pluralist View, in: Dennis OKHOLM –Timothy PHILLIPS (eds.), Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World, Grand Rapids 1996, 29–32.

[846] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 141.

universality of Jesus Christ. Jesus has experienced rejection from his people and died on the cross without any divine splendour and therefore, according to letter to Hebrews, He is the high priest. He is, despite His suffering and death, the Son of God. The council of Nicaea has emphasized that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. He is also *totum Dei*.[847] At the same time, God in the form of human has all human limitations.

9.4 Religious Other: An Indispensable Dialogue Partner

Every human is, according to Marcilio Ficino, *vultus ominium nodusque et copula mundi* (the countenance of all things, and the knot and bond of the world).[848] S/he represents God on the earth, is created to recognize and love the integrity and beauty of the creature and its creator.[849] Human is finite on the earth and simultaneously has the capacity for infinity. According to Karl Rahner, God's revelation to every human being is through every finite human experience and at the same time it is an experience of absolute transcendence.[850] Therefore, for a Christian, the religious other, as a human being experiencing God's transcendental revelation, is an indispensable dialogue partner. Their religion also, which, according to *Gaudium et Spes* 16, roots in their conscience and forms their conscience, is entitled to its own dignity, to give a communicative character to the *temple of God in human*.

The religion of the other has its relevance because of two reasons: firstly, every human has *capax infiniti* and secondly, s/he has the strength and mission for conversion, for the religiously motivated transformation of the history. When Christians engage in dialogue with the faithful of other religions, they confront with the universal salvific will and determination of God.[851] Thus, interreligious dialogue is, from a Christian –*kenotic*– point of view, not a monologue between a superior and an inferior partner, but a dialogue with mutual respect. According to Paul F. Knitter, to engage in fruitful dialogue, all religions are to be at same level and therefore, *demythologization* of Christology is necessary to bring Christianity to the level of all other religions.[852] But Christianity, inspired by the kenotic attitude of Jesus

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[847] Cf. ibid., 178.

[848] Cf. Marsilio FICINO, Theologia Platonica III 2:242 (Marsilio Ficino, Platonic Theology I, 242; HANKINS).

[849] Cf. Walter A. EULER, „Pia philosophia" et „docta religio". Theologie und Religion bei Marsilio Ficino und Giovani Pico della Mirandola (Humanistische Bibliothek 1: Abhandlungen), München 1998, 189.

[850] Cf. Karl RAHNER, Experience of Self, in: Karl RAHNER, Theological Investigations 13, New York 1975, 122–132.

[851] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 118-119.

[852] Paul F. KNITTER, Apologie einer pluralistischen Theologie und Christologie, 76.

Christ, can engage in fruitful dialogue with a self–emptying attitude. God has become human and taken the form of a slave. Thus, Christianity can go deeper than the equal level and take the form of a servant. Since the very identity of Christianity is self–emptying, it need not strip away its identity for the sake of dialogue.

Bertram Stubenrauch finds theological foundations of dialogue. Christian revelation based on the incarnation and unsurpassable self–giving of God implies its dialogical relationship with all religious expressions of the humanity and hence its will to integrate these expressions in its worldly epiphany. This concept is not sufficiently unfolded in the theology of religions.[853] God's relationship to the world is dialogic. The first creation narration clearly points that the origin of earthly existence was through *word*.[854] In Johannine gospel Jesus is presented as the personification of *Word of God*. God expects response to His Word. This dialogue between creator and creature is the foundation of dialogue between religions. Every religion provides resonance and vividity to the Word of God. But no religion is identical with the Word of God. God has spoken as a human and therefore every religion, through which many people to respond to the Word of God, is to be respected by Christianity.[855] To avoid confusion Bertram Stubenrauch suggests a new terminology, i.e., interreligionel or intertheological dialogue instead of interreligious dialogue. Because religions do not obtain their belief from a result–oriented dialogue between religions.[856] Every human is addressee of God's communication. Therefore, *ignorantia hominis* is *ignorantia Christi*. Plurality of humans is reflected in the plurality of religions. Therefore, *ignorantia religionum* is *ignorantia Christi*.[857]

9.5 Dialogue and Mission

Jesus wanted to engage in dialogue with other humans and He has suffered rejection.[858] Every human is unique and searches for Gott and therefore, is a religious symbol. God has chosen this symbol to reveal Himself without any reservation. The appreciation of humanity of Jesus coincides with the appreciation of every human and eventually to the appreciation

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[853] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 25-26.

[854] Cf. Oswald BAYER, Schöpfung als Anrede, Tübingen 1986, 109–127.

[855] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 175.

[856] Cf. ibid., 173–174.

[857] Cf. ibid., 183.

[858] Cf. ibid., 147.

of whole humanity. Accordingly, Christianity as a religion that proclaims incarnated God as the source of kingdom of God, has to formulate its message according to the knowledge about every religion and in a meaningful way to human.

Mission is firstly, the announcement of the conviction that God has given everything in a kenotic way; secondly, it is the proclamation of an exemplary biography that is called to bring many biographies, in which God plays an important role, in dialogue; thirdly, mission respects the individuality of own religion and of other religions and human freedom; Mission can finally be understood only as an unceasing dialogue.[859] Developing a meta–religion is not the goal of dialogue as mission, as it is viewed by most of the pluralists. At the same time dialogue is not without a goal. Without an existential change of the partners in dialogue the missionary impetus will be superfluous. The deep human capability for divine is at the center of dialogue. Every believer can formulate and express own belief in the face of equally formulated belief of the other. Then the human, the religious symbol, is respected. At the same time the great respect towards the divine mystery will be increased. God remains greater even after his kenotic self–giving to the world. *Deus semper maior*, even after his self–emptying. According to trinitarian understanding, in the Father remains God as He was and as He always will be. In the Son and the Holy Spirit God gives Himself and He loves. The divine love makes everyone free, and this freedom is to be understood as freedom to choose. In the dialogue between religions also this freedom to choose is relevant. Christian mission has to proclaim the devotion to Christ as a possibility of new freedom. Other religions are to be respected as equal as own religion because they reflect the plurality of humanity, and at the same time Christianity can be promised as an alternative. This mission is inevitable to Christianity.[860] Christian mission is not to be realized with a triumphalist attitude, but with a kenotic attitude, with the readiness to a selfless pro–existence.[861] Christian mission has to cultivate its theological interest in other religions. As the expressions of the fellow human beings of incarnated Logos, other religions throw light on the human desire for God. Proclamation of God of Jesus Christ has its goal in the *messiahnization* of the whole humanity. Bertram Stubenrauch sees missionization as *messiahnization*. Jesus' cross drives kenosis of God to its end, but cross does not affect transcendence of God. Through the Jesus' obedience until cross, transcendence of God

[859] Cf. ibid., 148.

[860] Cf. ibid., 149–150.

[861] Cf. ibid., 168.

works in the human history. *Messiahnization* means: one, while proclaiming Christ, strengthens religious sensitivity of the other; searches real holiness in the gesture of adoration and conversion; demands obedience and devotion in order to transform the world. Such a *messiahnization* can be achieved only through dialogue. Dialogue must be conducted freely so that no religion shall feel it as procrustean bed.[862] Here, Bertram Stubenrauch criticizes pluralist tendency to form a new universal religion undermining identity of each religion. Classical inclusivism can contribute only little to the *messiahnization* because it relativizes other religions' claim to absoluteness. Dialogue, which lead by its own will, respects other religions without absorbing them and without denouncing own identity. Since every human is unique in relation to God's promise, the religious other is inherent in Christian proclamation. Whether the dialogue leads to conversion or not is something known only to God.[863]

9.6 Identity of Christianity in its Dialogue with other Religions

Creation and incarnation are the two moments of God's self–giving. Paul introduces the Philippians Hymn with an exhortation "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5). Therefore, total altruistic attitude of God is to be the attitude of Christians. The unreserved self–giving of God and of human are only at an analogical level. The relationship between God and human is not identical with the relationship between religions. God has completely revealed himself to humanity through his creation and incarnation. There is no plurality, but definitiveness when God reveals himself. Here, Bertram Stubenrauch clearly refutes the pluralistic idea that the divine revelation is pluriform and to be discovered through the dialogue between religions.[864] But this definitiveness, according to him, is to be gradually known, acknowledged and newly articulated by the humans and it is universally valid. God's word, which is incarnated through Jesus Christ, naturally demands a response from humans. Christians are the first respondents to incarnated word of God. Message of incarnated God reaches to the believers of other religions through dialogue. At the same time Christians,

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[862] Cf. ibid., 182.

[863] Cf. ibid., 183.

[864] Cf. Paul F. KNITTER, Jesus and the other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility, Maryknoll/NY 1996, 25f; Leonard SWIDLER, Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue. The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today, in: Leonard SWIDLER (ed.), Toward a Universal Theology of Religion, Maryknoll/NY 1987, 5–50, here: 12.

with respect and willingness to learn, have to understand the convictions of other religions as a response to the word of God. There is always a chance of misunderstanding and rejection when Christians share the message of Jesus Christ with other religions. This rejection and misappropriation were experienced also by Jesus Christ.[865] Jesus has responded to this rejection and to the violence against him with self–giving love unto the death on cross. *Turning toward the other* is not an option, but an obligation. Kenosis of God prohibit Christianity from striving for godforsaken authority. Christianity must constantly undergo a self–examination and correction to know whether its presence in the world is kenotic. Every religion, inclusive Christianity, is not the end or goal. Their goal is the salvation of the humans and the glory of God. Bertram Stubenrauch justifies pluralist's emphasis on soteriocentrism.[866]

Bertram Stubenrauch does not hold the position of Gianni Vattimo, also of pluralist theologians, that kenosis demands the de–absolutization of Christology. According to him, deeds of Jesus Christ is present beyond time. Therefore, Christianity must incessantly proclaim the *name* that is *above every name*. But this proclamation has nothing to do with the triumphalism. If other religions were assimilated in own confession of faith, then it would be triumphalism. Kenosis refrains from such temptation. Synthesis between religions will be realized only in *eschaton.* Attempts to artificially induce synthesis is an act of violence.[867]

Theories of theology of religions generally differentiate between Christ and Christianity, the church. But this differentiation does not mean a separation. There is a continuation between historical Jesus and church. Christ of New Testament is not understandable without his church. Church is a messianic community because of Christ. As a messianic community the church is glorified through Christ. How does the church communicate its glory, is determined by the incarnational character. The church needs not compromise its identity, i.e., scripture, creed, dogma, liturgy, and law. These all reflect God's determination to the world. Bertram Stubenrauch warns of the temptation to forget own identity in dialogue. According to him, without the unique case of God's kenotic presence in Jesus of Nazareth, the phenomenon of human religiosity will remain as an enigmatic abeyance. Religions are

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[865] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 120.

