

# Christian Mission in Religious Pluralistic Society

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ASIAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY

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## **Chapter 5**

# **CHRISTIAN MISSION AND THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS IN INDONESIAN RELIGIOUS PLURALISTIC SOCIETY**

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## ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a country indicated by religious plurality. Before the "world religions" came to Indonesia, the indigenous people of this country have already adhered their respective religion, later commonly called "ethnic religion." When Christianity arrived since the beginning of the sixteenth century together with western colonialists, those western Christians did not only meet and encounter the people of ethnic religions but also the Muslim.

After Indonesian independence, the relationship among the people of different religions and faiths, in the beginning, was relatively peaceful and friendly. But the process of formulating the foundation and the constitution of the state brought rivalry and conflict, especially between Christian and Muslim. Since the 1960s there are some steps and programs of dialogue. A number of Islam and Christian leaders and theologians from Indonesia participated in some international interfaith dialogue.

The plurality of religions has now been accepted as the fact

of life. Christian mission cannot be conceived without acknowledging the plurality of religions. Christians must treat people of any faith and no faith with genuine respect in their act of witnessing to the gospel.

## INTRODUCTION

Pluralistic society, including in terms of religion or faith, is a reality that has been lived by human beings for centuries. Christian communities have been facing and living in this plurality since the beginning of their existence. Among those pluralistic societies, the Christian communities have to do their mission based on their conviction and understanding of calling.

Christianity since its beginning is not monolithic; the early Christian communities had diverse backgrounds and contexts that influenced their understanding of missionary calling; therefore the expression of their faith, as well as the praxis of their calling and mission is diverse, too.<sup>1</sup> After some centuries of persecution, since the fourth-century Christian churches and communities - esp. in the West - enjoyed collaboration and conspiracy with the political power so that the Christian mission frequently ran together with colonialism. As the people of the colonized countries adhered some religions or faiths other than Christianity or were non-Christians, they became target and object of Christian mission (read: Christianization). We can find this understanding, practice, and optimism until the beginning of the twentieth century, among others in the International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. The slogan formulated by John R. Mott in 1900, "The evangelization of the world in this generation"<sup>2</sup> and his announcement in the clos-

1. See among others Andrew Clarke & Bruce Winter (eds), *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism* (1992), Part Two: Religious Pluralism in the Early Church.

2. Comments and analysis on this slogan as well as on the IMC Edinburgh 1910

ing address of the conference, "The end of the Conference is the beginning of the conquest"<sup>3</sup>, was held and promoted until the mid of the last century; some of the churches or mission societies still hold this kind of attempt and conviction up to this moment.<sup>4</sup>

Since the second half of the last century, esp. since the 1960s, emerged and grew some new understanding and respect on the people of other faiths and also new understanding on Christian mission among them. Christian mission is not merely understood as evangelization and Christianization. On the one hand, there is still a strong consciousness that the Christian churches and communities must continue to witness to Christ in a pluralistic age and societies. On the other hand, they have to find and practice a new and revised concept and methods of witnessing. They even have to develop a new theology, i.e. the theology of religions (*theologia religionum*).

The mission societies and later the churches they founded in Indonesia, after practicing the old concept, also showed such a new understanding and consciousness. Many of them have become more aware of the pluralistic sphere of this country and that the Christian communities must play a positive role and significant contribution to the life of the country, among other things by building a healthy and hospitable relationship and cooperation with the people of other faiths. In turn, they also

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see among others in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 337; and in Lalsangkima Pachuau & Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (2011), *passim*.

3. Cited in Andrew Walls & Cathy Ross (eds), *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, 200.

4. Since 1930s some missionaries and theologians began to revisit that understanding and concept of mission, as we can see a.o. in the document edited by William E. Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions* (1932). But until IMC 1938 in Tambaram, as we see in Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (a writing prepared for the conference), the idea of discontinuity (of Christianity and other faiths) was still stronger than of the continuity. Comments on this writing is also found in Pachuau & Jørgensen, *Witnessing to Christ*, 10-11.

join together to develop their theology of religions.

