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• Models of Encounter with other Religions
• *Modèles de Rencontre avec les autres Religions*
• *Modell der Begegnung mit anderen Religionen*

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RÉSUMÉ

Le flot des ouvrages consacrés au dialogue inter-religieux charrie diverses propositions de 'modèles': exclusivisme, inclusivisme, syncrétisme, pluralisme . . . S'il ne s'agissait que de classer les conceptions du divin étranger, le schème de C.–A. KELLER, deux fois triple, superbe d'économie logique, l'emporterait. Sur le dialogue lui-même, cependant, il nous incombe d'en esquisser un autre.

En voici l'arrangement. Aux limites, on conçoit deux modèles qui suppriment la rencontre: l'isolationnisme radical et le pluralisme total; personne, en fait, ne se tient à ces extrêmes. Dans le champ dont ils sont les pôles opposés, nous relevons, comme trois axes, trois soucis qui peuvent prédominer: de la puissance, *du* salut, *et de la* vérité. *'L'affrontement des puissances', cher à la Troisième vague charismatique, et le syncrétisme, de l'autre côté, relèvent du premier souci. L'exclusivisme évangélique traditionnel et l'inclusivisme catholique encore établi relèvent du deuxième. Selon l'axe du souci de vérité, nous distinguons deux modèles orthodoxes (scolastique et augustinien-calviniste) et deux modèles relativement relativistes (théocentrique et christocentrique).*

Nous suggérons, chemin faisant, quelques considérations critiques, et nous mettons enfin en relief les lieux névralgiques du débat: la portée des ressemblances, la nécessité d'un terrain commun pour dialoguer, la mesure de savoir requise par la foi salutaire, le rapport à l'amour et à l'engagement religieux personnel, l'usage des thèmes chrétiens comme celui de la kénose, et l'influence du Zeitgeist.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In der Flut von Werken, die dem interreligiösen Dialog gewidmet sind, werden verschiedene 'Modelle' vorgeschlagen: Exklusivismus, Inklusivismus, Synkretismus, Pluralismus . . . Wenn es nur darum ginge, die verschiedenen Vorstellungen des göttlichen 'Auslands' zu ordnen, würde das Schema von C.A. KELLER den Sieg davontragen. Es ist ein zweimal dreifaches Schema von bestechender logischer Ökonomie. Was den Dialog selbst angeht, müssen wir jedoch ein anderes Modell skizzieren.

An den Grenzen erkennen wir zwei Modelle, die die Begegnung ganz unterdrücken: der radikale Isolationismus und der totale Pluralismus; aber tatsächlich hält sich niemand an diese beiden Extreme. In dem Bereich, dessen gegensätzliche Pole sie darstellen, entdecken wir — wie drei Achsen — drei Sorgen, die vorherrschen können: Die Frage nach der Vollmacht, die nach dem Heil und die nach der Wahrheit. Die Herausforderung der Mächte einerseits, die der dritten charismatischen Welle viel bedeutet, und der Synkretismus andererseits gehen aus der ersten Sorge hervor. Der traditionelle evangelische Exklusivismus und der noch etablierte katholische Inklusivismus

entspringen der zweiten Sorge um das Heil. Bei der Sorge um die Wahrheit unterscheiden wir zwei orthodoxe Modelle (scholastisch und augustinisch-calvinistisch) und zwei verhältnismäßig relativistische Modelle (theozentrisch und christozentrisch).

Wir empfehlen unterdessen einige kritische Überlegungen und heben schließlich die neuralgischen Punkte der Debatte hervor: der Bereich der Ähnlichkeiten, die Notwendigkeit einer gemeinsamen Grundlage für das Gespräch, das erforderliche Wissen für den Heilsglauben, der Bezug zur Liebe und zum persönlichen religiösen Engagement, die Verwendung der christlichen Themen, wie demjenigen der Menschwerdung und Erniedrigung, und schließlich der Einfluß des Zeitgeistes.

Psalm 18:25—31

'Model' remains a fashionable word, and a most convenient one: it suggests some familiarity with scientific, and even epistemological, talk–by using it, one escapes being judged a Boeotian; it also benefits from an aesthetic halo–by using it, one avoids being judged a Philistine! Among the scholars who have written on the encounter of Christianity and other religions, many refer to 'models' and make lists of such.

Not all, however, give the term exactly the same meaning; before commenting on 'models', we should comment briefly on what we mean by the word 'model'. Raymond (Raimundo) Panikkar, after he has defined four main 'attitudes', offers four models, as he calls them, to assist us in dialogue; they are four key *metaphors*, which he develops artfully: the geographical, that of the mountain top to be reached by various paths; the physical, that of the rainbow, of light refracted; the geometrical, of the topological invariant, transformation and homeomorphism; the anthropological, of language and languages, and translation.[1] But we would not so closely identify models with metaphors. Although we agree that all seeing is seeing as, that all language (living, natural language) retains a metaphorical dimension, a model does not require that *transfer* which is essential to metaphor. Model is nearer to *concept*, 'that particular bundle of cognitive features, associated with the lexical unit, which makes possible the designation of all the denotata by the lexical unit in question'.[2] To the selection of traits, it adds a kind of visual, or plastic, assistance to the process of thinking. As a model in the physical, everyday sense, is usually a miniature substitute for a thing too big to handle, a model in academic talk is a stylized representation substituting for realities too complex for treatment. It is not far from type, *Idealtypus*, and, maybe, from the earlier Greek *idea*! A metaphorical touch may enhance the plastic quality of a model.

