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• What of the Unevangelised?
• *Qu' en-est-il des non evangélisés?*
• *Und die vom Evangelium Unerreichten?*

Martin Goldsmith, Ware, England

RÉSUMÉ

Notre approche de la question du sort de ceux qui n'ont jamais été évangélisés dépend de notre position théologique dans son ensemble. Il y a trois options principales: le pluralisme, l'exclusivisme et l'inclusivisme.

Le pluralisme repose sur quatre croyances: il n'y a aucune révélation unique dans l'histoire; il y a de nombreux chemins menant à Dieu; aucune expression de la vérité n'est adéquate; et on devrait prendre le 'meilleur' de toutes les religions.

L'inclusivisme considère que toute vérité vient de Dieu, par Christ; par conséquent, puis qu'il y a du vrai et du bon dans d'autres religions, ce ne peut être que par Christ. La nouvelle question à l'ordre du jour de la théologie est celle de l'origine du bien: 'vient-il de Christ ou de la révélation générale?' De même, y-a-t-il dans d'autres religions une part de révélation qui permette d'être sauvé?

Dans l'exclusivisme, on est sauvé seulement par la foi spécifique en Christ et les adeptes des autres religions doivent se tourner vers lui pour être sauvés. Le point de vue de l'auteur se situe entre ces deux dernières positions.

Le Nouveau Testament traite essentiellement, non pas de l'universalisme mais de l'universalité. Ceci est démontré à partir des écrits de Luc, Paul et Jean. Pourtant le particularisme impliqué par le concept de qahal *dans l'Ancien Testament est maintenu pour l'Église du Nouveau Testament.*

Il est capital de ne pas confondre la religion avec la race et la culture. L'évangélisation peut être comprise dans un sens impérialiste. La culture peut être prise en compte dans l'évangélisation.

L'Église moderne est en danger de perdre confiance. Bien que nous soyons d'accord qu'il peut y avoir une part de vérité dans d'autres religions et bien que nous reconnaissions notre propre faillibilité, il ne s'ensuit pas que la révélation de Christ soit imparfaite. Les notions de grâce, d'expiation, de repentance sont essentielles. Pourtant Dieu, dans sa miséricorde, peut sauver des personnes sans qu'elles entendent l'Evangile. De combien de connaissance chacun a besoin pour être sauvé est l'affaire de Dieu.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Unser Ansatz in der Frage nach dem Schicksal der vom Evangelium Unerreichten hängt von unserer theologischen Gesamtsicht ab. Es stehen drei Möglichkeiten zur Auswahl: Pluralismus, Exklusivismus und Inklusivismus.

Der Pluralismus basiert auf vier Voraussetzungen: es gibt keine alleingültige Offenbarung in der Geschichte; viele Wege führen zu Gott; alle Versuche, die Wahrheit zu formulieren, sind inadäquat; man sollte daher das 'Beste' von allen Religionen übernehmen.

Inklusivismus behauptet, daß alle Wahrheit von Gott kommt, durch

Christus. Weil es aber Wahrheit und Gutes in anderen Religionen gibt, muß dies durch Christus gewirkt sein. Die neue dringliche Frage, die sich der Theologie stellt, ist die nach dem Ursprung des Guten — kommt es von Christus oder von der allgemeinen Offenbarung? Und damit verbunden ist die Frage, ob es heilbringende Offenbarung in anderen Religionen gibt.

Exklusivismus betont, daß Erlösung ausschließlich durch den Glauben an Christus möglich ist, und daß Anhänger anderer Religionen sich zu ihm bekehren müssen, um Erlösung zu erlangen. Der Autor bewegt sich zwischen den beiden letztgenannten Positionen.

Das Neue Testament war nicht in erster Linie um Universalismus bemüht, sondern um Universalität. Dies wird anhand von Lukas, Paulus und Johannes gezeigt. Doch der Partikularismus der alttestamentlichen qahal setzt sich in der neutestamentlichen Gemeinde fort.

Es ist von großer Wichtigkeit, Religion nicht mit Rasse und Kultur zu verwechseln. Evangelisation kann imperialistisch verstanden werden. Andererseits kann Kultur durch Evangelisation bestätigt werden.