## A GLIMPSE OF PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS AND FAITHS IN INDONESIA

Before the world religions, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Islam, came to Indonesia, the indigenous people of this country have already adhered to their respective religion, later commonly called ethnic religion. When Hinduism and Buddhism came from India and other Asian countries, there were natural interaction and mutual absorption among each other so that these two religions in their countries of origin were not precisely the same with those in Indonesia, compare, for example, Hinduisms in India and in Bali.

When Nestorian Christianity arrived for the first time in Indonesia in the seventh century there was no information or inheritance of their interaction or mutual absorption with the ethnic religion until this sort of Christianity disappeared around the eleventh/twelfth century after the arrival of Islam. The encounter and interaction of Christianity with the ethnic religions happened again since the beginning of the sixteenth century, as we will see later.

Islam arrived in Nusantara, the other name of Indonesia, around the tenth or eleventh century, not directly from Arabia or Middle East, but from Gujarat, India, brought by the Muslim traders. Islam brought by the traders was open to the ethnic religions and cultures so that it absorbed a lot of ethnic or tribal elements and produced a different type of Islam compared with Islam in India and the Middle East. When Islam became the religion of the palace and power holders, many indigenous people that formerly adhered to their ethnic or tribal religions were forced to become Muslim. Later on, since the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, following the revival, purification,

and renewal movement of Islam in the Middle East that also expanded to Indonesia, the openness of Islam toward the ethnic religions was gradually more limited. The adherents of those ethnic religions are called "kafir" [infidel, pagan, or unbeliever].

When Christianity arrived again since the beginning of the sixteenth century together with the Portuguese and Spanish imperialist/colonialist power, later, since the beginning of the seventeenth century followed and replaced by the Dutch, those western/European Christians did not only meet and encounter the people of ethnic religions but also the Muslim. While they called and valued the ethnic religions as paganism or idolatry, they did not call Islam with the same assessment, because those western Christians already had experience of encounter and certain knowledge about Islam albeit very limited. The experience of encounter during the series of Crusades in the Middle East since the end of the eleventh century up to the thirteenth century, as well as the "Reconquista" in the Iberian Peninsula, implanted the impression and feeling of enmity and hostility, including in Indonesia. This feeling lasted for centuries.<sup>5</sup> Mujiburrahman, a Muslim scholar, pictured the atmosphere of the encounter as "feeling threatened".<sup>6</sup>

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century a number of missionary societies, Protestant and Catholic, motivated by a new revival spirit, came to Indonesia to do their mission, i.e. to propagate the Gospel and to call the people to convert to Christianity. Since the Dutch, Netherlands-Indies), colonial government adopted a neutral policy toward religion, although in

5. The details of the encounter of Christian and Islam in Indonesia since the beginning of the sixteenth century up to the beginning of the twenty first century (around 500 years) is described in Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen dan Islam di Indonesia [A History of the Encounter of Christian and Islam in Indonesia]* (2005). The abridged version is also available in Jan S. Aritonang, & Karel Steenbrink, eds. *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (2008), Chapter Six, 137-228.

6. Mujiburrahman, *Feeling Threatened* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2007).

many cases showed support to Christian mission, the government gave recommendation and support more for the evangelism to the people of ethnic religions than to the Muslims, while the majority of the people were Muslim. The permission for the missionary societies to work among the Muslims was very restricted. The restriction to the Hindu people in Bali, with different reason, i.e. cultural preservation, was also very tight.

After Indonesian independence in 1945, based among others by the common experience of struggle for and maintaining of independence, the relationship among the people of different religions and faiths, in the beginning, was relatively peaceful and friendly. But the process of formulating the foundation and the Constitution of the state shortly before the independence, in which some of the Islam exponents strived to make this country to become a Islamic state, brought back the rivalry and conflict, especially between Christian and Muslim. Concerning this issue, Pachuau et al noted,

Whereas on a grassroots level believers of different faiths often live peacefully together, the situation changes when in such contexts a religious group identity becomes a political factor, as in some parts of Indonesia where Christians and Muslims clash.<sup>7</sup>

Since the second half of the 1960s, as endeavor to solve a number of conflicts, and influenced by a growing spirit and consciousness among the people of different faiths to build dialogue and cooperation, there are some steps and programs initiated by the government together with the communities of different faiths. The meetings of the leaders of the different faiths are not only marked by agreement and mutual understanding but also by debate and disagreement. The Muslim side, for example, appeals to the Christian to stop evangelizing whereas

7. Pachuau & Jørgensen, *Witnessing to Christ*, 18.

the Christians claimed that Christianity, like Islam, is a missionary religion, therefore proclaiming the Gospel is an ultimate task and calling.