With this meaning of model in mind, we propose first to cast a glance at several lists of models in our literature; then to display our own choice, arrangement, and comments; and finally to draw attention to a number of sensitive issues arising from the models and from the confrontation between them.

Sample Typologies

Recent interest in the encounter of other religions has produced an overwhelming flood of books and articles; the mere reading of a review-article, such as Schmidt-Leukel's,[3] is staggering. Without claiming even to make a survey of the field, we present samples we have gleaned on the way.

R. Panikkar's 'attitudes' correspond to what most other writers (and we) would call models. As already mentioned, he has four: *exclusivism*, which he is willing to credit with some courage, untenable as it is today: *inclusivism*, with a Hindu example; *parallelism*, with religions as

parallel ways which meet only at the end; *interpenetration*, even *perichorèsis*, which he favours, yet with some questions.[4] The French liberal Protestant André Gounelle discerns six 'models': *exclusivism*, again, with Jansenists, Evangelicals (the Francfort Declaration), Luther, Barth; *religions as preparations for the Gospel*, from Justin Martyr, the Alexandrians to Bultmann; *multi-storeyed revelation*, the most classical model, which he ascribes to Aquinas, Calvin, Newbigin, Braaten . . .; *the anonymous Christ*, of Rahner and Panikkar; *relativism*, expressed already by Troeltsch; *syncretism*, of which A. Toynbee was a forerunner, and which flourishes most in America.[5] The younger theologian Jean-Claude Basset, in Geneva, is satisfied with four divisions: 'the isolationistic model of the integr-[al]ists, the expansionistic model of the missionaries, the syncretistic model, of the New Age type, and a new pluralistic model which constitutes in many ways a revolution';[6] his distinction between two exclusivistic types is a worthwhile insight, and he is aware of the New Age phenomenon. Moltmann expressly calls models, 'the traditional theological models', only the Nature/Supernature scheme, and the suggestion of Hans Küng, that Christianity be considered as a 'critical catalyst';[7] but, implicitly, his proposal of a mutual vulnerability profile stands for another model, and probably also the 'prejudices' which dominated previous ages: 'the Absolutism of the Church', 'the Absolutism of Faith' (of the dialectical theologians, Barth *et alii*), and 'the Relativism of the Enlightenment'.[8] As an original attempt, one may add to the basket Franz Jozef van Beeck's dipolarity of 'constructiveness', involving affirmation and 'a capacity for aggression and outright hostility', and 'receptiveness', even to the point of patient enduring of persecution; he warns of two temptations:

> The first, accommodation, has affinities with modernism; it amounts to an overstatement of Christian openness. Accommodation occurs when Christians crave constructive association with non-Christians to the point of jeopardizing the integrity of the faith. (. . .) The second is accommodation's opposite, isolation; it has affinities with integralism and amounts to an overstatement of Christian identity, . . . to the point of jeopardizing their responsibility to the non-Christian world.[9]

The Chicago Jesuit's 'soft' treatment resembles more a pastoral exhortation than a rigorous analysis.

The most impressive model of models comes from the Lausanne professor Carl-A. Keller. How does a given group (*ego*) view the relationship of their 'divine' to that of another group (*alter*)? The 'divine' (reality) is the ultimate reference of that group, with no *a priori* limitation (it may be dialectical reason for Marxists). Two main models emerge: the one 'divine' *includes* the other, or it *excludes* the other; but each model is found in three versions, producing six possibilities:

–Inclusion by identification: Allah is identical to the God of Moses and Jesus ('Isa):

–Inclusion by hierarchization: Shamash becomes a manifestation or delegate of Marduk;

–Inclusion by relativization: all gods are *avatâra* of the ineffable One;

–Exclusion in juxtaposition: followers of Yahweh are indifferent to Kemosh (Judges 11:24);

–Exclusion in opposition: either Baal or Yahweh, either Shiva or Buddha;

–Exclusion in negation: 'only the divine of *ego* exists; the divine of *alter* is nothing but chimera and human self-justification'; the most radical and intolerant of all models.[10]

The clarity, symmetry, and logical fullness of Keller's outline would render superfluous any other attempt on our part–were it not for the difference of topics: we are to chart, strictly, not the relationships between divine realities, but models of encounter between Christianity and other religions.

Mapping Models

Encounter requires a common space, some similarity: in absolute strangeness, totally foreign entities cannot meet, even less than can yards and pounds (metres and kilograms). At both ends of the spectrum of tendencies in the theology of religions, serious doubts arise as to the possibility of encounter: two models of non-encounter are thus suggested. No one, to be sure, entertains them in pure form, but they can play a limiting role, with some profit for orientation.