Die moderne Kirche ist durch Vertrauensverlust bedroht. Obgleich wir zugeben, daß es auch Wahrheit in anderen Religionen gibt und daß wir selber fehlerhaft sind, folgt daraus nicht, daß die Offenbarung Christi unvollkommen ist. Gnade, Sühne und Buße sind unverzichtbar, doch kann Gott in seinem Erbarmen Menschen auch ohne Evangelisation retten. Gott entscheidet darüber, wieviel Wissen jeder für seine Rettung braucht.

Until relatively recent years the question of our Christian approach to the unevangelised only seriously affected those of us who were involved in mission overseas. The contemporary reality of religiously pluralist societies has only come centre-stage theologically in Europe in our life-time. It should therefore not surprise us if Christian theologians still struggle with these questions and sometimes propose answers which on further reflection prove unacceptable. Our approach to other faiths and their followers touches every aspect of our Christian faith and theology. In this conference we are concentrating on salvation, and clearly our view of other faiths will be strongly influenced by our understanding of the necessity or otherwise of the atoning work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. Other faiths compel us to question who is saved and by what means. Inevitably we have to ask the primary question of what is salvation. But other fundamental doctrines come equally under question. Is there revelation in other faiths? Is there therefore truth in other faiths which is not to be found in the Christian revelation in Christ and in the biblical word? Is the revelation and truth in other faiths a possible means of salvation or is Jesus Christ in his person and work essential? Our relationship to other faith forces us to ask also concerning the person of Jesus Christ. Is he unique as the incarnation of God? Is he therefore merely human or is he also fully God? Is the doctrine of the Trinity a necessary Christian belief or merely the creation of theologians in their particular contexts in previous centuries? And is the biblical word the totally trustworthy word of God and the touchstone by which we judge all religious belief and practice? Or is the Bible just one superb religious book on a par with the 'revelations' of other religions? And so one could continue to question every other aspect of Christian belief, for all our theology will conflict in some way and to some degree with the belief of some other faith. As we have seen in the writings of such theologians as John Hick and Paul Knitter, nothing in traditional

Christian theology remains sacrosanct when it is placed in the context of the challenge of other faiths. Our approach to the question of the unevangelised will depend on our theological position in relationship to these fundamentals of the faith. Conversely it is equally true today that any study of theology which is not related to the issues of our pluralistic inter-faith society will be an out-dated ivory-tower theology.

In this paper we come together as evangelical Christians and therefore will base our debates on the traditional Christian faith and a belief in the Bible as the authoritative word of God. In this paper in the context of a conference of European Evangelical theologians it will not be appropriate to seek to defend the fundamentals of traditional Christian belief– such apologetics must come in other contexts. But, as stated already, our approach to the question of the fate of the unevangelised will depend on the totality of our theological position.

1. *The theological spectrum.*

It has now become traditional to describe the theological spectrum of belief in relationship to inter-faith issues as ranging from pluralism on the one side to exclusivism on the other side with inclusivism straddling the middle ground. Each of these terms however includes a considerable variety of positions and expressions, so that many of us may find ourselves uncomfortably seated on the fence between two positions.

i. Pluralism.

Pluralism allows the equal validity of the various faiths as ways to the ultimate and as means towards truth. As Visser't Hooft declared in his old book "No other Name" (SCM 1963) in relation to the development of syncretism, we may find four causes of syncretism. These four causes apply also to pluralism

a) No belief in a unique revelation in history. Theologians of pluralism such as John Hick or Paul Knitter would clearly deny a uniqueness in any revelation, whether in the person of Jesus Christ or in the Scriptures. They would also deny that Jesus Christ or the Bible could fundamentally be called a revelation rather than a human being and a human book which might in some ways reflect the ultimate absolute. They would also have real difficulties with the linking of revelation to specific historical realities such as the incarnation of Jesus Christ or the writing of the Bible.

