

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST: SHAPING FAITH AND MISSION

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My thesis is this: "Jesus Christ is Lord" is a foundational biblical, personal faith-confession that corrects the traditional pluralist, inclusivist, and exclusivist positions held by Christians concerning other religions and calls God's missionary people to be mobilized by the Holy Spirit to participate in Christ's mission which is culturally pluralist, ecclesiological inclusivist, and faith particularist.

INTRODUCTION

Many of us would agree with Clark Pinnock when he says, "By all accounts the meaning of Christ's lordship in a religiously plural world is one of the hottest topics on the agenda of theology in the nineties."¹

The topic has been a matter of the Church's reflection since the First Century. Since the late 1400's, the missionary expansion of the churches (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) has tried conquest, accommodation, adaptation, indigenization, acculturation, contextualization and inculturation in its relationship to other religious traditions. At the International Missionary Council's meeting in Tambaram, Madras, India, in 1938,² Hendrik Kraemer replied to William Hocking's earlier criticisms that led to the "Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry," by presenting The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, based on his missiological interpretation of Karl Barth.³

The matter has received increasing attention, particularly from the Roman Catholics after the Second Vatican Council,⁴ and from the World Council of Churches since the Second World War.⁵ Four years ago Gerald Anderson documented 175 books published in English between 1970-1990 that dealt with the subject of "Christian Mission and Religious Pluralism" (Anderson: 1990). Three years later Anderson wrote, "No issue in missiology is more important, more difficult, more controversial, or more divisive for the days ahead than the theology of religions" (Anderson: 1993, 200).

Evangelicals have only recently begun to give attention to this matter. (Covell:1993, 162-163). At the 1979 Evangelical Consultation on Theology and Mission, held at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and in spite of the fact that the title of the published papers was New Horizons in World Mission, no major presentation dealt with the topic of other religions. (See David Hesselgrave: 1979.) Fortunately, during the 1980's a number of Evangelicals have made significant contributions to the conversation.⁶

In this chapter, I will present my understanding of three generally-accepted positions or paradigms, suggest a fourth, examine two foundational assumptions that impact all four, and draw three major missiological implications from the fourth paradigm.

THREE WELL-KNOWN PARADIGMS OF CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO OTHER RELIGIONS

It is now common to subdivide the subject into three broad perspectives: pluralist, inclusivist, and exclusivist (or restrictivist). But the use of these terms is a rather recent phenomenon, and we need to examine their use.⁷

One of the earliest uses I have found of the three-part typology appeared in 1989 in Religious Studies Review articles by Paul Knitter and Francis Clooney.⁸ By 1991 and 1992, the three-part typology had become common currency, at least among Evangelicals.⁹

Harold Netland (1991, 8-35) follows this structure, but qualifies his acceptance of it. "The use of the term 'exclusivism,'" says Netland, "is somewhat unfortunate since it has for many people undesirable connotations of narrow-mindedness, arrogance, insensitivity to others, self-righteousness, bigotry, and so on. In the context of the current debate, however, the term is unavoidable, because of the widespread use today to refer to the position represented by the Lausanne Covenant." (1991, 34-35).¹⁰

Have we Evangelicals given away too much by too easily accepting these terms? First, notice that "pluralist" is positive in terms of a multi-cultural and multi-religious world of which we are all increasingly conscious. The word "inclusivist" is positive in terms of wanting to open our arms to receive all those who are loved by God. But "exclusivist" is a negative word. Is this by accident, or by design? Few of us would like to be accused of being individually, institutionally, culturally, economically, politically, or socially "exclusive."

Secondly, what is the basis on which these words are being compared? If the basis is tolerance, the pluralist and inclusivist would seem to espouse tolerance, the exclusivist intolerance. If the basis is love? The pluralist loves everyone, as does the inclusivist, for they "(refuse) to limit the grace of God to the confines of the church," says Pinnock (1992, 15). It is the so-called exclusivist, or restrictivist who, as Pinnock says, "restricts hope..." and therefore relegates people of other religions to "zones of darkness," refusing to love all peoples enough to offer them a "wider hope" (1992, 14). If the basis of comparison is global openness vs. parochialism, the exclusivist position looks ancient and out-of-date, and narrow.

Thirdly, if the basis of comparison is optimism vs. pessimism, the inclusivist position is, in Pinnock's words, "optimistic of salvation" (e.g. 1992, 153), while the so-called "restrictivists" demonstrate a "negative attitude toward the rest of the world" (1992, 13), a "pessimism of salvation, or darkly negative thinking about people's spiritual journeys" (1992, 182). Thus Pinnock is forced to assess the exclusivist view of judgment in rather harsh terms.