If religions are so utterly devoid of value *vis à vis* the Gospel that no relationship may be posited between them and Revelation, Christian faith can hardly encounter them. Karl Barth's condemnation of religion in his *Church Dogmatics*, para. 17, his equivalence of the essence of religion with unbelief, is often interpreted as an extreme of exclusivism, and it may be seen to move towards the first limiting non-encounter model: Barth's zeal for the freedom of grace seems to sever radically all connections with human religion. Would it not deserve the predicate 'isolationistic'? Or, seen from another angle, since the *Christian* religion fares no better, since it falls under the massive No in the same way, its relationship to the other religions is undefined, and of little interest indeed: there is no significant encounter.

Yet, as we all know, this does not happen in fact, neither with Barth himself nor with the Barthian missiologists. Commentators should not overlook the dialectical character of Barth's pronouncements: the *Aufhebung* of religion remains, as with Hegel, a two-edged tool, abolishing *and* assuming, taking up religion into justification. In practice, the Yes and the No are kept in balance–but who can tell the right balance? Apart from a flexible control of Scripture (*not* with the orthodox, indisputable, authority of Revelation itself) it seems largely to be an intuitive matter. Barth applied his dialectics to non- Christian religions in a conservative, exclusivistic way (in spite of his inclusivistic Christology relating to persons); we surmise that his dialectics would provide rich resources for a strongly positive affirmation of their value *post Christum, ex eventu gratiae*.

In the direction of pluralism, which commentators usually see as the opposite of Barth's, the limiting model also would mean: non-encounter. Utter (unthinkable) pluralism dissolves any common measure and togetherness; the elements, being radically singular, cannot meet. No thinker, to our knowledge, advocates this model. However, it provides a significant reference line: one can see the 'drive' of more moderate positions towards that line, and the tragic efforts of their defenders as they try to avoid the consequence (following Derrida's claim that deconstruction is no destruction); and, in a way, one can see the consequence happen already. When D. Z. Phillips refrains from passing judgement on child sacrifice in some remote tribe,[11] is it not obvious that pluralism suppresses encounter? Such is the respect of the other that it results in isolation. In our pluralistic society, the feeling is already there that the unbridled cult of differences breeds narcissistic indifference. This obtains in religious matters; D. A. Carson quotes a Jewish leader who complains that there is no pluralism: 'In public school, Jews don't meet Christians. Christians don't meet Hindus. Everybody meets nothing'.[12]

The other models, models of encounter, could be arranged in linear fashion, between the two poles. We have found it more convenient, however, to classify them in accordance with the dominant concern: either power, or salvation, or truth. Since it is impossible entirely to disentangle each from the others, some theologians may appear at more than one place in the scheme.

In many religions, the holy or divine is marked first and foremost by power. We may recall the Hebrew word *'ēl*, used for might and ability (*yesh le'ēl yâdî*, I am able). Two models emphasize power in religions: the 'Third Wave' *Power-Encounter*, and, less distinctly but effectually, *syncretism*. They are far apart, but, even as final foes, resemble each other to a

degree. The word *mêlée* comes to mind for both: in the sense of struggle, and in the other sense (in French) of mixing.

Power-encounter (Alan Tippett is said to have bound the two words together) is a theological model of encounter with religions. A rallying cry in the post-charismatic movement whose best-known leader is John Wimber, it has been elaborated by theologian Peter Wagner.[13] It embodies a reaction against the intellectualism of Western, especially Protestant Christianity: spiritual life is not so much a question of knowledge, as it is of power, supernatural power. In non-Christian religions, people are enslaved by demonic powers; Holy Spirit power, evident in signs and wonders, is to defeat the oppressors and to free their captives. In recent years, the model of spiritual warfare has given more and more importance to 'territorial spirits', with strategies developed to assault their strongholds: most places, territorial units (small or large), are said to be controlled by demonic powers (hence, for example, the meagre results of evangelistic efforts in the past). The main Biblical evidence in support of that view is the connection of pagan gods with cities or countries–it being understood that pagan gods are actually demons (1 Cor. 10:20).

The Power-encounter model does recover neglected dimensions of New Testament Christianity,[14] and it is well-known that the conviction as to demonic activity in heathen religions was axiomatic for most Church Fathers. Especially, they interpreted the similarities between these cults and Biblical religion as the fruit of demonic imitation. St Augustine, still, views such an influence as the very soul of pagan piety.[15] Nevertheless, one cannot but deplore a striking disproportion in the power warfare model when compared with Biblical religion–so sober, so free from demonological obsession. The evidence for a strict identification of pagan gods with demons is slender–far from convincing.[16]

Syncretism, the combination of heterogeneous, sometimes incompatible, elements drawn from various religions, is confronting us in two forms mainly. Syncretism affects the so-called 'independent' churches, or indigenous 'Christian' cults, especially in Africa; the search for power is an overt motive there. It is less obvious in the swarming spiritualities under the 'New Age' umbrella, but it is implied in the attempt to dissolve anxieties and to gain mastery of one's life.