b) Belief that there are many ways to divine reality. Hick clearly affirms in "Truth and Dialogue" that all religions and their inspired books are developments of and expressions of "the same ultimate divine reality". Each religion expresses varying human experiences of the ultimate absolute. All faiths are therefore to some extent valid as ways to move towards that ultimate which Christians may call "God" in a personal understanding of his nature, while advaitin Hindus may call it "Brahman" in a non-personal understanding. There is in such theology no uniqueness in any revelation. And truth is expressed in experience rather than in the hard facts of history.

c) All expressions of truth are inadequate. With this statement we enter into questions where we as evangelicals may feel some uncertainty. When pluralist theologians assert that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and in the scriptures is inadequate, we stand together in denying this. We want to reaffirm our faith in the absolute sufficiency of God's revelation which needs no supplement, although it does need to be reapplied and reinterpreted in our varying contexts both historically and culturally. But we do not believe that other faiths can add to God's revelation what is not already either explicit or implicit in it.

On the other hand we feel less assured when such theologians remind us that all human expressions of truth are inadequate. We as evangelicals have always maintained that God's revelation is perfect, but our human understanding and

expressions of that revelation are distinctly fallible and even errant. Thus we are compelled to make our traditional distinction between revelation and tradition. Put in such terms we face little difficulty, but when we put this in other terms we feel less comfortable–for example, if we say that God's revelation is perfect, but all theology and credal statements are fallible. As we shall note in more detail later, we need to make a clear distinction between revelation and our formulations of the contents of that revelation in our theology, let alone our experience and practice of the revelation in our personal lives and in the life of the church.

But pluralist theologians not only affirm that our theologies are inadequate. They also deny any possibility of an absolute truth even in what we believe to be God's revelation of himself in the incarnate and written word. If there is no absolute truth, we have to concede that a person is as likely to find salvation (whatever that may consist of) in some other faith as in and through Jesus Christ.

d) Visser't Hooft's fourth tenet which may lead to syncretism is the desire to take the best from all faiths and unite these varying elements of truth and goodness in order to come closer to the absolute. In his day it was true that the common expression of pluralist theology aimed at a syncretistic goulash which united elements from the various faiths. In this desire it was also common to underplay the differences between the faiths and emphasise the similarity of our beliefs. Thus in his "Karma and Redemption" Hogg envisages the time when "Christian and Hindu may ultimately be united in a faith wide enough to satisfy both".

But today pluralist theologians more commonly acknowledge the differences between the various faiths and consider that each has its own validity. In dialogue we are called therefore, they say, to encourage the followers of other faiths to continue in their own way and to become a better Hindu, Muslim etc. To many it would be axiomatic that no one has salvation, but that all are on the way unto salvation. As Frederick the Great said, "Jeder wird selig nach seiner eigenen Form".

ii. Inclusivism.

In his "What's so unique about Jesus?" Dr. Chris Wright defines inclusivism as the belief that "ultimately all truth is God's truth, and Christ must therefore *include* all that is true in other faiths. All truth and goodness is from God, therefore must also in some way be from and through Christ".

In recent years it has become common to underline the reality that there is truth and goodness within other faiths. This is undeniably true. Two questions arise from this statement. Firstly, where does this truth and goodness come from? Secondly, is it salvific?

a) *The origin of good.* Before this debate hit the theological headlines Lev Tolstoi simply stated "Where love is, God is". In Protestant circles the Christian Presence school have emphasised that the Christ is the origin of all truth and goodness, for these must come from God who is good and true. And the person of the godhead who is active into this world is the Christ. It is the Christ therefore who is active and present wherever truth and goodness are found. In Roman Catholic circles the name of Karl Rahner has been particularly associated with the concept of the anonymous Christian, although other less known theologians like Maurier have also formulated similar ideas. Although the precise application of his theology in this respect has been much criticised as religious imperialism, yet the basic idea that all grace is inseparably linked to the person of Christ is widely accepted in Catholic circles. The recipient and exerciser of such grace is then a follower of Christ although they may not be aware of it.