[866] Cf. ibid., 123.

[867] Cf. ibid., 124.

equal not because of their same source. Religions deserve great appreciation because of the kenotic character of incarnation. Church has to give testimony to this kenotic character.[868]

9.7 Conclusion

Bertram Stubenrauch wants to refute pluralist theologies and exclusivist theologies. He also points out the inability of classical inclusivism to appreciate and respect other religious traditions. He affirms that other religions or the fact of religious pluralism can be viewed by Christianity only in the light of God's self–revelation in Jesus Christ. This self–revelation of God was through incarnation, kenosis. He rejects the pluralist view that God cannot reveal himself in a concrete individual, but God's revelation is scattered in various concrete revelations. He emphasizes universal salvific will of God. Every human has the capacity to response to God's call. Different human responses to God's call or word of God are reflected in the plurality of religions. Christianity as the community of respondents to the self–revelation of God in Jesus Christ has the duty to proclaim its faith to the believers of other religions. This proclamation is to be done through dialogue with mutual respect, because the religious other and other religions are the expression of human response to the word of God. Bertram Stubenrauch tries to prove that from a Christian self–understanding without denying its own identity, other religions can be respected as equal as own religion without denying their identity.

[868] Cf. ibid., 126f.

Part III

Theology of Religious Pluralism, Which Recognizes, Respects and Values the Identity of other Religious Traditions based on Kenosis

In the first part a historical survey on the Christian attitude towards other religions was presented. The last chapter of the first part presents the important questions to be addressed in a theology of religious pluralism. Answering these questions is to be done from a Christian perspective since our concern is a Christian theology of religious pluralism. Christian theology cannot deal with the plurality of religions distancing itself from its belief that God has completely revealed himself in Jesus Christ as it is suggested by the pluralist theologians. Without this basic element of Christianity, it will lose its own identity. One does not lose one's own identity in the dialogue but rather attains a better and a deeper understanding of one's own identity. Without own identity one cannot take part in dialogue. Pluralist theologians present a particular prerequisite for dialogue, i.e., the withdrawal of own truth claims and acceptance of an *a priori* principle that truth is to be find out through dialogue.

Christ is Son of God is one of the earliest convictions of Christianity and this conviction is based on Jesus' self–awareness as the Son of God. This conviction of early Christianity is expressed in the New Testament and early Christian writings, of which the early Christians hymns are typical example. The Philippian hymn is one of the important examples of this. It presents God's self–emptying in the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ and exaltation of Jesus Christ in the resurrection and gifting of the name above every name. The interpretation of this hymn has many implications in Christology. The exegetical and theological interpretation of the hymn and the development of Christology in the early Christianity is discussed in the first two chapters of the second part. Many theologians have tried to apply kenotic Christology in their reflections on different religions. Bertram Stubenrauch wants to address the questions of theology of religious pluralism from a

Christian self–awareness, i.e., a kenotic awareness.[869] Based on this kenotic self–awareness, in this third part we are trying to answer the question in the theology of religious pluralism.

[869] Cf. Chapter 9.

Chapter 10

Defending a *Christian* Theology rather than a *World* Theology: Identity of Christianity in Interreligious Dialogue

10.0 Introduction

It is necessary to make clear that a Christian theology is the concern of this study. It is not only because the research field confined to Christian theology, but also because only a confession–based theology can engage in fruitful dialogue with other religions. Pluralist theologies go farther from religious convictions of people and therefore, cannot influence the believers to fruitfully engage in dialogue with other religions. They remain as a supra–theology or outsiders' perspective (*Außenperspektive*). It is a Christian, not a neutral non–confessional person, who engages in interreligious dialogue with other religious partners. Therefore, a Christian theology that does not annul own faith shall provide a Christian dialogue partner theological basis for interreligious dialogue. A *world* or *universal* theology cannot help him/her to engage in dialogue.

10.1 Christian Theology Rather than a World Theology

Pluralist attempt to construct a *universal* or *world* theology is not compatible with Christology.[870] It does the same to other religions. Michael Barnes correctly observes that basing on a type of philosophical universalism which picks up common values and essences and undermines the highly complex ways in which people of faith seek to identify themselves, pluralism fails to address religious pluralism and the differences between

[870] Cf. Chapter 6, session 6.1; the attempt to form a universal religion is not a new one. *Una religio in rituum varietate* in *De pace fidei* of Nicholas of Crusa is a medieval attempt in this direction. cf. chapter 3, session 3.2; Assmanns' *religio duplex* also indicates such an attempt.

them.[871] Pluralists' theological method proceeds in *a priori* dogmatic manner, ignores empirical data from the history of religions, and results in the *flattening out* of differences. The existential character of theology is to be taken seriously. This helps us to appreciate the distinction between the empirical study of religions and theology, to keep different religions different, and to appreciate the uniqueness of religions without claims to superiority.[872] Pluralist theology stands near to an empirical study of religions. It views all religions from an *outside perspective* and thus, they present a new theology that places all religions at a secondary level whereas at the primary level it places *theos*. Therefore, it is criticized as a *universal* or *world* theology.[873] The basic difference between a Christian theology of religious pluralism and pluralist hypothesis is that whereas the former tries to integrate the insights of religious studies into Christian theology, the latter tries to integrate theology into the perspective of religious studies.[874]

Jacques Dupuis opines that one *universal religion* is an impossible utopia.[875] In the sixth chapter we have seen the opinion of Raimon Panikkar that the theologies also differ substantially as the religious beliefs are substantially different and a theological enterprise which levels differences is not desirable.[876] A world theology undermines the differences between, and truth claims of various religious traditions. It contributes nothing to the theology of religious pluralism other than creating another truth claim, or religion. Therefore, theology of religious pluralism cannot be done in a universal manner. Christians, from a Christian awareness and faith perspective, have to develop a theology of religious pluralism, that means, it will be a Christian theology of religious pluralism.[877] That is the difference between empirical study of religion and theology. "[W]hile sciences of religion observe, evaluate, and compare religious phenomena from without, with the objective detachment that is claimed for positive science, the theology of religions begins and remains at every step within a faith perspective, with the presuppositions which faith implies."[878] Since our

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[871] Cf. BARNES, Nostra Aetate, 17.

[872] George V. KARUVELIL, Absolutism to Ultimacy. Rhetoric and Reality of Religious "Pluralism", in: Theological Studies 73 (2012), 55–81, here:56, 60.

[873] Cf. Chapter 6, Session 6.1 and 6.2.

[874] Cf. WOHLLEBEN, Die Kirchen und die Religionen, 365f.

[875] Cf. DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 141.

[876] Cf. PANIKKAR, Intrareligious Dialogue, 149–153.

[877] Cf. Chapter 6, Session 6.2.

[878] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 5.

concern is Christian theology of religious pluralism, the fundamental Christian belief is to be taken seriously.

The Christian belief that Jesus Christ is God's ultimate answer to the human search for God is fundamental for the encounter of Christianity with other religions. It is the duty of Christian theologies of religions to reflect on the uniqueness of Christ–event and to make the universality of this event understandable as the fulfilment of one single salvific plan of God for all humans.[879] As Jacques Dupuis rightly opines,

> The model that needs to be developed then is not that of mutual assimilation through a reduction of faith content but that of interpretation and cross–fertilization of the various traditions in their diversities; not a levelling of religious identities but a dialogical openness and mutual enrichment through conversation. Personal commitment to one's own faith and openness to the faith of others need not be mutually exclusive; rather they ought to grow in direct proportion.[880]

Therefore, the fundamental Christian belief that God has completely revealed himself in Jesus Christ is not a hindrance to the openness and respect towards other religions. On the contrary, the very nature of divine revelation in Jesus Christ is an imperative for the respect and positive attitude towards religious other.

10.2 Christ's Uniqueness and Universality as Integral Part of Christian Theology

Karl–Josef Kuschel summarizes two questions that are at the centre of the discussion in the Christian theology of religious pluralism: does the faith in the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, belong to the essence of Christianity? Do the theory of pre–existence and incarnation of Jesus Christ and consequent proclamation that Jesus Christ is the only saviour of the world lead to the demonstration of the superiority of Christianity over other religions?[881] Pluralist theologians generally opine that the theory of incarnation and pre–existence of Jesus Christ is the reason of triumphalist attitude of Christianity and Christianity has to reinterpret Christology to engage in fruitful dialogue with other religions. This reinterpretation of Christian doctrines is based on historic–critical analysis of New

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[879] Cf. George AUGUSTIN, Gott eint–trennt Christus? Die Einmaligkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi als Grundlage einer christlichen Theologie der Religionen ausgehend vom Ansatz Wolfhart Pannenbergs (Konfessionskundliche und Kontroverstheologiische Studien LIX), Paderborn 1993, 371.

[880] DUPUIS, Toward a Christian Theology, 7.

[881] Cf. KUSCHEL, Christologie–unfähig zum interreligiösen Dialog, 137.

Testament writings, *kerygma* of early Christianity and creed formulations of Nicaea and Chalcedon councils.[882] This reinterpretation of Christology resembles the attempt to find a *pure* Christianity devoid of Hellenist influences.[883] Kenotic theories also emphasizes the humanity of Jesus and rejects divine status of Jesus.[884] John Hick, while arguing for the de–construction of Christology, opines that the early councils have converted *metaphorical* son of God to *metaphysical* God the Son through the adoption of a non–biblical concept *ousia*.[885]

The image of Jesus according to synoptic gospels is different from that of Johannine gospel and Pauline writings. To make the de–absolutization of Christology compatible with Christianity, John Hick argues that the original Christianity had understood Jesus' divine sonship as a metaphor which was later converted to metaphysical understanding.[886] Choosing out synoptic gospels without considering Johannine and Pauline writings cannot do justice to the conviction of early Christianity. I repeat the opinion of James D. Dunn, which is quoted in seventh chapter "[C]hristology should not be narrowly confined to one particular assessment of Christ, nor should it play one off against another."[887] The further development of Christological doctrines has kept the balance between divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Replacing early Christianity's belief in the divinity of Jesus with any historical statement about Jesus is a radical break with historical Christianity.[888] Karl–Josef Kuschel asserts the need to develop a Christian theology seriously considering the plurality of religions. The criterion for evaluating such theologies is the question about the *adequate Christianness* of these theologies. Christology has a key role here. Christology decides the Christianness of the theologies of religious pluralism.[889]

The doxological and confessional character of language of creeds of early Christian councils presupposes a most certain religious belief and indicates not only the statements on *reference object* but also on the *professing subject*. From the perspective of Christian faith, normativity, finality, and definitiveness of Jesus Christ is the definitive component of

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[882] Cf. KAUFMAN, Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology, 5–12.