While the process of dialogue and building mutual understanding was going on, since 1990s until the first decade of the twenty-first century, the tension and conflict of the different faiths, esp. Islam and Christian escalated. In the political field, the founding of the *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, All-Indonesian League of Muslim Intellectuals in 1990 was perceived by the Christians as a strategic step of the Muslim to dominate and occupy political and governmental positions. Since 1996 there were a lot of riots and bloody conflicts with religious content and nuance, scattered almost all over the country, although some observers concluded that those cases have more economic and political than religious content.

Among the Christians themselves, there are different understanding on other religions or faiths, on people of other faiths, and on mission to them. Among the so-called Ecumenical wing including the Roman Catholic, based on the Second Vatican Council, there is a growing positive understanding and respect on the other faiths and their adherents so that the Christian mission to or among them should not aim to Christianize them. The ecumenical wing - learning from those outside Indonesia - finds that God in Christ does not only work within the Christian Church and communities and is not only found within Christianity. Since 1981 the ecumenical wing, initiated by the Council of Churches in Indonesia, later called Communion, every year holds Seminars of Religions that also invites and involves leaders and scholars from different religions.<sup>8</sup>

8. These seminars discussed various issues: politics, economics, cultures, ecology, global and national conflict and reconciliation, etc., based on the perspective and teaching of the respective religion. The process and result of the seminars are published, but only in Indonesian.

Meanwhile, the so-called Evangelical wing including the Pentecostal-Charismatic, at least in the beginning, did not support or participate in the interfaith meetings as well as in the Seminars of Religions. Most of them understand that the other religions do not have the right and proper understanding and teaching of salvation, and perceive their adherents as the target of mission, which is understood and practiced as doing evangelism to convert the people to Christianity. They find the ecumenical-wing's understanding and praxis as denial or even betrayal of the Christian faith, task and calling. Fortunately, since the last decades more and more leaders and theologians from this Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic wing join the interfaith activities, including the study of religions to develop the theology of religions.<sup>9</sup> We'll see this further in the next section.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEOLOGY OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS IN INDONESIA

As already said, at least since the beginning of the twentieth century there was increasing attention on theological inquiry concerning the Christian mission among the other faiths. This inquiry also involved missionary societies and their missionaries who worked in Indonesia. We already mentioned Hendrik Kraemer, the main speaker at IMC Conference in Tambaram, India, 1938, as an example. But since the 1960s, in line with the development of understanding and praxis among the churches and theologians in global scale, some of the churches and theologians developed their understanding and praxis, too. This development was also motivated and intensified by the increasing conflicts and polemics, esp. between Islam and Christianity.

9. As an example, see the a number of articles on activities and ideas of interreligious dialogue collected in Minggus M. Pranoto & Roby C. Kristanto (eds), *Melampauai Sekat: Pentakostalisme dan Dialog Antar Agama*.

A number of Islamic and Christian leaders and theologians from Indonesia participated in some international interfaith meetings and dialogue like in Ajaltoun, Lebanon, in 1970, and in Chambésy, Switzerland, in 1976 and 1979.<sup>10</sup> Indonesia also several times became the host of international interfaith conferences. Among the Christians, the study of missiology and theology of religions in a number of theological schools were also intensified.<sup>11</sup> The same trend can be assumed to be done in Islamic schools, albeit in different name or nomenclature.