The challenge to us all is the contemporary question of the origin of truth and goodness. In past times the battle was centred on the question of the origin of sin and evil; now the more pressing debate is

the origin of good. Is it the direct working of the Christ (incarnate or not) in our contemporary world? Or is it a product of some general revelation in which God reveals truth and goodness through the created order and through human nature and conscience–Rom.1.18ff and 2.14, 15 are of course key verses in this debate. Or is there some original history common to all peoples which influences the content of traditional myth and belief? And are these different theories mutually exclusive?

If the presence of truth and goodness does mean that the Christ is active and present even where the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth is not yet known, then of course this has profound implications for our question of the fate of the unevangelised. But we have to ask whether the theology of Rahner and the Christian Presence school does not need to ask further questions concerning the origin of truth and goodness. Does grace always and only come from God in Christ active and present amongst us?

b) *Is it salvific*? Many inclusivist theologians accept that there is revelation within other faiths and outside the specific revelation of God in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. But they then question the idea that this revelation is salvific, holding firm to the necessity of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation.

Some inclusivist theologians see the truth and goodness within other faiths as *praeparatio evangelii*. They believe that those who truly receive God's general revelation within the confines of other faiths will then go on to explicit faith in Jesus Christ when they hear the Gospel. This may however beg the question of whether they may be saved through the goodness and truth within their non-Christian faith if they do not then have the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Surely it is logical and consistent that the God who knows the hearts of us all will know whether they would believe in Jesus Christ if they did hear. Might he not then apply the work of Christ on the cross and in the resurrection to them, although they have not yet heard and believed?

Less acceptable to the evangelical will be the inclusivist belief that the specific saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the highest form of truth, but the Christ spirit is already active in other faiths without the incarnate Jesus Christ and therefore salvation is to be found in the Christ within other faiths. Biblically it does not seem acceptable to separate the non-incarnate Christ from the historical incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. The word and the light of John 1 did come into the world and did become flesh. While the light of revelation enlightened all people before the incarnation, grace and truth came through the incarnate word. It is in the incarnate Christ that the invisible God is made known.

Our two questions have avoided the definition of truth and goodness. But as Christians we are bound to ask whether humanity can have any absolute goodness or truth. In the context of debates on pluralism it is easy to underplay the universal presence of sin and corruption. But we remind ourselves that all human goodness is corrupted at every point by sin; likewise all truth which we as humans possess is to some extent falsified by untruth. The demonic influence of sin prevails at every point, although it is also true that evil and untruth are always mitigated by that remnant image of God which is still within us. We shall return to this point, but at this stage we need to note that all sin, evil and untruth needs the atoning work of Jesus Christ in his cross and resurrection. As evangelicals we agree that we cannot be saved by our own goodness and truth, but inclusivist theology still poses the question of whether we may be saved by the person and work of Jesus Christ without specific knowledge of or faith in him.

iii. Exclusivism.
Traditionally evangelicals have followed an exclusivist theology in which salvation is found only in a specific faith in Jesus Christ, his death on the cross and resur-

rection. Exclusivism disallows any possibility of salvation either in or through other faiths–i.e. not only that other faiths do not represent God's means of salvation, but also that no salvation is to be found which does not include a turning from other faiths to God in Christ. This goes considerably further than the views, for example, of Hans Küng who sees the Christian faith as God's highest and principle means of salvation, but also allows the possibility of salvation within and through other faiths. Exclusivism not only sees Christianity as God's principle way of life and salvation, but indeed as God's unique salvific revelation.

Sadly this theological position has often been allied to a negative attitude to other faiths which concentrates on the sin and untruth found in them rather than any truth and goodness. But such negative attitudes do not necessarily coincide with an exclusivist position. Love will always cover a multitude of sins and will believe and hope all things. It is perfectly possible for the exclusivist to deny the possibility of salvation in or through other religions, but yet in love to rejoice to see the good in them. This good and truth may then be considered as a foundation for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a bridge towards salvation but not in itself salvific. As evangelicals it is incumbent on us to repent of any unloving negativism which has rejoiced in the demonic to be found in other faiths rather than in the good. We want to be people of love. But we also want to reaffirm our faith in Jesus Christ as God's unique way of salvation.