We have to confront the niggardly tradition of certain varieties of conservative theology that present God as miserly, and that exclude large numbers of people without a second thought. This dark pessimism is contrary to Scripture and right reason. (Pinnock:1992, 153-154)

John Hick describes the exclusivists in equally strong terms.

(The exclusivist's) entirely negative attitude to other faiths is strongly correlated with ignorance of them....Today, however, the extreme evangelical Protestant who believes that all Muslims go to hell is probably not so much ignorant...as blinded by dark dogmatic spectacles through which he can see no good in religious devotion outside his own group.¹¹

As Evangelicals, we need to gain a better understanding of the basis for this caricature of the exclusivist position by both inclusivists like Pinnock and pluralists like Hick. In order to do this, we need to lay the three paradigms side-by-side. To do this in a short space, and at the risk of severe over-simplification, I will represent each paradigm graphically and briefly describe my own summarized interpretation of its over-all theological and missiological contours. The reader may wish to examine these summarizations to see if their description is close to the reader's perception of these paradigms.

PLURALIST -- A CREATION PARADIGM

Begins with creation, and the *fact* of religious pluralism
Relativist as to both culture and faith
PRIOR CHOICE: common humanity
Concerned about peoples of various faiths co-existing together
"As in Adam": all were created good¹²
Predominantly horizontalist
Religion is expression of individual subjectivity or culture
Weak theology of the Fall or sin¹³
Optimistic about culture/faith relation
Confuse culture and faith.
Bible is only the Christian's book, among other holy books.
No conversion, no transformation -- actually supports status quo
No necessity for personal faith-relationship with Jesus Christ
Holy Spirit works everywhere in the world with no relation to Christ or to the Church.
Pessimistic about the Church
No kingdom of darkness or recognition of the demonic
Newbigin and Netland are right: ultimately relative pluralism is illogical.
Ultimately pluralists cannot dialogue -- conversation stops.
Unrelated to issues of folk-religions
Related especially to "academic" views of world religions
Mission is irrelevant, unnecessary, demeaning, disrespectful.

Inclusivist -- A Paradigm of Universal Soteriology

Begins with the unique Christ-event ontologically presented for all people.
Not relativist about Jesus Christ, but weak in personal relationship to the living Jesus Christ
Relativist about the form of universal Christological soteriology.
PRIOR CHOICE: All will ultimately be saved by a loving God (John Hick 1980)
Concerned about peoples of various faiths co-existing together.
"As in Adam...So in Christ, all are saved" is emphasized.
Rather strongly verticalist soteriology, weakly horizontalist
Many religious forms ultimately are based on Christ-event
Weak theology of the Fall or sin
Generally optimistic about culture/faith relation
Bible as God's inspired revelation for all
Strongly concerned about the uniqueness of Christ ontologically
Personal relationship to Jesus Christ is desirable, not normative
Conversion is good, but not necessary, weak in transformation
Holy Spirit separated from Christology¹⁴
Pessimistic about the institutional church
No kingdom of darkness or recognition of the demonic
Ultimately inclusivism is patronizing -- everyone gets saved in the Christ-event whether they
know or want it or not -- they are given the option to say no to God.
Mostly unrelated to issues in folk-religions
Related especially to "academic" views of world religions
Mission is telling people they are already saved in Jesus Christ.

"Exclusivist" -- An Ecclesiocentric Paradigm

Begins with church as the "ark of salvation"

Absolutist re: personal allegiance to Jesus Christ in the Church

Assumes a rather medieval, institutional understanding of "extra ecclesiam nulla salus"

PRIOR CHOICE: salvation only in (my) institutional church

Concerned that all non-Christians become Christians in the church

"As in Adam... all sinned" is emphasized.

Strongly verticalist

Religious systems/cultures outside the church are all sinful.

Religious co-existence is possible only as people become Christians and part of the institutional church.

Heavy emphasis on theology of the Fall and sin

Pessimistic about culture/faith relation

Bible is God's inspired revelation proclaimed through the church.

Strongly concerned about uniqueness of Christ

Strong emphasis on conversion in Jesus Christ, in and through the church

Holy Spirit is predominantly mediated in word, worship, sacrament.