It is not easy to find a theologian who would advocate the syncretistic model (Eugen Drewermann?).[17] Its *de facto* attraction, however, should stimulate our reflection. Denis Müller, of Lausanne, makes penetrating comments on the need to face the underlying issues and not simply despise and dismiss strange mixtures regarding reincarnation and astrology.[18]

Religions may be defined as 'ways of salvation', as Panikkar observes,[19] although the soteriological interest looms larger in Christianity than in others. Some models seem to focus on the access to salvation. So does *traditional exclusivism*, which has played an important part in the missionary movement. So also does the model of *catholic inclusivism*, taking 'catholic' in the all-embracing sense, associated with the great name of Karl Rahner.

St Cyprian's *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* has been for centuries, with Council sanction (Lateran IV, 1215, refers to it[20]), *the* formula of Church exclusivism. Protestant orthodoxy has maintained a parallel rigour, with 'Gospel faith' replacing church membership as the decisive factor: in somewhat awkward fashion, Clark Pinnock charges the majority Evangelical position with being 'based on a narrow reading of the ancient text in Cyprian: "Outside the Church, no salvation" '–this 'imperial particularism' maintained, he cites, by A. Fernando, B. Demarest, M. Erickson.[21] Evangelical exclusivism, of course, is more concerned to honour Scriptural authority than Cyprian's!

Clark Pinnock is ready to go beyond what 'lenient voices' among Evangelicals have suggested.[22] They envisage the possibility, on the basis of General Revelation and of the work of the Holy Spirit, of a

saving faith in Christ, 'in the twilight as it were'.[23] He builds on a debatable interpretation of the 'Powers' ordered by God and subjugated by Christ to give religions a positive role:

> The religions too, being part of the power structure of the old age, present us with mixed signals. Insofar as they bestow order and meaning they are not evil. There is much that we can appreciate and build on. Only as they claim ultimacy for themselves are they demonic.[24]

He, then, praises insights into grace found in Eastern religions and suggests an ultimate salvation (won by Christ) attributed more on the basis of ignorance, yearning, loving behaviour, than of faith.[25] He also entertains the hope of *post mortem* second chance, a hope which Gabriel Fackre cherishes likewise.[26]

What Pinnock tries to do for Evangelical doctrine, in a way which fails to impress us, Karl Rahner, the *doctor subtilis* of our age, has done in the Roman tradition. Whether or not Rahner's teaching still embodies 'the mainline Catholic view'[27]–we have doubts–'we would be ill-advised to dismiss it hastily in contempt or outrage'.[28] Rahner is so careful not to infringe on dogma, while he radically reinterprets it, that his work forcibly challenges the orthodox.

There is more to it than the phrase 'anonymous Christians'. While affirming strongly the unique mediation of Christ and the prerogatives of the Church, Rahner ascribes a high degree of lawfulness and validity to non-Christian religions, as ways of salvation. The model produces this result through the interplay of three factors: first, the universal salvific will of God; then, in order for this will not to be empty words, the need of salvific, supernatural, Christic grace being offered actually to all (and then it cannot fail to effect what it was intended to–we have every reason to think optimistically of God); thirdly, the social and historical nature of man, which requires that grace be conveyed to him through the social channels in his historical situation–through his religions.[29] We can feel how difficult it must be for a Catholic theologian to escape from that logic! We would question the socio-historical emphasis, and claim more transcendence for the individual (together with transcultural invariants). As Protestants, we would challenge the typical notion of grace as something channelled by the institution, and the underlying view of religion as the way of salvation–in truth 'there is salvation in *no* religion because religions don't save. Not even Israel's *religion* saved them'.[30] Also, surely, a less indiscreet use (or abuse) of God's salvific will would be more becoming to the Christian theologian.

Truth is the third main concern, or knowledge of the Deity, the Ultimate, the Real. The antithesis of true and false has played a great part in the constitution of religious identities, and it is not surprising if many models focus on truth in religions. On the exclusive side, final and decisive truth is denied to non-Christian religions; on the inclusive side, that of pluralism, or better, *relative relativism*, truth is no monopoly of Christianity.

We would distinguish two 'orthodox' models. The *scholastic* one uses a two-level structure: on the basis of General or Natural Revelation, even sinful man can acquire some true knowledge of God, and we can discern it in religions; but it is partial and imprecise, not saving. Opinions vary as to the corruption of this level of truth, due to human sinfulness, but Demarest's conclusion is quite representative:

> . . . general revelation affords all people of all times and places rudimentary knowledge of God as Creator and moral law-giver. It also affords the Christian evangelist significant points of contact with the non-Christian world, thereby serving as a valuable pre-evangelistic tool. General revelation, however, does not yield that higher knowledge of God that is redemptive.[31]

The *radical Augustinian* model–inspired by the *credo ut intelligam*–denies the quality of truth to that distorted and repressive perception of General Revelation which sinners harbour. Their images

of God (mental as well as metal) are idols, crystallizations of falsehood, not truth. At the same time, they are answers to Revelation, they 'retain' God's truth (*katekhontes*, Rom.1:18), and the sinner cannot suppress his 'old man'–the one God created. Common grace ensures that sinful distortions are kept within bounds. Appeal can be made to the truth repressed, not confessed. In practice, Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaeffer are not so far from the previous group. Calvin himself uses imprecise, metaphorical language; Luther would affirm natural knowledge, but as the dreadful knowledge of legal condemnation, of the wrathful *Deus absolutus*, in sharp antithesis with the truth of the Gospel.