Personally I find myself in the position where I feel a real sympathy with the best in exclusivism. I want to state strongly my disagreement with the pluralist position and to stand firmly on the traditional Christian beliefs. I want also therefore to reaffirm my belief that salvation is to be found in Jesus Christ. I believe that theology should be not just theocentric, but definitely also christocentric (to use the contrast which theologians like Hick and Knitter have highlighted). And yet, as I shall develop later in this paper, I find myself increasingly forced to face the possibility that God may save the unevangelised by his grace and through the work of Jesus Christ. I stand therefore between a classical exclusivist and inclusivist position.

2. *Universality and universalism*

Hermeneutics demands that we interpret the New Testament primarily in relation to the situations and issues of the first century; only then can we apply the New Testament to modern European questions. The New Testament is not fundamentally struggling with the question of universalism, whether all people are saved. The battle for the New Testament church related rather to the question of universality, whether the God of Israel was also the God of the whole earth, whether the messiah was only for Jews and proselytes or also for non-proselyte Gentiles. And then the church faced the problem of how to integrate Gentile believers together with the original Jewish Christians.

Paul particularly faced the need to demonstrate in his writings the validity of his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. Thus we see in Romans his emphasis on the universality of sin in chapters 1—3 with the summary in 3.9—18 that "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin". This leads him in the second half of chapter 3 to show that this universal problem has a universally available solution in the redemptive atonement and propitiation in the death of Jesus Christ. This solution is not only for Jews, but also for Gentiles because it is not through the Torah, the mosaic covenant with Israel. It is indeed through faith in Jesus Christ and such faith is not limited to the Jews, but is universally available. Therefore 3.28 with its assertion that we are justified by faith apart from works of Torah is logically followed by the pressing question of whether God is the god of Jews only or also of Gentiles. Justification by faith and not by the works of Torah is in Paul's writings generally in the context of the universality of God's saving purposes.

Likewise the universalist verses in Paul with their much debated use of the word "all" are to be seen in terms of universality, not in terms of universalism. The new covenant is not only for Jews, it is also for Gentiles. And believing Gentiles do not need to join the household of Israel as proselytes in order to be part of the messiah's covenant community; they can remain fully as Gentiles.

Was Luke himself a Gentile? Or is his interest in Gentiles based on his having been the companion of Paul? In either case, clearly both in his Gospel and in the Acts he demonstrates a particular concern for Gentiles. In his Gospel this may be seen in his use of the genealogy of Jesus as the bridge between the very Jewish first three chapters and then the wider ministry of Jesus which opens out from the Nazareth synagogue address. The genealogy of course sees Jesus as the son of Adam, the son of God. God is the father of all humanity–and the messiah Jesus stems from Adam. We need not do more than remind ourselves also of Luke's emphasis in Acts on the universality of God's saving purposes which is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of life for all nations.

The prologue of John has the same emphasis on universality, not on universalism. Although westernised theologians like to debate the ontological significance of the word, it would seem that John was more concerned with the creational activity of the word. And it is in the context of creation, the beginning of human history not just Israel's history, that John stresses the word "world" (used four times in Jn.1.9—11). Clearly the creation story in Genesis does not use the word *'olam'* but rather *'erets'* and likewise the Septuagint in Gen. 1 and 2 uses *'ge'* not *'kosmos'*, but John underlines by repetition his change of the word. *'erets'* could so easily be misunderstood in John's time to mean *'Erets Israel'* and thus could be misinterpreted with a narrowly particularistic view which was precisely what John sought to avoid. *'Kosmos'* is clearly universalistic. God's salvation in the messiah is not just for Israel, but is also for those who were not by natural descent the children of God.

We need briefly also to note that New Testament eschatology is also in the context of universality. The gospel must first be preached to all peoples before the *parousia* can take place. And the vision of the book of Revelation includes the multitudes of all peoples.