[883] Cf. Chapter 7, Session 7.3.

[884] Cf. Chapter 7, Session 7.1.3.2.

[885] Cf. HICK, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, 44.

[886] Cf. ibid., 78.

[887] DUNN, Christology in the Making, 266f.

[888] Cf. Chapter 7, Session 7.3.

[889] Cf. KUSCHEL, Christologie–unfähig zum interreligiösen Dialog, 143.

Christological dogmas, which can be interpreted, not be eliminated.[890] How a Christian theology that undermines the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ can represent Christianity or Christians as individual in interreligious dialogue? According to Christian belief Jesus Christ is the fullness of the whole revelation (Col. 1: 15) and thus Christ–event is the centre of history.[891]

> Christology is at the heart of Christian faith, worship and life. The claim for Jesus as incarnate Word and saviour is not only an ontological claim but a functional one. Christian faith maintains that the historical Christ event in the world has made, and is making, a definitive difference in the possibilities for individuals and for human history as a whole. This faith, therefore, links the ultimate or absolute to a particular person, time, place, and culture in cosmos and history. […] The logic of the Christian gospel and worldview is such that this particular truth–claim holds the whole together, and Christian faith collapses if the definitive claim for Jesus Christ is denied.[892]

Therefore, a Christian theology, indeed also a Christian theology of religious pluralism, have to seriously consider God's self–communication to humanity in Jesus Christ in theologizing.

10.2.1 Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ: Decisive for Christ's Uniqueness and Universality in Salvation

From the early time of Christianity onwards it has emphasized the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Because both the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ is important in establishing the universality of Christ–event. In the New Testament writings, we can observe this fundamental character of Christian belief. The very name *Jesus Christ* itself reveals a statement of faith: *Jesus* is the *Christ*. *Jesus* represents the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew. *Christ*, *Messiah* in Aramaic, means the anointed one who was considered eschatological messianic figure at the time of Jesus' lifetime. The double name *Jesus Christ* itself shows the importance of both human and divine character of Jesus Christ. If the historical Jesus fades to background, there is a danger of idealisation of faith and loss of soteriological relevance of Christ–event. If the divinity of Jesus is undermined, Jesus is considered only as a model for humans and here also the soteriological efficiency of Jesus Christ is questioned.[893] Enlightenment period has advocated for such a model–Christology

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[890] Cf. WOHLLEBEN, Die Kirchen und die Religionen, 365.

[891] Cf. HOPING, Jesus aus Galiläa, 310f.

[892] Monika K. HELLWIG, Christology in the Wider Ecumenism, in: Gavin D'COSTA (ed.), Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions, Maryknoll/NY 1990, 107–116, here: 109.

[893] Cf. Tobias NICKLAS, Wer war Jesus von Nazareth? Jesus im Spiegel der Evangelien, in: Gerhard HOTZE et al. (eds.), Jesus begegnen. Zugänge zur Christologie (Theologische Module 3), Freiburg et al. 2009, 7–78, here: 7f.

(*Vorbildchristologie*). The encounter of disciples of Jesus with the risen Christ brings them to the realisation that Jesus, who proclaimed the kingdom of God and underwent suffering and death on cross, is Christ, the Son of God. This realisation is expressed not only in the gospels but also in the New Testament epistles.[894] This belief in the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ is expressed in the form of the dogma of Chalcedon: divinity and humanity are one – unmixed and undivided – in him who is called Jesus of Nazareth, and who *for that reason* is known as the Son.[895] The distinctiveness of Christianity depends categorically on this insight of Chalcedon.

Karl Rahner logically presents the necessity of incarnation of God: the abyss between the eternal immutable God and the historically mutable world is bridged in the fact that God has revealed himself in the story of a human, Jesus.[896] Without Jesus' proclamation God would not be revealed as the unconditional love; without Jesus' readiness to death the earnestness and irrevocable determination of God's love would not be revealed; and without his resurrection the reliable loyalty and the power that conquer death would not be revealed; without the Christ–event God himself would not be revealed. Based on this unity of events the history of Jesus is God's self–revelation for the salvation of humanity.[897] Christian belief in the universality of salvation through Jesus Christ is based on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as God's self–revelation to the humanity. Therefore, Karl–Josef Kuschel opines that if one wants to substantiate the faith that God has revealed himself in Christ and not otherwise, the definitiveness, finality, and normativity of Christ–event are inevitable.[898] The revision of Christology by pluralist theologians wants to develop "a Christology that is compatible with a vision of theology in which Christianity is understood in the context not only of its own history, but also of the history of religions"[899]. A Christian theology has a duty to develop a theology of religious pluralism that is compatible with Christology. It has to understand the fact of religious pluralism and to answer the theological questions raised by pluralism on the light of Christology. Because from the beginning of Christianity onwards

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[894] Cf. Gerhard HOTZE, Das Christusbekenntnis in Neuen Testament, in: Gerhard HOTZE et al. (eds.), Jesus Begegnen. Zugänge zur Christologie (Theologische Module 3), Freiburg et al. 2009, 79–118, here: 79.

[895] Cf. DH 302.

[896] Cf. TÜCK, Christologische Entwürfe im 20. Jahrhunderts, 161.

[897] Cf. ibid., 171; Thomas PRÖPPER, Evangelium und freie Vernunft. Konturen einer theologischen Hermeneutik, Freiburg et al. 2001, 47.

[898] Cf. KUSCHEL, Christologie–unfähig zum interreligiösen Dialog, 148f.

[899] Chester GILLIS, Pluralism. A New Paradigm for Theology (Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs 12), Louvain 1993, 89f.

the unique nature of Jesus Christ as God and human is an integral part of its faith. This faith was expressed in New Testament writings and in the dogmas of early Christian councils.

10.2.2 Philippians Hymn: An Early Christian Liturgical Hymn that Depicts Early Christian Understanding about Christ.

The intellectual conceiving of being simultaneously God and human is a continuing problem of Christian theology. This problem has its origin in the basic Christian confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. Church has tried to justify this confession in its different historical epochs. Early Christian ecumenical creeds and the patristic theology that defined Christological orthodoxy were the result of these attempts to rationalize the Christian confession of Jesus Christ as God and human.[900] Philippians hymn, as we seen in the seventh chapter, is a central scriptural witness to Christian belief about Jesus Christ, because the divinity of Jesus Christ is the central doctrine of Christianity. The hymn seems to speak of Christ's pre–existence and incarnation and to support basic Christian belief in the divinity and humanity of Christ. It also encourages Christians to follow the example of Jesus Christ.[901] Without denying its liturgical background and hymnic language we can consider the confessional character of Philippians hymn.[902] "The words we use to praise and proclaim God shape […] our understanding of that God."[903] It expresses early Christians' conviction about the divinity of Christ. Kenosis of God which is depicted in this hymn also reveals the character of God's self–communication to humanity.

John Hick asserts that Christ is not the only source, from which God's salvific spirit flows. There are also other sources of God's salvific plan. However, he admits that for Christians Christ is the universal normative manifestation of this spirit. Therefore, at least for Christians, according to pluralists, and thus definitively for a Christian theology, Christ is the criterium for the appraisal of religious truth claims. The Christian appraisal criterion for the discernment of spirits is the confession of faith in Jesus Christ; not only a nominal confession of faith in Jesus Christ, but also the mindset (*Gesinnung*) that was in Jesus Christ (cf. Phil. 2: 5). This mindset is to be understood theologically rather than psychologically. This attitude of self–emptying, unconditional surrender, and the openness for God and

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[900] Cf. DAWE, The Form of a Servant, 10.

[901] Cf. MORGAN, Incarnation, Myth, and Theology, 52.

[902] Cf. Chapter 7, Session 7.1.3.7.

[903] Cf. JENSEN, The Emptying Christ, 7.

humans that Jesus showed on the cross can also be found in the explicit confession of faith in Jesus Christ.[904] Through kenosis motif Christian faith has answered the basic question how God redeems the world that in Jesus Christ God has *freely and totally* given himself. God has shared human life by freely limiting himself. Thus, kenosis is a basic characteristic of the Christian faith in God. Paul applies the kenosis motif to ethical problems at Philippi and Corinth. Paul's ethical appeal is based on a Christological doctrine.[905] God's free and total self–disclosure to humanity in Jesus Christ belongs to the basic Christian belief and this free, self–emptying, and revelatory character of Christ–event is pivotal in theologizing, also in the background of religious pluralism.

10.2.3 Kenosis of God: An Impetus to Christian Relationship to Other Religions

Bertram Stubenrauch, in his book *Pluralismus statt Katholizität*, tries to present God's kenotic self–communication as a hermeneutical guiding principle for Christianity's relationship with other religions.[906] Jan–Heiner Tück, in his response to Jan Assmann, suggests *reflexive inclusivism* which withholds Christian truth convictions without triumphalism. As sixth of seven aspects of *reflexive inclusivism*, he presents fundamental kenotic character of self–revelation of God in Jesus Christ.[907] Other characteristics of his *reflexive inclusivism* also contain different elements of kenosis of God. The first aspect, that is the insight of creation theology, can be supplemented by the concept of creation as kenosis of God.[908] Sergei Burgakov, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karl Rahner see creation as the first kenotic act of God in his relationship with humanity.[909] Revelation as God's free self–revelation through Jesus Christ is also a relevant aspect of *reflexive inclusivism*. God's revelation is not to be considered as an instructive decree, but as an event of communication in the sense of a personal self–disclosure of divine mystery. God shares *himself*, not *something*. This complete self–communication of God with humans is possible only if God goes beyond himself and encounter humans in a human manner. The loving encounter of lover to the loved one reaches its goal only if the recipient is open and receptive to the love and if the recipient has freedom either to accept or reject it. The completeness of divine self–

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[904] Cf. BERNHARDT, Die Herausforderung, 34.

[905] Cf. DAWE, The Form of a Servant, 20f.

[906] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 25.

[907] Cf. TÜCK, Glauben im Modus des ‚Als ob' 61.

[908] Cf. ibid., 56.