Two main orientations also appear among 'relative relativists'. The pioneer thinker, Ernst Troeltsch, followed by Wilfred C. Smith, and the most eloquent spokesman in debate, John Hick, favour a *theocentric* model. Hick proclaimed a new 'Copernican revolution': whereas the traditional model placed Christianity at the centre, as the Ptolemaic system did the earth, and while people like Rahner try to salvage the old paradigm with epicycles added, we have come to realize that God 'is the sun, the originative source of light and life, whom all religions reflect in their own different ways'.[32] Jesus represents one of the manifestations of the Divine or ultimately Real; the Incarnation, according to John Hick, 'is a mythological idea, a figure of speech, a piece of poetic imagery. It is a way of saying that Jesus is our living contact with the transcendent God'.[33] Hick also uses Kantian categories: religions are the phenomena of the unreachable Noumenon.[34] What creates difficulty, then, is the effort to maintain a common measure, a unifying bond (however loose), to avoid indefinite wanderings on the sea of boundless plurality. Troeltsch, who, at the end of his life, criticized his earlier position and realized that 'the actual history of religion knows nothing of the common character of all religions, or of their natural upward trend towards Christianity', claimed a few pages later that religions 'are the products of the impulse towards absolute objective truth . . . that they all are tending in the same direction, and that all seem impelled by an inner force to strive upwards . . .'[35] Hick tries to maintain a convergence and 'family resemblance', even in reply to Robert Cook's severe critique,[36] which also Harold Netland has developed.[37] Hick's reference point and quasi criterion is the shift from self-centredness to Reality-centredness–a social-ethical test. A number of theologians give even more weight to the ethical, orthopraxic, reference, they load it with more precise political contents, and the model becomes, in Paul Knitter's words, 'a liberation theology of religions'.[38]

Other theologians prefer a *Christocentric* version, but the central Christ is no property of the Christian church. For Panikkar, at least in the bulk of his work, 'The Christ is the only mediator', but 'he is actually present and effective in every authentic religion, whatever its name or form. The Christ is the symbol which Christians call Christ of the always transcendent, and equally always humanly immanent, Mystery'.[39] He is clearly the key to the 'cosmotheandric experience'[40] and calls for the 'dekerygmatization of the faith'.[41] Younger writers in the same line show a much higher degree of sophistication: they follow the vanguard thinkers of post-modernism, mostly French, and they are deeply influenced by Buddhism. David Tracy, of Chicago, brilliantly mixes Lacan and Meister Eckhart, Eliade and Nâgârjuna.[42] We could call his Christ 'apophatic', and also the Christ of freedom, as Tracy strives to affirm, from the prophetic angle, the responsible agent. Joseph S. O'Leary, of Tokyo, unfolds a major synthesis, a dazzling intellectual feat, in which he argues that the 'centre is the *Deus incarnatus*, the incarnate, historical forms of divine revelation, not the *Deus nudus*, an abstract construction ...'; *the words 'liberation', or even 'vacuity' come more easily to us than 'God', since that 'proper noun' has become for us post-modern men the* 'improper noun'.[43] But

O'Leary's Christ is by no means restricted to 1st century Palestine: 'In each religion the divine logos wishes to be heard, and he does so in sovereign fashion in some great realizations, like those which focus on the figures of Jesus and Buddha'; the Christ he preaches, he calls the 'vacuous Christ'. [44] The character of the Christ in the 'Christocentric' model shortens the distance from the 'theocentric' one.

The primary target of critics of relative relativism is the self-destructive incoherence of the thesis. 'A radical perspectivism disqualifies its own position as a serious partner in theological conversation', writes G. Fackre; and he asks: 'Truth found here or there? But there is no there, there–only illusory claims and interest-laden agendas ripe for deconstruction'; we are actually falling back into 'confessional tribalism'.[45] True, our writers wish to resist complete relativism; but can they? Once a breach is made in the dike . . . Craig Gay ably exposes how the recourse to orthopraxy begs the question of norms.[46] Carson sees through Tracy's efforts at preserving responsibility: 'Despite the high-flown language of Tracy's moral concerns, I do not see how he avoids the radically arbitrary.'[47] One may discern in it a mirror reflection of the sociological conditions of our secular, consumerist, society[48], it's 'pick and mix' facility. Some observers note how *Western* (and even imperialistic) is the pluralistic agenda.[49] At a deeper level, contemporary thinkers remain remarkably intolerant, no longer pluralists, when things that really matter for them are at stake, things they really believe.[50]

Knots Appearing

As we have approached the models of encounter with other religions, some sensitive issues have surfaced, and not all theologians have faced them: knots, Gordian or not Gordian, to cut or to untie. We would offer brief comments on a selection of them.