While the New Testament stresses the universal purposes of God in the messianic saviour, there is also a continuity of the particularism which may be found in the Hebrew scriptures. There is a constant contrast between those who follow the messiah and those who deny him. The ministry of Jesus begins with the choosing of a small band of disciples as a continuity from the *'Qahal'* of the twelve tribes of Israel. As Israel was distinctly chosen as God's elect people in the Hebrew scriptures, so the church as the new *'Qahal'* is distinct from the 'world'. The covenant community of grace and faith is particularistic. Universality does not at all imply universalism.

3. *Race, religion and culture.*

In questions of inter-faith attitudes and of the possibility of salvation in other non-Christian religions it is easy to fail to distinguish between race, religion and culture. Our approach to other faiths may therefore be unduly influenced by questions of race and culture. Thus evangelism among people of other faiths may be misinterpreted as cultural imperialism or as racialism. It is also sometimes considered racialist or imperialist if one denies that other religions are in themselves salvific. This problem relates particularly to us in Europe in relationship to Jewish evangelism and to other ethnic minorities.

a) *The Jews.* Although I have a particular axe to grind in this issue as I am myself Jewish and also am a board member of the European *Jews for Jesus*, I do not want to develop this theme in detail in this paper. But it is perhaps right to note that a concern for the Jewish people is

often confused with an admiration of twentieth century Judaism. So also evangelism among Jews (even by fellow Jews, as in the case of the Jewish mission *Jews for Jesus*) may be seen as destructive of the Jewish community and even anti-semitic. Likewise Jewish evangelism is often assumed to produce believers in Jesus as messiah who are somehow no longer properly Jewish culturally. I am often asked when did I cease to be a Jew! It is assumed that a Jewish Christian must 'go goy'. Thus it is assumed that to be Jewish means also to be at least nominally a follower of Judaism and to be culturally Jewish rather than to assimilate with the culture of the nation where one lives. Therefore it may be considered anti-semitic to affirm that rabbinic Judaism is not God's accepted way of salvation. Evangelism among Jews can then be rejected by Gentile Christians who may even follow the logic of this in disallowing Jewish Christians.

b) *Ethnic minorities*. What I have said about Jews applies also to our approach to other ethnic minorities in Europe. As sensitive Christians all of us strongly oppose the racialism which so often greets Bengalis and Pakistanis in Britain, Turks and Arabs in Germany, North Africans in France etc. It is true that in their insecurity they often huddle together in ghettoes which are bound together by race, language, culture and religion. To evangelise is easily interpreted as a threat to the whole community and destructive of its traditional culture. It is therefore incumbent upon us to make sure that our witness is culturally appropriate, that contextually suited fellowships/churches are established and that converts are not separated from their community and family. We need to check ourselves that our attitude to other faiths is not coloured by racial prejudice–it is strange to me in this context that so many evangelical Christians are naively positive about Judaism and at the same time strongly anti-Islam. Theologically Judaism and Islam have much in common, as they do also culturally. Likewise many evangelicals wonder whether it might be possible to be saved as a follower of Rabbinic Judaism while at the same time they may strongly attack the suggestion that a Muslim could be saved while still within Islam. Clearly our beliefs concerning salvation or judgment for the unevangelised must not be prejudiced by racial or cultural sensitivities.

4. *Loss of confidence?*

Sociologists often point to western Europe's loss of confidence in the post-colonial and post-imperial period of history in which we live. The devastation of the second world war hastened the demise of national and cultural arrogance. A questioning uncertainty has characterized our cultural development and this has linked with theological liberalism and post-Christian secularism to undermine Christians' theological assurance. Obviously this also affects our approach to other faiths and our understanding of the position of those who have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The advances of eastern religions and philosophies in our societies of pluralism have further undermined a Christian belief in absolute truth(s) and in a particularistic theology. Knitter and others therefore emphasise that all truth is subjective–parallel to the child's statement that its parent is "the best in the world". For that particular child it is true, but it cannot be accepted as an absolute general truth. So also the New Testament verses that declare Jesus as the way, the truth and the life or as the only name whereby we can be saved–they are true for Christians who are in love with the Lord and who want therefore to make such declarations of love, but they cannot be considered as objective general truth. Hick and Knitter would happily allow that other faiths' followers could equally make parallel love declarations about Krishna or Buddha. Salvation may be found equally in other faiths and evangelization is then objectionably intolerant.