[909] Cf. Chapter 8, Session 8.2.4.

revelation of God in Jesus Christ on the one hand contradicts pluralist conclusion that the *Absolute* can never completely revealed in historical concrete revelations and on the other hand avoids triumphalism and respects the freedom also to reject the revelation.[910] Bertram Stubenrauch opines that the Christian confession and proclamation of a *God of all* in kenotic sense does not express a triumphalist superiority. God has revealed himself in kenotic manner and the church has to proclaim God in kenotic manner.[911]

Application of kenosis in theology of religious pluralism is not always monotonous and without consequences. Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida and other thinkers have already suggested kenosis as a de–Christianizing model. I repeat the quotation which I cited in eighth chapter. "Christianity is the religion that empties itself out of its religious or theological character into secular modernity."[912] David H. Jensen, applying kenosis in theology of religious pluralism, also presents similar thought: It [kenotic discipleship] demands not simply that we respond to the Other's need, but that we empty any and *all* privilege in relation to her, even one's religious privilege."[913] Bertram Stubenrauch mentions also Martha Th. Frederiks' call for a radical contextualization of Christianity and readiness to be changed through the other. Bertram Stubenrauch views this type of application of kenosis with suspect by indicating the possibility to cause dogmatic indifference and loss of identity of Christianity.[914] Such interpretation of kenosis resembles the kenotic theory that advocated by Gottfried Thomasius and strongly criticized by Karl Barth because it undermines the divinity of Jesus Christ.[915] For Karl Barth *equality with God* (*Gottgleichsein*) is not identical with *form of God* (*Gottesgestalt*). Jesus was fully conscious about his *equality with God* and therefore, he could renounce the *form of God*. He explains kenosis using the anomaly of two lovers. The more two loving people belong together the more they can give oneself to one another without fear of losing oneself.[916] Using Karl Barth's understanding of kenosis, we can conclude that Christianity can love and respect other religions as equals without losing its own identity.

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[910] Cf. TÜCK, Glauben im Modus des ‚Als ob', 56–58.

[911] Cf. Bertram STUBENRAUCH, Christus, die Kenosis Gottes und das Gespräch zwischen den Religionen, in: IKaZ 36 (2007), 138–151, here: 141.

[912] ibid., 131.

[913] JENSEN, The Emptying Christ, 17.

[914] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 114f.

[915] Cf. Chapter 8, Session 8.2.2.

[916] Cf. BARTH, Erklärung des Philipperbriefes, 60f.

Walter Kasper sees in the modern philosophical thoughts on kenosis a positive possibility to solve the problem of suffering of God, which is hardly impossible in the metaphysically oriented theological tradition. At the same time, he warns about some undeniable dangers in this trend, because of its temptation to empty the cross of Christ. These dangers can be observed in the kenotic theory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[917] In our theologizing in the context of religious pluralism also the idea of kenosis can positively contribute. To avoid confusions regarding the interpretations of kenosis, Bertram Stubenrauch underlines two characteristic key data (*Eckdaten*): first, in Jesus Christ God has unreservedly accepted humanity; second, Jesus Christ was completely human and therefore in many respects limited.[918] The kenotic self–communication of God to humanity in Jesus Christ, according to Bertram Stubenrauch, helps Christianity to understand different religions differently and to consider all religions equally without an attitude of superiority. Because in Jesus Christ God has shown his almightiness (*Allmacht*) in the powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*). Jesus Christ is not a symbol of triumphalism, but a symbol of humility and love.[919] Only a kenotic theology that upholds both humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ can contribute to the theology of religious pluralism. God revealed himself in Jesus Christ in a kenotic manner. In becoming human the Son has freely decided to limit himself in time and space. God has emptied himself to become human, to communicate his indefinite love towards humanity in human language.

10.3 Kenotic Self–Awareness of Christianity

Divine kenosis in the incarnation belongs to the essential element of Christianity. Presenting the self–awareness or self–understanding of Christianity in the face of religious pluralism, Bertram Stubenrauch tries to establish that the Christian revelation based on the kenosis of God and his unsurpassable self–giving implies the dialogical relationship of the incarnation of God with all human religious expressions and so his will to integrate all these expressions in his worldly epiphany.[920] The influence of divine kenosis does not limit to Christology, or to doctrine of God. It influences also Christian life and ethics. It is the key to the whole

[917] Cf. KASPER, The God of Jesus Christ, 192.

[918] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 115.

[919] Cf. Chapter 9, Session 9.2.

[920] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 25.

drama of human salvation.[921] Divine kenosis shows that the Christian proclamation of *one God of all* is not an expression of triumphalist supremacy. Jesus' obedience and self–emptying up to the crucifixion has challenged all hitherto conceptions about God. Therefore, God is to be proclaimed in a way that how he has revealed himself, that means, shattered out of love, for many. This is the truth claim of Christianity.[922] "The moral appeal of God's self–giving is the motivation for the life of self–giving love for the Christian. God's free self–giving, his kenosis, describes the pattern of life for the Christian."[923]

Quoting Philippians hymn, *Lumen Gentium* asserts the necessity to follow the model of Christ: "Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men" (LG 8). Kenotic self–awareness of Christianity upholds Christ as God's complete revelation to humanity and this revelation is unique not only because of fullness of revelation but also because of its kenotic character. As Bertram Stubenrauch writes, God has given everything he can in Jesus Christ. Since he is a human, Jesus Christ has lived and taught as a human and he can express himself only as a particular human, as a co–human, who fully shares the *basar*–existence of children of Adam.[924] Christian kenotic self–awareness understands divine kenosis in the sense of Karl Barth. Jesus Christ had renounced the form of God without losing his equality with God. He could give himself to the humanity without fear of losing his divinity as two loving people can give oneself to one another without fear of losing oneself.[925] Bertram Stubenrauch opines that Christianity can and must become a hermeneutical avantgarde based on its kenotic self–awareness. The historical revelation of Word of God in Jesus Christ and trinitarian mystery enable Christianity to speak about a God, who gives himself to the world without losing himself.[926]

In theology of religious pluralism pluralist theologians advocate for the de–absolutization of Christology and withdrawal of truth claims for the *levelling* of religions. The incompatibility of such a theology with Christian self–understanding is also discussed.[927] In

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[921] Cf. DAWE, The Form of a Servant, 16f.

[922] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 116.

[923] DAWE, The Form of a Servant, 17.

[924] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 181.

[925] Cf. BARTH, Erklärung des Philipperbriefes, 60f.

[926] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 182.

[927] Cf. Chapter 6, Session 6.1.

kenotic self–awareness other religions are respected as equal as own religion without de–absolutization of Christology.

10.4 Conclusion

We have seen that a de–absolutized Christology cannot be the basis of a Christian theology of religious pluralism. God's complete and definitive self–revelation in Jesus Christ is an inevitable element of Christian faith. This faith is considered by the pluralists as the source of superiority claim and triumphalist attitude of Christianity. However, the very fact that God has completely and definitively revealed himself in Jesus Christ in a kenotic manner, not in a triumphalist manner, challenges pluralist association between Christology and triumphalism. The kenotic incarnation of God gives Christianity the possibility and ability to proclaim the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ as the divine self–revelation without triumphalist attitude, but with kenotic attitude. The attitude of self–emptying and humility that the Son had in his incarnation challenges all superior or triumphalist attitudes and inspires Christians to have the same attitude of Jesus Christ in their relationship with other religions.

Chapter 11

Rooted in Kenotic Self–Awareness and Open to Other Religions

11.0 Introduction

Divine kenosis calls the church for a kenotic existence in this world. But it does not mean that kenosis of God is equal to the kenosis of church. Church is not a pre–existent divine reality as the self–emptied Son. However, there is a continuation between Christ and church even though this continuation does not mean identification. Bertram Stubenrauch accepts the differentiation between Christ and church, but it does not mean separation. Jesus Christ of New Testament can be rightly understood only in the context of early Christianity. Church is the messianic folk through Jesus Christ, who was exalted from cross. He is the head of church and church is the body of him in this world. Church is the sacrament of kingdom of God in this world. As messianic folk church is also exalted in Christ. However, the manner, in which church communicates this honour is to be determined by the nature of incarnation, that is kenotic nature.[928] An ecclesiology based on kenosis–Christology has the potential for a contemporary theology of the church[929] and can help the church to fulfil its mission. *Lumen Gentium* 8 emphasises the Christological kenotic example in the worldly existence of the church.

> Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, "though He was by nature god […] emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave", and "being rich, became poor" for our sakes. Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men.

The kenotic self–awareness of the church helps to critically compare its own earthly life with the kenotic attitude of Jesus Christ. This self–examination sheds light to the negative elements in the life of church and gives strength to correct them and follow closely Christ's

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[928] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 125.

[929] Cf. KREUTZER, Kenopraxis, 401.

example. God's self–communication in Jesus Christ is to be continued in the world through the church and every human, as being with *capax infiniti*, is the object of this divine self–communication. Different religions represent expressions of human religiosity because every human is a religious symbol. Christian concept of God is a God of all and this God wills the salvation of all humans. Therefore, the kenotic self–communication of God is to be reached to every human and every human is the dialogue partner of divine communication.

11.1 Church in Constant Need of Renewal and Purification

Lumen Gentium 8 asserts that the one church of Christ, which is holy, catholic and apostolic *subsists in* the Catholic Church. At the same time, it admits the weakness of the church: "[…] the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal" (LG 8). Peter Hünermann commends that this confession reflects the structural sins in relation to the institutional forms and manifestations of the church.[930]

Not only the history of the church, but also its present structure is not devoid of evil or sin. Alone this fact underlines the need of constant renewal and purification of the church. Church's proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ cannot be effective if its concrete life contradicts the message. Therefore, the church has to always self–examine in the light of its call to follow Jesus Christ. To compare own religion with other religions and to reflect upon the abuse of own religion Hans Küng presents a general ethical criterion, i.e., *humanum.*[931] As specific Christian criterion Hans Küng says, "Jesus Christus ist für Christen das *entscheidende Regulativ*".[932] In so far as Christianity in its concrete life witnesses the one God and his Son Jesus Christ, it is the true religion to its followers. If it deviates from God and Christ, it is the false religion.[933]

Church is called to follow the path of Jesus (cf. LG 8). In following the path of Jesus Christ, Lumen Gentium refers to the kenotic nature of incarnation. Jesus Christ, though he was by nature God, emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave. The church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to

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[930] Cf. HÜNERMANN, Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche, 369.

[931] Cf. KÜNG, Theologie im Aufbruch, 288–294.

[932] "Jesus Christ is the decisive norm for Christians." ibid., 302.

[933] Cf. ibid.

proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self–sacrifice. Church has to self–examine in the light of kenotic pro–existence of Jesus Christ. *Ad Gentes* also expresses church's call to follow kenotic way of Christ. The church must walk in the same path on which Christ walked. This path is the path of poverty and obedience, of service and self–sacrifice unto death. From death Christ came forth a victor by his resurrection (cf. AG 5). In relation to ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* states that it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, from *self–denial* and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way (cf. UR 7). Church always has to remember the need to be purified from its weaknesses and to follow the path of its master. Its relationship with other religions is also to be examined seriously in the light of the kenotic model of the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ.