New ideas and understanding proposed by a number of theologians from different wings or denominations, like Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, Raimundo Panikkar, Paul F. Knitter and Gavin D'Costa from the Roman Catholic; Madathiparampil Mammen Thomas, Stanley J. Samartha, S. Wesley Ariarajah, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Hans Ucko from the Protestant Ecumenical; J.I. Packer, John R.W. Stott and Harold Netland from the Evangelical; and Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Amos Yong from the Pentecostal were eagerly studied, and many of their writings together with a number of writings dealing with them and with theology of religions, in general, have been translated and published in Indonesian.<sup>12</sup> Some documents and publication from the churches or councils/fellowships/communions, Roman Catholic, WCC, WEA/WEC, etc., were also studied.

10. Information on these meetings and some papers (or the summary) presented there is among others recorded in Olaf Schumann, *Dialog Antar Umat Beragama – Di Manakah Kita Berada Kini?* [*Interreligious Dialogue: Where Are We Now?*] (1980), 81-124.

11. For example Th. Sumartana in his M.Div. thesis titled "Theological Matters in Interreligious Meetings" (1971), discussed some theological matters in the IMC Conference Tambaram 1938 and in several meetings in Indonesia (this thesis was just published in 2015). Sumartana is recognized as one of the Indonesian theologians that paid special attention on interfaith dialogue and cooperation through an institution called DIAN/Interfidei.

12. One of them is Harold Coward, *Pluralisme: Tantangan bagi Agama-agama* (1989), [*Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions*] (1985).

Some Indonesian theologians also join to develop the theology of religions, among other things by combining this theology with Christian theology of Trinity (esp. *perichoresis*). One of them is Joas Adiprasetya. In his writing,<sup>13</sup> Adiprasetya studied and compared Trinitarian theologies of religions proposed mainly by Raimundo Panikkar, Gavin D'Costa, and S. Mark Heim. He started this study with an observation that "Trinitarian theology of religions as a particular discipline has now come to the point where one can neither talk satisfyingly about Christian theology of religions without touching the issue of Trinity nor discuss the meaning of the Trinity without looking for its relevance in the context of religious plurality."<sup>14</sup>

After describing the meaning and forms of *perichoresis* as well as the Trinitarian theologies of those three theologians, Adiprasetya concludes and proposes his perichoretic theology of religions by saying that "perichoresis is the most plausible way of dealing with the issue of religious diversity. It allows us to maintain both commitment to the Christian faith in the Triune God and openness to other religious traditions."<sup>15</sup> He added:

Three important notes need to be emphasized here. First, the conclusion that the fullness of perichoretic participation exists in the Christian tradition, while other religions partake in such participation in a more partial way, is unavoidable. Second, this position does not necessarily entail a "superior" attitude. It rather extends an invitation to embrace otherness from within a particular perspective, i.e. the Christian belief in the Triune God. Third, consequently, Christians must also open to any invitation from other religions, which offers a possibility to embrace systems other than their own. According to this

13. Based on Joas Adiprasetya's Th.D. dissertation at Boston University, *An Imaginative Glimpse: The Trinity and Multiple Religious Participations*, published by Pickwick Publications (2013).

14. Adiprasetya, *An Imaginative Glimpse*, 12.

15. *Ibid.*, 165.



view, Christians should welcome engagement with members of other religions who are willing to engage with them, even though such interaction means that Christian ultimacy may then become a partial dimension of another religion's universal framework.<sup>16</sup>

Relating this perichoretic Trinitarian theology of religions to the tension between the universality of God's will of salvation and particularity of Jesus Christ, Adiprasetya stated:

Any Christian theology of religions must address what is known as the "scandal of particularity", that is, that God makes Godself known through the particular person of Jesus Christ, through whom salvation is offered to the world. The issue thus addresses the dialectic between God's universal salvific will and Jesus Christ's particular saving work.<sup>17</sup>

Another example of an Indonesian theologian is Hans Harmakaputra, who critiqued the tripolar approach (exclusive, inclusive, and pluralist).<sup>18</sup> Following and continuing Adiprasetya,<sup>19</sup> Harmakaputra noted that for a long period of time theology of religions has been dominated by the tripolar typology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, that was proposed among others by Alan Race. Perry Schmidt-Leukel has surveyed that this tripolar typology was criticized by some observers. Perry mapped those criticisms into eight major categories, among others: (1) The typology has an inconsistent structure; (2) the typology is misleading, because it obscures or misses the real issues of a theology of religions; (3) the typology is too narrow; (4) the typology is too coarse or abstract; (5) the