Very optimistic about the church - ecclesiocentric¹⁵

Over-emphasis on kingdom of darkness, not much about demonic

Ultimately triumphalistic, dominating, self-serving

Has done well among folk-religions, poorly among world religions

Mission is rescuing people out of sinful cultures into the church.

A FOURTH POSSIBILITY:
AN EVANGELIST PARADIGM

Let me suggest a fourth paradigm: the "Evangelist." I have chosen this name because I want to present a paradigm whose starting point and center is the EVANGEL, the confession by His disciples that, "*Jesus is Lord.*"¹⁶ The "Evangelist" paradigm may be presented as follows.

Evangelist -- A Fourth Paradigm

Begins with the confession "Jesus Christ is Lord."¹⁷

Absolutist about a personal faith relationship with the risen Jesus Christ as Lord, relativist in terms of the shape this takes in church and culture

PRIOR CHOICE: personal faith-relationship with Jesus Christ: born, lived, ministered, died, rose, ascended, coming again -- by grace, through faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit

Does not accept complete symmetry of "As in Adam...so in Christ."

Equally verticalist and horizontalist

All cultures (including my own) are fallen, all cultures can teach us something new about how "Jesus Christ is Lord."¹⁸

Concerned about human co-existence amidst multiple cultures and religions

Takes seriously the consequences of the Fall and of sin

Somewhat optimistic about cultures, culture-affirming yet pessimistic about human sinfulness

Bible, salvation and faith all call the institutional church to repentance and renewal -- to confessing anew in word and life, "Jesus is Lord."

Bible is God's inspired revelation for all humanity and has new things to say to each new culture where the Gospel takes root.

Strongly conversionist, can be strongly transformational

The same Holy Spirit works simultaneously but differently in the world, in and through the Church, in the believer for mission in the world.

Softly optimistic about the institutional church, but more intentionally oriented toward the Kingdom of God

Strong in the church's call to self-critique

Conscious of the kingdom of darkness and the demonic both in the world and in the church

Ultimately creative, ever-changing, theology-on-the-way that calls for new christologies in new cultural settings

Can do well in folk-religious environment

Tends to be confrontational with other global religious systems.

Mission is calling people to conversion, confession, and new allegiance, personally and corporately, to Jesus Christ as Lord in multiple cultures.

Before we look at the missiological implications of this fourth paradigm, we need to clarify two foundational presuppositions that influence all four options: (1) our understanding of the relation of faith and culture and (2) the relation of Christology and soteriology.

The Relation of Faith and Culture

As the church becomes more and more a global community, it is increasingly clear that faith and culture cannot be entirely separated from each other. The gospel does not take place in a cultural vacuum, but is always incarnated in a specific cultural context. That is, it is infinitely "translatable," as Lamin Sanneh has said. (1989, 50-51) Yet we must affirm also that culture and faith are not identical. As Charles Kraft says, "We deduce then, that the relationship between God and culture is the same as that of one who uses a vehicle to the vehicle that he uses.... Any limitation of God is only that which he imposes upon himself -- he chooses to use culture, he is not bound by it in the same way human beings are" (1979, 115).

Not only must we distinguish God from culture, but we must also separate the faith of the individual from his or her culture.¹⁹ We need to affirm approaches to other faiths that take seriously the culturally appropriate shape given the gospel in each time and place. But that is a far cry from equating culture and faith. Thus Paul Hiebert affirms,

The gospel must be distinguished from all human cultures. It is divine revelation, not human speculation. Since it belongs to no one culture, it can be adequately expressed in all of them. The failure to differentiate between the gospel and human cultures has been one of the great weaknesses of modern Christian missions (1985, 53).

The difference between faith and culture is not only anthropologically accurate, it is also supported historically and biblically. Historically, one needs only review the history of the church to realize that the Gospel of faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ has always tended to break out of the cultural molds that would imprison it. Originally the Gospel was not Western at all -- it was Middle-Eastern. It began among Aramaic-speaking Jews. Then it took shape in Greek culture, Roman culture, North African cultures, and on to Ethiopia, India, the Near-East, the Arabian peninsula, then on to Europe, and so forth. To associate any culture too closely with biblical faith is to ignore the historical expansion of the church.

But more profoundly, the distinction between faith and culture is biblically essential. This issue is at the heart of Acts and Romans.²⁰ In Acts and Romans the issue is precisely how the same faith in Christ's lordship can take shape in a variety of cultures. The difference between faith and culture is also essential for our understanding of Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians, for example. "The mystery," says Paul, "is that through the gospel the Gentiles (the ethne, comprising a multiplicity of cultures) are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6, 15). I Peter and Revelation would not make much sense either, without a distinction between faith and culture. We now

know that people of many cultures can have the same faith, and people of the same culture can have many faiths -- or, in the case of the secularized post-Christian West, no faith at all.