11.1.1 Other Religions Assist in the Self–Examination of Christianity

Kenotic church, even though aware of its divine and holy nature, is aware of its weakness and sinfulness (cf. LG 8). The history of Christianity has many times shown this sinfulness. Once persecuted church has turned many times in the history to the persecutor. Other religions have also a critical role to correct the church in its deviation from its divine call to be the sacrament of salvation, to be the witness to divine love in Jesus Christ. In the context of antisemitism in the twentieth century European history, Jan–Heiner Tück describes the readiness to reflect upon oneself with others' eye as a peculiarity of reflexive inclusivism. The church has to critically reflect upon the failures in its history. The presence of anti–Jewish elements in the catechism and liturgy of catholic church was critically examined and removed after the bitter experience of Shoah. Judaism is no more considered mere as a stepping stone of Christianity, but the persistent theological dignity of Israel as God's eyeball is recognized. The negative attitude towards Islam as a heresy or as demonic religion has also changed to a positive appreciation.[934] Jewish criticism against antisemitic elements in Christian theology and liturgy has helped Christianity to critically examine its attitude towards Judaism and to correct it.[935] The positive attitude towards other religions that is observable in the Second Vatican Council is the result of critical self–reflection of Christianity. Other religions can contribute to this process of learning.

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[934] Cf. TÜCK, Glauben im Modus des Als Ob, 59.

[935] Cf. for example, AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, Anti–Jewish Elements in Catholic Liturgy. A Memorandum to The Secretariat for Christian Unity, New York 1961, 1–23, especially 2.

11.1.2 Together towards the Transformation of the World to the Kingdom of God

Hans Urs von Balthasar opines that every creaturely reality shares in and analogically expresses something of the being of God (*analogia entis*) and likewise, every Christian life shares in and analogically expresses something of kenotic mission of Jesus (*analogia missio*). There is both the analogy of being and analogy of mission between Christ and the Christian. Christian existence means a re–performance of the Christ–drama on the world stage.[936] The church is called to continue the mission of Jesus Christ in this world. *Ad Gentes* makes clear that mission is not one among many apostolates of the church, but it is the very essence of the church and it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. AG 2).

The church is the sacrament of salvation in the world. "By virtue of her mission to shed on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture, the Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives it vigor [sic]" (GS 92). Dialogue excludes no one. It also includes those who oppress the church and harass her in manifold ways. Since God the Father is the origin and goal of every human, we are called to universal brotherhood. Therefore, we have to work together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in genuine peace (cf. GS 92). Church's mission is to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to invite all to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God in its fulness is an eschatological reality. However, the church, as the sacrament of kingdom of God, foster the values of kingdom of God in the world. In this attempt the church has to collaborate with other religions. Hans Küng expresses his conviction that the new world–order will be a better one only if there is a social, plural, collaborative, peace–promoting, nature–friendly and ecumenical world. Therefore, many people, based on their religious or human convictions, engage for a common global ethic and call all people of good will to a change in attitude.[937] In fostering the values of kingdom of God in the world the church can and has to cooperate with other religions.

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[936] Cf. HAVENGA, Christ as performance, 148; Chapter 8, Session 8.2.6.

[937] Cf. Hans KÜNG, Weltfrieden–Weltreligionen–Weltethos, in: Karl–Josef Kuschel (ed.), Christentum und Nichtchristliche Religionen. Theologische Modelle im 20. Jahrhundert, Darmstadt 1994, 155–171, here: 171.

11.2 Positive Role of Other Religions in Relation to the Self–Communication of God in Jesus Christ

The church is aware of its special role in the world as the continuation of Jesus Christ and as the sacrament of the kingdom of God in the world. Therefore, the church has to continue the mission of Christ in this world. God's kenosis in the incarnation, life and death of Jesus Christ remains as a criterion for the self–examination of the church in its mission. Christ has emptied himself up to death on cross, therefore he was exalted by God, the Father. Christ's self–emptying love to humans, his unceasing obedience to God, the Father, and his humble proclamation of the kingdom of God is, for the church, an example to follow in its earthly mission. Church's attitude towards other religions is also to be examined in the context of this self–awareness of the church. Jesus Christ, even though he was God, has emptied himself, and did not consider his divinity something to be exploited. Church, the presence of Christ in this world, is not devoid of sin. The holiness and sinfulness, perfectness and imperfectness are the part of church's earthly existence. From the perspective of kenotic self–awareness, we can say that the sin of the church is, in general, the failure in following the kenotic model of Jesus Christ in its earthly existence. The church will be completely holy and identified with the kingdom of God only in eschaton. Till this time, the church has to strive for holiness, by critically examining and correcting itself. This awareness also helps Christianity to avoid triumphalism and follow the example of Jesus Christ. In its relationship with other religions also the church has to follow its master Jesus Christ. If God is *God of all* and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is considered as the divine self–communication of God to humanity in human form, then every human, irrespective of their religious belongingness, are at the receiving end of this divine self–communication. Revelation in Jesus Christ is universal. Every human is the respondents to divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Religions, as a collective expression of human response to God, have their positive role in the history of salvation.

11.2.1 God is *God of all*

Already from the patristic period onwards the universal salvific will of God and the unity of salvation history were part of Christian theology.[938] Lumen Gentium speaks about persons

[938] Cf. Chapter 2, Justin Martyr (2.1.1), Irenaeus, (2.1.2), and Origen (2.1.3).

of other faiths being *oriented to* or *related to* the church (cf. LG 16). *Gaudium et Spes* speaks about the common origin of humanity based on creation and common destiny of humanity.[939] This vision of the single life–giving mystery of God's love in which Christians and the people of other faiths participate together places the question of the salvation of non–Christians in a new light. In particular, it challenges the dichotomy implicit in pluralist thought, between the tradition of church magisterium and the actual experience of dialogue. The question is not how to adjust the former in order to accommodate the latter, but how to speak of the *social and relational nature of human existence* while maintaining the proper integrity of faith.[940] The concept of kenosis can explain the relational character of humans, also of religions as collective form of human response to divine call, without breaking the integrity of Christian faith.

Karl Rahner understands creation and incarnation as two moments or two phases of one process of divine self–giving and self–revelation.[941] Hans Urs von Balthasar also considers creation as the first kenosis of Triune God *ad extra*.[942] In creation, God has unreservedly turned towards the creature as the other. David H. Jensen and Martha Th. Frederiks see in this divine kenosis in creation an inspiration and impetus for Christianity to consider the other –also religious other– seriously and imitate this kenotic approach in their life. Bertram Stubenrauch wants to emphasize that the relationship of Christians to religious other is not comparable with that of creator God to the world.[943] Nevertheless he upholds that God's creation and revelation are oriented towards whole humanity. God has created all humans in his image and likeness. *A God of all humans* belongs to the key element of Christian faith.[944] According to Christian belief we can unanimously state that all human beings are children of God. In creation God has created human beings with freedom and God stands as an *other* to the world. Since God is not a part of the created world, to perceive something universal about him the phenomenon of *revelation* is needed. God has revealed himself completely in Jesus Christ and therefore, Jesus Christ is *totus Deus* and *totum Dei*.[945] Thus, the revelation

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[939] Cf. Chapter 4, Session 4.2.2.

[940] BARNES, Nostra Aetate, 14.

[941] Cf. RAHNER, Foundations of Christian Faith, 197.

[942] Cf. VON BALTHASAR, Die Handlung, 305.

[943] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 119.

[944] Cf. ibid., 117.

[945] Cf. Chapter 9, Session 9.3.

in Jesus Christ is definitive, because God has *wholly* revealed *himself* in Jesus Christ, and universal, because God has created every human and He *wills salvation of all*.

11.2.2 Universality of Christ–Event as God's Self–Communication

Christian concept of God is God of all. Pope Francis calls all humans to fraternity or universal brotherhood based on their common fatherhood.[946] Regarding revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the Pope writes, "[a]s salvation history progresses, it becomes evident that God wants to make everyone share as brothers and sisters in that one blessing, which attains its fullness in Jesus, so that all may be one."[947] The Pope also quotes Phil. 2: 8 to establish the universality of revelation in Jesus Christ. As we have seen above, if God is God of all and this God completely revealed himself in Jesus Christ, then the revelation in Jesus Christ is universally valid for all humans.

George Augustin, while emphasizing the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ in the theology of religious pluralism, opines that in Jesus Christ the *whole* of reality is revealed and he is the answer to the open questions not only of Christians but also of whole humanity. If Christian theology succeeds to present the deeper meaning of Christ–event as the meaningful interpretation of whole reality and to interpret everything from the perspective of Jesus Christ, one can understand the world as God's world, the history as the space of God's action, and Jesus as the revelation of one God.[948] The revelation of God to humanity in Jesus Christ is not only complete and definitive in the sense of *totus Deus* and *totum Dei*, but also kenotic. Therefore, Karl–Josef Kuschel opines that the uniqueness of Jesus Christ does not mean superiority, but otherness and distinctness of Jesus Christ.[949] Kenotic character of revelation in Jesus Christ demands from his followers the same attitude or mindset of self–emptying as it is mentioned by Paul in Philippians hymn. This kenotic attitude is also interpreted in the sense of kenotic theories. This interpretation is very far from Christian faith. For example, Reinhold Bernhardt opines that the norm of Jesus Christ is

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[946] Cf. FRANICS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), § 54 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html [accessed: 27 February 2024]; his, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace (1 January 2014), § 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xlvii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html [accessed: 27 February 2024]; FRANICS, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 Ocober 2020), § 5 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html#_ftnref5 [accessed: 7 May 2024].

[947] ibid., § 54.

[948] Cf. AUGUSTIN, Gott eint–trennt Christus, 367f.

[949] Cf. KUSCHEL, Christologie–unfähig zum interreligiösen Dialog, 149.

universally valid for Christians, even though there are other norms from other *revelations*. To have the mindset of Jesus as it is mentioned in Phil. 2: 5 is to be understood theologically. This mindset of self–emptying, of self–devotion, of the openness to God and humans can be also found outside the explicit Christian confession.[950] This is a pluralist interpretation of kenotic self–revelation of God in the theology of religious pluralism. It suggests *plurality of revelations*.