16. Ibid., 164.

17. Ibid., 174.

18. Hans Harmakaputra, *Melepas Bingkai – Upaya Pencarian Jalan-jalan Lain yang Mengatasi Kebuntuan Model Pendekatan Tipologi Tripolar dalam Diskursus Teologi Agama-agama Kontemporer* (2014). The similar basic idea was earlier proposed by Cynthia M. Campbell, *A Multitude of Blessings – A Christian Approach to Religious Diversity* (2007) (Indonesian translation: *Berkat yang Melimpah*, 2015).

19. Adiprasetya, *An Imaginative Glimpse*, 2.

typology is offensive; and (6) the typology is pointless.<sup>20</sup>

As some way out to the impasse and options beyond the tripolar typology in the contemporary theology of religions, Harmakaputra described theological ideas proposed by some theologians, among others S. Mark Heim, Anselm Min, Amos Yong, Paul F. Knitter, Jeannine H. Fletcher, and Kwok Pui-lan.<sup>21</sup> After comparing, analyzing and interpreting their ideas, Harmakaputra arrives in some concluding suggestions, among others: (1) The Bible (Holy Scriptures) contains a lot of messages in developing theology of religions; besides the Bible we also need to take other resources into account. (2) Related to the appreciation to the particularity of each religious tradition, there is no single theological system that is able to simultaneously and holistically cover the universality and particularity. We have to look for the balance or equilibrium of both and never claim a certain system as God's perspective. (3) Theology of religions, including in Indonesia, needs to support and appreciate interfaith dialogue in the grassroots level. Interfaith dialogue should be developed as a holistic dialogue, not only concerning religion but also regarding social welfare, equality of opportunity and enhancement of the quality of education, ecology, and some other real-life struggle.<sup>22</sup>

Leonardus Samosir, representing Indonesian Roman Catholic theologians, also describes and criticizes the theology of religions in global as well as a national scale. After describing the opinion of some theologians, Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Raimundo Panikkar, Paul F. Knitter, etc., and also the criticism toward the tripolar approach, Samosir emphasized that one of the common goals of dialogue of the communities of different faiths in

20. Harmakaputra, *Melepas Bingkai*, 32; also cited in Adiprasetya, *An Imaginative Glimpse*, 3.

21. Ibid., 39-88.

22. Ibid., 116-30.

Indonesia is to overcome poverty.<sup>23</sup>

Junifrius Gultom, an Indonesian Pentecostal theologian, in one of his chapters in his work described religion resurgence in Indonesia from a Pentecostal and Charismatic perspective: he analyzed five factors of the resurgence. But he did not express explicitly his perspective in relation to Pentecostal and Charismatic theology of mission and theology of religions. He only said, "Christianity [in Indonesia] also realizes that the presence of a new religion and spirituality is not a threat to the subjective choice of society. For Christianity, the resurgence of religion is not a guarantee of moral enhancement in society."<sup>24</sup>

#### RECENT GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

While intensifying interfaith dialogue in a global scale as well as in Indonesia, in some cases dialogue was confused with pluralistic theology and continued to be treated by some with suspicion. Other Christians interpreted interfaith dialogue differently. John R.W. Stott, an Evangelical leader and thinker, for example, advocated a true Christian dialogue as a way of doing Christian Mission. In the decades following Stott's work, other Evangelical Christians have spelled out an Evangelical theology of religions.<sup>25</sup>

The recent work of Pentecostal theologians such as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Amos Yong have clearly signaled that theology of religions, with dialogue and witness in the pluralistic world as the core subject-matter, has come of age. As Pentecos-

23. Leonardus Samosir, *Agama dengan Dua Wajah [Religion with Two Faces]* (2010), chapter 7-9.

24. Junifrius Gultom, *Spiritus Ubi Vult Spirat - Teologi Misi Pentakostal - Isu-isu Terpilih* (2015), 80.

25. Pachuau & Jørgensen, *Witnessing to Christ*, 12-13.

tal theologians, they offer *Pneumatological Theology of Religions*.<sup>26</sup> In the Roman Catholic Church, post-conciliar documents such as *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991) seek to both correct what are perceived to be theological errors in interreligious issues and to connect the pluralist context with the church's faith.<sup>27</sup>