Tolerance has become a hallmark of our

contemporary *Zeitgeist*. The danger from an evangelical perspective is that this tolerance is only directed towards the tolerant, whereas people may be singularly intolerant towards those they deem to be intolerant. Questioning doubt and lack of theological assurance is accepted, while assurance of faith and belief in an absolute becomes intolerable. Such a position is more akin to eastern philosophies than to traditional Christian faith.

As evangelicals we are called to repent of intolerant lack of love and respect for others, but we are still called to a humble but sure faith in Jesus Christ and his saving work on our behalf. We have to confess that often we have allowed our assurance of faith to lead us into arrogance, intolerance and lack of love. God's will for us must be a theological confidence together with a holy humility which loves and is open to learn.

That leads us to the question of what we have to learn. As I have pointed out in "What about other faiths?", other religions in their beliefs and in their practice often force us to reconsider our appreciation and understanding of God's revelation in Christ and in the biblical scriptures, but as evangelicals we would not agree that this revelation is inadequate and needs to be complemented by what other faiths can teach us. For example, Knitter points out that we need to learn from Islam the emphasis that God is one and from eastern religions the practice of personal contemplation and acting without seeking the fruits of one's actions. It is true that as evangelical Christians we often do need to be reminded of these things. But it is also true that they are lessons which can be learned not only from Islam and eastern religions, but are fundamental to the teaching of the Bible.

This brings us back to the fact that we mentioned earlier that there is truth and goodness as well as untruth and evil within other religions, as indeed also within the Christian church. It has been said that all theology is contextual and we may add that as such it is also fallible and even errant. And our practice as Christians at all times falls short of God's standards of glory. When we share the good news of Jesus Christ with people within other faiths, we are not coming as those who have the truth in perfection or have achieved fully in sanctification. We come as sinners whose understanding of God's revealed truth is still in need of correction and perfection. But we also come to bear witness to the fulness of God's salvation for sinners and the fulness of God's truth in his word. We witness that in Jesus Christ our sin has been redeemed and our blindness has been healed so that we are beginning to see clearly.

Biblically we believe that God both saves and judges. In this paper we have been asked to look at salvation and the unevangelised; we have not been asked to examine the other side of the coin. But we need at least to restate the truth that God's salvation does have the dark obverse of judgment. This paper is not the place to discuss the nature of judgment and hell, but we sadly disagree with Rahner's view that hell exists but that there probably won't be anyone there! John's gospel puts the contrasting realities baldly in his juxtaposition of faith and unbelief, eternal life ond the wrath of God abiding on those who reject the Son of God.

It is with gladness however that we move on from the bitter tragedy of judgment which grieves our hearts. With joy we concentrate in this paper on salvation. As evangelicals we affirm that salvation is by grace through the atoning work of Jesus Christ in his cross and resurrection which we receive by faith in Jesus Christ, not by meritorious works nor by the Torah, God's covenantal Law with Israel. The question now comes to us whether such salvation can be applied to the unevangelised.

i. Grace.

Salvation is by grace. God's grace is unlimited and is for sinners. The unevangelised can relate to God's merciful lovingkindness towards sinners. In his

grace God may desire to cave some from amongst the unevangelised.

ii. The atoning work of Jesus Christ.
As evangelicals we reject the idea that anyone can be saved apart from Jesus' death and resurrection. The question is still before us however whether God in his grace may apply that work of Christ to those who have not heard his gospel. Does God know who would believe if they did hear the good news of Christ? Surely he does.

iii. Repentance and faith.
The New Testament seems clearly to teach that the means of entrance into God's kingdom and into his saving grace is by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Norman Anderson shocked the evangelical world some years ago by his IVP books suggesting the possibility of God applying Christ's redeeming work to those who humbly repent of their sin and seek with all theirs hearts the mercy of God. This somewhat speculative approach has since been echoed in varying forms by other evangelicals as a possibility, not as a certainty. Thus Peter Cotterell in his "Meaning and Meaninglessness", Chris Wright in his "What's unique about Jesus?" and I too in "What about other faiths?" have all opened the door somewhat to such a possibility in God's gracious providence. But we have to underline the fact that such views are speculative.

iv. Not by works or Torah.
The above possibility of salvation being granted to those who humbly repent and seek God in no way contradicts the teaching that salvation is by faith and not by works. All of us would reject the idea that the unevangelised (or others!) may be saved by living up to their lights or because they are morally upright and sincere in their religious beliefs. God's salvation is purely by grace and not at all by our sincerity or merit.