The kenotic self–awareness of Christianity in the background of religious pluralism cannot compromise the uniqueness and universality of revelation in Jesus Christ in favour of multiple revelations. Because God has completely revealed himself in Jesus Christ and this revelation is destined for whole humanity. Bertram Stubenrauch emphasizes that Paul's reference to kenosis underlines that God's self–giving to the world is not ephemeral, but it presupposes unconditional self–revelation and self–commitment. In the Son God has given everything, what He can. Therefore, the Son is indeed *totum Dei*. He gifts everything from God. In His life and death, the self–exploitation of God is fulfilled.[951] Therefore, Christ's normativity, which lies on the fact that God has revealed completely in Christ, is without the claim of absoluteness; Christ's finality is without exclusivism; his definitiveness is without superiority. This can be proved on the basis of New Testament exegesis.[952] "Normativity of Christ involves the normativity of crucified self–giving love."[953] A God of all humankind is the key point of Christian proclamation. This God is transcendental God, incomprehensible for mankind. Therefore, it is impossible to have universally valid knowledge about God without His revelation.[954] Pluralist theologians emphasizes the incomprehensible transcendental God, *Deus semper maior*, and go further without recognizing the fullness of revelation of God in Jesus Christ.[955] But Christian theology emphasizes the complete revelation of transcendental God in Jesus Christ. God's kenotic self–giving has a double dimension. The first of them is that God gives everything, what He has. Therefore, a de–absolutization of Christology is not possible. The second dimension is that the self–

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[950] Cf. BERNHARDT, Die Herausforderung, 34.

[951] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 174f.

[952] Cf. KUSCHEL, Christologie–unfähig zum interreligiösen Dialog, 152.

[953] Gavin D'COSTA, Christ, the Trinity, and Religious Plurality, in: Gavin D'COSTA (ed.), Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered. The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions (Faith Meets Faith), Maryknoll/NY 1990, 16–29, here: 20.

[954] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 117.

[955] Cf. Sigrid RETTENBACHER, One Text– different Meanings, 11f.

revelation of God is completely related to the humanness of Jesus. Divine fullness is at work in the world in human form. He was limited in human way and, therefore, his proclamation as the Son has used only the power of appellation and conviction through words and works. Jesus wanted to engage in dialogue with people and he has suffered rejection.[956] This fact makes dialogue an inevitable part of Christian proclamation.

11.2.3 Religions as Dialogue Partners of God's Dialogical Self–Communication

Revelation of God in Jesus Christ is to be understood as an event of communication in the sense of personal self–disclosure of divine mystery.[957] God wanted to communicate Himself with humans. There is no other so effective and efficient way to communicate with human than taking human form. God has decided to take human form and engaged in dialogue with his co–humans, who has freedom not only to accept God's self–communication but also to reject it.[958] Church, as the continuing presence of incarnated God in the world, continues this dialogue. This mission is part of church's very nature despite the possibility to be rejected.

11.2.3.1 Mission: Existential to Church

Kenotic self–awareness of Christianity does not underestimate the missionary character of the church. Truth claims of not only Christianity, but also of all religions are not to be underestimated, but to be respected. Different religions' truth claims that meet together and interact each other are to be taken seriously in mission. Christianity cannot avoid proclaiming Jesus Christ as the only salvific future of created world.[959] Without mission there is no Christianity. Christians must consider other religions with equal reverence as to own religion, but they can live and witness to only own religion. Mission is firstly the proclamation of the conviction that God has given everything, what He can give, in an unsurpassable way. Secondly, it is the proclamation of an exemplary life history, which brings many life histories that was influenced by God in dialogue. Thirdly, mission respects the human freedom. Fourthly, mission can be understood only as steadfast dialogue. The purpose of dialogue is not to create a *meta–religion* as it is held by pluralist theologians, but

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[956] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 146.

[957] Cf. TÜCK, Glauben im Modus des ‚Als ob', 57.

[958] Cf. ibid., 58.

[959] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 174.

to know the depth of human capacity for God.[960] Therefore, dialogue is a part of Christian existence. Through dialogue Christians try to communicate the message of God's complete self–communication in Jesus Christ. This dialogue is to be done in the manner, in which God's self–disclosure took place. The very revelation of God to humanity is in dialogical manner. Dialogue has its origin the Christian concept of God, in creation, and in incarnation. Taking the cross of Christ as a criterion, we can say that instead of triumphalist superior attitude, Christian mission activity is to be done with the willingness for a selfless pro–existence. Historical example for this model of selfless pro–existence is Francis Assisi. Francis Assisi, oriented towards the image of Christ according to Philippians hymn, wanted to make the loving presence of Jesus experienceable to his fellow beings through the complete non–violence in words and actions, leaving the possible conversion to the work of divine grace and free conviction.[961] This kenotic dialogical attitude is to be the characteristic of church's missionary activity.

11.2.3.2 God's Self–Communication, Church, and other Religions

Creation was performed by God through the Word. God spoke as he created. The fourth gospel testifies the incarnated Son as Word of God. God speaks and his Word presupposes an answer. God's relationship with the world is dialogical.[962] This revealed Word of God presupposes the response from human. The first respondents were, in the language of Philippians hymn, the people who consciously and demonstratively knelt before the *name above all names*. Ever since, this people of God have been newly communicating the message of the incarnated Word of God in dialogue with other peoples of other religions and cultures. The exchange of ideas with religious other has helped Christians to understand the convictions of people of different religions as responses, which are the historical impacts of the Word of God. This process was the same in the case of earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. He was born in a particular religion, culture, and geographical location. In this sense he was *limited* like every human. His life and thinking were influenced by his culture and religion. He has experienced sympathy and rejection. To understand his words, one has to understand his cultural and religious background. After two millenniums, the horizon, in which the Word of God proclaimed, has considerably widened and become complicated. Therefore,

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[960] Cf. ibid., 147–149.

[961] Cf. ibid., 168.

[962] Cf. ibid., 173.

quoting David H. Jensen, Bertram Stubenrauch opines that Christians need the other, their wisdom, perspectives, and commitment to be the disciples of the incarnated one. He adds, Christians need the wisdom of the other to deeply understand what Christ communicated to the world and the depth of the Word of God. Christians need other religions to thankfully realize that every human–as universal divine symbol–search will not go in vain.[963] Religions are the expressions of co–humans (*Mit-Menschen*) of the incarnated logos. Therefore, religions illumine the human longing for God that is hidden in every human being as a religious symbol. Jesus has experienced not only acceptance, but also rejection from his listeners. There were many people in the world during Jesus' earthly ministry, who had not a chance to hear Jesus because of his spatiotemporal limitedness. This can be analogically applied to the followers of different religions. Other religions, as a collective expression of human longing for God, are dialogue partners of Christianity, because the church is called proclaim the message of Christ to all people. The proclamation of Christ's message is to be done with the dialogical, kenotic, and self–giving attitude of Christ. The Holy Spirit as it is promised by Jesus Christ helps the church to fulfil this mission. Here, other religions are considered as the horizon of the proclamation of God's message. The knowledge about other religions and cultures has helped Christianity in the inculturation and thus to make its convictions about the incarnated God understandable to the people of other religions. In the first centuries Greek culture and religions has helped Christianity to articulate its faith in Hellenistic terms and differentiate it from other religious beliefs and philosophical thoughts. This process of inculturation is a continuing process in dialogue with other religions.

11.2.3.3 Other Religion as de iure Dialogue Partner

Whether religious pluralism is to be *de iure* appreciated or *de facto* respected is a disputed question in the theology of religious pluralism.[964] Bertram Stubenrauch opines that Plurality of religions reflects the plurality of creation, not the plurality of God. One God and one creation are two aspects of Christian faith. They appear to be harmonious, but they can be inconsistent. Created world is plural. Plurality can be symphonic, but not always so. It can lead to contradiction and conflict. Plurality and contradiction are not the characteristics of Trinitarian God. The Son is *other* than the Father, but he is not *another* than Father, *alius non aliud*. The opposite is the case of creation. However, the creation has its own unique

[963] Cf. ibid., 120f.

[964] Cf. Chapter 6, Session 6.6.

value before God. Thus, every human is unique before God.[965] Plurality of religions cannot be considered as a reflection of divine plurality. However, from a kenotic–dialogical view or kenotic self–awareness of Christianity other religion is *de iure* dialogue partner, with whom Christianity shares its faith and life experience, i.e., God has fully revealed in Jesus Christ for whole humanity.

In incarnation God has taken the *form of a servant*. The *form of a servant* represents human existence in the antagonism of creatural plurality and its uniqueness and transitoriness. Divine fullness is at work in the world in human form and is, therefore, subjected to all limitations of humanity. Jesus wanted to engage in dialogue with other people. He has experienced rejection, along with acceptance. His proclamation of kingdom of God is aimed at the whole humanity. The human, who searches for God, is a religious symbol. God has chosen this human form to reveal himself. Appreciation of humanity of Jesus presupposes appreciation of whole humanity. Therefore, a religion that proclaims incarnated God as the personal source of kingdom of God, obliged to formulate its message understanding every religion, which is meaningful to many people.[966] In dialogue with other religious dialogue partner, Christian message is to be communicated not only in a kenotic manner, but also understandable to dialogue partner. Every human is a religious symbol based on human *capax infiniti*.[967] Every religion represents response of their followers to the call of the absolute one in the world under specific preconditions. Therefore, Christianity has to respect the religion of other.[968] Through a dialogue, which is done for its own sake, other religions are being respected, without being assimilated and without losing own identity.[969] Theologically based dialogue considers the other on equal footing, because it's participants are the co–human of the saviour, Christ.[970] From the very beginning of Christianity, it has been living amidst different religions. Christianity's encounter with other religions made it necessary to formulate Christian belief in the language understandable to the followers of other religions. Bertram Stubenrauch explains this in terms of kenotic incarnation. God's self–gift to the world in Jesus Christ is not completely unambiguous; it

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[965] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 145f.

[966] Cf. ibid., 147f.

[967] Cf. ibid., 118f.

[968] Cf. Bertram STUBENRAUCH, Gaben des Geistes, in: Bertram STUBENRAUCH –Wolfgang BEINERT (eds.), Neues Lexikon der katholischen Dogmatik, Freiburg et al., 2012, 229–232.

[969] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 183

[970] Cf. ibid., 184.

is to be firstly recognized, acknowledged, and always rearticulated, and secondly, it concerns whole humanity that is the subject of creator God. Therefore, the whole world is the resonance room, in which the incarnated Word of God echoes.[971] From the Patristic period onwards the possibility of knowledge of God through creation has been emphasized because creation itself is a divine manifestation.[972] In this respect hearing and understanding the religious experience (as their response to divine call) of dialogue partner is important.