In short, the plurality of religions has now been accepted as the fact of life. Christian mission cannot be conceived without acknowledging the plurality of religions and the demand for a dialogical mode of existence and way of witnessing. Christians must treat people of any faith and no faith with genuine respect in their act of witnessing to the gospel.<sup>28</sup> A theology which recognizes the dignity of human beings as created by the one God cannot deny such dignity and respect to others; it will, therefore, want to honor their faith. Not religions, but human beings meet and share, ignore or enrich one another, clash and fight.<sup>29</sup>

In 2010, as part of the centenary commemoration and celebration of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910, Regnum Books International in Oxford, UK, published a book entitled *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age - Christian Mission among Other Faiths*. This book contains a number of articles contributed by theologians representing various traditions and perspectives (Conciliar Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Adventist), including some of those mentioned above. Through those articles this book also describes and analyses the development of the theology of mission and theology of religions, which also attracts and influences a number of students and scholars of those sub-

26. See Amos Yong, *Beyond Impasse: Toward A Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (2003).

27. *Ibid.*, 13.

28. *Ibid.*, 13-14.

29. *Ibid.*, 22.

jects in Indonesia. We will view some of the articles, including the summarizing introduction.

Based on "theme two" of the Edinburgh Conference 2010, "Christian Missions among Other Faiths", as part of the main theme "Witnessing to Christ Today", in the Introduction and the introductory article prepared by the Edinburgh 2010 Study Group, the editors of this centennial book stated that the study group operate with a conviction that theology of religions is the heart of missiology. The relationship of Christian faith and mission to other living faiths is the core issue in contemporary missiological thinking. In a world where the plurality of faith is increasing in importance and in terms of geographical spread, insight on this plurality are highly needed to strengthen our ability to better understand our faith and the faiths of others.<sup>30</sup> Related to this, the basic question is: "How should we relate with and witness to people of other faiths?"<sup>31</sup>

Most Christians easily agree that the Christian gospel is for all in a universal sense; but when the "particularity" of Jesus Christ become clear from reading the Scripture, both the modern and post-modern mind tend to interpret this to mean that other religions may be equally true. To claim the opposite is no longer tenable to most people, including many Christians. Based on this awareness, the editors of this book quote the Common Call of the Edinburgh 2010 centenary celebration:

Remembering Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for the world's salvation, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths - and no faith - to the uniqueness of Christ. Our approach is marked with bold confidence in the gospel message; it builds

30. Pachuau & Jørgensen, *Witnessing to Christ*, 5.

31. *Ibid.*, 8.

friendship, seeks reconciliation and practices hospitality.<sup>32</sup>

In line with this, they also remind us to the statement from the Mission and Evangelism Conference of the WCC in San Antonio 1989 which said: "We cannot point to any other way than Jesus Christ; at the same time we cannot set limits to God's saving power... We appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to solve it".<sup>33</sup>

Hans Ucko, representing the conciliar Protestant perspective, said,

It is only in relation with people of other faiths that it [Christian mission] can make sense of its own mission... What is needed in 2010 is that the religiously plural world impacts our missiological thinking, that missionaries are encouraged to listen more to the encounters they have made with people of other faiths than only to the mission statement that has become like a mantra... A new song needs to be sung, where God is praised revealing God self among all the peoples of the earth, even in ways that are contradictory, for ways to serve humankind and all the earth, for possibilities to learn from each other, for ways of being faithful to that which one has received without denigrating the other, for the salutary insight that God cannot be fully grasped in any other tradition and that nothing can exhaust God, not even the revelation of God.<sup>34</sup>

Harold A. Netland, representing the Evangelical Protestant, noted that the Evangelicals have emphasized the imperative of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, to make disciples of all peoples. Roughly 80% of the world's population professes some religious allegiance. Thus, in "making disciples of all peoples" Christ's followers are to share the gospel with sincere adherents of other religious ways. Evangelism and call to re-

32. *Ibid.*, 6.