Now this issue is more important than it may seem. One of the most disturbing aspects of the literature relevant to our topic is the close, nearly synonymous, relationship that is assumed to exist between faith and culture. (See, for example, Ernst Troeltsch 1980, 27). Whether we are speaking of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Karl Rahner, Paul Knitter, John Hick, John Cobb, or Wesley Ariarajah, there is a disturbingly close relationship between faith and culture in their writings.²¹ Interestingly, a close examination of the writings of inclusivists like Clark Pinnock, John Sanders and David Lowes Watson reveals the same almost total identification of culture with faith. However, the so-called "exclusivists" also tend to closely equate culture and faith -- and in that case, conversion to Jesus Christ sometimes too easily becomes conversion to a particular version of culture-Christianity.

The distinction between faith and culture is important theologically and missiologically because the increasing cultural pluralism of our world seems to create the assumption that cultural pluralism should lead naturally to religious relativism. In today's world, Christians and non-Christians, pluralists, inclusivists, and exclusivists are beginning to share one thing in common. We are all being radically impacted by the largest re-distribution of people the globe has ever seen. In this new reality, all of us are seeking ways to affirm *cultural relativism*: tolerance, understanding, justice, equality, and co-existence of a new multi-cultural reality. The cities of our world are especially impacted by this.

But cultural relativism can impact our theology and missiology in strange ways, particularly if we hold faith and culture too close to each other. If one views faith and culture as nearly synonymous and one also begins to be open to *cultural relativism*, the next, seemingly obvious step is some form of *religious pluralism*. If one goes all the way with this process, one arrives at the Pluralist position.²² If one cannot go that far and feels strongly constrained to hold tightly to the uniqueness of the cosmic Christ-event, one arrives at the Inclusivist position. If one refuses to accept *cultural relativism*, but holds faith and culture to be synonymous, one arrives at an Exclusivist position reminiscent of a cultural Protestantism like that of the nineteenth century: conversion is adoption of certain cultural practices, rather than a matter of faith-relation to Jesus Christ. As the Evangelical community has become more culture-affirming, the distinction between faith and culture has become harder to maintain, and its impact on our missiology more pervasive.

The Relation of Christology and Soteriology

Secondly, I we need to be conscious of the radically different forms the soteriological question takes among pluralists and inclusivists on the one hand, and the exclusivists and "evangelists" on the other. The bottom-line question of the pluralist and inclusivist positions is, "Given the fact that humanity is basically good, and God is a God of love, how is it possible that God could condemn so much of humanity to eternal punishment?" The exclusivists and evangelists would ask the question differently. We would ask, "Given the fact of the Fall, and

that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23), how is it possible that so much of humanity may be saved?"

I believe that our theological work concerning Christology in relation to non-Christian faiths must expand beyond the soteriological questions to questions of creation, fall, the nature of humanity, and the nature of sin and holiness. Without examining these, we cannot fully clarify the issues at hand. This is where I believe Pinnock and Sanders are both quite unrealistic about their Christological re-thinking. One cannot make such a substantive change in one's Christology without it being either the beginning of a change in all the other loci of one's theology -- or the result of changes already made or assumed.²³

MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Let me emphasize that I am making a conscious choice here to highlight the Christian's personal relationship with the living Jesus Christ who was born, lived in Palestine during a specific historical time, ministered, died, rose, ascended, and is coming again. The absolutely radical claim of the canonical text of the Bible is that this Jesus lives today, and is the one with whom the Christian disciple relates personally by faith. John Hick recognized in 1980 both the validity and the implications of this perspective. (1980, 19). As Hick admitted, "If Jesus was literally God incarnate, the second Person of the holy Trinity living in human life, so that the Christian religion was founded by God-on-earth in person, it is then very hard to escape from the traditional view that all (sic) mankind must be converted to the Christian faith." (1980, 19)

Of course, this is the crucial point, and sadly John Hick opted to understand the narrative about Jesus Christ in what he called a "metaphorical" manner, rather than a literal description of a verifiable historical person (1980, 19). That decision was coupled, in Hick's view, with his prior commitment that, "any viable Christian theodicy must affirm the ultimate salvation of all God's creatures" (1980, 17). The combination of these two prior commitments is not a neutral position, but rather involves an initial faith-choice that leads logically to a "pluralist" position

Although there are many missiological implications that flow from the "Evangelist" paradigm, I will limit myself to three basic ones. An "Evangelist" paradigm of Christian attitude to other religions offers a perspective that is (1) faith particularist, (2) culturally pluralist, and (3) ecclesiologically inclusivist.²⁴

The "Evangelist" paradigm recognizes the need to integrate both the particularity and the universality of Jesus Christ. The particularity of Jesus Christ's incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection in history continues to stand in dialectical tension with the universality of Jesus Christ's claims to be the Saviour of the world. In the midst of this universal-particularism, the disciples of Jesus confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord."