Salvation is not only not by works, it is also not by Torah. Salvation is for people of all races quite apart from their racial background or religious upbringing. Salvation is in no way linked now to a Jewish parentage or heritage, nor to our relationship to a particular people. The New Testament teaches strongly the truth of universality, good news for all peoples.

Personally I have come to the position where I believe that God may save the unevangelised in his grace by the work of Jesus Christ on the basis of people's humble repentance from sin and seeking in faith after God. But I would not want to make this an assured doctrinal position, for I do realise that it is not clear in scripture and must therefore remain merely as a speculative suggestion. I am happy to remain in such a position of agnosticism, for I believe that ultimately God's judgment and salvation are his business and not mine. But I believe in the promise of Jesus Christ that those who seek will surely find.

5. *How Much Knowledge is Needed?*

We have talked easily of 'the unevangelised'. But what does that mean? In the pre-conference description of this session it talks of "those who have not heard the gospel" and those who have "rejected it". What does it mean to "hear" the gospel? Is this merely a question of what our ears have actually heard or does it somehow require such a hearing that people understand and appreciate what they hear with their ears? The history of the church may prevent many from really 'hearing' what we preach. And our lives or forms of preaching may also mean that people do not understand or are repulsed. For example, I have heard a Christian preacher talking to Theravada Buddhists about the words of Jesus "I am the way, the truth and the life", but failing to note the key words "I am". The Buddhists therefore saw Jesus as inferior to the Buddha according to that preaching. Jesus was to them unenlightened because he still thought that he was, whereas Buddha had come to the enlightenment of

knowing that he is not. Those Buddhists heard with their ears, but owing to the inadequate preaching they did not understand.

We have also to ask how much knowledge of Jesus is necessary before people have "heard". Thanks to the Qur'an all Muslims believe in Jesus/Isa. They believe he is born of a virgin (unlike many Christians!), that he is a sinless prophet who worked many miracles; they believe that he did not die on the cross, but God raised him into the heavens and that he will come again at the end of history in his second coming. Their view of the resurrection differs from ours, as does also their understanding of the second coming of Jesus. How much about Jesus do we need to know and believe before we can be saved? This leads us to the question of the first twelve disciples of Jesus. When did they receive salvation? Was it when they first followed Jesus, although they did not yet appreciate his coming crucifixion or his deity? Or was it when they came at Caesarea Philippi to see him as the messiah and son of God (whatever they may have understood by those titles)? Or was it after that when Jesus began to teach them that he must suffer and die? Or was it when they experienced the resurrection? Or only when Thomas led them in the credal confession "my lord and my God"? We do not know. But do we need to know? Is not God's judgment his business?

Does this undermine our missionary motivation? I believe it does not. Firstly our motivation for mission is not merely the eternal salvation of those to whom and with whom we witness. God's salvation consists not only of eternal life, but the fulness of his *shalom* and wholeness. But secondly our mission aims at people having an assurance of salvation which will be missing without explicit faith in Jesus Christ. So we long that all people of all races, Jew and Gentile, may know with assurance the fulness of the life of Jesus Christ both in this world and in eternity. Thirdly we are motivated for mission by our gratitude for God's grace to us and therefore by obedience to his call as we rejoice to be allowed to serve him and the world he has created and died for. But our deepest and supreme motivation for mission is our longing that the name of the Lord should be glorified. Ultimately it must be said that the goal of mission is not that we serve, nor that others find salvation through our witness, but that the Lord himself and his name should be honoured, glorified and loved. Mission is for God's honour and pleasure.

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