33. Quoted in *ibid.*, 6 and 25.

34. Hans Ucko, "Protestant Perspectives: Christian Mission among Other Faiths." in Pachuau & Jørgensen, *Witnessing to Christ*, 39-44.

pent of one's sin and by God's grace, to embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior, with all that this entails, are central components of an Evangelical approach to religious others. But Netland also warns that we need to be guided by both the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Mt. 22:35-40). In obedience to our Lord, we are to "make disciples" of all people. As Christ's disciples, we are to love God with our entire being and to love our neighbor - including religious others - as we love ourselves. Therefore, the Evangelicals must approach Christian mission in today's world with an attitude of humility and repentance for the ways in which Christians have sometimes treated religious others in the past. New models of evangelism and disciple-making that are appropriate for a world full of religious tension and increasingly hostile to evangelism must be developed.<sup>35</sup>

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a Pentecostal theologian, in his thematic article - like Amos Yong and some other experts in theology of religions - proposes the trinitarian faith as Christian criterion in interfaith encounter and dialogue:

As much as the confession of the Triune God may be a stumbling block to interfaith encounters particularly with our Muslim brothers and sisters, that confession cannot be compromised even for the sake of dialogue... In order for the dialogue to be meaningful it takes both commitments to one's own belief and openness to listen carefully to the Other. A true dialogue does not mean giving up one's truth claims but rather entails patient and painstaking investigation of real differences and similarities. The purpose of dialogue is not necessarily to soften the differences as well as issues of potential convergence and impasse. A successful, fruitful dialogue often ends up in mutual affirmation of differences, different viewpoints, and varying interpretations."<sup>36</sup>

35. Harold A. Netland, "Christian Mission among Other Faiths - the Evangelical Tradition", in Pachuau & Jørgensen, *Witnessing to Christ*, 47-56.

36. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Theologies of Religions", in Pachuau & Jørgensen,

Observing a lot of change and challenges while also affirming the actuality and relevance of Christian mission in the twenty-first century, Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross with a number of missiologists from several countries summarize and elaborate the five marks of global mission:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.<sup>37</sup>

After he wrote this book, Andrew Walls summarizes Christian mission in a five-hundred-year context. He reminds us that Christianity is now a predominantly non-Western religion, the profession principally of African, Asian and Latin American people, and that it is currently moving progressively in that direction. Therefore,

church and mission are multi-centric, mission from anywhere to anywhere, but the different centres belong to a single organism. Christian faith is embodied faith; Christ takes flesh again among those who respond to him in faith. There is no generalized humanity; incarnation has always to be culture-specific... All our representations of humanity are partial and incomplete; complete humanity is found only in Christ in his fullness.<sup>38</sup>

## CLOSING REMARKS

We may assume or even be sure that those five marks of global mission are obviously endeavored by our churches and

*Witnessing to Christ*, 113-118.

37. Andrew Walls & Cathy Ross, eds. *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (2008), xiv.

38. *Ibid.*, 203.

Christian communities in our respective countries while we are also aware that we live in a very pluralistic world. These realities remind us to David Bosch's proposal of a relevant paradigm of missiology. After describing the emergence of postmodern paradigm, he proposed thirteen elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm, i.e. (1) Mission as the church-with-others; (2) Mission as *Missio Dei*; (3) Mission as mediating salvation; (4) Mission as the quest of justice; (5) Mission as evangelism; (6) Mission as contextualization; (7) Mission as liberation; (8) Mission as inculturation; (9) Mission as common witness; (10) Mission as ministry by the whole people of God; (11) Mission as witness to people of other living faiths; (12) Mission as theology; and (13) Mission as action in hope.<sup>39</sup>

We don't have to accept or agree with all that proposed by Bosch and some other missiologists, or with various thinking and ideas regarding theology of religions.<sup>40</sup> But at least we may learn many good things from their writings and ideas and use them as our basis and starting-point to develop our own theology of mission and theology of religions.

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39. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 368-510.

40. A contemporary missiologist that insists on constructing new understanding of mission based on the encounter with world religions is J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (1999).