JESUS Christ is Lord: Faith Particularist

The first element of this new paradigm that we need to stress is that it is PERSONAL. It deals not with religious systems, or theoretical religions as such, but with matters of people and of personal faith (Taber & Taber 1992). Thus we need to be able to deal with these matters in terms of "fuzzy sets," as Paul Hiebert has called them (1983, 427), for they have to do with personal

faith allegiance to Jesus who lived and ministered in Palestine at a specific time in history.²⁵ As Gnanakan says, "God's revelation has a historicity and a universality that will need to be reconciled" (1992, 19). And such reconciliation is to be found, first of all, in a personal relationship of the Christian with the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ of history. As Mark Heim (along with many others) has noted, the only truly unique, truly distinctive aspect of Christian faith is "a personal relationship between the Christian and the living Christ" (Heim: 1985, 135).

Thus in the diagram of the "Evangelistic" paradigm, all the figures are drawn with dotted lines. Confession in Jesus as Lord involves a personal faith-relationship that breaks the bonds of all religious systems. This relationship involves all of life with all its contradictions. It is not neat, logical, coherent. Sometimes it may involve what Hiebert has called "the excluded middle" (1982). This relationship is not exclusive, nor arrogant, nor triumphalistic. Rather, it is humble confession, repentance, and obedience. Thus the major question is not in what box or religious system does a person belong. Rather, we are dealing here with a relational "centered set," where the ultimate question is one of discipleship, one of proximity to, or distance from, Jesus the Lord.

This perspective calls into question the institutional structures of all churches, and especially of "Christianity" as a religious system, for the churches are now seen to be the fellowship of disciples of Jesus, whose allegiance is to Jesus more than to a particular institution (contra the "Exclusivist" perspective). This also calls into question the inclusivist perspective in its cosmic Christ-event that is salvific for all persons regardless of their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And it questions the "pluralist" perspective in its relativistic reduction of the confession to Jesus being only "a" christ among many.

The confession of Jesus as Lord calls for stripping away all the layers of the artichoke²⁶ of cultural accretions that Christians have added to the basic confession. As Paul demonstrates in Romans, and as one sees modeled in Acts, to confess with one's mouth and believe in one's heart that Jesus is Lord -- that is all there is. Nothing else really matters.

Thus when I call people of other cultures and faiths to confess "Jesus is Lord," it is not **my** Jesus (exclusivist), nor is it a or any Jesus (pluralist), nor is it the cosmic amorphous idea of Jesus Christ (inclusivist). Rather, it is Jesus *the* Lord, who calls for conversion and transformation of ALL who confess His name. Only in humility, in personal repentance and prayer, and expectation of great cultural diversity may I invite others to join me in confessing JESUS as Lord. Many Evangelical theologians and missiologists have affirmed this perspective. Such broad agreement does not minimize the radicalness of the affirmation.²⁷

Jesus CHRIST is Lord: Culturally Pluralist

Along with the historicity and relationality of Jesus Christ, we must also affirm the universality of Christ's Messianic Lordship. As John 1, Ephesians 1, and Colossians 1 state, Jesus the Christ is the creator and sustainer of all the created order. Here we listen carefully to the so-called pluralist concerns. For we ARE concerned about the whole of humanity, and about the care of God's creation. We are concerned about how humans can live together in peace and

justice, especially in the midst of increasingly difficult clashes between conflicting religious allegiances.