In the direction of the more 'objective' features of religions, we would first broach the topic of *similarity.* Many seem to presuppose that the more alike two religions are found to be, the more homeomorphic the role of their Gods or mediators, the more peaceful, cooperative, unitive at the end, their encounter will be. This, however, does not follow from Biblical hints: the whole idea of demonic imitation, so important to the Fathers, warns against alluring likeness; in the New Testament, the *antikhristos* theme calls for the discernment between authentic and counterfeit, and the image of wolves under the guise of sheep. Personal loyalty may see a temptation in resemblances: is falling in love with a woman most like one's wife something else than adultery? At the same time, dissimilarities do favour a presumption of essential difference, and the unique features of Biblical christianity may rightly be called to witness.

The need of a *common ground* if a fruitful encounter healthy dialogue is to take place may hardly be disputed. But what is 'common ground'? Too often, it is assumed that it must be opinions, values, experiences acknowledged and owned by both partners. Difficulties arise with the condemnations of idols and their cults, with the noetic effects of sin, the darkened mind, its utter inability to receive the things of God. Why not recognize that what we all have in common is precisely . . . the ground–the field of General Revelation to which all human beings respond? It renders conversation possible even in disagreement. This involves the use of logic and the testing of propositions by facts, as Denis Müller has well perceived, and which he finds lacking in the New Age.[51]

The classical analysis of faith as *notitia, assensus et fiducia,* raises the question of the amount of *notitia* required for saving faith to occur. 'We are not saved by knowledge . . .'![52] Debates between harder and softer Evangelicals hinge upon this issue. The basic argument for the broader viewpoint refers to the Old Testament believers, especially those of earliest times. Can sufficient *notitia* be inferred

from General Revelation, including Providence? In that case, Demarest's model might be expanded. Could this knowledge be channelled through established (pagan) religions, and would they so acquire a degree of lawfulness? All indisputable passages in Scripture lean on the negative side: the righteousness of works avails nothing; the root of human corruption is found in religion (Rom. 1); the power of heathen ceremonies is demonic. The only reference to pure offerings being made to God among the nations, in Malachi 1:11, is best understood as eschatological promise.[53] But boundaries are not so easy to draw.

Other points arise in connection with subjective commitment. Is *love* incompatible with *polemics*? Panikkar feels that 'if we believe that our neighbour is enmeshed in error and superstition, we can hardly love him as ourselves . . .'[54] Granted that, in the weakness of our passionate natures, we all find it difficult to strengthen personal relationships while we are fighting the other's ideas. Yet, in principle, any confusion would be ruinous. It is possible to separate. If there is any calling to truth, then to fight the errors that disfigure and destroy my neighbour unawares is the way of love. C. S. Lewis remarks somewhere that he used to think that the formula 'loving the person/hating the person's sin' was a bit artificial–until he realized that he was doing the same all the time, with regard to himself!

Panikkar often stresses also that no one can understand a religion who does not *believe* in it.[55] This looks like a replica of Augustine's *dictum*, but it is not: it involves being a Christian, a Hindu and a Buddhist at the same time (he claims it for himself[56]). Of course, we would commend empathy and imaginative efforts in the endeavour to know the other, but the principle as stated would make it impossible to brand any error as error. *Veritas index sui et falsi*! Only in the light of God do we judge rightly works of darkness (Ephes. 5:13). Panikkar's confusion ties in with his view of religion as language: the interpreter must believe the religion as he must speak the language.[57] But this confuses between *langue* and *parole*, code and message.[58]

Practically all the apostles of dialogue, inclusivists and pluralists, insist on *vulnerability*, on the need to risk oneself entirely, with one's most cherished beliefs.[59] The issue is complex and delicate. Certainly, there is an arrogant or neurotic defensiveness which brings no honour to the Gospel. Certainly, in a way, we always 'risk' ourselves in authentic encounters: we are actually there, not a part of ourselves only. Certainly, we should remember the frailty of our grasp of Revelation and be ready to be taught by anyone. But is not the mere thought that we 'could' forsake our Lord a breach of loyalty towards him? Would not the thought, when encountering someone, of a possible change of marriage partner already be a betrayal of the vows? A symmetry in the encounter with a non-Christian friend would mean the annulment of the gift of grace: a monstrous ingratitude. Maybe the solution lies in the realization that we are not our own possessions, that Christ's hold of us has full priority over our hold of him. We can, as subjects, only testify to the victorious grace of which we are the objects.

This leads us to the use made of major Christian themes in the construction of some theologies of religions. The praise of the final, unfathomable Mystery, the consequent relativization of propositions, doctrines, beliefs–human, all too human–indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their deliberate piety, their humility . . . but they lack any value in restraining the arrogance of reason. Craig Gay takes off the mask:

> it is at best a kind of mistaken humility that has the effect of rendering us invulnerable to revealed truth because we are now too modest to believe that we would know truth even if it were revealed to us.[60]

God is subtly forbidden to inform in the strong sense, actually to rule our minds. God is 'gagged'.