11.2.3.4 Salvific–Role of Other Religions

Regarding the salvation of people who do not belong church without their fault the church with kenotic self–awareness can only give a positive answer. As affirmed by *Lumen Gentium* divine providence does not deny the helps necessary for salvation to those have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God without their own fault and who strive to a good life with God's grace (cf. LG 16). The salvific role of other religions in the salvation of their followers is another debatable point in the theology of religious pluralism. Christianity, from a kenotic–self–awareness, can only affirm the possibility of salvation through Jesus Christ, because he is not only *totus deus*, but also *totum dei*.[973] Therefore, parallel mediations to Jesus Christ's unique mediation are not compatible with Christian theology. However definitive self–revelation of God in Jesus Christ does not exclude *participated forms of mediation* of different kinds and degrees that acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation.[974] Kenotic self–awareness considers other religions with great respect and recognizes the presence of saving elements in them that operate depends on Christ as it is suggested by the Second Vatican Council. Other religions can contribute to the search of their followers for eternal happiness. But this role is the fruit of Christ's redemptive activity and by virtue of the mysterious action of Holy Spirit.[975] As Gaudium et Spes 22 formulates Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being united, in a way known only to God, to the paschal mystery.[976] Holy Spirit is operating in and inspires all humans in their quest for God.

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[971] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 120f.
[972] Cf. Chapter 2, Session 2.1.

[973] Cf. ibid., 44.

[974] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, § 5.

[975] Cf. Christ the only Saviour (Tertium Millenium no. 4, October 1998), https://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01101998_p-18_en.html.

[976] Cf. O'COLLINS, The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions, 140; GS 22 (FLANNERY 924).

11.2.4 Name above Every Name and Universal Ecclesia

Christian faith in the incarnation of God refers to a particular historical person, Jesus Christ, not just to a principle. Here is the theology of name in the Philippians hymn relevant. This name, the *name above every name*, is a name for *all*, not for *many* as it is suggested by pluralists.[977] This name is not a name among *many* names, but above *every* name. Christianity must proclaim constantly the name above all names and it has right and duty to proclaim this name in kenotic manner. Through church, which is a sacrament in Christ (cf. LG 1), Jesus Christ communicates truth and grace to all (cf. LG 8). Thus, Jesus' act of kenosis on cross is present in his *person* beyond time. Christianity has to unceasingly proclaim the name above all names to the whole humanity. This proclamation is not to be done in a triumphalist manner, in which other religions are assimilated to own belief, but to be done in a kenotic manner, because God's self–revelation is in kenotic manner.[978] God wanted to fully communicate himself and to engage in dialogue with humanity. God came to the world in human form and revealed himself. The message of this incarnated God is to be further proclaimed by the church, which is the historical continuation of incarnated God.

Church is the messianic folk, body of the exalted one, and the sacrament of kingdom of God in this world. However, the manner, in which these roles are communicated, is to be completely incarnational, i.e., kenotic.[979] Dialogical presence is kenotic presence.[980] Christianity has to proclaim the name of the crucified one in a dialogical, kenotic manner. The universal salvific will of God presupposes the salvation of whole humanity. Church's missionary activity has its goal to make the whole humanity to one people of God. The universal ecclesia, in which every knee bends at the name above every name and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, is the goal of church's missionary activity. Therefore, church has to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to whole humanity in a kenotic manner with an intention to transform whole humanity to universal ecclesia. But the response to this proclamation from the part of hearers is left to the work of Holy Spirit.[981] Only God knows it and operates it.[982] Real conversion presupposes the work of divine grace

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[977] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität, 118.

[978] Cf. ibid., 124.

[979] Cf. ibid., 125.

[980] Cf. FREDERIKS, Kenosis as a Model, 214f.

[981] Cf. STUBENRAUCH, Pluralismus statt Katholizität 124.

[982] Cf. ibid., 183.

and free conviction.[983] Universal ecclesia is an eschatological reality, i.e., something to be fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. Christians can trust Holy Spirit in the background of plurality of religions.[984] "The Church possesses *plenitudo mediorum salutis*; consequently, it is her mission to contribute to drawing all humanity towards *plenitudo catholica* which is a sojourn on its way towards *plenitudo escahtologica*."[985] The faith and hope in the work of Holy Spirit and in the eschatological fulfilment of kingdom of God helps Christianity to avoid any kind of compulsion in conversion and triumphalist attitude. Human freedom to accept or reject the message of Christ remains unviolated. *Ad Gentes* 13 forbids forced and ill motivated conversion. Universal ecclesia, which is the communion of all men and women who bend their knees before the name of Jesus Christ and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, is not to be established with coercion, but to hopefully expect in the fullness of time, in *Kairos*, in eschaton.

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[983] Cf. ibid., 169.

[984] Henry DE LUBAC, Geheimnis aus dem Wir Leben, Einsiedeln 1967, 144.

[985] RUOKANEN, The Catholic Doctrine of Non–Christian Religions, 96; cf. AG 6 (FLANNERY 818f); GS 9 (FLANNERY 823f).

General Conclusion

From the General introduction it is clear that the objective of this study is to reflect on the issues of theology of religious pluralism and to find solutions from a Christian theological perspective. Kenosis belongs to the essential character of incarnation of Son. Kenotic self–awareness of Christianity functions as a referring point in Christian relationship with other religions. With the help of the historical survey of Christian attitude towards other religions in the first part, it became clear that the history of Christianity with other religions is not a monotonous negative one. Albeit negative attitude there were attempts to consider the religious other positively and to explain the existence of religious pluralism in the light of Christian faith. From the early centuries onwards, Christians believed in God of all and universal salvific will of God. Church Fathers understood creation as a form of revelation and asserted the possibility to come to the knowledge of God through creation. This shows that Christianity's reflection upon other religions is not new but is a continuing process that starts from the very emergence of Christianity. All these reflections on religious other, despite of differences of time, were based on the self–awareness of Christianity. The ecclesiocentric exclusivist attitude was formed based on the self–awareness of Christianity as the only true religion which possesses fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council developed a Christocentric inclusivist attitude based on its conviction that church possesses the fullness of revelation by the merit of Jesus Christ, the head and master of the church, on the one side and the awareness about the sinfulness of the church on the other side. In this respect, the weakness of theocentric pluralist theology is evident, because the conviction behind this attitude is that there is a universal incomprehensible Reality (Noumenon), i.e., *theos*, this Reality has many manifestations (Phenomena) in the world, and thus no single manifestation is complete and exhaustive. Jesus Christ is not the fullness of revelation and consequently, Christ–event has no universal salvific value. This attitude is incompatible with Christian faith in Jesus Christ as *totum Dei*.

The positive attitude towards other religions is to be based on Christian faith. Otherwise, it cannot represent Christian theology. As it is clear from the tenth chapter, only a Christian theology, not a universal theology, can help Christian to fruitfully engage in dialogue with other religions and to equally respect other religions. Kenosis of God is an integral part of Christian belief on Jesus Christ. As the second part of this work clarifies, it belongs to the

basic convictions of Christianity from the early period onwards. The understanding of kenosis, according to which God has emptied himself and became human without losing his divinity, corresponds to the basic Christological belief of Christianity that Jesus Christ possesses human and divine nature. Similarly, it underlines the communicative character of God's self–revelation in Jesus Christ. Divine self–revelation is thus divine self–communication. Church's mission is to continue the proclamation of Jesus Christ, i.e., to continue to proclaim *what* Jesus Christ has proclaimed during his earthly ministry and *how* Jesus Christ has performed his proclamation. Not only the content, but also the manner of proclamation is to be Christ–centred. Therefore, church has to perform its mission in kenotic character.

From the perspective of such a kenotic theology, other religions are valued and respected as equal dialogue partner with a different self–awareness and identity. Since God of Christians is God of all and creator of all, all humans are children of God. Humanity has a common origin and destiny in God. Therefore, every human has *capax infiniti*. Every religion represents this human capacity. Thus, plurality of religion reflets the plurality of creation. God, in creation, that is the first external kenotic action of Trinitarian God, has given freedom to humans. This freedom includes the freedom to reject or accept God's commandments. In his kenotic incarnation too the incarnated Son has respected and safeguarded this human freedom and he has experienced not only acceptance, but also harsh rejection up to death on cross, from the part of his listeners, or dialogue partners. The proclamation of the church through dialogue has the same character. Therefore, in dialogue with other religions, church has to proclaim with an attitude of self–emptying, with readiness to accept also the rejection, and respecting the identity and freedom of dialogue partner. Plurality of religions is respected as plurality of creation and every religion is *de iure* and thus indispensable dialogue partner of Christianity.

This open and positive attitude is not at the cost of Christian identity, uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the universality of Christ–event, but it is based on these basic pillars of Christianity. Thus, insights of kenotic theology help Christianity to respect other religions without losing its identity. It does not lead to religious indifference, nor it relativize mission. Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ's message is carried out with a *hope* of forming a *universal ecclesia*, in which every knee will kneel before, and every tongue will praise the *name above every name*. But the fulfilment of this universal ecclesia is an eschatological

hope, not an earthly reality that can be coerced. To conclude it would be suitable to quote *Evangelii Gaudium*,

> A facile syncretism would ultimately be a totalitarian gesture on the part of those who would ignore greater values of which they are not the masters. True openness involves remaining steadfast in one's deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one's own identity, while at the same time being "open to understanding those of the other party" and "knowing that dialogue can enrich each side."[986]

[986] FRANCIS, Evangelii Gaudium, § 251.

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Abstract (English)

In the history of Catholic church, the Second Vatican Council marked a pivotal point in its relationship with other religions. The Council tried to relate other religions to the catholic church based on the basic human quest for God and asserted that God does not deny the possibility of salvation to the believers of other religions. Following the positive attitude of the council towards other religions there were attempts to theologically interpret the relationship of Christianity with other religions and to theologize about the relevance of other religions.

Different Christian theological approaches to religious pluralism can be, according to the threefold classification pioneered by Alan Race and based on soteriological relevance of religions, summarized into exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Exclusivism rejects the salvific value of other religions and exclusively holds Christianity as the only true religion. Exclusivism has an ecclesiocentric view because it emphasizes the primacy of church in salvation (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). Inclusivism tries to include other religions too in God's universal salvific plan at least as *ordinary* ways of salvation, whereas the church is seen as *extraordinary* way of salvation. It bases its inclusive stand on the centrality of Christ as the only saviour of humanity and therefore, it is known as Christocentric attitude. Pluralism holds all religions as equally valid salvific ways. To establish this pluralistic view, its proponents emphasize the primacy of God (*theos*) over Christ and thus advocate for a theocentric view. According to them, Christ, as the reason behind the triumphalist and superior attitude of Christianity, is the stumbling block to real interreligious dialogue. To place all religions at same level for the sake of dialogue, pluralist theologians advocate for the de–absolutization of Christology and thus they want a Christianity devoid of its unique truth claims. Jesus Christ is viewed as one among many manifestations (*Phenomena*) of one God (*Noumenon*).