We need a trinitarian missiology that is Kingdom-oriented, as Johannes Verkuyl has so masterfully pointed out (1993). We need to remember that Christ's lordship is not only over the church (contra the "exclusivist"), but also over all the world. The pluralist and inclusivist perspectives confuse the manner, scope, and nature of Christ's kingly rule in relation to the Church (the willing subjects), Christ's rule over all humanity in the world (many unwilling subjects), and over the unseen world. These need to be differentiated.²⁸

However, this does not warrant our ignoring matters that deal with all peoples. Rather, Christ's Lordship will radically question the "exclusivist" position in terms of other cultures and religions, and will instead open up a much greater breadth for contextualized encounter of Christians with their multiple cultures. Not all so-called non-Christian culture is sinful (contra the exclusivist). But neither is it all relative (contra the pluralist). For all is brought together under the Lordship of Christ. Neither all creation, nor every human is ontologically determined to be included in Christ's salvation against their will (contra the inclusivist). Rather, we are called to "test the spirits" (I John 4:1-3). Those who confess "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" are to be recognized as related to God.

This broad, all-encompassing Christology means that we need to continue to listen carefully to the new Christologies that are arising in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Maximally, all that which does not contradict the Biblical revelation concerning the historical Jesus Christ our Lord is open for consideration. Even in the New Testament, we are becoming aware of a multiplicity of Christologies that draw from the greatness of Jesus Christ and shape themselves for specific cultural and historical contexts, as Robert Gundry recently pointed out in a paper entitled, "Diversity and Multiculturalism in New Testament Christology" (1994).

Thus John Levison and Priscilla Pope-Levison (1994) have called us to join them in a search for "an Ecumenical Christology for Asia" that is neither the cosmic Christ who loses touch with real life, nor the suffering Jesus who has no power to transform. In Latin America we inherited either the impotent Jesus hanging on the cross as a symbol of domination, or the distant Christ who is irrelevant to today's issues.²⁹

Clearly, we need to be very careful here, (H. Berkhof: 1979, 48) and must follow a very sensitive process that Paul Hiebert has called "critical contextualization" (1987). As David Hesselgrave has warned, we are constantly faced here with twin dangers: "the risk of going too far," and "the risk of not going far enough" (1988, 152).³⁰

Jesus Christ is *LORD*: Ecclesiological Inclusivist

Any discussion of the Lordship of Jesus Christ must begin with a recognition of the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ's kingly rule in the lives of people and in the Church. J. Verkuyl said it well.

A theology and missiology informed by the biblical notion of the rule of Christ will never fail to identify personal conversion as one of the inclusive goals of

God's kingdom...The good news of the Kingdom also has to do with the formation and in-depth growth of the Body of Christ throughout the world and to the end of time...The Kingdom is, of course, far broader than the Church alone. God's Kingdom is all-embracing in respect of both point of view and purpose; it signifies the consummation of the whole of history; it has cosmic proportions and fulfills time and eternity. Meanwhile, the Church, the believing and active community of Christ, is raised up by God among all nations to share in the salvation and suffering service of the Kingdom. The Church consists of those whom God has called to stand at His side to act out with Him the drama of the revelation of the Kingdom come and coming.(1993, 73)

The Kingdom leads to the Church, the disciples of Jesus Christ the Lord. For the Church is not only a gathering of individuals, it is much more. "Though faith may be intensely personal," comment Charles and Betty Taber, "religion is irreducibly social" (1992, 76). Jesus Christ is Lord not only of creation, He is also Head of the Church (Col. 1). Thus Jesus Christ sent His Spirit (contra Pinnock's *Logos* christology) at Pentecost to constitute the Church. Because Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, no one else is. The Church belongs to no human person, and church growth must be growth in the numbers of disciples of Jesus, as Donald McGavran always affirmed -- not proselytism with a view to expanding someone's little ecclesiastical kingdom. The "Evangelist" paradigm seeks to correct the triumphalism and arrogance of which the "exclusivists" have sometimes been accused.³¹

Because Jesus Christ the Lord is the Head of the Church, the Church's mission is therefore to participate in the mission of Jesus the Christ. This means that the Church's mission is *no less* than that which Jesus declares in Luke 4. And it is *as much as* what Paul says in Acts 13: the Church is to be a "light to the nations." The Church is therefore to focus itself on the whole of humanity. There is always room for one more forgiven sinner. But this also means (contra the inclusivists) that it is the Church as Church, and not some cosmic idea that gathers disciples. This also signifies (contra the pluralists) that the Church of whom Christ is Head is called to proclaim that Jesus is *the* Lord of all humanity, not just a christ. (See Van Engen:1991, 93-94).