Similarly, one is suspicious of interpretation of the Incarnation as the means to bind the Lord Christ to finitude, to the

invincible relativity of historical pluralism; of the *kenôsis* and the Cross as the means to empty the Christian message of its affirmations of judgement and reign; of eschatology, as the means to welcome, in its not-having implications, the alluring emptiness of Buddha.[61] This takes on an abstract turn which grows away from the concrete historicity of the Good News.

What may be deepest, and yet quite obvious, in the procedure of the advocates of inclusive and relativistic (or pluralistic) models, is the will to conform: to conform to the modern and postmodern mind-set, and sensibility.[62] It is inescapable, the only way. Here, we would suggest, is the radical choice: either the *Zeitgeist*, with its titles and credentials, or the power of the flawless Word, taking hold of us–for: *Who is a Rock besides our God?*

1 Raimundo PANIKKAR, transl. into French by Josette GENNAOUI, *Le Dialogue intra-religieux* (Paris: Aubier, 1985) 30—46. Quotations from that book have had to be translated back into English from the French. We acknowledge that, in recent years, Panikkar has moved beyond the positions of this book, in the direction of pluralism.

2 Eugene A. NIDA on meaning, in his *Componential Analysis of Meaning* (1975), 26, as quoted by Moisés SILVA, *Biblical Words and their Meaning. An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 134.

3 Perry SCHMIDT-LEUKEL, 'Das Pluralistische Modell in der Theologie der Religionen. Ein Literaturbericht', *Theologische Revue* 89 (1993) 353—364, plus a review, 365—370.

4 PANIKKAR, *op. cit.*, 20—29.

5 André GOUNELLE, 'Théologies des religions non chrétiennes', *Autres Temps. Cahiers du christianisme social* n.27 (Aut. 1990), 6—17.

6 Jean-Claude BASSET, 'Enjeux du dialogue interreligieux. Sept propositions en guise de test', *ibid.*, 31.

7 Jürgen MOLTMANN, transl. by Margaret KOHL, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit. A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 1977), 157—159.

8 *Ibid.*, 153ff.

9 Franz Jozef VAN BEECK, 'Christian Faith and Theology in Encounter with Non-Christians. Profession? Protestation? Self-Maintenance? Abandon?', *Theological Studies* 55 (1994) 55f. (whole art. 46—65; 50, 52f., for points cited).

10 Carl-A. KELLER, 'Le Dieu des chrétiens et les dieux des religions', in *La Communication avec l'ultime* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1987), 247—250.

11 D. A. CARSON, 'Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism', in D. A. CARSON and John D. WOODBRIDGE, eds., *God and Culture. Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 51.

12 *Ibid.*, 36 (quoting Dennis Prager).

13 See especially C. Peter WAGNER, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura, CA: Regal Bks, 1992); C. Peter WAGNER and F. Douglas PENNOYER, ed., *Wrestling with Dark Angels* (Ventura: Regal Bks, 1990).

14 See Clinton E. ARNOLD's thesis, *Ephesians: Power and Magic. The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989, 1992) and the chapters by David W. J. GILL, Thorsten MORITZ, and Bruce W. WINTER, in Andrew D. CLARKE and Bruce W. WINTER, eds., *One God, One Lord in a World of Religious Pluralism* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991).

15 See the well-researched art. by Goulven MADEC, 'Le Christ des païens d'après le *De consensu euangelistarum* de saint Augustin', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 26 (1992) 3—67.

16 In spite of WINTER's opinion, 'In Public and in Private: Early Christian Interactions with Religious Pluralism', *One Lord*, *op. cit.*, 131, we are not convinced by the simple identification. In 1 Cor., the verses may mean only that demons meddle with the worship of false gods. It does not warrant the transfer of attributes.

17 KELLER, *op. cit.*, 255 would favour inclusion through hierarchization (252, his defence of gnosticism).

18 Denis MUELLER, 'L'Ethique du dialogue à l'épreuve du défi religieux contemporain', *Autres Temps* n.27 (Aut. 1990), 24—28; cf. Gérard SIEGWALT's unusual openness to parapsychology and even the occult (under Jung's influence) in his *Dogmatique pour la catholicité évangélique. Système mystagogique de la foi chrétienne. I/2: les Fondements de la foi/Réalité et Révélation*

(Geneva & Paris: Labor & Fides and Cerf, 1987) 64ff, 71f., 82.

19 PANIKKAR, *op. cit.*, 139; 142f homeomorphism of *Nirâna and Sôteria*.

20 According to the *Enchiridion symbolorum* of DENZINGER (& RAHNER), the 31st ed. (1957), n.430; Cyprian's words (*Ep.* 73) are given: *Salus extra Ecclesiam non est*; cf. David F. WRIGHT, 'The Watershed of Vatican II: Catholic Attitudes Towards Other Religions', in *One Lord*, *op. cit.*, 158ff.