Pluralist de–mythologization of Christology and theocentric theology raise serious concerns for Christian theology. For example, the Trinitarian concept of God, uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, the uniqueness of church and consequently, the mission. Even though pluralist theologians' aim is to promote interreligious dialogue and appreciate religious pluralism as *de iure*, they have ended up in an impasse. They wanted to avoid truth claims of Christianity and ironically presents another truth claim that *theos* is the ultimate reality (the Real) and all saving figures of different religions are different partial manifestations (real) of the Real. The Real remains *Deus semper maior* and no single revelation can wholly reveal the

Real. Religions have to conform with this truth claim to fruitfully engage in interreligious dialogue. The question how Christianity, or any other religion, that is devoid of its truth claims, can fruitfully engage in dialogue is relevant. Any religion can enter into dialogue with its own identity and truth claims. The goal of theology of religious pluralism is to search for the theological fundament of interreligious dialogue in the light of, not irrespective of, own belief system.

Can Christianity respect other religions and engage in fruitful dialogue without de–absolutization of Christology is the question to be addressed. Kenosis that is the incarnation of God as it is depicted in Philippians hymn belongs to the essential part of early Christian understanding about Jesus Christ that he is God and human at the same time. Amidst the early Christological heresies, the church has always defended the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. The dogmatic formulation of this faith was the contribution of the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. The concept of kenosis not only expresses the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, but also reveal the self–emptying character of incarnation. The concept of self–emptying of God, the powerfulness (*Allmacht*) to freely decide for human powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*), and the concept of self–revealing God go hand in hand. In Jesus Christ, God has emptied himself and taken human form and therefore, Jesus Christ is the fullness of revelation. Christian concept of God is *God of all* based on creation that is also an act of kenosis *ad extra* in Balthasar's language. God wills the salvation of all humans. This universal salvific will of God is expressed in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Being the fullness of God on the one side Jesus Christ was also limited spatially and temporally due to his human nature. Since God has gifted freedom to humans in creation, they are free to follow or reject the will of God. This freedom was also safeguarded in the communication of Incarnated God in the earthly ministry. The Incarnated God has experienced not only acceptance but also rejection, even up to the death on cross. The church that is the continued presence of Jesus Christ after his ascension in heaven and the sacrament of kingdom of God in this world is called to proclaim Jesus Christ's message, that is the message of kingdom of God.

The concept of kenosis can safeguard the Christian belief in Jesus Christ as the fullness of revelation and it also safeguards Christianity from any form of triumphalism and superiority. The very self–revelation of God to humanity was kenotic and dialogic in character. The Church is inevitably called to proclaim the revealed message of God that is revealed through Jesus Christ in a manner how Incarnated God did it, i.e., in kenotic and dialogic manner. Every human has *capax infiniti*. The incarnation of God also shows the uniqueness of human, since

God has taken the human form. Religions as the collective expression of co–humans of Incarnated God illuminate the human longing for God. Therefore, every other religion is *de iure* dialogue partner of Christianity, to whom the church communicates God's revealed message through Jesus Christ. The acceptance or rejection of this message is subjected to human freedom and to the work of Holy Spirit. The realization of *universal ecclesia*, in which every human accepts the message of God's complete revelation in Jesus Christ is an eschatological hope, for which the church longs, but never coerces.

Abstract (German)

In der Geschichte der katholischen Kirche markierte das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil einen Wendepunkt in ihrer Beziehung zu anderen Religionen. Das Konzil versuchte, andere Religionen auf dem Prinzip der grundlegenden menschlichen Suche nach Gott mit der katholischen Kirche in Verbindung zu bringen, und behauptete, dass Gott den Gläubigen anderer Religionen die Möglichkeit der Erlösung nicht verweigere. Der positiven Haltung des Konzils gegenüber anderen Religionen folgend gab es Versuche, das Verhältnis des Christentums zu anderen Religionen theologisch zu interpretieren und die Relevanz anderer Religionen theologisch zu bewerten.

Verschiedene christlich–theologische Ansätze zum religiösen Pluralismus können, gemäß der von Alan Race entwickelten dreifachen Klassifikation und basierend auf der soteriologischen Relevanz der Religionen, in Exklusivismus, Inklusivismus und Pluralismus zusammengefasst werden. Der Exklusivismus lehnt den Heilswert anderer Religionen ab und hält ausschließlich das Christentum für die einzig wahre Religion. Er hat eine ekklesiozentrische Sichtweise, weil er den Primat der Kirche im Heil betont (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). Der Inklusivismus versucht auch andere Religionen zumindest als *außerordentliche* Heilswege im universellen Heilsplan Gottes einzubeziehen, während die Kirche als der *ordentliche* Heilsweg angesehen wird. Die Zentralität Christi als der einzige Erlöser der Menschheit wird vom Inklusivismus betont und ist daher christozentrisch. Der Pluralismus betrachtet alle Religionen als gleichwertige Heilswege. Um diese pluralistische Sichtweise zu etablieren, betonen die pluralistischen Theologen die Zentralität Gottes (*theos*) statt einer Konzentration auf Christus und plädieren damit für eine theozentrische Sichtweise. Ihrer Meinung nach ist Christus als Grund für die triumphalistische und überlegene Haltung des Christentums der Stolperstein für einen echten interreligiösen Dialog. Um alle Religionen um des Dialogs Willen auf eine gleiche Stufe zu stellen, plädieren pluralistische Theologen für die *Entmythologisierung* der Christologie. Jesus Christus wird als eine von vielen Manifestationen (Phänomenen) eines Gottes (*Noumenon*) angesehen.

Die pluralistische Entmythologisierung der Christologie und die theozentrische Theologie fordern viele Grundsteine des christlichen Glaubens heraus, z.B. der Trinitarischen Gottesbegriff, die Einzigartigkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi, die Einzigartigkeit der Kirche und folglich ihre Mission. Obwohl die pluralistischen Theologen den effektiven interreligiösen

Dialog ermöglichen und religiösen Pluralismus als *de iure* zu würdigen versuchen, sind sie in eine Sackgasse geraten. Sie wollen die Wahrheitsansprüche des Christentums vermeiden und behaupten einen anderen Wahrheitsanspruch, dass *Theos* die ultimative Realität (das Real oder das Noumenon) ist und alle Heilsfiguren verschiedener Religionen die Teilmanifestationen (real oder die Phänomena) des Realen sind. Das Real bleibt *Deus semper maior* und keine einzelne Offenbarung kann das Real vollständig repräsentieren. Religionen müssen sich diesem Wahrheitsanspruch anpassen, damit sie am interreligiösen Dialog teilnehmen. Relevant ist die Frage, wie beispielsweise das Christentum, aber auch jede andere Religion, ohne eigene Wahrheitsansprüche einen interreligiösen Dialog führen kann. Jede Religion kann mit ihrer eigenen Identität und ihrem Wahrheitsanspruch in einen Dialog treten. Das Ziel der Theologie der Religionen ist es, die theologischen Grundlagen des interreligiösen Dialogs im Lichte des eigenen Glaubenssystems zu suchen, nicht unabhängig davon.

Ob das Christentum ohne die Entmythologisierung der Christologie andere Religionen respektieren und mit diesen in einen effektiven Dialog treten kann, ist die Frage, die es zu beantworten gilt. Die Kenosis, also die Menschwerdung Gottes, wie sie im Philipperbrief dargestellt wird, gehört zum wesentlichen Teil des frühchristlichen Verständnisses von Jesus Christus, dass er Gott und Mensch zugleich ist. Angesichts der frühen christologischen Häresien hat die Kirche immer die Göttlichkeit und Menschlichkeit Jesu Christi verteidigt. Die dogmatischen Formulierungen dieses Glaubens findet man in den Konzilien von Nizäa und Konstantinopel. Das Konzept der Kenosis drückt nicht nur die Göttlichkeit und Menschlichkeit Jesu Christi aus, sondern offenbart auch den sich selbst entäußernden Charakter der Menschwerdung Gottes. Die Selbstentäußerung Gottes oder die Allmacht, sich frei für die menschliche Ohnmacht zu entscheiden, entspricht der Selbstoffenbarung Gottes. In Jesus Christus hat Gott sich selbst entäußert und menschliche Gestalt angenommen, und deshalb ist Jesus Christus die Fülle der göttlichen Offenbarung. Das Christliche Gottesverständnis, *ein Gott aller* Menschen, basiert auf der Schöpfung, die nach Hans Urs von Balthasar ein Akt der Kenosis *ad extra* ist. Gott will das Heil aller Menschen. Dieser universale Heilswille Gottes kommt im irdischen Dienst Jesu Christi zum Ausdruck. Jesus Christus war einerseits die Fülle Gottes und andererseits war er räumlich und zeitlich begrenzt aufgrund seiner menschlichen Natur. Da Gott den Menschen in der Schöpfung die Freiheit geschenkt hat, sind sie frei, dem Willen Gottes zu folgen oder ihn abzulehnen. Diese Freiheit wurde auch in der Offenbarung des menschgewordenen Gottes gewahrt. Der menschgewordene Gott hat nicht nur Zustimmung, sondern auch Ablehnung erfahren, bis hin zum Tod am Kreuz. Die Kirche, die

die fortdauernde Gegenwart Jesu Christi nach seiner Himmelfahrt und das Sakrament des Reiches Gottes in dieser Welt ist, ist berufen, die Botschaft Jesu Christi, d.h. die Botschaft des Reiches Gottes zu verkünden.

Der Kenosisbegriff kann den christlichen Glauben an Jesus Christus als die Fülle der Offenbarung festhalten und das Christentum vor jeder Form von Triumphalismus und Überlegenheitsgefühl bewahren. Die Selbstoffenbarung Gottes selbst war kenotisch und dialogisch. Die Kirche ist unweigerlich aufgerufen, die offenbarte Botschaft Gottes zu verkünden, die durch Jesus Christus geoffenbart wird, und zwar so, wie es der menschgewordene Gott getan hat, d.h. auf kenotische und dialogische Weise. Jeder Mensch hat *capax infiniti*. Die Menschwerdung Gottes zeigt auch die Einzigartigkeit des Menschen, da Gott die menschliche Gestalt angenommen hat. Religionen, als kollektive Ausdruckform von Mitmenschen des menschgewordenen Gottes, beleuchten die menschliche Sehnsucht nach Gott. Daher ist jede andere Religion *de iure* Dialogpartner des Christentums, dem die Kirche die Botschaft Gottes durch Jesus Christus mitteilt. Die Annahme oder Ablehnung dieser Botschaft ist der menschlichen Freiheit und dem Wirken des Heiligen Geistes unterworfen. Die Verwirklichung einer *universalen Ecclesia*, in der jeder Mensch die Botschaft der vollständigen Offenbarung Gottes in Jesus Christus annimmt, ist eine eschatologische Hoffnung, nach der sich die Kirche sehnt, die sie aber niemals erzwingt.