This world-encountering Church is as broad as all humanity, as accepting as Christ's cosmic lordship and as incorporating and gathering as Christ's disciples. The Church is always the same: it is the disciples of Jesus Christ the Lord of creation, of all peoples, and of the Church.³²

CONCLUSION

Ultimately our conviction, reflection, and proclamation involves a restatement of the mystery of the gospel for all peoples. In Paul's words, it involves a mystery that, "for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be known...according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." (Eph. 3:9-12 NIV). If Paul and the early Church could say that in the midst of their cultural and religious diversity, we can feel confident in doing so as well. ***Jesus***

Christ is Lord." In the midst of many cultures and peoples of many faiths, let's learn to be bold evangelists: faith particularist, culturally pluralist, and ecclesiological inclusivist.

¹ Pinnock: 1992, 7. Chapman quotes Max Warren as saying, "The challenge of agnostic science will turn out to have been child's play compared with the challenge to Christian theology of the faith of other (people)" (Colin Chapman 1990, 16). See also Robert Coote 1990, 15; Ralph Covell 1993, 162.) Harold Netland quotes Gerald Anderson as saying, "The most critical aspect of the task of forging a viable theology of mission today 'deals with the Christian attitude toward religious pluralism and the approach to people of other faiths'" (Netland 1991, 9; quoting from G.H. Anderson 1988, 114).

² See International Missionary Council, The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, London: IMC, 1938. An excellent series of articles on Tambaram, 1938, appeared in IRM (LXXVIII: 307, July). See also Carl Hallencreutz: 1969.

³ Cf. "The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion," in: John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, eds.: 1980, 32-51.

⁴ See International Bulletin of Missionary Research (XIV:2 April, 1990) 56-63. See Mikka Roukanen 1990.

⁵ See, e.g., Stanley Samartha 1977, 1981; Wesley Ariarajah 1988; Wilfred Cantwell Smith 1980; Kenneth Cragg 1986; Charles Forman 1993; C.S. Song 1975, 1987; Jerald Gort 1992; D.C. Mulder 1985; Anton Wessels 1992; Paul Tillich 1980; David Lowes Watson 1990; and the writings of M.M. Thomas and Paul D. Devanandan.

⁶ An excellent survey is given by David Bosch 1988. See also David Hesselgrave 1990; and Richard Bauckham 1979. Folks like Clark Pinnock 1992 and John Sanders 1992; along with others like John Stott 1975, 1981, 1989; Harold Netland 1991; David Hesselgrave 1981, 1988; Michael Green 1977; Carl Braaten 1981; Ajith Fernando 1987; Ken Gnanakan 1992; Andrew Kirk 1992; Mark Heim 1985; William Crockett and James Sigountos 1991; together with J.I. Packer, Carl Henry, Kenneth Kantzer and others have begun to offer us some very substantial food for thought. David Bosch, Gerald Anderson and Lesslie Newbigin, along with John V. Taylor, Max Warren, Johannes Verkuyl and Arthur Glasser, are among those who have consistently kept before all missiologists, including us Evangelicals, the importance of continued and careful reflection on the subject. see also Jack Cottrell and Steve Burris 1993.

⁷ In 1985, when Paul Knitter published No Other Name? he spoke of "models" of Christian attitudes to other religions: The Conservative Evangelical, the Mainline Protestant, the Catholic, and the Theocentric. In doing so, he down-played the "pluralist, inclusivist and exclusivist" typology. In 1980, in God Has Many Names, John Hick refers to the three major types of

approaches, but the words themselves as typological categories are not strongly emphasized. Harold Netland pointed this out in his response to the original reading of this chapter as a paper at the Spring, 1994, ETS/EMS Midwestern Conference. In a good reader on, Christianity and Other Religions (1980), John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite mention "religious pluralism" and "Christian absolutism," but do not use the three-part typology either. On the Evangelical side, Mark Heim, (1985) and Ajith Fernand (1987) do not structure their work around these three perspectives.

⁸ (XV:3, July, 1989), 198-207. Carl Braaten seemed to accept the threefold typology in 1987, mentioning Gavin D'Costa and Alan Race as utilizing it -- but he does not indicate where it came from. (Braaten 1987, 17)

⁹ Clark Pinnock (1992, 14-15); John Sanders (1992, 1-7); Millard Erickson (in his introductory chapter to William Crockett and James Sigountos 1991, 27-33); J. Andrew Kirk (1992, 9-15); and Ken Gnanakan (1992) all follow this organization. David Bosch follows a similar typology, but uses the words: relativism, fulfillment, and exclusivism (Bosch 1991, 478-483) to describe the three major perspectives.