21 Clark PINNOCK, 'Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990), 359 (with n.2). Answer and critique by Bruce A. DEMAREST, 'General and Special Revelation: Epistemological Foundations of Religious Pluralism', in *One Lord*, *op. cit.*, 147ff.

22 *Ibid.*, Pinnock tries to reduce the distance between their positions and his. For a review of Evangelical choices, Malcolm J. MCVEIGH, 'The Fate of Those Who've Never Heard? It depends', *Evangelical Missionary Quarterly* 21 (1985), 370—379.

23 J. N. D. ANDERSON, *Christianity and World Religions*, 102, as quoted, *ibid.*, 378.

24 PINNOCK, *op. cit.*, 364.

25 *Ibid.*, 366—368.

26 Gabriel FACKRE, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 45f, and especially for Israelites, 147—167.

27 Paul KNITTER as quoted by D. WRIGHT, *op. cit.*, 163.

28 D. WRIGHT, *ibid.*, 166, after a fine exposition of Rahner's views.

29 Karl RAHNER, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', a lecture given in 1961, published in *Theological Investigations* V and quoted as reproduced in John HICK and Brian HEBBLETHWAITE, eds., *Christianity and Other Religions. Selected Readings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988[3]), 52—79.

30 John GOLDINGAY and Christopher J. H. WRIGHT, '"Yahweh our God Yahweh One": The Old Testament and Religious Pluralism', in *One Lord*, *op. cit.*, 43.

31 DEMAREST, *op. cit.*, 151.

32 J. HICK, 'Whatever Path Men Choose is Mine', in *Christianity, Readings*, *op. cit.*, 181f.

33 *Ibid.*, 186.

34 Joseph Stephen O'LEARY, *La Vérité chrétienne à l' âge du pluralisme religieux* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 36.

35 Ernst TROELTSCH, 'The Place of Christianity Among World Religions', in *Christianity, Readings*, *op. cit.*, 16 and 29.

36 Robert COOK, 'Postmodernism, pluralism and John Hick', *Themelios* 19/1 (Oct. 1993), 10—12; John HICK, 'Response', *Themelios* 19/3 (May 1994), 20.

37 Harold NETLAND, 'Religious Pluralism and Truth', *Trinity Journal* 6 NS (1985), 74—87, esp. 82ff. on Hick.

38 Craig M. GAY, 'Plurality, Ambiguity, and Despair in Contemporary Theology', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993) 219; D. WRIGHT, *op. cit.*, 168f.

39 PANIKKAR, *op. cit.*, 92.

40 *Ibid.*, 52.

41 *Ibid.*, 115.

42 David TRACY, *Dialogue with the Other. The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990).

43 O'LEARY, *op. cit.* (n.34), 227, and then 216 ('le nom propre par excellence est devenu le *nom impropre* par excellence').

44 *Ibid.*, 229 (cf. 265: 'la figure historique de Jésus peut être vue comme une percée évolutionniste de la réalité humaine sur le plan du Logos . . .'); then, on the vacuous Christ, 294, 297.

45 FACKRE, *op. cit.*, 108, then 76.

46 GAY, *op. cit.*, 221.

47 CARSON, *op. cit.*, 58.

48 Kevin VANHOOZER, 'The World Well Staged? Theology, Culture, and Hermeneutics', in *God and Culture*, *op. cit.*, 23, referring to Scott Lash; and GAY, *op. cit.*, 210ff. (and the burden of his whole art., 209—227).

49 VAN BEECK, *op. cit.*, 57; BASSET, *op. cit.*, 33; according to O'LEARY, *op. cit.*, 38, Kenneth Surin has criticized Hick's Western imperialism; see the complaint of John V. TAYLOR, 'The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue', in *Christianity, Readings*, *op. cit.*, 231; cf. FACKRE, *op. cit.*, 222 (a 'new magisterium' of Western intellectuals).

50 GAY, *op. cit.*, 225 (already p.210). Even O'LEARY, *op. cit.*, 310, shows a sudden fixity in his 'politically correct' judgment on Western policies in the Third World .

51 MUELLER, *op. cit.*, 19—24.

52 Wilfred Cantwell SMITH, 'The Christian in a Religiously Plural World', in *Christianity, Readings*, *op. cit.*, 106.
53 As argued persuasively by Joyce BALDWIN, 'Malachi 1:11 and the Worship of the Nations in the Old Testament', *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972), 117—124.
54 PANIKKAR, *op. cit.*, 60.
55 *Ibid.*, 58f., 128.
56 *Ibid.*, 50.
57 *Ibid.*, 44f.
58 KELLER, *op. cit.*, 244, more accurate, yet not all satisfactory.
59 PANIKKAR, *op. cit.*, 62, 130, etc., stresses that dialogue is no experiment.
60 GAY, *op. cit.*, 223.
61 No one practices this exercise more cleverly than O'LEARY, *op. cit.*
62 Cf. *ibid.*, 28, 107, 251f, 261, 296 (in spite of a feeble disclaimer, 18).