¹⁰ In his response to this paper, mentioned above in footnote 11, Harold Netland commented, "It is probably safe to assume that the term 'exclusivism' was not first introduced into the discussion by adherents of that perspective, but rather is a pejorative term first introduced by those who did not accept that view, who wished to cast it in a particularly unappetizing light. Unfortunately, by default, we Evangelicals have allowed others involved in the debate over religious pluralism to define the category of 'exclusivism', and to do so in unacceptable terms..." (Netland: 1994, 1)

¹¹ For similar sentiments, see, e.g., Eugene Hillman 1968, 25-27. Hick's sentiment echoes that of Ernst Troeltsch, expressed in a lecture at the University of Oxford in 1923; see Ernst Troeltsch 1980, 26-28; and Wilfred Cantwell Smith 1980, 96-98.

¹² The question of what Paul meant in Romans 5:12-19 as to the extent and nature of the symmetry between Adam and Jesus is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet the implications of one's hermeneutic of that passage are profound and deep for our subject.

¹³ See, e.g. Michael Griffiths 1980, 128-130.

¹⁴ James Bradley 1993.

¹⁵ W. Cantwell Smith has felt that "traditional missions are the exact extrapolation of the traditional theology of the church" (1980, 90).

¹⁶ See Lesslie Newbigin 1978, 190-191. I have been helped here by an article by John Howard Yoder, "'But We Do See Jesus': The Particularity of Incarnation and the Universality of Truth," (John Howard Yoder 1983, 66-67)

¹⁷ See C. Van Engen 1991, 92-94.

¹⁸ See C. Van Engen 1989, 74-100.

¹⁹ What I mean by "faith" here is not the same thing as "revelation," which is primarily the action of God, by God's initiative, in God's way. Neither do I mean "faith" in terms of an existential or

subjective experience of the numinous, of the "Wholly Other," or of the "Real." Nor do I mean "faith" in terms of an assent to a number of propositions (and concomitant participation in a number of rituals) which allow for the person to be accepted in a specific religious context. Of course, I recognize the validity of all of these as part of a much larger picture. However, at the risk of over-simplification, I believe I am on firm Scriptural grounds to define "faith" in this context as including at its most foundational meaning a personal allegiance that derives from a covenantal RELATIONSHIP, an "assurance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1) that flows from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ by grace, through faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Charles Kraft is developing a fascinating approach to this in his investigation of three encounters: "allegiance, truth and power" that go on in Christian witness. (C. Kraft 1991, 258-265; 1992, 215-230.)

²⁰ See C. Van Engen 1991, 191-193).

²¹ For some references to this, see Van Engen 1991, 189, footnote 16.

²² W.A. Visser 't Hooft emphasized the importance of this faith/culture distinction. "To transform the struggle between the religions concerning the ultimate truth of God into an intercultural debate concerning values is to leave out the central issue at stake...ignoring the central affirmation of the faith, that God revealed himself once for all in Jesus Christ.." (1963, 85).

²³ James Bradley pointed this out in relation to the *Logos* christology that forms the basis of Pinnock's inclusivist position. (Bradley 1993, 20-22).

²⁴ I am following Paul Hiebert's lead here in calling missiology to move "Beyond Anti-Colonialism to Globalism" (1991).

²⁵ See also Paul Hiebert 1979.

²⁶ I used to say, "layers of the onion." But onions have no center: artichokes do.

²⁷ The reader may consult, e.g., J. Verkuyl 1989; Arthur Glasser 1989; Mark Thomsen 1990; Michael Green 1977; Carl Braaten 1981; John V. Taylor 1981; Waldron Scott 1981; Norman Anderson 1950, 228-237; Mark Heim 1985, 135; John Howard Yoder 1983; Stephen Neill 1970; William Pickard 1991; and Ken Gnanakan 1992.

²⁸ I have sought to make just such a distinction in Van Engen 1981, 277-305 and Van Engen 1991, 108-117.

²⁹ The development of new christologies in Latin America has been extensive and creative. For Evangelical perspectives on this, see, e.g. Samuel Escobar 1991; Padilla 1986, and John Mackay 1933.

³⁰ See also J. Andrew Kirk 1992, 171-187; Ajith Fernando 1987, 69ff; Bruce Nicholls 1979, 1984; Lesslie Newbigin 1978; and Carl Henry 1991, 253.

³¹ See Gnanakan: 1992 154.

³² See, e.g., Johannes Verkuyl 1978, 354-368, 1993; David Bosch 1991, 474-489; Bruce Nicholls 1984, 131-135; and J. Andrew Kirk 1992.